



Polish Profiles

Story Teller in Stone

By: **Kaya Mirecka Ploss, Ph.D.**, Executive Director
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Almost from the day that I arrived in the United States, forty one years ago I heard about a sculpture high up in the Black Hills of South Dakota, which was called Crazy Horse. At first I thought it is sculpture of a horse. Much later I learned that Crazy Horse is the name of a Sioux Indian Warrior and that the artist of this sculpture is a Polish- American, Korczak Ziolkowski. Today, the sculpture of the Great Sioux Chief, Crazy Horse and that of the artist, Korczak Ziolkowski are well known all over the world.

Chief Crazy Horse was born in 1840 in Rapid Creek, North Dakota. He was only 31 when he was killed, stabbed in the back by an American soldier, while he was under U.S. army protection. Chief Crazy Horse had no equal as a warrior. He was also a great leader of his people. But who was the man who devoted all of his life to make a sculpture of the Indian Warrior? Why was Korczak so obsessed to spend his whole life wanting to commemorate this Great Indian Leader? In the minds of Indians the life and death of Chief Crazy Horse parallels the tragic history of all Native Americans since the white man invaded their homes and lands.

Was Korczak Ziolkowski feeling their pain? Did he feel outrage about the unjust treatment of Chief Crazy Horse who was killed while seeking help for his dying wife at Fort Robinson where they were both staying? The Indians believed that Crazy Horse was lured there with promises to help his dying wife, but the purpose all along was to kill him. Did Korczak think of that, and like the Indians, felt the outrage about the killing of Chief Crazy Horse? Is that why he spent almost 40 years on the sculpture to honor Crazy Horse and the Indian People?

Ziolkowski did this without pay in complete obscurity and alone. He was hand drilling the first blasts in 1948. The project celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1998 and it is still impossible to predict when it will be finished. Korczak Ziolkowski is dead but he made sure that the dream of never letting Chief Crazy Horse pass unto oblivion and to preserve the memory of the Sioux Indian will become a reality. Without Korczak there would be no Crazy Horse Memorial.

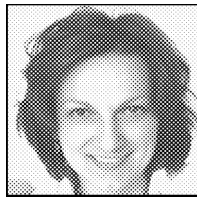
Korczak Ziolkowski was born in Boston in 1908 to Polish parents. He was orphaned at the age of one, and grew up in a series of foster homes. Later on in life he said that he was badly mistreated in some of those places. At the age of 16 Korczak was on his own. He took odd jobs to put himself through a technical school in Cambridge Ma. Later, he worked as a pattern maker in the shipyards on the rough Boston Water Front.

At the age of 18 he handcrafted a Grandfathers clock from 55 pieces of Santo Domingo mahogany. He never took a lesson in art or sculpture, but he studied the Masters and began creating studies in plaster and clay. Korczak was 23 when he used a coal chisel to carve his first portrait. It was a marble tribute to Judge Frederick Cabot, the famous Boston Juvenile Judge who has befriended and encouraged Korczak. Cabot introduced Korczak to the world of fine arts. But it was while he lived in Hartford Ct. where Korczak moved, that his career blossomed. He established a successful studio doing commissioned sculptures throughout New England, Boston and New York. In 1934 his marble portrait of Paderewski won him the first prize at the New York World Fair.

Soon after, he was asked to assist Gutzon Borgium at Mount Rushmore. Media reports about Korczak's World Prize and work at Rushmore prompted the Lakota Chief Henry Standing Bear to write a letter to Ziolkowski appealing to him to create a memorial to American Indians. Eventually Korczak and Henry Standing Bear met and toured a potential carving site. Years passed before Korczak started work on the Crazy Horse sculpture. The Second World War broke out and Korczak at age 34 volunteered for service in the Army. He landed on Omaha beach and later was wounded in the battle.

At war's end Korczak was invited to make Government War Memorials in Europe. But he wanted to fulfill his dream and to keep his promise to Henry Standing Bear and decided to accept the invitation to carve the Crazy Horse Memorial. He arrived in the Black Hills of Dakota on May 3 1947. That same year Korczak met his future wife, Ruth Ross. Three years later, in 1950 they married and had ten children.

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Dishing Out

Justyna Ball

Once there was this obnoxious chef, Mike Logozzo, an Italian- American who thought that his way is the only right way around the kitchen. In the late '90s, he moved to Poland to "revive" Polish cooking ... as if it needed to be revived. He received a lot of publicity as always happens when an American decides to make a fuss (another example, actor John Malkovich fighting for a gay club in Warsaw). While in Poland, Logozzo wrote a column for Gazeta Wyborcza (controversial daily news) and Twój Styl (women's magazine) and had a TV show, not mentioning endless interviews.

For Poles, who for decades lived under Communism, an American chef was a god. In the US he trashed Polish cooking on at least one occasion by writing about his "Polish experience" in The Wall Street Journal. In Poland he swore never to try (fried) cabbage pierogi but pushed for his own version, pierogi stuffed with zucchini or ...blue cheese. He explained that a dish of pierogi is nothing new, they are actually ravioli, and everybody has them-Italians, French, etc. Uno momento, Signore Logozzo. So if others have their own versions, what's wrong with Poles having one? How about ravioli a la Logozzo (with any stinky cheese he wants)?

And why is it always "others" who invented something and "we" who supposedly copied and not the other way around?

The Wall Street Journal article, "A Brooklyn Italian Does a Number on Polish Cuisine" was full of double standards. I tried to laugh at his ignorance, but instead, I just felt sorry. Surprised that a chef, an expert, knows so little about true Polish cuisine. And his approach was really arrogant. Imagine a Polish culinary virtuoso telling Americans that their Shepard's Pie or Sloppy Joes' are fatty and are up for some renaissance. Maybe, instead of changing something that does not need to be changed he should open his mind to some new Polish recipes and introduce them in the US, such as, haddock in horseradish sauce, hare pie, chicken pate, sorrel soup, boletus soup or sauce, pork sirloin roast with prunes or veal stewed in dill sauce etc. Growing up in Poland, I thought that roasted chicken with young potatoes and dill with "mizeria" (creamy cucumber salad) on the side was the traditional Polish food because that's what we ate the most. It was inexpensive! Pork chops were popular, sometimes called schnitzels.

But around here, nobody seemed to know this about a Polish diet. And when I mentioned meatballs, I was accused of stealing the idea from ...Swedes.

Then I realized that ethnic foods are not what is the most popular in a certain country but what distinguishes us from others. So, peanut butter sandwiches must represent the U.S. and we, Poles after being robbed of everything else are left with kielbasa and pierogi. Last weekend at a fireworks show I

met Sasha, a young man from Russia who was adopted as a child, asked me if I noticed that Russian pierogi in the U.S. are considered to be a Polish delicacy. He meant potato stuffed pierogi. I said "yes" and if you try to change it, you are wasting your time. "Polish" (or Russian) is what Americans say it is. Polish barszcz is never Polish but Russian, so we are even.

On his show, Emeril (Lagasse) once introduced Polish Belvedere vodka as vodka from Minnesota.

I also was met with strange looks after calling rye bread "Polish", how dare you? Everybody knows it's Jewish. And how many Israelis eat rye bread? Are there rye fields in Israel? Have you seen the landscape of the Middle - East? Prince Edward Island, a tiny Canadian island, probably has more potato fields than Israel, but my daughter's boyfriend rolled his eyes when she told him that potato pancakes are her mother's dish.

Double standards are normal. Cabbage served in Chinese soup may be considered a tasty delicacy but as if you say that it is Polish, people will pinch their noses. Cabbage once made it to the top of a "most disgusting foods list" by my local radio station, only second to anchovies. Why am I not surprised that sauerkraut made that list as well? The only time it was lifted to a world's standard was when Oprah went on a cabbage diet.

I bet, "Cream of potato" always sounds better than "kartoflanka"; "crepes" better than "naleśniki" and "sushi in wasabi sauce" c'est très sophistique, never mind our "śledź z chrzanem."

For the article Chef Logozzo "invented" some heavy woman allegedly serving as the nation's food guru.

I don't recall any 300 pound woman on TV during the communist years having a cooking show. Actually, I don't recall any cooking show. Neither does my husband or our friends who lived there at that time. And we should know, as there were only two channels of Polish TV. We couldn't miss that. And even if there were such a lady, they would call her "włoska matrona" (Italian matron) because that's how they call big women in Poland. I wonder where they got that name, not from eating all those pasta dishes!

Once in a while a foreign cook, Logozzo included, has issues with Polish traditional Christmas dinner, trying to... break with traditions. Why?

It would only do him good if Logozzo take some classes in cultural studies. Traditions are what they are, traditions! Don't like it? Create a new dish, but leave alone what differs us from others.

Polish food, pretty much like all things Polish, seems to be underestimated, never taken seriously.

In the Boston Globe, some food critic did not help much by writing about Café Polonia calling it... "Cabbage and Kielbasa Café." Nice...I'm being sarcastic here.

The problem with such people is that they never go beyond the stereotype. And naive Poles and Polish-Americans are happy that someone noticed. What they missed is the

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Calendar of Events

July 17, Tue - President of Poland Lech Kaczyński will deliver a special lecture and will present the Order of the White Eagle posthumously to President Ronald Reagan. Ronald Reagan Presidential Library Foundation in Simi Valley. Information and reservations Marguerite (805) 522-2977.

25 - 31, The Polish Club of Laguna Woods invites you to join them on a trip to Alaska, Information and reservations call Ron 949-770-9133.

28, Sat, 9:30 to 4:00 p.m. - Polish Genealogical Society of California, Information at: www.pgwca.org and President @pgsca.org Please see ad on page 8.

Aug 12, Polish Day. By PNA Lodge of Orange County at Alpine Village Torrance Blvd. and Harbor Freeway. Info: (909) 396-0662.

26, Polish Patriotic anniversaries of the 20th Century, Yorba Linda.

Sep 15 - 17, Dożynki, Yorba Linda.

22, 9:30 - 11:30 a.m. History of Ellis Island and Immigrant Experience Info: See ad on page 8.

28 - 30, The 2007 Paderewski Celebration, in Paso Robles, information: 213-821-1356 or polmusic@usc.edu.

29, Saturday, 5 p.m. Polish Festival at Clubhouse 2 in Laguna Woods, Information: Irena Lawyer 949 206 9122.

Oct 4, Thursday, 4:00 p.m., Dedication of the Paderewski Monument at USC followed by reception and the Annual Paderewski Lecture-Recital. Free admission.

Nov 11, Sunday, Polish Children's Rainbow Fund has its annual bazaar in Szarotka, 3400 West Adams Blvd., Los Angeles, CA, Information: Natalia Kaminska (626) 282 4686.

Please send information for the calendar to Bish Petryka zbyskoopet@aol.com ★