



Polish Profiles

Hmmm Good...

By: **Kaya Mirecka Ploss**, Ph.D., Executive Director
Jan Karski Institute, Baltimore, MD

Men in science are a normal thing, at least that's what my generation thought, but women – that's another story. The first one who proved people like me wrong was Maria Skłodowska Curie. Skłodowska was awarded the Nobel Prize for science not only once but twice, the first in 1903 and the second in 1911. Maria Skłodowska Curie, born in Warsaw, Poland, got the Nobel prizes for her research on radioactivity. The Piłsudski Institute of America established a Maria Skłodowska Award in her memory.

In 1996 that science medal was given to Dr. Alina Surmacka Szcześniak. Pani Alina is not a mousy little woman, but rather she is elegant, good looking and smart. Dr. Szcześniak is a food scientist, the one who makes your food "Hmmm Good." She worked for years for the General Foods Company in Tarrytown, New York. What does a food scientist do, I was curious to know! Well, I found out that how the food tastes, how long it can be preserved, is the work of a food scientist, and Alina Szcześniak is one of them; she specializes in food texture.

When we go to a store, we see the finished product, but before a food product like breakfast cereal reaches our table it goes through many different processes, as it is with food. Dr. Szcześniak invented all kinds of food textures and registered many patents. She holds patents in protein food products, also patents for a soufflé mix, low calorie cream-type salad dressing, artificial fruit and vegetable beverages, some chewing gum and many others. Alina has been called a pioneer, an inventor and researcher of food texture. Next time you sit at a dinner table or breakfast table remember that it is scientists like Dr. Alina Szcześniak who makes sure that the food texture is just right and to your liking.

Alina was born in Warsaw in 1925. She was fourteen years old when the war broke out. Three years later she lost her father. During the Nazi occupation in Poland schools of higher learning were closed. An underground network on the college level was established in Poland and Alina began to study chemistry in one such school. Her professor was a lady chemist who once worked with Madame Curie Skłodowska in her Paris laboratory.

After the Warsaw Uprising Alina and her mother were deported to Germany. Her mother's only brother was in the United States and he helped them immigrate to the United States.

Only the best would do for Alina; she wound up as a student at the prestigious Bryn Mawr College. She graduated from there in 1948 with a bachelor's degree and was accepted to do her graduate work at MIT in Boston. In 1949 Alina married Walter Szcześniak from Dedham Massachusetts. In 1952 she received a Doctor of Science Degree and accepted a research job from the General Foods Corporation. In 1953 her son Andrew was born.

Here is a woman, beautiful and elegant, who successfully combined a demanding career with marriage and motherhood. She worked for General Foods Corporation for over three decades until her retirement.

In 1999 the Engineering Association which honors pioneers in engineering and science awarded Alina Szcześniak their award. This prestigious organization has honored people like Ralph Modjeski, the bridge designer, Joseph Tykociński, pioneer in electronic and inventor of sound in films, Stanley Ulam, a mathematician and engineer who developed the formula for the hydrogen bomb, Mieczysław Bekker, the developer of a lunar vehicle that was used in three Apollo moon missions and Frank N. Piasecki, a pioneer in vertical lift aircraft. It is good to remind people about the achievements of Poles and Polish Americans in this country.

Alina Szcześniak's work in food texture can be defined as "how the food feels in the mouth-whether it is soft, hard, chewy, crispy or soggy." It is scientists like Alina who are responsible for how our food feels and tastes. □



Comatose Dragon

By: **Justyna Ball**

Once again, the flags are hung as if on command. No, it's not a national holiday, although some may think so. Poles not only decorated their windows and balconies, but their wardrobes matched the flags as well. It's like the Pułaski Day Parade in NYC, but on a much larger scale when not just 5th Ave., but the entire country participates.

It's the European Soccer Championship (Euro 2008), and it's hosted this year by Austria and Switzerland, and it may as well be ... the end of the world! Because for the first time in history, as one of only 16 countries, the Polish team made it and England's team stayed home (!) and now while sipping their Bass ale, its Britons who are watching Poles on the telly and not the other way around. Their next chance won't come for another 4 years.

For the Poles, such an advance itself is a good enough reason to celebrate, no wonder the country is in a festive mood. Or was, at least! To date, Poland lost to Germany and tied with Austria. Some saw it as a historical pattern, and the atmosphere before the first game could be compared to the charging before the battle at Grunwald in 1410, but with quite a different outcome. Back then, WE won.

The Polish media set up the posts on the Polish-German border asking local residents about their thoughts and bets. In those areas, Poles speak German, and Germans speak Polish, and they are actually split on whom to cheer for. Girls paint German colors on one cheek, and a Polish flag on the other.

After the second game, when English ref Howard Webb in the 91st minute, called for a penalty shot for the Austrians, you know, the host country, and they scored, bringing the match to a tie, Poles are the last in the group of four. No wonder Webb is the most hated man in Poland, and they are praying for a miracle to happen during the game with Croatia so they could move up to the next level. Where is John Paul when the nation needs him?

To sweeten their defeat, the day Poles lost 0:2 to the German team, Robert Kubica, Poland's number one car racer (although in BMW colors!) became a leader in the World Championship after winning the prestigious Formula One Grand Prix of Canada.

But it was Poland's "Mazurek Dąbrowskiego" not "Deutschland, Deutschland, über alles..." that played out from the loudspeakers over Montreal when Kubica took the highest post on the podium.

There are more surprises. What does Kubica and Germany's main goal scorer have in common? How about the fact that both were born in Poland? That's right! It was Łukasz Podolski who stole the show at the Germany-Poland game and scored not one but both goals. The cameras captured his teammates jumping in euphoria and there is Łukasz... with his feet glued to the ground, his hands covering his face after each goal.... And the faces of Polish fans all over the stadium are painted with confusion and disbelief...

Later, when asked by the press about the lack of excitement as compared to the outbursts of joy from rest of the team, Podolski said that he could not completely enjoy it, because of the respect he feels for his native country. He even spent half an hour in the Polish team's locker room ... apologizing! ATA boy! His parents taught him well.

Love for soccer runs in his blood as Podolski Sr. played for the Szombierki Bytom club before immigrating to Germany with 2 year old Łukasz.

The polls later showed that his old countrymen forgave him and many were actually proud of him. I think it's kind of funny to see German fans wearing jerseys with Podolski's name on their backs.

Among those whom, at this important for Poland moment, lack solidarity with the rest of the country is Magdalena Środa, a minister in Marek Belka's office, a feminist, and an unhappy woman, famous for her comments in 2004 when in Sweden, as Reuters reported, during a conference dedicated to an "honor killing," ex-minister Środa said: "In Poland, Catholicism does not directly support but also does not condemn abuse against women, although some ties exist through the culture that is strongly based on religion."

Now Środa is after soccer, soccer fans, and the media promoting soccer, you name it. I think it is simply because she is angry seeing a nation happy, full of hopes and dreams. She has this minority complex. She cannot stand being around optimistic people. With so much anger toward the Catholic church, that woman has lost her mind and someone please help her find it.

Emotions run high, and everybody cheers. Men are brought to tears, ladies, gents, kids, seniors, neighbors, even fans of Cracovia and their old enemy, Wisła sit side by side and cheer the Polish national team, but what Środa sees is bunch of guys in front of the TV drinking beer. Środa's opponent argued that after the game, he and his grandkids will go out and play soccer because they are in the mood for it now. And all the kids in Poland want to play, because that's what they watch and that's what everybody is talking about.

And no matter what the result will be for Poland's team, this is the moment when the country comes together united.

And even Podolski's goals cannot break that bond between people even though some want him to pay dearly for it. And that someone who did not appreciate his success, was Law & Justice's delegate Orzechowski, who for such a "disgraceful" performance wants Podolski to be stripped of his Polish citizenship. Oh, my...!

The stupid man says all he knows.

The wise man knows all he says.

Before you start any comments about ungrateful Poles, think for a moment about whose fault it really is?

Podolski Sr's? For wanting his talented son to excel? Kubica's? For polishing his talent in a foreign land, because his own country has no facilities? Talents densely grow in Poland, but the lack of sponsoring, and sometimes the lack of public interest prevents many of those young Poles from

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Calendar of Events

To June 30, 2nd Annual LA Polish Poster Festival at Weidman gallery, 7772 Santa Monica Blvd., West Hollywood, CA 90046. Information: www.contemporaryposters.com and www.weidmangallery.com

29, Sun, 1:30 p.m. Polish American Congress Annual Meeting in the Szarotka Retirement Home Patio - at the rear of the building. 3400 W. Adams Blvd., Los Angeles, CA. Information (626)577-9797.

Jul 13, Sun., 1:30 p.m. Day of Brotherhood with Poles in the Former Soviet Union. Fund raising dinner to help Poles there. Information and reservations: Janina Kosowicz, tel. (310)-857-0208, Zosia Adamowicz (626)281-4456.

Aug 10, Sun, Polish Day at Alpine Village sponsored by PNA Orange County Centennial Lodge 3193, Information Tony Nowak (951) 808-9580.

16, Sat, Steak Fry sponsored by Fr. Jerzy Popieluszko council 9599 Knights of Columbus, Information: Tony (714) 671-6892.

24, 10:30 am – Polish Patriotic Anniversaries of 20th Century in Yorba Linda

Sep 7, "Forgotten Odyssey" film to commemorate the 69th Anniversary of the beginning of WWII. Information: 949)206-9122.

20 – 21, Sat and Sun - Dożynki (Harvest Festival) at the Pope John Paul II Polish Center, 3999 Rose Dr., Yorba Linda.

27 - 28, Sat and Sun - Bazaar of Our Lady of Bright Mount Parish, 3424 W. Adams Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90018

Oct 1, Celebration of 400th Anniversary of Arrival of First Poles to Jamestown (Virginia)
Please send information for the calendar to Bish Petryka - e-mail: zbyskoopet@aol.com ★