

Justyna Ball from 2

she was asking me)... "I closed it." So she asked again, "But have you locked it?" Here I go again with "I closed it"... and what does she want from me?

I did not see the difference between those two, and Betty was not very good at helping me understand it.

Her asking me if I "zamknęłam" the door was odd, because often people do close the door behind them when leaving, and only on rare occasions they leave the door wide open. In my mind, she did not ask if I had closed it with a key (zamknęłam na klucz.)

We had similar arguments about shoes and cars. Betty's way was that sandals are not shoes but sandals, and a truck is not a car (which I always was so sure of, darn it!), but a truck is a truck.

So when in Betty's presence, I said to my daughter to "put her shoes on" pointing to her sandals or flip-flops, Betty quickly corrected me. To me anything that you put on your feet in order to make walking a more pleasant experience are ...shoes, and that's why we buy sandals or flip flops in the shoe department and not let's say, a hardware store. Over time, I have met people who still use "ice boxes" instead of a fridge.

I felt uncomfortable calling elderly people by their first name and kept silent when grandmas demanded from their grandkids to be called "nana" or "nena."

I was disappointed as back in Poland I waited all my life to be called "Mrs." and here I come and at the very beginning, I become "Justina." Since the mothers of my children's friends introduced themselves as "Roses," "Lauries," or "Robins," I guess I should not argue for not being called "Mrs. Ball." Only later, I discovered that there are still some good traditional families like my Irish landlord, Tom Cahill and his lovely wife, Kathy whose children were taught to call us (tenants!) Mr. and Mrs., and I liked it. I remember my grandma in Poland meeting with her friend, Mrs. Sentkowska. They knew each other back from during the war times. My grandparents stayed in her house while building their own (in 1947), and during all those years they never called each other, other than "Pani Halinko" or "Pani Halusiu" (although only one was Halina, and the other was Helena). Occasionally, they met for a tea and I, as a kid, loved that hierarchy and keeping old customs. They made the atmosphere elevated with respect.

Later in America, I was told that it is a Southern thing to call a person Miss Daisy or Mrs. Jeanie. We are in New England so it does not apply. Betty was very "old school," officially introducing herself by her husband's first and last names although she demanded from her grandkids never to use the forbidden "g" word (grandma) and asked to be called "Bongie" instead. To someone coming from Poland, a woman who insists on being called "Pani Jan Kowalski" seems insane.

Polish immigrants still learning English may have a problem with the right pronunciation of words like "sheet" or "beach" and sometimes results in calling them the "sh" or "b" word. At first, the difference between "sheep" or "ship" or "living" and "leaving" was unnoticeable to us. Once we even asked my husband not to say "sheet" until he gets it right.

For the same reason, reporters on Polish TV, often call Halloween "Helloween" or disco music "deesco." The "South Beach diet" became "diet from the beaches of Southern seas" whatever that means only because whoever translated it was not familiar with South Beach in Miami.

My article in a Polish magazine, "Twój Styl" about a nudist colony in Woodstock, CT had a caption "The legendary Woodstock" only because the person editing my story did not know that there are many Woodstocks in the US. The legendary Woodstock is in New York, and there is nothing legendary about the one in Connecticut. But I guess you have to live here to know it.

To learn about one's culture, you need to immerse yourself into it.

Seeing middle-aged women dress up in sports team jerseys seemed infantile and does not make me want to wear one, but I learned to accept such sights. I simply reset

my mind although my kids became an easy target for the media.

On our trip to San Francisco, I said "There are many gays around here" to which our daughter answered with "What's wrong with that? Are you against gays?" Jacek noticed that when only a couple of hours earlier, he said "There are many BMWs around here," she did not say, "What's wrong with BMWs? Are you against people driving them?"

Exploring American culture became an adventure. I learned how Americans live, eat, shop, how they raise their children, what has value, and what turns people off. I found out that just as we need to keep up with the Joneses, our children urge to keep up with the Joneses' kids. How do you explain to a child that buying a class ring for \$200 is not a deal? Easy. "Are you out of your mind???" End of discussion.

Quickly, I learned what a "rip off" means, and it became a popular word in our vocabulary.

I did not turn into an American mom, but remained a Polish mother. I potty trained my kids when they were 1.5, and I can train your dog, too. I did not put M&Ms in their peanut butter sandwiches. They did not have peanut butter sandwiches, and they ate horseradish and even raw herring at Christmastime.

I remained sober-minded, but in harmony with understanding and accepting other cultures.

So why am I still surprised that two American couples (actually one American and one Polish-American) who recently traveled to Poland wanted to see Auschwitz as the main attraction? The Polish-American couple stayed in Poland two weeks, The American couple opted for 9 days but returned ... 4 days earlier. Something tells me it was their first trip outside the country so you have to be careful criticizing them as they are a very fragile species.

You know, a couple of years ago, my daughter's then boyfriend, who was Jewish, did not want to go to Auschwitz while visiting Krakow. He was smart enough to know that he was there for a short time so he wanted to have fun. Unless ... this is what this group of American tourists sees as fun. If the crematoriums turn them on, it's scary. I think there is a name for it...

My bet is that none of them know anything about Poland's history and I'm not even sure if the American couple know what the capital of Poland is. The father went on business, dragging his wife and daughter with him.

So I asked the Polish-American couple whose idea it was. It was Bruce's idea. Dorota has no opinion. I asked why. For historical and educational reasons was the answer. Weird, I thought.

Its like Poles coming to the US seeking to go to Gettysburg, skipping Times Square and Broadway in NYC, Boston and the historical trail, and every major city and its attractions. Weird.

With five young children in tow, the Polish-American couple traveled to Mragowo (Dorota comes from a village in the area) known for country music festivals (and that's American country music!). From Mragowo, they drove down South to Auschwitz and Zakopane.

Slovakia was next, and back to Mragowo for the Polish wedding. I don't have to tell you how much fun they had there. But if you look at Poland's map, the very first town near Mragowo is Mikolajki, the capital of sailing and kayaking and a really lovely town. Did they go there? Sorry, car problem or something like that, you know with five kids it's not easy. So it came down to Zakopane, Aushwitz, Slovakia, and the Polish wedding.

After that, a great idea popped into my mind. How about creating (exclusively for American tourists,) trips called, "Auschwitz and Slovakia - Tours of Poland?" And if you pay a little more, I will take you to a Polish wedding. In conclusion, it all comes down to common sense.

But the more people are deprived of it by the ever present media that tells them what to think, and there is a substitute for culture (the true one fading away), the less they have it. □

Polish citizenship from 1

Poland did not officially exist, may have been Polish nationals but were not Polish citizens, hence such grandparents were unable to pass on Polish citizenship.

If at least two of your grandparents had Polish citizenship and did not renounce it, the Pol-Am is required to apply for what is known as "confirmation of citizenship". The nearest Polish consulate should be contacted for information on what documents are necessary to prove an ancestor's citizenship status and what procedures need to be followed. Again, this is not automatic, and requires paperwork and plenty of patience. Polish consular offices are understaffed and bogged down with back applications, so the applicant is usually in for quite a wait.

Anyone may apply for Polish citizenship, and normally that requires a five-year period of residence in Poland. In the event the applicant marries a Polish citizen, the residence period can get shortened to three years. Pol-Ams who cannot prove their grandparents' Polish citizenship are said to receive slightly more preferential treatment than someone with no Polish roots whatsoever, but this is more of a customary practice than a hard-and-fast rule.

The President of Poland Lech Kaczyński has the right to grant Polish citizenship at his discretion regardless of any of the above normal requirement. Such a move, however, is usually reserved for exceptional cases. Only someone of unique cultural, economic or athletic value to Poland and its interests can expect such special treatment. Most recently, the president granted fast-track citizenship to Brazilian soccer player Roger Guerreiro so he could join Poland's national team at June's European Soccer Championships.

None of the Polish Americans who have asked me about becoming a Polish citizen intend to give up their American citizenship. Neither the US nor Poland expressly forbid dual citizenship, but neither do they promote it. In essence they turn a blind eye and ignore any citizenship other than their own. That means that the holder of dual (or even triple, quadruple, etc.) citizenship is regarded as a citizen of the country he is currently in and is bound by all its laws.

For the sake of convenience, many Pol-Ams with dual citizenship use their Polish passports to enter and leave Poland and other EU countries, and their American ones to leave and enter the US. But a Pol-Am who gets into trouble and is jailed in Poland has no right to suddenly whip out his US passport and demand to see someone from the American Embassy. He will be treated like any other Polish-born Nowak, Kowalski or Wójcik with only Polish citizenship. □

Church Trade Fair from 12

declared Roman Catholics. The faithful worship in 15,000 churches and more are being built. One-quarter of the priests ordained each year on the continent come from Poland, which now exports clergy to priest-short Western Europe and North America.

Secularization has made some inroads since Poland dumped communism in 1989 and after it joined the European Union in 2004, and church attendance has dropped off to some extent. But the vast majority of Poles continue to get married in church, have their kids baptized and see to it that they receive the sacraments of the Holy Eucharist (First Holy Communion) and Confirmation And many Catholic-inspired customs are part are a normal part of Polish lifestyles including nameday celebrations, having priests bless new factories, roads nad bridges and the huge annual foot pilgrimage to Częstochowa.

Poland's small but vociferous circles of anticlerical atheist, post-communist, feminist, anarchist and homosexual agitators may rant, rave and fume against such ecclesiastical "big business" but have only a negligible following. To most Poles, Catholicism is an integral part of what being Polish is all about. And the practice of religion and its accompanying customs and traditions would be unthinkable without the kind of goods and trappings displayed at Kielce's SacroExpo. □

Brotherhood from 1

Theresa Dudzick, Michael Dutkowski, Wojciech Narbut, Lech Pisarski, and (Honorary) Roman Liwak. New, young members are needed for the work of the Committee to carry on.

In 2007 the Committee distributed a total of \$27,283 to 71 communities in six countries – Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Russia, and the Ukraine. Donations are always very welcomed. They may be sent to the committee at 3424 West Adams, Los Angeles 90018 - 4900.

Sto lat to Frank Kosowicz and his Committee!! Many thanks to Zofia Adamowicz and her helpers for organizing such a wonderful event. □

Janek's Corner from 4

nauseous, but they cannot let their member-friends down, so they are again quietly upset. What misery!

At the come back home family meeting everyone talks about their favorite moments of the stay. Everybody laughs and enjoys the evening to the fullest. Barbeque eases the atmosphere, as well. Nevertheless, each of them can feel unexpressed clashes during the senior club holidays and soon newlyweds' time at the Mediterranean Sea. Nobody wants to share those moments, though. They do not see the daylight on the photos taken. What everyone complains about is the next day when they have to wake up early to be at work on time...

It seems that the happiest are those who spend their vacation at home. They do not have any worries. They do not care about their friends that much. When they meet with their just back friends, they can simply talk about their romantic dinners and small presents they enjoyed very much. And, as for children, they can actually sense the presence of their parents at home. They are happy to have their daddies playing football with them or their moms dressing up and putting on make-up with them. They even start enjoying some of their late rendezvous downtown where they can behave openly and sometimes they even frolic. Parents get very comfortable with their children and the latter can easily forget their parents' misdemeanors. Anyways, they express their stance strongly and hope for a reconciliatory play with their parents next day, or a present or maybe some quality time at the zoo.

These are the patterns that happen to be commonly present all over the world. People are not that different from one another, and it makes the world go on. One can wonder which pattern applies to his family, but diverse mix-and-matches are possible. What is obvious is that everyone needs a vacation, and even though one can reject this statement easily, he will surely enjoy some time off. What is apparent too, is that summer is a season of holidays. Enjoy yours! □

Beginning Polish Language Study Group

Meet at Hastings Library
3325 E. Orange Grove Blvd.
Pasadena, CA, 91107

Beginning Saturday September 20th
from 1.00 PM to 4.30PM.

For info: Ronald Small 818-785-4094.
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Oferujemy pełen zakres usług związanych ze zgonem. Przygotowanie pogrzebu, możliwość kremacji zwłok. Msza pogrzebowa w języku polskim, pogrzeb na polskim cmentarzu, stypa. Zawiadom nas, a my zajmiemy się przygotowaniem i formalnościami.

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