

Inglis - Modjeska film from 8

living person has ever witnessed. Nor did we want to misrepresent the iconic Modjeska. Every shot was unified in post-production to match 19th century photography and early filmmaking."

Cinematographer/Producer/Editor, Leonard Myszynski, Barbara's husband as cinematographer and partner in film making, created an amassing work. Leonard, a native of Poland, was born in a photography studio, where he produced his first body of work. As a graduate of Cinematography at the National Film Academy in Poland, he was immediately recognized for his artistry --- stunning visuals enhanced by sensual lighting, distinctive camera angles, and provoking compositions. His insight, problem-solving capabilities, and diverse experience combined with a deep passion for fine art have enabled him to produce powerful ad campaigns and film content throughout his career. Additionally, he has an uncanny eye for editing and special effects, as seen in film about Helena Modrzejewska and in many of his productions. He has worked on every major film/video project that Basia, his partner, has directed and co-edited, creating the look and overall design.

"I also wanted to personalize the film," said film director Barbara Myszynski, "to show the inner worlds that haunted Modjeska identified through texts taken from her own memoirs, by using the emotional voice of a contemporary 'Queen of Polish Theatre' Danuta Stenka."

Born in California, filmmaker Barbara Myszynski pursued an interest in Theatre Arts, graduating with a BA in Drama from the University of California, Irvine. She traveled throughout Europe, performing her own self-directed one-woman plays on the Polish stage. She received her MFA in filmmaking at the National Film Academy in Łódź, Poland, where she met Leonard, her partner and collaborator. Winning recognition at International Film Festivals, together they produced short films in Europe, followed by the creation of Solar Eye Communications in the USA, a commercial photography and production company.

The romantic music that Barbara used for her film deepened the cinematic experience.

Barbara said, "In my eyes Modjeska was a romantic realist of great power and grace. The film represents the journey of her soul, her poetic nature and gentility (her 'Arden') juxtaposed by her continual drive upward and onward (exemplified by the steam engine train, the 'Iron Horse'). Modjeska crossed cultures, continents, classes and status. She was the voice of Poland, its 'artist missionary', so beautifully expressed by Duke University professor Beth Holmgren, a key scholar in the documentary. She was a voice for all women. There is nothing more sacred to me than nobility and compassion. Modjeska represented both." Barbara added.

At the end of meeting with Helena Modrzejewska Club members, Myszynski said, "I am proud that our film is the first full-length documentary made about the distinguished Helena Modjeska! I am also honored that the Modjeska Art and Culture Club of Los Angeles presented its world premiere at the Silent Movie Theater in Hollywood."

Film "Modjeska - Woman Triumphant" was produced by OC Influential Productions, LLC in association with GetBizzy Entertainment, Inc. and created by Basia and Leonard Myszynski in 2009.

The film was accepted into several film festivals - exhibited in Canada, the Polish Film Festival of America in Chicago, the Ann Arbor Film Festival, in Krakow - Poland, and at the Warsaw National Theater. □

Pienkos - Politics from 4

or (b) the children and grandchildren of the post World War II emigration. (These folks are also more likely to retain a greater sense of their Polishness in other ways too - meaning they may be more knowledgeable about Poland's history and are more likely to know the Polish language.)

- There is a great deal of marriage outside the Polish heritage too.

- Added to this, Polish Americans are no longer overwhelmingly Democrats politically - in 1960 78% had voted for John Kennedy to 22% for his equally pro-Polish and anti-Communist Republican opponent - Richard Nixon. Today, Polish Americans go Democratic by only 52-48 or 53-47 margins. Tax issues and moral concerns - abortion, for example - have become big factors in influencing their increasingly conservative thinking and political behavior.

- Today all the census data shows that Polish Americans are more likely to belong to the "middle class" than the "working class" - in their income levels, educational attainments, places of residence. Polish Americans are no longer easily classified on the basis of simple economic criteria. (Whether we will see changes in their political thinking in the wake of the current economic crisis is unclear. We just don't have the data.)

- Another indicator is the decline in membership in Polish American organizations. My guess is that only about 10-20 percent of all Polish American Catholics attend a parish church where the Polish ethnic presence can be found. The total membership of the five largest fraternal organizations is less than 400,000 - out of a total population of 9.5 million - about 4 percent. The fraternal do remain key ethnic organizations! But their outreach is reduced from what it was 50 years ago.

- Since the fall of communism - which both U.S. political parties welcomed and which the PAC can take some credit for supporting (as I wrote in my 2009 piece on Polish anti-communism in the book noted above) - traditional political loyalties based on foreign policy priorities have been blurred, thus contributing to a lower ethnic salience for Polish American concerns. Significantly, Poland received precious little recognition in the U.S. media for its critical role in the fall of Soviet communism. The long illness and death of Pope John Paul II is another factor that has greatly reduced the salience of "being Polish" in the U.S.

All these factors have combined to make the "Polish vote" less identifiable, less salient or visible in U.S. elections, and seemingly less significant. The mass media's "invincible ignorance" about Polish Americans and Poland and its fascination with new immigrations also have had their impact - in lessening Polish Americans' own awareness of their distinctive place in American life.

One last point to make about demographics:

In 1960, the ten states where Polish Americans were most significant in numbers - New York, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Connecticut - had 190 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives out of 435 - a 44% share of all the seats. In 2008, these ten states had a total of only 144 seats in Congress - or just 33% of the seats in Congress! This is due to the de-industrialization of the "rust belt" regions where many Poles originally settled and the massive U.S. population migrations to the South and West over the past 50 years, movements complemented by the vast immigration to those areas from Latin and Central America.

All this means that:

(a) there are fewer seats to compete for in states where large numbers of Polish Americans still reside - although even in

those states they are a lesser factor demographically today, for the reasons I have already mentioned, and (b) the average congressional seat takes in a population today of about 700,000 people, compared to about 415,000 back in 1960. (Our population today is 305 million - in 1960 it was about 180 million. But the number of seats in the House of Representatives is constant at 435.)

These developments mean that it's harder than ever for Polish Americans to win Congressional office -and it was hard in 1960 and before too!

In the 1960 presidential election, 8 of the 10 "most Polish" states went to Kennedy and made up a big part of his winning electoral vote. Ironically, while all ten "most Polish" states went to Obama in 2009 - these states together counted for a much smaller part of his winning electoral vote!

And with ever larger numbers of people to reach in campaigns, money has become a greater factor than ever in elections - far more than in the past, when a party's ability to mobilize its supporters by door to door work, to organize rallies, to send out mailings, and to operate other low cost methods of reaching the voters was what counted.

The second side in discussing Polish Americans' success in getting elected to important public offices is the 'social-psychological' question.

Briefly, let's begin by stating that there are plenty of smart, politically minded, talented persons of Polish origin. This is not the issue!

But some have theorized, following the argument of Thomas and Znaniecki in their classic study, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, Polish Americans are less likely to become politically active because they possess a rather fatalistic belief (stemming from their peasant origins) that political action has little value, even though they do value democracy.

Working hard, saving one's money, raise your children as best as you can - these are the things that count in the end, in the Thomas and Znaniecki view. This psychological explanation may also explain why Polish Americans aren't big donors to political candidates.

But this argument also implies that Polish Americans are passive people in society. Certainly the heroic decision of several million Poles to leave Poland for the unknown America over the past 140 years is the best argument against that! And frankly, Thomas and Znaniecki never addressed this obvious point!

A second theory is that Polish Americans (and perhaps Poles in general) are just too independent-minded to work effectively together to achieve a common goal, like electing one of their own to political office. But this characteristic is clearly not unique to Poles and Polish Americans. Other groups exhibit similar characteristics.

This argument also minimizes the value of self-reliance and ambition among Polish Americans. After all, Polish Americans have practically the highest rates of homeownership in the U.S. and are among the top two or three ethnic groups in their levels of education (according to scholars like Lopata and Kromkowski).

Perhaps Polish Americans don't go into politics in great numbers because they see better pathways to success and because they place a greater emphasis on community concerns at the face to face level - in working in support of their children and other family members or by their involvement in their parishes?

A third explanation is the theory of risk. Risk involves a person's readiness to lose something he values - money, status, power - in order to attain something greater - more money, more status, and more power.

My sense is that the Polish people who have come to this country were not risk

takers in the sense that they were willing to engage in entrepreneurial activities in large numbers (as businessmen, shopkeepers, builders). Most came, of course, without English language skills, with little money, and did not have the resources to risk much in these fields.

We do see many Polish Americans in teaching at the primary and secondary school levels as well as in police and fire protection work. Many Polish Americans are engineers and nurses and skilled artisans, managers, and accountants. Increasingly, there are Polish Americans in the legal and medical and academic professions. Relatively few are employed as unskilled laborers like their grandparents or great grandparents, or even as semi-skilled operatives, as were many of their fathers and mothers.

Today's Polish Americans and their children are making their investments of time, talent, and money in their efforts to live good and productive lives. They just don't value the risk (or gamble) involved in politics, and the costs of becoming so engaged, especially since having a Polish surname today means so much less than it used to in so many elections and where money - enormous amounts of money - is needed to run a credible campaign.

In other words Polish Americans are acting quite rationally. But is everything hopeless? Of course not! From time to time Polish Americans do and will rise to higher office. They are risk takers and they do win.

Even more significant, however, it's up to the PAC and the Polish government - if they want to achieve some influence in lobbying our Congress on matters of special importance - to work with these persons and with sensible and able politicians who are of non-Polish background as well.

I remember how impressed I was in 1994 to hear Senator Hank Brown of Colorado, a state with a miniscule Polish population, speak so eloquently and work so effectively for Poland's admission into NATO. And how about Senator Richard Lugar of Indiana - one of the greats of the Senate and a true friend of Poland. And there are others, in both political parties, some of whom have Polish American constituencies and some who don't.

It's obviously a good idea to remind our elected leaders of the significance of the Polish vote in their districts - and the solid contributions Polish Americans make as good and loyal citizens to our country. But more important is the need to present Polonia's views effectively and persuasively to our legislators. As good Americans who believe we have something to contribute on the issues - at home and as it concerns our strategic ally, Poland.

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