

Kiernik - Wonderland from 5

marinated mushrooms, smoked salmon and cream cheese rolls, pickled plums, and tomato/mozzarella/fresh basil salad. The main course included Barbara's home made Chili and Lasagna. I made pre-mixed special drinks in five pitchers, including a Cosmopolitan, Blue Hawaiian Martini, Tequila Sunrise, and "Viva Basia" (Viva Barbara) to go along with the rest of the bar, cashews and macadamia nuts. Many of our friends sampled items for the first time in their lives and loved the coziness of the apartment, the view, the feast, and the great time that we all seemed to have together.

Barbara and I slept until 3:00 PM Saturday afternoon but, of course, such a great night needed a follow-up. Thus we first headed to catch "Illumination Night" at the Royal Palace Square. It seemed as though half of Warsaw was in attendance to see the outdoor concert with some of Poland's best bands performing. The entire square and side streets were absolutely packed. The concert ended with a large choir singing "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas" in English. During the course of the show a beautiful Christmas tree was lit by the Royal Palace, as well as numerous ornaments and other decorations throughout the city.

The main Christmas tree located by the Palace is lighted in 3D fashion with stars and other ornaments changing colors and shape constantly. Beautifully lit multi-colored decorations hang from one building to another above the narrow cobble stoned streets throughout the area. The city also placed large multi-colored light decorations on virtually ever gas lamp along the Royal Route, Nowy Swiat (New World Street), and in the Old and New Town. Most of the trees are decorated as well. What a pleasure it is to have such additions to the scenery also looking outside our windows as well!!!

The lamp posts standing along the major street in the New Town (Fretta Street) are all dressed as beautiful Christmas trees with lighting that gives the appearance of being snow covered, with moving lights that give the appearance of falling snow.

The Old Town Square now consists of numerous mountaineer type cabins where Christmas lights, ornaments, and gifts are sold. One cabin contains a donkey and some goats. There is also a stage where the other day a choir of very young grade school children sang Christmas carols.

One can really feel Christmas coming here at every turn. Christmas decorations, themes, and songs dominate the radio, television, malls, and everywhere one goes. Along with Polish Christmas songs one can also hear many of America's favorites while shopping.

I find the entire atmosphere of the Christmas season very moving and meaningful here. It's a combination of experiencing the beautiful innocence that I once felt in America numerous years ago (which people here, for the most part, did not have the opportunity to experience under Soviet occupation), together with taking part in honoring the tradition of Christmas in a deeper way, one that America is too young to have ever experienced.

I enjoy seeing the freedom of businesses all around to commercialize this great holiday, while I can sense that the people have not lost the meaning of their traditional Christmas values in the process. It's such an absolutely great combination of feelings that keeps my adrenaline running with excitement and joy, while being at peace with the world as never before. Whereas during previous Christmas seasons I was capable of getting a little misty over Christmas's past, this year I get a little misty only from the feeling of joy, and good fortune, to be able to experience the best Christmas season ever. It's simply too nice for sad memories to get in the way.

Despite the same hustle and bustle as everywhere else I find that people still find the time to interact much more here. They are out in the streets, in cafes, and definitely visit one another and hold far more private parties and get-togethers than back in the U.S. It's quite normal for a friend to call on a moment's notice to get together for the same afternoon or evening even during a weekday. Calendars and scheduling simply do not serve as an obstacle for people to be among one another. One of our friends, Zdzisek, hardly ever spends an evening at home by himself. He is always out and ready to be among friends. In observing all this I have to conclude that people here simply place a greater value on relationships.

"Illumination Day" was absolutely great. Barbara and I concluded that we not only live in an adult Disneyland but also in a great winter wonderland, worth celebrating some more. Thus after having the pleasure of handing out left over plates from the night before to our neighbors (all wonderful people who are frequently helpful and never complain about our late night parties) we were off to Molly Malone's for another great concert. Despite late notice and a packed house we were told that our favorite table would always be waiting on a moment's notice, and it was, and the band was absolutely great.

It does not surprise me that during most any night at Molly Malone's, or any other club, Barbara is frequently asked to dance by young men, including teenagers. What does surprise me most is that here young girls, including teenagers, ask this cool California hippy with what's left of his hair growing by the day out of one of his stylish hats to dance almost as often (in fact sometimes more often). Like most everyone else here, we feel absolutely no age barrier nor inhibitions. When we feel like dancing we dance, even if it is by ourselves at the table. When we like the band we hug them. One of the bands offered to play at our home for free during Barbara's Names Day celebrations. We would have loved to take them up on their offer but the place is simply too small and having music blaring out of major equipment may have crossed the line of neighbor tolerance.

Illumination Day ended on a bitter sweet note. While at the Polyester Club for a night cap I went against my better judgment to check on two "loaded" patrons who went outside to try and prevent a possible fight. There was no fight but one of the individuals did not appreciate my checking to see if everything was OK. When leaving the establishment the guy came after us to show several badges (believe the equivalent to American FBI), as if to show his power in a somewhat threatening way. I immediately went back into the establishment and asked them to call the police while lecturing the guy who followed, at the top of my lungs. "This reminds me of communism" I screamed, "and you need to learn not to ever threaten me or any citizen of this country again for no good reason."

The police arrived and after questioning all involved, as I hoped, they asked if I wanted to prosecute the guy for disturbing my peace. I told the officer "no, but I would like his apology and recognition that such behavior is unacceptable and that it will not happen again." The guy ended up apologizing.

On the one hand this was a bitter moment for having our peace disturbed. On the other hand it was a sweet moment which showed again that Poland is now a truly free country and jerks like this guy are no longer above the law regardless of their position. I expressed my appreciation to the police and told them that they were living up to my expectations of their duty in a free and democratic country.

Sunday December 6th was Santa Clause Day. Although we missed a big parade

down Nowy Swiat, we could not leave the little bit of bitterness from the previous night stand. Therefore we went to Irish Pub #3 where bands virtually always play very old Oldies. So there we were singing and dancing to very early Beatle songs, the Stones, and those of many other great bands, along with everyone else. It was another great wild evening.

A large group of folks sat at our long table, including a young blind girl. I asked the group if I could ask her dance, and they were delighted, but she politely turned me down. I think she appreciated being asked but did not need my pity to have a good time. I noticed that she smiled far more than me (and I smile a lot these days), had a great time and seemed entirely at peace with the world.

It's all a mind game my friends. If we were a spirit, or did not exist, would it not be exciting to have the opportunity to observe the greatest play of all that we know in this universe? Unlike a movie or a theater stage, the game of life is being played out by people who are not doing it for a camera or an audience. The game of life is being played out for keeps with real laughter, tears, and other emotions.

If we were given any time frame to come and observe this world, would it not be now when life can be so comfortable as long as we have enough to eat, don't have to take part in wars, and other major misery? Even that little box that we often complain about in our homes shows so much of what is going on in this world from the comfort of our beds, while the technology available can take us anywhere with just a few clicks on a keyboard. When considering that we not only have the opportunity to observe this crazy world around us, with all it's political and other plots, but also have an opportunity to take part in some of its scenes (to get involved in a cause, to try a craft, or even to just party), we are lucky indeed. We are especially lucky because we are free to be actors or observers anytime we want.

We are also free to never be satisfied and to always strive for more. I was so thrilled this morning when my home insurance man came to visit pertaining to my policy and asked if I was the Adam Kiernik who was so politically involved in the United States on behalf of a free Poland, and how honored he was to meet me. It's such a good feeling to get such feedback from time to time after the many years of a lot of sacrificing for a positive cause.

The bottom line - there was a time and a place when I felt the need to jump into some of those beautiful political scenes for my own good (as otherwise it would have been a difficult ordeal to just sit and watch the events that I cared about as they unfolded). I am most overjoyed, however, with my present stage in life, realizing that I was free to get out of the rat race and to feel completely satisfied with what I have, without feeling a need to strive for anything further. Since May I have just hoped that nothing changes and the ride lasts as long as possible, and it has already lasted long enough to feel that it has been a great life worth living.

If that blind girl could smile all night long while just hearing the sounds of life (and interacting with her friends) then surely happiness is more a question of mind frame than reaching never-ending materialistic goals, or any earthly goals for that matter. It's appreciating the freedom and lack of pressure to perform in any way, shape, or form (within reason), that stands in the way of happiness, and accepting the game of life for being the greatest show on earth, and in the universe, as far as we know. I really attribute this positive thinking and the vision of ultimate earthly freedom (really just acceptance of truth) for attracting the good breaks and good luck that have made it all possible.

Certainly a financial base plays a key role in attaining retirement but many

Our Lady of the Bright Mount

Roman Catholic Church

3424 W. Adams Blvd.
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Schedule of Masses

Sunday 9:00, noon & 18:30
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Wed, Fri - 7:30 pm

(All Masses are in Polish)

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Ks. Antoni Bury, Rezydent

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Pope John Paul II Polish Center

3999 Rose Drive,
Yorba Linda, CA 92886

Mass Schedule:

Saturday 4:00 PM ENG
Sunday 7:00 AM Tridentine
9:00 AM ENG 10:30 AM POL
First Friday of the month
8:30 AM Eng 7:30 PM. POL
First Saturday of month
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would say that we should have waited to first build a bigger cushion (and for many the cushion is never enough). It does no good to complain about jobs that we don't like if no effort is made to replace them with jobs that we do like, or to search for a means to make more if there is not enough money. Without getting into our personal religious beliefs, God did not create borders, states, and cities, for us to be confined in. There are plenty of great places to live on this beautiful earth which are very affordable, and with the benefit of computers it might be very possible to earn more than enough to reside in such areas. In some such places simply knowing English might be enough to carry the day. It is often said that we are our own worst enemies that stand in the way of achieving goals by confining ourselves to a box and it's routines.

This will probably be my last entry prior to New Year, 2010. I will be forwarding you some pictures, and short videos (short enough not to exceed my capacity for sending, and if I think you have the capacity for receiving). Thus I take this opportunity to wish you, and all, a very Happy New Year. I hope that the New Year will make all your dreams come true because (being on my list) you deserve this. Barbara asks that I pass on the same from her. We love you all. □