



# POLISH HERITAGE SOCIETY OF GRAND RAPIDS

January 2021



## PHS Launches Card Project to Encourage People Isolated by Covid Pandemic

By Matthew Gryczan

As the Covid pandemic persists in making people feel isolated, the Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids has begun mailing cards of encouragement to individuals and families as a reminder that they remain part of a caring community.

The Words of Encouragement project is sending cards to persons or families who are experiencing milestones in their lives that need to be recognized, such as a shut-in at a retirement home who feels alone, a new birth in the family, a recent marriage, a sudden illness or loss of

## Boxing Was Way for Local Polish-Americans to Find Fame and Fortune

By Matthew Gryczan

Anyone passing by Holy Cross Cemetery on Richmond Avenue can easily spot the gravesite of famed middleweight boxer Stanley Ketchel (Kiecal) from the road, as the looming monument is often adorned with a Polish flag.

But what they may not realize is that Ketchel was one of a slew of talented local Polish-American boxers from Grand Rapids in the first half of the 20th Century who hoped to find fame and fortune from pugilism.

Buried at Holy Cross just west of Ketchel's grave is Gus Jazwinski, an elevator operator who became amateur flyweight champion of Michigan, but died tragically at 17 when he fell off a train heading home from a visit with then President Calvin Coolidge.

Other renowned boxers from Grand Rapids included professional national heavyweight Al Kubiak, who went by the aliases "Human Battleship" and "The Michigan Giant," and national amateur light-weight champion Martin Lewandowski, according to local historian Edward Symanski.

Local champions of Golden Glove tournaments held in Grand Rapids included Edward Wosinski, Leon Jasinowski, Leon Nowakowski, Henry Sampolinski, Albert Maslowski and Edward Anisko.

Sports historians say that boxing was seen as a short path to glory and money for some first generation Americans whose families immigrated from Ireland, Italy, Scandinavia, Germany and central Europe at the turn of the 20th century. For instance, while Ketchel and Jaswinski were born in Grand Rapids, their parents were relatively recent immigrants from the Polish region of central Europe when Poland was partitioned as a nation.

Like many young fighters from Grand Rapids, Jaswin-



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The Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids promotes an appreciation of the Polish and Lithuanian culture in the metro Grand Rapids. The Society publishes this newsletter monthly. We invite story ideas and content contributions. For more information, please contact Matthew Gryczan or Marilyn Lignell by writing to [phsgrandrap-  
ids@gmail.com](mailto:phsgrandrapids@gmail.com).

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## Cards: Sharing A Feeling of Community

loved one.

The Society has had two types of cards printed, one that highlights a colorfully decorated plate with "Congratulations" in Polish and another that shows a field of poppies with the words "Thinking of You."

Active PHS members can request to have cards sent at no cost to any individual or family who is to be congratulated or in need of encouragement. The PHS asks that members exercise reason in the number of requests that they make.

Card recipients do not have to be PHS members. PHS members should send their

### Time to Apply for PHS Scholarships

The PHS is encouraging college-bound students of Polish/Lithuanian descent to apply for financial aid offered by the society.

The deadline for applications is March 15, so students should contact their high school or college counselors to start the application process.

To view the scholarship guidelines and application form, visit the PHS website at [https://  
polishheritagesociety.com/  
scholarships](https://polishheritagesociety.com/scholarships). To obtain more information on the program, contact Scholarship Committee Chairperson Mary Ann Bergevin by writing to the PHS email address [phsgrandrap-  
ids@gmail.com](mailto:phsgrandrapids@gmail.com).

requests to [phsgrandrap-  
ids@gmail.com](mailto:phsgrandrapids@gmail.com) with the following information:

- Name of Recipient
- Mailing address
- A sentence that describes the situation so the appropriate card is used with a short personalized note written on behalf of the PHS.

Marilyn Lignell, who chairs the membership committee of the PHS, said one group who can immediately benefit from the project are shut-ins at assisted living centers. "The elderly feel isolated because family and friends haven't been able to visit personally due to Covid," she said. "This is a small way to show they are remembered."

## Boxing: A Way to Punch Your Way Out of Poverty

ski learned the ropes of boxing under the auspices of the American Legion Furniture City Post 258, which organized boxing tournaments in the 1920s and later sponsored Michigan Golden Glove tournaments until 1988.

In 1927, the post had sponsored a trip for Jaswinski and other Michigan champions to the national A.A.U. boxing tournament in Boston and a visit with President Coolidge at the White House. An elevator operator at the Morton Hotel, Jaswinski had lost in the tournament, but the Grand Rapids Press reported that he "always gave a good account of himself."

While returning home on the back platform of the Red Arrow speeding through Pennsylvania on the night of April 28, Jaswinski lost his grip on a rail when the train swerved on a sharp curve, and he plunged over the side. Witnesses pulled the emergen-

cy stop cord, and train crews set up warning lights to slow any oncoming trains. His body was soon discovered near the tracks, where he had died from a broken neck.

While Jaswinski's boxing career was tragically cut short, a number of other boxers of Polish-American descent from Grand Rapids engaged in amateur boxing for years at Golden Glove tournaments held at the City Armory, the Civic Auditorium and other venues.

To this day, the Michigan Golden Gloves Association operates St. Mary's Boxing Gym, where it teaches youth the sport of boxing in the basement of the St. Mary's Activity Center, 526 Broadway N.W. The Michigan Golden Gloves Association, a 501(c)3 organization based at 2447 Glenvalley NW, sponsors annual boxing tournaments at the gym and the DeltaPlex Arena & Conference Center.

## PHS Member News

By Marilyn Lignell

Happy Birthday to Carson Ball!

Carson will turn 20 on Jan. 14, and Carson's father Lucas feels so passionate about the Polish Heritage Society that he is providing Carson with a lifetime membership!



"We're proud of our heritage, and the good PHS does," Lucas said. "I like the idea of giving the lifetime membership as a legacy to him. He'll never have to worry about dues."

Lucas, also a lifetime member, and Carson have worked at the Dozynki Polish Festival by volunteering with Diamond Hall.

"They asked for help, and you didn't need to be a member, so we chipped in.," he said. "Carson was in charge of the light or dark bread on the Polish plates." Lucas went on to say, "He was so efficient, and could hear customers ordering at the counter. People working the food line watched how many slices he had ready so they knew how many plates were going to be asked for."

Carson is in KISD school

program and is also an advocate for autism.

Congratulations to Sally Stephenson, who graduated with a 4.0 with a Master of Arts in Organizational Change Leadership from WMU. She is a member of the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi. "I chose this program because I have a passion for change and the gift of leadership," she said. "I have used this program in my professional work to mentor, coach and am currently working to design a global quality department for my organization."

Sally went on to say that the program has taught her valuable skills in research, how to use models to lead projects and deepened her knowledge on the impact of culture in an organization. Sally works for Kalsec, Inc., a proud sponsor of the Dozynki Polish Festival.

PHS Board Member Anthony Paul Zasuwa has reason to celebrate. The Second Vice President was married to Angela Marie Walejewski on December 20, 2020. The wedding took place in Anthony's backyard. Anthony said he will make sure to get Angela signed up as a

life member! Congratulations Anthony and Marie!

The PHS strives to inform our community about all things Polish/Lithuanian.

We care about our members, their families and friends. We extend an opportunity for you to let us know if there is someone you know that could use a little lift, congratulations, condolence or recognition for an important life event. Please email us at [www.polishheritagesociety.com](mailto:www.polishheritagesociety.com) with their name and address and we would love to send a card.

*Editor's Note: this recipe has been substituted for space reserved for minutes from PHS board meetings, as there are no approved minutes from the November meeting.*

By Matthew Gryczan

There are as many recipes for golabki, or Polish cabbage rolls, as there are families who make them. Over time, each family finds an ingredient or technique that makes their recipe special. In our case, it's the use of home-canned tomato sauce from Romas grown in our own backyard, picked at the height of ripeness. This recipe makes about 14 golabki in a 13-by-9 inch baking pan

- 3 to 3 1/2 pound cabbage
- 1 cup onion, diced small
- 1 large clove of garlic, pressed or diced small
- One 8 oz can of mushroom pieces and stems, diced small
- 1 1/2 cup brown rice, cooked
- 2 teaspoons of Worcestershire sauce
- 1/4 cup parsley or more, diced small
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Fresh ground black pepper to taste
- 1 pound 80/20 ground beef

- 1/2 pound of ground pork
- 2 15 oz cans of canned tomato, sauce or 2 pints of home canned tomato sauce

Core the cabbage and simmer in boiling water for approximately 10 minutes so that leaves can be peeled from the head. Remove head and place on baking sheet so it can drain and cool.

Sauté the onions in butter or olive oil until translucent, then add garlic and sauté for another minute. Remove from heat and place in large mixing bowl. Drain mushrooms, dice small, add to onion/garlic mixture with Worcestershire sauce.

Pour half of tomato sauce and remaining ingredients into the mixing bowl and mix thoroughly with hands. Plastic gloves come in handy here.

Place 1/3 cup or more of filling in a leaf, tuck in sides and roll. Place in baking pan.

Pour the other half of tomato sauce over rolled golabki. Cover with cabbage leaves that were set aside, and cover the entire pan with aluminum foil.

Bake at 350 degrees for one and half hours. Let sit overnight so that golabki can soak up liquid. Add more tomato sauce if needed.

Join the Polish Heritage Society to receive our monthly newsletter and other benefits!

**Annual Student Membership for full-time students through college \$5**

**Annual Adult Membership \$20**

**Annual Family or Business Membership \$35**

**Lifetime Membership \$150**

**ONLINE**

You can join the Polish Heritage Society online by going to our website at <https://polishheritagesociety.com/>, filling out the Membership form and paying by using the PayPal Button.

**MAIL**

Fill out this form and send a personal check made out to the Polish Heritage Society to this address:

Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids

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