POLISH HERITAGE SOCIETY
Grand Rapids, Michigan

November 2026

The Echo Newsletter

November is a Month of Remembrance

By Richard Panek

November is the time to remember our lost loved ones as well as those living and deceased who served our country in the military. November 2nd is All Souls Day which is a day of prayer and remembrance for the faithful departed observed by Christians. Nine days later is the celebration of Veterans Day on November 11. This occasion honors all veterans-both living and deceased-who served the nation in times of war and peace.

In November 1918 during World War I-at the eleventh hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of that year-an armistice was declared between the Allied nations and Germany. Commemorated the following year as Armistice Day in many countries, November 11th became a federal holiday in the United States in 1938. In the aftermath of the Korean War, Armistice Day became known as Veterans day.

Last November, PHS member Dan Zarzecki sent a copy of an old wartime Grand Rapids Press news clipping that is pictured above. It shows the Zarzecki family of Grand Rapids made a notable contribution to the World War II generation through the service of three brothers: Joseph, Edward, and Edwin Zarzecki. The short article gives details about the brothers who were serving overseas at the time during WW II.

Dan Zarzecki wrote "My dad was Edwin who served in the Navy. His older brother "Edward" (who went by the name Red) was a career Marine. Uncle Joe was in the Army." Also, not mentioned in the article, was their youngest brother, Richard, who served in the US military some years later.



RAPIDS PRESS

Army, Navy or Marines—All One Big Family

SGT. EDWARD ZARZECKI — EDWIN ZARZECKI — SGT. JOSEPH ZARZECKI

You can't "take sides" in the Zarzecki family! Mr. and Mrs. Peter Zarzecki, 726 Crescent-st., N. E., have a son in each of the major branches of the service. Sgt. Edward Zarzecki, 28, marine parachute jumper in Guadalcanal, has been in almost seven years. Sgt. Joseph Zarzecki, 20, is with the army in New Guinea. Edwin, 18, seaman, second class, is at sea with the navy.

Three Sons on Fighting Fronts From One Grand Rapids Home

A sergeant in the marines.
A sergeant in the army.
A second-class seaman in the navy.

That's the proud service record of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Zarzecki, 726 Crescent-st., N. E.

Sgt. Edward Zarzecki, 28, now a parachute jumper for the marines, will have been in service with the corps seven years Nov. 17. When last heard from he was on Guadalcanal and expressed his determination "to fight till victory is won." He is a graduate of Catholic Central High school and before his enlistment was employed in Detroit.

Joseph Zarzecki, 20, was a corporal when he sailed from the United States last spring, but news has reached his family of his recent promotion to sergeant in New Guinea. New Guinea is quite different from what he expected, he writes. "People and surroundings are odd but very interesting," he declares. Entering federal service two years ago with the national guard, he was stationed at Camp Beauregard and Camp Livingston, La., and Fort Devens, Mass., before going to the west coast for embarkation. He is a former student of Catholic Central.

Edwin Zarzecki, 18, seaman second class, enlisted in the navy a week before Pearl Harbor. He received his basic training at Newport, R. I., then was assigned to sea duty. Home on leave last August, he informed his family he "likes the navy and has no complaints." Since he has been in service he has gained 25 pounds.

Undated Grand Rapids Press article about the Zarzecki Brothers

Dan mentioned that his father also had 2 older brothers Casmir, who became a doctor and Chester who moved to Detroit to work at General Dynamics as a tool and die maker for the war effort. He wrote that his father Edwin's "claim to fame" was that his ship was in Tokyo Habor when the surrender was signed by the Japanese.

(continued on pg. 2)

President
Teresa Bonham
1st VP
John Theisen
2nd VP
Eric Tetsworth
Treasurer
Michael Jasperse
Corresponding Secretary
Tad Broda
Recording Secretary
Angela Walejewski
Directors
Rosemary Maciejewski
Sarah Sharpe
Marzanna Butryn
Judi Serba

The Polish Heritage Society meets at the Polish Falcons at 6:00 pm on the 3rd Monday of every month except for December and general meetings in June and October.

This newsletter is published monthly. Submit story ideas or content contributions to Richard Panek or Marilyn Lignell by emailing:

phsgrandrapids@gmail.com

or by mail:

PHS
PO Box 1844
Grand Rapids MI 49501-1844

www.polishheritagesociety.com

POLISH HERITAGE SOCIETY EVENT SCHEDULE

PHS Board Meeting, Monday, November 16th, 6:00 pm at Falcons - Members are welcomed to attend
Rozmowa Polish Language Club, Tuesday, November 24th 7:00 pm, Kosciuszko Hall
Grand Rapids Public Museum Cultural Heritage Festival, Saturday, Nov 7, 10 am-4 pm
Wigilia Dinner, Saturday, December 5
Collegium Cantorum Advent Choral Program, Saturday, December 19 at St. Isidore Church
Wigilia and Choral Program details in this newsletter. See PHS website and Facebook page for other events.

(Zarzecki's Cont' from pg.1)

The Grand Rapids Press article mentions that Edward was a Marine parachute jumper serving in Guadalcanal. Joseph was in the Army and had been promoted to sergeant in New Guinea.

At the time of the article, Dan's Father Edwin was an 18-year-old seaman who enlisted in the navy a week before Pearl Harbor. Dan said his father Edwin suffered from Scarlet Fever as a child and had to be held back in school some years due to illness related absences. Since his brothers were serving in the military before the war, he decided to enlist as well at the age of 17 before even graduating high school.

While home on leave the August before the Press article, Edwin informed his family he "likes the navy and has no complaints." The article mentions that "since he has been in service he has gained 25 pounds." Dan says he worked on the ship as a fireman, which in those days involved shoveling coal into the ship's boilers. The manual labor plus navy rations probably accounted for the "growth spurt" in the 18-year-old.

Edwin and his brother "Red" (Edward) happened to be both serving in Iwo Jima at the same time during the war. Edwin's naval service ultimately spanned both the Atlantic as well as the Pacific theaters of the war. Thankfully, all three of the brothers returned home safe at the end of the war.

Their younger brother, Richard served in the United States Navy for some years but did not enlist until after the end of the Second World War. He served during the Korean Conflict.

Dan's uncle Joseph Zarzecki remained active in civic and veterans' organizations after the war. Following his military service, he became a leader in local organizations, serving as president of the Grand Rapids Rosarians and as president of the Tailors' Union of Grand Rapids. Dan said he worked in the Menswear Department at Herpolsheimer's Department Store in downtown Grand Rapids. He was also a member of the Catholic War Veterans Post 1804, which met at the American Legion Northeast Post 459 on Michigan and Grand in Grand Rapids.

Richard Zarzecki built a long career as a toolmaker with American Seating. A devoted member of St. Isidore Church, Richard was remembered as a proud veteran whose Korean wartime service remained an important part of his life and identity.

Together, Joseph, Edward, and Edwin Zarzecki represented the patriotism and sacrifice of many Grand Rapids families during World War II. Their service helped support the Allied war effort. Their younger brother Richard followed in their footsteps as well by continuing the family record of service to the country.

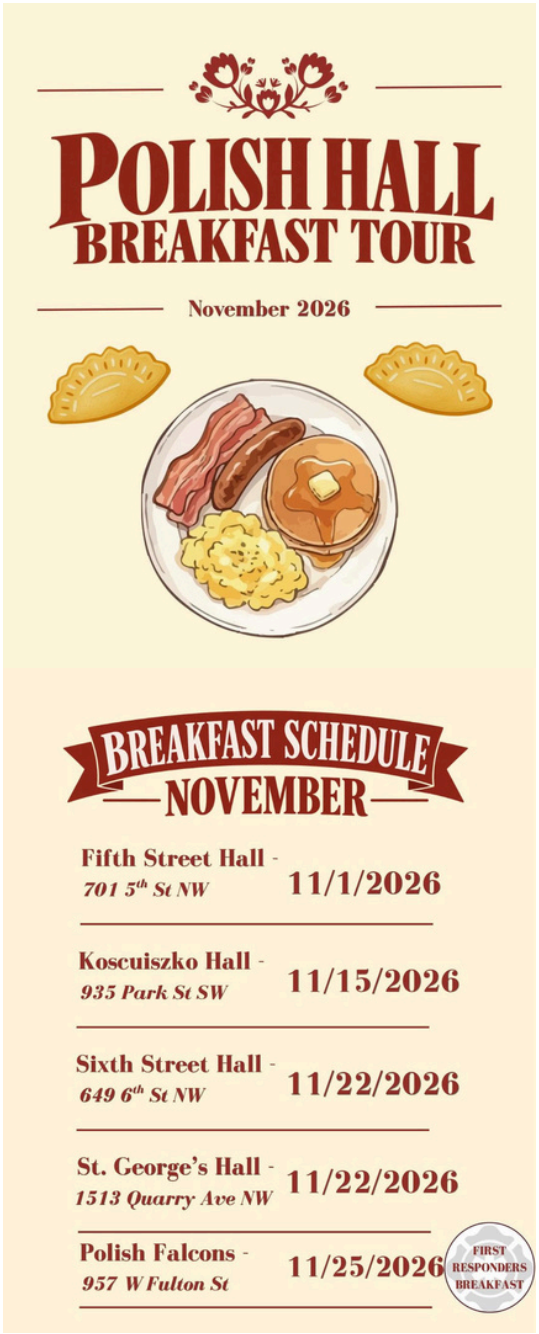
Their lives as veterans after service, demonstrated a continued commitment to their community, church, family, and fellow veterans. Their legacy remains a valued part of Grand Rapids' local history.



Polish Hall Corner

November mornings are better at the Polish Halls! 🥞🇵🇱
Keep the Polish traditions going all month long with good food, great friends, and a hearty breakfast!
Breakfasts are served between 9:00 AM and Noon

*Check out each hall's Facebook for menu information and pricing.



POLISH HERITAGE SOCIETY'S ANNUAL

Wigilia Dinner & Program

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2026

WESTLEONARD BANQUETFACILITY
1140 MUSKEGON NW
GR 49504

Join us...

SOCIAL HOUR
5:00-6:00 PM
WITH COMPLIMENTARY PUNCH, COFFEE & CASH BAR

DINNER / PROGRAM
6:00 PM

POLISH KOLEDY
FEATURING
JAREK KOZAL & NICK PALMER
WITH SPECIAL GUESTS
FROM THE
MALBORK DANCE ENSEMBLE
AND
POLISH LANGUAGE STUDENTS

Oplatek

Assorted Homemade Breads with Butter & Horseradish Butters

Cream Herring

Traditional Wigilia Red Beet Soup or Mushroom Soup Made from Scratch

Homemade Cheese Pierogi with Sour Cream

Baked Cod with Sauteed Colored Peppers and Onions, Served with Red Skinned Potatoes and Traditional Polish Sauerkraut

Authentic Polish Desserts

$45.00 per person-prepaid:
Checks payable to Polish Heritage Society
or scan the QR code

*****RESERVATION DEADLINE NOVEMBER 21, 2026*****

SendtoPHS-c/oMarzanna Butryn Phone: 203-415-0005
1547 Hamilton Ave NW Grand Rapids, MI 49504

Please designate which soup you prefer: Traditional Red Beet _____ Mushroom_____

Name: _____

*Phone #*_____

# of tickets @$45.00 ea _____ *Amount enclosed* _____

I would like to be seatedwith _____

Email: _____

PRCUA
Malbork Dance Group

Malbork Dance Group's

Annual Pierogi Fundraiser



Let's spread the Polish tradition of eating pierogi.
These stuffed dough dumplings are loved by all!



$8 per package

1 lb. frozen package
(12 pierogi +/-)
with cooking instructions

Flavors:

- Sauerkraut
- Potato-Cheddar
- Potato-Farmer's Cheese

Orders & money are due December 3rd.

Pick up will be December 10th at 7pm at Diamond Hall.

Place orders by emailing
sarahdeemer@gmail.com
or call **206-482-7400.**

Make checks payable to Malbork Dance Group and mail to
1824 Wooster Ave SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

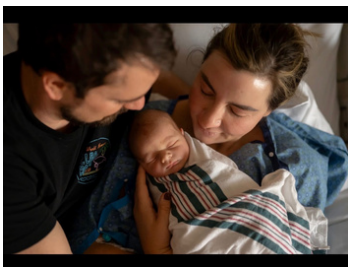
Polish Heritage Society Membership News and Events

The Polish Heritage Society welcomes two new members this month. Tami Brown joined with the hope that she will connect to her history and find some ties in our Polish community. She shared that her grandfather was a Polish immigrant and her heritage is something she's always wanted to embrace. She is interested in volunteering at events as well as attending meetings and Polish language classes. New member Sierra Baker also inquired about Rozmowa language classes and decided to go all in by becoming a member.



Tami Brown

Congrats to Matt and Ann Gryczan on the arrival of their first grandchild, Atlas James (AJ) Gryczan, born Sept. 24 in Detroit to their son Paul and daughter-in-law Abby! AJ weighed in at 7 pounds 5 ounces, 21 inches long at delivery. AJ is putting on weight and starting to smile, while the new mom and dad are experiencing shock at the amount of stuff they need for a simple trip in the car. Matt says he'll be introducing puréed



Paul and Abby Gryczan with AJ

kielbasa to AJ as soon as he can take solid food!



Eloise Suzanne

Celebrating the birth of her first child is member Emma Latham and her husband Hayden. Eloise Suzanne arrived on September 24 weighing 8 pounds 1.5 ounces, 21.5 inches long. Eloise is also the second grandchild of Millie Combs and the eighth great-grandchild of PHS member Donna Mileski. Congratulations to all

A few members of the Polish Heritage Society attended a benefit evening in support of Ukraine. Much of the money raised will be used to provide and send medical equipment to Ukraine so that soldiers can be treated there instead of being sent to other countries, especially those in need of a prosthetic.



Polish Heritage Society members attending the October 26 Benefit Dinner in support of Ukraine

POLISH HERITAGE SOCIETY
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Saint Isidore the Laborer

THE KOSCIUSZKO FOUNDATION

PRESENT

COLLEGIUM CANTORUM POLONIA CHICAGO

AN EVENING OF SACRED CHORAL ADVENT MUSIC

St. Isidore Church, 628 Diamond St. NE, Grand Rapids, MI

DECEMBER 19, 2026

SINGING THE 4:30 PM VIGIL MASS WITH THE ST. ISIDORE CHOIR FOLLOWED BY A FULL RECITAL FROM 5:30-6:45



RSVP TO ATTEND:

FREE WILL OFFERING PROCEEDS WILL GO TO THE POLISH HERITAGE SOCIETY SCHOLARSHIP AND CHARITABLE GRANT PROGRAMS

POLISH HERITAGE SOCIETY
Grand Rapids, Michigan

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

Scan the QR code with your phone camera to become a member:

OR BY 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
P.O. Box 1844
Grand Rapids MI 49501-1844

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____