

Kopernik Memorial Association Newsletter

Member of Polish American Congress
American Council for Polish Culture
Kosciuszko Foundation
Oneida County History Center

The Kopernik Memorial Association is a 501c3 not for profit organization. Please consider a tax deductible donation to the Scholarship fund.

Website: cnykopernik.com

OFFICERS

Richard Noga -President
Gary Moszak Vice-President
Valerie Elacqua –Treasurer, Newsletter Editor
Dan Jadowski - Corresponding Secretary
Sue Moszak—Cultural Center Director
John Ossowski-Cultural Center Director



Winter Newsletter January 2024

Issue 35

Szczęśliwego Nowego Roku



Happy New Year

Calling all Volunteers! We will need help for our Palm Sunday Workshop! Please contact John@ 315 749-3226. Your participation is so necessary for our successful activities.



TIME TO RENEW
2024 membership form enclosed



BULLETIN BOARD

Send in your dues by Feb. 29th!!

Mon. Feb. 12, 6:00 KMA Meeting PCC

Mon. March 11, 6:00 KMA Meeting PCC

Sun. March 24 Palm Sunday Following the 10:00 mass Palm Sunday Easter Traditions Workshop, Palm Weaving, Butter Lamb Carving, and Pisanki (Polish egg decorating)
11-2 Holy Trinity Gym
1208 Lincoln Ave. Utica Free

Mon. April 8, 6:00 KMA Meeting PCC

Watch our website for a virtual tour of our Cultural Center featuring our 50th Anniversary Display, Szopka/Christmas Room, and main display area by mid-February.



KOPERNIK
1973



ASSOCIATION
2023

KMA's 50th anniversary festivities were a tremendous success. Sunday October 8, 2023 began with 10:00 a.m. Mass at Holy Trinity Church, the mother church and spiritual home of the Polish community for 126 years. Our elegant anniversary brunch followed at Fountain Elms, fittingly looking out over the Kopernik Memorial statue where our organization's history began.



The capacity crowd enjoyed brunch and celebrated two impressive young scholars Ewa Koscinski and Sabina Wozny. Mary Currie introduced the candidates and highlighted their qualifications. Each was presented a \$1,000. check from the association President Richard Noga and Scholarship Chairperson Valerie Elacqua.



L to r Tom DeStefano, Emma Piersall, Fr. Joseph Moskal

A special 50th Anniversary recognition award was given to Mary Currie for her many active years growing the organization's membership, hosting folk art workshops, coordinating cultural speakers, movies and



Sabina Wozny (above center) Ewa Koscinski (3rd from left below)

children's activities. KMA is so very grateful for her magnanimous contributions to our efforts here in Central New York. Bog Zaplac!

Pictured above Fr. Canon John Mikalajunas, Mary Currie, Mary Kris Smith (Mary's daughter) Val Elacqua, Richard Noga



Remarks from the 50th Anniversary Brunch Oct. 8 2023 **by Valerie Elacqua, Treasurer KMA**

I am a proud 2nd generation Polish American. In the early 1900's my grandparents came to this country with little more than their sense of adventure and their Polish ways; their culture, traditions, and values all of which were profoundly formed by their Catholic faith. I was fortunate to grow up in a beautiful family which was a microcosm within the extended family of Utica's vibrant Polish community that nurtured a love and respect for its past, its history and an appreciation and gratitude for this freedom loving country we call home today.

I have spent much of my youth and adult life learning and exploring the many facets of the beauty and complexity of my Polish heritage through costume, music, traditional dance, and the arts. It's a rich and vibrant tapestry, woven from the threads of centuries of history, culture, and tradition. It is a heritage that we should all be proud of, one that we should all strive to maintain because it connects us to our past and give us a sense of identity and belonging.

My identity was formed as I learned about Polish traditional folk dance from Hanna Lewandoska and John Gacek and during my summer studies in Poland. I understood Poland's brutal WWII history from my uncles Stanley and Casmir Krauza, conversations and books from Stanley Gramatyka and concentration camp survivor Julian Noga.

I experienced the inventiveness of Polish folk art from Joe and Wanda Miller, Larry Kozlowski, and dear friend Adela Nowak I learned of the courage, sacrifice and unshakable faith of St. Maximillian Kolbe, Pope St. John Paul II, the martyrs of Novogrodnik from the sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, my elementary school teachers at Holy Trinity school, as well as my parish priests.

I studied the sometimes glorious and often painful history of Poland from The Most Serene Republic of Both Nations— the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to modern day Poland with Tom Lawrence.

My identity was formed as I flipped through Polish literary classics in the Kopernik Cultural center library such as Adam Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz*, and read Sienkiewicz's *With Fire and Sword* trilogy. I also marveled at the charm and virtue contained in children's folk tales. I identified with the magnificence of Polish opera; *Halka*, *Straszny Dwor* and brilliant Polish composers like Chopin and Szymanowski with Ewa Lawrence.

I could go on, but in the words of St. John Paul the Great "The Polish nation is a gift to the world. The Polish people are a people of great faith, courage, and compassion. They have made significant contributions to the world in the fields of science, culture, and the arts."

All of these experiences, knowing the people that I came from and what they valued, enriched me and gave me a deep insight as to the soul of Poland. By embracing it, it became part of MY identity.

These people and many, many others opened my eyes to the beauty and depth of Polish culture. They unlocked this world to me... a world that I may never have known if it weren't for their knowledge and enthusiasm. And thanks to the Kopernik Memorial Association I am still learning. It wrought in me a desire to share our history, our customs and values. They were that bridge that connected this noteworthy past into the future.

You and I are the product of centuries of progress and sacrifice; of agony and ecstasy. We all owe a debt to the past, but we also have a responsibility to the future. The Kopernik Memorial Association has done its best to pass the torch. We must collectively inspire the next generation to look back and take notice.

I encourage you to maintain your Polish heritage. It is a precious gift to be passed down to your children and grandchildren by joining a Polish organization, supporting Polish events, preserving or reviving Polish Christmas and Easter customs, learning the language and most importantly, share the pride in your heritage with the next generation.

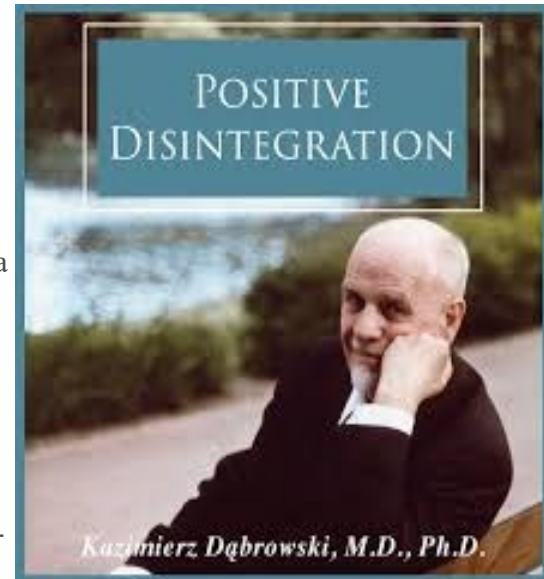
Polish Psychologist, Developer of Positive Disintegration Theory,

Kazimierz Dabrowski

Qualifying scholarship essay by Sabina Wozny

One of the most well-known Polish individuals in the field of psychology is Kazimierz Dabrowski. Dabrowski was born in Krakow, Poland in 1902. Dabrowski is a major contributor to personality and developmental psychology. When he was only 12 years old, World War One had started which profoundly influenced his thinking and subsequent work in psychology. He was greatly disturbed by the sight of all the bodies of fallen soldiers laid out across the battlefield and he also noticed that certain individuals come out stronger and more resilient after facing hardship and trauma while others struggle to pick up the pieces. He had spent a tremendous amount of his career trying to find the answer to this phenomenon.

In the 1960's, Dabrowski developed the theory of Positive Disintegration, which later was the foundation for modern theories of post-traumatic growth. This theory highlights that stresses, anxiety, and traumatic events are sometimes necessary in order for an individual to grow. Dabrowski stated that whenever an individual experiences these kinds of negative events and emotions, it forces the individual to "disintegrate", or let go of their previous identity and leads to self-examination and reflection, where a new identity can be constructed based on new values, ideals, and beliefs. The individual throws out old habits that are not useful or can even be damaging to them where personal growth can take place and emerge a stronger and more resilient individual. His theory on Positive Disintegration is different from other theories on personality development because other theories hypothesize relatively smooth transitions from one stage to the next, while Dabrowski's theory is driven by inner conflict, angst, and trauma. Positive Disintegration is seen as a necessary step towards the realization of a more developed and individualized self.



Dabrowski had noticed that individuals who emerge stronger after traumatic events tend to have a psychological over-sensitivity or "overexcitability" that leads them to experience the world in a stronger, deeper, and more personal manner, which in turn makes them react to traumatic events with deeper self-reflection that propels them through the five stages of development and emerge a stronger person whereas other individuals who do not have this overexcitability can get stuck in one of the stages and struggle to cope with life.

The first stage is Primary Integration where the individual is only concerned about their own basic needs and desires. Young children typically fall in this category as they have no need for deep or meaningful relationships and often lack empathy and the needs and concerns of others.

The second stage is Unilevel Disintegration which is focused on conformity and social comparison. Individuals here are concerned about "fitting in" and are easily influenced by their social group. Some individuals start to question the beliefs imposed upon them and will begin to discover their own personal values and beliefs.

The third stage is Multilevel Disintegration, where individuals who question these values will begin to form their own beliefs and may feel emotions such as shame or guilt as they question their moral standing.

The fourth stage is known as Directed Multilevel Disintegration, where the individual realizes who they are, what they value, and how they must act in order to be their authentic self.

The fifth and final stage is Secondary Integration, where the individual is aligned with their personal values and their behavior, and they tailor their actions to work towards higher goals such as the betterment of society. This individual has formed their ideal personality and experiences peace with one's self.

These stages are similar to the well-known "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs" due to Dabrowski being a friend and admirer of well-known psychologist Abraham Maslow. Overall, Kazimierz Dabrowski's work has had a lasting impact on the understanding of human development, personality, and the potential for positive growth. His emphasis on the importance of inner conflicts and crises as catalysts for personal development continues to influence discussions in psychology and related fields.

Pope St. John Paul II, Holy Father, World Leader

Qualifying essay Ewa Kosciński

If I could spend an hour with a famous figure of Polish descent it would definitely be Pope St. John Paul II. Pope St. John Paul II was head of the Catholic Church from 1978 until his death in 2005. He was the first non-Italian pope since the 16th century and was the first, and only Polish pope. He continues to inspire people worldwide, as his legacy transcends the boundaries of time and place.



I would choose Pope St. John Paul II because of his unwavering commitment to human rights, deep spirituality, and interfaith dialogue, which make him an extraordinary individual deserving of our admiration and attention. Friends of Pope St. John Paul II would describe him as warm, approachable, compassionate, intellectually curious, and humorous. All qualities that I seek within my own friends.

Pope St. John Paul II's faith is exemplary for Catholics worldwide. His image can be seen in nearly every Polish household and church. It is widely known that the Polish population upholds values that are rooted in Catholicism. Such values include almsgiving, caring for the ill, and regular prayer. Spending an hour with him would provide an invaluable opportunity to gain insights into his faith and his commitment to the core values of love, compassion, and forgiveness.

Pope St. John Paul II, had lived through and experienced the terrors of World War II and survived an assassination attempt. Ultimately, he has been credited for helping to end communist rule in Poland. He embodies Polish resilience in the noblest ways. He also held two PhDs and a Licentiate of Sacred Theology. Perhaps Pope John Paul II could provide insight on how to peacefully end ongoing conflicts worldwide. His unprecedented commitment to social justice, fighting against discrimination, poverty, and violence, continues to serve as a beacon of hope for humanity. Spending an hour with Pope John Paul II would allow me to explore his perspectives on these crucial issues, gain wisdom on fostering inclusivity and understanding, and understand his strategies for advancing human rights globally.

Additionally, Pope John Paul II loved spending time with youth and exploring the outdoors. As a future biology teacher, I've combined both of these components into my career. I would love to ask Pope John Paul II more about how to inspire my students, and how to teach them to be caretakers of nature. Understanding his approach to promoting harmony and cooperation among diverse communities would be invaluable in addressing the challenges of modern education. Without a doubt, Pope St. John Paul II's conversational prowess would be exceptional. Nevertheless, it is widely agreed that a single hour would hardly do justice to fully embrace the profound depths of his wisdom.

Program from the
50th Anniversary Celebration



Kopernik Memorial Association
50th Anniversary Celebration



October 8, 2023

Holy Mass 10:00

Holy Trinity Church Utica, NY

*The Terrace Café, Fountain Elms,
Genesee St. Utica, NY*

Program

Welcome: *Richard J. Noga*
Kopernik President

Invocation:

Fr. Canon John Mikalajunas
Pastor Holy Trinity Church

Brunch

Remarks: *President Noga*

Scholarship Recipients:

Chairperson: Valerie Elacqua
Ewa Kosciński
Sabina Wozny

50th Anniversary Recognition

Award: *Mary Currie*

Benediction:

Fr. Canon John Mikalajunas

SZOPKA 2023

This year's **ST. NICK PARTY** was held at Holy Trinity Church's gymnasium on December 3, 2023. Carol Armitage and teens from the parish presented customs and traditions about St. Nicholas as celebrated in Poland, Italy, Mexico and the Netherlands with displays, games, activities, crafts and snacks representing each country.



One of the activities for Poland included having the children contribute to making a giant sized **Gingerbread Szopka**. Armed with copious amounts of royal icing and every type of sprinkle and candy, the children were given unlimited freedom to contribute any style, color

or design of gingerbread structure to our three tiered szopka. Level one included Polish dolls singing koledy, level two housed the Holy Family in the manger scene and the upper level Christmas star was crowded with decorated houses of all type. The children enjoyed being a part of our one of kind tasty szopka. We are grateful to Denise Tan, Kopernik member and Notre Dame Art teacher for artistic guidance and directing the construction.



Part of the festivities featured the Jane Kosuda memorial Puppet Theater Szopka. This hand made Christmas crèche was used to present "**The Story of Christmas**" with puppets along with an original soundtrack recorded by John James Hickey, from Los Angeles, to the children's delight.



We also had a special **Visit from St. Nick** (our wonderful deacon George Spohr) who led the children in prayer and distributed gifts with our pastor Fr Canon John Mikalajunas.



The winner of our \$50. original Family Szopka prize was Emma Piersall (pictured). Her szopka consisted of a segmented church structure, filled with miniature tinfoil figures in three separate scenes, the heavenly hosts; angels, Shepherds and Kings, and the Holy Family, with a Polish flag aloft. The first runner up prize of a hand carved Polish wooden box was awarded to Kuba Mroczek for his four and a half foot tall szopka. We were so very pleased with the efforts of our families as we strive to share the beautiful Polish Christmas customs in our community.

KMA Open House and 50th Anniversary Tea

IN PICTURES ON SUNDAY OCTOBER 29, 2023



(L. and R.) Visitors in the Cultural Center at the Folk Tales display and in the Christmas room.

Below: Regina Rabbia and Alaina Franco in traditional Polish costumes, before distributing three-tiered luncheon trays to the guests for the Kopernik 50th Anniversary Tea.



Below: Denise Tan (left in photo) recipient of the Kopernik Special Recognition Award for her remarkable talent and years of commitment to our successful Szopka Festivals with her students at Notre Dame Jr/Sr High



Luncheon guests and Cultural Center visitors at the Open House at the Kopernik Cultural Center



(Left) Cody Grabinski, Logan Shedd, Jenna Herron, and Kaytee Grabinski, Notre Dame students who volunteered to prepare the



Library room with Kopernik memorabilia including costumed mannequins in vintage gown and tuxedo from previous Kopernik Grand Balls.



Kopernik Memorial Association
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Thanks for Renewing! 2024



Kopernik Association Membership Application

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone #: _____ Email: _____

Individual Membership..... Renewal New Member.....\$15.00 \$ _____

*Add American Council for Polish Culture Membership.....\$5.00 \$ _____

Student Membership.....\$5.00 \$ _____

I am interested in making a donation to: Polish Cultural Center \$ _____

Scholarship Fund \$ _____

Association's Operating Fund \$ _____

Association Year: January 1 - December 31, _____ **Total:** \$ _____

Please make checks payable to: **Kopernik Association** Mail checks to: **P.O. Box 911 Utica, NY 13503**

