

A Eulogy for Jadwiga Bogucka

Thank you all for coming this morning. My mother always drew great strength and comfort from the knowledge that so many people cared about her. She saved every card she ever received, for even simple kindnesses like birthday and Christmas cards meant a lot to her. Your presence here today also would mean a lot to her – she liked a good funeral – and means a lot to us.

My mother was most of the way through her 94th year when she died, and she lived a remarkable life. Born in 1915 in the Nicetown part of Philadelphia, she returned with her parents Piotr and Florentyna and siblings Bronisław, Wanda, and Zdzisław to



Florentyna (l) and her children 1924; clockwise from top: Bronisław, Wanda, Jadwiga, Zdzisław, and Tadeusz (born in Poland).

Poland in 1920 where she attended grade school and was baptized in Grudziądz, where my grandfather opened a bakery. Despite having been born an American, her formative

years were spent in Poland, and it is important to know this in order to understand her personality and the choices she made in life. She had one foot in the Old World and one foot in the New. Then the family returned to the United States, first to Syracuse

and then back to Philadelphia in 1930, where my grandparents established the Richmond Bakery in Port Richmond.

In the fall of 1930, Jadwiga started at Kensington High School. The teacher she admired the most was Miss Helen Palmatary, who directed her toward an academic track. Miss Palmatary, incidentally, had a hobby of studying South American archaeology and still is highly regarded for her pioneering scholarship in that field. A scholarship to Drexel Institute of Technology permitted Jadwiga to pursue a B.S. degree in Home Economics Education. Although Chemistry gave her difficulty, she thrived in the practical courses like Nutrition and Clothing Design. She loved studying at Drexel and being a college student – her classmates nicknamed her “Vega” – and she was a loyal alumna. One of her greatest recent thrills was attending her 70th reunion last year and being greeted warmly by President Papadakis, who sadly did not outlive her. While at Drexel, she joined PKM, the Polish Intercollegiate Club, and learned to play tennis, becoming the first PKM tennis tournament champion in 1936.



Jadwiga being greeted by President Papadakis at her 70th Drexel reunion, May 2008.

After she graduated from Drexel, Jadwiga did substitute teaching for a year in the Philadelphia public schools, and then in 1939 she was offered a position teaching at Georgian Court College in Lakewood, New Jersey. She said she stayed one day ahead of her students, who were only about a year or two younger than she was. Before leaving for Lakewood, she was introduced to Alfred Bogucki, a medical student at Hahnemann.

A long-distance romance ensued across New Jersey, between Philadelphia and Lakewood, and then to Bound Brook, while Alfred finished medical school and residency. Then on August 14, 1943,



Jadwiga and Alfred Bogucki at their wedding reception, August 14, 1943, Holmesburg Country Club, Philadelphia

just before Alfred was scheduled to report for active duty in the Army Medical Corps, they were married at St. Adalbert's church.

This began a great cross-country odyssey, which took them first to Georgia and then to California, before my father shipped out to India in 1944. After he returned in 1946 and began

graduate study at Berkeley, they would make transcontinental drives back and forth to Philadelphia, sometimes in as little as 3 days, taking different routes all the time, and after returning to Philadelphia for good in 1948, they continued to travel. By the early 1950s, Vega and Al had visited all 48 of the continental United States.

Although she completed a Masters degree at Drexel while my father was in India, my mother settled into the life of a doctor's wife and homemaker, and after much difficulty, I was born in 1954. Raising me became her central purpose in life for the next two decades. She had a very specific vision of how I was to turn out, and in pursuit of that I was given remarkable opportunities. Many involved travel and culture, including a trip to Poland in 1962, summer concerts at the Robin Hood Dell, a six-week cross-country road trip in 1967, attendance with my parents at conventions where I learned to behave in adult company and learned about colleges and resorts, and finally the opportunity to participate in the Kościuszko Foundation summer session in Kraków in 1973, where I not only met Virginia but also



Al, Peter,
and Vega at
the Robin
Hood Dell,
mid-1960s.

encountered Polish prehistory, my two lifelong passions. Without the opportunities that my parents gave me, and their sacrifices, I would not have been able to pursue either.

During this period Jadwiga also deepened her intense interest in Polish culture and Polish-American affairs. Of course, she had always been active in the Polish-American community, so this was nothing new, but during the 1960s and 1970s, it intensified. She sang in the Paderewski Choral Society, attended numerous Polonia events and organized still more, marched in the Pulaski Day Parade, served on the national council of the Kościuszko Foundation and as local chapter coordinator for the Polish-American Historical Association, and finally as a board member of the Polski Uniwersytet Ludowy, where friends credit her with the survival of the program through some difficult years. She also began to travel to Poland again, five times in the 1970s, to attend Kościuszko Foundation summer sessions and to accompany her father on his final journeys. In the late 1990s, she traveled again twice to Poland and once to Rome. Her Polish-American identity was grounded also in her deep Catholic faith. In the 1960s, my mother and father were among the core group of volunteers who helped the Pauline Fathers establish this shrine, starting in this very barn-chapel that was once in the valley down the hill. When Karol Wojtyła, whom

Cardinal
Karol
Wojtyła,
Jadwiga, and
Alfred at
Shrine of
Our Lady of
Częstochowa
September
1969.



she had met here at the Shrine in 1969, was chosen Pope in 1978, she was ecstatic.

Alfred's death in 1980 was a tremendous blow, but the births of her granddaughters Caroline and Marianna in 1981

and 1986 brought Jadwiga tremendous joy, as well as allowing her to rename herself "Babunia". Of course, she had very definite ideas about how they should identify with their Polish heritage, and they too had to march in Pulaski Day Parades. To the end she was convinced that we named Caroline after the Pope, although that's not really the case. Babunia took great pride in her granddaughters' educational achievements, and she eagerly participated in Grandparents' Days at Lawrenceville and the George School and attended their graduations from high



Jadwiga,
Marianna,
and Caroline,
Pulaski Day,
October
1992

school and college, the last one of which was Marianna's at Bryn Mawr this past May, at which my mother sat through the awarding of over 400 diplomas without complaining.

This brings us to the final stage of Jadwiga's life. Until early 2002, she was in superb physical condition, walking long distances almost daily. For example, on September 11, 2001, while the attacks were taking place in New York and the Pentagon, she decided to attend a funeral but didn't realize that the bus line ended some miles before the church. She then walked most of the rest of the way until a kind soul offered her a ride for the last half-mile. Several months later, she came down with shingles, and her health began to decline. After her sister Wanda died in 2004, Vega went into a tailspin and could no longer live safely and comfortably at home. The stress of managing her care and affairs were taking a physical and emotional toll on me and my family as well. In January 2005, she entered the Sunrise at Floral Vale assisted living community, and let me now extend our most sincere thanks to the Sunrise at Floral Vale staff and recently everyone from Odyssey Healthcare for their thoughtfulness, support, and kindness in giving my mother – and us – a new lease on life and enabling her to live safely and comfortably for the past four and a half years. Over the last several weeks, we have seen countless examples of your

genuine care and affection for Vega, and we are especially grateful for your help during her final days.

The anchors of Jadwiga's life were her family, both her immediate family and the extended Kulpinski and Bogucki clans, and her Polish identity rooted in her Catholic faith. She always did what she thought was best for others, whether they agreed or

Marianna (with Finnian), Caroline, and Jadwiga, with Brodie at feet, Floral Vale, May 2008.



not, and was determined to see Polish traditions preserved in the generations that followed her. She was persistent, and even in her final days, she did not give up without a fight.

She died with the music of her beloved Chopin in her ears. Let us remember Jadwiga as a devoted daughter, sister, wife ... mother, mother-in-law, grandmother ... friend, Polish-American activist, devout Catholic ... and generous soul who wanted the best for everyone. *Cześć Jej Pamięci!*

*Peter Bogucki
Doylestown, Pennsylvania
July 23, 2009*

The papers of Alfred and Jadwiga Bogucki have been deposited in the Polish-American Archives at Central Connecticut State University, where they are a resource for scholars interested in the history of Polonia in the 1930s through 1990s.