

PolAm

A Publication of the Polish American Cultural Institute of Minnesota www.pacim.org

April 2012

Polish in Puerto Vallarta3
Poland's Scouting Movement .4
News & Events6

Vol. 34, Num. 4

The Postal Workers of Gdańsk

By Steven Ukasick

Since I have worked for the United States Postal Service for some twenty-one years, a photograph of a monument to postal



Monument to the Defenders of the Polish Post Office.

workers in Gdańsk caught my eye in a Polish tourist guide. It seemed a bit odd that a considerable amount of money was spent on an impressive monument to postal workers. Evidently something noteworthy must have happened at the Gdańsk Post Office... and, of course, something did.

The event took place at the beginning of World War II in the Free City of Danzig, as Gdańsk was known then. This Free City was an anachronistic enclave left over from World War I and was primarily populated by Germans in culture and language. The Treaty of Versailles in 1920 created a Polish Post Office in the city and its buildings were by treaty extra territorial Polish territory. As tensions increased during the summer of 1939 between Germany and Poland, the Polish

government sent additional postal workers to the Gdańsk Post Office and trained them all in military preparedness. They



Gdańsk Post Office opening.

stockpiled weapons as well, correctly surmising that at some time the Germans would try to occupy the Post Office. Just over 50 Polish postal workers and others (including a 10 year old girl) were ready to defend the Post Office.

At 4 am the morning of September 1, 1939, the same morning that the Germans invaded Poland, electricity was cut off to the Post Office. The Germans crossed the border at 4:40 am. Then at 4:45 am, at the same time that the German battleship Schleswig-Holstein started shelling the nearby Polish Army military outpost, German troops attacked the Post Office. The first attack was repelled; the second attack with artillery support also was repelled. The Germans then declared a ceasefire and demanded that the defenders surrender, which they all refused to do.

During the ceasefire, the Germans tunneled under the building and placed a bomb there. At 5 pm they detonated the

bomb, causing the defensive wall to crumble; but the Germans were unable to capture the basement. Pumps were brought in and burning gasoline was pumped into the basement. Three Polish defenders were burned alive, bringing the casualty count to six. At this point



Polish postal workers arrested.

the remainder of the Poles decided to surrender. The first two to leave the building with a white flag were shot and killed. The rest were allowed to surrender; however, six escaped of which two were later captured.

The surviving defenders were imprisoned, tortured and put on trial. All were sentenced to death as illegal combatants under the German special military penal law of 1938. They were executed by firing squad and buried in a mass grave. Only four of the six original workers who managed to escape survived the war.

In 1979 the Polish Government erected the "Defenders of the Polish Post Monument" in Gdańsk to commemorate their heroism. Designed by Wincenty Kucma, the monument depicts an injured postal worker on top of scattered mail handing over his rifle to Nike, Greek goddess of victory.

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Please add \$5 to the above membership levels if you wish to join the American Council for Polish Culture (ACPC) through PACIM (a 50% discount).

Subscription Note: Due to postal rate increases and since non-profit mail is NOT forwarded but returned postage due please add \$6 to your membership if you travel south each winter. This ensures that you will receive your *Pol-Am* Newsletter by first class mail all year long wherever you may be. Anyone else who wishes to receive their *Pol-Am* by first class mail all year long should add \$6 to their renewals.

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PolAm

PolAm (Permit #31798) is the official publication of the Polish American Cultural Institute of Minnesota and is published monthly with July/August and January/February issues. Non-profit bulk permit paid at Minneapolis, Minnesota. The Polish American Cultural Institute of Minnesota is located at 43 Main St SE, Ste 228, Minneapolis, MN 55414. Please direct all inquiries to our mailing address, or email us at info@pacim.org, or call 612-378-9291.

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We appreciate your continued support. Dziękujemy!

Thoughts

We have a strange convergence of events in this issue. The cover piece on Poland's heroic postal workers and the center



spread on Polish Scouts come together on page eight. Andrzej Malkowski's Polish Scouts actually worked with the Polish Postal Service in the early 20th

century. I wish I could say it was carefully planned, but our former Editor, Steven Ukasick, and contributing writer, Joe Beben, submitted their articles without knowing there was a link...somewhere.

And speaking of links, who would have known that deep in Mexico a Polish pub would be serving up their version of our favorite foods? Steven's brief article on his yearly trip to Puerto Vallarta is a fun read.

Finally, a message to all the "foragers" out there: "When the buds of oak trees are the size of a mouse's ear, the morel mushrooms are ready to be harvested." That's what a member of the Minnesota Mycological Society told me last week. Looking outside, we still have a way to go before the mushrooms are "flowering," but spring is here for sure. Let's hope it's a good one for mushroom hunting.

Do zobaczenia,
Jane Mrazek Flanders, *Editor*

New & Generous Members

Welcome New Members

Tomek Kaliski
 Tony Czarnik
 Craig & Jennifer Marsolek

Generous Members

Bill & Bonnie Frels	\$1,150
Zbigniew Wojski	\$50

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Polish Children's Fund

Donna Walicki	\$100
Stanley Musial	\$30
Alan & Sherry Rybak	\$25
Tom & Sue Hunter	\$75

Directions and Parking Information for PACIM's New Home at 43 Main Street SE Suite 228 Minneapolis, MN 55414

The Institute is in Suite 228 on the second level just to the right of the elevators. From SE Main St enter at the doorway marked "3" (next to Kikugawa restaurant).

Parking is available at the Riverside Parking Ramp. The entrance is just to the east of Our Lady of Lourdes Church. The rate is \$1.00 per half hour. Enter at Level A to 2nd floor.

Directions

From Hennepin Ave E: Turn right onto SE 2nd St. Entrance to Ramp is 3/4 block on the right.

From Central Ave from the North: Take the first right turn after University (SE Ortman St, but not marked), turn left at next corner then right to Ramp entrance.
From Central Ave from the South/River: Take the first left turn after the Mississippi River Bridge (SE Ortman St), turn left at next corner then right to Ramp entrance.

From University Ave: Turn onto SE Bank St (only street between Hennepin and Central) and go one block to Ramp entrance.

Metered on-street parking is available in front of Riverplace on SE Main St.

Free Parking is available 2 blocks from Riverplace on the west and east side of the Nicollet Island Inn weekday evenings and weekends. E Island Ave and Wilder St are just across the Merriam St Bridge.

News From Poland

by Mietek Konczyk

16 people were killed and 57 others injured when two passenger trains collided head-on in southern Poland, making it the country's worst rail disaster in 22 years. A railway signal controller is expected to be charged for unintentionally causing the crash.

Polish government seeks to legally **equalize the retirement age of men and women** at 67. The plan would be implemented over a period of several years and would do away with most early retirement privileges for miners and uniformed services. The project is generating heated public discussion as well as protests from opposition parties and labor unions. Currently the retirement age is 60 for women and 65 for men. It is even lower for teachers, government employees, miners, fire fighters, police officers, fishermen, actors and musicians, clowns and other performers.

U.S. Secretary of State **Hillary Clinton met with Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski**. After their talks in Washington, DC, Clinton reported that the U.S. will not lift the entry visa requirement for Poles this year.

The Associated Press (AP) has updated its style sheet **advising journalists against using the phrase "Polish death camps"** when referring to Nazi death camps in occupied Poland during WW II, following a wave of protests by the Polish American community and Polish diplomacy.

Poland's unemployment rate grew in February to 13.5%, up from 13.2% in January.

Poland's Treasury bonds enjoyed a lot of interest among American investors last year. They purchased as much as 30% of Poland's external debt in 2011.

Poland's new National Stadium in Warsaw, one of the key venues of the Euro 2012 soccer championship, hosted its first soccer match. Viewed by 55,000 fans, the match between Poland and Portugal ended in a goal-less draw.

On Being Polish in Puerto Vallarta

by Steven Ukasick

Once again I made my yearly journey to Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, to get away from the cold and snow of Minnesota.

After six years of going to the same place, I really didn't expect to see anything new; but, on the cab ride in from the airport, I saw "Pitypolski Pub: Polish Food" on a corner restaurant. One cloudy afternoon I abandoned the beach and I and a few friends walked the Malecon (the seaside pedestrian walkway) the two miles to the pub.

I walked in and greeted the young lady at the door with a cheery *Dzień dobry*, to which she replied in

English, "I only speak Spanish and some English." So I taught her how to say hi in Polish. It was a very nice pub, very European, and I found out later that it's a chain of restaurants in Mexico. But Polish? ...not really. There were *pierogi* and *goląbki* and Perla beer on the menu — that was it. We ordered our lunch:

kielbasa and *pierogi*. The *pierogi* looked like *pierogi* except it was deep fat fried like a Mexican *empanada*. It was good, but I wanted a *pierogi* not an *empanada*.

I give them credit for trying, and it was one of the nicer pubs in Vallarta. I took a picture to show you all the incongruities of the Polish Pub in Vallarta! Yours truly and the German statue with the beer

stein; the Mexican wait staff; and the Guinness sign. It was still worth the walk.



Polanie Club Scholarships

The Polanie Club of Minneapolis and Saint Paul is once again offering a limited number of \$2000 scholarships for the academic year 2012-2013. Qualifying applicants must be of Polish American ancestry, U.S. citizens and Minnesota residents, with a GPA of 2.8 or better. Scholarships will be available to applicants 18-25 years old who are seeking financial aid for post-secondary education.

To request an application, please go to the Polanie Club website at:

www.polanieclubmplsstpaul.com

Click on the Scholarship page to download and print the two page application.

To have an application mailed to you, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to:

Polanie Club of Minneapolis and Saint Paul
Attn: Scholarship Committee
P.O. Box 130204
Roseville, MN 55113

Applications must be postmarked by June 5, 2012. Applicants will be notified by August 31, 2012.

Poland's Scouting Movement

By Joe Beben



The uniforms first caught my eye. As my wife and I strolled in Warsaw's Śmigły-Rydz Park a few years ago, uniform-clad teenage girls and an adult stood in the shadow of the 40 foot high Sapper Monument (*Chwała Saperom*). We watched them perform a solemn ceremony and smiled as their little circle collapsed with hugs and words of congratulation. We puzzled over the ceremony in this decidedly military setting, and wondered why girls would be drawn to a war memorial honoring Poland's WWII combat engineers.



One of the girls explained that we had just witnessed an initiation ceremony for two new Girl Guides. Here were two of Poland's newest Scouts. The ceremony's location and the solemn attitude of the girls demonstrated Poland's respect for her Scouts and the work they are known for.



Scouting has been part of Poland's history since Andrej Małkowski translated Lord Baden Powell's *Scouting for Boys* into Polish more than a century ago. In its earliest days the three main branches of Polish Scouting included a paramilitary organization, a sport and education society, and an anti-alcoholic association. The three merged in 1918, forming *Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego*, the Polish Scouting and Guiding Association (ZHP).

Today Poland has 12 independent Scouting organizations, yet the ZHP continues to attract 90% of total Scout membership. As in the U.S., there are separate groups for boys and girls. There are Cub Scouts and Brownies for ages 7–11, and Scouts and Guides from 11–15. Older Scouts become Rovers or Rangers, and groups have five ranks ranging from Volunteer to Polish Republic Scout. Like American Scouts, Polish Scouts camp a great deal, hike and backpack — which they call “wandering.” They even sing

Clockwise from top: Boy Scouts in Warsaw Uprising; Scout arranging flowers and lamps at Presidential Palace memorial following April 2010 Smolensk tragedy; Polish Girl Guide in her stylish head scarf; Polish Scouts at Camp Crivitz, WI (2007).

around their campfires at night! What sets Polish Scouts apart from others is the role they played in times of war.

During WWII, Scouts were declared illegal by the German occupiers, so they went underground. Nicknamed *Szare Szeregi* (the Grey Ranks), they joined the fight, declaring: "Members of the Grey Ranks, which enter into a clandestine group, will be enrolled as soldiers without regards to age." Older Scouts carried out sabotage and armed resistance. Girl Guides formed auxiliary units working as nurses and ammunition carriers. Youngest Scouts performed "small sabotage," which included dropping leaflets and writing morale-building graffiti on buildings. They also rewrote German slogans, such as changing the name of Hitler to "Hycler," a word used to describe a "dogcatcher."

During the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, *Szare Szeregi* units were some of the most effective in combat; but perhaps their most famous action was on March 26, 1943, in Warsaw. The objective was to free troop leader Jan Bytnar, aka "Rudy." Twenty-eight Scouts attacked a prison van filled with Polish inmates en route to Pawiak Prison. It was a violent 15 minute battle with machine guns, hand grenades and Molotov cocktails. Scouts freed Bytnar and 30 other prisoners. Unfortunately, Bytnar died four days later from torture wounds received at the hands of the Gestapo while in prison. The Grey Ranks later assassinated his torturers. The film *Akcja pod Arsenalem* (Operation Arsenal) dramatizes this daring and successful mission of the Grey Ranks.

After the war, Scouting was no longer illegal, but found new battles to wage with communism in Poland. There was pressure for the organization to become part of the Pioneer Movement, which shared principles like preparedness and

promotion of sports and outdoor skills. However, it also included teaching communist principles, which many Polish Scouts felt was ideological intrusion. They were forced to change their original oath and law, and their educational content and methods also took a hit. For a time the mention of God was removed from their oath, replaced by Lenin and praises of the Bolshevik Revolution. Scouting groups were also forced to become co-educational — boys and girls hiking, backpacking and camping together. Polish Scouts dissatisfied with the introduction of co-ed scouting formed splinter groups. Offshoot Scout organizations grew with the objective of restoring original Scout ideals.

The Polish Scout motto "*Czuwaj*" translates as "be aware" or "stay awake." It symbolizes the organization's readiness to serve, and harkens back to the 13th century when Poland's knights were holding back the Mongols. Another nod to history is one of the Polish Boy Scouts' laws: "You can rely on the word of a Scout as much as on the word of Zawisza," referring to the famous Black Knight of the Battle of Grunwald (1410) who was a trustworthy diplomat for King Władysław II.

The Scouting tradition runs deep in my family. As a kid, I lived in a Polish neighborhood in Philadelphia with dynamic Scouting organizations. We thought our Scouting traditions were strong, but looking at Scouting in Poland, I appreciate how that country's long history has added a unique dimension. The Polish Scouting movement successfully exemplifies the worldwide Scouting goal: to educate the youth to be responsible citizens, build character and develop personal fitness.

Joe Beben is a former Cub Scout, Boy Scout, Sea Scout and (temporary) Scoutmaster.



From top: Joe Beben (back row right) at troop leader meeting; as Den Chief. (top right); saluting the Sapper Memorial.

News

The Polish American Cultural Institute of Minnesota is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and all donations are tax deductible to the extent limited by law. Please consider including us in your tax and estate planning. We appreciate your generous support.

The Board of Directors of PACIM holds their monthly meeting on the first Thursday of the month at 7 pm at the Institute: 43 Main St SE, Ste 228, Minneapolis, MN. All are invited. 612-378-9291

PACIM Library

43 Main St SE, Ste 228
Minneapolis, MN 55414
Hours: Sundays from 1 to 4 PM
or by appointment
Closed April 8 for Easter

From the Librarian

The Library will be closed on April 8 to allow our volunteers time to enjoy Easter with their families.

Thanks to Jola Rajtar and Katherine LaVine for their donations this month. Remember, when you go to Poland, bring back a book for the Library and you'll see your name mentioned here!

Mary Wojciak and Barbara Rowinski have volunteered to help us in the Library. They will be joining the rotation in late April after their orientation. What a relief to have a full contingent of volunteers again!

Here are the new materials added last month.

Entanglement (the story of the movie *Uwikłanie*)

1920 Battle for Warsaw (DVD by Jerry Hoffman with English subtitles)

Raport o Stanie państwa (cartoons)

Czarna Skrzynka (fiction)

Dieta w Chorobach Nowotworowych

Smakolęki prosto z ulla dla zdrowia i

urody Smakolęki prosto z ulla dla zdrowia i urody

Jak mówić, żeby dzieci nas słuchały. Jak słuchać, żeby dzieci do nas mówiły

Czekają na Godota (fiction)
Encyklopedia Zdrowia Dziecka
Bratnie dusze : tajemnica dobrych związków

We invite everyone to visit us at our new location. If we aren't there immediately at 1 pm, it is because Mass is running long. If we find we can't consistently make it by 1 pm, we will set the opening time back and let you know.

Lastly, thank you all for your patience with the move and for your help. A huge thanks to John Bieniek for his careful planning and execution of the move of all our books.



New PACIM Office.

— Judith Blanchard, *Librarian*

Echos from the North

News from Little Falls, Minnesota

Another beautiful day. How lucky to live in beautiful Minnesota.

The Polish Echos met in February after a month's vacation. Our local bakery, Pete & Joy's, well known to many of you readers, makes *pączki* on Shrove Tuesday and Holy Saturday, so one of our members treated the group to this delicious pastry.

At our March meeting we were very happy to see Roman Bonczek and his daughter. Roman has been very ill but he has always been at our events when possible. He has retired from a military career, in which he spent much of his time in Poland because of his Polish ancestry and ability to speak fluent Polish. Roman has a library of Polish music, DVDs, books, magazines and other Polish items. He has generously shared a number of his DVDS with us at our meetings.

We will again be having a "Brat Sale" at our local grocery store some time this summer. Rita Hoeschen and Cheryl & Chuck Stanek will be in charge of the event. The annual Polish Dinner was discussed and it was decided that we would not do it at this time. We always had the dinner about May 1st in celebration of the Polish Constitution.

We will again be giving a scholarship to a graduating senior from Morrison County. Applications are due April 1. In the past we have had some very interesting applications. We ask that they write a small essay on their Polish heritage stating what they do within their homes and personal life. The applications will be brought to our April meeting and read to all members present who will then cast a secret ballot for their choice. One of our members will attend the awards program to present the scholarship to the winner.

Our next meeting is Tuesday April 17th at Our Lady of Lourdes at 7pm. If you happen to be in the vicinity, join us, we'd love to meet you.

God's Blessings to all!

— Phinee Zak, *Polish Echos*
320-632-2652

Przysłowia Polskie

Kwiecień gdy suchy, nie daje otuchy.
A dry April does not give much hope.

Polish American Cultural Institute of Minnesota
Affiliate Member of the American Council for Polish Culture

PACIM Officers and Board of Directors:

President: Ania Scanlan, Vice President: Paul Rog, Treasurer: Steven Ukasick, Directors: John Bieniek, Charlene Delaney, Greg Gramza, Jane Mrazek Flanders, Terry Kita, Ursula Peterson, Paul Rog, Bruce Rubin, Dan Schyma and Magdalena Zborowski.

Events

Many dates and times for events are given to us well in advance of the actual date and are subject to change. Please call to verify the particulars.

April 12–May 3 International Film Festival

The Film Society of Minneapolis/St. Paul hosts a three-week celebration of independent filmmaking. Showcasing a collection of 250 documentary, narrative and short films from more than 60 countries, the festival also brings numerous international filmmakers and celebrities for gala events, parties and receptions. 115 SE Main St, Minneapolis. For information visit www.mspfilmsociety.org or call 612-331-4723.

April 22 Midwest Polka Association Anniversary Dance

Celebrate MPA's 9th anniversary at the Withrow Ballroom, northwest of Stillwater. Craig Ebel's DyVersaco band will play from 1–5. There will be cake, coffee and door prizes. Admission is \$10, MPA pay \$8. Contact Jim Carlson for more information at: k.carlson55110@yahoo.com, or call 651-426-1079.

April 27–28 Genealogy Conference

The Polish Genealogical Society of Minnesota, partnering with the Minnesota Genealogical Society, sponsors a conference focusing on Central and Eastern European Genealogy. Nationally respected speakers as well as a complete "Polish Track" of seminars. Keynote speech on Friday evening is followed by seminars on Saturday. Registration information is available at www.mnsgs.org. Plan now to participate in the best conference for Polish researchers offered in this state in many years!

May 3–6 Festival of Nations

One of the nation's largest and longest running multicultural events comes to St. Paul's RiverCentre, 175 W. Kellogg Blvd. At this 80th anniversary celebration, sample ethnic foods from around the globe, purchase handmade and imported crafts, and attend music and dance performances. Visit the "Polish Café" at the festival for a taste of real Polish food. To volunteer or for ticket information, contact Marie Przynski at przynski@comcast.net, or call 612-501-2799.

May 4–6 PACIM travels to Polish Chicago

See ad below.

Polish Related Films at the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Film Festival

Rose (Róża)

Directed by Wojciech Smarzowski is a story of the tragic fates suffered by the inhabitants of the Mazurian lakes region in the years following the Second World

War. Due to anti-Nazi propaganda, the communist authorities in Poland treated them as second-class citizens.

Woman in the Fifth

Directed by Warsaw native Paweł Pawlikowski, it tells the story of Tom, an American writer who moves to Paris to be closer to his daughter and immediately finds himself falling on hard times.

Bon Appetit

Directed by Kuba Maciejko is a portrait of a small Polish catering business with carefully selected protagonists.

The Argentinian Lesson

Directed by Wojciech Staroń is the documentary sequel to 1998's *Siberian Lesson*, which documents his wife's everyday life in a small Siberian town as she teaches Polish to the children of Polish immigrants.

The Moon is Jewish (Księżyc to Żyd)

Directed by Michał Tkaczyszński, this is an extraordinary documentary about self-discovery and conflicted identities in contemporary Poland.

St. Anthony Main Theater, 115 SE Main St, Minneapolis. Call 612-331-4723 or visit www.mspfilmsociety.org.

Come with PACIM to Polish Chicago May 4–6

Travel in comfort and style on a motor coach to celebrate Polish Constitution Day in Chicago



Trip highlights include:

- March or ride in the colorful Constitution Day parade in downtown Chicago
- Attend the Polish Independence Day Festival
- Dine in traditional Polish restaurants
- Shop in unique Polish stores
- Visit the Polish Museum
- Attend a Polish mass at St. Hyacinth Basilica

Depart 8 am May 4, return 8:30 pm May 6

Trip price \$315 is based on double occupancy and includes transportation, hotel, 2 lunches and 2 dinners. Registration deadline is April 2. Motor coach seating is limited and spots fill quickly.

To register or for information visit www.pacim.org or call 612-378-9291

People



Andrzej Matkowski
1888-1919

Andrzej Matkowski and his wife, Olga, are considered the founders of Scouting in Poland. He was a Polish scoutmaster (*harcistrz*) who joined the Polish Legions with many of the boys in his Scout troop.

Meanwhile, his wife supervised a Girl Guide company of 300 girls and one Boy Scout troop. The Scouts and Guides worked with the Polish postal service, organized a children's home and established a hospital.

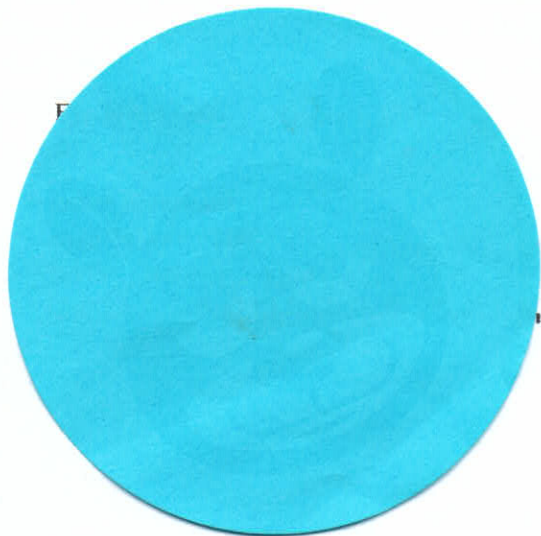
In 1915 the Austrian government forced them to leave their home in Zakopane and they emigrated to the U.S. Andrzej died in 1919 on a mission from the Polish Army. In his honor, a Scout troop wrote a song called *Na Polanie*.



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TWIN CITIES
Polish Festival
August 11 & 12, 2012
www.tcpolishfestival.org



Bakers, Start Your Ovens!

This year's festival will feature a new event — a bake-off.

All are welcome to enter the competition, which will have a category for yeast breads (such as Makowiec) and a category for pastries.

The rules are simple: impress the judges.

More details will become available as the festival nears, but now's the time to start digging through Babcia's old recipes, picking your favorite, and practicing!