

POLAM

May-Jun. 2014

Vol. 36, Number 3

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A Level Playing Field

Beatus Vir

Baseball's Polish Roots

Behind the Scenes



The baseball season is well underway and this issue of *PolAm* looks at the sport on both sides of “the pond.” A real scoop is the history column on page 5, where Dick Lewis argues against the longstanding claim that Poles brought baseball to the Jamestown Colony in the 17th century. As a result of his research and writing, Dick has influenced baseball bloggers and historians who have stood by the legend for decades.

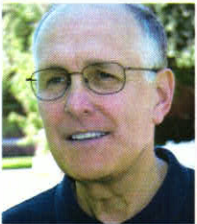
The center spread raises a glass in toast to a Polish American baseball hero, Stan Musial. He loved the sport passionately and gave thanks every day for the opportunity to don his uniform and play ball. Speaking of uniforms, Musial served in the U.S. Navy during World War II smack dab in the middle of his illustrious career. He was an all American, Polish American hero for sure.

Finally, speaking of war, Poland’s attention these days is directed to her western border with Ukraine, which is threatened by Russia. A strange new type of aggression is being waged by Russia; and Poland, together with the U.S. and other allies, is offering military assistance to secure freedom and peace in the area.

Thanks so much for supporting PACIM through membership. Your role provides the financial backing for this magazine, which is unique among Polish American publications. We strive to publish articles focusing on arts, culture, history and news relating to Polish American interests. Our articles are often reprinted in other publications in the U.S. and abroad — a testament that our readership is growing.

Do zobaczenia,

Jane Mrazek Flanders, *Editor*



The staff of *PolAm* is proud to welcome a long time PACIM member to the team. Anthony Bukoski, Ph.D., is a well-published and nationally acclaimed writer of fiction, essays and short stories. His many years of teaching creative writing at the University of Wisconsin Superior, plus his frequent book reviews in the *Star Tribune* and other journals, make him an excellent Editorial Advisor.

Table of Contents

- 4 *Beatus Vir*
- 5 Baseball’s Polish Roots
- 6 A Level Playing Field
- 8 Library
- 9 Happenings
- 10 Buzz in Poland

6

POLAM

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Technology Revamp

With eyes fixed on growth and mission, PACIM's website is undergoing a complete update. Although it may be a few months before it is fully in place, the newly designed website will provide visitors greater ease when registering for programs and events, as well as increased ways to research topics or find links. A few of the updates will include:

Library Search

Website visitors will be able to search among the PACIM Library's 5,000 materials. Titles of fiction, nonfiction, children's books, history, geography, art and DVDs will be easily identified. A call to the Library can secure an item if it is available, and current PACIM members retain the exclusive privilege to check out materials.

PolAm Highlights

The cover and center spread article of each issue will be a fixture of the new website. The 12-page glossy full color magazine contains extensive articles on art, culture, history and current events that relate to Polish Americans. The professionally designed magazine is a member privilege, but the website will showcase some of each issue, stimulating new interest in PACIM.

Membership

Becoming a member or renewing membership will be a breeze with the new website. A complete list of benefits, discounts and events ensure that PACIM members make the most of their affiliation.

Donate

In support of PACIM — a non-profit organization offering broad ranging programs and events to grow deeper in understanding and appreciation of Polish traditions, culture and history — donors wishing to make tax-deductible contributions can use the new website. A secure site provides donors the peace of mind that their gift is supporting the work and mission of PACIM.

Event and Program Registration

Whether enrolling in one of PACIM's Polish language classes or buying tickets for an upcoming event, visitors to the new website will find a user friendly, informative and secure environment to conduct business. Updated regularly, the website will provide accurate information and details for PACIM sponsored activities.

Other Ways to Stay Connected Already in Place:

Facebook



To find news, events, music and historical tidbits relating to Polonia, a visit to the PACIM Facebook page is a must. Continually updated with links to happening headlines and calendar items, the page is an excellent way to connect with other PACIM members and Polonia in the U.S. and Poland.

Twitter



Follow PACIM on Twitter for social networking and immediate feedback on events, programs and classes. Last minute available event tickets or open seats in Polish language classes are "tweeted," making good use of technology to inform.



Summer Polish Classes

The Polish American Cultural Institute of Minnesota (PACIM) will conduct summer Polish language classes. Both classes will focus on conversation geared to the students' abilities.

Beginning Polish Summer Session

(An introduction to the Polish language, or a refresher course)

Instructor: Iwona Srienc, Ph.D.

First class: Tuesday, July 1, 2014

Class time: Tuesdays, 5:30 pm–7:00 pm

Classroom: PACIM Library (43 Main Street SE, Suite 228, Minneapolis)

Tuition: 4 classes total, \$30. Textbook NOT required

Intermediate Polish Summer Session

Instructor: Iwona Srienc, Ph.D.

First class: Tuesday, July 1, 2014

Class time: Tuesdays, 7:15 pm–8:45 pm

Classroom: PACIM Library (43 Main Street SE, Suite 228, Minneapolis)

Tuition: 4 classes total, \$30. Textbook NOT required

PACIM offers language instruction courses with Iwona Srienc, Ph.D., from beginning through advanced levels. Classes focus on grammar, vocabulary, and usage in weekly settings. As a Slavic Linguist and Native Speaker, Iwona understands the mechanics of Polish and, for the last four years, has fostered a love and mastery of many of the Polish language skills within her PACIM students.

Registration closes June 20, 2014

For Information or to register, phone: 612.378.9291 or email: office@pacim.org

Blessed be the man that fears the Lord, who delights greatly in His commandments. Psalm 112, Verse 1

Beatus Vir

by Jane Mrazek Flanders

One of the Catholic Church's newest saints was a pope, poet, playwright and patron of the arts. Before ascending to the papacy, Cardinal Karol Wojtyła commissioned an orchestral work honoring the 900th anniversary of the assassination of St. Stanisław. Wojtyła called on Henryk Mikołaj Górecki to craft the piece and Psalm 112 provided the text. Intended to show the holy and heroic life of St. Stanisław, Górecki's musical psalm also parallels the modern Pole who brought freedom, hope and joy to the world.

He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. Verse 7

Soon after his election to the papacy, Pope John Paul II planned a pilgrimage to Poland to mark the anniversary of St. Stanisław's martyrdom. The life and death of St. Stanisław represented the age old opposition of church and state — Stanisław, Bishop of Kraków, was assassinated by King Bolesław in 1079. Modern Poles rallied behind the new Polish pope, who was a 20th century stand-in for St. Stanisław, while Górecki's music provided a "film score" for the drama that ensued.

Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness; he is gracious, and full of compassion and righteous. Verse 4

Górecki's orchestral masterwork premiered during that historic visit, with the composer conducting in the presence of the pontiff. John Paul II publicly praised *Beatus Vir* while reminding Poland's communist oppressors of their responsibility "before history and your conscience." The text of Psalm 112, which Górecki leaned on, fueled freedom in the hearts of the millions of Poles who stood in Warsaw's Victory Square to see the pope. Each verse of the psalm seemed to rebuke the communist rulers and other oppressors who put God in last place. The impassioned Poles added to the Communist Party slogan — The Party is for the People — the twist of "...but the People are for the Pope."

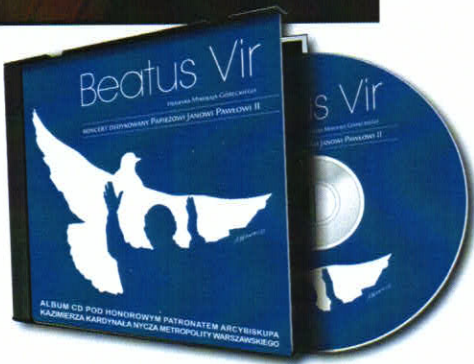
The melodic writing of *Beatus Vir* evokes chant-like responses in the Catholic mass. Mirroring those call and response moments in the mass, Pope John Paul II asked the crowds before him if they would accept God's call to be witnesses of His cross and resurrection. Thunderous voices chanted back, "We want God!"

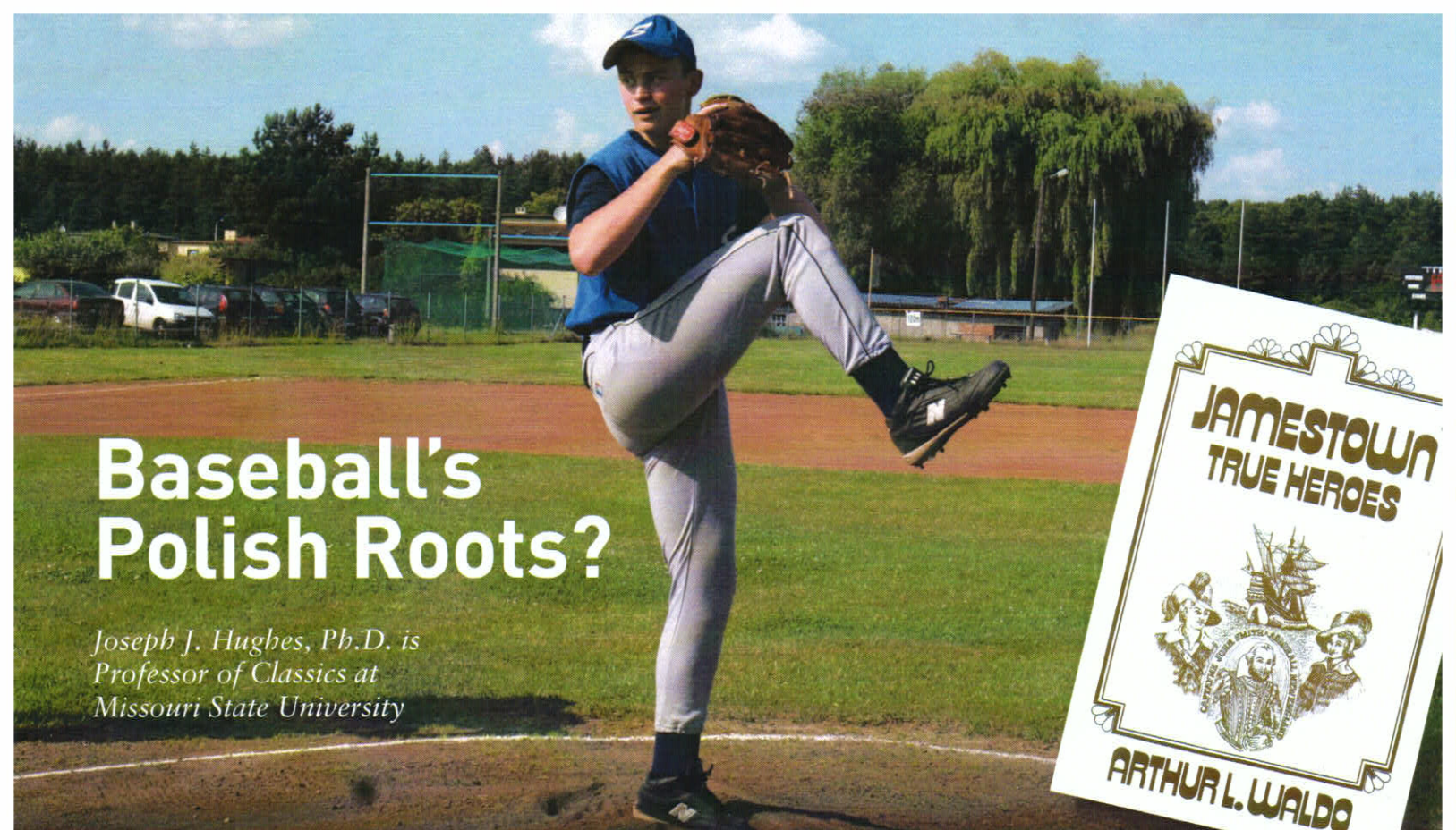
The wicked shall see it and be grieved, he shall gnash with his teeth and melt away; the desire of the wicked shall perish. Verse 10

Like a page out of the Old Testament, God worked through John Paul II to peacefully crush oppressors and bring freedom to many lands. Already a hero in our hearts and history books, John Paul II was canonized in April. Honoring the event, Górecki's masterwork *Beatus Vir* is a newly released CD and part of many concerts in the U.S. and Europe.



Composer, Mikołaj Górecki





Baseball's Polish Roots?

Joseph J. Hughes, Ph.D. is Professor of Classics at Missouri State University

In July 2013, pitcher Artur Strzalka of Katowice signed a minor league contract with the New York Yankees, making him the first Polish born and raised player in American pro baseball. This teenaged lefty's chances of making the big leagues may be a long shot, but as Hall of Fame players like Stan Musial, Phil Niekro, or Carl Yastrzemski have shown, baseball is definitely in the Polish blood. For centuries, Poles have used a bat, a ball and two bases to play a game called *palant*. Indeed, some think professional baseball was brought to America by Polish settlers in 1609!

Polish American writer Arthur L. Waldo (1896–1985) makes this very claim in his controversial 1977 book, *True Heroes of Jamestown*. Supposedly, the Polish settlers in the Jamestown Colony introduced “a ball game, played with a bat.” This Polish ball game, which Waldo names *piłka palantowa*, pleased the English and “the savages” (that is, the Indians) alike. Waldo's account has worked its way into baseball lore. The respected baseball research website Protoball.org includes this “event” on their chronology, although wisely reserving final judgment.

The renowned historian Norman Davies literally states in his history of Poland, *God's Playground*, that the Poles invented baseball.

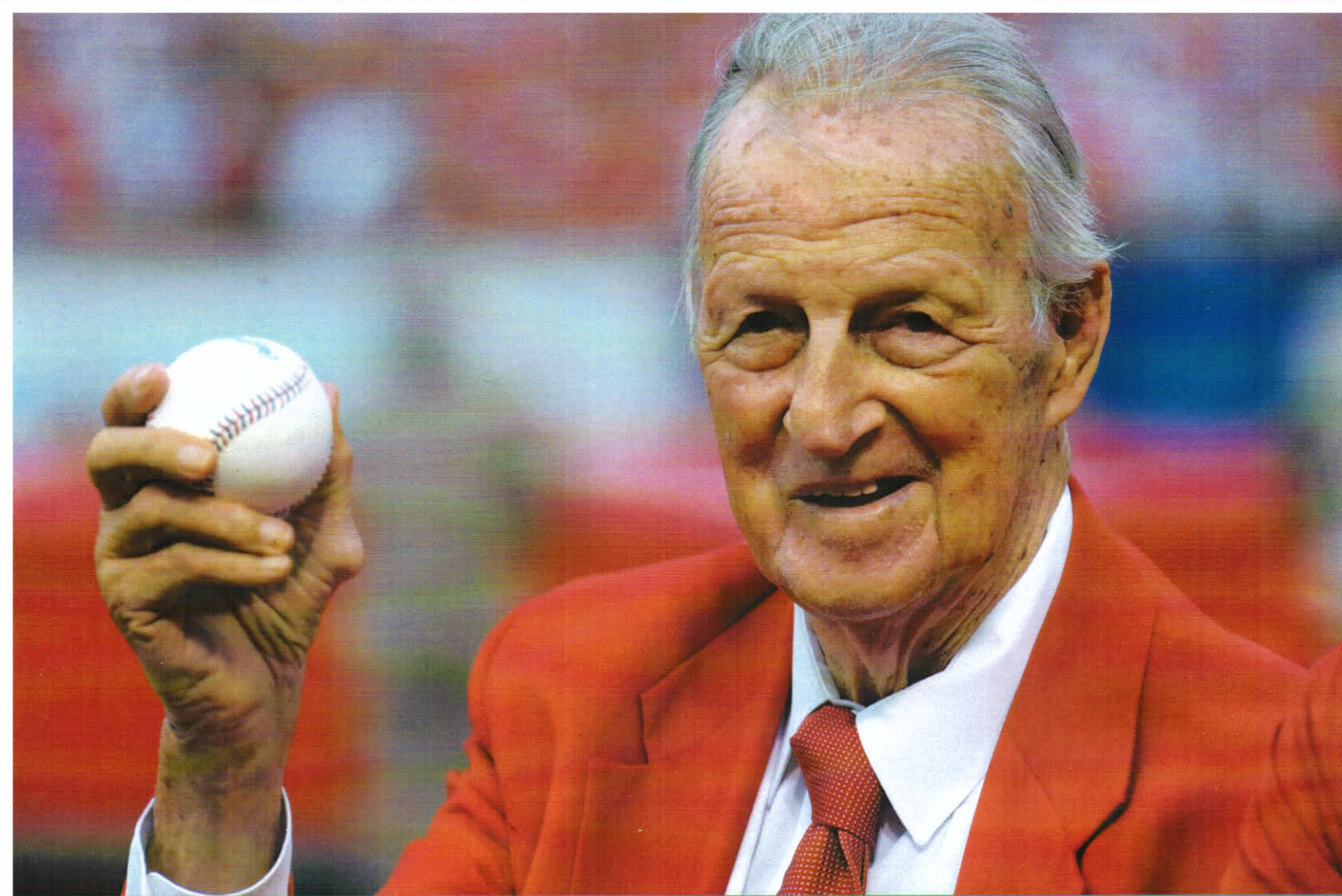
The controversy lies in Waldo's major source for his Jamestown book. He leans on the 1625 book *Traveler's Memoirs* (*Memorialium Commercatoris* or *Pamiętnik handlowca*), purporting it to be the work of the glass-blower Zbigniew Stefański — one of the Poles who settled in Jamestown in the early 17th century. However, the only evidence that *Traveler's Memoirs* ever existed is Waldo's say-so. Waldo also claims that in 1947 Mieczysław Haiman (1888–1849), librarian of the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America, had a chance to buy a copy of *Traveler's Memoirs* for five thousand dollars. Although Haiman could not raise the money, he was permitted to read aloud some pages from the book for transcription by none other than Arthur L. Waldo. The only copy of *Traveler's Memoirs* then vanished, never to be seen again.

In a 2008 *Polish Review* article, leading Polish American historian Dr. James L. Pula points out that Waldo's account constitutes valid evidence only if an authentic

Artur Strzalka winds up.

copy of *Traveler's Memoirs* is discovered. It is no secret that the Jamestown Poles were treated as second-class citizens. Indeed, the English denied the Poles voting rights in 1619, causing them to strike until they were given equal rights. Waldo's desire to portray the Jamestown Poles in a better light is understandable, as is his claim that America's national pastime is really Polish. So is the Polish Americans' desire to believe that Waldo's *True Heroes of Jamestown* is a valid historical source. Yet without a credible source, it seems highly unlikely that baseball's roots can be traced to the Jamestown Poles.

If the Jamestown Poles didn't “invent” baseball, who did? Perhaps the English can lay claim with their folk game of Rounders which predated Jamestown by centuries and also used a bat and ball. Perhaps children, around the world and over the centuries, who “invented” games using round objects and a stick they found can receive the credit. Regardless, Americans can rally behind Polish athlete Artur Strzalka and cheer him on his quest to reach the big leagues.



A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD

by Jane Mrazek Flanders

The cluster of consonants stitched on the back of the jersey is a dead giveaway. Names like Drabowsky, Niekro and Mientkiewicz are undeniably Polish. Announcers stumble over the last names, while fans create nicknames for their favorites like “Bazooka,” “The Man” and “Yaz.” From the Bronx to sunny California, America’s national pastime is home to Polish American fielders, sluggers and pitchers. A bit like Lady Liberty, baseball opens her arms to immigrants. It doesn’t take much money to learn or play the game. City streets and back alleys are still home to stick ball, while fields and pastures provide more slugging space for country boys learning the sport. All you need is a level playing field.

Left: Musial, a life-long supporter of baseball.

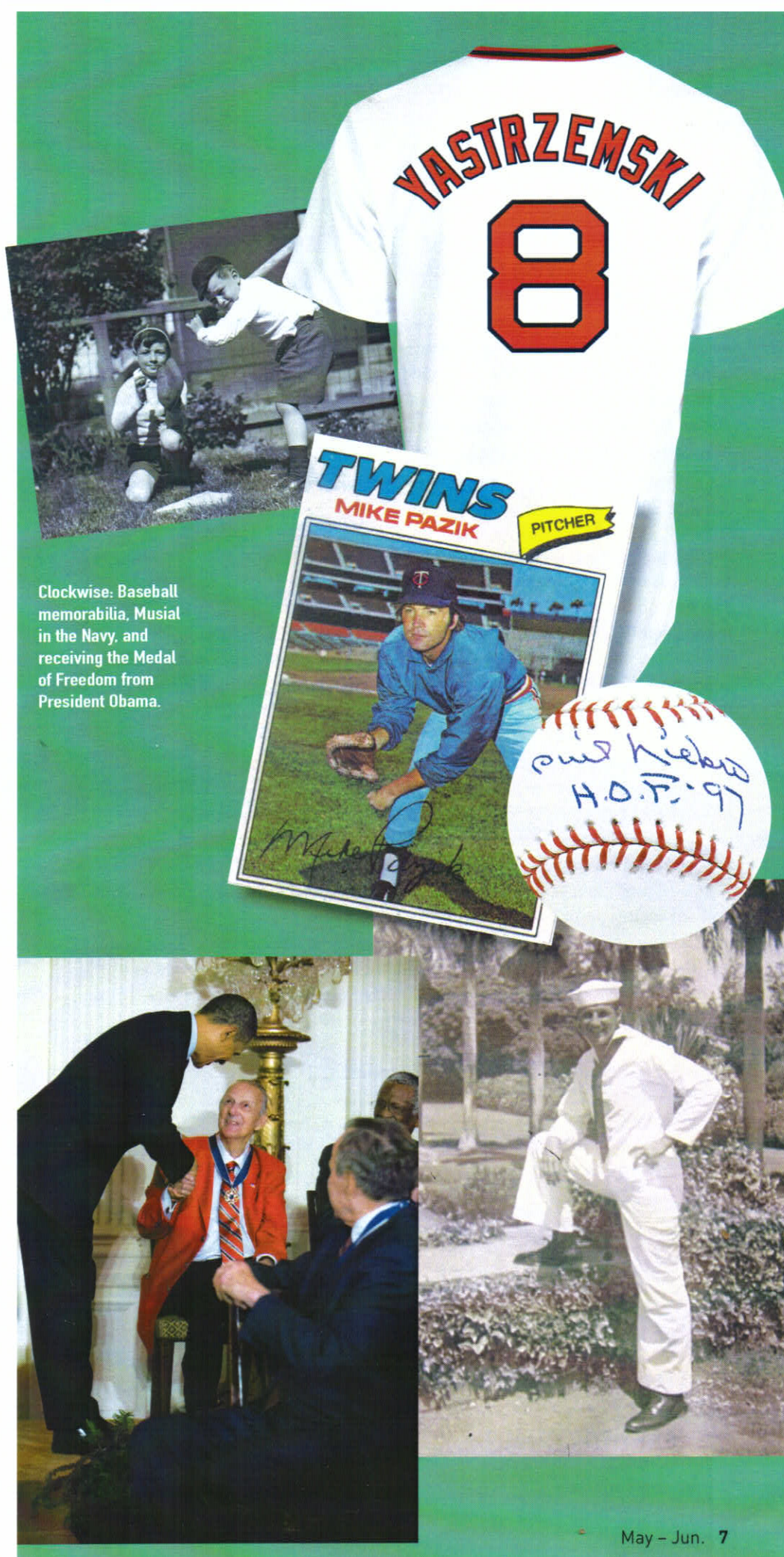
One of baseball's brightest stars and biggest humanitarians, Stan Musial, wanted to "level the playing field" for kids in Poland in the 1980s. The oppressed and economically impoverished country had few playgrounds, poor equipment and no money. Always a supporter of Polish causes, Musial (born Stanislaw Franciszek Musial) saw the power baseball had to influence young lives, and with the help of his close friend, Edward Pizek, he introduced the sport to Poland. It took considerable money and years of effort, but Musial's and Pizek's negotiating skills were responsible for Kutno becoming the Little League headquarters for all of Europe, Africa and the Middle East. One of Kutno's seven stadiums is named after Stan Musial.

In 1989, U.S. President George Bush presented the first Little League charters in Eastern Europe to an assembly of players and leaders in Warsaw. Addressing the teams of Jaslo, Kutno, Rybnik and Wroclaw, he praised Stan Musial's work on the field and off. The president also acknowledged the Polish players' commitment to the sport and their country. "The Little League program has come to Poland... listen to these words from the Little League pledge: 'I trust in God. I love my country and will respect its laws. I will play fair and strive to win. But win or lose, I will always do my best.' Remember those words because their spirit is Poland's spirit."

After the fall of communism, baseball experienced a renaissance in Central Europe, and Poland was the hub of the rebirth. In addition to Little League teams, the country founded teams for Olympic competitions and semi-professional international leagues. As the Polish economy grew, so did the influx of new gloves, bats and baseballs. America's national pastime represented freedom, success and hope to newly-free Poland. With its red stitching and white cowhide cover, a baseball even reflects the Polish colors.

In the U.S., Polish American players have influenced baseball since its inception, and the hitting streak continues

Continued on page 11



Clockwise: Baseball memorabilia, Musial in the Navy, and receiving the Medal of Freedom from President Obama.

Libraries as a Living Organism

Walk into any library and you know the book collection is orderly, audio visual materials are neatly arranged, and a hushed silence permeates the air. While libraries may seem unchanging, or at least slow to change, the reality is quite different. New additions increase the depth and volume of the collections, unused titles are culled to archives, subscriptions and research materials requested by patrons fluctuate as the demand changes, and programs to educate and entertain patrons grow as needed. Libraries are organic entities that undergo constant bouts of metamorphosis to maintain relevance and interest.

One of the biggest contributors to change in a library is donations. From financial help to printed materials, this additional burst of new energy to a library is life changing. PACIM's Library received a significant contribution to its collection recently from the family of a long time member, Roma Kehne, who passed away in the winter. The new additions include nonfiction, geography, history and fine arts. Members and friends continually donate items of interest and value, enhancing the over 5,000 items available to patrons. PACIM values these generous and thoughtful contributions.

Just as a seed falls to the ground before new life can spring from it, treasured Polish-based groups in Minnesota that closed up operations made PACIM a recipient of their holdings. Last year, the Polish White Eagle made a financial contribution to PACIM with a generous separate gift to the Library. In addition to over 20 new books in Polish, the Library purchased and wall-mounted a large flat screen TV with the gift. The Library can finally host film events and discussion groups. Another long-time group, the Polanie Club, donated numerous boxes of treasured crafts and historic objects. A portion of those items are on display at the Library along with recognition of the donor.

As an act of cross-pollination, the PACIM Library is establishing a children's book exchange with a group in Poland. The current children's collection sees a lot of action due to the addition of story times and other children's programs at the Library. The PACIM website will list new and changing titles in the exchange program as they become available. Teaching young readers the joy of exploring new books and topics provides future generations an alternative to screen-based entertainment, and a boost in cognitive growth.

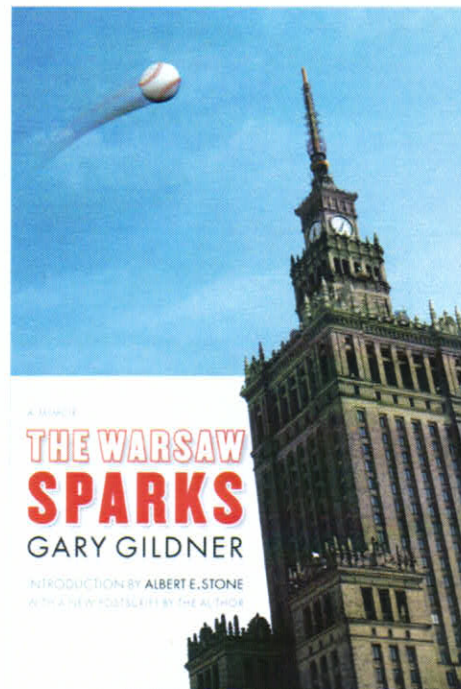
Finally, just as migration occurs with butterflies, birds and other living beings -- please remember PACIM's "Bring a Book from Poland" program. For years, the simple addition of one or two books from world travelers greatly increased and updated the Library's holdings.

PACIM's Polish Film Night and children's program begin a summer hiatus in June. Look for future event details in *PolAm* and the website (www.pacim.org) in September.

PACIM Library

43 Main St SE, Ste 228
Minneapolis, MN 55414
Hours: Sundays 1 to 4 pm
or by appointment

At the Library



Check out *The Warsaw Sparks*, written in 1990 by poet Gary Gildner. The book is Gildner's memoirs about coaching baseball in Poland while teaching American literature as a Fulbright fellow. PACIM member and national award winning writer Anthony Bukoski reviewed the book for the journal *Polish American Studies* and described the book as "...a moving portrait not only of the people and country whom [Gildner] has touched and been touched by, but also of the country of childhood where baseball was no less important to him."

"A fresh and fascinating memoir . . . a story charged with human interest, clean prose, and original perspectives. . . Mr. Gildner's book is a heavy hitter."
— *New York Times Book Review*

"Gildner's memoir offers plenty for baseball buffs; it presents a gallery of colorful characters, Polish and American, and it provides fascinating insight into life under a decaying communist regime."
— *Detroit Free Press*

HAPPENINGS

Local

JAN KARSKI'S CENTENNIAL

2014: THE YEAR OF JAN KARSKI



June 13-17

Jan Karski Humanity's Hero Exhibit Grand Opening

A 22 panel exhibit about the life and legacy of Jan Karski opens at the Minnesota State Capitol at 1 pm. Karski was a member of the Polish Underground during World War II who risked his life to carry eyewitness accounts of Holocaust atrocities to allies in the west. Karski received the Presidential Medal of Freedom posthumously from Barack Obama in 2012. The Grand Opening is June 15 at 2 pm. Free and open to the public.

June 16-19, 23-26

POLESOM Get to Know Poland Summer Camp

Polish Education Solutions of Minnesota's summer day camp is a terrific way for kids to learn basic Polish and explore Polish culture while enjoying summertime fun. Kids spend 4 days immersed in language, songs and stories from different regions of Poland. Campers participate in games and activities designed to provide a cultural experience focused on language development. Details and registration at polesom.org.

State/Regional

June 13

Polish American Night at Comerica Park

Take in a baseball game and proudly display Polish pride when the Detroit Tigers take on the Minnesota Twins. Sponsored by the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America, the event details are at PRCUA.org.



June 13-15

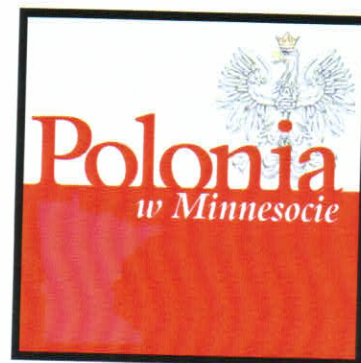
Milwaukee's Polish Fest

Explore Poland's colorful culture through music, cultural events, art and food. Held at the Henry W. Maier Festival Park along the shore of Lake Michigan, the festival features classic Polish cuisine, a cultural village and a *sukiennice* marketplace. Tickets and details at polishfest.org/2014.

June 27-July 19

Jan Karski Exhibit in Winona

The Polish Museum of Winona, Minnesota, will host the traveling exhibit honoring a real life hero. Exhibit details at Jankarski.net.en. Museum hours and directions at polishmuseumwinona.org.



Meetup group for Polish speakers in Minnesota sponsor four upcoming events including a book club, camping, a restaurant outing and summer fun at the beach. Visit meetup.com/Polonia-w-Minnesocie for details and sign up.



August 8, 9 & 10, 2014

Sport your red and white, grab a picnic blanket and head to Old Main Street in Minneapolis August 8-10 for the Twin Cities Polish Festival. Experience all things Polish, from authentic cuisine to cultural displays and performances to opportunities to purchase Polish goods and souvenirs.

New for this year's festival is a Friday night concert. Stay tuned for an announcement of who will be performing!

Keep up with announcements and updates at www.tcpolishfestival.org, or follow the festival on Facebook or Twitter.

Poland will **donate** 0.4 million zloty in expert assistance to support Ukraine's planned self-government reform.

Hostages held by pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine were released recently, including a Polish citizen working for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Polish **Prime Minister**

Donald Tusk said that "Russia is waging an undeclared war on Ukraine." Rockets and weapons are used, helicopters have been shot down, and 42 people have died in clashes between government supporters and armed pro-Russian demonstrators.



U.S. soldiers arrived in **Swidwin**, Poland, in late April in a first wave of support to face the rising tension with Russia over Ukraine. Another 450 troops were also deployed in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to reassure NATO allies of the U.S.'s commitment to the region's defense. The U.S. military has also sent 12 F-16 fighter jets and aviation support teams to Poland.

"When it comes to **military security**, we're aware that Poland will have no better guarantor than the U.S.," said Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk.

Ukraine: A Neighbor in Need

For two months, Ukraine's border with Russia has made headlines around the world. Russian President Vladimir Putin's claim on Crimea, the southern part of Ukraine, stirred up old fears of Soviet rule, and the introduction of the Russian military along the border gave those fears some teeth. The Polish government along with other EU and G7 member countries are on tenterhooks, ready to put strict sanctions on Russian officials if outright invasion occurs; but Russia's new claims on former Soviet states and increased military exercises show Putin is not fazed.

The nut of the problem appears to be language. Putin recognizes that large portions of former Soviet states speak Russian. His claim on those countries is to protect those people. Protect from what? Protect from living in an economically sound and democratically free state? All of Europe smells something fishy in Putin's claims and has the painful reminder of recent history to point toward the stench.

During the heyday of the Soviet Union, Poland and other oppressed states were forced to learn Russian in schools. Citizens were discouraged from using their native language and most public signage was in Russian. Russian citizens moved to these Soviet satellite states just as a family spreads out in a newly expanded home. More than half a century later, Putin's claim on these Russian speaking citizens seems false and aggressive.

In the last few weeks, Putin began talking about Estonia and Latvia the same way he talks about and views Ukraine. None of these countries can offer muscle to forcefully resist Putin's army should it advance. Poland is a champion of freedom and is calling on the U.S., Germany, France and Italy to rally behind Ukraine. The one hitch in all of Europe's plans is Russia's hugely abundant supply of oil and natural gas and the leverage it represents. Ukraine's former leader, who was Putin's crony, kept the country out of the EU and tied to Russian oil and money.

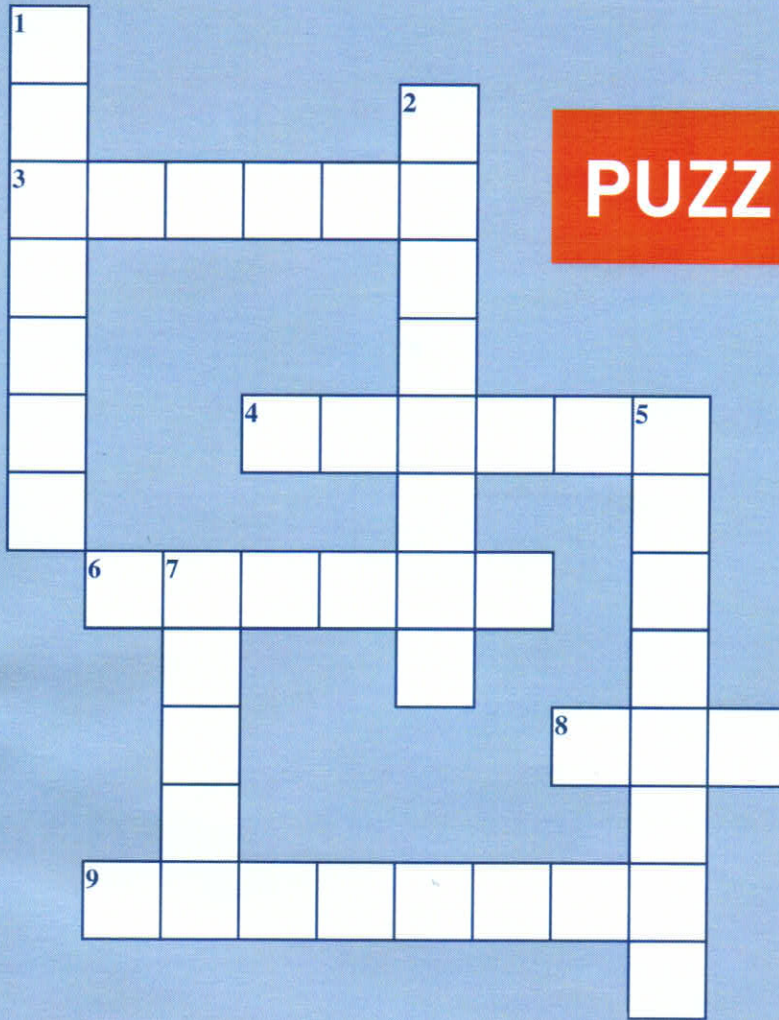
Poland's chief diplomat Radoslaw Sikorski recently stated that "The situation is becoming dangerous when Russia gives itself the right to decide what the government in Ukraine can and cannot do in its own territory. Such behavior is new in international relations. However, we cannot exclude the possibility that Russia will act on its threats." Sikorski also said that the EU is "behind the curve" on what is needed.

More than 2,000 miles of border divide Poland and Ukraine. With mostly farm land and picturesque towns dotting the border, the introduction of tanks and military from the U.S. and other allies will offer a stark contrast to the area's landscape. However, Poland is a good neighbor and wants to be ready to fight for Ukrainian self-government if the need arises.



U.S. soldiers arrive in northwest Poland.

PUZZLE



This Golden Glove winner played for the Twins 2001-04.

Musial, who served in the U.S. Navy, did two stints of service in the Pacific theater during WWII. Four years into his glittering major league career, Musial enlisted in the Navy. He was assigned to a ferry launch unit in Hawaii that brought back damaged ships' crews to Pearl Harbor. Every afternoon he played baseball in the naval base's eight-team league. In 2007, Musial received the Navy Memorial's Lone Sailor Award, which honors Navy veterans who have excelled in civilian life.

In today's world of athlete superstars and steroids, there still remains a code of honor among many, perhaps most, baseball players. Rules and traditions exist to maintain a level playing field, and players on both sides of "the pond" adhere to the sport's code or pay the penalties. Whether it is a fastball skimming the batter's chin to keep him unsettled in the batter's box, or a line drive sent squarely toward the pitcher's mound in retaliation, the players operate within the rules to keep each other behaving well. Scandal and a sullied reputation follow players who violate the rules. An asterisk next to names on the Hall of Fame list comes close to erasing the players' success in the sport. America still yearns for heroes and among the hundreds of Polish American players through the decades, Stan Musial remains at the top of the list. A clean cut, wholesome humanitarian who loved the sport enough to sacrifice his money and time to bring baseball to disadvantaged kids in communist Poland is truly an All American Hero.

From the Kraków Kings to the Minnesota Twins, love of the sport, respect for its code of honor, and honest players ensure future generations will have eager players waiting in the on deck circle.

Across

- 3 Humanity's hero
- 4 Górecki's masterpiece "_____ Vir"
- 6 "Warsaw _____" by Gary Gildner
- 8 Stan Musial's nickname
- 9 Social networking vehicle for PACIM

Down

- 1 *PolAm's* Editorial Advisor
- 2 First Polish American baseball player
- 5 NY Yankees Polish pitcher
- 7 "Ball" in Polish

March/April 2014 Answers

Across: 2. *Eroica*, 6. *Renata*, 8. *Scorsese*, 9. *Train*

Down: 1. *Katyn*, 3. *Pulaski*, 4. *Window*, 5. *Crimea*, 7. *Amazon*

Playing Field *Continued from page 7*

today. At least five players have been inducted into the Hall of Fame, and numerous players recognized as All Stars and Golden Glove awardees. The first U.S. baseball player of Polish ancestry was Oscar Bielaski, who debuted with the Washington Nationals in 1872. Buried in Arlington National Cemetery, Bielaski fought for the Union Army during the

Civil War before becoming a big league player. Bielaski seems to have had the Little League pledge in his blood — loving his country and striving to win.

Moreover, through two world wars, Polish American baseball players have served their country proudly. Men with consonant-heavy names like Wyrstek, Zuverink, Rojek, Krykoski, Perkowski, Ostrowski filled the ranks of the U.S. Army, Marines, Navy and Air Force. Stan

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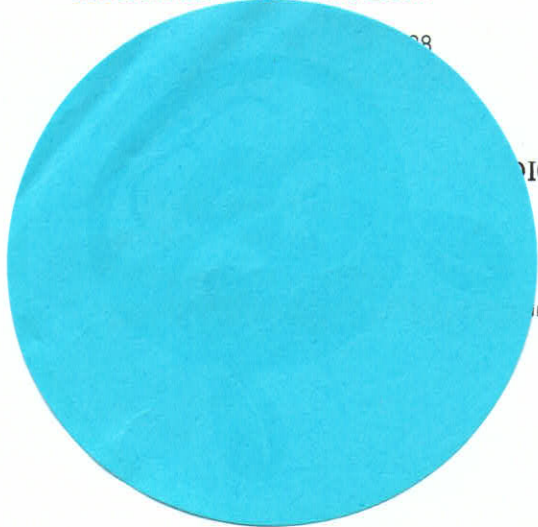


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