

Krakowski
Dziennik 4 years of papacy

Ryszard Drleszynski

THE LITTLE HOUSE ON PRINCE JOSEPH PONIATOWSKI STREET

At the beginning of the last century there was a huge estate belonging to Zofia Gaartoryska, a Polish noblewoman. On a stone dated 1813 was engraved a beautiful poem to commemorate the visit of Prince Joseph Poniatowski. The name of this place is called "Pod Lipkami".

At the beginning of the last century many people visited this lovely spot early in the morning to get away from unpleasant city noises and to admire the many lindentrees gently sloping toward the river Vistula. After many years this homestead was divided into 3 parts and the owners began to build homes. One of them was built by a family Scotch (an alias adopted for security reasons after January uprising). Leon Scotch was employed by an insurance company named "Florjanka" in Krakow and his wife Irena, was a school teacher. She was a very cultured woman and spoke many languages. In 1938 a student named Julius Kydrynski visited her and brought with him his best friend, a slim young man of medium height, named Karol Wojtyla.

From that day on, Karol was a frequent guest at the home of the Scotch family. He liked to discuss literature with Irena and they read poetry together. At that time Karol was also taking French lessons from Jadwiga Lewal, a woman who lived in the house. It was necessary for him to take a boat-ferry across the Vistula river to reach the Leon Scotch home, but he continued to visit the family even during the German occupation, while working as a simple employee at the Solvay factory.

In 1941 the Germans threw the family out of their lovely villa and German officers occupied the place for the duration of the war.

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The Scotch family moved to Swedish Street where the whole clan gathered to live under one roof - necessary to survive the war. Karol Wojtyla helped find the new place and visited there every day. The future Pope was part of the then underground resistance and Theater group "Rapsody" played different patriotic roles. Someone denounced the group to the authorities but no evidence was found against them and beyond being frightened nothing more happened.

One day Karol was hit by a large truck and was left unconscious in a ditch by the side of the road. A woman passing by found him and helped him up. When he came to, he dragged himself to the home of the Scotch family where Irena gave up her bed for him. It took two weeks for him to recuperate from this dreadful accident. Not long after this incident he became very thoughtful and more serious than usual. It was at this time that he began his studies with Archbishop Sapieha in secret. After the war Karol continued to visit Scotch family. They replaced the family he had lost during the war years. In 1945 Leon's son in law Wloddek Pozniak, returned from prisoner of war camp. He was a famous musicologist before the war and well known authority on Polish folk lore and opera.

At about the same time Karol Wojtyla became a prime- first in a chapel then in the Church in Dembniki. The Scotch's gave a festive dinner party to celebrate the event.

Karol never forgot his friends the Scotch's, not even years later when he was chosen to become the Pope. A special invitation from Vatican was issued to Zofia Pozniak, Leon's daughter, wife of the musicologist. She visited in Rome for 6 weeks while she was in Rome she received an announcement from Jerusalem that she was being honored with a medal and they would like her to come to Jerusalem to plant a tree in the Alley of the Just (Yad VaShem). That Zofia was honored in Israel was arranged by her previous music student Bronislawa Kohn from Krakow, whose life she saved.

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Bronka, with her family, was taken in a truck (in a convoy of trucks to be transferred to a railroad in the middle of the night) to the gas chambers. By some miracle she was forgotten where she was sitting up front next to the truck driver (put there by a Polish policeman). Her parents, Benjamin and Amalia Kohn and her brother Berthold, perished in the chambers. Bronka was taken by the driver to a park-like area "Blonia" many miles long near Krakow and left off at 5 am (carefew was at 7 am).

She walked to the other end of "Blonia" to Swedish Str. 19 fearful any moment that she might be shot, but somehow managed.

There, in spite of mortal danger to Zofia and her 3 children, she was received warmly and stayed one week. Zofia arranged a new identity for Bronia and gave her warm clothes, left by her mother Amalia in case someone survives and with this kindness helped her to survive the war in Lwow and then in Warsaw. Bronia (called Nika) ended up as a prisoner of war in Oberlangen (after uprising of Warsaw in 1944 failed) near Holland and was finally liberated by Canadian and Polish units in 1945 on the day of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's death.

Bronka (Nika called by friends) is married now to Alfred Fleissig and lives in Wellfleet, Ma. near Boston in USA.

Zofia because of her many brave and good deeds at the risk of her own life, was invited to Rome by the Pope and visited Jerusalem - the dream of her life with a ticket sent by the Fleissigs.

Years after the war, when Zofia was going through family papers, she found a manuscript, written by Karol in longhand, titled: "Brother of God".

The present Pope has brought this article to Ireland for critique. At the present time "Brother of God" is performed as a play in Krakow theater "Julius Slowacki". Ryszard Dzielzynski, the writer of this article had an audience with the Pope together with the present owner of "Pos Lipkami" famous house. They were reminded by His Holiness to take good care of this house which is so dear to his heart. The writer compiled with Pope's wishes and wrote this article.

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