



Vol. 83, 2013, № 1 (Winter), Series IV

Lemko history seminar planned for November Conventions, talks offer chance for members to meet

The Lemko Association will host a "round table" discussion on "Writing the History of the Lemko Region" at the annual convention of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian studies (ASEEES), to be held Thursday through Sunday, November 21-24, 2013, at the Boston Marriott Copley Place Hotel in Boston, Massachusetts. We expect both American and foreign experts to take

part in our round table, which is tentatively scheduled for Friday morning, November 22nd at 10 a.m. but is subject to change. Check lemkoassociation.org for updated information.

We will also have a display in the exhibition area during the whole convention, at which we will be

(Continued on Page 3)



Lemko Association headquarters, Higganum, Connecticut, in winter.

KARPATSKA RUS', Series IV, is the continuation of the oldest Lemko and Rusyn newspaper published anywhere.

Series I, *Lemko*, was published in Lviv, Nowy Sącz, and Gorlice, 1911-1913, in Austrian Galicia.



(Interim 1: The original Lemko ceased publication in the lead-up to WW I.)

Series II, *Lemko*, was a monthly, biweekly, and then weekly published first in Philadelphia, then Cleveland and New York City, 1928-1940, by the Lemko Association. The first editor was Dymytrii Vyslotskii (pseudonym Van' o Hunianka), an editor of *Lemko* Series I.

(Interim 2: In 1939, the Carpatho-Russian National Committee in New York City began to publish the newspaper *Karpatska Rus'*, with 12 issues in 1939 and one in 1940. In January 1940 this paper was merged into *Lemko*, with the combined publication keeping the *Karpatska Rus'* name but the *Lemko* numbering.)

Series III, *Karpatska Rus'*, was published first on a weekly, then on a bi-weekly, monthly, and finally an occasional basis in Yonkers, New York 1940-1999 and Allentown, New Jersey, from 1999 through January 2008.



(Interim 3: After the January 2008 issue, Volume 80 No. 1 (Winter), *Karpatska Rus'* became dormant due to the grave illness of editor Alexander Herenchak.)

Series IV began as a quarterly with the No. 2 issue of Volume 80 (2010), with No. 3/4 (Summer/Fall) wrapping up Volume 80. The new publication schedule includes Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall issues.

It is hoped that Series I, II, and III will eventually appear online at www.lemkoassociation.org.

Upcoming seminars, conventions offer chance for members to meet

(Continued from Page 1)

selling our publications as a fund raiser. We also hope to organize a group dinner for members and friends.

Since our members are spread out all over the country, and the bi-annual Lemko Association conventions are held at our headquarters in Higganum, it is hard for us to meet as a group. But the ASEEEES conventions are held in major cities throughout the country, so they are one way for our members to be together in the same room. In future years, we expect to have panel sessions in ASEEEES meetings in November, 2014 in San Antonio, Texas, and in November, 2015 In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The Executive Committee is willing to help organize seminars or discussions on agreed-upon topics at other places in the country, but the Association is not in a position to pay to rent a meeting space, so local organizers would need to find somewhere to meet. Church halls, libraries, private homes, and local historical societies are possibilities.

Meanwhile, anyone who will be in or near the Boston area this fall would be most welcome to join us for the panel discussion, for dinner, or both. Or just stop by and say hello to us in the exhibition hall— we will need some encouragement as we sit there all day with a table full of books!

Lemko Association News

Advisory Council: We are slowly constructing an Advisory Council, a committee of those who would like to help the Lemko Association in a more active way. We will be calling on members to join. Self nomination would be gratefully received!

Executive Committee changes: Acting according to our by-laws we accepted the resignation of Walter Maksimovich from our Executive Committee, as he requested, as of March 15, 2013. Walter wishes to pursue other interests. We thank Walter for helping us revive the Lemko Association and hope and trust he will assist us again in the future.

Mary Micenko Barker, our long time Secretary, has reluctantly withdrawn due to ill health. She has graciously accepted appointment to our Advisory Council. We are grateful to Mary for her invaluable help reviving the Lemko Association and are glad to have her on the Advisory Council.



Dr. Bogdan Horbal of the New York Public Library has agreed to take over the post of Lemko Association Secretary. Bogdan is the son of parents from the Lemko villages of Bartne and Muszynka, who were deported from their Carpathian homeland during the 1947 Vistula Operation to southwestern Poland where he was born. Bogdan is a noted historian and author, most recently of *Lemko Studies: A Handbook*.

Lemko Community Histories: We already have on file for future publication two articles about our communities: "The Five St. Johns of Greater Bridgeport" which concerns four churches which developed out of the original one on Arctic Street, Bridgeport, Connecticut, and "The Slavs of Yonkers, New York, USA" which deals with the Slavic community of that city. We encourage members to write-up memoirs, articles, reports and stories about our people and to send them to us. Members Robert Klancko and Steve Rock have contributed (see later in this issue), what about you? Do not worry if your writing skills are not professional— we will edit your material for publication, thus, send us something!

Our Catalog: We had intended to get a complete catalog of Lemko Association books and printed material out as part of the first issue of *Karpatska Rus'* for this year but we have decided to hold off a bit in order to get a better product. Several things led us to this conclusion.

First, we need to do a really thorough inventory, with everything in order, of what books, maps, pamphlets and digital media we have for sale. Second, we need to have in-place an easy method for customers to purchase our materials. Third, to print and distribute an extensive catalog is beyond our means. Since we have no deep-pocketed supporters we need to at least break-even in whatever we do. Fortunately, no one is paid, so salaries and benefits are not an issue. We get no government subsidies, in contradistinction to Europe where the state may help by giving grants for publishing. In the USA the Cold War is over for 22 years now and money once directed to Slavic Studies now goes to the Middle Eastern or Asian studies. For instance we have 850 addresses worldwide of libraries and institutions which purchase Slavic materials; to distribute and mail a catalog to them would cost thousands which we don't have— and would we make back the cost even if we did go all out?

However, notice to members, interested parties and institutions that there is an on-line catalog (see page 34) with an easy purchase method may bring some positive results, but we have to do it right.

Interestingly, Prof. Jaroslaw Moklak of the History Institute of the Jagiellonian University of Cracow has obtained a Polish government grant to, hopefully, inventory our books and archives at the Lemko Association headquarters in Higganum, Connecticut. He ought to be here May 13-23, 2013. Perhaps something good will come of his visit.

Our Headquarters in Higganum will be closed for the month of June while Lemko Association president Paul Best attends the Studium Carpatho-Ruthenorum in Prešov, Slovakia. A limited supply of Lemko Association maps and publications will be available to fill online orders received during June; orders by mail, or for material kept only in Higganum, will be shipped after Paul's return in July. Look for a report on Paul's trip in the next issue of *Karpatska Rus'*. Meanwhile, get your orders in soon!

Lemko Association scholarship awarded



The half-tuition (\$800) Lemko Association scholarship to the Studium Carpatho-Ruthenorum for members and children of members was unanimously awarded to Lemko Association member Sarah Latanyshyn, a graduate student studying ethnomusicology at the University of California in Santa Barbara, California.

Sarah is a graduate of Syracuse University and of New York University, where she completed a masters' thesis on Lemko music and cultural identity that was described as "poetic" by one scholar in her field.

Sarah's grandfather was from the Lemko village of Jawornik, which was almost completely destroyed during the 1947 Operation Vistula.

Sarah plans to do musicology field work in Carpathian Rus', including visiting the folk music festival that has now been established on the site of Jawornik. (The photo at left shows a performer from the 2002 festival.)

Congratulations, Sarah! We are glad to be able to help you advance your studies and the appreciation of our culture.

“Moving seminar”: The Carpathian Front

The year 2014 will mark the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of WW I and the 75th anniversary of the start of WW II. To commemorate these events, the Carpathian Institute is planning a two week “mobile seminar” on “The Carpathian Front in WW I and WW II.” We will travel through the Carpathian Mountain region with special attention paid to the wartime significance of each place visited. The trip is currently planned for June-July 2014; a tentative schedule appears below.



Sunday June 22, 2014: Participants arrive Cracow, Poland, accommodation either in the Jagiellonian University guesthouse on St. Florian Street, the Pigon Bursa or the Bratniak Hotel.

Monday June 23, a.m.: Discussion on the world wars in general and the orders of battle in the Carpathian Region; p.m., lecture on the Battles of Cracow, November 16-25, 1914 and Fall 1944.

Tuesday June 24, a.m.: Visit to sites in the Cracow military area. pm, travel to Gorlice, accommodation at the Margot motel(?)

Wednesday, June 25, a.m.: Discussion about the battle of Gorlice-Tarnow, May 1915. pm, visit to sites and battle museum.

Thursday, June 26, a.m./p.m.: Travel to Przemyśl, visiting battle sites and cemeteries. Accommodation at the State Higher East European School (PWSW).

Friday, June 27, a.m.: Discussion of the Przemyśl fortress in WW I; p.m., visit to the fortress ruins and the battle museums.

Saturday June 28, a.m.: Discussion about military operations in the Przemyśl region in WW II; p.m., free time.

Sunday, June 29: Depart to Lviv by train, bus or minivan.

Monday, June 30 : Lviv in WW I and WW II.

Tuesday, July 1: Travel by train or bus through the Uzhok pass to Užhorod, accommodation in Hotel Zakarpatia.

Wednesday, July 2: The Užhorod region in WW I and WW II.

Thursday, July 3: Užhorod to Prešov by bus. Accommodation at Prešov University.

Friday, July 4: Discussion of the south side of the Carpathians in WW I and WW II.

July 5, Saturday: Prešov to Cracow through the Dukla Pass. Visit to battlefield and museum.

July 6, Sunday, a.m.: Participants depart Cracow

While the focus of the “mobile seminar” is not on genealogy or visiting ancestral villages, those kinds of visits could be included either before or after the main excursion. There are also other excellent “visit the ancestral homeland” trips to Lemkovyna, notably those run by the Carpatho-Rusyn Society and Lemko Association member Nancy Revak.

More details will be posted on lemkoassociation.org as they become available. You can also email Lemko Association President Paul Best, president@lemkoassociation.org, to express your interest.

Russian icons exhibit opens in New Haven



Icons of Our Lady of Kazan and Jesus Christ Enthroned in Glory, from the exhibit "Windows Into Heaven."

By Robert Klancko

On Wednesday, April 17th, the Knights of Columbus Museum (1 State Street, New Haven, Connecticut; www.kofcmuseum.org) opened an exhibit of Russian Icons and religious artifacts. There are some three hundred items on display, from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries. Ninety percent of the exhibit is focused on Russian icons, although there is one Cretan icon and some icons that appear to be more from the south Slavic areas. There are also display cases with triptychs, panagias, and pectoral crosses.

Four distinct viewing galleries comprise the exhibit - one focused on Jesus Christ and His life, one focused on the Virgin Mary— the Theotokos— and her life, one on various saints and feast days of the church, and one, chapel-like in nature, which contains a magnificent *plaščanitsa* (burial shroud) and an antimins from the time of Peter the Great.

A few of the icons contain niello *oklads* (covers) and some have *oklads* with paste stones. Two very outstanding items have *oklads* of seed pearls.

Most of the icons come from anonymous sources, however it appears that about 40% come from particular source who is a Roman Catholic priest and one of the others, I am led to believe, is an icon dealer. One of the donors seems fixed on Old Believer Icons, however, outside of some of the brass icons, many appear to be misidentified as such.

Of particular interest are the copies of Our Lady of

Karpatska Rus' / Carpathian Rus'



Paul Best, Editor

Michael Decerbo, layout and production

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The mission of the Lemko Association and the Carpathian Institute is to further the study of the history and culture of the Lemko Region and the larger Carpathian Rus' area of Central Europe and to support Lemkos and Rusyns whether in the homeland or in diaspora.

Submissions of articles and letters to the editor are welcomed and may be sent to the address above, or by electronic mail to editor@lemkoassociation.org.

Kazan, Our Lady of Tikhvin, Our Lady of Kiev, and a copy of the Kursk Root Icon— these are all very impressive copies. Unfortunately, even though Our Lady of Kazan, Our Lady of Tikhvin, Our Lady Joy of All Who Sorrow and the Kursk Root Icon all have interesting connections with the USA and have resided here, no mention of these connections is made. I have had the honor to pray before the originals of all four of these icons and to even touch them. Our Lady of Kazan and Our Lady of Tikhvin have been returned to Russia and the other two still reside in the USA.



Icons of Our Lady of the Doves and Christ Pantocrator from the exhibit "Windows Into Heaven."

The material is displayed in a sterile manner - more of an art museum motif than a spiritual experience befitting the mystical nature of such religious objects. The exhibit does remain awe-inspiring due to the nature and volume of the items on display. Yet unlike the spiritual atmosphere at the Roman Catholic St. Ann's Shrine Icon Gallery in Sturbridge Massachusetts, there is no such feeling of quiet and solitude where a thoughtful prayer can be offered at this exhibit. A major value is that there are many pieces in the exhibit that one normally would not be able to come so close to and examine unless you were an icon collector or icon dealer. One example is the copy of the very rare icon of Our Lady of Arabia, which instead of having the three stars on

her robe has three images of Jesus Christ.

I took my twin grandchildren to see it on the Wednesday it opened. My grandson was awed by the Icon of St. Alexander Nevsky and its niello oklad. Of course he also liked the warrior story that went with it. My granddaughter loved the very large icon of Christ and the children— she does have a sensitive heart.

If you go, do not forget to stop in the gift shop, which has three icons, specially hand written by highly skilled lacquer box artists on mother of pearl in a knurled wood frame shadow box. They are priced at a kings ransom, but to me, they were the highlight of my visit.

So, the bottom line is, if you have a free afternoon and want to have a spiritual experience and reconnect with your faith, visit this exhibit. Despite its shortcomings, you will leave not only closer to God, but also with a greater understanding of your faith and the role that icons play in your spiritual life.

The exhibit will be on display through April, 2014. Supporting lectures by Connecticut iconographer Marek Czarnecki will be given on May 25, 2013, at 2 p.m. ("Iconography of the Mother of God") and on June 29, 2013, at 2 p.m. ("Iconography: Tradition & History.")

The Knights of Columbus has performed a service to all of us by affording us the opportunity to have this Window into Heaven, and they need to be thanked for doing it. And I thank them for the spiritual experience and their time, effort and resources in mounting this awe inspiring exhibit.

Robert John Klancko (rjklancko@gmail.com) is Treasurer of the Lemko Association. He writes from Woodbridge, Connecticut.

Vatra and festival scheduled for summer

We have received confirmation that the 31st annual Lemko Vatra in Zdynia, Poland, will be held July 19-21 this year, and the 51st Festival of Culture and Sport, a large Rusyn festival, will be from June 29-30 in Medzilaborce, Slovakia. If anyone will be able to make it, we hope you can send us your impressions and photos, so that we can share them with other members in a future issue of *Karpatska Rus'*.

A Lemkovyna Journal



At the skansen (open-air museum) in Nowy Sącz.

By Steve Rock

The primary intent of this journey was to visit the villages in Lemkovyna in which my father's parents, Mikolaj Rak, of Wola Cieklińska, and Teodora Hryckanycz, of Wysowa grew up and from which they immigrated to the USA (Mikolaj in 1892, Teodora in 1903).

Both of my father's parents were Lemkos, which is why I decided to employ the services of Lemko Heritage Tours for this adventure, rather than those of the genealogist who had done all of the genealogical research for us five years earlier (this was when we first discovered that we were Rusyn Lemko, not Ukrainian, "White Russian" or any of the other labels that my father, who did not know about the Rusyn nation, applied to our heritage, for lack of a better explanation.)

As it turns out, the decision to spend our time

with Andrzej and Halina was pivotal to the depth to which we would enjoy not only the geographical aspects of our Lemko heritage, but be immersed in and experience the deep cultural and personal aspects as well.

My brother Mark and his wife Carolina ("Car") picked up our father, John Rock Sr., in Cohoes, NY, leaving there to head to our home in Mahopac, NY shortly before 11:00 a.m., July 16, 2008. Arriving around 1:15 p.m., we went for lunch. Just before going out, however, we had our first "crisis." Dad could not locate his passport in his carry-on bag. He found it after some panicky searching, but for a couple of minutes there the dark prospect loomed that we would not be traveling as planned – if the passport was still in Cohoes, we would not be on the plane. Fortunately, it was not. First crisis averted.

We sat comfortably for the ninety-minute drive to

the airport in Newark. Our wait to get on the plane that would take us to Warsaw was made a bit longer by a delayed boarding, and we sat on the tarmac for an extra hour before taking off. I enjoyed a dinner complete with wine, linens and great service, and then relaxed a bit. Before long I slipped out of my shoes and into the “sleep mask” provided, pulled up a blanket and got a little shut-eye.

Sleep did not come easy and was inconsistent, but when I looked over at Dad he was slumbering well. At around 2:00 a.m. or so (still our time) the breakfast was being served, so I sat up for it. Dad woke up shortly afterward and we enjoyed a nice breakfast together as we crossed over from Germany’s airspace into Poland’s. Poland at last! After five years of planning, it was actually happening. The entire flight was smooth and pleasant, and we arrived in Warsaw right on time, despite the delayed departure.

Finding our gate for the connector to Cracow was a bit of a challenge. As we eventually discovered, it was in the “old” section of the terminal. Several friendly flyers and employees got us properly oriented, though. Once again the wait for the flight was extended by a flight delay. Just as I had convinced myself that the delay would be another hour, they called us to board. The surprise, though, was that we were boarding a tram, not a plane. Fifteen to twenty minutes later it took us to a plane out on the tarmac. Mark and Car got bumped up to business class for some reason, but unfortunately for them that only meant a seat by the door, near Dad and me.

The flight to Cracow was short and smooth. When we broke through the clouds on our approach to land, I could see that the topography was very much different from that in Warsaw. The land rolled slightly. Most of it was either farm or forest, with the farms cut like long rectangles, as I’d seen in Lemko artwork. And we weren’t even in Lemkovyna yet!

Our driver, Zibi (whom I arranged in advance through Internet connections), met us there and drove us to our hotel after a stop to convert some currency (at a 2:1 rate – the dollar had weakened further during our flight). We got checked in to the Hotel Campanile, and Mark and Car decided to take a nap. Dad and I showered and went out for a walk.



Picture 1. Cracow– John, Carolina and Mark in the town square.

We spent ninety minutes strolling, with Dad making several attempts to ask “natives” if they knew where the cathedral was where the Pope used to say mass when he visited. He got a few odd looks. He also yelled “You shouldn’t smoke!” to some young women who were doing so on a park bench. Now *that* was embarrassing.

The city is old and beautiful. We saw much more of it afterwards, when we all went to Chopskie Jadlo for dinner in the market square. There were electric shuttles that one could hire to tour Cracow. We took a horse-drawn carriage ride past many churches, a castle, several “Pope-associated” places and down the oldest street in Cracow. Mark said he could spend “about a week per street” in Cracow, just to look at how the buildings were constructed. A lovely warm night it was.

Dad wanted to know if we had to buy our plane tickets to get home (this came up before our return trip as well.) I spoke briefly to my wife, Margaret, to let her know we were here, safe and sound– that was real nice. We called Mom after dinner, outside of Chopskie Jadlo. She sounded good, too, and happy for Dad.

After that, (around 9:30) I told everyone that I was tired and had to get to bed. We walked back to the hotel, where I went to the room. They went out to have drinks at a lovely bar that we’d encountered earlier.

So Day 1 finally comes to a close – about 37 hours

after it started. Given that I've had only a few hours of sleep so far, I'm hoping for a good solid 8 hours of it tonight. Tomorrow morning it is an early breakfast and a pick-up by our tour guides, who will bring us to the heart of our journey— Lemkovyna - where we will visit the home villages of Dad's (Tato's) father and mother, my Dido (grandfather— which American Lemkos tend to pronounce as either "Jee-doe" or "Jee dah") and Baba (grandmother).

Day 2 – 7/17/08: Still in Cracow

I awoke at 6:00 a.m. after getting to sleep around 11:00 p.m. last night. Looking back, I see that this was about the most sleep in any given night that I'd get until we returned home. Dad had come into the room last night just a few minutes after I'd turned off the light and tried to get to sleep. When he lay down, his breathing was erratic and orchestrated with a series of throat clearings, followed by what sounded like deep labored breathing for several seconds. When I first heard this, all I could think was that he was having some kind of an attack, and was frightened that we'd have a health emergency in a foreign country. But there was a kind of rhythm to it, so I relaxed my concerns about him and then wondered if I'd ever be able to sleep with that going on. He settled and quieted shortly thereafter, though, and I was able to drift off despite my excitement and anticipation for the events that were to follow. Amazingly enough I was not at all bothered with gas or any other physical discomfort from the large traditional Polish meal that we'd had for dinner.

It had rained overnight and the skies were a bit darker than they were yesterday. But I'm not concerned – we have a lot of driving to do as we go to the skansen (the open-air museum of local architecture) in Nowy Sącz, and then on to Gorlice.

Looking forward to today – time to get up!

Our Guides, and the Open-air Museum

I got up and showered, then, around 7:15, woke up Dad, thinking he'd want to do the same. Instead, he got dressed and started getting ready to go down for breakfast at 7:30. We had our next "crisis," when he could not find his video camera. We did a thorough check of the room and his luggage, but could not find it. So we checked with Mark & Car – they did not

have it, either. On the way to breakfast we reported a possible theft to the front desk. The meal was OK – everyone had what they wanted. We went back to the room to pack up to leave and Dad found his video camera– in the pocket of the very pants he was wearing! Another crisis solved.

We met one of our guides, Andrzej, and his son, 23-year-old Paulo, at 9:00 – right on time. Andrzej and Dad immediately began talking in Lemko – it was amazing and thrilling to behold. I'd never before heard my father converse in a foreign language. Later, Andrzej told me (through his son, because Andrzej's English is more limited) that in all the years that they've been receiving foreign Lemkos as guests and clients, Dad's Lemko is the best that he's ever heard from any of them.

We all jumped into the van and left for the skansen in Nowy Sącz. Dad and Andrzej kept it up, with Paulo joining in. Lots of questions and answers. We heard more about "Action Vistula" from Paulo, at my request, because I thought both Mark and Car were unfamiliar with this forced deportation of Lemkos in 1947. I was pleased and surprised that this was not entirely the case – they'd done a lot of reading on the Lemkos before coming to Poland.

We arrived at the skansen around 11:30 AM, thinking we'd be there for an hour. We left over 2 hours later. We visited Polish, then Lemko traditional homes, although all were from a bit more "upscale" Lemkos than our Dido's family likely were.



Picture 2. John and Paulo taking it all in at the Nowy Sącz skansen.

Dad saw several examples of the kind of “oven” that doubled as a bed that Dido had described to him (to my relief – I’d guaranteed him the previous day that he’d see this). Each building was staffed by someone who could describe the lifestyle and the contents and structure of the buildings for us – Paulo translated.



Picture 3. John finally sees the “oven beds” that his otec had described to him.



Picture 4. Mark checks out the other side of the oven.

We saw a gorgeous Lemko church before we left to have lunch, which was traditional Polish – pierogis, potato pancakes, and so on. Delicious – and so much cheaper than the restaurant last night, which, Paulo told us, was not unusual – they’re very expensive places in Cracow (he starts his fifth year of university there in October). I am sure I’m gaining weight already, but I’m loving it, so who cares?



Picture 5. Skansen guide with Paulo, John, Steve, Carolina and Mark.

On the drive to Gorlice the land started to better conform to the idea of Lemkovyna that I had. But Paulo assured me that we were not yet even in “Lemkoland,” as he liked to call it. Regardless – the area is very pretty. Dad said that he understands why his father always wanted to return to it.

We arrived at the Hotel Margot in Gorlice, which is OK, around 4:00. We reserved a 2-bedroom suite – our room included a bedroom with a shower/bath and a living room with 2 twin beds. Not what I had imagined, but it would suffice – we did not intend to spend much time in the room. We are to be picked up at 6:00 p. m. to attend a small welcoming party at a local “restaurant.”

Our Warm Welcome in Gorlice and Lemkovyna

That was one fantastic evening! Andrzej and his wife, our other guide, Halina, organized a party where we were finally delighted to meet Halina, with whom I’d been corresponding for nearly a year, ever since Dad indicated that he wanted to make the trip. After she mistook Mark for me when she met Mark, he pointed to me, still climbing out of the van, and told her I was Steve. I was chuckling as I finally made her acquaintance in person, because she had exclaimed when she saw me something along the lines of “Oh, no wonder his English is so good – he’s just a boy!” (In Poland the younger generation are more formally schooled in English, so their use of it is almost always superior to that of their elders.) Apparently the hat I was wearing and the joy that was on my face at finally being there was enough to take twenty years

off of my appearance. Both Halina and the Malecki's other child, 21-year-old Natalia, guessed my age to be between 30 and 35. Imagine Natalia's expression when I informed her that my age exceeded that of her mother, a number of years my junior. Hey, my ego didn't need any further boosting – I *liked* this place!

We were ushered into the only well-finished room of the still under-renovation Carpatho-Rusyn Cultural Center, where the party had been arranged. There we met for the first time the members of the Carpatho-Rusyn Society's (C-RS) Lemko language tour, who had arrived several days before us and would be staying for a day or two after we'd left. We were also introduced to a few friends, neighbors, and relatives who joined in the welcome party.

In no time at all there were loud conversations going on all around the room. There was delicious finger food for everyone, and Andrzej's home-made honey/caramel vodka started making the rounds as Andrzej instructed the newcomers (us) in a traditional toast that passed from one person to another. We toasted a lot, and each time the delicious vodka went down smoother and easier. Dad's first time was tenuous, and it took him several sips to get it down, but by the end of the night and thereafter he was able to just throw it back all at once. There was also of course, *pivo* (beer), and the Lemko brotherhood simply abounded and filled the space. What beautiful, lovely people. I love them all already.

The language tour people joined all those who had greeted us, accompanied by Andrzej on accordion, in leading us in the singing of many traditional Lemko songs. I joined in by sharing the lyrics (in the language book that Halina, a teacher of Russian, had prepared for them) with a woman named Pat. Despite not knowing the music, lyrics or meaning of the words, I sang them from my heart and soul, loving every minute of it. My favorite was "Lisom Lisom," which we sang more than once. (I found out days later, at our farewell party, one very good reason for this song appealing to me so strongly.) I took no photos at this event, because I was so engrossed in it.

The Maleckis' voices were beautiful, and Paulo sang a lovely solo for us, but everyone sounded just

wonderful (and it wasn't just the pivo and vodka - we really sounded good!). We'd arrived on the outskirts of Lemkovyna just a few hours earlier, and yet our hosts, who always seemed to have just the right plans for us, had us singing in a language that all of us (except Dad) had never really heard before.

I spent a good hour engrossed in conversation with several members of the language tour (Pat, Nancy and John, with additional input from Marilyn and Jim) about our Lemko origins – it was fabulous. This evening was the best time I've had in years - a small room, a handful of people, some food, drink and music – I could not have been happier. Coming here and spending our time with the Maleckis was the best idea!

Day 3 – 7/18/08

Breakfast was interesting. There's a soccer team staying here, and they got to the dining room just before we did and were busy with the buffet, cleaning it out pretty well. But we all eventually got what we wanted. After we ate almost all of it, a waitress brought us some scrambled eggs. Dad, of course, felt he had to eat all of it, so he was stuffed. He's not usually much of a breakfast eater, so this was a new experience for him.

Andrzej and Paulo arrived on time and we all set off for Wola Cieklińska, the village where Dido was born. It took only about twenty minutes to get there from Gorlice. The day was overcast, so the views were a bit obscured, but the hills, and mountains (Magura Wantkowska – pronounced "Vontkovska") were gorgeous. Before we knew it, we followed the sign for Cieklin, which brought us into the village of Wola Cieklińska.

To my surprise, it was not an empty field, as I'd suspected! There were many homes, and a good percentage of them were original Lemko homes. I shot video for both Dad and me, and took many photos. Dad seemed pleased to see it, but not much moved by it. I was practically hyper-ventilating when we went into the Wola Cieklińska cemetery, where I gathered some earth from a grave to sprinkle over Dido's grave, so far away in Cohoes, NY. On our way back from that site we intended to speak with an old woman who had been deported to Ukraine in 1945



A true Lemko homestead in Wola Cieklińska. Did Dido live here, or nearby? Possibly.

but had come back to her home in Wola Cieklińska (not very many did.) She wasn't home! We learned from a passing neighbor that she was at a family event in Ukraine, due back the following day.

Andrzej took it upon himself (as the intrepid guide that he is) to check with a neighbor at their home, which was located across a small stream from this one, whose house number was 31. The house of Dido's birth was number 30, but I learned some things that dispelled my notion that Dido's home must be very near to this one. First— they did not have numbers on their houses back then — nobody had any use for them. Second — property numbers were re-assigned, so the 31 on this house was unlikely to match the house's original number. OK, so maybe we weren't close. But maybe we were!

Andrzej was away from us for a few minutes, so we looked at and photographed the Lemko house before which we stood. Then he came quickly back, and he and Paulo told me to join them and to bring the genealogical information I had with me. They

seemed excited, so I was, too. What was going on? Not what I expected — something totally different but just as wonderful. They took me through this neighbor's back yard, full of firewood and chickens, to meet the three women standing in front of it. It appeared to me to be three generations, a baba, a mama, and an adult daughter, all of whom appeared to be anxious to convey something to us. It was funny, watching them all speak at once to Andrzej and among one another— I could tell that they were both confirming and contradicting one another at the same time, but they were all smiling and nodding their heads as they did so — I knew we were on to something. I also knew why Andrzej and Paulo wanted only one of our party — me - to accompany them as they conferred further with the three Polish women who were clearly enjoying the relation of the tale they were telling. Paulo translated for me, with Andrzej continuing to listen to the women speak to him in Polish, convey new details to Paulo, and continue speaking with them. It was quite the scene!

They asked me to show them my records, and they looked at them and began again to speak excitedly. Eventually the story was conveyed to me by Andrzej and Paulo that the house (on whose porch we now stood, because it was lightly raining) had come into the baba's family's possession as a result of *Akcja "Wisla"*, Operation Vistula, the forced deportation of Lemkos from their home villages and the invitation of Polish people to take over the homes that the Lemko had left to do so. Polish people who wanted them could, for free, come and take over homes vacated by the Lemkos – their family had taken over this one.

They told the story of the Lemko family that had lived there previously. The owner had a wife, two daughters and two sons. One of the sons had died young. The husband had gone to America to earn money, and taken the other son with him. The war came. Eventually the women went either to Ukraine in 1945 (when the Polish and Russian governments had conspired to lure Lemkos there), or were "relocated" to western Poland in 1947. The man's name was Dziama! The size and make-up of the family matched that of one of my father's aunts, both of whom had married men named Dziama. In 1965, two women, whose ages were estimated to be between 55 and 65 (correct for my records for the daughters of Mr. Dziama), came to this house, asking to see the home in which they had grown up. These were Dad's first cousins! They had tearfully toured the place, telling the current owners about their childhoods there. Then they had left– never to be seen or heard from again. I was shown photos of the original house, which had stood at that time alongside the beginning of the construction for the new house. Stones from the original foundation were used in its construction, and I was shown them. It was an exciting time for me, and I rushed to tell Dad, Mark & Car what I'd learned.

We visited the gorgeous old Lemko church in Pielgrzymka, and then drove into Folsz, a nearby village in which Dad's family tree had many roots. There is a place to eat there where they specialize in trout, which you can catch for yourself! After a couple of failed efforts, I managed to hook three of the four we needed for our lunch (Paulo caught the

other one). I carried a bucket with the fish to the man who would prepare them, and watched him whack each of them on the top of the head with a small club to knock them out. The next time I saw them they'd been expertly prepared with garlic and butter and served with French fries and salads. Yum! We took a short but lovely walk in Magurski National Park, in which this establishment resided, and then headed back to the hotel to rest up for the evening. The Lemko Vatra was beginning that evening, and we were considering being in attendance for that.



Picture 6. Pielgrzymka. John looking towards the church (not pictured) that his father would sometimes walk to from Wola Cieklińska.



Picture 7. Folsz - fishing for trout for lunch.

We rested, and at 5:00 Halina and Andrzej were here to pick us up. Because of the unstable weather, they suggested that we leave open the option of not attending the vatra tonight and, instead, to stop along the way to it at a horse farm and riding establishment that is run by the Polish government. This place was on the road toward Zdynia, and past Halina's home village. The farm is on Mount Magura,

in the Beskid Niski, which we climbed via a series of switchbacks. These mountain foothills, with the low clouds enveloping their upper slopes, would put romance back into even an unreclaimed Ebenezer Scrooge. They are enchanting, warm and embracing, like a mother's arms to a weary child. Seeing these hills gave me a new appreciation for the sacrifice made by those who chose to emigrate from here, and the level of crime committed by those who forced (or coerced) human beings to leave them. I also understand now completely why our Dido wanted to return. I expect these feelings to be compounded significantly over the next few days as we travel through them to our other destinations in Lemkovyna.

We enjoyed our tour of the stables, where Hutsul horses are kept for riding and breeding. Shorter, stronger and hardier than most other breeds, these stalwart but somewhat diminutive equines enjoyed our attention and the sweeter grasses we pulled for and fed to them. In one yard were this year's foals, alternatively feeding from their dames and prancing around, showing off a little for us. They were adorable.



Picture 8. Hutsul horse farm, Regietow.

It was raining, so the final decision was made to leave the vatra until tomorrow and to enjoy a meal at the restaurant there. We entered a large hall with an earthen fireplace near its center, open at both ends and on both sides, inside of which was a good size fire. Above the fire, being slowly rotated by an attendant was a roasting sheep, well-browned on the outside. Halina translated the menu for us, and then took our orders (and a bit of ribbing for her

waitressing skills, from Andrzej) to the counter. We had to settle for regular piva, as the raspberry juice they can flavor it with was not available. The borsht was light, with small pierogi floating in it – quite tasty. The simple Lemko meal of breaded and fried pork chop with sauerkraut was very nice, although Halina thought the kapusta was a little too sour.



Picture 9. Large oven inside the restaurant in Regietow. There is a whole sheep roasting in there!

We enjoyed this opportunity to get to know our hosts a bit more. Halina volunteered her brother in Yorktown Heights (about a twenty-minute drive from my home) to assist me with my Lemko language – I hope that he is as generous of spirit. Dad and Halina talked about cooking, with Dad once again describing his method for preparing his mushroom dish. By the time we had finished our meal and lingered a bit, a big group was taking over the place, so we took our leave of it.



Picture 10. View leaving the farm, Regietow.

The clouds were beginning to part and the sunset

was illuminating the eastern hills— they were even lovelier than before! Heading down the mountain, we stopped to view one of the many WW I cemeteries in Gorlice County – there are ten on Mount Magura alone. This was one of the most serene places to be interred that you could imagine, tucked into the hillside and guarded by huge pine trees and hardwoods. The young ages engraved on the markers brought home the tragedy of war, whose price is always paid by young vital men (and, nowadays, women). The drive home was pretty as the sun set over the western hills.

Our plan for tomorrow is to be picked up at 9:30 and brought to Zdynia for the Lemko vatra! Na zdrowia!

Day 4 – 7/19/08, Morning

Last evening I taught Dad how to play “skella-cuarenda,” a card game that our Italian neighbors play, and he enjoyed it. I asked him how he felt when we were in Wola Cieklińska – his father’s home village. I wondered why I did not observe a more dramatic reaction in him. He said he was thinking a lot about how his father lived there, but “didn’t get all gushy about it.”

Now it’s 5:30 a.m. on Saturday. The church bells ring every morning at this time – I will have to find out why. Mark was up an hour earlier, went out to smoke, and returned with a big cup of coffee. Dad stirred a minute ago, looked at his watch, and then settled back down – hopefully to sleep some more.

Around 6:00 a.m. Mark went out again, so I got dressed and went out to join him. He’d already made it a good three to five hundred yards, around the soccer field in back of the hotel, but I caught up with him and we had a nice stroll in a park along a small river. I took photos of a couple of statues there and found a few *Russula* (mushrooms) growing. We came back and had breakfast with Dad and Car – no eggs this morning, except the ones deviled with horseradish – delicious!

After breakfast we all took a shorter walk in that park but returned because Dad was chilly. On that walk, though, a small bird – kind of a cross between a bluebird and a sparrow – that hopped on the sides of the tree like a woodpecker, seemed curious about

me. It followed me and seemed to like it when I gave it some attention. I half expected it to hop right onto the finger I offered it, but it stopped short of that.

We got ready and were picked up by our hosts at 9:30. We’d packed some warmer clothes, in case we needed them, in my backpack, but the day started out clear and warm so I didn’t bother looking for my umbrella and poncho. The ride through the Beskidis was lovely, and with less cloud cover we saw more of them and more of the Lemko lands through which we traveled. When we arrived at the site of the vatra (in Zdynia), it reminded me of outdoor concerts in America, with people walking to and fro, cars parked along the small road (to avoid the 30 PLN parking fee), and the dirt/mud parking lot.

Halina led us into the vatra – Andrzej went back to Gorlice for the language tour folks. Cost of entry was 18 PLN/person (about 9 bucks American). Before we went in we shopped the vendors who were outside the venue, but they were mostly selling junky stuff. The vendors inside were much better, and we shopped them for about forty minutes (the vatra would not officially start until later). During the day Mark and Car found a nice painting of the Lemko church in Pielgrzymka and gave it to Dad as a gift – very thoughtful. I’m sure Dad will enjoy having that in his home.



Picture 11. Zdynia - 2008 Lemko Vatra.

Paulo and Natalia’s choir was first on the agenda so we were there for their opening songs. Halina was trying to signal them to let them know that the sound was carrying well – Paulo is into audio engineering and I think was involved with the vatra’s sound

equipment this year. The opening speeches went on way too long, with the choir required to stand in place all that time. I felt so bad for Paulo and Natalia, stuck standing up there for so long.



Picture 12. Zdynia, 2008 Lemko Vatra, opening song sung by the choir. Paulo and Natalia in center back row.

Dad got hungry around 12:30, so we took him down to the food tent. Halina led us to a good vendor, where we ordered pierogi and kielbasa, and Halina and I found us a table. Once we were settled, Halina went back to watch her kids perform while we enjoyed our food and piva (raspberry-flavored—yum). There were 3 guys at the table behind Mark and Car, who were seated across from me and Dad. They appeared to have started drinking a good 36 hours or more earlier. Any one of them might have been the Lemko equivalent of a Cohoes “barfly”, back in the 70’s, a pretty well-known local type in our home town. The guy closest to us, who barely had more teeth than fingers, kept trying to communicate with us and give us the “thumbs up” sign, despite having only one half of that thumb. They were cute, a little scary, and funny to watch as they sang one song or another and looked very pleased with themselves as they drank and smoked.

We went back for the performances, sitting or standing as seats became available (and procured by Halina, who always seems to know what we will want or need before we do) and we were enjoying watching the performers and watching Dad enjoy them. He was picking up “some” of what he was hearing in the lyrics. I’ll have to see if I can get a printout of the program, so I can better identify and recall the ones we saw. Dad and I did some recording

with our video cameras. One time I spotted Dad with his recorder pointed toward himself instead of at the stage, so I quickly remedied that. He’s still not so good with it, but I love the way he keeps at it.



Picture 13. Zdynia, 2008 Lemko Vatra stage.

Nestled in the valley the way we were, the clouds swirled, so the weather changed back and forth between sun and clouds, and eventually rain came, sending all of us scrambling for cover and umbrellas. Again, amazingly, Andrzej showed up with my umbrella and poncho and offered them to me, asking “You want?” How had he gotten them? Weren’t they still in the room, where I thought I’d left them this morning? No – apparently I’d left them in the van the previous day, which everyone but me seemed to know. I was glad to have them, though, as the rains came several times before 3:00.



Picture 14. Performers at the 2008 Lemko Vatra, Zdynia.

Halina’s father was at the vatra – a 78-year-old Lemko – and we all got to meet him. He and Dad started chatting like old buddies – on the topic of

mushrooms, mostly. Halina told us that he spends many hours and treks many miles to collect and bring home mushrooms each autumn. Ironically, he doesn't like to eat them! Instead, he dries them and offers them to family and friends. What a sweet guy. I hope I'm able to bring some American mycologists to him. If I recall correctly, Halina said that he was sent to Silesia in 1947, and then returned as soon as he could after the mandatory ten-year waiting period. Due to some technicality he was forced to re-purchase his own land, which he did. Halina was born there, but her older brother, Shtefan, was born in Silesia. He, unfortunately, died two years ago, at 48, from a stroke.



Picture 15. Zdynia, 2008 Lemko Vatra: Halina's father, Halina and John enjoying each others' company, talking mushrooms!

Around 3:30 Carolina told me that Dad was ready to go, and asked if I wanted to as well. I did not! I knew that the Maleckis were going to need to make at least one more run back to Gorlice, so I asked the language group folks if they had an idea as to when they'd be leaving and if they had room for one more. Fortunately, they did, and they planned to depart around 6:00 p.m. So I stayed.

At 5:00 I checked with the language group – they were still on for 6:00 or so – so I returned to my new friends in the third row for another half an hour, during which we saw “the Cossacks” perform – what a foursome they were! Awesome.

I asked Halina if she would help me to pick out some items to buy before we left, and she was happy to do so: earrings and a pendant (Swavorski crystal) for Margaret and nice box to put jewelry into, and a

box to hold playing cards for me. I added a nice wooden plate, to decorate the china cabinet, too. As we returned to the stage I explained to Halina that Dad had some discomfort with the payment situation (we had not brought enough cash with us), and she understood completely. She will speak with him soon and reassure him that payment after-the-fact via wire transfer was a common practice. This should solve the problem.

We (the language group and I) left the vatra around 6:00 and were in the hotel dining room for dinner by 7:00. Dad, Mark and Car had been there since they returned, eating dinner and then enjoying some nice piva (no raspberry for them). One of the C-RS people wasn't feeling so well on the ride back, so I'd ridden up front with Andrzej and Halina (again, I think Halina had seen that she was ill and that I would probably not want to sit beside her in the back of the van, so she offered me the seat beside her in front.) The Beskid Niskis were even more clearly visible on the way home, and I got my first peak at the higher Carpathians in the distance as we once again went over Mount Magura. This place is so very scenic – it just calls to me and touches me deeply. I'm thinking right now how I over-romanticize and tend to imagine idyllic lifestyles that simply could not exist – at least not live up to the dream. But with that comes the revelation that life is very short and fast, so if I'd like to spend a lot of time with friends, I'd better make more of them and make the efforts to see them more often. I want more of that in my life– good friendships and life shared joyously with them. It's time I pursued hobbies and interests designed to cre-



Picture 16. The sun is getting low over the 2008 Lemko Vatra, Zdynia.

ate things and situations around with I can gather those whose company I crave and value. I may not be able to live in the Beskids, but I can do my best to instill and cultivate in myself the spirit that they impart to those who live here.

Day 5 – 7/20/08, Morning

It's about 4:30 AM and I've been awake (again) since about 3:30 – I don't seem to need more than 4 hours of sleep here each night. I awaken feeling refreshed, start thinking about what's been going on here, and that's it – I'm up. The birds are singing and chirping lovely greetings to the pre-dawn light by which I'm writing this, as Dad continues to sleep.

It's Sunday, our fifth day here, and already I am beginning to think how hard it is going to be to leave. I love this area and the Lemkos I've been so fortunate to meet. Halina has suggested a great idea – to come back one September with as many mycologists as I can arrange, to have a foray south of here, in the vicinity of her father's home, with her father as our guide! Perhaps I can arrange something that includes some Polish mycologists and enthusiasts as well. We'd have to work out places and activities for spouses, children, etc as well. But for the most part we'd have ourselves (and possibly local Lemkos) to entertain us.

Evening

Halina and Andrzej took us today to Slovakia, so we drove with them through the Carpathian Beskids. On the way we saw Gypsy people and their homes. Andrzej and Halina told us that if we stopped under their encampment (which looked like garages with satellite dishes, and were on a bit of a hill along the side of the road), that we would be attacked with thrown rocks.

Our first stop in Slovakia was Bardejovske Kupele, a spa town, where people go to get healthy – there are mineral springs there and an entire industry has been built around it. It's a pretty place, with a hotel that was frequented by a Hungarian emperor who brought his mistresses there. A small orchestra played German classics for those assembled, and we enjoyed that for a while. We were amused when a small boy took up a "baton" and imitated the conductor (who Car said had a sexy voice). While

there I noticed Halina take my father's arm and discuss with him the financial and payment situation, assuring him that post-travel payment was very common. He melted under the warmth of her natural Lemko charm. I was very pleased to observe this, and all the more grateful that I had decided to employ the Maleckis as our guides, instead of another option that I was considering.



Picture 17. The spa town of Bardejovske Kupele. John and Halina discuss the town's history.

There was a Rusyn skansen there, so we visited the assembled buildings within it. Many of them had more modern "conveniences" than the Lemko homes we saw in the skansen in Nowy Sącz, so they were clearly of more recent origin.



Picture 18. At the skansen in Bardejovske Kupele. Andrzej describes the working of an old device to Carolina and Mark.

We saw some nice wagons and sleds, too. There was even a one-horse-powered machine that served many purposes, such as chopping wood and grass. I

liked the device contrived to squeeze oil from flaxseed the best. Mark most enjoyed the hydro-powered device as well as the basic construction methods, such as the inter-linking logs, set so that they would not pull apart from one another, the wooden “nails” and the effort required to cut the logs so meticulously. We both liked the huge “chimney” that was lined with hay and mud.



Picture 19. Skansen in Bardejovske Kupele.

We enjoyed a nice lunch there, with dark or light beer. During dinner we had a lot of laughs, and Mark almost made me choke on my kielbasa when he made a comment about sticking his butter knife in either me or Dad when we argued about whether or not French-Canadian is French. Typical Rock fun.

After lunch I showed Dad, Mark and Halina a fairy ring of mushrooms in the lawn, and then it was on to another Slovak city, Bardejov, known as “Little Cracow.” It had a beautiful town square with a huge church and town hall as its centerpieces. Most

buildings’ ages ran from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries. It was a perfect opportunity for excellent photos and just strolling and enjoying the place and one another. The Maleckis knew of a wonderful ice cream place there, where we cooled off a bit with a delicious cone (some more than one); cherry for Dad and me. We had fun trying to pronounce the Slovak word for ice cream (*zmrzlina*) with frozen tongues.



Picture 20. Learning to say *zmrzlina* in Bardejov.



Picture 21. Bardejov.

Halina and I made some modifications to the agenda for our two days in Wysowa, which would begin the following day, and our return to the airport on Wednesday. We’ll be on our own for part of Monday afternoon and Tuesday until around 2:00, when they’ll pick us up to take us to a Lemko woman’s home in Ropki for our cooking lesson and a farewell party.

Day 6 – 7/21/08

I can’t believe that it’s Day 6 already, and I’m soon to

be asleep. I went to bed last night after foolishly drinking and eating too much – we'd had a large lunch in Slovakia, where I ate the last piece of kielbasa I'll probably ever eat. My pescetarian system seems to be telling me to "knock it off already" with the meat. I awoke around 2:15 with a very bad stomach ache. I thought I might vomit. I didn't, but it wasn't improved when I got up at 7:00, either. But it did not stop me from enjoying a wonderful day after having just a bit of juice and coffee for breakfast.

Andrzej and Natalia brought us through a series of Lemko villages (Leszczyny, Kunkowa, and Uscie Gorlickie) on our way to my Baba's home village of Wysowa. The views we encountered along the way were stunningly spectacular. The hills, the villages, the homes, churches and cemeteries were more incredibly beautiful than I had imagined they could possibly be.



Picture 22. Church in Leszczyny.

I made Andrzej stop repeatedly so we could take it all in, and I could shoot some photos. Dad was visibly moved by the grandeur presented to us. I could tell that the area was part of him, and him of it. His steadfast expression has been slowly diminishing as

the trip has proceeded – today it was removed – at least while he traveled his ancestral Lemkovyna. When he spoke Lemko, the Maleckis were clearly pleased and happy. I think they all really like him. Andrzej told us the story of how his grandfather's village was destroyed when the (Soviet) government built a dam and flooded it to create a reservoir. It was quite sad, and Natalia expressed to me that she has bad feelings about the place whenever she is there. No wonder.



Picture 23. Gravestone detail with what is believed to be the oldest known photograph of Lemkos. Uscie Gorlickie.

We saw the oldest known photograph of Lemkos, dressed in the classic style, on a grave stone in Uscie Gorlickie, along with many other graves in a number of cemeteries. I kept apologizing to them as I moved about their resting places. Natalia told us that there is a project underway to document with photos all of the headstones in all of the cemeteries – that will probably take years. Andrzej will be one of the contributing photographers.



Picture 24. Leszczyny.

The Lemkovyna we saw today was the one I came

to see. Wola Cieklińska is nice, Pielgrzymka very pretty, but the Beskidz call to me. I was affected viscerally, and frequently on the verge of tears, as I am now just recalling it. I was absolutely overwhelmed. It's gorgeous, and I love it. Again I thought of the anguish and suffering that must have been experienced by those who chose or were forced to leave it all behind. I can't imagine that kind of heartbreak. I am so fortunate to have had two very courageous young people who were willing to endure that, leave their families, and take the risky and dangerous journey to an entirely different place, with no certainty that they would ever see their loved ones or beloved homeland again.

We entered Wysowa at just past Noon. It was very overcast, so we decided to have a meal in the Lemko tavern and then decide what to do afterward. The meal was fabulous – the best pierogi we've had since arriving. The tavern used to be a school—Andrzej worked there for a year. In fact, it was one of the two schools in the village, so, as it turns out, the first place where we stopped was a building where Baba had almost certainly attended school.

During lunch Andrzej told us of the route that most Lemkos probably took to the new world when they emigrated. They would go north (by foot, horse, wagon, whatever) to Jasło, then take a train to Warsaw. After that there would be another train to Bremen, Germany, where they waited, then boarded the steamship that took them across the Atlantic.

After lunch (again, I ate too many pierogi, but who could blame me?), we checked into the Glimar Hotel – a much better hotel than the Margot in Gorlice. Our hosts then took us to the "Holy Mountain," a place to which pilgrimages are undertaken to reach the spot where it is said that visions of Mary, the mother of Jesus, were experienced.* The walk up the hill was steeper and harder than it had appeared from the starting point. We took it in stages, stopping often so Dad could catch his breath (it wasn't just for Dad that we stopped, I don't mind telling you). We ascended

* For more about the appearance of the Mother of God to the Lemko people of Wysowa, see the announcement of Alexi Currier's new book, *The Blue Lady of Sycamore Hill*, on p. 33 of this issue. (Editor's note.)

through a forest of mainly beech trees, most of which had grown irregularly – it was odd, to see so many misshapen trees in one place. A straight tree was an anomaly! The chapel at the top was smaller and less ornate than those we'd seen earlier in the day. I more enjoyed a walk over the crown of the hill, where we were rewarded with beautiful vistas of Slovakia. In fact, we crossed the border (by stepping over some sticks that marked it) just over the top of the hill. There is a Rusyn village in the valley we observed from there – it was quite beautiful.



Picture 25. The chapel on Sycamore Hill near Wysowa.



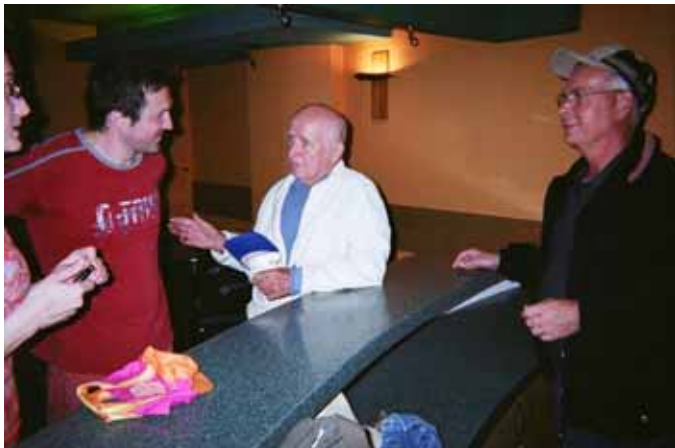
Picture 26. View into Slovakia from Sycamore Hill near Wysowa.

Andrzej and I walked back from the Slovakian border together. When I explained to him how the places we'd seen affected me, he paid me a great compliment by referring to me as a "true Lemko." Despite the fact that I'm only half Rusyn, I have to agree.

We returned to Wysowa and looked through the

cemetery there, but found no headstones with any of Dad's family names, despite Jim Stamm's information that said we would. Oh, well – nobody with all the info that he tracks can be expected to recall all of it accurately.

You'd think that all of this would have made the evening lackluster by comparison. Not so. After our dinner at the Glimar, we found the hotel's two-lane bowling alley where a family of a father, mother and two daughters were bowling. We began to encourage them with applause, and after a couple more frames the father came over to chat. He had spent four years in Queens, New York, but now lives in his home town in far east-southern Poland, near the Ukrainian border. We were enjoying our conversation, which led from topic to topic. At one point I asked him if he knew anyone named Dziama – the last name of the two men who married my father's aunts, and whose last known whereabouts was in Boryslav, Ukraine. He did! In fact, he works with a man named Roman Dziama! I broke out my genealogical records (which I'd always carried with me) and showed them to him. He immediately pointed to one occurrence (there are several) of the name "Roman Dziama" and stated emphatically "I work with that guy!" This was so wild – I could not believe it. We have no idea if this person is a relative, but we'll find out – I have his e-mail address. Even if he is not, there is a possibility that he can connect us to a Dziama who might be, or who might know a relative of ours. But it just goes to prove that you never know where and how you're going to make the next critical connection as you pur-



Picture 27. John and Mark converse with new friends in the Hotel Glimar's bowling alley, Wysowa.

sue your genealogical quest. Perhaps a chance conversation with a pleasant stranger in a two-lane bowling alley in a hotel that is, in a few short weeks, going to be a hotel no more but be converted to a sanitarium, with a stranger from whom, before the night ended, you would receive an invitation to stay with them whenever we visit again, will lead you to the very relatives you've long sought. You just never know!



Picture 28. Church in Blechnarka, used as a barn after Operation Vistula.

Day 7 – 7/22/08, 1:00 PM

Another phenomenal day already, and it's only 1:00 p.m.!

Dad and I were taken to Blechnarka by Emil Sczur and Wayne, who I had met at the vatra in Zdynia, along with Jim Stamm, a genealogist from Arizona who was also staying at the Glimar, and a young man named Bartek Bartko, who is a fifth cousin of Jim Stamm's, lives in Uscie Gorlickie, and who would serve as our interpreter. There we had some serious revelations.

First we visited an old Lemko church, which was gorgeous. Shockingly, the locals, after Operation Vistula, had used it as a barn! There was also a cemetery there, where we found a headstone with the Truchan name on it – a family name, but probably not a relative. It was a very common name, as was Ferencz (another name in our genealogy).

While there, I spoke with Emil and told him that when I came to Poland, I believed that my deep heartfelt connection to Lemkovyna was through my

grandfather, but, after driving through the Beskidis, visiting the Lemko villages there, and arriving in my grandmother's village of Wysowa, I felt differently. I told him that I think now that this connection comes to me through my grandmother, who had lived not a mile and a half up the road from where we then stood, not through my grandfather.

We then went to visit Mrs. Jakubiec (pronounced "Ya-koo-be-its") who Emil and Jim had visited last year and learned so much from – as it turns out, she was good friends with Emil's mother. Everyone we encountered in the village had referred us to her, telling us that "she knows everything." She is now 81 years old. Bartek interpreted for us, and asked about the Hryckanycz (my father's mother's maiden name) family.



Picture 29. John visiting Mrs. Jakubiec in Blechnarka.

Mrs. J. began rattling off first names of Hryckanyczs that she knew – all of them fit the list of Dad's Uncle Stefan, who was born in 1849 and married Rosalia Kuryllo (born 1856) on February 7, 1875. Their kids were Julianna, Martha, Demetri (she did not much remember the older ones), Irina (b. 1885), Jan (b. 1891), Basili (b. 1894), and Maria (b. 1897). When Jim Stamm first heard her response, he was shocked. He stopped Bartek and asked "did she know them?" I immediately pulled out my genealogical data and, as she went through the names again, Bartek and I were checking them off on the page. It was amazing. She had known Dad's first cousins!

Mrs. J. fit the classic description of a baba, 81 with only a few teeth left in her head, short, smart, tough

and independent. While we were there she continued to prepare a meal (getting up from her chair by the window to do so), mashing potatoes and adding a kind of gravy (Dad has the Lemko word for it- *zypraška*) to them. She told us the names of the villages near Lviv, where my father's family had gone in 1945-47. I was grateful to learn that the Nazis had not stood them all up and shot them, as they had Emil's ancestors. She kept looking over at me and smiling, and eventually stopped saying whatever it was she was saying at the time to tell Bartek, as she pointed at me, "If I saw him coming toward me and someone asked me 'Who is that?' I'd say 'I don't know, but he looks just like Jan Hryckanycz'" – one of Dad's first cousins. Imagine how I felt just then" – being told about my strong resemblance to my father's first cousin on his mother's side, when not an hour earlier I had told Emil that I felt that my Lemko roots ran from my grandmother's side of the family tree. Not an hour later!

Mrs. J. wanted to know how many of us had attended the Lemko vatra– all but Bartek raised our hands. Then she wanted to know how it was, and told us that we all had to come back next year and visit her when we do. She was very adamant that we come to visit her– she loves company. It was hard to leave her, but she had a meal to eat and we had an appointment to keep at 1:30, so leave we did, but not before giving her many hugs, and kissing her, and calling her "Baba." She liked that. So did I. What a beautiful woman.

Dad was overwhelmed with this two-hour venture that told him so much, including an excellent estimation of the place where his mother's (or perhaps uncle's) house had stood. It is across the street from the church, five or six houses in from the corner, on the road that now leads up to the Glimar Hotel– the very hotel in which we were staying. The same Glimar that we would not be staying in if we had not come here this year, because it is being converted to a sanitarium in September. And why are we here, in this particular hotel? Because when I researched local hotels, the photos on the Glimar's website appealed to me so strongly – images of the hills and valleys of this section of the Beskid Niskis, so close to the Slovakian border– images that my

grandmother must have carried with her until the day she died, seventy years and seven days ago.

10:00 PM

Tonight's entry will likely be the last I make while still in Lemkovyna— we are scheduled to leave the hotel around 9:00 a.m. tomorrow morning, to be driven to Balice Airport in Cracow by our guide (and expert driver), Andrzej. The rain is falling, light and steady here in Wysowa. We've had a very full, joyful, delightful and heart-rending day.

What a *great* time we had at this evening's events— a dinner and farewell party in the home of some wonderful Lemkos in Ropki. Absolutely exquisitely delicious home-made Lemko dishes, Andrzej's smooth home-made vodka, Halina's perfect combination of enthusiasm, charm and orchestration, Andrzej's continual demonstration of artistry, craftsmanship and ingenuity, the companionship and shared passion of the C-RS Language Tour – all combined for a very moving and highly enjoyable evening and send-off. I was moved to tears several times in the course of these events, watching Dad stir the same delicious soup that his mother used to make for him, while singing those wonderful traditional Lemko songs, when people were making toasts (Halina's especially), and at other times when the week's experiences simply overwhelmed me. Not only will I never forget this week, but I'll also cherish and be forever and grateful for it. The songs of Lemkovyna now live within me and will be forever expressed from my heart.



Picture 30. Ropki: John stirs a pot of *keselitsa*, the soup that his mother made for him as a boy.

One last note - it was at the farewell party that I

finally found out the reason for "Lisom Lisom" appealing to me so strongly - apparently the lyrics are about a man who went out to pick mushrooms, and ended up making love instead. When John told me this I laughed and said: "No wonder I love this song so much— it has everything I want in it!" When I related this story to Dad, later in the evening over our last pivas in the hotel lounge, he said with a big smile on his face: "That's where Henry came from!" (Henry was his younger brother.)



Picture 31. Singing 'Lisom, Lisom.'

Day 8 – 7/23/08: Flying Home

Unfortunately, our journey has to have an end – or, at least I hope, only an intermission. Today was the day our journey in Lemkovyna ended, and our trip back home began. We awoke to rainy conditions, which at least one of us (who simply cannot seem to sleep between the hours of 3:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m.) can testify, fell steadily all night. Reluctantly, and with a heavy heart, I packed my bags for the last time in Lemkovyna. Of course, the prospect of being reunited with my beloved wife, Margaret, offsets this. I can't wait to regale her with the stories, songs, photos and revelations that were bestowed upon me in my short time here. Off we went to breakfast, thinking these revelations had already ended. But not yet.

Jim Stamm, the genealogist from Arizona, who was also staying at the Hotel Glimar in Wysowa, is nothing if he is not doggedly persistent to follow a trail to its source (as he did with the Ropa River last summer). The man has been incredibly helpful and supportive to me as I've plundered the riches of my Lemko heritage over the last five years. He was waiting for us in the dining room this morning, and

greeted me with the weighty statement: "I have news." Knowing Jim, I had no doubt that this was going to be good, and I was right. Jim had invested the time and effort it took to determine the relationship or lack thereof between my father and the Truchan whose headstone we discovered in the Blechnarka cemetery the previous day. (Was it really only yesterday? it already seemed a long time ago.)



Picture 32. Blechnarka - Jim Stamm and John inspect a tombstone of a Truchan - an ancestor, perhaps?

Having received verbal description of who lies beneath it (Christina Truchan) from Mrs. Jakubiec, Jim later took that information with him as he delved once again into that massive and convoluted construction he's made of his genealogical database. What he determined connected my father not only to another Truchan (Joachim), but to someone else as well!

According to Jim (and summing it all up), it plays out like this: Going up the genealogical ladder from Joachim Truchan – father: Theodore; father: Daniel; father: Andrew. Andrew Truchan is my father's great-great-grandfather. He is also the great-great-grandfather of none other than Mrs. Jakubiec herself! (Joachim was Mrs. J's grandfather.)

So the dear, sweet, loving and generous human library of knowledge about Blechnarka and Wysowa from whom Dad learned so much about his mother's family was also a distant cousin of his! I was shocked not by this new revelation, but by the fact that Jim had done all of that work in the short time that had passed since I'd last seen him (about twenty hours ago), in addition to everything else he'd accomplished

in that time (apparently sleep does not rate high on his priority list while he is in Lemkovyna.)

Our friend Emil Sczur, who was also at breakfast, told me that they had returned to Mrs. Jakubiec's house later in the day (we'd been there for about an hour, from noon to almost 1:00 p.m.) to bid her farewell, and described to me how she had tearfully embraced them all and received from all of them promises to return to visit her again next year. Isn't it just great that she is so confident that not only will she be there next year, but will be able to once again accept them into her home and demonstrate her consistently high standard of hospitality? I once again heartily thanked my friends Jim, Emil and Wayne, and made commitments to each of them to maintain close contact and constant collaboration.

A short while later Andrzej and Paulo were there to pick us up for our drive to the Balice Airport just west of Cracow, from which we would fly to Warsaw to board the flight we are on now. It was still raining, and Paulo's first comment to me summed up how I was feeling at the time. He said: "It is time for you to leave Lemkovyna for now, and the sky is sad for you."

Something significant occurred just then. I am neither religious nor superstitious, but the connection I'd discovered between my longing to visit Lemkovyna, and my physical connection to my father's mother's side of the family, combined with the fact that I was now departing from a place from which I could practically throw a stone (well, perhaps my voice) and hit the plot of land on which my grandmother's home had stood, the day after visiting the church where she had most likely been baptized, and only a week after the seventieth anniversary of my Baba's death, really forced me to re-evaluate my perspective on the physical, spiritual and cultural attributes that make up our reality as we experience it. I acknowledge that there are plenty of ways (believe me – my center-brained logical mind already was quickly recounting them) to totally discount and discard any such notions, and in the future, when not under the spell cast upon me by the grandeur of Lemkovyna and the proud children of the countless generations it has nourished over the centuries, I might be more inclined to allow the passage of time and the fading of memories to do so. But for today I

am content to feel that I have been somehow spiritually guided by my Lemko ancestors to return to our beloved homeland, to rekindle its culture and customs in myself and in as many other Lemko descendants as I might have the privilege to share this with, and to take into my heart (and soul? Is this really me saying this?) and dearly cherish the true spirit of the beautiful, courageous, resilient, joyful and passionate people known as Lemkos.



Picture 33. *“It is time for you to leave Lemkovyna now, and the sky is sad for you.”*

It is now many hours later in the day. We’ve taken a flight to Warsaw and are now on the flight from there to Newark, New Jersey, USA. I sit now in a seat on an airplane thousands of feet above the Atlantic Ocean, part of a journey (of less than 1 day) from the heart of Lemkovyna to my home in New York State, just about equidistant from the two places to which my father’s two parents initially traveled, 105 and 116 years ago, that took them several weeks, if not longer – by foot, train and steamship. I will return to a loving wife of nearly twenty-five very happy years, who will welcome me gratefully and lovingly into our warm and comfortable home. My father sits beside me. He had gazed out the window as we flew over very much the same route to the ocean port that was my grandparents’ first primary destination: Bremen, Germany. He noted when we first transitioned from flying over land to beginning to cross the ocean. We fly a bit further north than the route that the steamships likely sailed, but will eventually land in eyesight of the port of New York, the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, all of which

greeted these two immigrants who were to eventually meet, fall in love, marry and raise eight children. The seventh of these eight, my father, John (Iwan) Rock, with his wife, Evelyn Marie Schramm, whose lineage is not Lemko but German (on her father’s side) and French-Canadian (on her mother’s) raised not only eight children of their own, but eight more in addition! (In true old-world Lemko style.) Had they only matched my paternal grandfather’s family in size, I, the ninth, would not be here right now, enjoying a rapidly-accelerated voyage of my own from Lemkovyna to the USA.

My grandparents were surely greeted either at the New York port or very near to it by a family member or friend, and had to almost immediately find a means to not only support themselves, but to assist the family members that they joined here as well as those that they had left behind when they risked all that they knew and loved to come here. My time in Lemkovyna was a teardrop in an ocean compared to theirs, and I’ve shed tears a number of times in the last two days (right now, in fact, as my father falls asleep beside me) because of what I’ve newly discovered and so quickly have to depart from. It would be preposterous of me to compare the mild chagrin I am experiencing right now to the tragedy that was the separation of these true sons and daughters of Lemkovyna from the land of their birth, their family and friends, and the graves of their ancestors. How their hearts must have ached. How their spirits must have fought their bodies and minds, which propelled them to foreign lands, where they were to work not on the land, as they were accustomed, but under it, in mines, or shut off from it, in factories and mills. How they must have yearned, for the decades that were to pass before they were once more, and for all eternity, reunited with the earth, to return to the soul-restoring hills, valleys, streams, farms, faces, arms. lips, songs and bosom of Lemkovyna, even if only to visit her for a short while.

My grandparents never again experienced Lemkovyna, except in their thoughts, which could never have been far from there, and in their dreams, which must have given them deeply-satisfying and restorative nights’ rest after a day of toiling to

achieve a better life for the families who remained in Lemkovyna and the family they had created thousands of miles and an ocean away from them. What great respect I have for them. What gratitude. I am in awe of them – so much more so now that I have experienced this region and its people for myself, albeit only for a short while.

How pampered and spoiled I am, in comparison to them, having been raised to never experience true hardship. I have enjoyed the benefit of an excellent education provided for me and been presented with ample opportunities to work in a wide range of occupations, where I've earned my ability to support myself, not by the sweat of my brow, ache of my back or blistering and callusing of my hands, but by applying the clever mechanics of the mind that evolved from a people who needed to outwit hardship and fickle Mother Nature in order to survive day-by-day and year-by-year. The conditions under which I've been employed for the last twenty-five of the thirty-five years that have passed since I entered the work force have been consistently temperature-controlled, well-lit, ergonomically correct and supportive of the attainment and maintenance of good health – far different from the conditions under which my grandparents and even my father had toiled. For this and for the fact that my employment put me in close proximity to the warm, loving, generous and beautiful person who did me the honor of accepting my proposal of marriage within a year of meeting me – her ancestry is still in question, but there may very well be Lemko blood running through her veins due to her (as indicated by her parents) Polish, Austrian and “orphan” ancestry – I will be forever grateful to my grandparents on both sides of my family.

But I sometimes wonder if I'd have existed at all if my Lemko Baba and Dido had never taken those fateful journeys over a century ago. And I, of course, indulge myself a bit in romanticizing about trading in my life as I know it and starting one anew (or returning to the one I would have had, depending on your perspective) in Lemkovyna.

It's a nice fantasy to enjoy, but not one to which I give any serious consideration. However, it provides ample food for thought. For example: If there are, as

many believe, an infinite number of alternate universes side-by-side, each only a tiny fraction of historical experience different from the next, are there versions of me now enjoying life as a modern-day Lemko in Lemkovyna? If so, how would he respond if he were given the opportunity to swap the life he has, life as he has always known it, for the life that I've been given and have enjoyed? What are the chances that he would turn his back on Lemkovyna forever to live somewhat more comfortably and conveniently, but away from everything he's known and loved all of his life? Would he have the appreciation for its uniqueness if he'd never been removed from it?

And if there are an infinite number of alternate realities, covering the entire breadth of human experience, from the first creation of life in our planet's oceans to the present day and beyond, how would my alternate-reality selves have felt about this potential swap in 1892, when my Dido made his decision to emigrate, if they could somehow know then what my present-day selves know now? How would their decisions change from one year to another as borders changed, and countries clashed and conspired one against the other to eradicate or expel a nation from its homeland of many centuries? Under how many scenarios would the decisions of my alternate selves have changed the situation and conditions under which I find myself today? Would I feel any more or less happy and content under different circumstances? Would Lemkovyna have the same seductive power over me as it does today, having only discovered my Lemko roots five years ago, but being inexplicably drawn to her, my return to her then provided for me, so that I might feel this deep craving satiated?

But, alas, for mine is not. Quite the contrary. Like the trout that I caught for lunch at that restaurant's pond in Folusz a few days ago, I feel as if I've been eagerly pursuing the bait that was cast before me when Lemkovyna and my attachment to it was first revealed to me, eager to taste it but wary of the price that I could sense I would pay if I did. Having finally discovered the sweet succulence of its sustenance, I feel the firmly-embedded hook of the lure, and I revel in its captivity. That one taste, even if I should never

enjoy it again (a prospect I'd rather not entertain, especially right now, when my lips are still smacking and my tongue continues to scour them for just one more fleeting instant of satiation), is worth a lifetime of longing for another. Fully satisfied, I still starve. It's like eating a very full and delicious meal, only to have your stomach immediately start growling at the first scent or mention of the aromas that emanate from the kitchen as your mother puts the final touches on your favorite home-cooked meal. Nothing has physically changed – the loving spirit of Lemkovyna fills me, satisfying every hunger and quenching all thirst, but I would gladly and gratefully consume another entire meal. These meals would never make me fat; in fact they would never lessen or depreciate my health in any way. The life-giving energy they provide would saturate all with whom I make contact, as it does with Lemkos like Andrzej Malecki, Halina Malecka, and the members of the 2008 Carpatho-Rusyn Society's Lemko Language Tour, with whom I've so much enjoyed sharing this experience.

The Lemko spirit cannot be contained and is incapable of doing any harm. It must be released in camaraderie, companionship, laughter, love and song. It inspires great depth of emotional experience; tremendous joy, great and heart-rending sorrow. It compels us to seek justice, right wrongs, correct the mistakes of the past, make amends for our own transgressions – all in ways that are never abusive, coercive, insidious or destructive, but are instead patient, logical, persuasive, charming, persistent and, yes, loving. I have no doubt that this is true. In my short time here I've witnessed a steady stream of evidence that supports all that I've said here. I have seen it in the commitment of our American Lemko population, who stoke the fires of Lemko cultural awareness with their heritage and language tours, as well as their support of individuals, families, parishes and initiatives in the homeland and the countries which house our proud nation. In those who educate the citizens of the world with articles, newsletters, books, artwork, forums and Web sites. In the dedication and commitment of those who teach us about our heritage and lead us on tours of our ancestral homelands, sharing all of their knowledge, skills, passion and love with us as they do so. In the

voices and graceful movements of the singers, dancers, choirs and ensembles who continue to learn and share with us our traditional music in venues large, small, near and far. In the joyful faces of those who attend Lemko festivals, vattras, and activities of local C-RS chapters. In the tear-filled eyes and mournful expressions of those who shared with us their memories of events, places and people that they once knew but from whom they have not heard since they were untimely ripped away from their homes, neighbors and friends on the whims of government officials who neither understood nor appreciated them. In the appreciative and loving gazes of Lemkos who, after many visits to the same Lemko sites with one visitor after another, are still filled with the same loving admiration and appreciation for them as must have existed when they first beheld them – you cannot imitate that sincerity; I felt it as much as saw it. In the voices of Lemkos, raised joyously and without a shred of shame or self-criticism, as they sang Lemko songs, many for the very first time and, for the first time, speaking the Lemko language. In the purity and spellbinding melodic voices of the Lemkos who know the songs well and sing them not from a printed page, but from a place where they are etched deep in their hearts and flow easily through their souls and out their mouths. In the instruments of Lemkos who play these songs so sincerely that any voice accompanying them participates in a blessed and sacred harmony that will haunt the listener for the rest of their lives. In the minds and hearts of those who, out of a necessity that has no explicable origin, are compelled to not only learn the truth about their own Lemko ancestry through (dogged and often expensive) research, but collaborate with and assist their (initially completely unknown) Lemko brothers and sisters who are doing the same. In the shining eyes of researchers who recount stories about their known ancestors, such as one whose grandfather was the best blacksmith in the village and who very likely forged the very crosses that still adorn the steeples of that village's church, a church that he found when he visited a village that his mother told him no longer existed, and from within he heard the unlikely sound of an English-speaking voice that first revealed to him



and nourished the Lemko spirit within you? Are you in touch with it today? Fully satiated, do you still hunger? Whom have you allowed to be affected by it recently? Do Lemko words spring from your mouth? Do Lemko songs haunt your mind and burst forth from your heart, joyfully, unashamedly and proudly, and in the company of other like-minded Lemkos? Have you stoked that ember that still smolders within you, waiting

his Lemko roots. And I have seen it in the respectful and loving tone with which Lemko children address their parents and elders, and the obvious joy they take in sharing their knowledge of and passion for Lemkovyna with those of us who are experiencing it for the very first time.

No, this Lemko spirit cannot be contained once released. And, because of that, we must all do as much as we possibly can to see not only to its survival, but also to its nourishment and continual release. If we cannot live within Lemkovyna, we must be diligent in our efforts to ensure that Lemkovyna lives within us. We must nurture it the way that it nurtures us today, and in the way that it satisfied the souls of our forebears for millions of yesterdays, for the sad fact remains that the spirit's strength deceives us as to its mortality. Complacency on our parts could usher in its eventual demise. The horrors of population displacement would pale in significance, if this were ever allowed to come about.

But what can we do to ensure the survival of the Lemko spirit? Much. How have you recently fostered

patiently for you to build from it a bonfire – a vatra? If not, you must act soon to ensure that it does. Do not hesitate – the fate and future of our unique and precious culture may in part depend upon it. Have you visited the homeland? I can now tell you from experience that there is no better place to rekindle the passionate fire that should always and everywhere burn brightly within you, so that it can enthrall all those with whom you come in contact with its pure and generous, intoxicating presence.

Yes – that is the word – intoxicating. After my first visit to Lemkovyna, I've never been so sober or so completely, mournfully, wonderfully, and joyfully intoxicated. I sit in this seat on this airplane right now, several hours closer to and just a couple of hours away from the land first seen by my grandparents over a hundred years ago. My nearly 84-year-old father, subtly but definitely altered since he visited their home villages, has never been more dear to me. I am looking at a book (provided by Halina) called "Lemko-Rusyn... for Foreigners" that I immediately opened and from which I began to learn

as soon as I sat down in this seat – a gift from our Lemko Heritage Tours hosts, given to me in the course of a farewell dinner party during which, despite a strong desire and the words mentally scripted with which to do so, I could not toast them as we sang the traditional “Mnohaia Lita” that precedes the end of a celebration and the departure of its participants. Why could I not make this much-intended and heartfelt toast to them? Because I knew that, before uttering the first two syllables, I would have collapsed in a fit of sobbing, an unfortunate effect that powerful emotions tend to have upon me, because of the love that I felt at that moment for the assembled group and our hosts in particular, and still feel right now.

The Lemko spirit burns brightly within me today. I suspect that it will continue to do so as long as I continue to value and stoke it. But how will I nurture it, so far from Lemkovyna? Is it really possible for me to do so? Yes, it is, and yes, I will. I will learn Cyrillic and our Lemko language, and practice it with my father and the friends I made who went to Lemkovyna specifically to learn the language of our forefathers. I will attend events with my local Carpatho-Rusyn Society chapters. I will contribute to and participate in Lemko journals, forums and Web sites. I will tell and share with all who will listen to me about my culture, my journey to Lemkovyna and my adventure and educations here. I will do my best to exemplify the spirit that was so well demonstrated to me in Lemkovyna by people who quickly became cherished friends.

Yes, I will do all that I can to nurture the Lemko spirit within me. But if I ever feel the need to rekindle that spirit within myself, or if I ever find myself in a position that will allow me to once again retrace my grandparents’ journey and experience this beloved Lemkovyna again, I know who will hear about it first. They are the finest emissaries of our most precious Lemko spirit that we could hope for, capable of fanning even the slightest tiny flicker and, from it, producing a brilliant Lemko vatra. Yes, the first two people I will contact are true spiritual fire-starters: Andrzej Malecki and Halina Malecka.



Picture 34. The author’s home in Mahopac, NY: a table covered with souvenirs, each with precious memories attached.

Five Years Later

So much has happened in the five years that have passed since returning from Lemkovyna.

Less than a year later, I was again given a great gift from my friend Jim Stamm - this one the greatest of them all. He sent me an e-mail, asking me if I was aware that I have a Lemko cousin who lives in Yorktown. “Which Yorktown?”, was all I could ask. It was Yorktown Heights, a New York town not fifteen minutes down the road from where I live in Mahopac, NY. Jim had received an inquiry from a young lady asking if he could help her to locate any relatives who might live in the US.

Here’s where it gets really interesting. The person who had contacted Jim was the grand-daughter of Mrs. Jakubiec, to whom my father and I were introduced in Blechnarka, Poland, during our journey, Irena Truchan Gazda, daughter of Mrs. Jakubiec’s son Wladyslaw (Wladic) Truchan. Even more interesting—Wladic’s wife, Anna, is directly descended from my father’s Hryckanycz grandfather, making her my father’s first cousin once removed. Irena is my second cousin once removed and she lives less than ten miles from me! We have become close friends as well as cousins and she is helping me to learn the Lemko language and sharing with me many of our traditional customs, which her family still keeps.

During conversations with Irena I learned that the young woman in Blechnarka who had encouraged us to visit with Mrs. Jakubiec, saying that “she knows

everything” was Irena’s sister-in-law, her brother Stefan’s wife. So we had spoken with two relatives while in Blechnarka and did not even know it!

Unfortunately, within months of this wonderful union between us, Mrs. Jakubiec passed away. Even more tragically, Irena’s brother Stefan was killed in a bizarre tractor accident a few years later, while his wife was carrying their second child (born a healthy baby girl). Irena has since completed her degree in Physical Therapy and given birth to her and her husband Marek’s first child - a girl who they named Olivia and who my father accurately describes as “a beautiful Lemko baby.” I look forward to the day when we are all picking mushrooms together.

Paulo Malecki earned his master’s degree in audio engineering from Cracow University and later married his beautiful and talented wife, Susana Jara. His dido, Halina’s otec, passed away on December 25, 2011 and we all mourn the loss of this wonderful man.

Within a year after our return my mother’s health began to deteriorate. My father was constantly at her side, at home and at the hospital. She passed away at home on February 2, 2012, a month before her 87th birthday, with my father still by her side, as he had been for over 65 years. My father, born in 1924, continues to enjoy good health and the company of his sixteen children, forty-plus grandchildren and many great-grandchildren. He and I converse “po nashomu” as much as my limited Lemko vocabulary allows, and we both enjoy reading, discussing and learning more about the history and culture of “our

people.”

I continue to practice my Lemko, both on my own and with my father and cousins, and am starting to learn Polish as well (the only phrase I’d mastered while in Poland was “Ja nie mowie po Polski” - I don’t speak Polish). I have done presentations about the Carpatho-Rusyns and our journey to Lemkovyna at work, to social groups and to the New Jersey chapter of the Carpatho-Rusyn Society, of which I have been a grateful member since 2003. Since its revival I’ve been a member of the Lemko Association. I’ve attended a Lemko vatra in Ellenville, New York and the vatra that the Maleckis built in my heart still burns brightly - its flames are consistently fanned as more fuel in the way of newsletters, correspondence and books is consumed. I treasure my Rusyn relatives and friends and frequently visit with or correspond with them. Singing the song “Lisom, Lisom” may not always bring me good fortune as I spend time doing what I enjoy most - walking in the woods with my wife Margaret, scanning the forest floor for *hrubij hrybamy* (fat mushrooms) - but it never fails to put a smile on my face as I recall all of the fond memories with which I associate it.

Na zdorovia!

Steve Rock (steve_rock_0916@yahoo.com) is a member of the Lemko Association. He writes from Mahopac, New York. Photos courtesy of and © 2008 Steve Rock.

IN MEMORIAM / VECHNAYA IM POMYAT



DIMITRI “PETE” GALLIK: Dimitri M. “Pete” Gallik, 97 of Walton, NY, passed away November 14, 2011 at the New York State Veteran’s Home in Oxford, NY, following a long illness. A graveside service was held on Saturday, November 19, 2011 at Walton Cemetery, with full military honors.

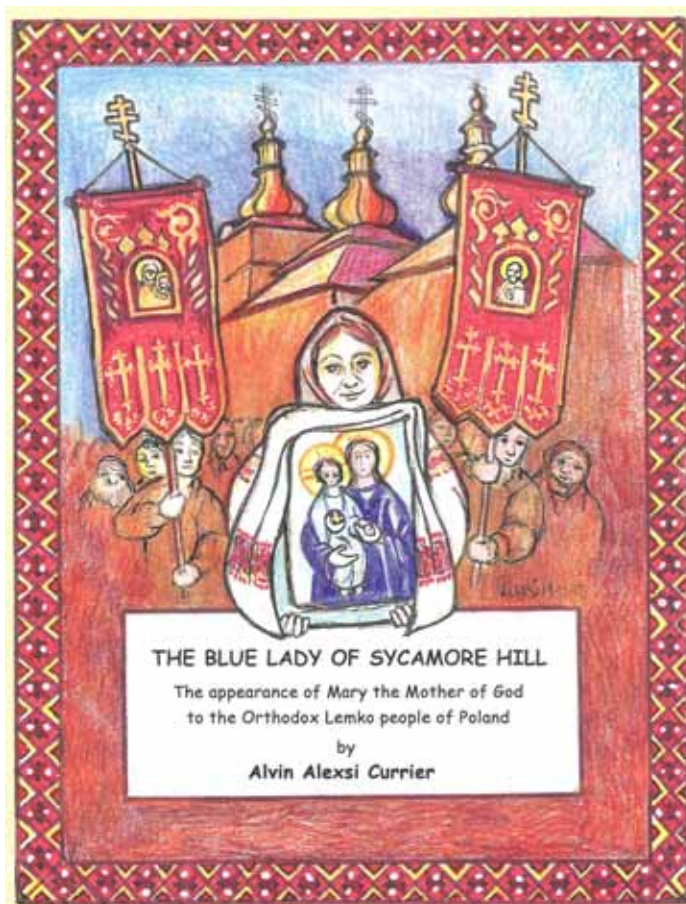
Pete was born on October 11, 1914 in Clifton, NJ; the son of the late Michael and Julia Hoch Gallik, and raised on a dairy farm in Herkimer, NY. He joined the US Army Air Corps in 1937 due to the lack of jobs in the pre-World War II depression and rejoined during WW II, honorably discharged in 1945 as a glider pilot. He met his future wife, the former Laura Schriber, while working in dairy herd improvement in Walton and they were married on July 22, 1949 in Auburn, NY. Following a degree from Syracuse University and further studies, he spent his career in Washington DC, translating Russian materials into English and doing research on the economy of the Soviet Union. After retirement in 1984

and moving to Walton in 1987, he engaged in translating literature written in the Lemko language of his parents. His early translations from Fr. Ioann Polianskii's *Istoriia Lemkovyny* were an extremely valuable contribution to the Lemko Association's English translation of that book, published in 2012.

Pete was a generous man to his family as well as to the community. He was a member of the board of trustees of the Walton Cemetery Association. He loved to read and would devour several books in the course of a week. He also enjoyed playing cards and having coffee with his many friends in the Walton area.

Pete is survived by two brothers, William Gallik of Hamilton, NY and Daniel Gallik of Annandale, VA, both Lemko Association members; one sister, Olga Hubiak, of Herkimer, NY; sister-in-law Arlette Schriber of Walton; several nieces, nephews and cousins. He was predeceased by his wife, a brother, Michael Gallik Jr., and two sisters, Julia O'Connell and Anne Thwaits.

“The Blue Lady of Sycamore Hill” published



Lemko Association members and friends should take note of a newly-published book, “The Blue Lady of Sycamore Hill”, by American author (and frequent visitor to Lemkovyna) Alvin Alexsi Currier.

Lavishly illustrated by the author, it tells the story of the appearance of Mary, the Mother of God, among the Lemko people, on Sycamore Hill (*Hora lavir*) near Wysowa in Lemkovyna. A chapel has now been constructed atop Sycamore Hill, and it is now the site of an annual pilgrimage. [Editor's note: See photo on p. 22 of this issue.]

As one reviewer put it, “This book is first of all a tribute to the Lemkos. It is a tribute to their suffering under the cruel Austro-Hungarian Empire, then under a Poland that was swept away by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.”

Set against the historical background of our people's pain and suffering, the text recounts the dramatic events on Sycamore Hill as it becomes the spiritual heart of the local Lemko people and their land.

As the author writes, “The Latin literacy of the West gave birth to a church rich in learning, piety and art. However, our mostly illiterate Eastern Orthodox ancestors painted, sang and acted out the Gospel, weaving it through a rich, liturgical cycle, wrapping it in a vibrant folk culture and celebrating it in their amazing churches. Our faith more than anything else is the mark of our people.” Perhaps this is true of many of the Eastern Christian peoples, but none more so than the Lemkos and other Rusyns.

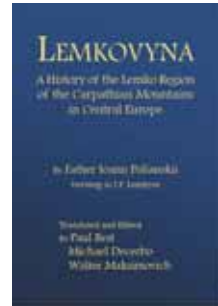
This 32-page, 8 ½ by 11 inch, full color book is available for \$9.95 through the author's Web site, <http://www.createspace.com/4154520>.

—Michael Decerbo

Lemko Publications Available

The following publications are available directly from Inter-Ed., Inc., 184 Old County Road, Higganum, CT 06441. Please make checks payable to Inter-Ed., Inc. Prices on this page reflect the Lemko Association member discount and include shipping and handling. You can also order online with your member discount, at <http://www.lemkoassociation.org/member-discount/> . Use the password: "Carpathians" (without the quotation marks.)

1. Polianskii, Ioann, *Lemkovyna: A History of the Lemko Region of the Carpathian Mountains of Central Europe* (Higganum: Carpathian Institute, 2012). Fr. Polianskii's important 1969 Lemko history, translated into English with extensive new explanatory notes by three LA members, and with additional new material including Fr. Polianskii's autobiography. While supplies last, we will include a free copy of the 1969 Lemko language original with each order of this book placed directly with the Lemko Association (to addresses within the USA, only.) Paperback \$20.00, hardcover \$30.00
2. Lemkyn, I.F. [Ioann Polianskii], *Istoriia Lemkovyny* (A History of Lemkovyna; Yonkers, NY, 1969). The only extant Lemko language history of the Lemko Region. Free (within the US) when you order the new English translation, otherwise \$25.00
3. Vyslotskii, D. F. (ed.), *Nasha Knyzhka* (Our Book; Yonkers, NY: Lemko Association, 1945). An explication of the Lemko Soyuz's case, in the Lemko Language, as of 1945. \$25.00
4. Best, Paul, and Jaroslaw Moklak (eds.), *The Lemko Region, 1939-1947: War, Occupation, and Deportation* (Cracow-New Haven: C-SSG/Carpathian Institute, 2002) ... \$25.00
5. Best, Paul, and Stanislaw Stepien (eds.), *Does A Fourth Rus' Exist? Concerning Cultural Identity in the Carpathian Region* (Przemsyl-Higganum: South-Eastern Research Institute and Carpathian Institute, 2009)..... \$25.00
6. Wronski, Pawel, "The Lower Beskids: On the Trail of Churches of the Eastern Rite [in the Lemko Region]," in *Podroze* (Travels), April 2002. A translation of a short but very interesting discussion of Lemko churches with a sketch of how they were built, and full color pictures. \$10.00
7. *Lemkovyna (Western Carpathian Rus')*, Scale 1:200,000, 2012. A full color, 24 by 36 inch map of Lemkovyna showing many no longer existing Lemko villages. Suitable for wall mounting or use as a reference. Price \$10.00. If ordering multiple maps, add only \$5.00 for each additional map after the first shipped to the same address.: two maps \$15.00, three maps \$20.00, etc.



A complete catalog of publications available, as well as a short inventory of Lemko Association archives, is planned for a future issue of *Karpatska Rus'*. Also, a variety of Lemko books and audio recordings are available from Lemko Association member Walter Maksimovich. Contact Walter at lemko@lemko.org or (954) 920-1193 for pricing and availability.

Membership

The Lemko Association and the Carpathian Institute operate in cooperation with Inter-Ed., Inc., which is recognized under Connecticut and U.S. Federal law as a non-political, nonprofit, tax exempt corporation. Inter-Ed., Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization under the rules of the U.S. Internal Revenue Service and thus may receive tax deductible contributions.

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2. A supporter of the Carpathian Institute (minimum support requested: \$25 per calendar year)

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Mission Statement

The Lemko Association, founded 1929, and the Carpathian Institute, founded 1988, are independent, non-governmental educational and social organizations (NGOs) which work closely together to preserve and protect the 1500 year old history and culture, both material and intellectual, of Lemkos and Carpatho-Rusyns, and to advance their culture in the 21st century.

In pursuit of these goals, the Lemko Association, a membership organization, focuses on the Lemko area of Central Europe and the Lemko people, wherever found; while the Carpathian Institute, a formal project of Inter-Ed, Inc, founded 1974, encompasses in its activities the whole of the Carpatho-Rus' region and the Carpathian Diaspora.

Both organizations are non-political and non-partisan, operating under Connecticut state law as non-profits. Additionally, the Carpathian Institute, as a project of Inter-Ed, Inc., not only has a state and federal tax exemption for its activities, but also is part of a 501(c)(3) educational and charitable organization as defined by US federal Internal Revenue Service (IRS) nonprofit, non-political organization rules.

Contributions

Under U.S. federal tax rules, contributions to 501(c)(3) organizations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. To make a monetary or material contribution to support the activities of the Lemko Association, you must make the contribution to Inter-Ed, Inc., in order to take advantage of 501(c)(3) tax rules, but you may assign your contribution to the benefit of the Lemko Association, the Carpathian Institute, or both.

Besides monetary contributions, the organizations can accept books, documents, and papers for archiving, and works or art, costumes, implements, etc., for preservation. Contact any officer for assistance in making a contribution.

Lemko Association
184 Old County Rd.
Higganum, CT 06441

Starzyński Help Fund: Update and Thanks

Last year Jurko Starzyński, a leading Lemko activist in Poland, lost his wife, the mother of his 5 (five) children. A few months ago I set up a Starzyński Help Fund in an attempt to collect financial help for him. The word was spread, including notes in *The New Rusyn Times* and *Karpatska Rus'*, and monetary contributions were sent by those whom I know and those whom I have never met. That's great! One thousand five hundred dollars (along with the list of donors and their notes to him) were delivered to Jurko at the beginning of January 2013.

I'd like to thank the following people who contributed to this worthy cause: Danuta Barnowski, Paul Best, Szymon and Emilia Czuchta, John Danyo, Grazyna Fesz, Judith Holmes, Bogdan and Danuta Horbal, Diana Howansky, Steven and Mary N. Howansky, Andy Hranyczny, Lorraine and James Huryan, Piotr Kosowski, Teresa Kuncik, the Pawelczak Family, Karen Rosneck, Stefania Rudyk, and Julian Tychanski. Grazyna Fesz, the manager at the Self Reliance (N.Y.) FCU has also been helpful.

The account at the Self Reliance FCU was kept open hoping that at the end of 2013 we can send Jurko Christmas money again. Please consider donating:

Account no. 43255-0000
Self Reliance (N.Y.) Federal Credit Union – Astoria Branch
P.O. Box 6218
Astoria N.Y., 11106-0218

—Bogdan Horbal