

## Looking through the Window...

by Resident Vice President Anna Sokolowski



Dear Readers,

As I am writing this article, my heart is very heavy in grief and tears. As many of you know, on Saturday, April 10, 2010 an airliner crashed in Smolensk, Russia carrying the Polish President Lech Kaczynski, his wife Maria and the military's chief of staff and the heads of Poland's land forces, navy and air force and other top leaders of Poland's political and business sectors, many dignitaries and special guests. The presidential delegation was traveling to a commemorative ceremony marking the 70th anniversary of the Soviet secret police massacre in Katyn forest in Russia of over 22,000 Poles - doctors, professors, teachers, politicians and officers of Polish army. Upon hearing this devastating news, the grief and shock gripped us in disbelief. As was done in Poland, many of us here wore black ribbons, sought solace in our churches, lit candles in churches and at the Katyn monument in Niles, IL or at the Polish Consulate in Chicago. The flag at the Polish Consulate flew at half-staff where mourners, including the PRCUA and the PMA delegation and members, laid flowers - red and white - the colors of the Polish flag, and signed a book of condolences. In our homes, offices, places of business, we displayed Polish flags draped with black ribbons. Cars on the city's Northwest Side and Southwest Side flew the Polish flags, with black bunting attached. The flags at our PRCUA Home Office also flew at half-mast and the entrance to the PMA was wrapped in black ribbons. This tragedy touched me personally, since among the victims were people whom my husband and I had met, some on several occasions, in the US, in Poland and in Italy. Among them President Lech Kaczynski and his wife Maria; President of Wspolnota Polska and great friend of Polonia- Maciej Plazynski; co-founder of the Solidarity Movement and former Solidarity activist - Anna Walentynowicz; Polish Undersecretary of State and Presidential aide - Mariusz Handzlik; Vice Marshall of the Polish Senate - Senator Krystyna Bochenek; Deputy Culture Minister - Tomasz Merta; Head of the National Remembrance Institute - Janusz Kurtyka; Poland's last "President-in- exile" - Richard Kaczorowski; Chicago artist and talented sculptor - Wojciech Seweryn - whose sculpture commemorating the Katyn massacre was dedicated last year at St. Adalbert Cemetery in Niles.

We all are overwhelmed by grief and pain at the Polish nation's heavy losses. In these moments of sadness, we express our sincere condolences to the entire Polish nation and Polonia. We will pray for all those people who died and we believe that Katyn will now be remembered not only for the innocently killed people, but also for Poland's best and brightest citizens - the country's political elite, who were going to commemorate them and died on this pilgrimage. May Poland and its people, in the depths of such grief, find the strength to carry on. We know that Poland will recover, as it always does, but the hearts that broke on April 10, 2010 will never mend. Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims' families.

Let me share with you what was happening in the last few months. Due to a limited space I am not able to mention all the events that I attended. They were all important. The first week of March was very

busy as we prepared for our annual meeting with the Budget and Grievance Committee to present our financial reports, as well as the quarterly Board of Directors meeting. After our Board Meeting, on Saturday, March 13, we had the pleasure to attend the 25th Anniversary Concert of the Southwest Center of Polish Dancing with a special guest appearance by "Wesoly Lud" The two-hour concert contained a wealth of beautifully detailed dance routines and colorful costumes. Each dance routine was beautifully choreographed and very memorable. The various programs by each age group displayed folk dances from different regions of Poland that ranged from delicate to athletic routines. In addition they entertained us with jazz, the Charleston and Polka dances. The performances by the youngest group of children were absolute show-stealers, as they playfully danced and sang their way to everyone's hearts.

Wesoly Lud (group I, II, and III) performed several dances beautifully with grace, passion and excitement. As usual, the performance of the Spisz Suite (my favorite) was spellbinding! It was full of fast turns, leaps, and jumps - these young dancers performed with increased athleticism and energy. Oh, don't I wish that I was young and could dance like that! The entire repertoire was under the direction of very talented

choreographers Richard and Misia Jaminski, with assistance from Ania Kraszewski, Virginia Gavaghan-Stekala, Danielle Kroplewski, Kalina Dziadkowiec and Andrew Lech. Our sincere congratulations to Southwest Center of Polish Dancing under the direction of Krysia Lech. Congratulations and best wishes to the dancers, choreographers, dance assistants, the Anniversary committee and parents for their hard work, talent, time and many years of sacrifice to make this 25th Anniversary Concert a truly breathtaking and memorable event. You all did a wonderful job! You are truly providing a fine legacy to the Polish American community. Thank you for your continued dedication and may you have many more years of prosperity.

On March 20, the 76th PRCUA Basketball Tournament was held in Dearborn, MI, hosted by St. Stan's Soc. 718. Congratulations to all basketball players who participated and to our champions: Open Division - St. Stan's YMS and to the B Division Wizards of St. Stan's. Special thanks to the Society President Jerry



Katyn Monument in Niles, IL  
(Photo: G. Balut Coleman)

Nasiatka, chairmen Patrick Kosowski, Bob Hojnacki and Mark Hamilton, as well as all members of the committee for their hard work and planning. You all did a GREAT JOB organizing a wonderful weekend and an excellent Basketball Tournament. Thank you for all your efforts. We all had a great time on and off the courts and are looking forward to future tournament run so smoothly by your Society. (See article on page 11.)

On March 14, District #7 held its Corned Beef and Cabbage dinner. It was a very delicious feast. It was so nice to see many familiar and new faces. Congratulations to the committee who worked so hard to make this event a great success! (See page 10.)

On March 18, the Home Office officers and employees, and the PMA staff, celebrated St. Joseph Day in the Social Hall. Rev. Stanislaw Jankowski from St. Hedwig Church blessed the table of meatless dishes and joined us for the meal. Special thanks go to our employees, especially my secretary Mary Jane Robles, Kasia Budzyn, Julie Prado, Madia Robles, Pat Tropp and Mike Pierzynski, who set the tables, served the meal and cleaned up the hall afterwards.

On March 24-26 the Fraternal and Communication Section Mid-Year Meeting was held in the largest city of North Carolina, Charlotte, nicknamed the "Queen City" in honor of the Princess Charlotte, who became the wife of British King George III. Just north of the city is Lowe's Motor Speedway that draws the biggest and the loudest crowds at NASCAR racing. The southern heritage is evident throughout the city in the stately facades of old homes and churches. The meeting was well attended and the speakers focused on communication and selling products to the next generation. If we, as an organization, want to stay alive, we MUST start to recruit, engage and attract younger members. This should start at the society level. The young generation of today wants to be seen, heard and respected. They have a need to belong to groups and they will share their good experiences with friends and social networks through Facebook, Twitter, etc. Let's encourage and involve them. Listen to them; you would be surprised at their ideas. Concentrate on where we are going, not where we have been. Soon, we will be electing delegates for the PRCUA Convention from our societies. Make sure to elect a good mixture of members - some young adults, some middle aged and some seniors. It's time to include more young members to rejuvenate the PRCUA and to hear their ideas and concerns.

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY** - Happy Birthday and Sto Lat to all who are celebrating their special day in May. Special Happy Birthday to PRCUA employees: Anna Trush, Membership Dept.; Kasia Budzyn, secretary to the Secy.-Tres.; Jolanta Zachara and Roberta Brewster, General Office; Danuta Rybska, Accounting Dept.; Claudine Wicker, Treasurer's Office; Mary Jane Cypura, Claims Dept. Also best wishes to Dir. Thomas Lisiecki (D10), Alina Rozwadowska, Anna Zmarzlinska and Kazik Myslinski, to our daughter Alicia Marron, who will celebrate her birthday on May 30th. "Dearest Alicia, we wish you happiness and may your dreams come true not only on your special day, but always!"

Also Happy Birthday and Sto Lat to all who are celebrating a birthday in June, especially PRCUA employees: Anna Wolan, Membership Dept.; Michael Perzynski, Maintenance; Ewa Trzeciak, Ohio Office; Halina Misterka, PMA Archivist; Malgorzata Kot, PMA Head Librarian; to PRCUA Directors Mitch Bienia (D5) and Robert Bugielski (D7); also Frieda Zabek, past Dir. (D1); Richard Jaminski, very talented choreographer of Wesoly Lud, Polanie and SWCPD; Patricia Steven, Syrena Director; Ursula Walton, Toledo, OH Polish language teacher. Happy Birthday and STO LAT to our son-in-law, Sean Ackerman - "I hope your birthday will be extra special - exactly like you!" A very special Happy 3rd Birthday to our granddaughter Aurora. "Dear Aurora, every day, you make us happy and we are doing our best to enjoy our moments together. You've made us slow down, watch closely, and listen carefully. You've taught us patience and compassion and humor. You are a delight and make us burst with pride and joy every single day. You've made us better people. Happy Birthday to our sweet granddaughter Aurora, you are our princess! We will always love you - Babcia and Dziadzia. Wishing you all the happy things birthday celebrations bring!"

**HAPPY WEDDING ANNIVERSARY** to National PRCUA Vice President Robert Bielenda and his lovely wife, Eleanor; Past District #8 National Director Steve Cieslicki and his wife Marge; and to wonderful friends Basia and Janusz Frankowicz, Marlene and Andre Bober and Marysia and Bolek Bogun. I hope that married life is especially sweet to all of you! Congratulations!

**THANK YOU** - Dear Readers, "thank you" to all who sent flowers, cards and e-mails with Easter greetings. My family and I greatly appreciate all your good wishes. Bog Zaplac.

More photos of the above events are on the PRCUA website at [www.prcua.org/news/rvp](http://www.prcua.org/news/rvp)

I like to hear from you. E-mail: [fraternal.department@prcua.org](mailto:fraternal.department@prcua.org) or call 1-800- 772-8632 or send letters to: 984 N. Milwaukee Avenue, Chicago, IL 60642-4101.



Southwest Center's 25th Anniversary Concert



Southwest Center's younger dancers



VPs of PRCUA, PNA  
and PWAA in SC