



MARY & BEN
PACACHA

70th wedding anniversary

1913 ~ 1983

Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła

Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła
Póki my żyjemy
Co nam obca przemoc wzięła
Szablą odbierzemy
Marsz, marsz Dąbrowski
Z ziemi włoskiej do polskiej
Za twoim przewodem
Złączym się z narodem

Przejdziem Wisłę, przejdziem Wartę
Będziem Polakami
Dał nam przykład Bonaparte
Jak zwyciężyc mamy
Marsz, marsz Dąbrowski
Z ziemi włoskiej do polskiej
Za twoim przewodem
Złączym się z narodem

Polish National Anthem

Oh, our Poland shall not perish
While we live to love her;
What the cruel foe has ravished
We'll regain through power
March, March Dąbrowski
From Italia's fair lanes
Back to join the nation
Back to Poland's broad plains.

We'll cross Wisla, Warta waters
And our bondage sever
Joining Poland's sons and daughters
We'll be Poles forever
March, March Dąbrowski
From Italia's fair lanes
Back to join the nation
Back to Poland's broad plains.

Editor: Carl Pacacha

INTRODUCTION

This book is dedicated to our parents, Mary and Ben Pacacha, 1702 Iowa Avenue, West Mifflin, Pennsylvania who celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary on June 18, 1983. The book attempts to trace their lives from the early days in Poland to the present time.

Like many immigrants before them, Mary and Ben came to this country from Poland after the turn of the century. Ben devoted forty-three years of his life to working in the Duquesne steel mill, while Mary committed herself totally to raising twelve children. In spite of deprivation and hardship both were determined to provide the best home and care they could for their children.

It is important to note that this booklet is not complete. Perhaps the reader has a story, an anecdote, a tale that can be added to this legend. Indeed, the story of Mary and Ben Pacacha continues as we celebrate this 70th wedding anniversary.

On the following pages unfold the story of the life and times of Mary and Ben Pacacha. We, their sons and daughters, hope that you find this story as interesting as it has been for us in compiling it.

Certificate of Marriage



Church of
ST. STANISLAUS
21st & Smallman Sts.
Pittsburgh, Pa.

This is to Certify

That *Benedictus Pacaska*
and *Mary Pasek*
were lawfully Married

on the *18th* day of *June* 19*13*

According to the Rite of the Roman Catholic Church
and in conformity with the laws of the State of *Penn*

by *Rev. Anthony Rachwalcki*

officiating, in the presence of *Joseph Japalle*
and *Angela Gerson* Witnesses, as appears
from the Marriage Register of this Church.

Dated *Feb 2 1986*
Rev. Robert C. Jansen, C. Pastor.





St. Stanislaus Church
21st & Smallman Streets
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

MARY PASEK - BEN PACACHA

Sons/Daughters - Spouses

Josie - Ted
Stevie - Agnes
Cy - Kay
Regina - George
Dolores - Commodore
Norbert - Judy
Carl - Joan
Frank - Mary
Ed - Vern
Patsy - Champ
Wally (deceased) - Alice
Irene (deceased)

Grandchildren - (32)

Bob, Fred, Jerry, Arlene, Sonny, Ken,
Richard, Bill, Ron, Bob, Virginia, Maria,
Greg, Joe, David, Kathy, Nick, Tom, Mary
Ann, Rose, Tim, Terri, Mary, Mike, Kevin,
Susan, Janet, Mark, Maria, Jackie, Diane
and Susan

Great Grandchildren - (36)

Richard, Lora, Beth, Kim, Chris, Sharon,
John, Brian, Susan, Patrick, Fred Jr.,
Leslie, Jody, Gerald, Michelle, Eric, Amy,
Harry, Brian Edward, Erin, Ben, Angela,
Michael, Laura, Jill, Colleen, Kelly, Ken,
Clair, Zachary, Gregory, Gabriella, Jessica,
Jeremy, Lisa and Mandy

Great Great Grandchildren - (2)

Jeremy and Amber

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MARY AND BEN PACACHA

Both Mary Pasek and Ben Pacacha were born in Brzeziny, a farming village in Poland and located approximately fifty miles southwest of Warsaw. Mom was born on September 18, 1891 and Dad on May 15, 1885. She attended school through grade 5. Mary was the only daughter in a family of five brothers. Dad was one of eight brothers.

As a young man in Brzeziny, Ben was a tailor who made farming overalls for the Pasek sons and father. Young Mary's primary task was helping around the house. They knew each other, but only as acquaintances. In his youth, Ben was drafted into the Austria-Hungarian Army where he served as a tailor for the soldiers.

Many immigrants from Eastern Europe were attracted to America by the prospect of a better life and fortune. One of Mary's friends who had come to America encouraged her to leave Poland. Mary, at the tender age of 17, decided to leave her homeland in 1909. On the day that she left home, Ben was at the Pasek house working as a tailor. With three companions she left Brzeziny by horse and cart to travel to Debica, a railroad center 125 miles to the southeast. (Not far from the Czechoslovakian border) From Debica she went by train across the continent to Rotterdam in Holland.

On March 19, 1909, (St. Joseph's Day) Mary and her companions embarked for New York City. One day out to sea Mary became seasick. Another female passenger suggested that she (the teetotaler!) sip on a glass of beer to settle her stomach. It worked! The ship arrived at Ellis Island in New York City on April 5, 1909.

After arriving in New York City, Mary traveled by train to East McKeesport where she worked for a family as a housemaid. Her pay was \$3.00 per week! The family was stingy with its food, and Mary seldom got enough to eat. She lived with Uncle Frank Gasior. She then got a job as a housemaid for the Mellon family on the north side of Pittsburgh. One of her many responsibilities was to milk the cows by hand. Here she was treated very well and Mrs. Mellon wanted to send Mary to nursing school. However, she passed away and the opportunity for mom to become a nurse was gone forever.

In 1913 Ben Pacacha left Poland to come to America. He went to England to board the ship to America. There was a two-week layover in England. Eventually, Ben arrived in Pittsburgh where he re-met Mary at a Saturday night dance. His first job was in the Jones & Laughlin Steel Mill on the south side of Pittsburgh.

Mary and Ben fell in love and were married on June 18, 1913, at St. Stanislaus Church in Pittsburgh. (21st and Smallman Streets). Stan Pacacha, Ben's

brother, was the best man and Mrs. Gasior was maid-of-honor. Stella and Mary Gasior were flower girls. The reception was held on Bealon Street in Pittsburgh. Ben's dad played the violin and Stan the accordion.

After their marriage in 1913, Mary and Ben came to Duquesne, Pennsylvania to live. They rented an apartment in Mr. Kutchinsky's house on Williams Street. Mom described the two small rooms as "Beensy". Here the first child in the family - Wally - was born. When the rent was raised from \$6 to \$8 a month, they left Williams street.

What was the Duquesne-West Mifflin area like in 1913? William Howard Taft was the President of the United States. There were no radios or televisions. A loaf of bread was a nickel. Men worked a twelve hour day in the steel mill. The street car motored its way up and down Kennedy Avenue.

Ben worked as a laborer in the Duquesne steel mill for \$1.10 a day. He worked in the open hearth section of the mill, one of the most detested jobs in all of the steel works. Years later, Ben was promoted to "dinky driver," a dinky being a small train that pulled ladles from the open hearth.

In 1916 while Ben was working in the steel mill, he suffered a broken leg. He was sent to West Penn Hospital in Pittsburgh. He was quarantined for six weeks because several visitors from Clairton

entered the hospital with a communicable disease. Ben's broken leg was not operated on, thereby causing one leg to be shorter by one-half inch.

During the early part of their married life Mary and Ben lived in several locations. The Pacachas eventually moved to what is called Nicklee Hollow where they endured many heavy rains and flooding. It was commonplace for the kitchen and living room to be flooded. One day Ben saw some geese swimming in the front yard. Ben risked his life trying to catch a goose for the evening dinner!

The church was always a center of their lives. They attended St. Hedwig's on Polish Hill. The church burned because of a Christmas tree fire. A new St. Hedwig's was built (present site) in 1930. Carl Pacacha was the first to be baptized there.

In 1925 Mary and Ben bought their present house on Iowa Avenue of \$7,500. They had a garden in the back yard extending to the old Houdek home. They owned two cows, twenty chickens and one rooster. The raucous rooster was a real problem as his favorite pastime was chasing people! Ben traded it to Mr. Pichora for two chickens. Ben said the deal was nothing to crow about!

The 1930's were difficult years for the Pacacha family. Ben worked one, sometimes two, days a week for a ten-year period, 1931-41. Lack of employment

caused real hardships. Even so, there was always enough to eat---thanks to the Salvation Army and other welfare agencies. Dad dug coal in the "Union Woods" to fire the furnace. The poor quality of coal and slate caused at least one home furnace to be ruined.

Wally, Cy and Steve sold newspapers in Duquesne. There were many home foreclosures throughout the Nation. The Pacacha's almost lost their house, too, as Ben could only make the interest payment. The President of the Duquesne Bank threatened to foreclose. Fortunately, a new, more understanding man became president at the bank and told Ben to keep paying the interest; the principal could be made up later. When the employment situation improved in the 1940's, the principal in arrears was paid in full.

In 1935 tragedy struck when daughter Irene died. She was 17 years of age at the time and mom recalls her as being scholarly and industrious.

In spite of the trials and tribulations of the Great Depression, the family sustained itself. Wally and Steve qualified for the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Josie (our second Mom) went to work in the Grennan Bakery in Wilksburg. (Thanks for all those pies, Josie!) Ben brought salt candy home from the Steel Mill. (What a treat!) There were many good times during the 30's. Who can forget the church picnics and polka dancing on Polish Hill? There was the closeness

of every family and the community. Most people were poor and they shared with each other by bartering goods. The Salvation Army gave the family soup every two weeks. The Duquesne Steel Mill gave each worker's family fifty pounds of flour. This was later repaid when the families gave back two dollars each pay day. Patsy, the last child, was born in 1939.

In 1941 Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Soon the steel mills were rolling again and Ben returned to work full time. Steve was off to the Navy and Cy to the Army. At the close of hostilities they returned home safely, although Cy did suffer some frostbite in Belgium.

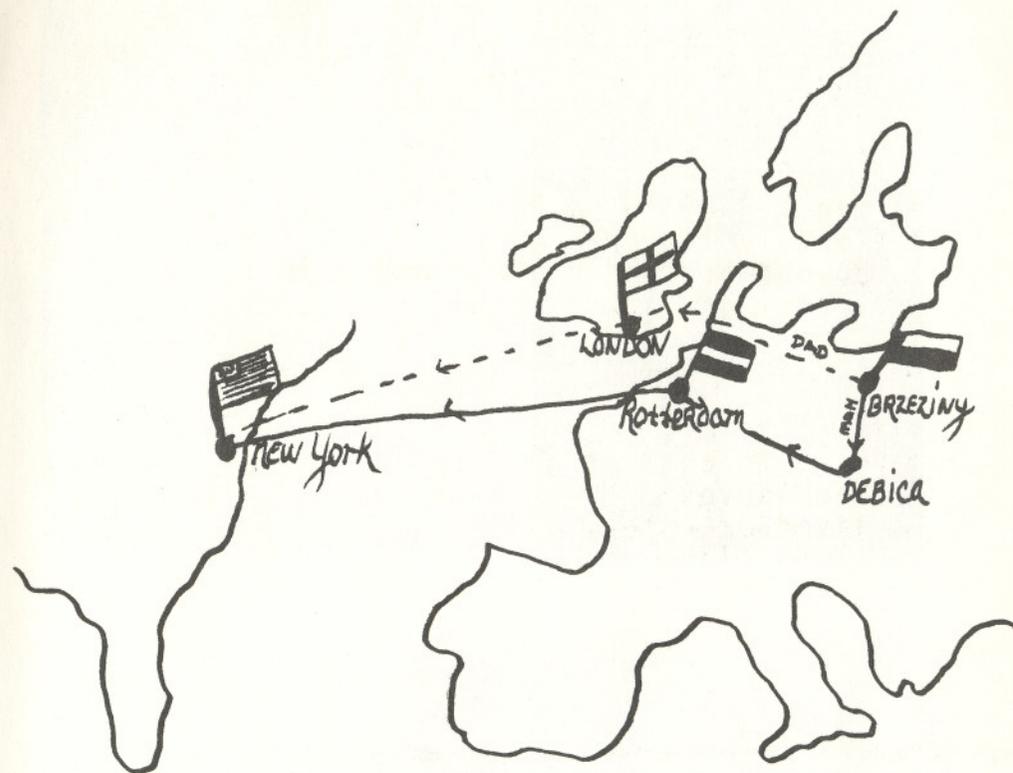
During the 1940's and 1950's the family prospered. The boys were active in sports. They started a basketball team called the "Pacacha Five." They played several games with the only spectators at the games, Mom and several of the daughters!

In 1963 Mary and Ben celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary at the Slovak Club in Duquesne. Ben issued one of his favorite axioms at the dinner presentation: "After 50 years of marriage, you get an automatic divorce." The 60th anniversary took place at St. Hedwig's Hall with all children present at the head table.

In 1975 oldest child Wally passed away shortly after he had retired and had moved to Florida. Mom and Cy flew to be with Wally. It was the first airplane ride ever for Mom. In 1978 the 65th wedding anniversary was held at the Fireman's Hall in North Versailles. Approximately 100 persons celebrated this joyous occasion. When asked to say a few words, Ben stood up and stated only: "Let's do it again!" President Jimmy Carter and Rosalyn sent their congratulations.

In closing one cannot imagine having more devoted parents than ours. They have lived exemplary lives.

Thanks, Mom and Dad.



Emigration of Mary & Ben







AUTOGRAPHS