

Oldest LIT graduate feels young at heart

By SHIRLEY IDEN

It was a long time between degrees for Maria Wegrzecki. But she prizes the one earned recently at Lawrence Institute of Technology every bit as much as the one granted many years ago in Poland.

Mrs. Wegrzecki admits she was "one of the oldest graduates" at LIT's 1980 commencement, but says she doesn't feel her age (53) at all.

An assistant controller at Alsur Aluminum Company since 1978, Mrs. Wegrzecki says she didn't feel the need for more formal education until her employment situation changed.

She holds a master's degree in economics from Warsaw University, earned after World War II, but couldn't get credit for it here.

Mrs. Wegrzecki left Poland in 1959 to visit a sister in Winnepeg. "Someone asked me to look up this fellow for his family in Poland and I did," she says. "After we met twice, we decided to marry and came to the states."

In 1973, the couple moved to Southfield.

Lester Wegrzecki is a tool and die maker employed in Southfield. After being refused credit for her master's degree, Mrs. Wegrzecki went to Walsh Institute where she went through a crash course in accounting and business law in four months.

"ALTHOUGH I hardly knew English, it was easy for me," she says. And she found a job as an assistant payroll clerk through a private agency.

For 15 years she worked at the Felows Medical Manufacturing Co. where she went from payroll assistant to assistant to the vice president for finance.

"I didn't think about school because I was advancing well," she says. "But when things began to change I began to think differently."

What changed was the company merged and employees were told to look for other jobs. Although Mrs. Wegrzecki found hers at Alsur, she felt more formal education was in order.

"I could have gone to Wayne State University for a masters in business administration, but it was too far for

me," she says. And so she chose LIT in Southfield.

"I saw a counselor for foreign students and they gave me 131 credits," she says. "For 49 more credits I could earn a bachelor's degree in business administration, majoring in accounting."

Without much trouble she did that, earning excellent grades.

MRS. WEGRZECKI says she especially appreciates being able to get more education, because she keenly remembers what it means to be deprived of that opportunity.

"During World War II, young people in Poland faced the danger of being hunted down and sent to Germany to work in the fields by the Germans," she says. "They needed workers because their men were all in the war and they would empty streets and houses and just take young people away even without saying good-bye to their families."

Mrs. Wegrzecki was sent to a private, isolated estate in the Polish countryside to avert being snatched away.

"The Germans had closed all the high schools and universities," she recalls. "But the Polish people organized

an underground school system and I was lucky enough to be able to continue my education."

Although she never had close contact with the occupation troops during the war, she remembers being hungry. When the war ended, young Polish students were able to get formal recognition of their academic accomplishments.

SINCE IMMIGRATING here, Mrs. Wegrzecki has returned twice for visits to Poland with her husband.

Their first trip brought Wegrzecki back to his native country after a 20-year absence. He was a prisoner of war in World War II and was freed by American GIs at the war's end.

The two hope to make yet another trip to Poland.

Much of Mrs. Wegrzecki's leisure time is taken up by her activities with Friends of Polish Art, a cultural group of some 500 members.

Recently, she was installed as its new president.

At the present, Mrs. Wegrzecki says she has no plans for more formal education, but she'll not soon forget the re-

cent graduation.

They gave Lester a certificate for supporting a degree candidate," she

says, "and they even allowed me to wear the colors of my previous degree from Poland."



MARIA WEGRZECKI

Explain Burgundy? It's not that easy

What's in a name? A great deal indeed if the name is "Burgundy." For there are, in the broad world of wines, two Burgundies, and they have little or no commonality between them.

When the word is applied to French Burgundy, it takes in some of the truly great wines of this world, both red and white. While the Burgundy region of France includes Chablis, Macon, Chalon and Beaune, the non-modified use of the term usually refers to the great wines of the Cote d'Or. This is the area between Dijon and Clagny, less than 40 miles in length.

With the Cote d'Or (Slopes of Gold) are the great Cotes de Nuits and Cotes de Beaune. Both produce their red and white wines from, respectively, single grapes, the Pinot Noir and the Chardonnay.

The latter is used down as far as the Maconnais while the Pinot Noir is useable only in the cooler north. A different clone is used down in Beaune, related but distinctly different.

THE WORD Burgundy, in most people's minds, however, conjures up images of red wine exclusively. Certainly, the great red wines of Burgundy have, for centuries, represented the ultimate in wine consumption and to many they continue to do so today.

So it was perhaps only natural that recently (from the time perspective of this wine) when prohibition ended in this country the fledgling winemakers in California would seek out a name for their red product.

Some initially used Claret (the Brit-

ish term for Bordeaux wines), some Chianti and others a variety of European place names of established quality to call their wines. But Burgundy has been the name that has survived and is most common.

The Californians could do this name-stealing with impunity. The same holds for Champagne, Chablis, Rhine and Sauterne. No law restricts that kind of practice. The French and Germans do not like it, but can't stop it, though they continue to try.

BUT WAIT, the plot thickens. Not only does the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, which governs such things, not care about the name put on a bottle of wine (if it is a generic one, as opposed to a varietal, when they get very fussy), they don't restrict in any way what goes into that bottle.

A California, New York or Michigan Burgundy may contain juice from any red or white grape and frequently does. It will always be a blend of the juice of lesser grapes in some combination that is commercially feasible and, at least, to the winemaker, somewhat palatable. Some California Burgundies are quite decent, but they do not contain much, if any, Pinot Noir, as they must in France. The exception is Beaulieu vintage dated. I suspect Inglenook does at times. They may contain whatever it is impossible to generalize about whether one likes American-style Burgundy making.

The cost difference is telling. French

wine

Richard Watson

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