

Polish contributions inspire author

By Julie Brown
staff writer

Do you know what Polish-American John D. Vranlak has in common? Can you name the religious order of sisters that arrived in the U.S. in 1874 and became the largest and most important Polish sisterhood in the country?

The answers (The three were elected to Congress; the Felician Sisters) are on page 26 of "The Polish Trivia Book," written by John Vranlak of Plymouth Township. Vranlak's book came out in 1989 and is going through its third printing. That printing will take the book, published by Avenue Publishing Co. of Hamtramck, up to about 15,000 copies.

"It's doing real well," said Vranlak, a senior quality engineer with the Ford Motor Co. Powertrain Operations in Livonia. He describes his book as the exact opposite of a Polish joke book.

VRANLAK DOESN'T consider his book to be a tedious extreme, a tedious textbook. It's easy to read, but still provides plenty of information.

"It allows people to pick it up in small doses, learn about the Polish experience," said Vranlak, who's mostly Polish and part Lithuanian and Slovak.

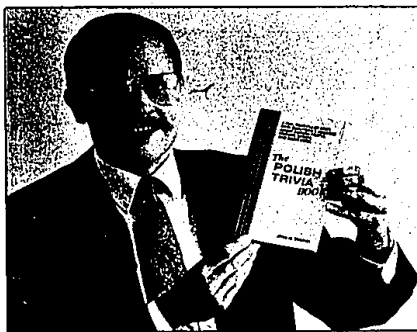
He began to think about writing such a book quite a few years ago. The game Trivial Pursuit came out in the early 1980s, and Vranlak (pronounced Ver-on-ick) noticed its popularity.

He didn't want to produce a trivia game, and thought a book would be a better choice. Vranlak paid a great deal of attention to the book's format, wanting to make it reader-friendly. He talked to many people about the format, discussing it with Polish-Americans and others.

Answers to questions are found on the opposite page, meaning readers don't have to flip through the book to find what they want to know. Vranlak didn't sort the questions into categories, such as sports or history, thinking that some readers might bypass such sections. Instead, questions from a number of different subject areas are found on each page.

Vranlak, 37, did a great deal of research on questions and answers, relying on books, newspapers, magazines and other sources.

"I knew very little of it," Vranlak was surprised to learn that scientist Marie Curie was Polish, rather than French. (She was born Marie Sklo-



BILL DRESLER/staff photographer

John Vranlak, a former Farmington Hills resident, wrote his book to increase awareness of Polish and Polish-American history and contributions.

dowska in 1887, and received the nickname "Madame" when she married a Frenchman.)

HE WAS ALSO interested to learn of the contributions Poles have made in U.S. wars, including the Revolutionary War. Polish-Americans have fought in all wars since the country's beginnings, he said, and have made significant contributions.

Vranlak, who grew up on the east side, didn't learn much about Polish and Polish-American history as a student in the Harper Woods schools. Such history typically isn't taught in school, he said, and many young Polish-Americans are unaware of the contributions their countrymen and women have made.

"Oh, absolutely. They know little or nothing."

Vranlak started his research in 1986 and took a couple of years to finish. He did research at area libraries, including the main branch of the Detroit Public Library.

At the time, he was traveling quite a bit for Ford, and found he could take materials with him on business trips and do work on planes and at other in-between times.

He didn't use a computer to put together information. Instead, Vranlak wrote questions and answers on 3-by-5 cards, which were easy to take along on trips.

"It worked out great." He was pleased to find a publisher without much difficulty, and knows many

hours of work early in the morning he manages. Vranlak has a sequel due out in early 1992, and was busy in recent years doing that research and writing.

"The format will be identical, but it's all new information." The second book will also be published by Avenue.

"The Polish Trivia Book" is most well-known in the Detroit area, he said, and has started to do well in other cities with a large Polish-American population, including Chicago, New York, Cleveland, Milwaukee and Pittsburgh.

"It's still a relatively unknown quantity," said Vranlak, who invited readers to write to him through his publisher with any comments. He's received 75 to 100 letters, and hasn't heard any negative responses.

Some younger people have bought "The Polish Trivia Book" as a gift for a parent or grandparent. They've ended up reading it themselves, learning a great deal in the process.

He's found some people are surprised that an engineer would write a non-technical book. Vranlak would eventually like to work on writing full time.

He's proud of his Polish ancestry, but isn't necessarily bothered by those who tell Polish jokes. It's easy to tell when such a joke-teller's belligerent, he said.

"For the most part, they're not. A lot of those same people truly appreciate what the Polish have accomplished."

John Vranlak will sign copies of his book during the Plymouth Fall Festival, noon to 2 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 8, at Little Professor On the Park, 380 S. Main, north of Ann Arbor Trail in Plymouth.

first-time authors aren't as fortunate. Vranlak enjoyed working with a local publisher.

VRANLAK SPEAKS and reads a little Polish, but got help from a translator with the Polish words and phrases in the book.

Vranlak's wife, Annette, was a tremendous help to him in working on the book. They have three children, ages 8, 6 and 3. Vranlak found it a challenge at times to work on the book while keeping up with the demands of his job and family life.

He finds if he can put in "one good

Pregnancy support available

Oakland Family Services, a social work agency, offers pregnancy support services. A professional is available for exploring the choices for permanency including abortion, adoption, or parenting. If you feel the need for support or know some-

one who might benefit from counseling during their pregnancy, contact Oakland Family Services at its central location in Pontiac, (313) 858-7766. Other locations and services are also available.

OWLS pan for gold

The Older Women's League of Michigan will go prospecting for gold in the golden years at its biennial conference, seeking a more adequate retirement income, affordable housing and expanded health care coverage.

Lansing Friday and Saturday, Sept. 6-7. A distinguished group of speakers from Michigan and Washington D.C. will present.

The \$25 registration fee includes dinner and entertainment Friday, breakfast and lunch Saturday, all workshops and materials. A Saturday-only rate is \$20. Rooms at the Kellogg Center are \$55 per night for up to four persons.

For more details, call OWL 566-9537, or Virginia Nicol, 474-3094.

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Prove your Polish trivia prowess

These questions, from John M. Vranlak's *The Polish Trivia Book*, will give you a chance to test your knowledge about the people, places and things of Poland.

1. Approximately 1,000 Poles served in the Continental Army during which war?
2. What president, in his first year in office, Jan. 22, 1917, supported "a united, independent and autonomous Poland"?
3. This Polish-American was born Patricia Andreowski but her rock and roll fans know her as whom?
4. Craig Bodzianowski gained national fame in 1985 after he lost his right leg in a motorcycle accident and resumed his career in what profession?
5. This actor was born Charles Buchinski.
6. When Frederic Chopin, the famous 19th century composer,

- died, which of his organs was sent to his native Poland for burial?
7. What Polish astronomer was the first to discover that the Earth and its fellow planets revolve around the sun?
8. This part Polish football coach reportedly once told his players in his postgame speech: Let's say the Lord's Prayer and get the hell out of here.
9. Name the Polish-Jewish immigrant who was a makeup man in the early days of motion pictures before becoming a well known cosmetics manufacturer.
10. As of 1987, how many people of Polish descent live in metropolitan Detroit?
 - a) 200,000
 - b) 800,000
 - c) 1,500,000

Answers: 1) American Revolutionary War. 2) Woodrow Wilson. 3) Pat Benatar. 4) Boxing. 5) Charles Bronson. 6) Heart. The rest of his body was buried in Paris. 7) Nicolas Copernicus. 8) Mike Ditka. 9) Max Factor. 10) 800,000.

Hendersons wed 50 years

More than 300 guests attended the 50th wedding anniversary celebration of Velda and William Henderson on Aug. 16. The Farmington Hills residents came to Michigan on their honeymoon and have lived here since. The couple were married Sept. 28, 1941, in St. Genevieve, Mo.



William and Velda Henderson

The Hendersons renewed their vows in Berean Baptist Church of Livonia. Their son, Pastor Dennis Henderson, performed the ceremony. The couple's five children and 17 grandchildren planned a memory-filled reception, held at the Karas House of Redford.

One of their gifts were a handmade quilt given to them by their children. Their daughter Karen made her mother's dress, the flower girl's dress and the wedding cake, just as her mother did for her 27 years ago.

Just as they did 50 years ago, Beulah Henderson, the groom's sister, served as maid of honor, and Gary Roth was the best man. David Henderson served as the ring-bearer and Heather Carerson was the flower girl.

The next day, the two families met for a reunion with relatives and friends from throughout the U.S.

The couple's children are Jerry Henderson of Plymouth; Karen Klaus of Phoenix, Ariz.; Ed Henderson of Livonia; Dennis Henderson of Jamestown, Ohio; and David Henderson of Union Lake.

She appears in magazine

Courtney Kling, 19, of Farmington Hills, appears in the September issue of "TEEN Magazine" as a semifinalist in the first Salon Selectives Super Hair Search and is eligible for a \$5,000 scholarship.

Salon Selectives and "TEEN" magazine are on the lookout for the best locks.

Qualifications are simple. Applicants must be 12 to 19 years old and have "terrific tresses and stand-out, stylish hair."

Out of the thousands of entries received, Salon Selectives and

"TEEN" judges will select only 48 semifinalists — 12 semifinalists will appear in the September, October, November and December issues of "TEEN."

The winner, along with four to six finalists will appear in the January 1992 issue of "TEEN." If Kling is selected as a finalist, she will receive an all-expense-paid trip to Los Angeles to compete in the Super Hair Search contest.

The winner, selected by "TEEN's" editorial staff and experts at Salon Selectives, will receive a \$5,000 scholarship.

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