

Cultural curiosity spurs a Polish calendar

By Dave Varga
staff writer

Donald Samuli doesn't speak or read Polish.

Yet, 10 years ago the Bloomfield Hills school teacher was prompted to delve into his Polish heritage.

"One day in school I came across a black history calendar commemorating important events and people," Samuli said. "I thought, gee, probably any ethnic group, whether through pride or as an educational tool, could do the research and produce one."

And so he came up with his first Polish American Calendar. This year, Samuli's 10th anniversary edition is actually a trivia game with multiple choice questions on every date and a game board in the middle.

The calendar, which started with library research and clipping newspaper articles on Polish matters, was just the start of Samuli's research into his roots.

HE BECAME involved in the Polish Genealogical Society of Michigan, traveled back to Poland five times, produced magazine articles on Polish sites

in Michigan, the western states and other areas.

Don't think he's obsessed. Samuli said he still takes vacations just for fun. For instance, on a recent trip to New York, Samuli said, he did all the usual tourist things.

"But I still took time to hunt down a Polish neighborhood and see a statue honoring a Polish general in Central Park," Samuli said. "There's no place you can go in our country where you can't find evidence of the Polish being there. What I'm trying to do is make a written and photographic evidence of that."

Samuli has written about and photographed many historic Polish landmarks, beginning with his hometown about six years ago.

"I'm glad I started with the Detroit area because a lot of buildings have since been torn down in the Polatown area," he said.

FOR THE LAST five years, Samuli has lectured on Polish, Eastern and Christmas customs at Greenfield Village in Dearborn. He has also conducted tours through Hamtramck and the

Delray and west side ethnic neighborhoods of Detroit.

His lectures, which include his personal ethnic artifacts, Polish music and authentic foods, bring in a lot of people of Polish descent who want to recapture their heritage or traditions, especially around the holidays.

Samuli, who was to speak Saturday on "Polish Related Sites in Outstate

Michigan" at a church in Dearborn Heights, said the Polish influence is spread all over the country, as evidenced by the fact that he has sent calendars to all 50 states.

He said his fifth grade students at Eastover Elementary actually believed he was born in Poland because of his discussion of his heritage. But Samuli said he uses his proud heritage as an

example to help his students develop pride.

ONE POLISH custom that he had no trouble interesting students in was the paczki or jelly-filled doughnuts, a Polish tradition on the day before the beginning of Lent, which he brought in to let them sample.

Perhaps it's because he has a reputation in the school, but Samuli said he doesn't bear many "Polish jokes" any-

more. One of the reasons for starting his calendar was a response to those insults. Maybe it helped inform more people about Polish contributions.

"I think I've had help, it's not just my calendar," Samuli said, referring to the Solidarity labor movement in Poland and the heritage of Pope John Paul II. Copies of the calendar are \$3. They can be obtained by writing to Samuli at 8201 Artesian St., Detroit, Mich. 48228.

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George M. Kurajian of Farmington Hills, chairman of the department of mechanical engineering at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, has been selected as part of an 11-person delegation from the U.S. to visit the Peoples Republic of China this May.

The delegation will represent the 110,000 members of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME), which has been invited by the Chinese Mechanical Engineering Society for the purpose of establishing an agreement of cooperation between the two societies.

In addition to participation in the agreement discussions and meetings, Kurajian has been invited to deliver lectures on stress failure prediction, stress concentration and structural shells.

Kurajian is a Fellow of ASME and is chairman of its design engineering division, which is the largest technical division of ASME.

Kurajian is in his 37th year of teaching and has been the mechanical engineering department chairman for 10



George Kurajian

years. He has lectured both nationally and abroad and has been an active consultant for over 30 years, most notably for the National Space Program and in the areas of synthetic fibers and plastics.

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