

# Wielka Rodzina Firkowskich



12/2005 · Number 3  
English Version

## Wake up!

### Lukasz Firkowski



My Dear! Wake up! Don't sleep! Soon we will meet again. I hope that you are anticipating our next meeting as much as I do! I hope that even more Firkowskis will attend the next family reunion. I already have several ideas on my mind, how to make it even more attractive. Do you have any ideas? All your suggestions and remarks concerning the reunion are welcome. And if anyone would like to help with organizing the reunion, it would be just great... Soon, I hope, our Firkowski discussion forum will revive and together we can discuss this great gathering.

Already now, we must book the weekend in August... and order the good weather... I am sure that the sun will again shine over Sielpia and in our hearts....

Also think about updating and supplementing your data on our great family tree. Hopefully, you shall find some time to do this on those long, winter evenings. Photos are also welcome. Already now start thinking how will your part of the family tree look and if you will not feel stupid that it is full of question marks?

This year's newsletter features many articles written by you. It is nice. I hope it will encourage others to write about their roots for next year.

## A Busy 2005

### Tim Firkowski



It has been over one year now since the wonderful experience of the First Firkowski Family Reunion, and over 3 years since I met Lukasz. This has been 3 wonderful years of friendship! Many new Firkowski Family members have been identified.

To date we have almost 1900 names in the Firkowski Family. I am sure that by the next Reunion in 2006, we will have reached 2000 people because of our newly found data. We have located the Firkowski Family in Argentina, along with more evidence of Firkowski ancestors from the Ukraine/Russia. We have also located my Fathers closest relatives, which also allowed us to identify many of the people in the unknown photos that were put in the 1<sup>st</sup> Firkowski Newsletter. We were very excited. It has been a busy year researching the family. While I have been busy working on my land, and Lukasz was finishing school & taking his trip to Tibet, we have still worked hard on Family Research.

The memories of the visit to Poland have remained very strong in the minds of my father and me. There has not been a week that has gone by, that my father and I have

not talked about our wonderful experiences in Poland. We both would like to offer our most hearty THANKS to everyone.

This next year we will once again have a Family Reunion. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Firkowski Family Reunion is being planned for a weekend in August 2006. Last year there were so many people that came to the 1<sup>st</sup> Reunion, that I do not think I had the chance to talk enough with everyone. It was so wonderful to meet everybody at the Reunion. I am hoping I will have more time to visit with everyone at this next Reunion.

We had a pleasurable experience with those who hosted us, and acted as tour guides throughout our travels in Poland. You allowed us to see Poland, as we could never have seen it by ourselves.

It has taken over a year, but by the time you read this newsletter, I believe I will finally have almost all of the 14,000 photos of our trip, placed on my webpage. I have also started adding videos of the trip. Those videos should all be on my webpage after New Years.

Yes, it has been a whole lot of work to do all of this, but it has been worth every moment of my time, in order to experience all the joys of finding & meeting such a wonderful Firkowski Family throughout the world. I would do it all again without hesitation.

## SO YOU THINK YOU HAVE BEEN TO A FAMILY REUNION?

### Eric Firkowski



Just the thought of going back to visit the country of my birth for the very first time in my life was exciting enough but to do it with my oldest son Tim and also attend a "Firkowski" family reunion for the first time in Poland ever! Well, that was the absolute "icing on the cake" as we say in the US!

So many exciting things happened while we were in Poland and I have tried to describe some of these things in my previous article in this newsletter last year. There were so many wonderful moments that a person could write a book and still not cover everything!

Because of Tim and Lukasz Firkowski's excellent efforts over the previous two years, the seed of an idea to have a First Firkowski Family Reunion was born! As more and more people were sending their confirmation to attend the Reunion in Sielpia Wielka, the more excited I got.

I did not know exactly what to expect of Poland after being away for so many years. What would it look like? How would it feel? What would the people be like? I would like to answer these questions with just one word "beautiful!"

Questions came to my mind like, how would I recognize all of the people that would be at the reunion? How would they accept these Americanized "Poles"? What would we say and talk about? None of these questions

would be a problem in the next three days. Because of the love that was poured out by all those we met, these questions were totally irrelevant! We did not have to recognize anybody; we just hugged everybody! None of us ever stopped talking and we were welcomed as lost sons of Poland, which made both of us, feel like we never left. Language barriers appeared to be no problem as we managed to converse in whatever language it took, to get our point across and if all failed we used sign language! No one was a stranger by the time we were done! How absolutely wonderful!

It felt both exciting and strange as we drove into Sielpia Wielka that Friday afternoon. Faces began to appear ahead, on the right and on the left. Some faces we recognized, other faces we did not. Smiles began to appear everywhere, as many of the people attending were also meeting each other for the very first time. Many kisses and hugs were exchanged and it started the thousands of photographs, which were to be taken that weekend. As I ponder these photos today, I am so glad I have them to look at, share with others and make me feel like I have never left. I will not and cannot ever forget the tastes, songs, dances and laughter of our entire group. The beers were most appetizing, the vodka was excellent, the sliwowica was incredible, the food was absolutely delicious and the people, well the people, they were all unforgettable! The atmosphere, which the camp helped to create for all of us, was great fun. The people who shared their experiences on and off stage, the champagne, the campfire, the music, the kielbaski, Sielpia's food, the laughter and the dancing are moments that will never be forgotten by this Firkowski.

As our weekend came to a close with a beautiful and very touching Polish mass for the Firkowski family, arranged by Lukasz on Sunday, I began to think. "I don't believe that I had an opportunity to greet and hug everyone at the reunion" and I started to feel bad that I did not spend more time with all of the people. I wished I could have spent hours with each wonderful family, so I could get to know them better and talk about their families, their stories, where they lived, how they were doing, the things and the people they loved. I would like to have shared of my family and myself, also. How many missing memories could have been connected and brought together, if only we had more time. The opportunity is coming!

So you say you have been to family reunions before? Well not at one that had more than 200 people who took the time to share of themselves, by being there for the very first one, with just a 6 months notice.

Firkowski's unite! Be at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Firkowski Family Reunion in 2006! I am looking forward to meeting all of you again and for those that will be coming for the very first time, you will be glad you came and you will leave with newly found friends and acquaintances, and like myself, you will also leave with a new spot in your heart, that can only be filled by getting together again at the next reunion in 2008, then 2010 then 2012 and the next and the next!

# Back To Where It All Began

Eric Firkowski



Eric Firkowski, Senior Buyer, Construction/Purchasing, had an opportunity to return to the country of his birth, Poland last August. His son Tim has been Genealogically pursuing the name "Firkowski" for the past two years in an attempt to re-connect the roots of the Firkowski family. Tim and a cousin, Lukasz, in Poland have located around 1,400 Firkowski's throughout the world. Eric's children, Tim, Ken, Alaina & Andrew surprised Eric by providing him with airplane tickets to Poland so that Tim & Eric could travel to Poland together. It has been 62 years since Eric was born in

Auschwitz, Poland (the city not the camp) and had an opportunity to visit that city along with Krakow, Warsaw, Torun, and others. The daring crew made a 4 1/2 hour descent of a 6,000' peak in the Polish Alps, visited his nephew in the Czech Republic and attended an impromptu weekend Firkowski family reunion which had an amazing attendance of over two hundred people, most who were meeting each other for the first time. The Czech Republic, Sweden, Belgium, Germany, France and the U.S. were represented. "Meeting all the people who greeted us so warmly and had never met us before as well as a relative,



Miroslaw Firkowski who was an inmate of the infamous Nazi death camp in Aushwitz, was probably the most touching moment of my trip". Four Polish newspapers covered the unprecedented event. Over 17,000 photos were taken. They all plan to do it again in 2006!

Reprinted from "The Power Source" a Dashiell Quarterly Newsletter, April 2005

We intend that financial matters do not prevent anyone from attending the next family reunion. Thus, in order to possibly decrease the cost of the reunion we turn to all private individuals as well as to companies that may be interested in financially supporting the event. In return, we offer an opportunity of what is generally understood as promotion of a company/product in the form of banners/posters posted at the reunion site, ads on the family web site and on the reunion materials, t-shirts, etc. In case you are interested, please contact us to arrange the details.

## Thanks

We would like to thank everybody who helped us in editing this newsletter

### We thank you!

Zbysgniew Firkowski from Poland  
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# The Found Family

One summer evening I reached for a box filled with old photos that I had kept on the attic. I blew away a thin layer of dust uncovering the lid of the box. I was rarely taking this box out. Yet, that very evening I particularly wanted to spend time browsing through old family photos. I have plenty of them. I know every face; I remember every place and related memories from my childhood and youth time... This melancholy came upon me after a conversation with my brother Marian. In August 2004, Wojciech Firkowski contacted him and told about the Firkowski search performed by Tim and Lukasz Firkowski. I was positively surprised that Tim and Lukasz have made the effort to build the genealogical tree of our family. Owing to them, I found my family from across the ocean. Tim is a grandson of my father's brother. Dad often used to tell us about his brother with whom he kept in touch via mail, and whom he never saw again since his brother had left Poland. It is moving to me that we can all meet and renew the family ties. Together with my sister Barbara and brother Marian we decided to help Tim and Lukasz in collecting photos and news related to our kin. Owing to this, we meet with the family more often. Many people have offered us their help in gathering information concerning Firkowskis. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Aleksander Mrozinski from Bydgoszcz, Janek Mrozinski from Gubin, Elzbieta and Jan Bartoszak

from Slawsko Dolne, Stanislaw Latkowska and her daughter Halina from Markowo, Ewa Lewandowska from Gniewkowo and Teresa Bialka from Torun and many other people I did not listed here for their cordiality.

**Maria Dankowska**

Do you remember the photos of unknown people from the first newsletter? There was a photo of a girl at her her First Communion. Today we know that she is Maria Dankowska (Firkowska) Antoni's daughter.

## Yesterday... Maria Firkowska



... & today  
**Maria Dankowska  
(Firkowska)**

## Memories of Maria Dankowska (Firkowska)

Our dad Antoni, the son of Marcin and Marianna always enjoyed spending time with them. He kept in touch with his siblings. He used to visit his sisters and brother Franciszek and he kept in touch with his brother Wladyslaw via mail, who had gone to the US.... We remember the letters, Christmas cards, & handkerchief that my mom got from her sister-in-law .... and the one dollar bills, stuck in the Christmas card from our uncle Wladyslaw. Our dad also visited his sister Anastazja, who left for France and whom we named Busia.....

Our dad told us that there had been fourteen children at home. He was the youngest and they used to call him Antek 14. He also told us that some of them had died young and there had finally been only eight of them.

We have wonderful memories of those family visits with our dad at his sisters, our aunts. We have nice memories from our visits to Aunt Antonina and Uncle Leon of Raduszczyk, near Zielona Gora every summer. (We lived in the city of Torun and our aunt lived in the country). The whole two months of summer vacation we spent away from home and when our vacation was over, it was sad to go back. At our aunt's we pastured cows that we collected from other people around the village, together we would remove the harmful potato beetles from the farms & we paid to pick our own apples.



At harvest we were helping, an uncle with tightening sheaves and at the machine – we were cutting a sheaf and throwing away the chaff. We made many female friends and nice friends



with whom, despite the fact that it's been 32 years, we still keep in touch with many of them and remember the nice moments spent in Raduszczyk.

We also remember wonderful visits with our dad at Aunt Jagusia in Szadlowice. That aunt was a very warm, nice and loving person. She also had wonderful daughters: Kazia, Zosia, Stasia and a son Czeslaw. We used to go there with dad by train. They always waited for us, looking up the road to see if Antoni was walking to them from the station. They baked special pancakes to treat dad and us. We felt the cordiality and family warmth of theirs.

Dad also used to go to the family of his brother Franciszek from Markowo, and on the way he dropped by my mom's family. Those moments spent in the country among the family remain in our memories and despite the time that has passed, we go back to those parts. Our uncle served us black oil with potatoes. It used to be a delicacy and we, as children, were happy and satisfied that we could eat something like this in the country.

Sometimes he would take us to visit Aunt Pela, who lived near Janikow in the country, in the village of Dobieszewiczki together with her husband, two daughters and a son. We remember the time of a storm there and a thunder that hit a house. The road we had to walk on foot from the station was very bumpy and we as children had a hard time walking. But anyway we have nice memories of it now. They always hosted us and treated us very nice. We used to visit her also, when she moved to Janikow.

We also used to go with dad to visit Aunt Helena who lived in Rutartowo near Gniewkowo by train and then some kilometers on foot. We often complained about sore feet and our dad had to give us a piggyback ride. We remember that we had to carry water and go to the cellar for potatoes. It was nice to sit outside in the fresh air. When we were leaving, Aunt Helena & our cousins used to walk with us halfway. It was always a happy time at their place.

We also remember the visits of our dad in Gniewkowo by Urszula Firkowska, where dad used to take us, when he was visiting the grave of his mother, our grandmother. We were very happy when he let us light the candles on the graves of our relatives from his mother side – sister Zofia and brother Jan. Dad used to visit the grave of his father in Jaksice.

Polish-English Translation: Lukasz Firkowski

## Biography of Antoni Firkowski

I was born April 17th 1914 in Krusza Zamkowa, City Hall in Inowroclaw, son of Marcin and Marianna (from Konopa family).

At the age of 7, I went to grade school in Jaksice near Inowroclaw.

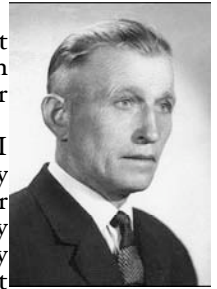
After grade school I still lived with my parents. My father worked at the property Borkowo and my Mother stayed at home. When I finished school I also worked in Borkowo until November 5<sup>th</sup> 1937. Between November 5<sup>th</sup> 1937 and September 28<sup>th</sup> 1939 I did my military service in the Polish Army. From September 1<sup>st</sup> 1939 until September 28<sup>th</sup> 1939 I took part in the defense of Poland against the German invasion, I was in 18<sup>th</sup> regiment of Polish Cavalry.

January 31<sup>st</sup> 1937 I married Anastasia Orlikowska.

After the surrender of Warsaw I was captured and sent to prison in Germany near the frontier with Holland ( but I don't remember the city). As a prisoner of war I stayed at "stalag" 11B, my number was 332.

After the liberation by the Allies army in November 1945 I returned to Poland. I found a job at the railway station in Torun where I worked as a locksmith until May 1974.

In May 1974 I retired. I have 2 daughters and 1 son, but they have started their own families, so now I have only my wife.



Antoni Firkowski

*Antoni Firkowski died 10 Oct 1984 in Torun*

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Głęboki ocean  
Szeroko rozlany  
A za nim tam mieszka  
Nasz Eric kochany.

Mieszka od kilku lat  
Ze swoją rodziną  
A tęsknił za nami  
Tą polską rodziną.

Był dobrze nam znany  
Już od 50 lat  
Bo jego tata słał  
Fotki z dziecięcych lat.

Fotki się przydały  
Gdy Eric znalazł nas  
I dziękujemy za to  
Życząc mu aż 100 lat.

**Author: Maria i Monika Dankowskie**

# The unwanted visit Alicja Grochowska (Firkowska)

The life of a nine-year-old child could look airy, especially during summer months when relatives and friends used to visit our place in the woods and the youngsters could play around the forest, climb tall trees, pick up from the undergrowth: berries, wild berries, raspberries and wild mushrooms that were growing abundantly in these woods; and were very beautiful. We could see handsome boletus from our yard.



However, living in the woods during the war meant it was common to have short or long "visits" of partisan troops of the Polish Underground Army. Often in the middle of the night, I could hear knocking on a window and then some movement in the house; I pretended I did not hear anything. However, I had to be aware of some matters. The Nazis introduced a compulsory reporting at the county office of all facts concerning the movement of the partisans, especially in the territory of the Lublin region, the Kielce region and the Warsaw district. The Underground Army carried out numerous successful operations against the Nazis, including blowing up trains. Hence, any contact or co-operation with "bandits", as Nazis used to call our brave soldiers, could end with the death penalty.

Facing this prospect my Dad, Alojzy Firkowski, son of Franciszek, a local forester, from time to time faked such notifications, comprised of fictitious data concerning the date, the number of people, the type of weapons carried, etc. All family members had to memorize the content of those false reports like prayers. Anyway, there was always the threat that somebody could not withstand the fear and e.g. facing the rifle's barrel stuck to their head, he or she would tell the truth, as happened in the case of one of my Dad's fellow foresters.

One day brought us a real peril. It was a winter, freezing morning of 1943. The white of the snow was all around. Dad went into the woods to supervise the felling of the trees. Mom was bustling about cooking dinner; incidentally she was cooking rabbit whose nice fragrance was spreading around the cottage. I was laying in bed in the dining room suffering from a cold that I caught very often during my childhood. Suddenly, one could hear a rattle of vehicles and Mom's scream – "Oh, God!". I sprang up to the window and what could I see... Several lorries and fully armed German soldiers jumping off them, surrounding the fence of the house with an iron-like circle; and loud harsh voices of the ones entering the house.

Mom "invited" them into the room where I was laying. They penetrated all rooms, producing inarticulate sounds upon smelling

of the baking hare, and when seeing me as "sick" they stepped back just in case. There were over ten of them, they made themselves comfortable in chairs, some around the table. There was an interpreter with them too. Impatiently they inquire about Dad. Just before their arrival, there had come to our cottage, a forest worker evicted from the Poznan region; and he knew some German, so Mom told them that he could go to look for Dad. They sent him for my Dad, obviously under escort and in the meantime they begun with an interrogation. Mom had self-control, even smiling while responding to the questions. They were not turning to me, they looked at me with some concern because the overwhelming stress and threat, caused me to shiver severely like during an epileptic attack.

The words of a prayer that I used to say with my Grandma rattled in my head – "He who seeks his Lords protection..." (J.Kochanowski). And the fear was truly great... Dad was not returning, time was passing and they were going deeper and deeper with the questions about the partisans. When they asked, "What did they look like?" Mom calmly looked at each of them, pointed at one and said "Oh, one looked just like this man" which made them burst out laughing and shout "Bandit, bandit".

During the whole questioning, my not-yet-five-year-old little brother, Witek, was standing next to Mom and was carefully observing "the guests".

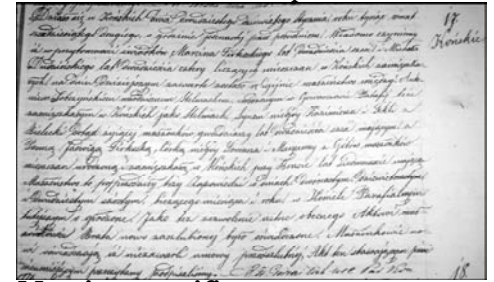


When they asked, through the interpreter, the question about the type of weapons carried by the partisans, he opened his mouth. But since he yet could not speak well, he tried to lean forward towards the table and to point at one of the German rifles, but Mom vigilantly told him not to interrupt.

Finally, the interrogation came to an end. Observing the interpreter who sitting next to the commander. I could see that they were checking Mom's answers against a little paper they held discreetly. Dad came to the house upon their departure. We learned that he had been questioned by the gate, in the freezing air. We learned that both of my parents were asked the same questions – fortunately, they also gave the same answers. Thanks to God Almighty. On the next day, my 40-year-old Dad had no more brown hair.

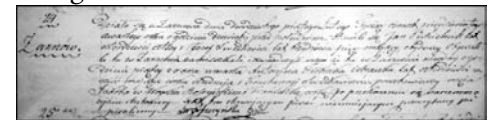
## Enchanted by the language...

Old parish registers, as probably all of you know, contain a great number of interesting information. But a few realize how colourful and different form the modern is the language they are written in... Here are some examples.



### Marriage certificate:

It happened in Konskie on the twenty-ninth day of January eighteen hundred sixty two at eleven o'clock before noon. We make it known, that at the consciousness of the witnesses Marcin Firkowski being twenty six years of age and Michal Dudzinski being twenty four years of age both good citizens living in Konskie, on the present day the religious marriage between Antoni Jobczynski born from young Stelmach in Gowarczow Parish and living in Konskie as Stelmach was settled. The then son of Kazimierz and Tekla of Bielecki hitherto living, a couple of nail-men being twenty six years of age and Miss Jadwiga Firkowska, the then daughter of Tomasz and Marianna from Guty, a couple of good citizens, born and residing in Konskie by the brother, being seventeen years of age. This wedding was preceded by three banns on the twelfth, nineteenth and twenty-sixth of the running month and year in the local Parish Church announced. As was given the oral permission of the brother present at on wedding moment. The couple declare that there had been no pre-marriage agreement drawn. This certificate, read to the ones missing the skills of reading, we signed.



### Death certificate:

It happened in Zarnow on the twenty-fifth day of February, eighteen hundred fifty four at ten o'clock before noon. Jan Pichielnik forty four years of age and Józef Sweckowicz thirty five years of age both citizens residing here in Zarnow presented themselves and announced to us that the day before a day ago at five o'clock in the morning Antonina Firkowska a beggaress being forty six years of age the daughter of Andrzej and Konstancja Sweckowicz died leaving the husband Jakub in the Boficjers Army and the daughter Franciszka. Upon examination with our own eyes, this certificate, read to the ones missing the skills of reading, we signed.

## 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz – Birkenau concentration camp

[...] It is very cold. It snows heavily. The eighty-year-old Miroslaw Firkowski has been already sitting for quite some time on his chair in the open air together with the other former prisoners. They are all waiting for the beginning of the ceremony commemorating the 60th anniversary of the camp liberation.

The ceremony begins. A whistle of locomotive can be heard. It is to remember the trains that were brought over hundreds of thousands of people, to the gas chambers, to death. It will be necessary to withstand over two hours on this honorary place, in the cold and strong wind. Firkowski has his warmest suit and warmest coat on. [...] Miroslaw breaths with difficulty, often coughs, though he does not smoke. [...]

He looks good as for his age, despite the suffering he had to go through during those five years spent in the camps. Five years of the mental terror, tortures, all the illnesses, medical experiments, frequent x-rays and weight lost down to 76 lbs.

Miroslaw speaks fast. He says that people should never forget this. [...] Millions lost their lives in the camps. Today many memories of that time fade. But one cannot forget this. This is a challenge for the schools and the media. He repeated that over and over again. [...]

He was often come back to the places of terror he had witnessed, maybe fifteen or twenty times to Oswiecim. He does not know exactly himself... „It is like visiting a cemetery, where my close ones are buried. So many of my friends were murdered and cremated in Oswiecim” – he said.

He was eighteen when the Nazis arrested him. He was suspected of organizing the resistance in his home town of Konskie. Together with his colleagues the Nazis took him to the jail in Kielce where all of them were subject to tortures. It is impossible to describe the scenes and the pain they had to undergo as the victims of the interrogations. [...]

It is already dark. The square in front of the railway ramp in Brzezinka, where SS were deciding about the life and death of the newcomer prisoners is covered with even light. It still snows heavily. All speeches are already over. The heads of states are lighting candles. The candle flames are lighting the tracks leading to the gate through which the death trains used to enter. A piercing music can be heard. One tone. Once loud and again quiet. [...]

*From the article in Berliner Zeitung  
28.01.2005.*



On January 26th, 2005

Miroslaw Firkowski, in acknowledgement of his extraordinary merits in commemorating history and the truth about Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, was awarded the Officers' Cross of the Polonia Restituta Order

## Hidden Treasure

The war developments shook up Poland, & it also had their effect on the Firkowski's Family of Opoczno. All men in our family decided to grab a weapon and stand to defend the Homeland. It was a time when then 24 year old, Piotr Firkowski enlisted in the Polish Army.



He was stationed in Skierniewice. As a private, he took part in the Battle at Bzura. Upon defeat, the regiment he served in, headed west to join the Polish units there. However, while making its way through the Skierniewice Forest, the regiment came under enemy firing. Private Piotr Firkowski received from the regiment commander a mission to hide the regiment funds and the regimental banner. Together with two fellow soldiers, Piotr went deeper into the forest where he buried three sacks with regiment's money and the regimental banner under a tree. Upon completion of the task, the Nazis captured all three men. Piotr became a prisoner of war for a moment and then he has sent to

the Reich to work. He worked there at a farm notorious of its hostility towards Poles. Inhumanly treated, under very bad conditions, Piotr got typhoid. Due to the action of the local Germans, it was possible to transfer him to Hamburg to work at the railway serving the cars. There, the US Army liberated him. Piotr intended to fight for his Homeland, even though he was hundreds of miles away from the Polish Army. He decided to join the US Army, where he was serving as an MP. Upon the end of the war activities on the western



front, he moved to the US. However, he missed his family, his home & his Homeland. Upon his return to Europe, he mysteriously found a bar of German gold that he cut into pieces and hid in a special made belt, yet it was stolen from him. He returned to Opoczno in 1946. Since then, he lived happily on Polish land until he died.

Author: L. Firkowski – Slupsk, Poland

# A Dream come true

Lukasz Firkowski

The participants of the first reunion contributed to the realization of one of my dreams by offering me the first 'brick' to the huge amount I had to collect for the "expedition of my life" to Tibet.

"One of the most mysterious and remote places on Earth. Monumental, covered with shining ice and snow mountain ranges, highland s t o n y deserts



through which Tibetan nomads cruise and pasture their herds of yaks, majestic monastery buildings and lonesome ruins – mute witnesses of the past, never-ending spaces going into horizon and praying pilgrims heading towards holy places (...). This country is a cradle of the Tibetan Buddhism with numerous temples, stupas, some turned into museums, it is a homeland of Dalajlama, a place of a vivid and true religious cult filled with mysticism, mysteriousness, where fortune-telling, oracles, folk believes and visions are practiced to these days, and where monks persistently defend their faith against the Chinese authorities."

I visited fascinating places in Tibet. I learned about the perishing Tibetan culture and about the religion of the country on the Roof of the World. Coming from northwestern Tibet through the central Tibet, I reached remote and not commonly known nor visited places. I visited rooms of the monumental Potala Palace – one of the



most stunning buildings on Earth, which hovers over the capital, Lhasa, spanning one mile, it has thirteen levels and entirely covers the top of the Red Hill. I walked along the alleys of

Norbulinka, the summer residence of dalajlamas, the place from where Tenzin Gyatso, the present Dalajlama had to flee for good in 1959. I was strolling around the most sacred Tibetan temple of Jokhang along an always, jammed pilgrim route, constituting a fascinating combination of strong devotion and faith with a market economy, where sacrum and profanum meet in one place. I could see at close range Tibetan monks debating and praying in numerous monasteries that I



was visiting, among which, the most important ones were Sera, Ganden, Labrang, Kumbum.



I also had an opportunity to admire the Drepung monastery, stretching on a hill on the outskirts of Lhasa – once the biggest monastic center in the world with the then population of ten thousand monks. Neither will I ever forget the river crossing of Brahmaputra in a flat-bottom boat on the way back from the officially inaccessible Samya monastery. I



bathed in hot springs on the elevation of over 14,000 ft with the view on the snowy mountain ranges. My route led

also through the cities of Gyantse and Shigatse - the latter hosting the Tashilumpo monastery, the seat of the present Pantshenlama. Passing along the unbeaten track of the Tibetan Plateau, I crossed the mountain passes of over 16,000 ft, I arrived at the tents of nomads scattered around the



meadows and I made my way to holy lakes placed picturesquely inside the rings of white peaks over 22,000 ft high.



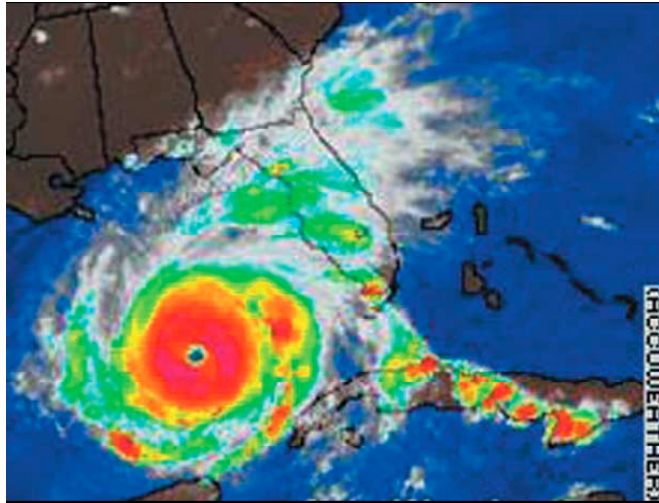
I also tasted dishes of the local cuisine like the yak-steak, tsampa and salty yak butter tea so disliked by many tourists. I was enchanted by the cloudless panoramic view of Himalayas and I spent a night at the foot of the highest peak of the world – Mount Everest.



Finally, leaving Tibet I went down the plateau along the curvy hairpin road into the scenic, tropical green of Nepal. Once again, I would like to thank all those who helped me make my dream come true.

# A Date With Rita

*She came up slowly from the south, played around in the Caribbean for a week, gathered strength, turned into a category 5 hurricane (winds of 250+ kilometers per hour), then slowly started to creep north/northwest across the Gulf of Mexico and headed directly for Houston, Texas, USA.*



My wife Sherrie Ann and I have been living in Houston, Texas since November of 1991. Part of the price we have to pay for living in the beautiful sub-tropics, is the occasional threat of hurricanes, which form during the season (June – November) in this part of the world.

We watch the hurricanes form every year and every year they pass us without any harm. As I started watching, this “Rita” began to gather strength and turn into a category 5 hurricane. I began to have a very bad feeling and could see that this time, this time it might not miss us and with winds this strong and the threat of a 6 meter high tide surge. We had better plan to get ourselves out of the way. We live only about 10 miles from Galveston Bay, which connects directly into the Gulf of Mexico. A wall of water 6 meters high was nothing to guess about.

We had to make a decision to evacuate this part of Houston and head away from the water and the winds. The greater Houston area has a population of 4 million people and is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest city in the USA. Leaving this area would not be easy and it was not. We own two Lincoln “Town Cars” which are large automobiles. We would have to pack everything into the two vehicles with just the most important things and leave the rest behind. Those decisions would be very difficult at first but as the threat of the storm became a reality, the decisions became easier. What does a person bring and what does one leave behind, perhaps never to see it again?

We packed our two cars with all the most important papers and documents, which we had. Photographs were another treasure we would dare not leave behind and after forty-three years of living together; we had many, many photographs. We brought our collectibles and other valuables, as well as the computer and all the important

software and CD's with more photographs. Sufficient clothing to last for a week, personal items as well as enough food and drink to last us for about the same time. We boarded up the windows of the house, taped up any other open glass, turned off the water, and removed those things on the floor onto the beds or tables to get them off the ground in case of flooding. We then sadly said goodbye to our home.

Our first twenty minutes on the road took us 20 miles northeast of Houston. The next thirty miles took us thirteen hours. The traffic on all the highways, crossing through and surrounding Houston was at a complete standstill and temperatures were running at 37 C. Many cars overheated, many ran out of gas. All the gasoline stations were closed and out of gasoline, stores were closed, all bathrooms were closed

also. This made it very difficult for many people and some people died because of the heat or other reasons.

After not being able to drive any further than 50 miles, because we were at a total standstill, we decided to “ride-out” the storm in the area in which we were located. At least we were away from the water. We spent the next two days and nights in a church/school building that the minister was kind enough to let us stay in, along with about 350 other people. Sherrie Ann and I had one of the children's classrooms all to ourselves. We helped with distributing the food that so many people had donated to the church and no one went hungry or thirsty. Everyone cleaned up after themselves. We actually had a great time together and many new friendships were made.

The major path of the hurricane had turned east and missed Houston for the most part. Much of the city was without electricity for as much as a week. Our area was spared. It was very windy but only some trees and branches were lost, no homes were destroyed. On the third day we took a chance and left back for our home south of Houston. It took us only an hour to get back home the 50 miles we had traveled, as the freeways and highways were mostly clear of traffic. As we approached our home, I could see that we had electricity, because the outside light was still on. Our yard was scattered with many broken tree branches but no major damages.

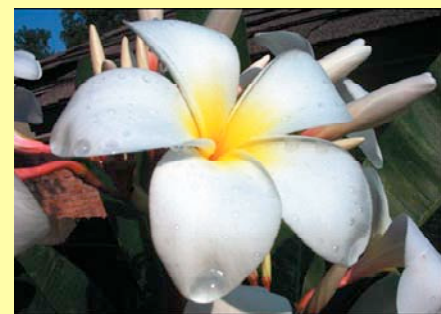
We were fortunate. We had a home to come back to and suffered no damage and could begin to put our lives together again. We were lucky, many people east of us lost all they had including their lives.

# From Sherrie Ann



The drive itself was, of course, a VERY horrible experience. But the experience at the church shelter that we stayed at was a very GREAT experience. The pastor & his family were wonderful, as were his deacons and others that helped in the kitchen and to help keep us organized. We had families of several cultures there and there were no problems at all. We all got along with each other VERY well. Everyone helped out as best as they could. It was important that the families who had children keep an eye on them. That way, everyone else wasn't always trying to find the parents of lost children. There were several people in wheelchairs. Obviously they were not able to help or maybe just a little bit. There were also several elderly people. The amount that we helped in the kitchen and around the building, helped to keep our minds busy and we didn't have time to worry so much. We will never forget this experience and we will remember the church people and our new friends forever!!

We also will not forget the many thoughts and prayers of our friends and family both here in the U.S. and around the world. As we came around the last corner before reaching our house and we saw that our home had not been destroyed, of course we said a HUGE prayer of thanks to our WONDERFUL Lord!!!!!!!!!!!!!! But one of the thoughts on my mind was that we had been spared because of all of you. For this we want to thank you all very, very much. We hope that you never have to have an experience like this. But if you ever do have to, we hope you would be able to find someone to help to make everything better, like we did.



## Ode to a Plumeria

Plumeria's a wondrous sight,  
Growing yellow, pink or white!  
When in bloom, those colors glow.  
Don't you know we love you so?  
Frangipani's fragrant smell;  
We are in your glorious spell!  
Lots of sun and not much rain;  
We want you to bloom again!  
Pretty Plumey's beauteous face;  
You are blessed with God's good  
grace!  
Noble, fair and rich with splendor;  
You are just the best of flowers!!

**Sherrie Ann - USA**

Eric Firkowski

# What is a First Cousin Twice Removed?

If someone walked up to you and said "Howdy, I'm your third cousin, twice removed," would you have any idea what they meant? Most people have a good understanding of basic relationship words such as "mother," "father," "aunt," "uncle," "brother," and "sister." But what about the relationship terms that we don't use in everyday speech? Terms like "second cousin" and "first cousin, once removed"? We don't tend to speak about our relationships in such exact terms ("cousin" seems good enough when you are introducing one person to another), so most of us aren't familiar with what these words mean.

## Relationship Terms

Sometimes, especially when working on your family history, it's handy to know how to describe your family relationships more exactly. The definitions below should help you out.

### Cousin (a.k.a "first cousin")

Your first cousins are the people in your family who have two of the same grandparents as you. In other words, they are the children of your aunts and uncles.

### Second Cousin

Your second cousins are the people in your family who have the same great-grandparents as you., but not the same grandparents.

### Third, Fourth, and Fifth Cousins

Your third cousins have the same great great grandparents, fourth cousins have the same great-great-great-grandparents, and so on.

### Removed

When the word "removed" is used to describe a relationship, it indicates that the two people are from different generations. You and your first cousins are in the same generation (two generations younger than your grandparents),

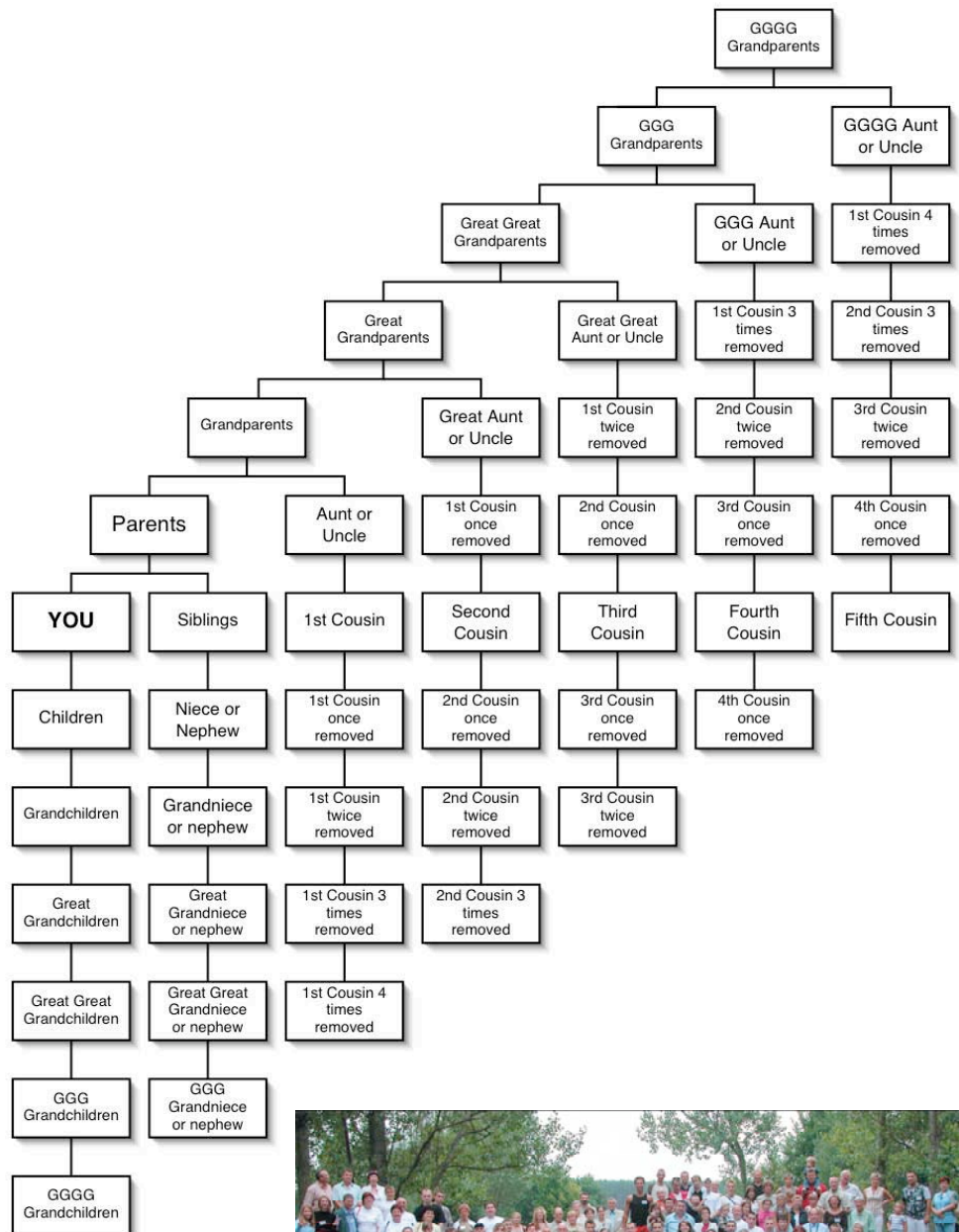
so the word "removed" is *not* used to describe your relationship.

The words "once removed" mean that there is a difference of one generation. For example, your mother's first cousin is your first cousin, once removed. This is because your mother's first cousin is one generation younger than your grandparents and you are two generations younger than your grandparents. This one-generation

difference equals "once removed."

Twice removed means that there is a two-generation difference. You are two generations younger than a first cousin of your grandmother, so you and your grandmother's first cousin are first cousins, twice removed.

Reprinted from article at [http://www.genealogy.com/16\\_cousn.html](http://www.genealogy.com/16_cousn.html)





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## We are looking for any information about these people:

Aleksandra Firkowska	Berufsschule Polen, Koordinatorin
Alojzy Firkowski	Bielsko-Biala, Poland ul. Podgorze
Aneta Firkowska	Piotrków Trybunalski ul. Slowackiego (0-44) 646 86 64 Poland
Aneta Firkowska	Tomaszów Mazowiecki Zespól Szkol Ponadgimnazjalnych, Poland
Ann Firkowska	Brazil
Antonina Firkowska	hotel industry?
Barbara Firkowska	Mniszków Poland Nurse; ul. Piotrkowska 42; 26-341 Mniszków (0-44) 756 19 01
Elzbieta Firkowska	Lodz, Poland ul. Podhalanska
Ewa Firkowska	Warszawa, Poland Instytut Gospodarki Mieszkaniowej - Zaklad Badania Rynku Nieruchomosci; ul. Filtrowa 1; 00-611 Warszawa
Gabrielle J Firkowski	Fort Lauderdale, FL data urodz. 1950 USA
Gwynth Firkowski	Canada Member of Edmonton Bird Club <a href="http://ebc.fanweb.ca">http://ebc.fanweb.ca</a>
Ettore Firkowski	Brazil
Izabela Firkowska	Lodz, Poland Fortis Bank Polska S.A. ul. Piotrkowska 189/191; 90-447 Lodz
Jadwiga Firkowska	Jezow, Poland Dressmaker; ul. Lowicka 61; 96-134 Jezow
Jerzy Firkowski	Lublin, Poland
Jolanta Firkowska	Szczecin, Poland ul. Legnicka
Justyna Firkowska	Lodygowice, Poland Finished High School in 1994
Katarzyna Firkowska	Bydgoszcz, Poland ul. Fiordonska; (0-52) 348 97 21
Leokadia Firkowska	Warszawa, Poland ul. Keniga
Lukasz Firkowski	Gdansk, Poland <a href="mailto:lacki@biomed.eti.pg.gda.pl">lacki@biomed.eti.pg.gda.pl</a>
Malgorzata Firkowska	Bydgoszcz, Poland ul. Józefa Sulakowskiego (0-52) 371 01 17
Malgorzata Firkowska	Warszawa, Poland ul. Kochanowskiego
Malgorzata Firkowska	Warszawa, Poland Surgeon; ul. Ksiecica Ziemowita
Maria Firkowska	Warszawa, Poland ul. Natolinska 2
Marianna Firkowska	Lodz, Poland ul. Tuwima
Marianna Firkowska	Mniszkow, Poland ul. Piotkowska; tel. (0-44) 756 16 93
Mateusz Firkowski	swirus37; Scientific secretary
Mirosław Firkowski	Lublin, Poland
Monika Firkowska	Chorzow, Poland ul. Młodzieżowa (0-32) 247 53 55
Natalie Firkowski	Manitoba, Canada Kelvin High School in Winnipeg, Canada
Piotr Firkowski	Gdansk, Poland
R. Firkowski	Lodz, Poland "Fart-Plus" Autokomis; ul. Wojska Polskiego 83; 91-755 Lodz
Sabina Firkowska	Kielce, Poland Tour group "Czaploki" from Cieszyna; <a href="mailto:leszekczudek@poczta.onet.pl">leszekczudek@poczta.onet.pl</a> ; ul. Nowowiejska (0-41) 342 65 90
Stanisław Firkowski	Opoczno, Poland numer gadu-gadu 5242188, more than 67 years
Tadeusz Firkowski	Jezow, Poland ul. Wojska Polskiego; 95-047 Jezow; tel. (0-46) 875 51 98
Thomas Firkowski	Bielsko Biala, Poland went to England to look for work
Władysław Firkowski	Wroclaw, Poland Doctor; Wroclaw
Zofia Firkowska	Smardzko, Poland Sklep spoz.-przemyslowy; 78-300 Smardzko 22; (0-94) 365 34 49

When we are researching the Firkowski Family for new people, we are looking for any information that may help us in our research, every piece of information is a clue to locating another relative. If you would like to help us add to our information about the Firkowski Family, here are some pieces of basic information we are looking for. Dates & Places of Birth, Baptism, Death, Burial, Marriage, and Places they have lived. We also must try to find all the spouses that a person had, their parents and their children. Family Stories can be quite useful also in giving us clues about where to search for more information. If you would like to help in the Firkowski Family Research you can see the information we already have on our web pages. Research takes time, but with the help of more people, we will learn more about the Firkowski Family History sooner.

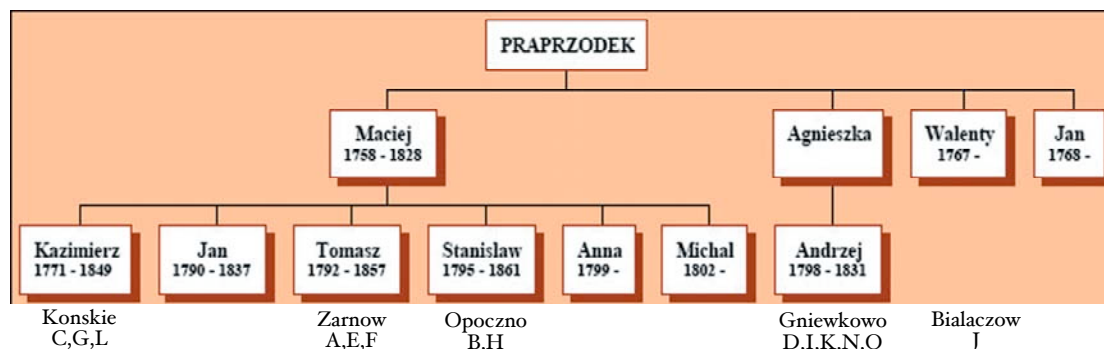
## Lukasz Firkowski

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0 501 305 961  
Email: [lukasz@firkowski.com](mailto:lukasz@firkowski.com)  
Gadu-Gadu#3812933  
Web page:  
<http://firkowscy.of.pl>

All the above data was found on the Internet and in phone books.  
**If you recognize anybody, please contact Tim or Lukasz.**

## We are one big Family!

On the March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005 after over 2.5 years of genealogical research all branches of our Family were connected to form one big tree. And even though the great-grand ancestors remain unknown, many things have been clarified. We have found in the parish registers, information about siblings and offspring of our oldest ancestors. This allowed us to create the above layout of the fore bearers of our family. Thus, all Firkowskis are one Family...



# I am my own Grandfather

From: Conscript – Stanislaw Firkowski.

To: The Chief Commander of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland  
President of the Republic of Poland  
48/50 Krakowskie Przedmiescie St.  
00-071 Warsaw

Dear Mr. President.

I kindly request you to release me from the honorable duty of military service due to a complicated family situation for which I am now in, specifically:

I am 24 years old and I have married a widow who is 44. My wife's daughter is 25 years old. It has happened that my father married my stepdaughter. In this way my father became my son-in-law, because he married my daughter, Because of that she is my daughter and my stepmother at the same time. My wife and I had a baby-boy in January. This child is a brother of my father's wife so he is my father's brother-in-law. At the same time, by being my stepmother's brother he is my uncle. So my son is my uncle.

My father's wife, also my daughter gave birth to a boy on Easter, who is, at the same time, my brother, because he is my father's son and my grandson, because he is a son of my wife's daughter. So I am a brother of my grandson, and by being a husband of the mother-in-law of this child's father. I am in a way father of my father remaining a brother of his son. In this way I am my own grandfather. So if it pleases you, Mr. President, could you relieve me from the recruit service, because as far as I know the law does not allow enlistment of grandfather, father and son from one family at the same time?

I trust Mr. President that you will understand my case,

Best regards.

Stanislaw Firkowski



**Learn about Maciek Firkowski from Brwinowa.**

He was not at the first reunion because he was visiting Rome at the same time. Now he is waiting impatiently for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Firkowski Family Reunion and he would like to come in his dream car. ☺



## Announcement - Contest!

**How many people will come to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Firkowski Family Reunion in 2006? Nobody knows the answer to this question now. And in fact, nobody will know until the first day of the reunion...**

**So, you can join the contest and take your guess...**

**At the First Firkowski Family Reunion we had 202 people**

### Whom to count?

- 1) We will only count the people who will arrive before the official opening of the reunion (Saturday) – those who will have registered at the reception.
- 2) We will count all who are both closely and loosely related to the Firkowski Family.
- 3) We do NOT count the local staff, friends, invited guests and journalists.
- 4) Pregnant women count as 1 person.

### Rules:

- 1) Only one guess per person.
- 2) To participate in the contest you must be over 12 years of age.
- 3) The person with the guess closest to the actual number will receive a prize worth ca. 250 PLN !!  
**Silver DVD/DivX Player - Manta DVD-011 Emperor 3**

- 4) In case there are more participants with identical, correct answers, the winner will be decided by a random drawing.
- 5) The mandatory condition to receive the award is to be present at the reunion, at the time of announcement of the game results. (Saturday).

### Submissions are due by March 31, 2006.

After this deadline, new submissions or alterations to the previously sent submissions will not be permitted.

To avoid any misunderstandings, before April 10, 2006 the list of the participants with their guesses will be published on the Firkowski Family web site. The list will also be available during the Reunion.

Any claims concerning the votes will be accepted until the absolute deadline of April 30, 2006.

### Your answer should include:

- 1) your guess (a number)
- 2) name and surname of the person who sends the vote
- 3) and his/her city of residence.

### You can guess ONLY via:

- 1) SMS: 0 501 305 961.  
Example of SMS:  
157, Kazimierz Firkowski, Bydgoszcz
- 2) e-mail: lukasz@firkowski.com
- 3) mail:  
Lukasz Firkowski; ul. Kosciuszki 19/220; 41-300 Dabrowa Górnicza POLAND

Notice: In case of submitting your guess via SMS or e-mail you will receive a confirmation. This means that SMS sent from the Internet will not be accepted. Guesses cannot be submitted personally, on the phone or via a web communicator.