

Wielka Rodzina Firkowskich



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English version

Two years...

Lukasz Firkowski

Translated by author



Time passes inevitably... Days, weeks, months were passing... My adventures of genealogy started about two years ago.

It was a period of "lots of searching", very intensive work, a lot of unforgettable events, wonderful experiences crowned by the 1st Reunion of The Firkowski Family. When I met Tim on the Internet two years ago, I didn't think that my life would be changed so much.

My family consisted of only a few people. And I met only a few of them regularly...

Memorable 24th of August in 2002... only one magic word "Hello"... and everything started... and everything started happening so quickly... so fast that I didn't notice when two years had passed...

There were letters, mails, phone calls at first... Then the time of getting answers from them... When we were getting new information and new photos for our tree, it was a time of a lot of happiness... I was learning how to accumulate all the information, processing photos and genealogical programs, HTML language to create web page. Thanks to a great deal of conversations with Tim, I was practicing my English...

We wrote the first newsletter and sent it to everyone. It had been one year since our genealogical research started. Then we started looking for Firkowski records in archives. Tim spent hundreds hours for searching our ancestors in LDS. All records, which he had found, he sent to my by email... and I tried to read unclear records from many years ago, and translating them for him.

There were a lot of events during that time... first meeting with the Firkowski families... happiness when we joined any relatives together, or sadness and disappointment when we met some difficulties with finding some data...

Today its time for a summary... in our tree there is more than 1500 people... We found Firkowski's in many countries all over the world... They live in almost all regions of Poland... I met about 250 people, if I include the contacts by Internet and phone that number gets higher...

It is incredible... how genealogy has changed my life... how Firkowski's have changed me...

What are challenges will there be during the next two years? That has yet to be seen... For sure I would like to find all Firkowski's and join them together in one big family... I would like to break a record of people who

come to the next Reunion... I would like that the our hard work helps bring everybody together here and abroad.

Two years to a magical moment

Tim Firkowski



It has been an amazing 2 years since Lukasz and I met on ICQ. What an incredible adventure that began on the 24th of August 2002 with 1 word "Hello". I never imagined in my wildest dreams, what would transpire from that day forward. My life is forever changed.

I had only known a few people in my Firkowski Family, and my father was not even sure who his grandfather was. I remember my father telling me how he would always look for Firkowski in telephone books and other places when he traveled, and he never found another Firkowski. My father has done this all of his life. My grandparents did not talk much about the Firkowski Family that was left behind when my grandparents left Poland in 1942. My grandparents left Poland during the war, after my Father was born. I had thought we were the only Firkowski's on earth. When I met Lukasz on ICQ, that all changed. Lukasz and I were both very curious to know how we were related, and so it began...our research into the genealogical history of our Firkowski families.

From the beginning when we started by looking for any clues on the internet, to the research into the microfilm archives of church records, our research and desire to learn the truth was very intense. Lukasz and I have spent thousands of hours working together gathering all the information that we have today.

I wanted to travel to Poland to meet Lukasz and some of the people we had been finding in our research. I told Lukasz that there were too many people to meet in the short time that I had to visit Poland. Lukasz proceeded to plan a family reunion that turned out to be more incredible than I could have ever imagined.

My first meeting of another Firkowski was when my father and I met Lukasz and his father Janusz at the airport in Krakow. I was very happy to finally meet the wonderful friend that I had made during the past 2 years. While we had never actually met, we both felt like we knew each other all our lives.

My second meeting of another Firkowski was at a party at the home of the Ciuks. When I walked into that house, feelings of joy overwhelmed me. I see in this house many of the

people that I had learned of through all our research. These people were not just photos and information anymore....THEY ARE REAL PEOPLE, and I was really meeting them... This is a moment I never had imagined. The Ciuk and Hajdrowski family that I met that night were wonderful. The big event, of meeting Firkowski family was yet to come.

It was Friday, August 20th... Lukasz and his mother Maria drove to Selpia Wielka early that morning, while Janusz (Lukasz father) took my father and I to do some more sight-seeing. My father and I spent most of the day visiting Czestochowa. Then it was time to drive to Selpia. I was not sure what to expect. Lukasz had emailed me photos of the camp already, so I had an idea of what it would look like. The questions going through my mind were... Would anyone be there when we arrived? What will they be like? What will my father think? Will we be able to communicate? To my surprise there were almost 50 people there on Friday night. It was a heartwarming welcome. What a wonderful moment. The night passed quickly as we settled in, had dinner and had a party until 3 in the morning.

Saturday brought on more surprises. I woke up to find that the 30 meter long family tree

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Two years to a magical moment

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had been put up outside. I had never seen the whole family tree before, but thanks to hours of work from Lukasz, and his Uncle Krzysztof, I was seeing the result of 2 years of work. 1300 people were on that tree. As the morning progressed, Firkowski members arrived. It was incredible as I was greeting new arrivals non-stop. I recognized many of the people from their photos I had seen, and many of the people I had talked to via the internet. I was now meeting them in person. I was so excited to see everyone meeting everyone else, and everyone taking photos. I was moving from one person to another... trying to say hello to everyone. Now it was time for everyone to get together in the Amphitheatre. I was nervous, I was going to see all those Firkowski descendants in one place, and was going to give a part of my speech in Polish. I did not want to make a mistake. Over 200 Firkowskis from 6 different countries were there. Lukasz gave his speech, then it was my turn... many mixed emotions flooded out as I gave my speech in Polish. I had never imaged in my wildest dreams that this moment could ever have happened... so many Firkowskis in one place.

The party on Saturday night was the best party I had ever been to... and that party went on till 3 in the morning. I did not get much sleep that weekend!

Sunday Morning we went to church in Konskie where a special mass was said for the newly reunited Firkowski Family, followed by a trip to a cemetery where many Firkowskis were buried in the 1800's. It's a wonderful feeling to see all the Firkowskis fill this very large and beautiful church

I can only thank Lukasz for his unwavering dedication to helping find the history of the Firkowski family. I would also like to thank everyone who helped provide us with family information. A big thanks goes to everyone who came to the first Firkowski family reunion.

I only wish that the family reunion was longer, so I could have visited more with everyone. I apologize now to those people at the Reunion that I did not have the chance to talk with more. I wish to learn everything I can from everyone. You all have a special place in my heart, & I left the reunion a different person knowing that I indeed am not the only Firkowski on earth. I hope there will be even more people at the 2nd Firkowski family reunion in 2006.

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The First Reunion of the Firkowski family

Polish/English Translation by Agnieszka Strozik

The First Reunion of the Firkowski Family took place from the 21st to 22nd August 2004 in Sielcia Wielka. Although many people came already on Friday - the 20th August, The most guests arrived in the afternoon. They came earlier to help in preparing for reunion. All of them helped to hang the occasion banners, to blow up and tie balloons. There was a lot of work to do... especially at the reception: filing materials for



reunion, stamping special certificates and planning preliminary accommodations.

All the while excitement was felt. Everyone anticipated the "Great Day". All newcomers wanted to know their family and to see "Family Tree" at last.

Everybody was talking all the time but the attempt at gathering all together might not be a success... Maybe it was supposed to be a formal meeting as for the first time...

All the guests enjoyed the fresh air much better, definitely. Special songs book were prepared and thanks to that the words of known



and popular songs there were heard everywhere for a long time. The bravest singers sustained till early morning - till 3 a.m. The others went to bed earlier because they wanted to wake up well rested and full of energy for facing up to new emotions next day.

Saturday morning began by hanging the 30-meters long "Family Tree". It took some time to



find oneself and the closest family there.

New cars and new people registered at reception minute by minute. Receiving occasional T-shirts was possible. More and more people were walking along "The Tree". They got to know



each other and tried to find the relationship between them. Some of participants added new personal details on this Family Tree.



Flashes were seen everywhere... Everybody wanted to have and to take photos with everyone else. Everyone was cheerful, happy and smiling all the time. Also from the local press came the journalists to report about the Firkowski Reunion.

The weather was beautiful. It was getting a little cloudy but the rain didn't fall.

The common dinner was at 1 p.m. o'clock.



One hour later all guests gathered together for official part in amphitheatre in the fresh air. There were about 200 people.



The official part began with the organizer's speeches. Everyone was overcome with emo-



tions. Then, special poem, written by Maria Radwanska (Firkowska) was read - the author could not come. Mirosław Firkowski - the oldest Firkowski present at the reunion - was talking more or less about sad old times in the past.



Raising a glass of champagne finished the official part. Next, people with the same name gathered together on the stage and took group photos in memory of reunion. Conversation didn't



stop for a moment. Many people wrote some commemorative sentences in Guests Book.



There were a few minutes free time before supper... The youngest played football, some people went for a walk to visit the nearby area while the others sailed on pedal boats on the lake. Some of guests, who could not wait for campfire, organized their own parties near their camp area.



An organized campfire with music played by a DJ after supper. Young and old - all together - were dancing while holding hands. One



Great the Firkowski Family! Special attraction was possible singing some songs together.

A Film was also shown, with greetings from Eric Firkowski's wife, who could not be here. Sausages were roasted on the bonfire & in such noble-minded company; they tasted delicious as never before. Dancing and singing fell silent only at daybreak. Then, a light rain started to fall... But the Family Tree was luckily saved.



Sunday - breakfast at dawn. Hot "zurek" got everybody on their feet. At 9:45 Holy Mass took place in Konskie. All the Firkowski Family took active part in it by reading Holy Scriptures and



Faithful Prayer, singing Psalms and giving gifts. The additional highlight during this mass was singing into Latin Chorus. The excited priest said exceptional words towards our family and gave us three devoted loaves, which we divided among us later. In the end, on the stairs of the church, group photos were taken. Later people related to this area, went to the cemetery to light candles.

At noon the 1st meeting of Family Board took place. Participation in it wasn't obligatory. During this meeting, it was established that next Reunion of the Firkowski Family would take place in two years' time in the same place - in Sielcia Wielka.

After dinner everyone gradually went home.

My impressions of the Reunion...

Lukasz Firkowski

The First Reunion of the Firkowski Family is finished! But it will stay in my memory forever. I probably have never experienced so many moving and nice moments in only two days. They were two incredible days.

We went to Sielpia (city where the Reunion took place) on Friday in order to start preparing for this great event. When I approached the scouting campground, I felt excited. Lukasz - I thought - about 200 people (which you had invited) will come here in few hours. People, who have never seen or met each other before. Some have known nothing about their closest relatives. Would they come? - I was wondering - What would my family be like? Would everything be all right? What would the weather be like? I only begged for no rain.



When I arrived I saw a few people whom I already known. They came early to help me. Everything would be all right. Everything would have to be right. - I repeated in my mind.

About 50 people came on Friday. So many! There would be four times that on Saturday! It's hard to tell what happened on Saturday. There were so many emotional and moving moments during our first meeting. At last I could meet people, who I had known only from the Internet, phone calls or those who wrote letters to me. They came (many of them from many kilometers) to meet each other! It's amazing & wonderful!

It was nice to see my family walking around our genealogical tree (longer than 30 meters).

They met each other, their roots, and their "new" relatives! Conversations! Everybody was talking to each other. They were talking about their families about past events. Everybody was so nice and friendly.

Then at one moment, someone took a pen and started writing new information on the genealogical tree. They were adding dates and names. I was very happy - so much new information.

Dinner was at 1 p.m. It was our first communal meal, during which, everybody was still talking. Smiles didn't disappear from anybody's face... I was so stressed and nervous that I drank beet soup, which I don't like at all.

I planned the most important part of Reunion - meeting at about 2 p.m. I decided that it would take place in an open-air area, in the amphitheatre, near the lake. It can't rain. At least not today. In my mind, I drove away all the clouds.

When I was standing on stage... I was very happy that they were here, that they arrived, but on the other hand I was still wondering if everything would be all right... I was excited. The Firkowski family has already been found after only two years. Nobody expected that. - Was it a dream? No! They were here! They were sitting in front of me. They were smiling heartily. I started giving my speech.

There was a campfire where we roasted sausages after supper. A DJ was playing music. The music was audible so far from amphitheatre. When I arrive at the amphitheatre, I couldn't believe my eyes. My whole family was dancing and singing. Everyone... young and old, adults and children...

EVERYBODY!! THE WHOLE FAMILY!!

Two years of arduous research, but only two Reunion days. But those days were worth everything... The view of jubilant people, who were playing, smiling, & dancing together, although they hadn't known each other a few hours ago, was worth of all this effort. To be honest I should have expected this... because... they are Firkowskis!! So the Reunion was a success. And it didn't rain. ☺

In two years we will meet here again... but in a bigger group. My dear family, I have already missed you. See you.

Lukasz Firkowski

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Opinions about Reunion

From the internet
Guest Book

- It is after Great Reunion already!
It was so amazing, that I do not what to write. It was indescribable!!
Congratulations Lukasz!!!!:)
Magdalena Gągor-Dziadek - Mikolow
- ,...and I was there, I drank mead and wine there..." Even the most wonderful words could not to describe that magnificent event. For all those who organized it and all the participants, I offer my congratulations and I say thank you.
Slawomir Firkowski - Katowice
- I am filled with admiration for what Lukasz and Tim did. I can't believe it, yet. It is beyond description.
Justyna Firkowska - Lodz
- It was magnificent, This is what we have to tell others. See you in two years.
Maria Firkowska - Wroclaw
- A Big "Thank you" to Tim, Lukasz and his parents for the Reunion, it brought many emotions and impressions. Greetings to all participants "This was a Indescribable Reunion". I hope that all the time we spent together, will not be forgotten. See you next time.
Janina Firkowska - Konskie
- This Family Reunion was a dream come true! It was wonderful to see all the people that Lukasz and I had been locating throughout the past 2 years. I had never imagined that anything like this would ever happened. If it was not for the great help & friendship of Lukasz Firkowski and all the people who helped us with information, this First Firkowski Family Reunion would never have been possible. Lukasz did a FANTASTIC job of organizing this reunion. I look forward to the next Reunion in 2 years. My 3 1/2 week trip to Poland was one of the most memorable moments of my life!!! I know now we are one big Firkowski Family. THANK YOU LUKASZ!!!!:)
Tim Firkowski - NH, USA

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My memories about Radwan

Author: Maria Czechowska (Firkowska)

Wroclaw, 08-22-2004

(This text was read at the 1st Reunion by Maria Czechowska's daughter - Ewa Witek)

Polish/English Translation: Lukasz Firkowski

- Lukasz did not disappoint us, we were not disappointed ourselves and we met in Sielpia to enjoy ourselves. In two years there will be more participants, because nobody would want to miss that fun.

Lukasz Grochowski - Warsaw

- Lukasz, Thank you and your family for being such wonderful hosts and hostess for my father, Eric and my brother Tim. I am very much enjoying looking at everyone's photographs from the family reunion. Everyone looks like so much fun, that we all want to come in two years! It is so wonderful to have family that so good! The number of family that attends is amazing!

Alaina Harkless (Firkowska) - FL, USA

- It is 33 days since the Reunion and we still are filled with admiration for that. It is hard to believe that so much happened in such a short period of time. For the time we spent together, for the emotions, & for the fun, we say "Thank You" to you, Lukasz, your parents, to you Tim and to all cousins, uncles and aunts.

Ewa, Grzegorz, Michal Zabloczy - Lodz

- I am so glad that I could participate in the Reunion. Family is very important and it is good to know that our family is so big and hearty. It is true, we live in a lot of different places on this planet, but it does not matter to us, we can overcome all difficulties to meet each other, even thousands of km. Since the death of my grandmother Marylka Firkowska from Opoczno we did not meet at every Christmas and Easter like we used to. I yearn for it, for those family feelings, my wonderful, irreplaceable cousins. You are the best, big kisses to you. Sometimes think about me and about Thierry because we miss you. A Big "Thanks" for all who organized this family event.

Magda Guillaud - Bellegarde, France

- 3 months have passed since "Our Reunion", and we are still under a big impression. Everything was well organized, all set. Congratulations and thanks for everybody who helped in organizing this meeting. Health and greetings for all the Firkowski Family. Let's gather as a bigger group in the second Reunion.

Dorota i Zbigniew Firkowscy - Brwinow

*Polish/English Translation by:
Slawomir Firkowski - Katowice*

My memories about my grandmother's (Klementyna Skladzinska-Firkowska) house began when World War I started. I was 4 years old and I lived in Opoczno with my parents, my brother - Alojzy and my sister - Irena. There, my father with his brother-in-law worked together in a service station. One day, there was a conflict between my father and German Officer because my father couldn't carry out his order. It was easy to expect the next events... so my parents suddenly decided to escape to my father's family house about 12 km from Radwan at the night. O tempora! O mores!

The house in Radwan was halfway between a country manor and a big peasant residence. But the most important were the people who lived inside. My grandmother Klementyna was well educated and but not a wealthy person. She wanted to set up home so she married a farmer from Nadole. With their combined money, they bought the house in Radwan. They had 9 children. All five sons were tall, muscular, and they had strong personality. Roman, Franciszek, Wladyslaw & Feliks found their own place in life the world. The youngest - Lucjan, a man with goodness, but with heart problems stayed at home in Radwan and helped with the household. Daughter: Stefania, Michalina, Zofia and Maria - were very kind, gentle and delicate. Two of them moved out after their marriages.

My aunts - Zofia and Maria were living in the Radwan house very long. Along with Lucjan, they helped with household. They were also two other people to help - Andrzej and his daughter - Zuzanna.

Everything went smoothly in Opoczno. My father worked as an administrator of a group of villages in Zarnow. He defended other peo-

ple's matters. He spoke German and Russian very well, so he could help them. Soon, he gained respect and was very popular.

In spite of the fact we were living in Zarnow, we had very good memories of Radwan. My father and I went to Radwan very often. Sometimes there were very special days, for example my grandma's birthday or when her son came from far away. Everything



was different then. My grandmother dressed elegantly in a long black dress with white, lacy jabot, and black, lacy scarf on her hair - she looked very distinguished. She was sitting at the table with her sons dressed in suits with stiff collars. My aunts brought delicious meals and put them all

on the table. It was very special. Everybody was talking about very serious topics. I was listening to them with my all attention. They were about Poland, and about famous Polish people like: Paderewski, Haller, Dmowski!

The end of the war was approaching very quickly. It was a very memorably day: 11th of November in 1918. People were gathering together in the center of Zarnow. My father was giving a speech. Everyone was overcome with emotion, everyone was crying. I remember few words from his speech up today.

The period between wars was so short. On 1st of September the world was changed... Only people's feeling, emotions stayed invariable... When on 31st of September, my two children & I came at 22 o'clock to the house in Bodzentyn, I was invited inside with pleasure, as usual. It wasn't strange. Feliks Firkowski - pharmacist from Bodzentyn and two of his sisters lived there, and he was famous for his kindness.

**The newsletter is free
to all family, but as times
goes by, our costs
increase greatly.**

**If you would like to contribute
to the funds for the
newsletter please contact
Lukasz or Tim.**

**Any extra funds received
will be applied toward
the Second Firkowski
Family Reunion.**





Leokadia Firkowska

- the author of "Legends from Swietokrzyski Region"

Stanislawa Rogala

Having a passion for something is good for our life activity.

Motivation for having passion is very complicated, but passions are always positive. I would like to introduce you to a person with very noble passion - Leokadia Firkowska and her interest in legends.

Leokadia is a pharmacist. Only one part of her life is connected with Kielce region, but she had a heart for this region. She was born in Saratowo, Russia. She finished her high school named Anna Jablonowska-Sapiecha in Bialystok, before the II World War started. Then she started studying at Stefan Batory's University in Wilno, but she finished one at Adam Mickiewicz's University in Poznan - it was a pharmacy. She was a manager of pharmacy in Skoki for 15 years.

In 1966 she with her husband - Antoni moved to Bodzentyn to manage a pharmacy there. Antoni Firkowski did service in the community. He was a councilor. Antoni was interested in the region's culture. He was the chairman of Friendship Society of Bodzentyn, because he loved monuments from this region very much. Leokadia was caught her love of the Swietokrzyszczyna region from her husband. They both toured this region, and at first they collected materials about this region and about its legends. They both worked out them. In 1980 Antoni suddenly died, but Leokadia decided to continue with their passion. In 1983 when she retired, moved to Kielce, and took up collecting legends again. She published them in some regional newspapers like: "Goniec Staszowski" and "Farmacja Pomorza Srodkowego". In 1994 she published her first book with 8 legends, which she started writing with her husband. The following year she published the next book. In the same year she published her third book. It contains legends from previous books and some new ones.

Each legend is from a real geographic place, so they seem to be very realistic. Her legends started with some old ones, very often, traditional poems. She quotes guide-books, geographic books, folk songs, and old sayings. In this way the action of her legend is very interesting, and her heroes are very realistic. They are very similar to normal people - sometimes they are noble, but they also have weaknesses. They aren't teaching examples.



Language of these stories is very simply and correct. You can feel that each legend was written with heart.

Each book has its own cutouts made by Cecylia Czernikiewicz - folk artist from Bodzentyn. In this way, two passions were met - collecting and writing legends and making cutouts in the paper. The result of their work is an extensive book with 220 pages "Legends swietokrzyskie". This wonderful book enriches the regional library.

Polish/English Translation: Lukasz Firkowski

Her name was Rose

Author of this legend is: Leokadia Firkowska

Her name was Rose. She was an orphan. The only richness, which she had, was unusual beauty and diligence. Everybody liked her and she had a lot of friends and admirers. Elected chair of a village council's son - Franek fell in love with her and he promised her marriage. But Franek's parents didn't agree to this misalliance and they forced him to marry another rich woman. Rose died of sorrow after their separation.

Franek got married, but he died soon after. When he was buried, his coffin came out of the ground by itself, because it didn't want such a sinful person. A priest ordered this coffin burned, together with three old crosses. And Frank was buried again.

When Frank's friend came to the cemetery to pray for him, suddenly he felt somebody grab his sleeve. It was Frank's spirit, who asked Frank's friend to find the grave of Rosa in this cemetery. All three came to the chapel together. Frank's friend was very surprised when he went inside. The candles were lit. The organ was playing. There were a lot of other spirits in the chapel. A skeleton was standing by the altar. It looked like a priest. It was Death. Rose and Frank went to it, and they were married.

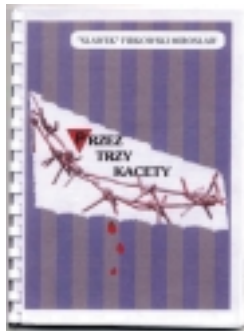
After this, everything disappeared. Frank's friend felt free. He went back to the country, and told everybody about his incredible adventure. Although it seemed credible, it was difficult to believe all of this. He got older and turned gray that night.

Polish/English Translation: Lukasz Firkowski

Through Three Camps

Polish/English Translation: Slawomir Firkowski - Katowice

The book "Through three camps" by Mirosław Firkowski is the collection of memoirs from the years 1941-1945... tragic memoirs, so full of pain and suffering... but real... it is notes of events which we can not forget. It is a book worth reading... the book which teaches humility and respect to history...



Time is "a Wonderful Doctor" who knows a medicine for every ailment, but he hasn't found the medicine for my pain. Time still goes on, my pain still goes on, I did escape from my memories through all those past years. I had try to avoid everything that reminded me of that terrible time, and destroyed my frayed nerves,

but is it possible to recover one's health? Recover wasted teenage years? Escaped from yourself?

Millions died in the Camps. Only a few survived. Today we forget that time. For Some people, who have never been there, it is comfortable for them to not remember those prisons, Gestapo, Auschwitz, Neungamme or Bergen-Belsen. We cannot forget about it, ever.

Juliusz Firkowski - about himself...

Author: Juliusz Firkowski - Germany

Polish/English Translation: Lukasz Firkowski

I asked Juliusz to tell about his success in cycling:

My adventure with cycling started in 1967. At that time, my brother - Marian encouraged me to take part in a cycling race. I won second prize, and was admitted to the cycling club K.S. Start in Lublin.

During the next two years I took part in cycling as a youngster, then as a junior, and finally I started experiencing the real cycling in 1971.

Although it was not easy, my first successes as a senior started after a year. I won the race (with four stages) in the Kedzierzyn Region in April 1972, and in some others I placed very well. I also placed very well in the Baltic Friendship Race (11 stages from Gdansk to Wilno)

I was qualified for the Youth National Team, because in qualifications up to 22 years old I took 5th place, and in general I took 16th place the same year. The next year, after finishing my school, I served in the army in K.S. Legia and it was a big honor.

As a member of Legia I won two first prizes in Polish Competitions (in team race and in long distance race in



racetrack) and two third prizes. And in classification up to 22 years old I took 5th place again. In 1976 I changed my club to K.S. Start again, and was a member of National Team where I was preparing for the Olympic Games in Montreal. I participated in Polish Peace Race.

In 1977 I changed my club to Karkonosze Jelenia Gora. In this club I won the most important prize for me - Championship of Poland in race on time.

After these promising years, an unlucky year came. I had a serious accident during my race in Nowy Sacz. I had a concussion and was operated on the ligaments of my shoulder.



In spring in 1980 I achieved my last important success (First place in a race in the Opole Region with 4 stages).

While we had a wonderful time on our 1st Reunion, Juliusz Firkowski took 2nd place in the World Competition in St. Johann, Congratulations!

Prefer to be rather than to have

Lukasz Grochowski¹ graduated from a business school, but he has been always saying that he is a person of humanities. When he was 17 y.o. he joined the first initiative group in Poland establishing Rotaract Club - the youth chapter of Rotary International, grouping people of age 18-30. Lukasz had thought about something like this for a long time. He found his place there. Involvement in social projects for local communities, professional development and leadership skills - the fundamental ideas of Rotaract bring him a lot of satisfaction.

For four years together with his club fellows he was spending at least one weekend per month in an orphanage in a little Sonsk near Ciechanow (Central Poland, 100 km North of Warsaw). They were always making effort to bring charity collected for the children, but also to spend some time with them - walking in the meadows, visiting a grocery store, playing soccer or just talking.

Lukasz Grochowski has got a good, occupying job - a responsible position in a big, stock listed company - he is an example of a young man of success, but he says that he would not like to spend evenings sipping drinks in fashionable bars.

In Rotaract Club he meets people who, just like him, prefer "to be more than to have", for whom helping others is a need of the heart. They advise one another about life, profession, and teach each other different skills. They organize trips out of the city, go to the cinema, theatre, bowling. They are a cool group spending time together and carrying out the motto of Rotaract: Friendship in action.

These days, Lukasz Grochowski is an ordinary club member, earlier, even during his university years he had responsible functions in the district - a unit composed currently of all Polish, Ukrainian and Belarussian Rotary and Rotaract Clubs, and he also served two terms as the President of European Rotaract Committee.

- Clever, ambitious, reliable, excellently coping with public presentations at the international conferences, granted with organizational talent, yet at the same time very open - this is what Bohdan Kurowski - the Governor of the Polish Rotary District 1997-98 says about Lukasz Grochowski. He emphasizes a huge organizational input of Lukasz's in shaping of Rotaract structure in Poland and execution of international charity projects. - He is a man who wants to do things. The world belongs to such open and determined people.

Writer: Anna Sobczyk
(fragments of article from the Polish edition of Reader's Digest Magazine, October 2004)

¹ Lukasz Grochowski, Warsaw
- grandson of Alojzy Firkowski

Translated by Lukasz Grochowski

YahooGroup "FIRKOWSCY"

YahooGroup "Firkowscy" was created for talking in the Internet. In simple terms, the group is an email address, for which are hidden email addresses of people who wanted to take part in discussion.

So, if you send an mail to this address:

firkowscy@yahoogroups.com, everybody who belongs to this group gets this mail. Everybody can answer it, and this answer will get to everyone from this groups. All mails from this group contain word [firkowscy] in its topic.

YahooGroup "Firkowscy" was created in order to:

- make all our contacts easier
- share out all genealogical news about our Family
- meet new relatives, new friends
- talk on the topics connected with Family or others
- organize meeting, reunions

In order to access to this group you have to send mail (without topic and content) to this address: firkowscy-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

We invite everybody!



Stanislaw Firkowski - letter from France

- Vietnam War veteran & Antarctica expedition participant.

I am the youngest child of my family, I was born in a small village of 350 souls in Picardy, the Department of the Somme, this village is 15 miles from the city of Amiens. I went to primary school and earned my "certificat d'études". In May of 1940 the war forced us to leave the village and find refuge in Brittany, near Vannes. In September, we were able to come back but the region was still occupied by German soldiers. I did not return to school when we got back, but worked in the fields for farmers until I was 14. Then, as my father worked in masonry, he got me into the construction and public works business.

At 20, in May 1947 I was called up for my military service in an artillery/paratrooper regiment in Algeria. After basic training I took classes to become an officer and I was named Sergeant. In November I was trained as a parachutist. After having done all the various training and six jumps, I received my certificate. Then I was in charge of the mess hall.

In February of 1948 I volunteered for Vietnam.

After spending 30 days leave with my family in France, I rejoined my new regiment in Algeria. I was injured in a parachuting incident and was hospitalized for two months. I was back to my unit two days before we left for Vietnam. We set sail on the troop carrier Maréchal Joffre, and after 30 days at sea and layovers in Port Said, Djibouti, Singapore, Saigon and Haiphong, we reached Hanoi, our back base where I participated in various combat operations. After 18 months of bloody fighting, our battalion was disbanded/dissolved for want of sufficient numbers of soldiers. After that, I along with some of my buddies were moved to HUE where I worked as an instructor for a Vietnamese battalion.

On the 15th of Nov. 1950, I returned to Haiphong and after 45 days at sea, arrived in Marseille on New Year's Eve. The 1st of January, 1951 I was back home for 90 days R&R. It was at this time that I met my future wife. In April I was back to the 35th Light Artillery and Paratrooper Legion in Tarbes. I was named Master Sergeant and drill sergeant. In June of 1951 I got married.

In 1952, I went through some training and got the tank mechanic certification and became the head of the regiment shop. The 9 December 1952 my daughter Joel was born. In January of 1954, I went through more training in Hiller where I got certified as a helicopter mechanic. In September of 1954, I got on a plane and went back to Vietnam in a helicopter squadron. After 40 hours of flying and layovers in Beyrouth, Karachi and Calcutta we landed at Saigon's TON SON HUT airport.

In April of 1955, we returned to France, and a few days after landing in Marseilles we took off for Algeria and we got settled at the SETIF base which would become the biggest helicopter base for the army. There I became head mechanic for the Bell helicopter squadron. In 1956, I went on

a mission in the Sahar at Tammanraset and by the month of August, I was named Senior Master Sergeant. In October of 1957 I was asked to go on a mission to Terre Adelie in the Antarctic, working as support for the Bell Helicopter that the army lent to the French polar expeditions directed by Paul-Emile Victor.

After 69 days at sea on board the NORSEL, roughly 45 meters long and 9 meters wide, and after layovers in CRISTOBAL (Panama), PAPETEE (Tahiti), DUNEDIN (New Zealand) and the Maquary? Islands, we arrived at the Dumont D'Urville base on the 8 January 1958, after having taken the helicopter out of its "cocoon" and having "restaged" it, we transported various materials to the mainland. Unfortunately, at the end of the mission it crashed on the white continent. After 48 hours of searching, to our great joy we found the pilot safe and sound but the equipment damaged, so we had to haul the thing back on a WEASEL and get it back aboard and put it back in its cocoon.

Feb 8 we head back to France with the men who've just spent a year in Antarctica. We stop over at Hobart, in Tasmania and left the boat. After spending a week in Hobart, we take a plane to Melbourne, Australia and board the ocean liner Arcadia, which after 18 days at sea and a call at Aden (Yemen) gets us to Marseilles. A couple of days later the French President René Coty, receives us. I get fifteen days of leave then head back to my responsibilities in Algeria. In December of 1958 I return to France and am posted to pilot training school of the "Army Light Aviation" at Dax in the Landes as head mechanic for the Bell Helicopter squadron, now with more than 20

July 1959: I get promoted to Chief Warrant officer, in June 60 I was decorated with a Medal of Honor (Médaille Militaire). My son, Jean-Michel is born in 1962 and on the 1st of May (Labor Day in France) I head back to Algeria where I am posted to the ALAT specialization school (??) at SIDI BEL ABBES as head of the SIKORSKY shop. On the first of January 1963 I became an officer (second lieutenant) and was posted to Oran as head of technical services on the H2 PIASECKI (VERTOL). Once again, I go on a mission in the Sahara with stops/stages in CLOMB BECHAR, ADRAR, REGGANE, IN SALAH, ARAK; IN AMGUEL.

In January of 1964, I returned to Valence in France. On the 25th of December my daughter Marie Noelle was born, and on the 1st of January I was named Lieutenant. In September I was trans-

ferred to Rennes (in Brittany) still in the same capacity. On the 14th of July 1968 (French National Day) I was decorated with the "National Order of Merit" (Chevalier). I did a training mission as a mechanic on the the PUMA SA 330 helicopter at two companies: SUD-AVIATION and TURBOMECA. In September of 69 I was transferred to Mulhouse in Alsace. On the 1st of July 1970 I was named Captain.

In June of 1973 I requested my retirement. Over the course of my military career, I accomplished 54 parachute jumps, two of which in a war-zone, and 1100 flight hours either in an airplane or a helicopter. Jean-Michel and Marie-Noelle had studies to be paid for and my military pension didn't allow us to live decently. I found work in Orleans as a foreman in a transportation company (450 vehicles: cars and trucks). I didn't get along with the big boss very well, and at the end of January 1974 I left this job. In March I found new work as the assistant to the head of personnel at Alcatel (a telecom company) in Orléans. The Orléans factory employs 1350 people. In 1976 I was quite ill with pleurisy, but after two months of sick leave I was able to return to work. At the end of 1977, we had our house built and we moved in in April of 1978. Sadly, June of 1984 brought the death of my wife, a tragic event that was difficult to bear, but life went on, the children having not yet finished their studies.

In March of 1987 I turned 60 and retired definitively. I finished my civil career as an engineer working as an administrative executive. Since then, I have met a woman with whom I share my life – we alternate between our homes, living 6 months at my home and six months at hers. I take care of my house, my yard, veterans groups, my hobby is bicycling, now having done the Paris-Roubaix 3 times. (SAS: This is a very famous bike race of) 245 kilometers of which 45 kilometers are on cobblestone. I also walk, collect stamps, and play on the stock market a bit.

Over the course of my life I've done lots of sports – soccer, volleyball, rugby, boxing, and bicycling. Of course, given my age, I'm happy with just bicycling and walking. As I told you, on the 14th of July 2003 I was decorated with the Legion of Honor (military) with the grade of CHEVALIER. In a few days I will turn 77. I am 1 meter 82 tall and I weigh 110 kilograms. I am not in bad health despite prostate cancer (in remission after radiotherapy) and a spinal cord handicap (the result of my parachuting accident)

Author: Stanislaw Firkowski, France

*French/English Translation: Steve Shimanek - France
English/Polish Translation: Beata Firkowska - Lodz*



About the Pharmacists from Bodzentyn once more...

The originator of the pharmacy - Feliks Firkowski - my husband's father's brother. I didn't know him personally, but during my 18 years at the first Pharmacy in Bodzentyn, I heard a lot of good words about him. Citizens of the town were grateful to him for everything he had done. That is why I decided to write the history of this generous and kind-hearted man. With great specialty and compassion for humane misery, he helped people by giving advice in bad times, when medical care was insufficient - people turned to doctors as a last resort. That is why they preferred to ask pharmacists for help.

Feliks Firkowski was born the 15th of November in 1882 in Jasion near Konskie with his family of nine children. He had finished primary school in Zarnow, and had passed his high school finals in 1904 in Czestochowa. Next he served as a pharmacist's apprenticeship in a Pharmacy in Lodz. He took part in a pharmacist's strike on the 4th of February in 1911, and among eighty people, a dozen or so were arrested and imprisoned by the czarist's police. Feliks Firkowski was there also. When he was set free, he had to leave Lodz. He went to Kijow and worked at many pharmacies and finished a course for pharmacist's helpers.

In 1915 he worked at Mr. Lelejko's pharmacy. In 1917 he took part in a pharmacist's strike again. In 1918 he went into the Polish Army and for several months, he served as chief of the military pharmacy.

He studied in Warsaw from 1919 to 1921, graduated college and obtained a degree in Pharmacology on the 14th of December in 1921 (at the age of 39).

In 1922 he operated the pharmacy in Bodzentyn, which he had bought from Maria Mierzejewska - Mr. Mierzejewski's widow, paying almost 3 millions marks.

He had inherited money from his parents and it was meant for him and his two younger sisters, who he took care for the rest of his life. The pharmacy was situated at that time next to the Central Market at the spot of today's community library. Later Feliks Firkowski moved the pharmacy to another place in the Central Market. He built a new house in 1930 and put a pharmacy with a laboratory on the ground floor. Absorbed by building new house, taking care of siblings and nephews, professional work and community service - he never started his own family.

After he had taken residence in Bodzentyn, he joined in the community service of the village. For a long time he was treasurer of the

Polish Youth Circle, which was run by a private teacher. Feliks Firkowski was also a member of the Fire Brigade Board. In this time the Fire Brigade built People's Houses with his assistance. He did not shun political activity, as he considered it as help for farmers in their difficult situation. There is a registration from 1929 that shows that Feliks Firkowski was a member of the Peasant party.



Feliks Firkowski - first from left

After German Forces arrived in 1939, Feliks Firkowski had been held as a hostage, but he was set free. Soon afterwards, he went back to work at the pharmacy. His guest house was a shelter during the occupation for other members of his family as well as for refugees and displaced people. He helped all of them in these bad and hard times, assuring them of a place to live, food and at times, work in the pharmacy.

Important patriotic and social activities were lead by Feliks Firkowski during the occupation. He helped the guerrillas and refugees. The range of his help was significant. He supplied guerrilla units with medicine and dressings. He helped, along with Doctors Browar-Paszkowski and Arendarski, to create a small guerrilla hospital in Bodzentyn. He delivered medicine and dressings by liaison officers. An ex-liaison officer from Bodzentyn - Boleslaw Sikora - remembers going to Feliks Firkowski for different medical things necessary for the rest of guerrillas. Feliks Firkowski knew how much they were worth and he never took money for them. Pharmacists also helped in

preparing explosive chemicals for the Polish army and guerrilla Units.

A young pharmacist - Mr. Swiderski, who worked at Feliks Firkowski's pharmacy was arrested and sent into exile, to a concentration camp in Auschwitz in 1942 for his membership in an underground organization.

During the occupation, getting medicine was very questionable and difficult. When Feliks Firkowski was unable to get them elsewhere, he made them in his own laboratory. He had bought natural resources from the local community - mainly plants and processed them into needed medicines.

On the other hand, Feliks Firkowski also assured financial aid to victims of Nazi's terrorism and violence. There is a thankful letter from Abram Wajntraub written in Hajfa the 12th of January in 1946, among many souvenirs of the pharmacist from Bodzentyn. He thanked Feliks Firkowski for his father's salvation by giving him money and food. Herszel Wajntraub - Abram's father thanked Mr. Firkowski for his ability to start his post-war existence. Abram wrote: *"This subsistence allowance was necessary for my father from first piece of bread. It was an unselfish gesture on Feliks Firkowski's part."* Young Abram Wajntraub wanted to repay him for helping his father and offered him support, but the pharmacist from Bodzentyn did not take advantage of Mr. Wajntraub's invitation.

Apart from Herszel Wajntraub, others Jews could also count on Mr. Firkowski and other citizens help.

In 1948 Feliks Firkowski's health started to fall. He had a heart condition and vein diseases. Because of that, he hired his nephew - Antoni Firkowski and Mrs. Janina Sudenis - both young pharmacists. In 1950 Antoni and Janina got married. When the pharmacy was made state property, Feliks Firkowski became its manager. Unfortunately his health was getting worse, day by day. He decided to hand over the pharmacy management to Mrs. Janina Sudenis-Firkowska. He continued to work at the pharmacy as a pharmacist until the end of his life - the 29th of December in 1952.

Feliks Firkowski is buried in Bodzentyn in a family vault where the following inscription is visible: *"At work and in faith goes the right to God's immortality."*

Author: Leokadia Firkowska; 04-14-1986

Translated by: Agnieszka Stozik

Archive Research

Tim Firkowski

When Lukasz and I began researching the Firkowski Family, we utilized the Internet. We made contact with every Firkowski we could find, and wrote many emails and letters. Everyone contributed to the information we had, and were even able to provide us with more email address and Postal addresses. Eventually it came to the point where we were not able to acquire any new information using only the Internet. It became clear that we would have to find old documents to look through.

I started asking some other genealogists where I could look, and they all said that there was a church that had millions of Microfilm of old Church records for all over the world. This Church is The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints. In 1894 the Family History Library was founded to gather genealogical records. This is the largest library of its kind in the world. The main Library is located in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA. In this main library they have a collection of about 3 million rolls of microfilmed genealogical records, about 750,000 microfiche, 310,000 books and many other resources.



These Library resources are available to everyone, not just to members of the Church. Family History Centers are branches of the Family History Library. There are over 4,000 family history centers operate in more than 88 countries. Volunteers staff local family history centers. My local Family History Center is about 80 km from where I live. About 100,000 rolls of microfilm are circulated to family history centers each month.

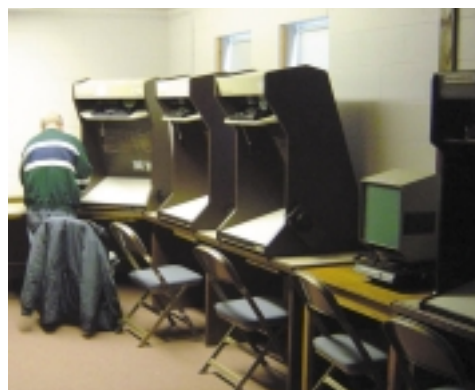
This is how it works... I go to the local Family History Center... and "order" the microfilm that I want to look at. The order is then sent to the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah. A copy of the microfilm I want is then sent to my local Family History Center. I only have to pay a small fee when I "order" the microfilm. I am then notified by the Family History Center when my film has arrived. I then go to the Family Center to look through the microfilm. I am allowed 6 weeks to look through the microfilm. If I wish to look at it longer, I can renew it for 60 days and pay the small fee again. If I still need it longer, I once again pay the small fee and renew the microfilm in 1 year increments. This is the last time I will be required to pay the fee for the microfilm. I have looked through 80 rolls of microfilm since I started in October of 2003. There are over 500,000 records on these microfilms... that is a lot of records!

We are looking for any information about these people:

Aleksandra Firkowska	Berufsschule Polen, Koordinatorin
Alberto Antonio Firkowski	Misiones, Argentina Born in 1940, Occupation: Pilot
Alojzy Firkowski	Bielsko-Biala, PL Podgorze Street
Aneta Firkowska	Piotrkow Trybunalski, PL Slowackiego Street; (0-44) 646 86 64
Aneta Firkowska	Tomaszow Mazowiecki, PL Zespól Szkól Ponadgimnazjalnych
Ann Firkowska	Brazil
Antonina Firkowska	hotel industry?
Artur Firkowski	Gdansk, PL Nest Networking & Communication Sp z.o.o. 36 Piastowska Street; 80-332 Gdańsk
Barbara Firkowska	Mniskow, PL Nurse 42 Piotrkowska Street; 26-341 Mniskow (0-44) 756 19 01
Ettore Firkowski	Brazil
Ewa Firkowska	Warsaw, PL Instytut Gospodarki Mieszaniowej - Zakład Badania Rynku Nieruchomości; 1 Filtrowa Street; 00-611 Warszawa
Gabrielle J Firkowski	Fort Lauderdale, FL, USA Born in 1950
Gwynth Firkowski	Canada Member of Edmonton Bird Club http://ebc.fanweb.ca
Izabela Firkowska	Lodz, PL Fortis Bank Polska S.A.; 189/191 Piotrkowska Street; 90-447 Lodz
Jadwiga Firkowska	Jezow, PL dressmaker; 61 Lowicka Street; 96-134 Jezow
Jerzy Firkowski	Lublin, PL
Jolanta Firkowska	Szczecin, PL Legnicka Street
Justyna Firkowska	Lodygowice, PL High school finished in 1994
Katarzyna Firkowska	Bydgoszcz, PL Fiordonska Street; (0-52) 348 97 21
Leokadia Firkowska	Warsaw, PL Keniga Street
Lukasz Firkowski	Gdansk, PL lacki@biomed.eti.pq.gda.pl
Małgorzata Firkowska	Bydgoszcz, PL Jozefa Sulakowskiego Street; (0-52) 371 01 17
Małgorzata Firkowska	Warsaw, PL Kochanowskiego Street
Małgorzata Firkowska	Warsaw, PL surgeon; ul. Księcia Ziemowita
Maria Firkowska	Warsaw, PL 2 Natolinska Street
Maria Firkowski	Misiones, Argentina Born in 1944
Marian Firkowski	Torun, PL Gagarina Street
Marianna Firkowska	Lodz, PL Tuwima Street
Marianna Firkowska	Mniskow, PL Piotkowska Street; tel. (0-44) 756 16 93
Mateusz Firkowski	swirus37; Scientific secretary
Miroslaw Firkowski	Lublin, PL
Monika Firkowska	Chorzow, PL Młodziejowa Street; (0-32) 247 53 55
Natalia Firkowska	Inowroclaw, PL Przedsiębiorstwo Handlowo-Uslugowe z.o.o. „Arpis” Sp Sklep nr 21; 23 Krzywoustego Street; 88-100 Inowroclaw
Olga Firkowski	Misiones, Argentina Born in 1942
Piotr Firkowski	Gdansk, PL
Pablo Andres Firkowski	Misiones, Argentina Born in 1962, Occupation: Farmer
R. Firkowski	Lodz, PL „Fart-Plus” Autokomis; 83 Wojska Polskiego Street; 91-755 Lodz; tel. 0 501 419 735
Sabina Firkowska	Kielce, PL Touristic group “Czaploki” from Cieszyn; leszekczudek@poczta.onet.pl; Nowowiejska Street (0-41) 342 65 90
Stanislaw Firkowski	Opoczno, PL GaduGadu #5242188, more than 67 years old
Tadeusz Firkowski	Jezow, PL Wojska Polskiego Street; 95-047 Jezow; tel. (0-46) 875 51 98
Władysław Firkowski	Wroclaw, PL doctor; Wroclaw
Zofia Firkowska	Smardzko, PL grocer's shop; 78-300 Smardzko 22; (0-94) 365 34 49

All the above data was found on the Internet and in phone books.

If you recognize anybody, please contact Tim or Lukasz.



Once I find a record, I use my digital camera and photograph it. Most records must be recorded with more than one photograph. When I have

finished photographing the records for the day, I then take the photos for those records that have multiple photos and use the computer to make them one large record, which is easy to read. I use Photoshop tools to make it easier to read, and then email Lukasz with the records so the information can be added to our data. Lukasz also translates the records for me.

I have found records in Latin, German, Polish, and Russian, and have spent 100s of hours looking through microfilm. It has taken a lot of time, but it is time well spent as we have found so many new pieces of information. Because of how grateful I was to the Family History Center, I choose to act as a volunteer librarian, so I can help others in their research. I volunteer my time about 3 nights each month.

My Heart Is A 'Firkowski' Heart!

I am very excited about Tim's genealogy work! I had done a little of it, myself, very many years ago. But that was before personal computers. That was when all information came from family members or from the courthouses. Tim has been able to discover in a few years, what it would have taken a few lifetimes of research to accumulate.

Sometimes I wonder why I have more interest in the Firkowski family than my own family. My mother's family has been in America (mostly Canada) since the mid 16th century. But I was my mother's child for only 18 years of my life and I have been a 'Firkowski' for over 42 years now. My mother's families' stories have gotten lost over the centuries, but Eric's family's stories are so much more recent and therefore more interesting to us.

Sometimes the stories were very happy and pleasant stories; such as the toys that his father had made for them (he & his sister) when they were in Germany. Or the walks that he and his father would take through the fields. Then his mother would tell us about the way she would fatten up the geese for eating or selling. Included were the very good memories of his childhood friends in Uffenheim, Germany.

Some of the stories were more sad; like when his mother was out shopping and had to pull him and his sister into a doorway when an air-raid siren would blow. And he has three sisters who died in Poland before he was born. An even sadder story was when a little friend of his, activated a live grenade in the bathroom. That little boy never grew up to see a Europe of peace.

Eric had often talked about going to see his much older brother in (then) Czechoslovakia. But it was always - "one of these days"! So one year, for his birthday, our kids chipped in with me for plane tickets for us to go. All that he had to do was to choose in which month we would go. That was in 1996-a year after their mother had died. His brother, Mietek, had wanted to take us to Poland, but Mietek's health didn't allow him to do that.

When Tim and Lukasz started talking about a possible Family Reunion, I was very excited about it. But not for us! Due to a chronic illness, I had had to quit working in 2000. We no longer had the extra money for



Sherrie Ann Firkowski with her husband Eric

things like travel overseas. Also, due to that illness, traveling is not easy for me. Early in 2004, when it looked as though the Family Reunion was REALLY going to happen, our children asked me how I would feel about Eric going by himself. They were going to chip in for a plane ticket so that he could go. I had desperately wanted him to go, but had felt that we couldn't afford it. I was very happy that they had found a way for him to go. It bothered Eric much more than it bothered me that I would not be going with them. He kept saying things like: "I sure wish that you were going with us!"

I have always kept up with all of the family information we receive and I helped Eric with most of the preparations for their trip. I made the picture booklet of the people that would be going to the Reunion IF we had their photos. I helped him to decide what tokens of Texas he would bring along. I designed and pasted the backs of the postcards and glued on all of the quarters. Why did I do all of this, when I wasn't even going? Well, part of it was just to help him out. But the rest of it was - "it helped me to feel as though I was a part of it all"! I even followed their daily activities on a map.

Did I, at any point in time, wish that I was going, also? Of course, I would not be human if I did not feel that way. But if I was very sick by the time that I arrived in Poland, it wouldn't have been very much fun for me and it would have been very hard for Lukasz's family. I am working on some issues right now, hoping that I might be able to go in 2006. It looks pretty good that at least one of our other children will go also. We will see.

I had tears of joy when Eric returned with all of the wonderful stories and beautiful photos of the trip. The great old castles and churches and the mountain pictures were awesome to see. I have read most of the information that Eric brought home with him if it is in English. I am learning more about your beautiful country. But the Family Reunion pictures were the best of all. People are always more interesting than 'things'! And everyone was so wonderful, happy, friendly and helpful!

I cried when I saw and heard Tim read his speech (on video) and when he presented "the Firkowski family" to Eric. I cried as I heard Miroslaw speak and when Tim and Lukasz were presented with their mementos. I was ecstatic with joy when Lukasz Grochowski presented Lukasz Firkowski with money for plane fare to fly to some exotic place. Maybe Lukasz G. will be able to go with him. Wouldn't that be WONDERFUL!?! My heart danced with happiness as everyone danced to the DJ's music. And I commend that DJ for all of his hard work during that whole day. And what a super way to end everything, with a Mass on Sunday morning, thanking God for "wonderful times"! Yes, my heart is definitely a 'Firkowski' heart!

As Tim and Lukasz are putting their photos on their websites, Eric and I are working on two other photo projects. When we get to the Family Reunion pictures, it is going to be both fun and hard to identify everyone. We may be contacting some of you to help with those pictures. Putting it all together, the Family Reunion, was definitely the best part of their trip. I hope that in two years, I will be able to meet all of you also. It is going to be VERY exciting once more!

If anyone can read and write English and would like to communicate with me, you could e-mail me at sapenguin44@yahoo.com

Thanks

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

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Steve Shimanek from France,

Caroline Shimanek from France

And for everybody who payed
some money for this newsletter.

From the catalog of monuments of the construction industry in Poland...

Cereal water mill is located about 200 meters east from crossing-roads to Paradysz and to Opoczno, by the river - Weglanka. This water mill was there or nearby a long time ago. It is shown on the map from XVIII/XIX century. The present mill was built in about 1890. It was made of wood, but foundations were made of stones.

The mill is in working order and was inherited by Magdalena Firkowska-Gornik (Miedzna Drewniana) after her parents died.

Are we descended from the Karaims?

"From where do we come from?" - we ask our family elders very often. The answers are various... Some people say that Firkowskis came from east, others explain that we came from Crimea, or from Tatars. Is there any truth in those old stories? Can we find a grain of truth there? Maybe, yes... Maybe, we came from Karaims - whose population originated in Turkey, lived in Crimea first, later lived in Easter Europe. The majority of them lived in the Ukraine & Lithuania. The Firkowicz surname was and still is very popular there. Is it only a coincidence?

Crimea and Polish-Lithuanian Karaims came from a Turkish population from "Chazarskie" country or "kiczpacko-polowiecki" tribes, who came there later. Only a few people were moved from Crimea to the area of duchy "halicko-wolynskie" in XIII/XIV century. They formed religious groups called dzymats in Halicz (some sources say about the year 1246), Darazn, Olyka, Kotow, Lvov, Luck and others (...)

Lithuanian duke - Witold settled the Karaim people in Lithuania (Troki, Poniewiez) in the end of XIV century. In 1397 Witold moved hundreds Karaim families in from Solchat (near Crimea) to

Troki (capital of the Lithuanian Duchy that time). They were Witold's bodyguards. And they defended his castle too. (...)

A local government of Lithuanian Karaims was established by the king - Kazimierz Jagiellonczyk on 27th of march in 1441. (...)

Dzymats (Karaims' religious groups) in Halicz, Kukizow and Zalukiew belonged to Austria-Hungary in 1795 (after third partition of Poland). The rest of dzymats were in Russia. Because Crimea region belonged to Russia, almost all dzymats were in one country in 1783. It was good for contact between Karaims. Some Turkish people didn't accept Russian government and moved to Turkey. (...) Some people were to forced to escape from Crimea during the Crimea War (1853-1856).. After that war, some of them went back to Crimea, others stayed in other places, because there were many other good places to settle down. (...)

Russian government established Karaim laws in XIX century.

The Karaims settled down in Poland from about XIV century. At first, there were three religious communes in Luck, Halicz and Troki. Later the

fourth one was in Vilnius. Superior Religious Karaims lived in Troki.

Karaim religion came from Judaism from VIII century from Mezopotamia. Anana ben Dawida from Basry (754-775) started it. He only approved of the Old Testament. He didn't accept oral tradition.



One of the most famous Karaims was Abraham Firkowicz (1786-1874) - archeologist, graphic artist, clerical.

Translated by Lukasz Firkowski

Tim Firkowski My Trip to Poland

My father and I leave the US to fly to Poland for the first time. During the flight all I could think about was finally meeting Lukasz Firkowski.

After a nine-hour flight, we arrive in Krakow and are met by Lukasz Firkowski and his father Janusz. We drive to Dabrowa Gornicza, where Lukasz's mother Maria has a meal waiting for us. Our first taste of Polish food! We spend the rest of the day exchanging some gifts and talking.

Saturday we tour Dabrowa Gornicza, visit the Ogrodzieniec Castle, and meet the Ciuk and Hajdrowski Family.

Sunday and Monday we go to Ostrava, Czech Republic and meet my Family there for the first time EVER.

Tuesday we go to Krakow, first stopping at The Castle of Pieskowa Skala. In Krakow we went to Wawel Castle, then on to Stary Miasto where we saw Maria Church, and Cloth Hall. We did some souvenir shopping in Cloth Hall. We left Krakow and drove to Zakopane in the South of Poland.

Wednesday, Lukasz was up very early to save our place in line for the cable car. (THANKS LUKASZ!). The beauty of the Tatry Mountains would soon be revealed as we walked down the mountain. The walk took us about 5 hours as we descended about 1 mile of elevation over a distance of about 10 miles. The scenery was FANTASTIC. There were very few clouds in the sky. At the top of the mountain I had the opportunity to step into Slovakia. In the evening we walked around Zakopane. I very much enjoyed the style of wood structures in Zakopane. Walking in Zakopane we enjoyed the street vendors and musicians.

The next morning on Thursday we drove to Oswiecim to where my father was born. We walked around the streets of Oswiecim & visit Auschwitz. It was an uncomfortable feeling being in Auschwitz. My father saw his Baptismal record, and we went to Harmeze where my Grandparents had lived. On the way to Harmeze we saw Birkenau work camp.

Friday Morning Lukasz and his mother Maria drive to Selpia Wielka to prepare for the reunion while Lukasz's father Janusz takes my father and I around for some more sightseeing. Then Janusz takes us on a driving tour of Katowice. We drive to the town where Pope John Paul II was born, then on to Czestochowa. The Church in Czestochowa was

beautiful. It is beautiful walking up to the church along the walkway through the trees. Then we go to Selpia Wielka and find about 50 people have already arrived. We have fun meeting everyone and partying all night.



Saturday & Sunday is the First Firkowski Family Reunion in Selpia Wielka.

Monday we leave Selpia Wielka and drive to Inowroclaw. Before we go, I walk around the now empty camp area. It is so quiet, but I can still see all the people having a wonderful time. A small tear comes to my eyes. In the early evening we arrive in Inowroclaw & meet with Slawomir Folkman. We all go to the home Jan & Jozefa Firkowski.

Tuesday, Slawomir and his Uncle Jan take us to Orlowo, where my Grandfather was Born and Baptized. Jan Firkowski takes us to Gniewkowo, & remembers there is a Firkowski living in Gniewkowo, so he asked around. We finally found the home of Zofia Firkowska (Nowak). Despite the surprise visit, Zofia shared with us some of the family history, and was happily surprised at the information I knew about the family. I get to see the still small town on Lipie. We drove into Inowroclaw and met with Jan Firkowski & his wife Alicja at his photo studio and

had a wonderful visit, then on to the Park in Inowroclaw, and the Stick Wall. We also went to see Elzbieta Grajewska and her daughter Honorata. Jan & Jozefa's daughter Izabela Aashaug called from Norway.

Wednesday we left Inowroclaw and made our way to Warsaw. Before we went to Warsaw we stopped in Torun and saw the wonderful city there. I was interesting to see the various styles of Architecture that were used in Torun from all the buildings that were built over time. In Warsaw we met by Lukasz Grochowski, who took us on a night tour of Warsaw. We walked in the park at night. And saw the presidential palace...and many other wonderful places. To end the evening, Lukasz brought us to a restaurant call Folk Gospada.

Thursday Morning we went into Stary Miasto of Warsaw. In the afternoon Lukasz Firkowski's parents arrived and we continued to visit the city. Witold Firkowski took us on tour of some of the monuments of Warsaw and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. We visited Stary Miasto at night.

Friday was the day that my father left Poland to return to the USA. Krzysztof & Halina Maslowski met us at the airport in Warsaw. After that we went to Wilanow Palace and Park with Lukasz and his parents. The gardens there were breathtaking- so many beautiful flower gardens. Then it was on to the home of Lukasz Grochowski's parents where we had a wonderful meal. We had the chance to visit with the family there and see some of Lukasz Grochowski's souvenirs of his time in the USA.

Saturday morning we left Warsaw for Ruciane-Nida with Lukasz Grochowski accompanying us. After getting a room we ate at a nice restaurant by the lake.

On Sunday we took a boat ride on the Mazury Lakes. We arrived in Mikolajki, ate, then Lukasz Grochowski returns to Ruciane-Nida to return to Warsaw. Lukasz & I then left Mikolajki by Boat to Gizycko. Lukasz parents drove ahead with the luggage. When we arrive in Gizycko, we all drive to Olstyn & arrive at the home of Antoni & Teresa Firkowski. We have a great meal and visit with all the Family there. Antoni and Teresa opened their home to us and we stayed the night there.

Monday Antoni took us on a tour of Olstyn. Olstyn was one of my most photographed cities. We then went to see Reszel Castle.

Tuesday we went to Malbork & toured Malbork. After we toured the Malbork Castle we drove to

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Forward to the past

The wet & icy deck and railings on the transport ship "General Stewart" came into view on that cold December morning in 1950 as dawn began the day in a new world as the ship entered the harbor of a waking New York City. An 8-1/2 year old boy poked his head out of the heavy steel doors of the ship and gazed at the thousands of amazing lights of that city as well as the large and looming structure of that nations' "Statue of Liberty".



He had left the European continent less than a week previously from the shores of a dark and depressing war torn nation and listened carefully as his father told him to take his last look at the twinkling lights of Bremer Haven, Germany, Europe and to look forward to a new life in the United States of America! Here it was! This is where he indeed started a new life and in that time span of 54 years, met a wonderful lady that became his wife. They have had four wonderful children from that union. The last thing on that young boy's mind was that he would someday return to Europe, much less to the country of his birth, Poland!

The young boy of course was myself, Eric Firkowski, my wife Sherrie Ann and the children Timothy (Tim), Kenneth (Ken), Alaina Harkless (Firkowska) and Andrew. We are currently residing in Houston, Texas, U.S.A. and our children seem to be all over the country. My son Tim began to get deeply involved in genealogy and was planning to go to Poland in August of 2004, to meet with his new friend Lukasz Firkowski from Dabrowa Gornicza, Poland. All four of my children surprised me earlier in the year by advising me that they were going to give me my Christmas gift early, in the form of an Airline ticket to Poland so that I could accompany Tim (I think that Tim might have had something to do with this suggestion!). Wow, I still can't believe it happened! What a visit and adventure it has been!

Poland's hospitality became reality early, as Tim and I stepped up to the boarding gate of LOT Airlines. Our seating arrangements were such that Tim and I would not be able to sit together during the flight to Krakow. The flight was full and all seats had been assigned. The flight attendant promptly announced to all the people ready to board the plane that a father and his son were traveling to Poland and that the father was returning back to Poland after an absence of 62 years and would like to sit next to his son during the flight. An amazing three people offered to exchange their seats so that

Tim and I could enjoy the flight! Wow!

Polish hospitality continued throughout the extent of my visit to Poland evidenced by food, drink, sights and monuments as well as the culture; but most of all by its energetic and fun loving people. I was quite concerned about my ability to communicate in the Polish language with the people of Poland and all were kind enough to forgive my faults in communication. Many words, songs, sayings etc. came back to me throughout the course of our visit. Our hosts throughout our stay in this beautiful country were the ever present, ever understanding Lukasz, Janusz and Maria Firkowski. They were our Guardian Angels! Without their assistance in providing transportation, unbelievable home cooked meals, laundry service, lodging as well as maintaining the patience of a saint with their two American visitors; this visit would have been much different.

Landing in Krakow was a great thrill for me as my heart started to race and my hands started to sweat with excitement. Seeing Lukasz and Janusz at the airport was a joy not to be missed. Maria had a fantastic Polish meal ready for us at their home when we arrived.

Our first day began with a tour of Dabrowa Gornicza, the castle ruins in Ogradzieniec and ended with a hearty barbeque at the home of Magdalena & Robert Ciuk. The singing of Polish songs, which I had not heard for many years, the dancing, the laughter and love of everyone there, is a memory that I will not soon forget! The following day we took a side trip to the Czech Republic, where we visited with my brother Miecislaw's two sons and their families along with my sister-in-law Andjela.

Throughout the entire visit I was amazed at the beauty and diversity of Poland as a country. Our adventures continued as we visited the castle of Pieskowa Skala on our way to Krakow. The buildings, the architecture, the history, as well as the color and vitality of Poland continued to impress me as we visited Wawel Castle and enjoyed the hospitality of that city. That afternoon we left Krakow to enjoy the sights of the Tatry's in Zakopane.

I know that Zakopane is a tourist town but I enjoyed all of it just the same, the mountains most of all. My amazement continued as we took a cable car to the top of 6,000 foot Kasprowy Wierch, had a fantastic pizza at the top, and then took a 4-1/2 hour walk down the 10-mile path to Zakopane. There was a picture opportunity at every turn. Those little loaves of smoked stringy cheese were very delicious. I sure wish I could get some of it here in the States! What an experience! What a view! What an adventure! Not soon to be forgotten!

Lodz. In the evening we went to Piotrkow Trybunalski to the home of Krzysztof, Halina & Katarzyna Maslowski. There were a number of people from



around Poland who had come. That evening we ate a wonderful meal, sang Karaoke, and had a bonfire.

Sunday we drive to Dabrowa Gornicza but first stop in Konskie to visit with Maria Firkowska and her daughter Anna Matynia.

Some more austere moments came when we left Zakopane to visit Oswiecim. I was quite affected by that visit as we entered the city limits and we took photos of each other at the sign to the entrance of the city. We walked through the camp of Auschwitz where I saw the name of Miroslaw Firkowski as an inmate of that infamous camp. (I would meet him later at the family reunion!) We drove past Bierkenau and imagined where my parent's property was just north of Bierkenau somewhere near Harmeze where my mother was born. At this point I was starting to feel very depressed. Finally, before we left Oswiecim I had an opportunity to see the church where I was baptized, saw my name in the baptismal log, visited with the priest and had a chance to hug him. Slowly my depression went away and I was able to go on, feeling much better.

The next day we left Dabrowa Gornicza to go to the Family Reunion in Selpia Wielka. On the way, we stopped in Czestachowa to visit the church on Jasna Gora. The church was quite spectacular and humbling and I am really pleased that we took the time to go there. As usual, many photos were taken and beautiful sights were preserved in our memories as well as our cameras.

Following our memorable, not soon to be forgotten, first Firkowski Family Reunion, we traveled on to visit relatives in Inowroclaw, Orlowo, Lipie & Niewkowo. We enjoyed these cities greatly, along with the charm of the people.

Torun was a sight to behold as we visited that city prior to leaving for Warsaw. Stopping to eat along the road at some very interesting restaurants was a very tasty and interesting experience also.

Warsaw was a magnificent city! I was very impressed at how beautiful and well organized the city was. Meeting with our friends and relatives there was a special treat as they began to pour out their hospitality in making us welcome during our stay. Poland has come a long way in getting its past back into perspective and from everything that I saw, its future is becoming a sparkling new reality also.

The huge LOT 767 with a Polish eagle on its nose taxied down the runway in Warsaw. It began to pick up speed and slowly lifted into the air, as its wheels began to retract, the people standing on the roof of the terminal waved in farewell at the individual in the plane and he waved back. He knew they could not see him, but he was leaving a piece of his heart behind with them, this city, this Poland. The plane became a small spec in the sky on that warm, Friday, Warsaw morning and the passenger would again be arriving in New York for the second time in his life and see that welcoming statue that he saw 54 years ago. Somehow he would never be the same after moving forward into the past... he will be back!

My Trip to Poland

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Gdansk to meet The Michalkiewicz Family. On the way to their home in Gdansk I saw a beautiful rainbow at Lech Walesa Airport. We ate dinner at the home of Adam & Maria Michalkiewicz.

On Wednesday Adam and Maria took us on a tour of Gdansk. They showed us around Sopot where I touched the Baltic Sea. They also gave us a tour of Gdynia.

Thursday we stopped at Barbara Firkowska's house then toured Slupsk. While taking our walk around Slupsk we met Marek Firkowski. Marek returned with us to his sister's house where we had a wonderful meal. Later we went to Ustka and took a nighttime walk on beach. Longin Firkowski had an apartment in Ustka and we stayed there for the night.

Friday morning Longin Firkowski and his daughter Izabella met us at the apartment and took us for a walk on the beach. After an eight-hour drive to Lodz, we ate a dinner at the home of Marcin & Jolanta Firkowski. Later in the evening we all went for a walk down the street in Lodz.

Saturday Krzysztof Firkowski took us on a tour of

Monday, I left Poland from Krakow. Lukasz and his parents take me to the airport where Gosia Ciuk and her father Robert meet us to say goodbye. I will miss everyone very much. This trip to Poland has been one of the most memorable moments of my life. As I fly back home, my mind cannot stop thinking about all the wonderful people I have met, and the beautiful places I have been. I want to thank everyone for giving us so many unforgettable memories.

I cannot thank Lukasz and his parents enough for driving us everywhere from the Tatry Mountains all the way to the Baltic Sea.

The favorite part of my trip to Poland was meeting all the people. I really enjoyed seeing all the history in the architecture of Poland. If I had to pick one place that I enjoyed visiting the most, I would have to say that I enjoyed the astounding beauty of the Tatry Mountains.

Between Lukasz, his parents, my father and I, we took almost 14,000 photos and 35 hours of video. Photos I have already put on my webpage, can be seen at www.firkowski.com/poland.

This is a summary of my trip. Details can be seen on the Internet at www.firkowski.com/poland/trip.html

For children...

In a beautiful Forest lived Two Bears.



As it always is in winter, they were asleep in a warm lair made of autumn leaves. Once, something very strange happened, when winter ended and the bears woke up, it appeared that outside the burrow it was still very cold and there was a lot of snow everywhere.

Something was wrong.

Anyway they decided to look into it. They took the some meat from the cupboard and went to the

forest. They met three hares which looked very bad, because during winter they couldn't find much to eat. Even a fox didn't want to eat them, as he had no strength to run after them. There weren't any birds besides sparrows and bullfinches. Squirrels had gone out of their burrows and quickly hid back inside.

Neither the bears nor anyone else knew what was happening.

Worse still, was that this situation could bring a natural calamity. Everyone was afraid, so the bears being the most couragous animals started searching for spring. They went to the south because there it is always the warmest. They went everywhere, and everywhere they went there was a lot of snow. They were afraid. Finally they met a giraffe with a scarf on her neck and a lion with gloves. On the trees, instead of bananas, hung only frozen branches.

But the bears didn't give up.

Despite the many obstacles, they made their way from the north to the south. And there they discovered that spring was entertaining winter. She was sitting on the armchair and crocheting with a crochet hook, the flowers and grass of the meadow. What surprised them the most was that winter was helping spring in her work. They couldn't believe it. Spring told them her story. When she was very ill, winter cared for her. And because it had lasted a rather long time, she didn't have enough time to get ready for her arrival. Spring without flowers and green leaves on the trees isn't spring.

The bears were happy that spring recovered and that she would come to their forest.

They also decided they would help spring deliver everything that spring and winter had prepared. When they arrived at their forest, the sun was warm and all around it was green and happy. The bears became heroes of the forest. And what is the moral of this story? Even if winter stays too long, we must have hope that winter isn't sleeping, spring comes but sometimes we must help her by our smile, happiness, good words, or gifts.

Author: Katarzyna Ciuk - Sosnowiec
Polish/English Translation: Maciek Firkowski :-))

Where does the Firkowski surname derive?



1. firka - bird similar to a tit

Fier — od niem. n. os. *Fier*, *Fir*, te od ap. vier 'cztery', na Kresach Wschodnich też od *Olefir*, *Olefler*: Fiera 1687, Fier-asi+ewicz, Fier-c+ek, Fier-cz+yk, Fier-cz+yriski, Fier-ek, Fier-och, Fier-osi+ewicz, Fier-ski, Fier-us, Fier-uś, Fier-ut, Fier-uta; Fierk, Fierka, Fierke, Fierki-ewicz, Fierko 1475 (KrW), Fierk-owicz 1680, Fierk-us; Fir, Fira 1769 (od gw. *fira* 'kobieta rozpustna'), Fir-ak, Fir-as, Fir-asi+ewicz, Fir-asz, Fir-asz+ewicz, Fir-asz+yriski, Fir-aś, Fir-ek 1631 (por. też gw. *firka* 'ptaszek podobny do sikory; drobnostka'), Fir-esi+ewicz, Fir-es+ko, Fir-ewicz, Firo, Fir-och, Fir-ok, Fir-or+cz+yk, Fir-osz, Fir-owicz, Fir-owski, Fir-us, Fir-uś, Fir-ut, Fir-uta, Fir-uz+ek, Fir-yś+uk; Firka 1488 (od *firka*), Firke, Firki-ewicz, Firko 1476 (KrW), Firk-owicz, Firk-owski, Firk-us.

source: Nazwiska Polakow: slownik historyczno-etymologiczny by Kazimierz Rymut; Polska Akademia Nauk. Instytut Języka Polskiego. volume. 1, A-K. - Krakow: Issue. IJP PAN , 1999

The name of this bird is mentioned in a famous Polish book called "Potop" by Henryk Sienkiewicz.

2. Other meanings...

- old coin, which was worth 4 grosz, metaphorically speaking - 1) trifle, small thing, 2) scatterbrained girl, 3) from German - vier - "4"

source: Sownik wyrazow obcych i zwrotow obcojezycznych by Wladyslaw Kopalinski, Issue XVII - Warsaw 1989, page 172; <http://www.slownik-online.pl/kopalinski>

- word used very often in Old Polish to mean shoddy, worthless thing. Muchlinski, who is interested in oriental said that this word comes from Turkish language and means gang, sect. Karłowicz wrote that firka word comes from German word Vierer - coin, which was worth 4 grosz, small change.

source: Encyclopedia Staropolska / Zygmunt Gloger, volume II; Wiedza Powszechna Warsaw 1974 page 156

Translated by Lukasz Firkowski

An unknown photographer



Do you remember an article about Zenon Firkowski from Starachowice in last newsletter? Thanks to Bohdan Ufnalewski from Warsaw, we now have more information about him:

In reference to an article in the last newsletter, I would like to add some more information about "An unknown photographer" He was my uncle, my mother (Janina Firkowska-Ufnalewska)'s brother. He was born in 1908, and died in 1957 in Gorlice, and he was buried there. I was at his burial and I have all his artistic photos and photos of his family.

Unfortunately, I don't know a lot of those people and I cannot recognize them. As I mentioned in the previous letter, his son - Marek Firkowski is still alive, but I lost contact with him in 80s XIX. (...)

My uncle - Maciej (he used this name) was my godfather. He was friendly with my parents



Marek and Zenon

& spent almost all his vacations and holidays with them during the Second World War, and after WWII. We lived in Konstancin near Warsaw in good conditions. He could meet and spend time with his son Marek (1947). He was divorced. He loved nature, walking in the mountains, gardening, & chopping wood. After the Second World War, he lived in Gorlice, because he wanted to have close contact with nature. Then he lived in Grybowo (near from Gorlice), from where he could make trips to mountains.

Bohdan Ufnalewski - Warsaw

Translated by Lukasz Firkowski