

Tuesday, May 5, 1992.

Dear family,

Since I have had a little encouragement from Lee Ann and Teri to continue with my autobiography, I shall continue. Teri encouraged me to write of my parents and grandparents. Maybe you should have that material to understand who I am and how I got that way.

My Dad was born in Krakow, Poland, and migrated to US at the age of 5. His mother was the second wife of his father (first wife died young) so Dad had 2 half brothers and a sister. I believe there were others who died that I don't remember. I don't remember Grandpa Z but remember Busia very well. She lived to late 90's.

The story of their coming to America was told to me by Busia---in Polish. I knew some then. We had to learn as it was taught in school. As I remember, She explained that it took a long time and the ocean was rough. Lots of people got sea sick. There were no beds---not even cots--so you lived with what you could bring. There was no food aboard so that you ate what you had with you. Foods like carrots and crackers that kept well was the kind of menu they had. There were already in Bay City relatives and friends so that they sort of had a "home" and job. Bay City was heavy with trees so the lumber industry was thriving and they used every hand they could get. The wages were low but it was a living. The Saginaw river was used to send the logs downstream and to shipping elsewhere. Dad's parents built the residence on Van Buren and that was where Dad lived all his life. The house was built in two sections; the back end first with the big kitchen, bedroom (the afore mentioned furnace room) and a small room which later became the bathroom. The second story had those 2 large bedrooms. It wasn't until Mom and Dad got married that the front end of the house was added and he and Mom lived there and Busia and Dzia-dzia in the back half until after the death of dzia-dzia when Busia went to live with a daughter. By then we needed the extra room and it became our family home. We were all born in the house.

Mom was born in Bay City. Her parents came over long about the same time as Dad's and, of course, the Polish stuck together. Busia Janowicz was really German (Heron by name) but married Ignatz Janowicz, a Pole, and she learned the language and knew it well. We never got a cookie from her if we didn't ask for it in Polish. She made the best thick molasses cookies and we loved going there as the cookie jar was always full there unlike the larder at our house. We lived just 6 blocks apart so it was an easy walk and we loved going there. Busia J died at 66 of an embolism after appendix surgery and it was a huge loss to us. Dzia-dzia lived a long time. In fact, the day he was buried, Lee Ann was born. He was in his late 90's when he expired so you have long life genes on both sides of the family. The Janowicz family home still stands (burned about a dozen years ago but got repaired and a granddaughter still lives in the old homestead.) Mom's family was large, 4 brothers, 4 sister---like us! Helen is a product of Mom's brother John, has always lived in Bay City and we were more like sisters than cousins.

All the uncles on Mom's side of the family were alcoholics---in fact my godfather Alex, was drunk when he walked in on me in the tub I told you about last time. My 2 older brothers, Al and Myron, had drinking problems, too. Al died with ruptured ulcers as a result of drinking and Pinky (Myron) died in a plane crash the year I graduated from nursing school----and right on the day I was to graduate, too! I was pretty steamed as I missed the ceremonies in Grand Rapids to attend to his funeral. I will long remember that and the fact that I was his last passenger prior to his last flight. Pinky was a weekend drinker and really was a smart person. I told you he repaired radios and did well. He also invested in oil in Bay County and did very well there, too. He died at 35 and left his wife well off. They had no children. Al, on the other hand, left 4 and MArge (nurse friend of mine that I introduced to him) was pregnant with the 5th. She had it tough and reared those kids herself but died young of a heart disease. Brother Don died over Germany in the war and you know the rest of my siblings are alive. Edith, the oldest sibling is going on 84 next August. Pen (Betty Marie Anne) is the youngest and she will be 60 next birthday. You should know that I had 3 other siblings who died. Mom had a set of twin girls who died shortly after birth and they were her first offspring. There was a girl between Es and Ernie that died of pneumonia at age 5.

Mom was 19 when she married Dad, then 26. They were married at St. Stan as your dad and I were on October 12th, 1906 or 1907. Dad was a meat cutter and worked for a sister -in-law. His brother died and Dad helped her out. He worked there until the height of the depression when people were too poor to buy meat and there was not work enough for 2 in the shop. The depression was a terrible time for our family and I'll write of it sometime. You really have to live through it to understand how really bad things were for the jobless. The welfare system was nothing like today---but that is another day's story.

The Zielinski family has much to be proud of and a large part of the credit belongs to my sister Es. She was the first one to finish high school. The Polish believed when you were 16 your schooling was over and you got a job to help the family. Edith worked at a knitting mill making garments when she was only 14. Pinky went to radio school at 16 in Traverse City due to a kindness of an aunt and did well. Al became a bakers helper and ventured into a lot of stuff and never really found himself. As Dad would say, "He was a poor fish!" meaning a lost boy with lack of common sense. Es wanted a college education but couldnot finance it. She graduated 2nd highest in her class and really deserved a scholarship which were not available. She worked in the same factory as Edith did but she got to be a forelady. Later she did other things, catering, typed in a lumber factory and then got a good position at Dow where she stayed until retirement. She did stay home with the kids when Charley worked for Jewel T and sold foods door to door. He did well. If it had not been for Es and Charley, I could not have gone into nursing. They and Pinky gave me enough money to pay the first tuition year and buy the clothes and uniforms I needed. I was lucky the 2nd and 3rd year as the war was on and the government stepped in and offered help to females who would be nurses. We worked very hard and without interns so we got a lot of training that was done by doctors. I worked as clinical instructor for a year after graduation and then went on to Cath U with a scholarship and funding I saved that year of work. In those days, tuition at CU was only \$200 a semester and I made my money stretch but working a couple nights at Emergency Hospital. I worked for a year in Grand Rapids after I got my degree to fulfill an obligation on the scholarship I received from there. I came back to Bay City to work and get married and quit when Mom broke her hip and I had to care for her. Lee Ann came along and as you know, I was home with you kids and did not go back to work again.

Ernie was the first to get a college education. He excelled in football, made the All Michigan team and was awarded a scholarship at the U of M. He later (after the service) went back for his masters. Ernie worked with an undertaker to earn his room (lived right across the embalming room) and at a hotel to earn his meals. We are proud of Ern! Don would have gone on in chemistry had he come back. Dick chose not to go on to school. He got married at 18 instead and worked in factories and then on truck as a sales person for Made Right Potato chips. Dick did as well as he could and has a wonderful wife. He also has a drinking problem and has a damaged liver and smokes but can't seem to give it up. You know Gee and Pen went to the same nursing school as I did. Now you can understand my pride in my family. We have risen from adversity and have come a long way!

Now you probably know more about us than you cared to. Anyway, it is now down on paper and you don't have to wonder. I have more for you another time.

Much love,

*Mom*

*any nibbles on selling your house? Guess not or we would have heard. we pray for you & Rosie. miss you very much.*