

Zofia Gadomska Paluch and The Legacy of Kindness: Honoring the Righteous Memory of Stanisław and Stefania Pyrcak

By Kevin Ostoyich, Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation

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Stefania and Stanisław Pyrcak [FLSFF]

[Note: Items from the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation are marked with “FLSFF”]

On June 26, 2022, Zofia Gadomska Paluch (born on January 24, 1952, in Prusiek, Poland) sat down with Kevin Ostoyich in Waukegan, Illinois to discuss the events and the meaning of what her parents—Stanisław and Stefania Pyrcak—had done during the Second World War. Before the interview commenced, everyone present was treated to a slice of one of Zofia’s amazing baked goods. Ostoyich had been told on numerous occasions that Zofia loves to bake and that she is always offering cookies and cakes to others. Although by no means a culinary expert, Ostoyich can vouch for the validity of the historical claims; he and the others in the room savored a confection of apple deliciousness that was absolutely one of a kind.

Sitting next to Zofia was her niece, Angelika Hojsan (born on August 2, 1969, in Sanok, Poland; daughter of Zofia’s late sister, Irene). Angelika sat ready to join the conversation, assist with historical details, and offer reflections based on what she had learned about this history from her grandfather (Stanisław Pyrcak) and her mother, Irene.

With the taste of the baked goodness lingering on everyone’s lips, Zofia proceeded to recount her parents’ history.¹

¹ The interview appears in the footnotes when it is used for direct quotations and when it is necessary to distinguish it from other sources. The interview was conducted primarily with Zofia Gadomska Paluch with intermittent participation from Angelika Hojsan. During the second half of the interview, Angelika Hojsan participated with more frequency. Toward the end of interview, Angelika participated as a full interviewee. The interview is cited as “Zofia Gadomska Paluch, June 26, 2022 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich” when Zofia was acting as sole interviewee. The interview is cited as Zofia Gadomska Paluch and Angelika Hojsan, June 26, 2022 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich” when Angelika Hojsan was participating in the interview with Zofia.



Stanisław and Stefania Pycak did something that took remarkable courage: They hid seventeen Jews on their farm in Prusiek, Poland during the Second World War. The Jews had come to Stanisław Pycak after Stanisław's brother, Michał—who had originally helped hide the Jews with his friend, Maria Kuśmierczyk—was arrested on his way to procure food for the Jews. Maria's brother and a friend of his had tipped off the police that Michał was in possession of US dollars.² Michał was sent to Mauthausen concentration camp. Fearing that the police would come to her next, Maria Kuśmierczyk and Mojzesz Lieberman, one of the Jews, went to the Pycak farm in Prusiek to seek a new hiding place for the Jews. Stanisław agreed to take in the Jews right away. Stefania, at first overcome by the fear of such a dangerous act, had a dream in which the Virgin Mary instructed her that this was the right thing to do. After Stefania's dream, the Pycaks did not waiver in their efforts to save the Jews until their village was liberated by Soviet soldiers in August 1944. In the meantime, Michał had been transferred to Flossenbürg concentration camp, where he was murdered on February 25, 1945.³

In 1984, Stanisław, Stefania, and Michał Pycak and Maria Kuśmierczyk were officially honored by Yad Vashem in Israel as Righteous Among the Nations.

Although the main events of this history took place during the Second World War, the repercussions of the Pycaks' actions went well beyond the war.

Zofia is Stanisław and Stefania's youngest child. She was born in 1953, well after the conclusion of the Second World War. Nevertheless, her childhood was impacted by what her parents had done during the war years. Zofia remembers her family being ostracized by many of their neighbors as she was growing up. She also remembers that she did not know *why* her family was so scorned. This is because Stanisław and Stefania did not tell Zofia what they had done on behalf of the Jews until she was seventeen years old. But even then—in 1970—the history of the Pycaks and the Jews was to be kept a secret. In Poland the taboo surrounding having helped Jews during the Second World War was still very much entrenched.

The Pycaks did not tell their story officially until many years later. It was not until Jacob Lieberman—one of the seventeen Jews who had hid on their Pycaks' farm—took the initiative to have the Pycaks honored by Yad Vashem that Stanisław Pycak gave an official account of what had happened some forty years previously.

Given that she assisted her parents when they were documenting their history for Yad Vashem, Zofia is well-positioned to convey the history of what her parents did. Having married a Jewish Holocaust survivor later in life, Zofia is uniquely suited to reflect on the meaning of parents' actions.

The following is a synopsis of the Pycak history based not only on the June 26, 2022 interview but also on materials contained within the Florence and Laurence Spungen Foundation Holocaust Collection, various online and printed sources, and post-interview correspondence with Angelika Hojsan. In crafting this synopsis, Kevin Ostoyich has compared various accounts of the story and has noted where certain details have differed. He hopes the synopsis properly conveys the message that even in a history as suffused with human barbarity as that of the Holocaust, there are examples of individuals who confronted evil and hate with compassion and courage.

² <https://muzeumulmow.pl/pl/ratujacy/podkarpackie/kusmierczyk/> Accessed July 21, 2023.

³ https://www.ushmm.org/online/hsv/person_view.php?PersonId=7126275 Accessed July 21, 2023.



Stanisław and Stefanie Pyrcak and Family:



Stanisław Pyrcak [FLSFF]

Stanisław Pyrcak

Birthdate: April 20, 1909

Location of Birth: Prusiek, Poland

His parents: Father: Józef, Mother: Maria (She was from Belorussia). His parents were farmers. The farm was middle-sized.

Siblings: According to Angelika Hojsan, who checked her family history specifically for this text, Stanislaw had four brothers and perhaps two sisters (Zofia speaks of only one sister).

The information provided by Angelika Hojsan:

From family information, I know that my grandfather had brothers and sisters.

1. Wladyslaw (was a priest)[.]
2. Stanisław (my grandfather)[.]
3. Kazimierz (changed his name to PERCAK after the war), My grandfather had no contact with him for many years after he brought this group of Jews to hide them[.] [He] didn't want to participate anymore. When the blue police were looking for him for selling meat and for having dollars, they did not find him, so they beat Ludwik [see below] very much and knocked out his teeth.
4. Michał (the one who was taken to the camp and never came back)[.]
5. Ludwik (lived with my grandfather until the end of his life. He was a very helpful and good man, but he was slightly mentally undeveloped, so it was easy to get information from him, it was [for this reason that he was not] in the know about the hidden people. When Kazimierz was searched, Ludwik didn't say anything about the Jews because he didn't know anything about it)[.]



Personally, I loved him so much. He was the most kind and working hard person.

There [were] probably 2 [sisters]

One of them name was Katarzyna[.]⁴

Stanisław was the oldest of the children. He attended school for four years and then had to work on the farm. According to Zofia, Stanisław's father, Józef Pyrcak, served as the mayor of the village. Józef was thus expected to attend many celebrations (e.g., baptisms). Apparently, Józef liked to drink too much. Zofia says that Józef's excessive drinking bothered Stanisław greatly. Zofia says that neither Stanisław nor Stefania drank.

According to Zofia, Stanisław was an honest and hardworking man. She remembers him as being strict.



Stefania Pyrcak [FLSFF]

Stefania Pyrcak

Birthdate: According to Zofia: September 10, 1917. (NOTE: An official document signed by Stefania Pyrcak has her birthdate as December 24, 1917.)⁵

Location of Birth: Born in what is now Ukraine.

Parents: Zofia says Stefania came from a family of farmers. They were wealthier than the Pyrcak family. Zofia says that the family was deported but is not sure when they were deported. She says the family lost everything in the process. Zofia draws a stark contrast between her two grandfathers with respect to alcohol consumption; Stefania's father did not drink much.

Siblings: Stefania had four sisters.

Stefania's Personality: According to Zofia, Stefania was a good and very quiet person, whom everyone loved. Zofia says that her mother never spoke poorly of others.

⁴ Angelika Hojsan email to Kevin Ostoyich, August 17, 2023.

⁵ Official Account of Stanislaw Prycak dated July 5, 1982, in Sanok, Poland. The account is signed by Stanisław Pyrcak and Stefania Pyrcak. The account was notarized on July 23, 1982, in Lesko, Poland. **Unofficial translation from the original Polish by Ewa Wiatr.**



Religiosity of Stanisław and Stefania:

Zofia says that whereas Stefania’s family was *very* religious, Stanisław’s family “was a little less” so. Nevertheless, one of Stanisław’s brothers, Wladyslaw, was a priest. Zofia says that although her father was a believer, he was less religious than her mother.

Religion was very important to Stefania. Zofia remembers that during her childhood in the 1950s and 1960s, Holy Mass was performed only on one Sunday a month in their village. On the other Sundays, the Pyczak family walked to neighboring villages for Holy Mass. Zofia remembers that in warmer months, they would take off their shoes for most of the walk and put them back on as they approached the church to conserve the shoes. The family did not have enough money to purchase shoes frequently.

The Pyczak Children:

Zofia says that her parents did not tell her much about the time before the Second World War. She does not know where or when her parents met, but says they got married in 1933, when Stefania was sixteen years old.



Stanisław and Stefania had six children who survived infancy.⁶ Two children were born before the Second World War; two children were born during the Second World War—Stefania gave birth to another child during the war, but the baby died within two weeks of the birth; and two children were born after the Second World War. Zdzislawa Teresa was born November 17, 1935.⁷ Brygida Anna was born on October 8, 1938. Józef Zenon was born on October 30, 1941.⁸ According to Zofia, the child who died within two weeks of birth was born sometime between 1941 and 1944. Irene Barbara was born on July 21, 1944.⁹ Maria was born on May 11, 1950. Zofia was born on January 24, 1953.

Above: The Pyczak Family ca. 1939. The children: (left to right) Brygida and Zdzislawa [FLSFF]

⁶ Angelika Hojsan states that a daughter was born probably in 1933 but passed away as an infant. Angelika Hojsan email to Kevin Ostoyich, August 17, 2023.

⁷ Zofia gave information in the Interview. The information in the text is based on an email that Angelika Hojsan sent to Kevin Ostoyich on August 17, 2023, after she had consulted with family members in Poland. Zdzislawa Teresa passed away in Germany on May 12, 2012.

⁸ According to Angelika Hojsan, Józef Zenon “still resides in Sanok (in the house my grandpa moved from Prusiek).” Angelika Hojsan email to Kevin Ostoyich, August 17, 2023.

⁹ Irene Barbara, who passed away on April 12, 2021, was Angelika Hojsan’s mother.





The Pyrcak Family ca. mid-1950s (first row, standing left to right: Zofia, Maria; second row, seated left to right: Stefania, Stanisław; third row Standing left to right: Irene, Zdzisława, Brygida, Józef) [FLSFF]

Autumn 1942:

There are multiple accounts of the story of how the Pyrcaks came to hide seventeen Jews on their farm. The following narrative incorporates elements of the various accounts within the historical context of Prusiek, Sanok, and the surrounding area. As is often the case with historical accounts, there are discrepancies with respect to some of the details. Kevin Ostoyich has tried to detect, acknowledge, and weigh-in on such discrepancies. Stanisław Pyrcak's official notarized account is privileged here and marked in **red**. His account has been translated by Ewa Wiatr specifically for the present text. She cautions though that her translation should not be considered an official translation. Ostoyich has chosen not to leave most of the translated text as it was provided by Wiatr. He has applied some edits (noted in brackets) with respect to spelling for consistency with the rest of the text and some grammatical edits for readability. His edits do not impinge on the details of Stanisław Pyrcak's narrative.

Zofia says her father did not talk much to her about his brother, Michał Pyrcak. She says that, when Michał Pyrcak was around twenty years old, he went to live in the nearby town of Sanok and eventually came to live in the house of the widow, Maria Kuśmierczyk. Zofia does not know what the relationship was between Michał Pyrcak and Maria Kuśmierczyk, and surmises that Pyrcak perhaps worked for Kuśmierczyk.

Zofia says that at some point, Michał Pyrcak encountered a group of Jews on the street in Sanok. Zofia says that according to her father, someone had promised to hide the group of Jews (perhaps for money) but then had not helped them. They were thus left on the street and had to search for another place to go. Zofia says it was late evening when Michał encountered them on the street.¹⁰ He then brought

¹⁰ Zofia claims that Michał encountered all seventeen Jews from the beginning. This conflicts with the account written by Gayle S. Stockland, presumably based on an interview with Jacob Lieberman. Gayle S. Stockland,



Germans also established a transit camp for Jews at Zasław, about 8 kilometers (5 miles) south of the town.”¹⁵

According to Śliwa, “On September 5, 1942, the Germans announced on placards that all the Jews in the Sanok ghetto would be taken to the Zasław camp. Then on September 10, the German police, assisted by Ukrainian auxiliaries, conducted a major deportation *Aktion*.”¹⁶ The Germans then started to deport Jews from Sanok and the Zasław camp to Bełżec extermination camp.¹⁷ Some Jews remained in Sanok, but in mid-December the remaining members of the Judenrat were killed and by January 1943 the remaining laborers in Sanok had been sent to Zasław camp. Thus, Michał Pyrcak encountered the group of Jews when the Germans were making a big push to deport and kill the Jews in Sanok.

Kevin Ostoyich wonders if perhaps the initial encounter of the Jews with Michał Pyrcak, Michał Pyrcak’s arrest, and then the transfer of the Jews from the Kuśmierczyk house to the Pyrcak farm took place in September rather than October. The historical context of the situation of the Jews in September 1942 is what makes Ostoyich think this is a possibility. It should be emphasized here though that **all accounts, including Stanisław Pyrcak’s official notarized account, refer to October 1942.** If October is correct, then the Jews Michał Pyrcak encountered had somehow managed to escape the *Aktion* conducted by the German police and Ukrainian auxiliaries and were some of the last remaining Jews in Sanok.

On July 5, 1982, Stanisław Pyrcak gave an official account of the history. According to his account,

My brother [Michał], a single man living in Sanok, during the deportation to the ghetto from Sanok to Zaslavl [Zasław] made contact with several Jews and together with one widow named [Kuśmierczyk] decided to hide 17 people in her house. This widow gave my brother \$20 [USD] to start with and told him to buy food with those dollars. When my brother went to buy food[,] he was stopped by the police, searched, robbed and imprisoned, and from the prison he was taken to a camp, where he died on [February 24, 1945] in [Mauthausen]. The next day in the evening after my brother’s arrest, the widow Kuśmierczyk came to us together with Moses Lieberman and told us what had happened to my brother, and Lieberman asked me and begged me on behalf of everyone to take them with me, that if they survived then I and my wife would [...] not experience privation until death, that they currently had nothing, but would repay us for everything. I agreed to hide them in my house in Prusiek. I had already learned how much human gratitude is worth after the fact. I helped these people out of simple human kindness, without my help[,] they would have faced inevitable death.¹⁸

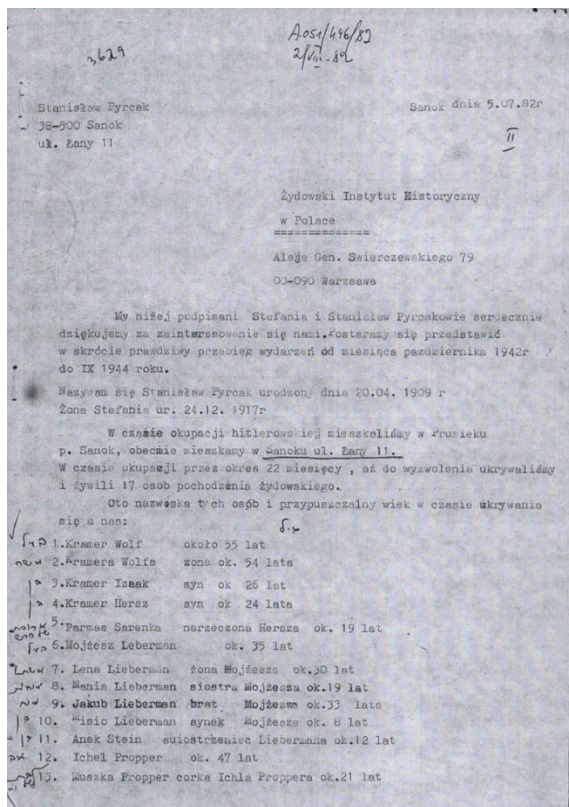
¹⁵ Śliwa, “Sanok,” 570.

¹⁶ Śliwa, “Sanok,” 570.

¹⁷ Śliwa, “Sanok,” 570-571.

¹⁸ Official Account of Stanisław Pyrcak dated July 5, 1982, in Sanok, Poland. The account is signed by Stanisław Pyrcak and Stefania Pyrcak. The account was notarized on July 23, 1982 in Lesko, Poland. **Unofficial translation from the original Polish by Ewa Wiatr with edits by Kevin Ostoyich.**





Left: First page of Stanisław Pyrcak’s Official Account of July 5, 1982 (FLSFF)

Stanisław Pyrcak’s continued:

After staying with us for a few days, the Jews told me that they had been robbed by [Maria Kuśmierczyk’s] brother and his friend while they were at the widow’s house, that the whole thing with my brother's arrest had been planned. These bandits did not turn the Jews over to the Nazis for the sake of their sister Kuśmierczyk - the widow.¹⁹

Zofia’s account closely aligns with her father’s official account. She says that on the day after Michał Pyrcak brought the Jews with him to Maria Kuśmierczyk’s house, Kuśmierczyk gave him money to go purchase food for the Jews.²⁰ According to the website of the Ulma Family Museum of Poles Saving Jews in World War II, the reason for Michał’s arrest was that he was found with US currency in his possession.²¹

Michał was sent to Mauthausen concentration camp. Most accounts—including Stanisław’s—erroneously have him dying there. Records from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) and the Arolsen Archives reveal, however, that he did not die in Mauthausen. He was transferred to Flossenbürg concentration camp in Bavaria on October 1, 1944. Whether he went directly from Mauthausen to Flossenbürg is not clear. He died in Flossenbürg concentration camp on February 25, 1945.²² A document from Flossenbürg lists his birthdate as March 3, 1919, his occupation as milk inspector (*Milchkontrolleur*), has date of admittance as October 1, 1944, his arresting authority as Sipo-Karkau [Sicherheitspolizei and typo for Krakau], his prisoner number 27466, his place of death as Flossenbürg camp, and his date of death as February 25, 1945.²³

¹⁹ Official Account of Stanisław Pyrcak dated July 5, 1982 in Sanok, Poland. The account is signed by Stanisław Pyrcak and Stefania Pyrcak. The account was notarized on July 23, 1982 in Lesko, Poland. **Unofficial translation from the original Polish by Ewa Wiatr with edits by Kevin Ostoyich.**

²⁰ Zofia Gadomska Paluch, June 26, 2022 Interview by Kevin Ostoyich. In Zofia’s account, Michał Pyrcak was robbed by Maria Kuśmierczyk’s brother and his friend. Zofia is not clear though regarding the details in this part of the narrative. She thinks the two men had somehow found out that Michał Pyrcak was carrying a lot of money. Zofia notes that Michał Pyrcak was arrested but is not sure regarding the grounds for his arrest. Note: The account on the Memory and Identity International Information Center website does not mention Kusmierczyk’s brother and friend, but states simply that Michał Pyrcak was stopped by the police, who searched him, took the money, and arrested him. <https://pamiecitozsamosc.pl/en/3669-2> Accessed July 24, 2023.

²¹ <https://muzeumulmow.pl/pl/ratujacy/podkarpackie/kusmierczyk/> Accessed July 24, 2023.

²² https://www.ushmm.org/online/hsv/person_view.php?PersonId=7126275 Accessed July 19, 2023.

²³ <https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/de/document/10979921> (Accessed August 10, 2023).



Vor- und Zuname: Pyrcak Michael Polen Haft-Nr. 27466
 Beruf: Milchkontrollleur geboren am: 3.3.1919 in: Prusalek
 Anschrift: 5
 Einzeln am: 1.10.44 Uhr von Sipo-Karkau Gml. o.H. Verstorben am 25. FEB. 1945
 Bei Entlieferung abgegeben:

			Koffer	Aktenfolder	Tafel
1	Brot/Wafer	Paar Schuhe/Strümpf	Kragenhaube	Baumwolle	Werkzeug
1	Mantel	Paar Strümpfe	Daletuch	Tafel	Handtasche
1	Rock	Paar Handschuhe	Taschentuch	Zigaretten/Zigaretten	Arbeitsbuch
1	Woll-Kleiderrock	Kragen	Paar Handschuhe	Tabak	Tabak
1	Hose	Wachsbomb	Dreiecksche mit	Strick	Handballtasche
1	Wolljacket	Strümpf/Rings	Wanzen	Koffer	Esszettel
3	Überhemden	Paar Armbänder	Sparschwein/Dolm	Wäsche/Drehtuch	
1	Unterhemden	Paar Handschuhe	Abstreifen	Werkzeuge	
1	Unterhosen	Paar Handschuhe	Schlüssel o. Ring	Kamm	Wertfaden: ja-nein

Abgabe befähigt: Pyrcak Michael
 Haftleitungsverwalter: Pyrcak Michael
 66 Oberstaatsführer

“Personal file of PYRCAK, MICHAEL, born on 3-Mar-1919” from Flossenbürg concentration camp. Arolsen Archives: <https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/en/document/10979921> (Accessed August 10, 2023).

- 866 -		- 869 -	
Puskar, Stefan	5293	PA	21. 3.42
Puskar, Wanda	5608	PA	13. 4.28
Puskar, Josef	5300	HA	28. 9.15
Puskar, Michael	5600	HA	2. 12. 17. 1945
Puskar, Hanna	5605	HA	21. 12. 22. 11. 44
Puskar, Maria	5606	HA	21. 12. 22. 11. 44
Puskar, Maria	5607	HA	21. 12. 22. 11. 44
Puskar, Maria	5608	HA	21. 12. 22. 11. 44
Puskar, Maria	5609	HA	21. 12. 22. 11. 44
Puskar, Maria	5610	HA	21. 12. 22. 11. 44
Puskar, Maria	5611	HA	21. 12. 22. 11. 44
Puskar, Maria	5612	HA	21. 12. 22. 11. 44
Puskar, Maria	5613	HA	21. 12. 22. 11. 44
Puskar, Maria	5614	HA	21. 12. 22. 11. 44
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Puskar, Maria	5616	HA	21. 12. 22. 11. 44
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Puskar, Maria	5696	HA	21. 12. 22. 11. 44
Puskar, Maria	5697	HA	21. 12. 22. 11. 44
Puskar, Maria	5698	HA	21. 12. 22. 11. 44
Puskar, Maria	5699	HA	21. 12. 22. 11. 44
Puskar, Maria	5700	HA	21. 12. 22. 11. 44

Entry for Michal “Michael” Pyrcak in the Flossenbürg Prisoner List. The information provided is that Pyrcak was Polish, had the prisoner number 27466, had the birthdate of March 3, 1919, had an entry date of October 1, 1944, and died on February 25, 1945. The photograph was ordered from USHMM.

The link is [1689759378-2833847-RG-30.005M.0002.00000203.jpg \(5522x3743\) \(ushmm.org\)](https://www.ushmm.org/online/hsv/source_view.php?SourceId=44619) (The link was temporary. The photo was downloaded from the link.) The USHMM gives the date of the document as (ca. 1955) and provides the following explanation: “Electronic data regarding prisoners interned in the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp from a list compiled in the 1950s to use as evidence against camp administrators and guards being put on trial for war crimes; data includes names, prisoner numbers, nationalities, and dates of birth, entry and departure.”

(https://www.ushmm.org/online/hsv/source_view.php?SourceId=44619 Accessed: July 19, 2023). Note: Based on this information, the date of death listed on the Yad Vashem website (February 24, 1945 is off by one day. Note: The Yad Vashem website does not provide a place of death for Michal Pyrcak.

Maria Kuśmierczyk knew that Michał Pyczak had been arrested and was worried about what the consequences of his arrest would be for the Jews whom she was hiding. The next night the oldest man of the group—Mojzesz/Mojżesz/Moses Liebermann and Maria Kuśmierczyk went to the Pyczaks' farm and asked Stanisław Pyczak if he could help the group of Jews. They thought it would be better to hide the group on the farm in Prusiek with Stanisław Pyczak than for them to stay in Sanok with Maria Kuśmierczyk given there would be less police presence in the country than in the town. Stanisław Pyczak agreed to take them in.²⁴

According to Stanisław Pyczak's official account:

The next night Lieberman brought in a whole group of Jews. We hid them initially in the barn between the sheaves, then I built them a bunker under the barn. The walls, floor and ceiling were lined with boards, an air vent made of four boards against the wall in the shape of a pole, so that the stale air would come out. The door to the bunkhouse was in the floor, the exit to the stable to the pigsty in which the goat stood. The goat was bought to mask the entrance to the bunker. The hiding Jews went out only at night to get fresh air.²⁵

Zofia's account of these events is very similar to her father's official account. She says on the night after Maria Kuśmierczyk and Mojzesz Lieberman came to speak with Stanisław, the Jews moved to the Pyczaks' farm. She explains, for "a whole week they kept them in the barn in between...[where] grains [were stored]...because they had to make a room for them." She says this was late October. [See comments above regarding the dates of the events.] She says that everyone was concerned about the upcoming winter. "For a whole week they worked [on creating] a room underground under the barn...a bigger room." The Jewish men helped Stanisław in making this room.²⁶ According to the Ulma Family Museum of Poles Saving Jews in World War II, the underground shelter was boarded up and had wooden bunks.²⁷ Whereas Stanisław wrote that he kept a goat (singular) on top of where the Jews were hiding, Zofia says there were goats (plural). She says one reason goats were kept here was to drown out any noise coming from below. The Jews needed to stay hidden during the day. As in her father's official account, Zofia notes that the Jews could come out and walk at night.²⁸

Stefania Pyczak's Dream:

Initially, Stanisław's decision to allow the Jews to hide on the farm weighed heavily on Stefania's mind. This was understandable, given that if the authorities found out that they were harboring Jews, the whole family was liable to be killed. Then Stefania was visited in the night.

As Stanisław Pyczak explained:

²⁴ Zofia Gadomska Paluch, June 26, 2022 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich.

²⁵ Official Account of Stanisław Pyczak dated July 5, 1982, in Sanok, Poland. The account is signed by Stanisław Pyczak and Stefania Pyczak. The account was notarized on July 23, 1982, in Lesko, Poland. **Unofficial translation from the original Polish by Ewa Wiatr.**

²⁶ Zofia Gadomska Paluch, June 26, 2022 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich.

²⁷ <https://muzeumulmow.pl/pl/ratujacy/podkarpackie/kusmierczyk/> Accessed July 25, 2023.

²⁸ Zofia Gadomska Paluch, June 26, 2022 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich.



At first, when I just brought in the Jews and began to build the bunker it was my wife who despaired greatly. She was afraid, like any mother, for her children, her husband and the whole family. It was known that for hiding Jews the Germans would execute the entire family. I remember that she cried for several days, and once she fell asleep in this despair, [and] she dreamed that a great brightness came over our house, the figure of the Virgin Mary appeared to her saying[,] “don’t be afraid daughter and don’t despair, you will all survive.” After waking up, my wife told us about the dream. We believed that with Divine help and great caution we would live happily to see the days of liberation, and with us[,] those whose only fault in the eyes of the Nazis was that they were Jews.²⁹

Zofia emphasizes the importance of her mother’s dream. Zofia explains that for a couple days her mother cried, fearing what would happen to her family if the Jews were found. Zofia explains that it was thought that if they were found out, the Germans would kill “the whole family.” Zofia explains that later her mother,

said to me...[that] one night, when she started to sleep...she had a dream. And, during this dream, she saw a bright light and the Holy Virgin Mary, and she said what she said to her [was] “Don’t cry, daughter. Don’t despair. You’re [all] going to...survive.” So, my mother was very religious, and, in the morning, when she talked to the family...to my father...everybody believed, so she stopped [crying] at this time. And they [all] survived.

Zofia says this happened a few days (“three, four days, maybe”) after the group of Jews arrived at the farm.³⁰

An account of Stefania Pycak’s dream also appears on the savingjews.org website: “

At the beginning Stefania Pycak was terrorized by the risks to her family and she cried for several days. Then in her sleep, she recounted, she saw a sudden bright light and in the midst of it the Holy Virgin Mary, who told her: “Do not fear my daughter and do not despair. You will all survive.’ They all believed in it. And so they did survive.”³¹

²⁹ Official Account of Stanisław Pycak dated July 5, 1982, in Sanok, Poland. The account is signed by Pycak and Stefania Pycak. The account was notarized on July 23, 1982, in Lesko, Poland. **Unofficial translation from the original Polish by Ewa Wiatr with edits by Kevin Ostoyich.**

³⁰ Zofia Gadomska Paluch, June 26, 2022 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich. Ostoyich has performed a light edit here. Zofia said, “light bright” instead of “bright light.” It is not clear how many of the family members were told about the dream by Stefania. Zofia speaks of her sister not knowing about the Jews on the farm and asking her mother why she was baking more bread than the family could eat. Thus, when Zofia talks of “the family” in the account of her mother informing “the family” about the dream, it was probably only to *certain members* of the family. In the sentence she moves from family to her father as the audience, so there may be some haziness here about who exactly the audience was. At the very least, Stefania told Stanisław about the dream.

³¹ <https://www.savingjews.org/righteous/pv.htm> Accessed July 25, 2023. The source listed for the entry on the Pycak’s is Grynberg, Michal: *Księga Sprawiedliwych*. (Book of the Righteous). Warszawa, Wyd. Naukowe PWN, 1993.



The Seventeen Jews Hidden on the Pyrcak Farm: Questions of Who? and When?

The accounts of the Pyrcak story vary with respect to the details about the seventeen Jews who hid on the farm. Not all accounts list all seventeen Jews. The first names of two individuals (Mrs. Förer and Mrs. Kramer) do not appear in any of the accounts or the Yad Vashem files. One account claims that a baby was born and passed away as the Jews hid on the farm.³² Moreover, the accounts tend to use varied spellings and varying degrees of information about the individuals. Kevin Ostoyich has compiled the following list using multiple accounts and Yad Vashem files. The spellings used most often are underlined in the list. The link to each individual's Yad Vashem online file has been provided to establish with authority that each individual was part of the group of seventeen Jews hidden on the Pyrcak farm. Two individuals—Ichel Propper and Muszka Propper—were murdered immediately after liberation. According to more than one source—including that of Stanisław Pyrcak—they were murdered by one of the men who had informed on Michał Pyrcak. According to one source, blackmail was involved. According to Stanisław Pyrcak, the reason was because the murderer had earlier robbed the Jews and feared “punishment for what he had committed.”³³ Another daughter of Ichel Propper, Helena Propper, was injured at the time of the murders. (See “Learning a Secret” section below for Stanisław's account of the Propper murders.) The Yad Vashem files note that Ichel Propper and Muszka Propper were both shot and both are noted as victims of the Shoah. It is not clear specifically when the murders occurred. The Propper murders warrant further research. Most accounts speak of seventeen Jews surviving the Holocaust because of hiding on the Pyrcak farm. Such a statement may need a qualifier that all seventeen survived until liberation by the Soviets, but that Ichel Propper and Muszka Propper were then killed sometime shortly thereafter.

Who? - List of Individuals:³⁴

Mojzesz/Mojżesz/Moses Liberman/Lieberman, husband of Lena Liberman and brother of [Jan] Jacob Liberman.³⁵ Approximate age while in hiding: 35.

Lena Liberman/Lieberman, wife of Mojzesz Liberman.³⁶ Approximate age while in hiding: 30.

Mzsiak/Misio Liberman/Lieberman, son of Mojzesz.³⁷ Approximate age while in hiding: 8.

³² The Ulma Family Museum of Poles Saving Jews in World War II website is the only account that mentions a baby. [Kuśmierczyk - Muzeum Polaków Ratujących Żydów podczas II wojny światowej im. Rodziny Ulmów w Markowej \(muzeumulmow.pl\)](https://www.muzeumulmow.pl) Accessed July 27, 2023.

³³ Official Account of Stanisław Prycak dated July 5, 1982, in Sanok, Poland. The account is signed by Pyrcak and Stefania Pyrcak. The account was notarized on July 23, 1982, in Lesko, Poland. **Unofficial translation from the original Polish by Ewa Wiatr.**

³⁴ The approximate ages in the list come from official account of Stanisław Prycak dated July 5, 1982, in Sanok, Poland. The account is signed by Stanisław Pyrcak and Stefania Pyrcak. The account was notarized on July 23, 1982, in Lesko, Poland.

³⁵ Yad Vashem file noting Mojzesz Liberman as a survivor of the Shoah and associated with the Pyrcaks: <https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=en&itemId=10491231&ind=1> Accessed July 21, 2023.

³⁶ Yad Vashem file noting Lena Liberman as a survivor of the Shoah and associated with the Pyrcaks: <https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=en&itemId=10491235&ind=1> Accessed July 21, 2023.

³⁷ Yad Vashem file noting Misio Liberman as a survivor of the Shoah and associated with the Pyrcaks: <https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=en&itemId=10494413&ind=1> Accessed July 21, 2023. The file states, “Misio Liberman was born to Mojżesz.”



Anek Stein, nephew of Mojzesz Lieberman.³⁸ According to Zofia, Anek was the son of a sister of Mojzesz Lieberman.³⁹ Approximate age while in hiding: 12.

Jan Lieberman, brother of Mojzesz Lieberman. (Later in USA: Jacob Lieberman and is henceforth referred to here as Jacob Lieberman.) Approximate age while in hiding: 33. [Note: See below for more information on Jacob Lieberman.]

Mania Lieberman, sister of Mojzesz Lieberman. She is the member of the Lieberman family who is missing in some accounts. She is listed in Stanisław Pyrcak's account, the Ulma Family Museum list and in Yad Vashem records.⁴⁰ Approximate age while in hiding: 19.

Wolf Kramer/Krammer, husband of Mrs. (unnamed) Kramer.⁴¹ Approximate age while in hiding: 55.

Mrs. (unnamed) Kramer/Krammer, wife of Wolf Kramer.⁴² Approximate age while in hiding: 54.

Iccahk/Izaak Kramer/Krammer, son of Wolf Kramer.⁴³ Approximate age while in hiding: 26.

Hersz Kramer/Krammer, fiancé of Sara Parnes and son of Wolf Kramer.⁴⁴ Approximate age while in hiding: 24.

Sarenka/Sara Parnes/Parnas/Parnas, fiancée of Hersz Kramer.⁴⁵ Approximate age while in hiding: 19.

Ichel/Jechiel Proper/Propper.⁴⁶ Later murdered by one of the men who had robbed/informed on Michal Pyrcak). Approximate age while in hiding: 47.

³⁸ Yad Vashem file noting Anek Stein as a survivor of the Shoah and associated with the Pyrcaks:

<https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=en&itemId=10494587&ind=1> Accessed July 21, 2023.

³⁹ Zofia Gadowska Paluch, June 26, 2022 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich.

⁴⁰ Stanisław identifies Mania Lieberman as Mojzesz Lieberman's sister. Official Account of Stanisław Pyrcak dated July 5, 1982, in Sanok, Poland. The account is signed by Pyrcak and Stefania Pyrcak. The account was notarized on July 23, 1982, in Lesko, Poland. **Unofficial translation from the original Polish by Ewa Wiatr.**

Yad Vashem file noting Mania Lieberman as a survivor of the Shoah and associated with the Pyrcaks:

<https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=en&itemId=10494495&ind=1> Accessed July 21, 2023.

⁴¹ Yad Vashem file noting Wolf Kramer as a survivor of the Shoah and associated with the Pyrcaks:

<https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=en&itemId=10494826&ind=1> Accessed July 21, 2023.

⁴² Yad Vashem file noting Kramer (without a first name) as a survivor of the Shoah and associated with the Pyrcaks:

<https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=en&itemId=10494763&ind=1> Accessed July 21, 2023.

⁴³ Yad Vashem file noting Izaak Kramer as a survivor of the Shoah and associated with the Pyrcaks:

<https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=en&itemId=10494847&ind=1> Accessed July 21, 2023.

The file states, "Izaak Kramer was born to Wolf."

⁴⁴ Yad Vashem file noting Hersz Kramer as a survivor of the Shoah and associated with the Pyrcaks:

<https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=en&itemId=10494855&ind=1> Accessed July 21, 2023.

The file states, "Hersz Kramer was born to Wolf."

⁴⁵ Yad Vashem file noting Sara/Sarenka Parnes as a survivor of the Shoah and associated with the Pyrcaks:

<https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=en&itemId=10494903&ind=1> Accessed July 21, 2023.

⁴⁶ Yad Vashem file noting Ichel Propper as having been murdered during the Shoah and associated with the

Pyrcaks: <https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=en&itemId=10494903&ind=1> Accessed July 21, 2023. The file states his cause of death as "shot".



Muszka Proper/Propper, daughter of Ichel Propper.⁴⁷ Later murdered by same man who murdered Ichel/Jeziel). Approximate age while in hiding: 21.

Helena Proper/Propper, daughter of Ichel Propper. Injured but survived being shot when her father and older sister were murdered by one of the men who had robbed/informed on Michał Pyrcak. Based on correspondence between Yad Vashem and Stanislaw Pyrcak, her name presumably became Helena Lantner.⁴⁸ The Yad Vashem file lists her as Helena Lantner.⁴⁹ Approximate age while in hiding: 19.

Hinda Proper/Propper, daughter of Ichel Propper. Based on correspondence between Yad Vashem and Stanislaw Pyrcak, her name presumably became Hinda Schurarg. [Kevin Ostoyich wonders if perhaps “Schurarg” is a typo for “Schwarz” and further wonders if she may have married a man named Ira Schwarz.] Note: The Yad Vashem file has her as Hinda Schurarg.⁵⁰ Approximate age while in hiding: 16.

Izak/Izaak Forer/Förer, husband of Mrs. (unnamed) Förer. According to Yad Vashem file, he was born in 1888.⁵¹ The Förers were from Krakow.⁵² Approximate age while in hiding: 54.

Mrs. (unnamed) Forer/Förer, wife of Izak/Izaak Förer. According to the Yad Vashem file, she was born in 1892.⁵³ The Förers were from Krakow.⁵⁴ Approximate age while in hiding: 50.

When?

All accounts are consistent in that the Pyrcaks hid a total of seventeen Jews on their farm.⁵⁵ The accounts are not consistent about whether the Jews all arrived at the farm at the same time. Some accounts have all seventeen arriving together in October 1942. Gayle S. Stockland’s article, presumably based on an interview with Jacob Lieberman and, thus, the only one from the perspective of one of the Jews who were hidden, has the Jews coming to the Pyrcaks’ farm in three stages: 1) twelve going from Maria Kuśmierczyk’s house to the Pyrcaks’ farm in October 1942; 2) Jacob Lieberman (named Jan Lieberman at the time) arriving at some point in the winter of 1942/3; and 3) four others arriving at a

⁴⁷ Yad Vashem file noting Muszka Propper as having been murdered during the Shoah and associated with the Pyrcaks: <https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=en&itemId=10495102&ind=1> Accessed July 21, 2023. The file states, “Muszka Propper was born to Ichel.” The file states her cause of death as “shot”.

⁴⁸ Geni.com has the following information about Helena Lantner: Year of Death: 2009. Father: Ichel Propper. Mother: Mina Propper. Husband: Naftali Lantner. Source: <https://www.geni.com/people/Helena-Lantner/6000000021193175786> Accessed: July 20, 2023.

⁴⁹ Yad Vashem file noting Helena Lantner as a survivor of the Shoah and associated with the Pyrcaks: <https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=en&itemId=10495160&ind=1> Accessed July 21, 2023. The file states, “Helena Lantner was born to Ichel.”

⁵⁰ Yad Vashem file noting Hinda Schurarg as a survivor of the Shoah and associated with the Pyrcaks: <https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=en&itemId=10495180&ind=1> Accessed July 21, 2023. The file states, “Hinda Schurarg was born to Ichel.”

⁵¹ Yad Vashem file noting Izak Forer as a survivor of the Shoah and associated with the Pyrcaks: <https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=en&itemId=10495378&ind=1> Accessed July 21, 2023.

⁵² <https://muzeumulmow.pl/pl/ratujacy/podkarpackie/kusmierczyk/> Accessed July 21, 2023.

⁵³ Yad Vashem file noting “first name unknown” Forer as a survivor of the Shoah and associated with the Pyrcaks: <https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=en&itemId=10495423&ind=1> Accessed July 21, 2023.

⁵⁴ <https://muzeumulmow.pl/pl/ratujacy/podkarpackie/kusmierczyk/> Accessed, July 21, 2023.

⁵⁵ This statement has the caveat that The Ulma Family Museum of Poles Saving Jews in World War II website claims that a baby was born and died while the group was hiding. [Kuśmierczyk - Muzeum Polaków Ratujących Żydów podczas II wojny światowej im. Rodziny Ulmów w Markowej \(muzeumulmow.pl\)](https://www.muzeumulmow.pl/pl/ratujacy/podczas-ii-wojny-swiatowej-im-rodziny-ulmow-w-markowej) Accessed July 27, 2023.

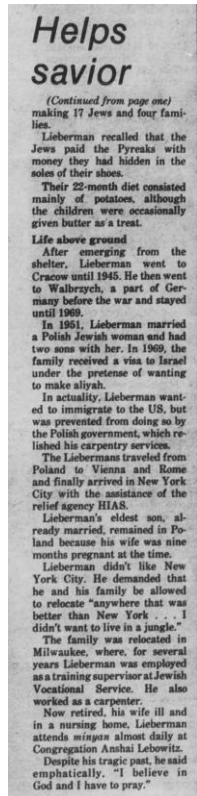


later undisclosed date. It seems right to privilege the Stockland/Lieberman account here of a three-staged arrival of the seventeen Jews.⁵⁶

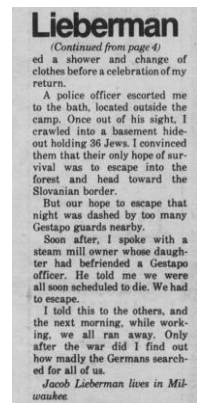


Top Left: First page of the November 16, 1984 article in the *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle* by Gayle S. Stockland [Note: This clipping was provided to the FLSFF by Jay Hyland, Archivist, Jewish Museum Milwaukee in an E-mail to Danny Spungen on September 14, 2018.] [FLSFF]

Top Right: Second page of the November 16, 1984 article in the *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle* by Gayle S. Stockland [Note: The clipping was provided to the FLSFF by Jay Hyland, Archivist, Jewish Museum Milwaukee in an E-mail to Danny Spungen on September 14, 2018.] [FLSFF]



Bottom Left: First page of April 5, 1985 article in the *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle* written by Jacob Lieberman in Polish and translated into English [Note: The clipping was provided to the FLSFF by Jay Hyland, Archivist, Jewish Museum Milwaukee in an E-mail to Danny Spungen on September 14, 2018.] [FLSFF]



Bottom Right: Second page of April 5, 1985 article in the *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle* written by Jacob Lieberman in Polish and translated into English [Note: The clipping was provided to the FLSFF by Jay Hyland, Archivist, Jewish Museum Milwaukee in an E-mail to Danny Spungen on September 14, 2018.] [FLSFF]

⁵⁶ Gayle S. Stockland, "Helping the pair who saved him," *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle*, November 16, 1984.



By incorporating Jacob Lieberman’s account into the general narrative, the following appears to be what happened: In autumn 1942, Michał encountered a group of Jews on the street in Sanok. He brought this group of twelve individuals to Maria Kuśmierczyk’s house in Sanok. The next day Michał was apprehended by the police while carrying a considerable amount of money with which to purchase food for the Jews. Maria Kuśmierczyk and Mojzesz Lieberman then went to Stanisław to take in the group of twelve individuals.

In the winter of 1942, [Jan] Jacob Lieberman joined the group hiding on the Pyczak farm after escaping the Zasław concentration camp. Regarding the Zasław camp, scholar Johanna Śliwa writes,

This was an unfinished paper factory, with its own railhead, that was surrounded with barbed wire. The only accommodation was in primitive barracks. From the middle of August the Germans started to concentrate Jews in Zasław, for example, from Lesko, Bukowsko, and Ustrzyki Dolne. The camp’s location within a factory was exploited to make Jews believe they would find employment there, but most were deported to the Belzec extermination camp within days.⁵⁷



Map Showing Location of the Zasław concentration camp in relation to major concentration camps in Poland.
 Source for Map: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zas%C5%82aw_concentration_camp#/media/File:WW2-Holocaust-Poland.PNG Accessed July 24, 2023.

According to his Petition for Naturalization, [Jan] Jacob Lieberman was born on August 21, 1909, in Wyrne, Poland. (The Yad Vashem has his birthdate as July 27, 1909; the November 16, 1984 *Wisconsin*

⁵⁷ Joanna Śliwa, “Sanok” in *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum encyclopedia of camps and ghettos, 1933-1945. Volume 2, Ghettos in German-occupied Eastern Europe, Part A*, Martin Dean and Mel Hecker, eds. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012), 570.



Jewish Chronicle article states he was born on August 31, 1909 in Ustrzyki Dolne, Poland.)⁵⁸ [Kevin Ostoyich speculates: Wydrne is a tiny village that is 14 kilometers/9 miles from the larger Ustrzyki Dolne.⁵⁹ The discrepancy could be because Wydrne is so small and for the article, Lieberman may simply have stated the closest town, (i.e., Ustrzyki Dolne).] According to scholar Joanna Śliwa,

Ustrzyki Dolne is located 34 kilometers (21 miles) southeast of Sanok. The 1921 census registered 1,767 Jewish residents in Ustrzyki. German forces occupied Ustrzyki briefly in September 1939 before handing over control to the Soviet Union. Following their attack on the Soviet Union, German forces reoccupied the town in late June 1941.⁶⁰

Lieberman said he was one of nine children, his father had died before the war, his mother was killed by the Nazis, and his wife and two daughters were also murdered by the Nazis. He was a carpenter. He claimed to have been in three camps. After his escape from the Zasław concentration camp, he survived in a forest for about a month with only a straight razor as protection and as a tool with which to carve off bark from trees for sustenance. Lieberman eventually encountered a Mr. Kopp, who was a family friend. According to the November 16, 1984 *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle* article, “Kopp, in turn, led Lieberman to his brother and 11 other Jews, already living beneath the Pyrcaks’ [sic] home. They were later joined by four other fugitives, making [sic] 17 Jews and four families.”⁶¹

Food on the Farm:

The Pyrcaks’ farm had about 10 hectares of fields and a few head of cattle.⁶²

According to the official account by Stanisław Pyrcak:

They received food during the day, and I always made sure, or one of my siblings, that a stranger did not come during that time while bringing food to the bunker. Once a day they received hot soup in a 30-liter pot, in addition to bread, garlic, tea, what was there at home, in the summer various vegetables.⁶³

⁵⁸ Yad Vashem file noting “Jakub” Lieberman as a survivor of the Shoah and associated with the Pyrcaks: <https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=en&itemId=10494435&ind=1> Accessed July 21, 2023.

⁵⁹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wydrne> Accessed July 24, 2023.

⁶⁰ Joanna Śliwa, “Ustrzyki Dolne” in *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum encyclopedia of camps and ghettos, 1933-1945. Volume 2, Ghettos in German-occupied Eastern Europe, Part A*, Martin Dean and Mel Hecker, Eds. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012), 590.

⁶¹ Gayle S. Stockland, “Helping the pair who saved him,” *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle*, November 16, 1984. [Note: All the information in the paragraph comes from this article.]

⁶² Official Account of Stanisław Pyrcak dated July 5, 1982, in Sanok, Poland. The account is signed by Stanisław Pyrcak and Stefania Pyrcak. The account was notarized on July 23, 1982, in Lesko, Poland.

⁶³ Official Account of Stanisław Pyrcak dated July 5, 1982, in Sanok, Poland. The account is signed by Stanisław Pyrcak and Stefania Pyrcak. The account was notarized on July 23, 1982, in Lesko, Poland. **Unofficial translation from the original Polish by Ewa Wiatr.**



According to Zofia, the food grown on the farm was sufficient for feeding the group the Jews. She explains that it was a farm in a village. There was no store. So, they had to plant all vegetables, grains, and fruits. She says they had apples. They also had livestock (e.g., cows, pigs, and chickens).⁶⁴

According to the article about Jacob Lieberman written by Gayle S. Stockland, Lieberman remembered that the food they had on the Pyrcaks' farm "consisted mainly of potatoes, although the children were occasionally given butter as a treat." [Note: The quotation is of Stockland's article, not a direct quote of Lieberman.]⁶⁵

Zofia says that one of her sisters remembers/remembered⁶⁶ asking her mother why she was baking so much bread given they could not eat all the bread. Zofia says her mother baked bread about three or four times a week so she could feed the Jews. She says her sister does/did⁶⁷ not remember what her mother's response was. Zofia also notes that her mother cooked a big pot of soup every day for the Jews.⁶⁸

According to the Ulma Family Museum of Poles Saving Jews in World War II, Stanisław's brother Ludwik, who lived on the farm, bought eggs and chickens in surrounding villages and that Ludwik and Stanisław milled grain for flour. The Ulma website also claims that Stefania prepared thirty liters of soup every day.⁶⁹

Twenty-Two Months of Danger:

Zofia says that her parents hid the Jews on their farm for twenty-two months. She believes the relations between her parents and the Jews was a good one. She says in the early morning a group of young Jewish men would help Stanisław with cutting the grass to feed to the cows. They had to be careful to stay hidden during daylight hours. She says, "It was a good thing our house for this time was not close to the other ones." This did not mean there were no close calls. Zofia remembers being told by one of her sisters that one day a German policeman came with a translator and asked the sister, who was eight years old at the time, "Who lives with you?" Zofia says her sister had not been told about the Jews, so she simply answered that just her family members lived with her.⁷⁰ As stated above in the "Stanisław and Stefanie Pyrcak and Family" section, according to Angelika Hojsan, Stanisław's brother, Ludwik, was likewise not told about the Jews hiding on the farm for fear that information could be drawn out of him easily.

According to the Ulma Family Museum of Poles Saving Jews in World War II website, the Germans and members of the Blue Police (the police of the General Government in Poland) searched the farm looking for Stanisław's brother, Kazimierz Pyrcak,⁷¹ who was being sought for illegal slaughter and trade in meat

⁶⁴ Zofia Gadomska Paluch, June 26, 2022 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich.

⁶⁵ Gayle S. Stockland, "Helping the pair who saved him," *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle*, November 16, 1984.

⁶⁶ It is not clear which sister Zofia was referring to in the interview. Not all her sisters are still living.

⁶⁷ It is not clear which sister Zofia was referring to in the interview. Not all her sisters are still living.

⁶⁸ Zofia Gadomska Paluch, June 26, 2022 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich.

⁶⁹ <https://muzeumulmow.pl/pl/ratujacy/podkarpackie/kusmierczyk/> Accessed July 25, 2023.

⁷⁰ Zofia Gadomska Paluch, June 26, 2022 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich.

⁷¹ The website does not identify Kazimierz Pyrcak as Stanisław's brother. The information on the fraternal relationship was supplied by Angelika Hojsan. Angelika Hojsan email to Kevin Ostoyich, August 17, 2023.



and sausages. Not finding Kazimierz, they severely beat Ludwik Pyczak and knocked out his teeth in the process. Then they took him outside the village and let him go barefoot in the snow.⁷²

Angelika Hojsan claims that her grandfather (Stanisław Pyczak) told her the story of a “young, scared” German soldier finding out that the Pyczaks were hiding Jews on the farm but did not do anything about this. Zofia says she never heard that story.⁷³ According to Zofia, toward the end of the war, one neighbor found out, but the neighbor did not say anything.⁷⁴

Maria Kuśmierczyk, Michał Pyczak, Stanisław Pyczak, and Stefania Pyczak risked their lives in harboring Jews. Michał Pyczak paid with his life for his part. If the actions of the others had been found out, they almost certainly would have been killed. According to scholar Joanna Śliwa, in September 1942, when the Germans were starting to deport the Jews of Sanok to the Zasław camp, “It was announced that anyone providing help to Jews would be punished by death.”⁷⁵ Śliwa states further, “

Some Jews managed to escape the liquidation of the ghetto and go into hiding. The Germans hunted down the Jews in the nearby villages. In Bykowce, the Germans shot 3 Jewish escapees from the Sanok ghetto. In Dabrówka, the Gestapo shot 14 Jews. On April 19, 1944, Stanisława Kornecka was executed by the Germans for sheltering a Jew.⁷⁶

The Germans were not the only ones who posed a danger to the Pyczaks. The Pyczaks were also subjected to violence from Polish villagers. Zofia says that her father told her that the Pyczak house had two fires (presumably arson cases as retribution for harboring Jews).⁷⁷ The timing of the fires is not clear. According to the Stockland/Lieberman account, the Pyczaks’ house was burned down twice after the war. In the Stockland/Lieberman account the incidents are specifically identified as arson conducted by “antisemites.”⁷⁸ According to Angelika Hojsan, who checked with family members regarding this issue, “[M]y grandparents' house was destroyed/burned down twice. The first time at the end of the war, and the second time right after the war.”⁷⁹

In August 1944, the area in and around Prusiek and Sanok was liberated by the Red Army.

Although the seventeen Jews who were hidden by the Pyczaks survived up to this point, it did not mean they were out of danger. Two members of the Propper family were soon murdered. Zofia says that the Propper family had left the farm to live in Sanok.⁸⁰ She says, “Unfortunately, they met this one man who robbed Michał, and he killed Propper the father [Ichel Propper] and his older daughter [Muszka] and [a] younger daughter was wounded.” Zofia says her parents told her this.⁸¹

⁷² <https://muzeumlmow.pl/pl/ratujacy/podkarpackie/kusmierczyk/> Accessed July 25, 2023.

⁷³ Zofia Gadomska Paluch and Angelika Hojsan, June 26, 2022 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich.

⁷⁴ Zofia Gadomska Paluch, June 26, 2022 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich.

⁷⁵ Śliwa, “Sanok”, 570.

⁷⁶ Śliwa, “Sanok”, 571.

⁷⁷ Zofia states in the interview that the Pyczaks’ barn was burned down. She was perhaps confusing the two arson incidents of with respect to the house. Angelika Hojsan checked with family members in Poland and clarified the issue of barn in her August 17, 2023 email to Kevin Ostoyich: “Barn was not destroyed.”

⁷⁸ Gayle S. Stockland, “Helping the pair who saved him,” *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle*, November 16, 1984.

⁷⁹ Email from Angelika Hojsan to Kevin Ostoyich, August 17, 2023.

⁸⁰ Zofia Gadomska Paluch, June 26, 2022 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich.

⁸¹ Zofia Gadomska Paluch, June 26, 2022 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich.



Stanisław Pyczak's included the Propper murders in his official account:

When the Russians liberated the area, the Jews were finally able to leave freely. Many of them soon left. The Propper family had not yet managed to leave when they were reached by the bullet of one of the bandits who had robbed them earlier, fearing punishment for what he had committed. He shot Ichel Propper and their eldest daughter Muszka, the second daughter Helena hid under the bed, was shot in the throat, she managed to recover from this; the third daughter was not at home at the time, and thanks to this she saved herself. After this incident, the Russians executed this bandit, the second bandit, [Maria Kuśmierczyk's] brother is probably still alive somewhere to this day.⁸²

The Jews were not the only ones still in danger. As stated above, the Pyczaks were victims of arson after the area was liberated. Stanisław Pyczak's notes that the danger went beyond arson though:

I also received a death sentence from a bandit by the name of his Żubryd, for this reason, because I was hated by some people, that I was rich, I kept Jews, I have dollars and gold for this. When I learned of the death sentence from a friend, I ran to a woman, her name is Maria Rudy, still alive in the village of Prusiek, and whom the bandit Żubryd hid during the occupation, I fell to the woman's feet, begging for mercy to save me from death, because I have small children and I have done nothing wrong to anyone, I pledged to reward her for saving my life - and I kept my word.⁸³

It is possible that the Żubryd referred to in Stanisław Pyczak's account was Antoni Żubryd. Antoni Żubryd was from Sanok and was very active in Sanok and the surrounding area until he and his wife were shot and killed by the erstwhile subordinate to Żubryd, Jerzy Vaulin on October 24, 1946.⁸⁴ If Antoni Żubryd was in fact the man Pyczak identified as Żubryd in his account, it would mean that the events Stanisław Pyczak described regarding having a death sentence and then begging to have the death sentence lifted most likely happened before October 24, 1946.

⁸² Official Account of Pyczak dated July 5, 1982, in Sanok, Poland. The account is signed by Stanisław Pyczak and Stefania Pyczak. The account was notarized on July 23, 1982, in Lesko, Poland. **Unofficial translation from the original Polish by Ewa Wiatr with edits by Kevin Ostoyich.**

⁸³ Official Account of Stanisław Pyczak dated July 5, 1982, in Sanok, Poland. The account is signed by Stanisław Pyczak and Stefania Pyczak. The account was notarized on July 23, 1982, in Lesko, Poland. **Unofficial translation from the original Polish by Ewa Wiatr.**

⁸⁴ Vaulin later became a prominent film director. See https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antoni_%C5%BBubryd Accessed July 31, 2023; https://www.enumi.pl/en/articles/908/Antoni_Zubryd_%E2%80%9EZuch%E2%80%9D Accessed July 31, 2023; and <https://muzeumdziecipolskich.pl/a-meeting-of-the-youth-of-lodz-with-the-youngest-political-prisoner-of-the-stalin-era-in-poland> Accessed July 31, 2023.





Antoni Żubryd – Possibly the “Żubryd” whom Stanisław Pyczak claimed had given him a “death sentence.”
(Photo Source: https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antoni_%C5%BBubryd#/media/Plik:Antoni_%C5%BBubryd_2.jpg
Accessed July 31, 2023)

Zofia says that, as she was growing up, she always had a feeling that people did not like her family. She did not know why. She says that such treatment was not really directed towards her because she had been born after the war. She says that her older sister, Irene (Angelika Hojsan’s mother), had scorn directed towards her. Irene was called a derisive name that relates to Jews. Angelika confirmed this during the interview.⁸⁵ Zofia and Angelika say that Stanislaw was called a “kulak,” which was a derisive term that villagers used for wealthy persons. Zofia says that neighbors claimed that the Pyczak family were too wealthy and had received a lot of money and gold from the Jews. She says people talked. Zofia says this came especially from people who were poorer than her parents. She says, “They were jealous.”⁸⁶

In the interview, Zofia notes that her father held a rather prominent position in the area that went beyond being a farmer. She explains that the area lacked doctors, dentists, etc., and that Stanislaw often had to fill the void, even pulling people’s teeth and administering shots. His actions on behalf of his community apparently did not shield the family from the scorn of certain neighbors though.

Eventually, the Pyczaks sold the farm in Prusiek and purchased a plot of land in Sanok approximately a fifth the size of the farm property.⁸⁷ According to Angelika Hojsan, “My grandfather built a house for his daughter (Brygida) and the whole family lived there for about two years, during which time he built his house, which they moved to in 1965. Both houses are by the same street Łany (just across each

⁸⁵ In an internal Spungen Foundation document it is noted: “When Irena [Irene] went to Grammar School....students found out family hid Jews....called “Zyduwieca” (Jewess....not in a nice way)....approx 1951, 1st grade.” Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation Document: “Stanislaw & Stefania Pyczak Righteous Among Nations Yad Vashem Story ‘Corrected Version by Zofia’ MASTER Notes with Provenance & Back-ups Communications with their daughter, Zofia Gadomska Paluch Created March 21, 2018 (revised December 12, 2018).” Zofia Gadomska Paluch and Angelika Hojsan, June 26, 2022 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich.

⁸⁶ Zofia Gadomska Paluch and Angelika Hojsan, June 26, 2022 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich.

⁸⁷ Zofia Gadomska Paluch, June 26, 2022 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich.



other).⁸⁸ According to an internal document of the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation, “In Sanok [Stanisław] worked as a “first responder” in an ambulance. Mother did not work.”⁸⁹

Zofia, her brother, her sister Irene/Irena, and her sister Maria lived in the new house. Angelika notes that she was born in this house. Zofia says her parents lived in this house for the rest of their lives.



Above (Left and Right): Pyrcak Family [FLSFF]

Zofia says she was not told that her parents had hidden the seventeen Jews on the farm until 1970 when she was seventeen years old. She says it was a big surprise for her. She says that even as late as this date, her parents did not want her to talk to anyone about what they had done. She thinks she was still too young at the time to appreciate fully the significance of what her parents had done. It was not until some years later that she started to realize the importance of her parents’ actions.

Interactions with Jacob Lieberman and the Righteous Among the Nations Confirmation Process:

Zofia claims that Jacob Lieberman was the only one of the seventeen Jews who hid on the Pyrcak farm who later showed appreciation for what the Pyrcaks had done.⁹⁰

This is collaborated by Stanisław Pyrcak’s official account:

The only person with whom I kept in touch by letter until 1978 was Jakub Lieberman, my last letter was not answered and I do not know what happened to him. A few people, I no longer remember

⁸⁸ Angelika Hojsan email to Kevin Ostoyich, August 17, 2023.

⁸⁹ Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation Document: “Stanislaw & Stefania Pyrcak Righteous Among Nations Yad Vashem Story ‘Corrected Version by Zofia’ MASTER Notes with Provenance & Back-ups Communications with their daughter, Zofia Gadomska Paluch Created March 21, 2018 (revised December 12, 2018).”

⁹⁰ Zofia Gadomska Paluch, June 26, 2022 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich.

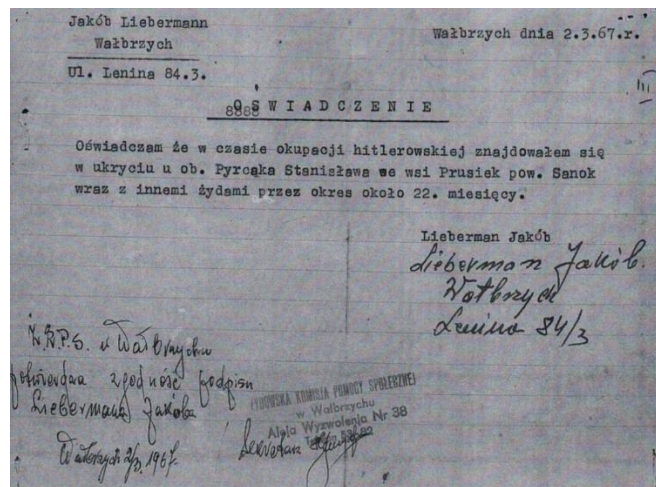


who, approached me shortly after liberation only when I proved to be necessary for them to notarize a certificate that they had been hiding with me during the occupation. However, we are disappointed in the attitude of these people, who, when the danger ceased, scattered around the world without having the courtesy to thank me at least by letter.⁹¹

On March 2, 1967, Jacob Lieberman officially declared in Wałbrzych that he and the other Jews had been hidden by Stanisław Pyrcak. His signature was certified by the Jewish Federation:

Statement

I declare that during the Nazi occupation I was in hiding at the home of citizen Pyrcak Stanislaw in the village of Prusiek, Sanok county, together with other Jews for a period of about 22 months.⁹²



Jacob Lieberman's Official Declaration of March 2, 1967 (FLSFF)

According to the article about Jacob Lieberman written by Gayle S. Stockland, after liberation, Jacob Lieberman initially went to Krakow and then moved to Wałbrzych in 1945. He got remarried in 1951. He and his wife had two sons. In 1969 they immigrated to the United States.⁹³ [Note: This may be incorrect. Lieberman's Petition of Naturalization lists August 18, 1970 as the date on which he was "lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence."⁹⁴ According to Stockland, one of Lieberman's sons stayed in Poland. In the United States, they first lived in New York City but eventually moved to Milwaukee. According to Stockland, in Milwaukee, "Liebermann was employed as a training supervisor at Jewish Vocational Service. He also worked as a carpenter."⁹⁵

⁹¹ Official Account of Stanisław Pyrcak dated July 5, 1982, in Sanok, Poland. The account is signed by Stanisław Pyrcak and Stefania Pyrcak. The account was notarized on July 23, 1982, in Lesko, Poland. **Unofficial translation from the original Polish by Ewa Wiatr.**

⁹² Official Statement by Jacob Lieberman dated March 2, 1967, in Wałbrzych. (FLSFF). **Unofficial Translation from the original Polish by Ewa Wiatr.**

⁹³ Gayle S. Stockland, "Helping the pair who saved him," *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle*, November 16, 1984.

⁹⁴ Jacob Lieberman's Petition for Naturalization filed on December 29, 1975. Stamped on June 8, 1977. [Note: Relevant information appears on the first page of the document.]

⁹⁵ Gayle S. Stockland, "Helping the pair who saved him," *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle*, November 16, 1984.



Jacob Lieberman was instrumental in the process of having the Pycaks honored for having hidden the Jews on their farm. Two newspaper articles (dated November 16, 1984 and April 5, 1985) from the *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle* from 1984 recount his story of survival during the Holocaust. Whereas the April 5, 1985 article (which is written by Lieberman) focuses on Lieberman's escape from Zaslav concentration camp and does not touch on the Pycak story, the November 16, 1984 article provides details of the seventeen Jews hiding on the Pycak farm as well as details of Lieberman's attempts to have the Pycaks honored for their actions.

According to Zofia, Stanisław Pycak and Jacob Lieberman corresponded with each other via post. Lieberman instructed Pycak about how to contact Yad Vashem and helped Pycak with the process of having the Pycaks officially recognized as Righteous Among the Nation. Zofia says that during this process, her father came to her, and she wrote down the story and had it translated. They then sent the story to Yad Vashem. She says months later—perhaps half a year—Yad Vashem asked to get confirmation from people who were saved. Jacob said he would help to do this. Zofia says it was not easy and “not a good experience,” though, because the people did not want to cooperate. She says that, when Jacob tried, he was informed that they did not want to be bothered. She says she does not know what Jacob did or what evidence he was able to provide, but he was eventually able to get enough confirmations about the history that Yad Vashem conferred the honors. She says this took a long time though.

After the confirmation process, the Pycaks were informed they were going to receive a medal and diploma. Zofia thinks they were notified in 1984 and that the celebration in Warsaw was held in 1986, but she is not sure. [Note: The Certificate of Honor was signed in 1986, but it does not appear that the Pycaks received the certificate and medal until 1987.] Zofia emphasizes that Jacob Lieberman helped greatly in this process.⁹⁶ She says though that she never met Jacob Lieberman personally; the relationship was strictly between Stanisław Pycak and Jacob Lieberman.⁹⁷

Zofia's comments about Jacob Lieberman with respect to his efforts to have the Pycaks honored are corroborated by Gayle S. Stockland's *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle* article. Stockland wrote, “After a five-year effort involving travel to Israel and numerous communications with Holocaust memorial officials and the Israeli government, Lieberman has seen to it that the Pycaks [sic] receive a \$40-a-month lifetime pension from the Israeli government. In addition, they were honored by Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem with a medal designating them as Righteous Gentiles.”⁹⁸

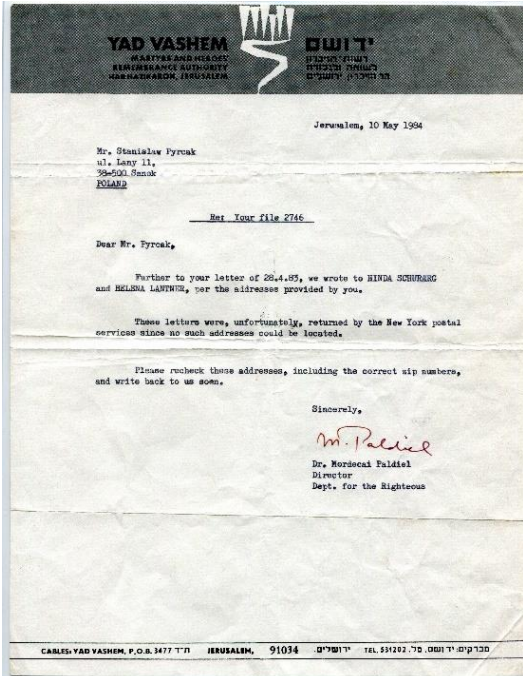
Correspondence from Dr. Mordecai Paldiel, Director of the Department for the Righteous at Yad Vashem reveals that there were efforts to track down at least some of the Jews who were hidden on the Pycak farm, and that Zofia is correct in that the decision to honor the Pycaks as Righteous Among the Nations was made in 1984. The decision was made on June 17, 1984.

⁹⁶ Zofia Gadomska Paluch, June 26, 2022 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich.

⁹⁷ Zofia Gadomska Paluch, June 26, 2022 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich.

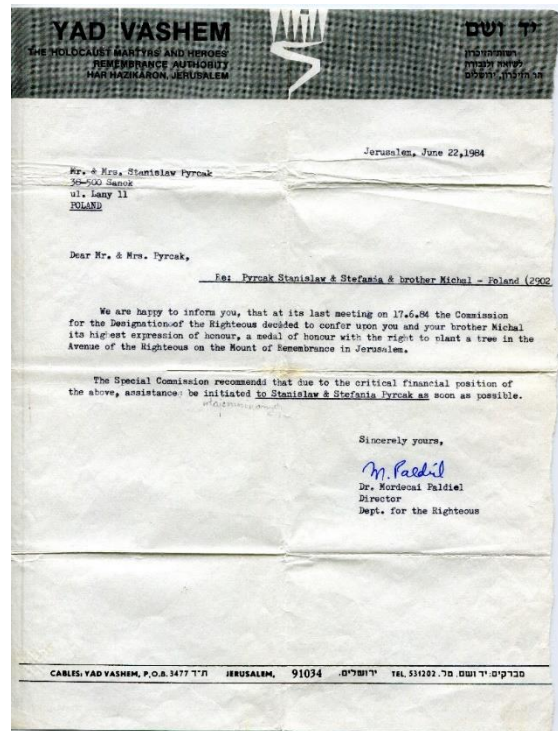
⁹⁸ “Helping the pair who saved him,” by Gayle S. Stockland, *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle*, November 16, 1984.



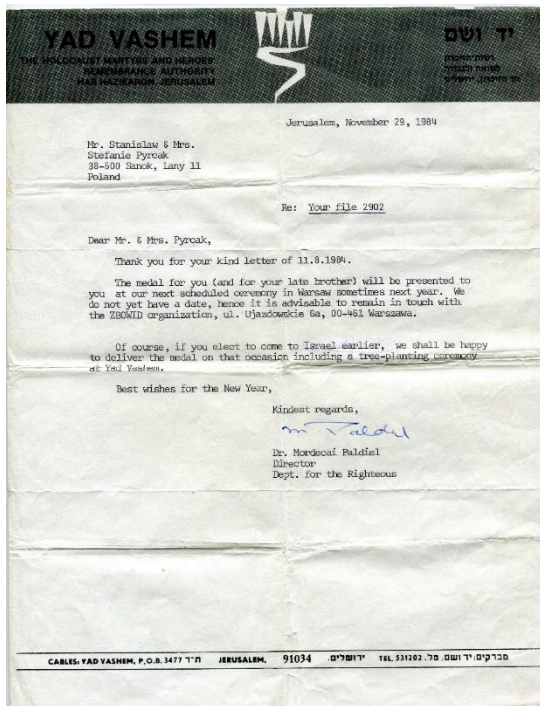


Top Left: Letter from Dr. Mordecai Paldiel, Director, Department for the Righteous at Yad Vashem to Stanisław Pyrcak, dated May 10, 1984. The letter shows the difficulty tracking down Hinda Schurarg [Note: This could have been a typo for Schwarz; it looks like Hinda Propper may have married Ira Schwarz] and Helena Lantner. [The two women were/are the two daughters of Ichel Propper who were not murdered by “the blackmailer.”] [FLSFF]

Middle Right: Letter from Dr. Mordecai Paldiel to Stanisław and Stefania Pyrcak dated June 22, 1984, informing them that the Commission for the Designation of the Righteous had decided on June 17, 1984, to bestow upon them and Michał Pyrcak the honor of Righteous. Additionally, financial assistance for Stanisław and Stefania Pyrcak was going to be initiated. [FLSFF]



Stanisław Pyrcak presumably sent a letter to Yad Vashem after being informed that the decision to confer the honor had been made. Dr. Paldiel then responded that efforts would be made to confer the honor in Warsaw.



Bottom Left: Letter from Dr. Mordecai Paldiel to Stanisław Pyrcak in response to a letter from the latter. Paldiel informs Pyrcak that the medal will be presented at some point in the coming year. He suggests that Pyrcak remain in contact with the ZBOWID organization (Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy) in Warsaw. The letter is dated November 29, 1984. [FLSFF]



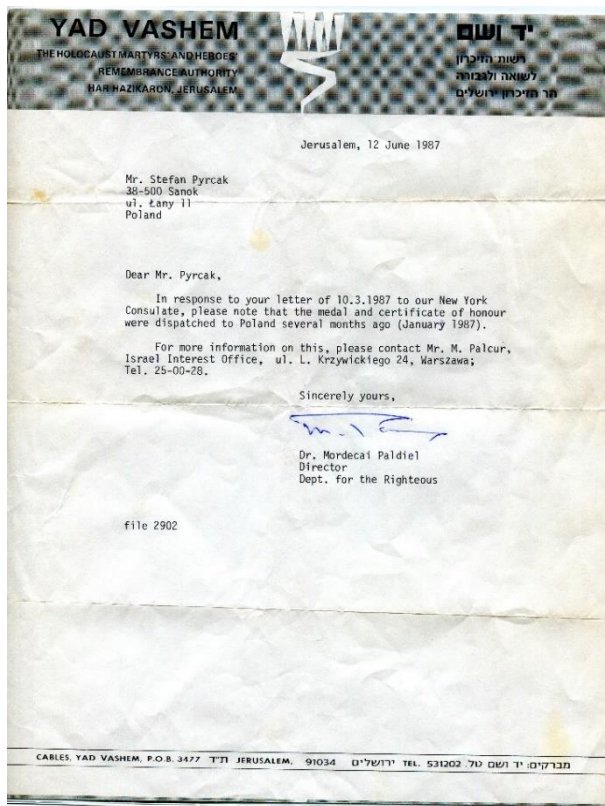
Presumably on March 10, 1987, Stanisław Pyrczak wrote to Yad Vashem. The next month he submitted an official declaration (see Polish declaration document dated April 24, 1987 below).

On June 12, 1987, Dr. Mordecai Paldiel responded to Stanisław Pyrczak's letter of March 3, 1987 to inform him that the medal and certificate of honor had already been sent to Poland in January 1987.

Right: Declaration submitted by Stanisław Pyrczak, dated April 24, 1987. [FLSFF]

Polish Declaration Form (DEKLARACJA CZŁONKOWSKA) for the Polish Society of the Righteous Among the Nations. The form is filled out with handwritten details of Stanisław Pyrczak, including his name, date of birth (30.04.1909), and address in Sanok, Poland. It is signed by Stanisław Pyrczak and dated 24.04.87.

Middle Left: Letter from Dr. Mordecai Paldiel to Stanisław Pyrczak informing him that the medal and certificate of honor were sent to Poland in January 1987. The letter is dated June 12, 1987. [FLSFF]



Bottom Right: Certificate of Honor to Stanisław, Stefania, and Michał Pyrczak. The Certificate notes that they were declared Righteous on June 17, 1984. The certificate itself is dated July 1, 1986. [FLSFF]



The Order of Polonia Restituta:



A Commander's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_Polonia_Restituta#/media/File:Polonia_Restituta - Commander's Cross pre-1939 w rib.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_Polonia_Restituta#/media/File:Polonia_Restituta_-_Commander's_Cross_pre-1939_w_rib.jpg) Accessed July 27, 2023)

Stefania Pyrcak and Stanisław Pyrcak passed away in 1989 and 1998, respectively.⁹⁹

In August 2009, Stanisław and Stefania Pyrcak were posthumously honored with Commander's Crosses of the Order of Polonia Restituta by the Polish government in Łódź, and this honor was documented in the official album of the Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland and the Museum of the History of Polish Jews.¹⁰⁰ In the official album the "Provision of the President of the Republic of Poland Lech Kaczyński on the awarding of medals" is printed as follows:

Based on art. 138 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland from 2 April 1997, as well as the statute from 16 October 1992 regarding medals and decorations (Dz. U. No. 90, item 450, of 1999 No. 101, item 1177, of 2000 No. 62, item 718, of 2002 No. 74, item 676, of 2006 No. 104, item 708 and 711 and No. 194, item 1432 and of 2007 No. 25, item 162 and No 123, item 848), for heroic stature and extraordinary bravery shown saving Jewish lives during World War II, for distinguished merit in defending human dignity and human rights, we have decorated:¹⁰¹

Photographs and brief synopses of the honorees then follow. Stanisław and Stefania Pyrcak appear on page 121. In her remarks that open the album, Ewa Junczyk-Ziomecka, the Secretary of the State at the Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland, noted

Nearly all the Poles who were given an award by the President, had been awarded with medals and certificates of honour issued by the Israeli Yad Vashem Institute. However, only a few of

⁹⁹ <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-pyrcak-family> Accessed August 26, 2023.

¹⁰⁰ *Poles who rescued Jews during the Holocaust: Recalling Forgotten History*. Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland Łódź, August 2009 Online Version:

https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/sites/default/files/sprawiedliwi_2009.pdf Accessed July 26, 2023.

¹⁰¹ *Poles who rescued Jews*, 29.



them attended the award ceremonies in Jerusalem, with most of them attending the ceremonies organized by the Embassy of Israel in Warsaw. They would often come in secret, even hiding it from their own families and neighbours, and sometimes they asked for the medal to be sent by post, preferably without the embassy's stamp. Silently, without publicity, so that no one would know and they wouldn't have to explain that they had saved Jews.¹⁰²

Noting the years of silence and lateness with which those Poles who helped Jews were being honored, Junczyk-Ziomecka stated, "Since it's so late, it has to be loud. By being modest and silent, we will not defeat the oblivion and won't break the years of silence."¹⁰³

According to the Ulma Family Museum of Poles Saving Jews in World War II website, Stanisław and Stefania Pyrcak were awarded the Commander's Crosses of the Order of Polonia Restituta on February 9, 2010, in Rzeszów and the Crosses were received by their son, Józef Pyrcak.¹⁰⁴ [Note: It is not clear why there were different dates (August 2009 and February 9, 2010) and locations (Łódź and Rzeszów for the bestowing of the honors). Perhaps members of the Pyrcak family can provide more clarity on this issue at some point.]

Zofia Gadomska Paluch and the Legacy of Kindness:



Stanisław and Stefania Pyrcak [FLSFF]

When asked what the honor "Righteous Among the Nations" means to her personally, Zofia responded, "I am very proud of my parents, my uncle—my parents mostly. And I would say it was [a] really, really big deal to do this. It was, ah...I don't know what to say. I am very proud of them. That's all I would say."

In 2017, Zofia met Adam Paluch through a friend who told her that Adam liked to dance. Adam and Zofia spoke on the phone, then on Skype. She says the next day he asked her to go out dancing. She responded, "Of course, I *love* to dance! [*She laughs.*]" Adam swept her off her feet with his dancing

¹⁰² *Poles who rescued Jews*, 7.

¹⁰³ *Poles who rescued Jews*, 7.

¹⁰⁴ <https://muzeumulmow.pl/pl/ratujacy/podkarpackie/kusmierczyk/> Accessed July 26, 2023.



skills. Adam Paluch was a Holocaust survivor who had been incarcerated in Majdanek extermination camp.¹⁰⁵ Paluch's story of reuniting with his twin sister, Ida Paluch Kersz, after having been separated for 53 years has been well publicized.¹⁰⁶ When Zofia told Adam that her parents had hid seventeen Jews on their farm during the Second World War, he was skeptical. After conducting his own research, he quickly found out that Zofia was telling the truth.

Zofia and Adam got married on November 3, 2017. Zofia says that, although Adam could sometimes be difficult, he always won her over with his dancing. She laughs as she says, "I would always say, 'If you didn't dance like you do, I wouldn't stay with you!'" She explains, "You know, not everybody is perfect... But he was a perfect dancer." Zofia and Adam remained partners in dance and marriage until Adam passed away in January 2022.¹⁰⁷



Left: Zofia Gadomska Paluch and Adam Paluch, March 11, 2018 [FLSFF]



Right: Standing (Left to Right): Natalie Spungen, Ida Paluch Kersz, Zofia Gadomska Paluch, Adam Paluch. Seated: Danny Spungen, March 11, 2018 [FLSFF]

¹⁰⁵ Zofia's first husband passed away of cancer in 2001. [Based on handwritten notes on a Spungen Foundation Document titled "Stanislaw & Stefania Prycak [sic] Family Photos 'Who is Who' Rev. Dec. 3, 2018." Adam Paluch's testimony of August 27, 1995, is available through the USC Shoah Foundation and USHMM. See <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/vha4291> Accessed July 26, 2023.

¹⁰⁶ See, for example, the documentary film *Adam & Ida*: [ARD History: Adam & Ida | ARD Mediathek](#) Accessed July 25, 2023; an interview with Ida Paluch Kersz: [Ida Paluch Kersz Transcript — Studio C \(studiocchicago.com\)](#) Accessed July 26, 2023; the Illinois Holocaust Museum profile on Ida Paluch Kersz: <https://www.ilholocaustmuseum.org/profiles/ida-paluch-kersz/> Accessed July 25, 2023. Ida Paluch Kersz has written a book about her story: Ida Paluch Kersz, *Unveiled Memories: Twins Reunited After the Holocaust* (Placed of publication not identified, Wishing Publishing, 2019).

¹⁰⁷ See Facebook posting of CANDLES Holocaust Museum & Education Center: <https://www.facebook.com/candlesmuseum/posts/earlier-this-week-we-learned-of-the-passing-of-adam-paluch-twin-brother-of-ida-p/10158235784985248/> Accessed July 26, 2023.



In recent years, Zofia Gadomska Paluch has started to tell the story of Stanisław, Stefania, and Michał Pyrcak and Maria Kuśmierczyk to school children in the Chicago area. In 2018, Zofia spoke to Carmel Catholic High School in Mundelein, IL. On November 15, 2020, she participated in the webinar “75 Years After: Stories and Artifacts Witnessing World War II and the Holocaust,” which was moderated by Kiel Majewski and organized by the Polish Genealogical Society of America.¹⁰⁸ Zofia and Adam spoke together to a group of students from Billings, Montana at the home of Danny and Natalie Spungen.¹⁰⁹ As Zofia’s proficiency with the English language improves, the number of speaking engagements will increase accordingly in the future. She says she would be fine speaking about her family in Poland if she were asked to do so.¹¹⁰ Both Zofia and her niece, Angelika, believe that the younger generation in Poland today are more open to honoring the actions of the Righteous Among the Nations than had been the case of previous generations.¹¹¹

Zofia is proud of her parents. Stanisław and Stefania Pyrcak demonstrated extraordinary courage during the Second World War. But her parents were honored by Yad Vashem and (much later) the Polish government for things they did well before Zofia was born. When she remembers her parents, she does not think only of those monumental acts of bravery about which so was told. She also thinks of the things she witnessed first-hand. What Zofia remembers is that her father was very intelligent and loved music, that he had a great interest in nature and geography, and that he often liked to read books on these subjects. She also remembers how he used to pull teeth and administer inoculation shots for his neighbors despite having only four years of formal education. She laughs as she remembers how great a dancer he was. With respect to her mother, Zofia remembers how wonderful her singing voice was. She says that her mother sang “mostly religious songs.” Angelika notes that Zofia, too, has a beautiful singing voice. Zofia says she used to have a good voice and that the family used to sing together at celebrations such as on name-days. But she laughs when thinking of her singing voice now, and says, “If you don’t use it, you lose it!”¹¹²

Zofia also remembers how her mother used to bake cakes and bread all the time: “My mother baked [such] *good* bread. I never! I remember the *taste* of this bread. [Even though] it was a long time ago, I remember this taste.” She says her mother used to make coffee cakes that “were *so good!*”¹¹³

The legacy of Stanisław and Stefania Pyrcak lives on in books, websites, a memorial wall, official certificates, and medals of honor. When interacting with Zofia Gadomska Paluch, though, one sees that her parents’ legacy lives on in other ways as well. Embodied ways. Zofia has inherited Stanisław’s love of dancing. She has inherited Stefania’s love of baking. Moreover, she has worked for many years as a caregiver for people in the last stages of their lives, people with dementia and other ailments. Angelika says of her aunt, “She is the strongest person I know.” Zofia says of herself, “People like me. And I like them.” She laughs and says, “Americans like cookies [...]. I like to make them, and I like to share

¹⁰⁸ <https://spungenfoundation.org/event/75-years-after-stories-and-artifacts-witnessing-world-war-ii-and-the-holocaust/> Accessed July 26, 2023.

¹⁰⁹ Danny Spungen said this (and Zofia agreed) during the interview with Zofia Gadomska Paluch and Angelika Hojsan, June 26, 2022 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich.

¹¹⁰ Zofia Gadomska Paluch, June 26, 2022 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich.

¹¹¹ Zofia Gadomska Paluch and Angelika Hojsan, June 26, 2022 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich.

¹¹² Zofia Gadomska Paluch, June 26, 2022 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich.

¹¹³ Zofia Gadomska Paluch, June 26, 2022 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich.



them.”¹¹⁴ When tasting one of Zofia’s cookies or cakes, one realizes that the legacy of kindness does not have to be on the monumental scale of saving lives. Stanisław and Stefania Prycak’s legacy of kindness is transmitted through a helping hand to someone who is ill, a smile to a dance partner, and a slice of a baked deliciousness to a Holocaust historian. Zofia Gadomska Paluch honors her parents’ righteous memory and conveys their legacy of kindness one person, one dance, one slice at a time.



Zofia Gadomska Paluch and the Legacy of Kindness, March 11, 2018 [FLSFF]

¹¹⁴ Zofia Gadomska Paluch and Angelika Hojsan, June 26, 2022 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich.



Items Pertaining to Zofia Gadomska Paluch and the Pyczak Family in the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation Collection:

Documents:

Certificate of Honor to Stanisław, Stefania, and Michał Pyczak. The Certificate notes that they were declared Righteous on June 17, 1984. The certificate itself is dated July 1, 1986.

Declaration made by Stanisław Pyczak, dated April 24, 1987.

Digital copy of November 16, 1984 article in the *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle* by Gayle S. Stockland.

Digital copy of April 5, 1985 article in the *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle* written by Jacob Lieberman in Polish and translated into English.

Letter from Dr. Mordecai Paldiel, Director, Department for the Righteous at Yad Vashem to Stanisław and Stefania Pyczak dated June 22, 1984, informing them that the Commission for the Designation of the Righteous had decided on June 17, 1984 to bestow upon them and Michał Pyczak the honor of Righteous.

Letter from Dr. Mordecai Paldiel, Director, Department for the Righteous at Yad Vashem to Stanisław Pyczak, dated May 10, 1984.

Letter from Dr. Mordecai Paldiel, Director, Department for the Righteous at Yad Vashem to Stanisław Pyczak in response to a letter from the latter. Paldiel informs Pyczak that the medal will be presented at some point in the coming year. He suggests that Pyczak remain in contact with the ZBOWID organization (Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy) in Warsaw. The letter is dated November 29, 1984.

Letter from Dr. Mordecai Paldiel, Director, Department for the Righteous at Yad Vashem to Stanisław Pyczak informing him that the medal and certificate of honor were sent to Poland in January 1987. The letter is dated June 12, 1987.

Jacob Lieberman's Official Declaration of March 2, 1967.

Jacob Lieberman's Petition for Naturalization filed on December 29, 1975. Stamped on June 8, 1977.

Stanisław Pyczak's Official Account of July 5, 1982.

Material Objects:

Righteous Among the Nations Medal Honoring Stanisław and Stefania Pyczak and Michał Pyczak.

Wooden Stand for Righteous Among the Nations Medal Honoring Stanisław and Stefania Pyczak and Michał Pyczak.

Photographs:

Various photographs of Stanisław and Stefania Pyczak.

Various Pyczak family photographs (historical).

Various recent photographs related to Zofia Gadomska Paluch.



About the Author



Kevin Ostoyich is a professor of history at Valparaiso University. Kevin and his students at Valparaiso began partnering with the Florence and Laurence Spungen Foundation in 2013. The Foundation provided artifacts (mostly documents & postal history) to the students from Holocaust survivors who were in the Shanghai ghetto, “Shanghailanders,” for archival studies and the curation of temporary exhibitions at the university. In 2021, he collaborated with the Foundation to author the preface and two additional chapters in the Foundation’s book, *Forging Secrets: Faces and Facts Inside the Nazi Operation Bernhard Scheme*, published in 2022. In July 2023, he joined the Foundation staff as a researcher, writer, and interviewer, focusing on artifacts from the Spungen Foundation collection. He has interviewed and written stories about Shanghailanders on the Foundation’s behalf.

At Valparaiso, he served as chair of the Department of History from 2015 to 2019, was the recipient of the Dixon W. and Herta E. Benz Fund for Faculty Support (an endowed position) from 2020 – 2022, and was bestowed the Excellence in Teaching Award for 2017-2018. He holds his B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania and his A.M. and Ph.D. from Harvard University. He was recently a fellow at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg (global dis:connect) at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München and is currently a fellow at the Centrum für angewandte Politikforschung / Center for Applied Policy Research (CAP) at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München.

He is a board member of the Sino-Judaic Institute and the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum and a non-resident fellow of the American-German Institute of Johns Hopkins University. Kevin has served as a fellow and guest professor at multiple institutions and universities; has written many articles and book chapters; has co-edited *The History of the Shanghai Jews: New Pathways of Research* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022) and authored *The German Society of Pennsylvania: A Guide to Its Book and Manuscript Collections* (German Historical Institute, 2006); interviews Holocaust survivors; gives lectures about the Holocaust worldwide; and creates historical theatrical plays about Shanghai Jewish refugees with students.

The Spungen Foundation can devote many pages honoring Kevin’s work, so let’s just say he keeps very, very busy teaching, writing, conducting interviews, and working on documentaries.



About the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation

The Spungen Foundation was established in 2006 by Florence Spungen and reflects the individual and collective philanthropy of the founders, their children, and their grandchildren. The Foundation focuses its grantmaking typically in Santa Barbara, CA and Lake County, IL. One of the Foundation's strategic areas concentrates on the Holocaust and genocide education. The Spungen Family Foundation has one of the largest collections of Holocaust artifacts in private hands, mainly consisting of postal history, such as letters, post cards, stamps, along with money, children's artwork, and more. The collection has been used for Holocaust education all around the world.

The mission of the Foundation is to improve the quality of life of individuals and families facing health challenges, and to address issues that particularly affect the Jewish community.

Visit us at: www.spungenfoundation.org

