

## In Search of Cousins

During the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, a large number of families from the Kashubian region in Poland immigrated to Minnesota to create a vibrant community in the East End of Winona. Over generations, the descendants have lost contact with their cousins in Poland, have lost the Polish language, and have even lost contact with their cousins here in Minnesota. One of the pleasures of the family genealogist is to rediscover our history, culture and family connections.

Several years ago, I was in Winona for the funeral of my cousin Don Pellowski. Quite by chance, I noticed the newspaper obituary of Joan Frankard. Joan is a descendant of my great-grandfather Joseph Sieracki, so that weekend marked the death of two of my cousins. We need to make connections with our cousins while we can, so I decided to contact a distant cousin that I had yet to meet. I had asked my brother Mike thirty years ago if he worked with someone named Michael Repinski. My brother said that he did. And I told him he was working with his cousin. I never had met Michael Repinski and thought this was a good moment to do so. I looked up his number in the Winona phone book and gave him a call. I told him I was Mike Sieracki's brother and that he and I were cousins. Mike said he didn't think so but wouldn't mind meeting me. So I drove out to his beautiful home in the country to pay him a visit. I explained that Marianna Sieracki left Wiele, Poland with her son Joseph, my great-grandfather and her daughter Julianna, who had married Peter Repinski, Micheal's great-grandfather – which made us cousins. Michael Repinski was happy to acquire more information about his great-grandparents and I was happy to meet another cousin.

Kilka lat temu, byłem w Winonie na pogrzeb kuzyna Donalda Pellowskiego. On był synem siostry mojego ojca. Przed i po pogrzebie rozmawiałem z wieloma kuzynami.

Przez przypadek czytając gazetę, zobaczyłem nekrolog pośmierty kuzynki, Joan Frankard. Ona była potomkiem mojego pradziadka Józefa Sierackiego. Zawsze chciałem spotkać innego kuzyna, Michaela Repińskiego, i postanowiłem nie czekać dłużej.

Michael Repinski (1942-) pracował z moim bratem 30 lat temu. Nigdy nie go poznałem. Podczas wizyty, znalazłem numer telefonu Michael-a Repinskiego, i zadzwoniłem do niego. Powiedziałem Michael-owi że jesteśmy kuzynami. On odpowiedział, „Myślę że nie.” Ale Michael wcale nie znał o swojego pra-pradziadków. Powiedziałem go że jego pra-pradziadek, Piotr Repinski, ożenił się z Julianną Sieracką, córką Marianny Sierackiej. I powiedziałem że to znaczy, że mamy tą samą pra-pra-babcię, Marianna Sieracka. W końcu Michael uczeszył się dowiedzieć się słysząc, że jesteśmy kuzynami!