



ESTHER ALLWEISS INGBER

Zygie Allweiss, 80, of West Bloomfield visits the grave of Zofia and Maciej Dudzik, in Jaslany, Poland. The Dudziks risked their lives and the lives of their children to save Allweiss and his brother from certain death at the hands of the Nazis in World War II Poland by sheltering the Jewish teenagers for 14 months on the Dudzik family farm.

A RESCUE REVISITED

Gifts via Farmington Hills help a survivor go to Poland

Esther Allweiss Ingber

It's a rainy day in Czajkowa, a rural village in southern Poland. The year is 1944. Two Jewish teenagers from neighboring Jaslany are hiding in a barn with guns at the ready while a Nazi soldier removes bales of hay. One more bale separates them when Zofia Dudzik enters and senses im-

minent danger.

Recounting the story 63 years later, one of those teenagers — Zygie Allweiss, 80, of West Bloomfield — said Zofia told the soldier: "What are you taking that wet stuff for? Come with me and I'll give you some good, dry hay." The soldier immediately followed her into the stable.

It was the pivotal moment

during the 14 months that Zofia and her husband, Maciej Dudzik, sheltered Zygie and his brother, Salek (Sol) Allweiss, on the family farm. Everyone's life was threatened, including the eight Dudzik children.

Despite the close call, the Catholic Dudziks let the brothers stay. They honored a promise made to their friend, Jacob Allweiss, who had pleaded:

"Keep my boys safe." (Jacob, his wife and seven other children all died or were murdered in the war.)

The brothers and the Dudziks lost contact until 1999, when Dudzik granddaughter Barbara Rzeznik of Chicago searched the Internet and found the Allweisses. Rzeznik's mother and two other daughters of Maciej and Zofia

were living in the Midwest and became instant siblings with the men. The family relationship continues for Zygie, although Sol, who lived in Farmington Hills, died in 2004.

Zygie visited Poland with me, his daughter from Oak Park, in September 2006. Chief Rabbi of Poland Michael

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Family photo

From left: Elizabeth Sova, whose family lived next door to the Dudzik family in Poland; Lottie Dudzik Rzeznik, of Wisconsin; Zygie Allweiss, and Esther Allweiss Ingber in Mielec, Poland, on Oct. 24, 2007.



Family photo

Zygie Allweiss and his daughter Esther, at the airport in Warsaw on Oct. 26, 2007. To their right: Janek Dudzik, son of the Polish couple honored as "Righteous Among the Nations" at Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial.

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Schudrich, of Warsaw, shared the letter he'd received from Janek Dudzik, the oldest son and our host. Janek wanted the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in Israel to designate his parents as "Righteous Among the Nations." This prestigious title is for non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews from extermination by the Nazis.

Dad also wished to recognize his rescuers. Rabbi Schudrich said only a survivor could apply, in a letter to the Israel Embassy. Both families were thrilled when the Dudziks were approved in July 2007. The ceremony would be Oct. 21, at the old Wysoka Synagogue in Krakow, Poland.

There was no doubt Dad wanted to go, to express gratitude and to witness Janek receiving a Yad Vashem medal and certificate. Though money was tight, flights were booked.

Perhaps someone might be willing to help a Holocaust survivor living on a fixed income? I made several inquiries. Within weeks, Schudrich relayed news of a "small miracle": Two gifts of \$500 were coming.

One angel was attorney Michael Traison, 61, of Detroit's Miller Canfield law firm. Traison, of Chicago and Warsaw, as well as Detroit, donated to the Hamtramck-based Piast Institute.

Thaddeus Radzilowski, 69, of Farmington Hills is president of this national research center for Polish and Polish-American affairs. The institute's own \$500 gift prompted



Piast Institute

Piast Institute president Thaddeus Radzilowski, 69, of Farmington Hills, left, with Zygie Allweiss in the Allweiss home in West Bloomfield.

Traison, who is Jewish, to say that Dad's cause had "received support from our Catholic younger brothers in faith, with whom we share this complex heritage of ours."

The Piast Institute seeks to "tell the Polish story in all of its dimensions, and to build bridges between communities," explained Radzilowski, whom we met before taking the trip.

"How better to do this than to make it possible to give this story its full dimension?" Radzilowski said. "The courage of the Dudzik family and their willingness — moved by their beliefs and principles — to sacrifice their lives, if need be, to save their neighbors from the German Holocaust is a story that needs to be told."

Both donations were funneled through the FJC/Jewish Community of Poland Fund.

Dad is grateful for the gift. Three other Poles were posthumously honored by Yad Vashem the same day, but Dad was the only survivor present. Only he could offer heartfelt thanks for those who saved his life.

Esther Allweiss Ingber is a Free Press special writer.

For more information: Piast Institute, www.piastinstitute.org; FJC Fund, FJC.org.