

Frank Gadek

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“ETHNIC POLKA MUSIC”

1] I have been doing some extensive research on Science, Technology and Society [STS] for several decades, from the perspective of a scientist [Ph.D. Chemistry and well published in many areas, including numerous grants for funding of professional activities, I can send you my resume and additional information if you are interested], with decades of experience in both academe and industry.

2] A] I have always been weak in the “Society” aspects of STS. But in the last few years, I have found that “ethnic music,” especially polkas and related music, can be a way to explore the society aspects of STS [e.g., new musical instruments, records, phonograph, radio, TV, internet, etc]. I can give you some more specific examples, if you are interested.

B] Obviously, some aspects of polkas and ethnic / immigrants in the past may help to better understand the music and people of the newer immigrants [e.g. Latino, Asian, Caribbean, Middle Eastern, newer Eastern European, etc.]

C] One of the goals of the research is to try to help people to better understand STS, so that it can be better managed.

D] As you must be aware, STS certainly is having continuing very dramatic global effects, that many find very difficult to understand, besides trying to properly manage in their own personal lives.

E] Some of the past special National Science Foundation [NSF] funded programs I was involved in alerted me to my “special take” on STS issues, based on my very diverse and unusual career as noted above and below.

F] I would now like to capitalize on all this by publishing books and articles of what I have to offer, in the hopes of some small way benefiting STS.

G] I am now officially retired and so have some more time to continue to explore this area of research, although I have several other projects that require a considerable amount of my time and resources. One major project is, while we still can, the “downsizing” of all of the “stuff” my wife and I have accumulated over 35+ years of very active professional, volunteer and personal projects. Naturally, I am funding this research as a “hobby” from our personal funds. It is fun and it keeps me intellectually stimulated also.

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H] Polish people have been greatly misunderstood in many ways, yet they were so significant in building this country, especially in the early 1900's.

I] As is dramatically demonstrated even in our local area, it was the blue collar worker / working class people from many ethnic groups who really built our local industries – they did the very hard and dirty work needed to “get the job done!” Sometimes people have to be reminded of this.

J] Polkas / ethnic music was one of their “outlets” when they were not working. It helped them better “assimilate” into and adjust to a dramatically new culture that they were so suddenly thrust into.

3] You may not have the time or resources to interact with me on this research and I will fully understand, since many of us are so busy today with so many diverse, and even fun, activities.

4] However, if you could even just point me in the right directions, I certainly do not mind doing the hard work.

5] A] I will try to keep the following brief and concise as possible. Please just ask if you need any more information, so we can keep “misinformation” to a minimum, since it can just unnecessarily waste a lot of time and resources. However, I want to include enough information for you to know that I am serious and have extensive experience, education and credentials in this area.

B] So I tend to write fewer, but longer, communications.

6] A] I have both Greene's and Keil's books – have read them both – fascinating!

B] Have recently received Keelman, Falkowski and Emmons theses. I skimmed them, have started to read them and they have a lot to offer.

C] Found a book by Clowes on Polish Americans in Pittsfield, MA even!

D] Have been collecting diverse polka music on LP's, 78's and CD's for the past few years. I can convert inexpensive records [e.g., \$1 or less] to CD's for easier listening and to better preserve this music. I have funded my www.swapcd.com account from my www.paperbackswap.com account – you can swap credits between them – since we are getting rid of a lot of our books as we continue to “downsize” in our retirement years.

E] I regularly listen to whatever polka radio shows that are available in our local area and there are a number due to our active local ethnic groups, but

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with a heavy German influence of SE PA. I have contacted almost all of these polka DJ's by a detailed letter, along with some follow-up phone calls.

F] Have done many productive internet and other searches / research, especially trying to contact some of the above authors for any additional information they could offer.

G] Have done some preliminary draft PowerPoint presentations on ethnic music and STS. Naturally, I have numerous diverse PowerPoint and colored slide presentations on more of the science and technology aspects of STS [a list can be provided if you are interested].

7] Any further reference materials, comments, suggestions, etc. from your research and experience would be greatly appreciated.

8] A] Personally, I am Polish-Ukrainian, third generation, from blue collar family, first to go to college, etc. I have always loved polka music and it was a big part of our rather large extended family [e.g., grandparents had 6 kids, who all married and had kids, many family functions including especially Orthodox & Catholic holidays, Troy, NY and MA areas {Happy Louie's Band for many weddings}, etc.].

B] I played trumpet in grammar school and trumpet & tuba in high school.

C] I am fascinated in the different "styles" of polka music [e.g. Eastern, Chicago, Tex-Mex, modern, etc.], along with how and why they developed.

D] As many have noted, including you, polka music certainly can be a very "happy / snappy / positive" experience in a world that can be so negative in so many ways.

9] A] My wife of 35+ years is an English major, now specializing in communication and technical writing. She helped me a great deal to balance my science interests with more human oriented interests. Her theses were on Faulkner and Hardy. She now is at the height of her career teaching at a university, member of our very active local township Planning Commission and, her great love, President for over 15 years of Animals in Distress no kill shelter for cats and dogs [www.animalsindistress-pa.org].

B] I had my day in the sun ["got a good sunburn too!" – the infamous 15 minutes of fame] and am now "very content" to be out of the limelight and able to do much of what I want to do when I want to as a formal retiree.

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10] A] I am not your conventional scientist. I have successfully taught numerous [over 2000? students – at a local small Catholic college] nonscience majors lab popular science courses and members of the wine industry, besides the usual technical chemistry courses.

B] My thesis advisor was very demanding on the “writing” aspects of my thesis [e.g., “it is for posterity”] and he is a very literate and well rounded – not your typical only science focused professional.

C] I had great English teachers in college and even minored in English. As noted above, I even married an English major!

D] I think all of this gives me an edge over other more conventional scientists in the STS area in order to try to better present a lot of this information in more understandable and practical ways.

Many thanks for your time and consideration in this matter. I really appreciate it.

Please do not hesitate to contact me when convenient and appropriate.

Frank