



# Labor strikes lead to new homes

Seeking new economic opportunities and freedom have been important motivations for many immigrants who make the difficult decision to leave all they know and move to this country. These Fremont immigrants, from Sweden and Poland, left their home countries 75 years apart but during similar circumstances: labor strikes and political change.

This is the story of two people whose lives were caught up in economic and political change: Sixteen-year-old Ingeborg Karlsson, who lost her printing job during the Swedish "Great Strike" of 1909 and Gregorz Patyk, 29-year-old father who was a steel worker in Poland in the 1980s and who could not find work after being imprisoned for 11 months by the Communist government for his organizing activities with "Solidarity."



Ann Knippelmeir's grandmother traveled to the United States after a workers strike in Sweden.

## Knippelmeir's family traveled from Sweden

Ann Knippelmeir: Sweden 1909

Ann Knippelmeir is the granddaughter of Ingeborg Karlsson, who left Sweden just after the "General Strike" of 1909, which was considered the largest strike in the world at that time. It lasted five weeks and included more than 300,000 laborers from many different industries. The entire industrial and transportation systems in Sweden literally stopped.



Courtesy Ingeborg Karlsson and her grandfather, Sven Nelson.

Prior to this time, the economic situation in Sweden had been in decline. Sweden's population had increased and there were simply not enough jobs or land to farm. Food was often in short supply. From the mid 1800s to the late 1800s, almost half a million Swedes left the country as immigrants to the United States looking for employment opportunities and resettling in the Midwest, including Nebraska.

took Ingeborg to live with her grandparents. Maria's old boyfriend, who was living in Nebraska, heard Maria was a widow and sent for Maria and her baby. However, Maria's mother would not let Ingeborg accompany her, thinking the ocean voyage was too dangerous for a young child. She promised to send Ingeborg to the U.S. when she got older. However, Ingeborg's grandmother never found a time that she felt was right to let her go be with her mother in the U.S.

At the turn of the century, those that stayed in Sweden began to initiate political and economic reforms often utilizing the "general strike," which became a powerful weapon of the working class in Europe. Its purpose was to demand change to economic or political systems for working people.

Maria left Sweden and traveled to Wausa, where she married Peter Henrickson in 1899. They had five children. She never sent for Ingeborg.

Swedish laborers secured the following reforms: Limited child labor in factories (1881); workers compensation for work related accidents (1901); banned night work for women in factories (1909) and secured the right of working class men to vote (1909). Previously, only men of a certain wealth could vote.

Ingeborg grew up in Sweden with her grandparents, going to school and working with her grandfather in a printing shop. On Aug. 9, 1909, when she was 16 years old thousands of workers went on strike. All printing stopped.

In the midst of these social and economic changes, Ingeborg was born and grew up with her grandparents. She was born on April 13, 1893, to Magnus Karlsson and Maria Svenson. But when Ingeborg was 4 months old, her father died and her mother, Maria,

With little money and no jobs available, Ingeborg wrote to her step-father about coming to America. Her grandmother who had raised her died that winter and so Ingeborg and her grandfather boarded a ship for New York

Please see **Knippelmeir**, A4

## Communism forced Patyk to leave Poland

Gregorz (Greg) Patyk: Poland 1984

Greg Patyk lived in Katowice (Katowice), Poland, with his wife, Bozena, and their two children, Monika and Michal, working in one of the world's largest steel mills (25,000 people; the size of Fremont) in the 1980s.

Katowice is a large city which is a center for science, culture, industry, business and transportation and was also a strong "Solidarity" region.

After World War II, the Soviet Communists secured power over Poland after pushing out Nazi German forces. Increasingly, Poland experienced economic difficulties. By 1980, workers organized by electrician Lech Walesa founded "Solidarity," a social/political movement which was anti-Soviet. "Solidarity" comes from the Roman Catholic Social Teaching by Pope John Paul II, who was Polish, which declares that "solidarity" with the poor and marginalized is an essential Gospel element. The Pope was greatly supportive of the movement and some say responsible for its success.

In Katowice in the 1980s, Greg Patyk was a young man organizing and publishing the "Solidarity" newspaper. On Dec. 13, 1981, when the Soviet's declared martial law in Poland, Patyk and his co-workers went on strike for 10 days. He was arrested by the police on Jan. 4, 1982, and taken to prison in Kłobuzko, Poland, which is about 250 miles from his hometown. The police accused Greg of being active in "Solidarity" and striking.

For three months, Greg's wife drove the round trip 500 miles to visit him in prison and tried to secure his release. He was finally let out of prison, but the government continued to watch him constantly; he had no privacy. He looked for work for nine months without finding an employment.

The family decided they needed to leave Poland, leaving their family and friends.

"It was a hard choice, but we had no choice," he said.

In order to leave, they would have to sign papers renouncing their Polish citizenship.

They did not want to live in Europe because they felt it was too close to other Communist countries. Austria and the United States were there only two options; while the Austrian embassy was noncommittal, the U.S. embassy began working on getting Greg and his family out of Poland right away. They U.S. government secured political refugee status for the family working with United Catholic Social Services and locating a sponsor in Fremont.

In January 1984, Greg, Bozena and their two children, Monika, 5, and Michal, 3, flew from Frankford, West Germany, to the United States not knowing where they would land. They landed in Omaha and were surprised to be welcomed by a crowd of people from St. Patrick's Catholic Church and United Catholic Social Services; they were soon shown to their new furnished home and a job waiting for Greg washing cars at Diers dealership in Fremont.

Today, Greg remembers when he arrived in Fremont 26 years ago with only \$17 in his pocket, a wife and two young children. On that day, "I had only one choice: Go forward, not back."

Greg has worked at Hormel in Quality Control for many years and continues to love Fremont. It's been a quiet town to raise his children who are today 29 and 27 years old. However, he expresses concern about many Fremont residents' recent fear of new immigrants moving into Fremont. He notes that many people in Fremont have never been exposed to different cultures and that when he first moved to Fremont in 1984, "people were scared of me too." But Greg believes, "we need to learn to live with each other."

This story includes contributions from previous stories featuring Patyk printed in the Fremont Tribune on Jan. 7, 1984; Jan. 11, 1984; and Feb. 2, 1984.



Greg Patyk left Poland in the early 1980s after a labor strike.

## Day of Prayer is Friday

People in more than 170 countries will celebrate World Day of Prayer on Friday.

The women of Cameroon have written the service around the theme of "Let everything that has breath praise God." The worship service emphasizes the importance that the people of Cameroon place on music and celebration in their praise to God.

Methodist pastor the Rev. Michael McGregor will sing and lead the singing with the help of accompanist Robert Yanike. Members of Fremont churches will be readers.

The service will take place at noon at First United Methodist Church, following a soup lunch.

Church Women United celebrates this day along with three other programs throughout the year.

Everyone is invited to attend. A \$4 donation will cover the cost of the soup lunch.

## MLC to host Haitian group

Midland Lutheran College will host the St. Joseph Family Haitian Drummers later this month.

The group will perform from 3-4:30 p.m. at the college's Kimmel Theatre.

They will perform and tell the story of the St. Joseph Family House, an orphanage for boys in Haiti. The home was destroyed in the recent earthquake in Haiti and the group is performing to raise funds for the rebuilding of their home.

The event is free and open to the public, with a suggested freewill donation of \$5 to help the group in its efforts to raise funds.

## Immanuel PTL plans dinner

Immanuel Lutheran PTL will host a pork dinner fundraiser from 4-7 p.m. Sunday at Hooper Auditorium.

Pork loin with all the homemade trimmings will be served.

Entertainment with a Hawaiian theme will be provided for children. A silent auction will be held from 4-6 p.m. and a live auction will begin at 6 p.m.

The suggested donation is \$8 for adults 13 and up, \$4 for children 6-12 and free for children 5 and under.

Proceeds will go toward education and equipment for Immanuel School. Supplemental funds will be provided by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans.

## POLICE BEAT

### Police arrest 1 for violation

Tribune staff

A 26-year-old man remained in Dodge County Jail this morning following his Monday afternoon arrest.

Fremont Police Deputy Chief Jeff Elliott said officers were called to an apartment in the 700 block of North Park Avenue shortly after noon on a report of a verbal disturbance.

When officers arrived, they heard two people screaming and found a man and a woman involved in a physical altercation.

Arthur Jensen, no address listed, was arrested for violating a protection order. His bond had not been set as of press time.

1909: Ann Knippelmeir's grandparents arrive in Nebraska from Sweden.

1984: Grzegorz (Greg) Patyk and his family arrive in Fremont from Poland.

1856 1870 1890 1910 1930 1950 1970 1990 2010

Periods of large immigrant arrivals throughout Fremont's history. ■ 1856-1890: Mostly northern Europeans; ■ 1900-1920: Mostly southern Europeans; ■ 1990-present: Mostly Latin American, Asians, Europeans.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

"Building Fremont: Immigrants 1856 to present" is a special four-week project of the Fremont Tribune, Fremont Area Art Association, United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 22 and Nebraska Is Home Fremont. It features photography by Dean Jacobs. Personal stories were compiled by Nebraska Is Home Fremont.