

# Irwin Writes

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package of information each week and always includes the *Lancaster Farming*. It not only keeps us up-to-date on events in Lancaster Co. and PA but is a valuable tool at seminars. When I'm presenting a seminar on 4-H, I show them pictures of 4-H events and 4-H Happenings, and if it is a program on Cooperatives, I show them the page on "Co-op Month" and pictures of people in Cooperatives. Most of the people do not understand English, but the pictures tell the story in all languages. We have not had a problem with languages since an excellent interpreter was provided for our 6 month stay.

We've had a very busy schedule since arriving here in June, and Betty has enjoyed it as much as I since she attends all events with me. In fact, I am also enclosing a news article she was asked to write for a local publication. It expresses my feelings as well as hers.

*Most sincerely,*

*Jay W. Irwin,  
USDA-ES/Poland Project  
Penn State University*

## Poland... From An American Wife's Point Of View

"I know I said I'm retiring, but how would you feel about spending six months in Poland?" With these words my husband of over 40 years greeted my hello on the telephone. It's noon and he's calling me between some of his meetings. He's all excited about being asked to go to Poland as a U.S. Department of Agriculture Extension team member from Penn State University. He went on... "I told them I wouldn't go if you could not go along, and they said you could, so what do you think?" As I hung up the telephone, I thought -- Retirement and travel had been in our plans but, Poland for 6 months? How can we be away from home that long? This conversation and the decision made later that same day found us here in

Poland.

Since arriving in Poland in June, we have been asked many times -- What is your impression of our country? What do you like about it? I would like to try to answer that here.

Traveling to Boguchwala from Warsaw, I wondered if the Polish people saw the beauty of their farms. The large fields of the state farms reminded me of mid-western U.S. The farms of small fields - one here and one there - reminded me of our visit to Spain 10 years ago but not the U.S. The one or two cows grazing in a field or beside the roadway also was something new.

We've traveled to some of your beautiful mountains, hiked some of the trails, walked along some country roads and through the fields of a state farm. We've walked in some of your small towns and looked over the fences to see the beautiful flower and vegetable gardens that everyone seems to have and take pride in.

We have seen the beauty of your history in the cathedrals, castles and cities that we've read about but

never expected to see. We have seen signs of man's inhumanity to man at Auschwitz. But more important, we have gained a little more understanding of how the Polish people have survived and kept their independent spirit over the centuries!

To me, the real beauty and strength of Poland is its people, and I find that harder to describe. I could say it's the language barrier, but honesty makes me say that feelings are always harder to describe when you are talking

When we go home from here, I will remember Poland's beauty; the greetings and welcome of all the people involved in this project; the people who acted as our interpreters, for without them we could not function nor learn about your country. As Jay says, "They are our ears and mouth." I will also recall the many extension advisors trying to give us an understanding of their problems and how they were trying to help their people; several young farmers who are hard at work trying to make changes that will benefit many far-

mers as well as themselves; an older Polish priest taking the time to tell two Americans about his church, his people and the history of his town; the churches filled to overflowing on Sunday morning; the children wanting to use their English on the Americans; the older youth talking about their dreams for Poland; the farm family that invited us into their home and we became friends without a common language.

I'll remember the dinners where we've sat and talked politics, shared ideas and gained a better understanding.

Of course I see the needs of Poland, and there are things I don't like, such as -- driving on your roads in the early evening darkness.

When I think of Poland, I will see more than the beauty of your country or its history -- I will remember where Poland's strength lies.... IN ITS PEOPLE.

*Very Sincerely,  
Betty Irwin, Wife Of  
Professor Jay Irwin,  
U.S.D.A. Extension Advisor  
In Poland*

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