



# Savior of the World

## family



### With Love and Prayer

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#### Please note:

The background story and first-hand survivor accounts of the Polish deportation are taken from *The General Langfitt Story*, Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship

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Dearest Family,

its gives me the greatest pleasure to thank and appreciate you in this season of Christmas. And God has given us all the grace to welcome him and to show love, patience and kindness to the world as a whole but the news is that you have always being ready to welcome the Lord and therefore you decided to open your heart to the poor, the needy, and the unwanted and you have made yourself an army who is ready to fight for good. may the Lord continue to guide and protect you and love in whatever you do.

This Christmas is an another milestone in

the Lord temple as we are going to baptize 17 more children in to the catholic church which has made us fishers of men. Because the Bible



say " there is joy in heaven for one sinner that repented" and I pray that as these children are undergoing this season of cleansing and rebirth may the good Lord also was out our sins and make us clean as snow may he make of us a temple worthy to receive him.

I do appreciate my visit because God has seen me thru and I will want to thank you all for your participation in to the whole fund raising process I strongly believe that God gave us what He has according to his riches in glory and we do appreciate it but everything savior of the world is receiving is because of you.

Once again I say thanks to everyone who has helped savior of the world weather spiritually, financially or materially we do appreciate it a thousand fold because no effort is too small we love you all.

With love Louisa



## The Life of Remigius (Reggie) Karwowski 1934-2012



The following is an account from the life Remigius Karwowski. He has a very special place in the lives of the children of the Savior of the World family. A summary of his life was given to me by his wife, Louise. I do not have any direct quotes from Reg, but there are many firsthand accounts available from other refugees who shared his fate. These other refugee's words (italicized) are included as part of the background history.

Reggie was born in 1934 in Pienczykówek, Poland, which is in the northeastern part of the country. He and his three younger sisters lived on a farm with his parents, grandparents, and aunt. They had horses and cows. There was a small lake on the land where he often fished. He lived the simple life of a farming family in rural Poland. But all this was to change in ways he could not have ever imagined.

In 1939 Hitler invaded Poland from the west. Almost immediately, the Russians invaded from the east. At first they were looked upon as allies, but then the Stalin decided to annex territory inhabited by 2 million people in eastern Poland. First they disarmed and arrested the Polish soldiers, then Polish leaders were jailed, and finally they turned to the peasant population. The Soviets arrested Reggie's father and put him in jail, where he remained until the end of the war in 1945. He was never to see his father again. But that was only the beginning of the horror and the unraveling of his young life. Shortly after, Reggie, his mother, sisters, and aunt were packed with others into unheated cattle cars and taken to the railroad station. The Karwowskis were among the 1.75 million Poles

that were deported by the Russians to work as slave labor on farms in Siberia.

*On 13 April 1940 many thousands of mothers and children whose fathers had been arrested were taken. We only had half an hour to pack. The soldier who came told us that we would die in Russia. In one night six long trains went on to Russia from Lwów and in every single cattle truck there were fifty or sixty people. I don't know how many thousands went in just one night.*

*It was an intensely cold winter night; through the door I heard the quiet sobbing of my mother. Laying scared and motionless I listened to the continuous howling of the dogs, wailing of women and screams of children. At first very faint and far, far away, then closer and closer, until the tumult was upon all of us. Screaming we jumped out of our beds and ran toward the kitchen. There was a very loud banging on the entrance door, then a gruff voice in Russian: 'Otwieraj!' (Open). A gust of freezing wintry air filled the room at the entry of three burly soldiers. 'Stoi!' (stand still) he shouted. The second soldier was ordering my sobbing mother to pack: 'You have fifteen minutes so hurry'. The third guarded the door.*

The trip to Siberia took approximately two to six weeks, depending on the destination and conditions. The people were not told where they were going or why.

*In all that time we were given no food and very little water and, because of that, quite a few people died. At the sidings we saw heaps of bodies from the previous transports lying piled up under the snow.*

On the train, during that slow, 'endless limbo of lost souls', Reg-

gie watched his mother, youngest sister, and aunt die

*They didn't bother about human beings because they knew that they had many more who would come and do the work so it didn't matter how many died.*

and join the bodies dumped on the side of tracks. He and his two other sisters were left alone on the train. Seven year old Reggie's childhood was over. When they arrived at the camp in Kazakhstan, some neighbors tried to take care of Reggie and his sisters.

*There were about 300 people at that collective farm. We lived in mud and peat huts. Not one single toilet and only one well to draw water. The local people did not have much more than us. The winters were very heavy. The only fuel available for cooking and warmth was cow dung and straw. Bread was a luxury*



Polish children in Siberia

*and we could very seldom get any meat. There were not many men and some women had about four, five or six children until they started dying from typhoid fever and dysentery.*

Those who could work, usually children from age 10 up, were forced into a variety of laboring jobs such as tree felling, wood cutting, digging holes, snow clearing, brick making,

milking, shoveling grain, and cooking. Reggie and his sisters were sent to a makeshift school in the settlement. There they learned Russian, that there was no God, and that all good things came from "Father Stalin."

As the winter of 1941 continued, so did the death harvest of the Poles. It is estimated that almost half of the deported Poles died during that first year. In 1942, with the invasion of Hitler into Russia, Polish General Sikorski



**Polish orphans in Iran**

petitioned the Soviet government to allow the deported Poles to leave. As Stalin needed help to fight the Germans, amnesty was granted which released the Poles from the labor camps and allowed them to travel south to join the Polish army which was forming there. Thus a great stream of humanity began to move across Russia. But freedom was just as hard as imprisonment.

*There was nothing organized when the amnesty came. People had to get to the Polish army as best they could, using their initiative. They told us we were free and could go where we liked but they didn't give us any means of transport or food. Some men made a raft so we could travel by river to the nearest train station. We all said, 'Never mind if we drown. We must try to get away from this place'*

The train ride south was as bad as the journey to Russia with people packed into cattle cars, each having to fend for themselves. Sometimes those on the trains would be

herded off to make room for soldiers, leaving them stranded and isolated. Sometimes the railcars would be detached. Some people died under the wheels of the train, trying to get on. Many families were separated in the chaos.

*I sat for hours, cuddled into the frozen corpse of a dead man so the wind wouldn't blow directly onto me. I was freezing but I wasn't afraid at all. I was afraid of living people but I was not afraid of the corpse.*

The Shah of Iran allowed some of the refugees to come to his country. Reggie and his sisters were among them. They were fortunate as thousands of Poles remained in the Soviet Union because there was no place for them to go.

*They put us on a merchant ship with very deep holds. They were not for people. It was so crowded and I was still very sick with dysentery. It was awful. You could not move and some people were so sick they couldn't control themselves. There were a lot of accidents. The smell was terrible and nobody could clean it up. Nobody cared because we were just happy to be on the ship.*

*The ship was the last transport and people were packed on board in the coal holds. Polish soldiers removed all possessions so that more people would fit, but still some were left behind. Everyone was aware that this was the last boat so people jumped into the water to swim after the boat. They all drowned.*

The Poles arriving in Iran found camps of tents in the sand. Songs of prayer and thanksgiving for deliverance could be heard throughout the

day and night.

*The camps were organized very quickly to get people out of Russia. All these hungry people were just like people from concentration camps. They gave us, people who were not used to eating anything but a piece of bread a day, a very fatty meat soup. Our stomachs could not take it. A lot of people died because they were so hungry they would eat anything.*

The climate was very different from Siberia. Reggie says he passed out in the intense heat. Another sister died while they were there.

One day the Shah invited some of the children to visit his palace. Reggie remembers going with them.

*One of our teachers told us that 200 children were to be the guests of the Shah of Persia. We were so happy. We walked through the beautiful gardens and into the palace. We thought we were in paradise. They took us to the Hall of Mirrors. There were 366 mirrors in a round room and I remember seeing myself in all these mirrors and thinking, 'Gosh there are so many of me!' We had ice-cream with fruit. You can't imagine the taste of it! It was so beautiful. The Shah and his wife came in and said he knew what we went through in Russia and he welcomed us in his palace. This visit to the Shah's palace was something to remember.*

The relief effort continued with help coming from Jews, Persians, British, and Americans. In each of the three camps in Tehran, orphanages were set up for growing number of children without parents. But the number of refugees overwhelmed Tehran and transports were set up to take refu-



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gees to British colonies in Africa and India.

Catholic Relief services arranged to have hundreds of thousands of the refugees taken to Africa, England, Mexico, and Australia. Reggie and his remaining sister, Helen, went onboard the US military transport, the USS Hermitage, to Leon, Mexico, to the Don Bosco orphanage, which was converted to the Santa Rosa camp which housed several hundred orphans and families. This was CRS's first project in Mexico.

*The children were given toys, which brought a lot of joy to us. We had forgotten what toys were. Being given toys brought many tears of happiness to our eyes.*

At first, the orphan home was in chaos until someone decided to ask the Polish Felician Sisters of Chicago to take it over.

*One Sunday we were ordered to go to the church to greet the nuns. They knew what a wild bunch we were. As they entered some of the kids hissed and booed. These nuns were small in stature but tough, and they shaped us up in no time.*

Reggie and Helen attended school. The nuns hired carpenters to



**Polish orphans of Santa Rosa**

make rabbit cages. Reggie was able to raise rabbits and have his own garden. Catholic Relief Services provided sports and recreation for the children. They often took them swimming at the hot springs in Camanjillo. A CRS worker remembers:

*After years of cold showers, the children were taken to the hot springs for a holiday where they squealed with delight.*

During World War II, the US would not accept refugees. In 1945 the Felician Sisters petitioned the US government to allow the orphan children to come to Polish orphanages in the USA where they would learn to speak American and also use their native Polish. Reggie and Helen were in the first group of refugees admitted to the US after the war. They were sent to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. A Polish newspaper published the names of the children and their birthplaces.

Reggie's great uncle recognized their names and went to Pittsburgh. He brought them, now 12 and 10, to Gary, Indiana, where he lived. He and his wife raised them as their own.

After graduating from Froebel High School, Reg became a carpenter at US Steel. He married Louise and they had four children. Helen (Baron) also married and had four children and remains in good health. Reg was beset by mesothelioma from exposure to asbestos in the mills and passed away on July 1, 2012.

Reg never forgot his ordeal, nor the kindness of those who helped him and his sister survive. His wish was that his wife Louise should use some of his inheritance to help other children who are orphans, just as he was. Louise had heard of the Savior of the World children and Louisa Aminata's story. She felt this was a place where her husband's wish could be fulfilled.

This fall, Louise, like an angel from heaven, presented Louisa with the money necessary to make our seemingly impossible dream of a chicken farm become real. This January, the construction begins!

## A Surprise Beginning

Starting a chicken farm in Sierra Leone has been a long-time dream for us. It would provide food for the children, and then as it developed and grew, it could provide income and also employment for children of the home as they become adults.

We wanted to buy land right next to the home, but it was sold before we were able to raise enough money. Last spring two donors came forward and we were able to purchase

land, about an acre, about 15 miles away.

The land would need a fence around it, a well, a building for the workers and storage, as well as the coops, feeders, and chickens. Some donations have been received for which Louisa and the children are very grateful, but it looked like the farm would be a long time coming.

Reg and Louise's generosity has now changed that.

But God is working in other delightful ways too. Much to our surprise, the person who purchased the land next to the home cannot get an access road to it built, so no longer wants it. A Protestant charity organization in Freetown decided to give Savior of the World money for the land, even though Louisa had not even asked. She immediately offered the land owner the same amount (which was lower than the original price),

and it was accepted.

This is providential. Building a chicken farm right next to the home means that we will only need a fence on 3 sides. We will be able to use the water from the home's well. And no building will be needed for workers or storage. Plus, the older children will be able to work the farm without needing transportation or outside supervision.

**Give thanks to the Lord for he is good!**