

**Things to do in 2007**  
**By Jeffrey Wintersteen**

I just read with pleasure and melancholy your superb December article on the Polish Nationals and annual sale. The pleasure should be obvious, the melancholy in only that I wasn't there. Having been to several over the years, I missed the last couple. Poland has taken a back seat to my new son and those dreaded necessities in life like work. My wife, always the practical one, said, "well, let's just go in 2007". Now my wife is a self-described "non-horsey" person and absolutely adores Poland. She has attended Scottsdale, US Nationals and the slew of local Class A shows grudgingly, but brightens at the mention of Polish Nationals. The reason she loves August in Poland is not the foreign travel, but my wife's reasons are the unpretentious, yet elegant and tasteful design of the event. In addition, the horses aren't in her words "clipped nearly bald and then greased in make up. The horses also enjoy themselves - and that just makes it more enjoyable for me."

From a "horsey" person perspective, the list of reasons everybody should make at least one trip to Poland could be endless, but I will share just a few. There are the simple things that stir the soul - the smell of straw bedding and silage, the mares being turned out to pasture, and being tied in at night. The timeless tradition and gentle horsemanship of Poland would quiet even the darkest cynic. It has been referred to as a pilgrimage of the faithful, and it truly is. When I see friends from Poland at other events like US Nationals, we carry on like long lost relatives. There is a bond between those that have shared Poland, I almost believe we should have a secret handshake. And unlike so many shows, the faithful don't lapse into the normal horse gossip in Poland. She deserves our reverence; like the quiet of a Sunday morning in the pews. It is, after all, about the horses. There I don't hear the partisanship of US Nationals, or the detractors of the champion at Scottsdale. It is a celebration of the Arabian, the Polish Arabian - arguably the best horses in the world. And please don't fear if you have "never really liked Polish", or are an Egyptian fanatic. You will find something there that will touch you too. In fact, I would be willing to go so far as you would be permanently and irrevocably changed.

Like everyone, there are things, which are forever etched in my memory; special events like seeing Savannah win her first Europa Cup, the tribute to Krzystalowicz or the sale of Druid. There are also the little things that upon recollection will always make me smile. Like in 1995 the grooms let me stand up Eukaliptus for my parents. On a later trip Dad and I, with the local vet, went in search of the yearling colt Cirkus, budding star for Białka after that stud's tour. In the evening twilight we hopped over fences and ducked under gates till we found him. The restaurants were closed when we finally made it to Zamosc for dinner, so we feasted on potato chips and local beer. It was the best night of the trip. And who wouldn't remember the day after the Nationals in 2004 when we stopped by the stall of yearling Pianissima. We rubbed her ears and nuzzled her face, the grooms just smiling and nodding. She wasn't sequestered behind show drape, but, like my wife said, unpretentious. And don't think they didn't know what Pianissima was, everyone in Poland knew - she was the best filly in the world, just waiting to prove it. For all these reasons, I think it is time my son learned to pronounce the Polish names, smell the silage, and marvel at the line up of snow-white mares in the Michałow barns himself. Maybe we could even look for frogs on the banks of the Bug. I recommend you pack your bags next August as well and head east -- just trust me on this. After all, as George Z says, "It is only money."

