

March
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Political

MR. RUCKI'S SCRAPBOOK.

Submitted By Sinch O'Har

As yet, no text has been made available that will teach any willing student the prerequisites for becoming a politician. The requirements seem to come naturally to some people.

Mr. William A. Rucki, a responsible leader of the Polish American Democrats in Essex County, is a man developed from the ranks of the common people. Today, he assumes quite an important role in determining the way Poles will cast their votes. Friends of Mr. Rucki admit that he does not know how to perform the intricate functions of government. He cannot be called a political philosopher and ~~might~~ neither can he be characterized as an intelligent man. He is not an independent thinker in the sense that his influence is the type that helps formulate policy. Nor can it be said that he represents a particular trend or tendency in the Democratic Party.

Though Mr. Rucki has held responsible government positions, someone else, behind the scenes, did the real thinking for him. The political perspective was put down before Mr Rucki and he had to follow it - or else!

Mr. Rucki was extremely pleased and flattered when nominated for government office. Reliable information, received from influential Poles of the same political party, states that Mr. Rucki was nominated for these government positions only when certain defeat was expected. The Polish people, he was told, must have representation, "and you are the only logical person that can be given the job." His ego was bribed - and the Polish residents were still left without real representation.

Mr. Rucki's scrapbook, from 1935 through 1938, is not complete in describing

his entire political career. Any newspaper item that carried his name was clipped and filed indiscriminately with no consideration given to dates or the newspaper from which the item was taken. There was no adherence to consecutive order. In other words, it was a slop-up job.

The smiling, good natured photograph of "r. Rucki, strikes a pleasant introduction to his scrapbook. "Our Next Sheriff, William A. Rucki, Democrat, An Honest And Courageous Friend Of The Tax-Payer," boasts a campaign circular* that probably makes Mr. Rucki beam with pride, for he has chosen this piece out of his collection to be put in a conspicuous spot on the inside front cover.

Mr. Rucki has discovered one thing - that politics in America is much different than the political warfare that has strided the Polish nation internally for many years. In Poland, the aristocrats, landlords and the "Pans" , have for generations handled the functions of the government. Worse yet, for these positions were handed down from generation to generation - from father to son - and when other officials were necessary they were selected from immediate relatives. A peasant or worker, or any man of the people, could never receive any politically worthwhile office. There were some elements, however, that were able to crush the ruling government in power by armed force and set up their own dictatorship. But they were not elements from the people. Pilsudski is an outstanding example. By disguising himself as a friend of the worker (he was one of the leaders of the Polish Social Democratic Party) he was able to build up a small army that was to take over power during the period of a government crisis following the world war. His government can hardly be distinguished from those groups that rule Italy and Germany today.

The political machine in Poland had to be armed and the iron fist ~~necessary~~ ~~instilled in the minds of the people~~ ~~used~~ used generously - if the group in

power wanted to keep it. In America, a club room, a few excursions for the kiddies, occasional free beer and sandwiches, together with a few extra dollars for votes on election day, will get you into public office - with no lives lost.

The scrapbook does not include news items of Mr. Rucki's political life prior to 1935. It cannot be said that he wasn't active in politics before that date, for he had already served a term as a State Assemblyman from Essex County and was active in many of the local election campaigns. The idea probably originated from one of his co-workers, who assumed the responsibility in gathering the material.

An interesting feature, if the scrapbook reflects the real standard, is the lack of publicity he received from the local Polish press in comparison to the great deal of attention the local English press has given him. Whatever reason can be attributed to this contradiction, one thing is certain, that it has not undermined his popularity among the Polish voters.

Mr. Rucki has easily adjusted himself to the streamlined technique of American politics. It is a tradition of ward politicians to organize and finance clubs bearing their names. This procedure is necessary in order that the individual may become an integral force in the life of the community. These clubs very often produce excellent sport teams, thereby winning hundreds of fans and rooters, and more important - increasing the popularity of the standard bearer. The largest neighborhood socials and dances are usually sponsored by such organizations.

On the night of November 12, 1935, after much preliminary canvassing and organizational work, five hundred Ironbound residents met to organize the WILLIAM A RUCKI ASSOCIATION, INC. A few months later the wives and daughters of the male members were organized into a Ladies Auxiliary. Mr. Rucki, was apparently pleased at the response the club received; for on June 17, 1936, he bought a building on 28 Houston Street, Newark, that formerly housed a Russian

punctuation
cleaner

Orthodox Church. The building was turned into a clubhouse. A bar, modern shuffle-boards, cuspidors and a nickleodium have replaced the sanctum of holy relics.

13 Mr. Rucki, together with other dignitaries of the Democratic Party, spoke at a testimonial dinner in honor of John Bushinski, and Ironbunder, who was appointed a Deputy U.S. Marshal. The dinner was held sometime in October, 1935, and over 600 people attended. *bat of Rucki*

14 An item dated November 13, 1935, states that a Mr. William A Rucki was acted as chairman for the Annual Bazaar held by St. Casimir's Church. This, evidently, is Mr. Rucki's real name shortened for easier pronunciation.

15 Nothing worth mentioning interrupted Mr. Rucki's routine from October 1935 to April 5, 1936. Mr. Rucki's religious activity has won him the prestige of being one of the outstanding laymen in the Catholic community. *no 1* So much so that on April 5, 1936, Mr. Rucki was scheduled as the main speaker in paying tribute to Msgr. Knappek, pastor of St. Casimir's Church, at a communion breakfast ceremony. The items indicated that he never shirked responsibility in taking leading parts in arranging church affairs. Again, on October 16, 1936, Mr. Rucki was appointed as one of the co-chairman in arranging a church bazaar that would last from October 17 through the 26th.

16 St. Casimir's Church has managed to involve Mr. Rucki to work on a committee 7 for any important affair, or as a speaker at one of the large meetings or luncheons. His influence and ability in swinging his club to support church affairs usually turned into profits and important contributions to the upkeep of the church.

17 Mr. Rucki has never won the honor of being accused of being an interesting speaker. He is not a person well versed in any particular field who can be expected to delight guests at a luncheon with tales of adventure or personal

put in the beginning

exploits. Yet, he is listed as the main speaker for many meetings of Polish organizations. Unfortunately, the press does not mention the topics he spoke on, nor is he ever quoted on any phase of his talks.

18 One of Mr. Rucki's many accomplishments that will evoke excited and enthusiastic comments, is his interest in children's bands. (This is explained in more detail in a personal interview) Each year, St. Casimir's Church has on its calendar of social events a Military Ball organized by the church's Pipe, Drum and Bugle Corps. Other organizations sponsoring Junior Bands are invited to participate. The Second Annual Military Ball, held April 7, 1936, had the active assistance of Mr. Rucki who was honorary co-chairman.

19 What can be termed as the "big day" in the life of William Rucki was the testimonial dinner given him by the Allied Polish Democratic Clubs of Essex County, May 28, 1936, at St. Casimir's Hall. Thirty of Newark's leading political figures, from Mayor Ellenbogen to former Mayor Charles P. Gillen, headed the list as honorary members of the arrangements committee. F.J. Pietrucha, a close associate, of Mr. Rucki, whose name will appear in many of the articles relating to Mr. Rucki's activity, was toastmaster. Three hundred and fifty neighbors, friends, political leaders and what have you ---- attended the occasion. One item relates (May 21, 1936) " Mr. Rucki has had a commendable career not only in politics but in work amongst the Poles. His funeral home is the mecca of downtown Poles seeking advice in various matters and also financial help." Twelve items appeared in the press relating to this affair. The releases issued by the committee in charge had the same wording. This dinner was to open up new prospects for the future political aspirations of Mr. Rucki. In the vernacular of politicians, Mr. Rucki was being " groomed " for " something big".

20 An article dated June 6, 1936, specialized in personal incidents occurring at the Rucki dinner. One of the speakers, Reverend Stachowiak, said he would speak in the language of the "Angels". He spoke Polish. The kind Father, tried somehow, to symbolize Mr. Rucki with the "Angels". The item further relates: "Father Stachowiak may be termed the Polish Father Coughlin. What a politician!" Members of the Newark City Commission were chastised for being "conspicuous by their absence." However, the other gentlemen from both parties seeking election were present. The item ends with "It was a good old fashioned banquet for a good old friend, William A Rucki."

21 The prediction for the purpose of the dinner was a correct one, for three items dated June 19, 1936, inform us that Mr. Rucki is an alternate delegate to the Democratic National Convention, to be held in Philadelphia, was presented with a traveling bag by a group of his admirers. Mr. Rucki was accompanied by his secretary, Stephen J. Stein, and was scheduled to remain there a week.

22 A humorous article in the Newark Ledger of June 23, 1936, describes the escapades of Mr. Rucki at the Convention. While waiting in line at least an hour for his admission tickets to the Convention, "good-natured" Rucki was approached with the old confidence gag by a smooth artist. "Just a minute, sir," ~~knocks~~ ~~and~~ Rucki was told, "I'm afraid a mistake has been made. You were given too many tickets, Let me see them please. Thank you..... Sure enoughHere... Here's all you'll need, I'll return the rest; we're running short." Another item appearing June 26, 1936, states the though Mr. Rucki was fleeced of his tickets the experience substantiates his generosity with the "gimme" boys.

23 It must be said that the affairs staged by the Rucki Association attracted good sized crowds. An excursion, July 31, 1936, brought out five hundred people in a boat ride up the Hudson River. Mayor Ellenstein acted on the honorary committee.

24 An item, August 3, 1936, declares the appointment of Mr. Wm. Rucki by City Clerk Richenstein to a city job of sub-registrar - a person who is authorized to issue burial permits at any time.

25 The Rucki Association baseball team did not have a very successful season. An article of August 1936, ~~xxx~~ laments the fact that Rucki is not pulling for his boys but is spending his time enjoying a cool breeze at the sea-shore.

26 A brief statement appeared August 15, 1936, to call to the public's attention that a liquor license has been issued to Mr. Wm. A. Rucki.

27 It looks like Rucki is getting in trouble from what can be gathered in a story of August 16, 1936. Mr. Rucki was given the job of taking burial care of the body of Edward Metelski, a murderer, electrocuted for killing a state trooper. The casket containing the dead man's body was left open at the home of his parents so that relatives could view it. A state law prohibits the public from viewing a body killed by the state. Rucki was brought before the authorities, and in his defense declared, " This is my first state business and did not know the law."

28 The 1936 Presidential elections are nearing and a clipping of September discusses some preliminary preparations being made by the Democratic Party. Political leaders from the various national groups were assigned to plan organizational steps to win their peoples votes for the Democratic candidate. The following committees were appointed :-

Polish:- William Rucki; Captain S.A.Gutowski; Vincent Shultz and Theodore Sussinsk.

Negro:- J. Bernard Johnson; Dr. Lloyd Grainger and Mrs. Helen Polk of Newark;
the Rev. L.C. Love and Dr. Arthur C. Thorrhill of Montclair.

Jewish:- Louis Weiss; Aaron Levinstone; Joseph Bohrer.

Italian:- J. Victor D'Aloia; Felix Forlenza and William Kingliano.

29 In line with these proposals, Mr. Rucki is going to have his organization concentrate on a recruiting drive. An item of September 2, 1936, mentions the fact that "Mr. Rucki is offering \$25.00 to the person that recruits the most members."

30 Other political candidates of ~~their~~ Polish origin started to form organizations of their own to provide backing for the coming elections. In October 1936, Mr. Rucki was an invited chairman for a dance sponsored by the Frank E. Pietrucha Association. Mr. Pietrucha was one of the candidates for State Assembly.

31 One of the largest Polish day celebrations ever staged in New Jersey was held in Perth Amboy, October 4, 1936. Mr. Rucki led the Essex delegation in an auto caravan. Secretary of War Woodring was the main speaker. Mr. Rucki brought greetings, and a few extra remarks, from Newark's Poles.

32 October 25, 1936 - the Junior Bands of all church organizations participated in a Pipe, Drum and Bugle Corps competition. Mr. Rucki and Mr. Pietrucha were chairman of the committee in charge.

33 An interesting article dated November 5, 1936 is worth quoting in full:-
"For the first time in New Jersey a citizen of Polish extraction will cast an electoral ballot. This honor was bestowed upon William A. Rucki, who was elected to the Electoral College Tuesday."

Put in at beginning

Thus ends Mr. Rucki's scrapbook career for the years 1935 - 36. The Polish press, during this period, was more interested in giving attention to the church activity of Mr. Rucki than in describing his political achievements. There is one newspaper, however, backed by Polish business men, that appeared about this time. The paper was named the "Post" from scribbling that appears over some of the items in the scrapbook. It was written entirely in English and devoted all its space to political gossip in Polish circles. Its main intent was to push prospective Polish candidates as well as vigorously seeking patronage for Poles in many important government jobs.

1937

the year
~~Through the year 1937 had an important City Commission election that involved every important neighborhood political club, and for some reason, the scrapbook of Mr. Rucki does not mention one word of his participation.~~

35 To open the new year in a gay mood, the Essex County Democratic Polish Clubs and the Polish Central Committee sponsored a banquet in Mr. Rucki's honor, Jan. 17, 1937. Immediately after the banquet Mr. Rucki left for Washington to attend a reception given at the White House in honor of the Presidential electors.

A brief item, also dated Jan. 17, 1937, states that Mr. Rucki was elected leader of the Polish American Democratic Clubs, Inc.

36 To add to his many official positions in the various organizations, Mr. Rucki on March 8, 1937, accepted the nomination for treasurer of a committee selected by the different Polish societies to plan an anniversary affair for Msgr. Kappok, pastor of St. Casimir's church.

Out at end
 37 In 1937, Newark was the scene of a hectic political campaign for the City Commission elections. Though this election was important ~~xxx~~ in the sense of involving all the local political organizations, Mr. Rucki's group, for some reason, wasn't very active - again, using the scrapbook as the standard. An item dated March 19, 1937, mentions the fact the Mr. Rucki influenced a resolution being passed at the United Polish American Democratic Clubs to support the Democratic candidates for election to the City Commissions.

38 On the ~~xxxxxx~~ March 26, 1937 issue of the Newark Ledger a story was written about the life of Mr. Rucki. He was characterized as one of the "Builders of Newark" and one of the "most influential leaders of the Poles". Mr. Rucki was born in Frysztak, Poland, December 18, 1874. He came here in his early youth and worked as a hatter. He entered the Renourd Embalming School in New York and after completing the course, became the first Polish undertaker in Newark. As a

State Assemblyman Mr. Rucki was instrumental in having a bill passed in the State Legislature to compel undertakers to take State examinations before they enter practice. The story goes on to describe the political career of Mr. Rucki and enumerates the many organizations that he is a member of.

39 The Polish Kronika of April 24, 1937, covered a dinner given in honor of Stanley P. Wesslowski and said the affair was "recognition of the Poles in Irvington". Speakers emphasized the need of the Poles uniting to become a powerful political force. Mr. Rucki was one of the main speakers.

40 April 26, 1937 - and again Mr. Rucki acted as vice-chairman for the 3rd Annual Military Ball of St. Casimir's pipe, drum and bugle corps. Twenty five drum corps competed from N. J., Conn. and N.Y.

41 The Rucki Association has planned a venture that was to bring that organization into a brighter limelight than ever before. On August 25, 1937 the Association planned a "Poor Kiddies Outing", and, "Mr. Rucki felt the problem of orphan Kiddies in Ironbound have been overlooked for too long a period. After canvassing all business men and manufactures he raised a sufficient amount of money to take the matter into his own hands." The item further relates Rucki's efforts in assisting youth through the various sport and social activities organized by the Association. The affair was held in Hillside Grove, Hillside, and over 500 children attended. The item states "this work for youth is given by that well loved leader of the Poles - William A. Rucki."

42 The Newark Ledger of Dec. 1937, in an article written by one of its Trenton correspondents, had this to say, "Governor Moore will not forget patronage of Essex Polish leaders. He has conferred with William Rucki and others and something will come out of it."

1938.

43. A good beginning in starting the year 1938 with a bang for Mr. Rucki was the honor bestowed upon him as the chief figure in the ⁴⁴4th Amusal Military Ball of St. Casimir's fife, drum and bugle corps held in the month of February, 1938. Mr. Rucki, as a charter member of the corps, was presented with a gift by Msgr. Anappek. Twenty corps competed and Mr. Rucki distributed awards to the victors. ~~This contest was the first of its kind in the history of the church.~~ Eight hundred people attended, breaking all past records in affairs staged by the church.

44. 1938 was quite a busy year for Mr. Rucki. A glaring heading of a local newspaper, ~~dated in March, 1938~~ dated in March, 1938, said "BOOM RUCKI FOR SHERIFF". Petitions were being circulated by Polish Democratic organizations to speed Rucki's candidacy. Mr. Rucki, the item declares, has made no comment. However, if enough pressure is exerted, officials stated, Mr. Rucki will probably respond to the wishes of his followers. The story says that should Mr. Rucki decide to run, he will be slated on an independent ticket. This has to be done in order to rebuke the Democratic machine for its inconsiderate attention on patronage to Poles. The author of the story states that political leaders will have plenty to worry about for "Mr. Rucki's philanthropic work is well known and the people will vote for him."

45. In another item ~~xxx~~ dated March 1938, a political writer has this to say:- "One promise was that 48 hours after Morre's elected Governor, Stanley A. Gutowski would be placed in a responsible position." Those to whom such a promise were made were sorely disappointed and now began to challenge the Democratic machine with an independent organization. ~~xxxx~~ The independents immediately set out to have petitions signed endorsing Mr Rucki's candidacy, hoping such a move would be sufficient pressure to have the machine meet their proposals. The same writer also says: The

petitions purpose is to spank the Democ atic ~~xxxxxxx~~ organization." After the last election, in which the Poles gave the Democrats a good majority, all promises regarding patronage were broken . Some of the Polish Democrats, who sided with the independents, were not misled to believed that Mr. Rucki would be successful in the Sheriff elections. The main tactic was to build up a protest vote - enough to take away from the regular party candidate so as to prove to the machine that their considerations should be met. The attack of the Poles was centered against Colonel William Kelly, a leader of the Democratic Party who often appeared on many platforms lauding Rucki as a leader. Colonel Kelly " is going to be in for a sever rebuke. He has not kept his promises." In essence, this divisions could not be characterized as a political one. A division in politics means differences in policy and ideals. This squabble was merely a demand for recognition on the part of some Polish lawyers to be given a portion of the good paying government jobs that were open. Not a word is mentioned as to how the party as a whole can better the community, or what can be done about such high taxes, and the many other questions facing the people generally.

46 An article appearing in March 1938 raised more problems to annoy Mr. Rucki. A group of indignant Poles in the Central Committee of Polish Societies felt slighted becuses they were not asked to participate in the election of Rucki. Bt not being informed of the plans being made they hesitated to give a full indorsement to Rucki candidacy. However, they joined in the work of some committees and

arranged to discuss the entire matter at some future meeting.

The first six hundred ~~six hundred~~ signed petitions were turned in by the Rucki Association, says an item of March 1938. Mr. Rucki's club "is going to bat" and the organization is prepared to handle all emergencies that come up, and the present situation is an emergency for their standard bearer.

48 The following interesting item of March 18, 1938 is quoted in full:- "The Colonel is on the other side of the fence now. When it was revealed last night at a meeting of the Central Committee of Polish Democratic Clubs in Essex County that five attempts to see Colonel William Kelly in connection with patronage for Poles were unsuccessful, a delegation in the audience remarked-'This is no time to see Colonel Kelly. He's too busy trying to get himself a job.' "

49 Two Irish groups, the Murphy and Smith Associations, joined Rucki's campaign by endorsing him as their candidate at their last meeting, states an item for March 25, 1938.

50 In the March 25, 1938 issue of "The Post" a column appeared pleading with the Poles to unite at this crucial time and to stop wrangling. F.J. Pietrucha, President of the Central Committee of Polish Democratic Clubs, was threatened with impeachment proceedings by the Woodrow Wilson Democratic Club. No reason is given for this sudden split.

51 On March 26, 1938, an item states that Rucki For Sheriff Clubs have been set up in the 5th, 10th and 12th Wards. The central headquarters are located at 28 Houston Street, Newark.

31 Another item dated March 26, 1938, clarifies the differences mentioned above. The attempts to remove Pietrucha were unsuccessful and a plea for harmony was well received by all the groups. Peace

On April 4, 1938, the Rucki Committee announced that more than 50 organizations have endorsed their standard bearer, William Rucki, for Sheriff. ~~xixxi~~ The same statement said that ward clubs are being organized throughout Essex County.

A brief item on April 22, 1938 says that 9,000 signed petitions have already been turned in.

In May, 1938, a dinner dnace in honor of Mr. Rucki has been arranged by the Rucki For Sheriff Committee.

Mr. Rucki has installed a sound system in a hearse, states an item of May 1938. The well know funeral directeder has arranged this system so that it will play funeral marches and dirges as the coffin is being carried out of the house of ceremony.

The William Rucki Association and the Ladies Auxili ary have p planned steps to increase efforts to speed up the Rucki For Sheriff campaign, an item for May 13, 1938, declares. New officers in both organizations were elected. A committee has been set up to plan an October Sport Dane. Also, the girl's group is planning to have a fashion show called " Masterpieces of 1938 ", fashions to be made and modeled by the girl's themselves.

Mr. Rucki, says a May 1938 story, has appointed Mr. George Wewandowski as his campaign secretary. Mr. Wewandowski is also President of the William Rucki Association.

Nothing happened during the hot months of June and July 1938.

A statement of August 2, 1938, says that 12,000 petitions have already been signed and that 70 different organizations have endorsed Rucki for Sheriff. The new headquarters of the Rucki For Sheriff Committee is located at 34 Park Place, Newark.

An item appearing in August 1938 speaks of an appointment offered to Mr. Rucki to the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission by Democratic

Chairman James J McMahon, if he would withdraw from the Sheriff race. The article states that " Rucki put thumbs down on the offer". Rucki is again offered candidacy for Freeholder on the regular Party ticket if he withdraws from the race. Rucki again refuses. The writer of the story claims that Mr. Rucki has wavered on this offers and took some time before he made a decisive negative answer. Mr. Rucki was told, in the same story, that " he should know enough to go in for the big stuff" especially when ~~the recent~~ recent figures show that the Poles can be responsible for 50,000 votes in the county.

On August 22, 1938, Mr. Rucki denies he is withdrawing from the Sheriff race. " I am in to stay," said Rucki, " we have signed petitions ready to file with the County Clerk.

An item of August 26, 1938, states that four democrats and eleven Republicans will enter the primary race.

August 26, 1938 - Mr. Rucki has entered his designation to the County Clerk as an independent democrat with the following slogan:-
"Life Democrat, Labor's and Taxpayers friend - William A . Rucki.

August 1938 - Mr. Rucki objects to having his name entered on the seventh line of the voting machine.

~~xRxRx~~ The final tallies of the election show that Mr. Rucki piled 9,166 votes and came out second best.

The scrap book ends with:-

VOTE FOR WILLIAM A. RUCKI

FOR SHERIFF

MAKE SURE TO LOOK ON VOTING MACHINE FOR