



Jan Steven Zaleski

April 22, 1959 - January 10, 2020

Zaleski, Jan Steven, January 10, 2020 age 60 of Detroit. Beloved son of the late Jerome (Ruby) Zaleski. Loving brother of the late Mark (Patricia), Loren (Karen), Timothy (Terry), Gregory (Robin), Geriann (Robert) Catenazzo, Dianne (Mark) O'Connor, Marian (Marty) Linzmaier, and Matthew. Proud uncle of Derek, Geoffrey, Analiese, Tracey, Shawn, Jessica, Jacob, Miranda, and Katie and Great uncle of Tayla. Visitation Thursday, January 16th 4-8 PM and Friday, January 17th 12-8 PM at Vermeulen-Sajewski Funeral Home, 46401 Ann Arbor Road West, (between Sheldon & Beck) Plymouth. Rosary Friday 7:30 PM. In state Saturday, January 18th 10:30 AM until the 11 AM Funeral Mass at St. Joseph Catholic Church, 830 South Lafayette Street, South Lyon, MI 48178. Memorials may be made to American Diabetes Association. To share a memory, please use the Share a Memory tab on this web page.

Family Obituary:

Jan is the course material author for the following courses:

Research: Polish Ancestors

Jan Steven Zaleski was born in Detroit, MI, and currently works as a civilian detention officer with the Detroit Police Department. He became interested in his Polish ancestry in 1983, and began researching microfilmed records for his Polish ancestral parishes in 1989. By 1990, he had documented his Polish ancestry back to the 1770s, and had acquired sufficient fluency in Polish, German, Russian and Latin documents, to complete the accreditation

requirements of the LDS/Mormon Family History Library. From 1990-1995, he was an Accredited Genealogist with a Specialty in Polish Research.

From 1984-1999, he was a member of the Board of Directors of the Polish Genealogical Society of Michigan, and served in various capacities, including President. Since 1991, he has served as a volunteer librarian at the LDS Family History Centre in Westland, Michigan. From May, 1992, until Spring, 2001, he was Editor of the Polish Eaglet, the official journal of the Polish Genealogical Society of Michigan.

Mr. Zaleski has been a frequent speaker at meetings and seminars of PGS-Michigan, in addition to lectures for the United Polish Genealogical Societies (UPGS) Conferences, the Federation of Eastern European Family History Societies (FEEFHS) Conferences, the Michigan Genealogical Council, and various Societies in the metropolitan Detroit area. In 1996, he published "Guide to Border Crossing Records on LDS Microfilm: Accessing 1,500 Reels Documenting Crossings into the United States from Canada, 1895-1954." He also had over 25 years as researcher at Westland Family Historical Center, over 40 years as researcher/speaker for Polish Genealogical Society of Michigan.

"Finding your Polish Ancestors"; By: Kathleen Ann LaBudie-Szakall & Jan Steven Zaleski

Price: \$26.00, Book Details: 5 1/2 x 8 1/2, 342 pages, softcover, 2002; revised 2003, Heritage Productions

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN 16. 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Vermeulen-Sajewski Funeral Home Plymouth
46401 Ann Arbor Road West
Plymouth, MI 48170
(734) 459-2250
plymouth@vermeulenfh.com

Visitation

JAN 17. 12:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Vermeulen-Sajewski Funeral Home Plymouth
46401 Ann Arbor Road West
Plymouth, MI 48170
(734) 459-2250
plymouth@vermeulenfh.com

Rosary

JAN 17. 7:30 PM (ET)

Vermeulen-Sajewski Funeral Home Plymouth
46401 Ann Arbor Road West
Plymouth, MI 48170
(734) 459-2250
plymouth@vermeulenfh.com

In state

JAN 18. 10:30 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Joseph Catholic Church
830 S Lafayette St.
South Lyon, MI 48178
(248) 446-8100

Funeral Mass

JAN 18. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

St. Joseph Catholic Church
830 S Lafayette St.
South Lyon, MI 48178
(248) 446-8100

Tribute Wall



“ *Jan Steven Zaleski*

December 07, 2023 at 05:11 AM



“ *Jan was legendary. I just thought of him and sadly found this page. I met him at the Roseville Family History Center where he worked. He was a very precise and exacting man. He was intensely knowledgeable and passionate, almost intimidatingly so. He was hilarious, and I loved to listen in on his conversations when I was reading microfilm. He was quick witted. Very observant. He was a teacher to many and he challenged us to think critically. I'm sad I never got to see him again, surely gone too soon. RIP Jan. You taught us a lot.*

Erik Bockenstette - January 06, 2023 at 07:59 AM



“ *I will miss my good friend and colleague very much . . . and his witty ways. He is the one who got me on the board of PGSM when he was still president. We used to talk a lot, not only about genealogy, which he helped me with a lot, but about our similar professions in Criminal Justice (me in police and Jan in Corrections for DPD.) He was a very good Catholic and we spoke often about matters of the faith. May God rest his soul. I am sure he has a great place in heaven. I am very saddened by his passing and will keep him in my prayers. Jan, idź z Bogiem.*

Bill Krul - January 17, 2020 at 07:45 PM



“ *Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Jan Steven Zaleski.*



January 17, 2020 at 09:09 AM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Jan Steven Zaleski.*



January 16, 2020 at 09:58 PM



“ *Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Jan Steven Zaleski.*



January 16, 2020 at 02:51 PM



“ *So sorry to hear of Jan's passing. For people of Polish ancestry, Jan was THE MAN to see. Our genealogy society had Jan as a speaker several times and you could always expect a crowd. His talks were informative as well as entertaining. Rest in peace.*

Georgia Clark - January 16, 2020 at 02:31 PM

EE

“ *Polish research will not be the same without you Jan! My deepest sympathy to your friends family.*

Elaine Ess

Elaine Ess - January 16, 2020 at 09:31 AM

PM

“ *Polish Genealogical Society of Michigan purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Jan Steven Zaleski.*



Polish Genealogical Society of Michigan - January 16, 2020 at 08:46 AM

VK

“ *My deepest sympathies to Jan's family. I first met Jan through the Polish Genealogical Society of Michigan years ago. I observed him as he worked with patrons at the Family History Center, or gave a presentation. He was the teacher who challenged his students to develop strategies as they worked on their genealogy. Jan's sense of humor is legendary and I will miss hearing the jokes but the wisdom remains. Requiescat in pace.*

Valerie Koselka

PGSM

Valerie Koselka - January 16, 2020 at 08:36 AM

“Jan was a friend, a brother and in many ways was the religious patriarch of the Zaleski family. He kept us all grounded. He gently reminded us that God and family should be first and foremost in everybody’s life and heart. I will miss the conversations about the multitude of topics that we always had at the dinner table, card parties and our family get togethers. Jan was always in the mix for a good laugh and story.

In the early 90’s, I was a new convert to the Catholic faith. Jan, Matt, Dianne and I traveled together for a 3-day Steubenville retreat in Ohio. Dianne was in the back seat of Jan’s orange Le-Car washing windows & cleaning out the back seat, with Matt and I following in a second car trying to decipher what was going on in the car ahead of us. Doors were opening and shutting as she cleaned away. Jan could be seen in his rear-view mirror laughing, directing and driving along.

We stopped in Youngstown to replace a bubbled tire on Jan’s car and he must have taken many wrong turns along the way because we didn’t arrive until after 10 pm, when we had estimated a 5 pm arrival. We missed the opening day conference speakers, had to find our badges at vacated tables and ended up eating at Pizza Hut because we missed the first day dinner as well.

The next day, Jan had what is now commonly referred to as his “fall from grace”. He had gone back to his room on campus located at the top of a grassy knoll. As he described it, he was walking down the grassy hill and began picking up speed and couldn’t slow down. He timed it perfectly to fall on his hands and knees on the 4 ft wide sidewalk at the bottom of the hill. We were concerned because we had not seen him for over an hour. We looked up and saw Jan lurching like a stiff legged mummy as he walked toward the conference tent. Our concern soon turned to laughter as he collapsed into a chair next to us. He had bandages on his elbows, knees and wrists. We still laugh about that story to this day. He didn’t let that stop him from kneeling during mass and celebrating

his faith.

Mark O'Connor

Mark O'Connor - January 15, 2020 at 11:39 PM

LM

“ *Love, Margaet purchased the Mrs. Fields Nibblers® Sympathy Basket for the family of Jan Steven Zaleski.*



Love, Margaet - January 15, 2020 at 10:43 PM

RP

“ *I am sad to hear of Jan's passing. I considered him a very good friend. He generously spent a lot of time with me a couple of years ago at The Library of Michigan helping me research my family. He was a very giving man. I will miss him a lot. My condolences to his family. May God keep him in his arms. Ron Pruss*

Ron Pruss - January 15, 2020 at 09:06 PM



“ *Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Jan Steven Zaleski.*



January 15, 2020 at 08:53 PM

CK

“ *I too am saddened by Jan's passing. I am pleased to benefited and gotten to know him during the past several years as a member of the Polish Genealical Society of Michigan (PGSM)*

Jan was an especially valued contributor to members of PGSM because Jan had the knack to view a question from the perspective of the person asking the question.

Jam was inspired to share his research talent and insight for any perplexing genealogical issue.

May his soul rest in peace.

Carl Kolenda

Carl K. - January 15, 2020 at 06:08 PM

DP

“ Oh, Jan! He has been such an amazing person in my life these last 5+ years as we worked in the Westland Family History Library of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He was always thinking up some yarn to amuse us with. I only got a zinger in once in all that time. You should have seen the look on his face! We all laughed so hard we had tears in our eyes, including Jan.

I admire him greatly. His knowledge of genealogy was incredible. He was a great friend, always trying to figure out people's motivations. I loved to compare stories about growing up Polish and shared experiences of attending mass as young children. Although I was not raised Catholic, I had much exposure to that church and remember my times there fondly. Jan loves God and put his teachings to practice. He wasn't afraid to share his beliefs with me and this left me free to discuss mine. It's a beautiful friendship when there are no areas to be avoided and I feel I had that with Jan.

I had plans for many more years of friendship. Jan was good with old ladies and I looked forward to being indulged. But he used to say "Why don't you get your Polish genealogy together and sow it to me. Later, I may not be around." I mostly never did it.

Jan loves his family very much. My heart goes out to you who will miss him even more than I.

*Sincerely,
Deb Piper*

Debra Piper - January 15, 2020 at 03:47 PM

LZ

“ *Jan, my brother, always had a story - whether from work with the prisoners or an event that he had occur to himself. He would tease you with a comment and see if you would bite, which we all did - much to his liking as we ended up flabbergasted and laughing. We will miss the stories , the laughter , the hugs and most of all his smiles as he told us about life and the new facts on our family genealogy. Rest in peace, and keep an eye on the rest of us. Miss you bro,
Loren Zaleski*

Loren Zaleski - January 15, 2020 at 02:41 PM

JS

“ *Jim, Keith, Mike, Scott, and Steve purchased the Basket of Memories for the family of Jan Steven Zaleski.*



Jim, Keith, Mike, Scott, and Steve - January 15, 2020 at 02:41 PM

WP

“ *Westland Family History Staff and Patrons purchased the Basket Full of Wishes for the family of Jan Steven Zaleski.*



Westland Family History Staff and Patrons - January 15, 2020 at 02:03 PM

DH

“ I met Jan in November 1994 on the 9th floor of 1300 Beaubien, when i started working for City of Detroit.

He was a gifted person, give him a computer he was in his own world, he show me how to do a lot on the computer.

He was the Union Rep., he sent one E-mail to all of the city of Detroit Employees causing a shut down of the City of Detroit IT System.

He Loved good food, he took me to many polish Restaurants and I took him to many Chinese and other Restaurants.

I got hurt on the job in 2007, He made sure that all paper was in order and was present at Internal Affairs Matters as it was related to my injury.

(I had a chance to get him, I had a Doctor appointment and the nurse was Polish, I had her answer the phone- he was surprised to hear her speaking in polish

He could always may you laugh, and he loved doing genealogical research from public records departments, Cemeteries, any place that have a history of a living person.

He loved his Job as a Detention Officer and being the editor of the Polish Eaglet it made his day and night.

Yes he will be missed as well remembered.

My prayers are for his family an friends.



David Hamiel - January 15, 2020 at 01:20 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Jan Steven Zaleski.*



January 15, 2020 at 11:00 AM



“ *Jan was such a remarkable member of a remarkable family. I can't say enough about the Zs, but even among them Jan was a standout. (Actually, they're all standouts.) Jan had the best and driest sense of humor of anyone I've met. You needed to drink water after listening to his quips, puns and jokes. (I hope he appreciates that bit of pun.)*

While I didn't share his passion for Polish genealogy and history Jan made sure I knew he was named for perhaps Poland's greatest son (next to Karol Wojtla, aka JP II, and maybe Lech Walesa) - Jan Sobieski. I hadn't seen Jan in many years but I've some fun and enjoyable memories.

I am sad and sorry for your loss. Russ

Russ Craig - January 15, 2020 at 10:56 AM



“ *I met Jan over forty years ago when we were both members of the Polish Genealogical Society of Michigan. I will be forever indebted to him for all the help he gave me with my family research over the years. I offer my deepest sympathy to Jan's family. The wonderful memories he created over the years will give you comfort.*

Darlene Ziolkowski

Darlene Ziolkowski - January 14, 2020 at 10:02 PM

KL

“ Always had a lot of laughs when visiting with Jan



kathy labudie - January 14, 2020 at 08:48 PM

WA

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Warren Adkins - January 14, 2020 at 06:44 PM

MZ

Is that photo from his time on the 9th floor?

Matthew Zaleski - January 14, 2020 at 09:51 PM

WA

Yes, not sure of the year but i would guess it was in the 90s

Warren Adkins - January 15, 2020 at 10:33 AM

WW

“ With love, Michael and Robin Wohlfeil purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Jan Steven Zaleski.



With love, Michael and Robin Wohlfeil - January 14, 2020 at 06:10 PM

AK

“ I had the pleasure of volunteering with Jan at the Westland Family History Center for quite a few years. He taught me everything I know about Polish research. I will miss his sporadic emails that shared something about PGSM or the latest information regarding Polish websites.

Anne Kruszka

Anne Kruszka - January 14, 2020 at 04:59 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Jan Steven Zaleski.



January 14, 2020 at 04:49 PM