

Portraying all events chronologically, Wieslaw (88) describes his childhood, teenager years during 2nd World War, witnessing Holocaust, attendance in Merchant Marine Academy, marriage, study at Gdansk University making him Civil Engineer & Architect, escape from communistic Poland as Sailor, and his residence jointly with his wife in 7 countries.

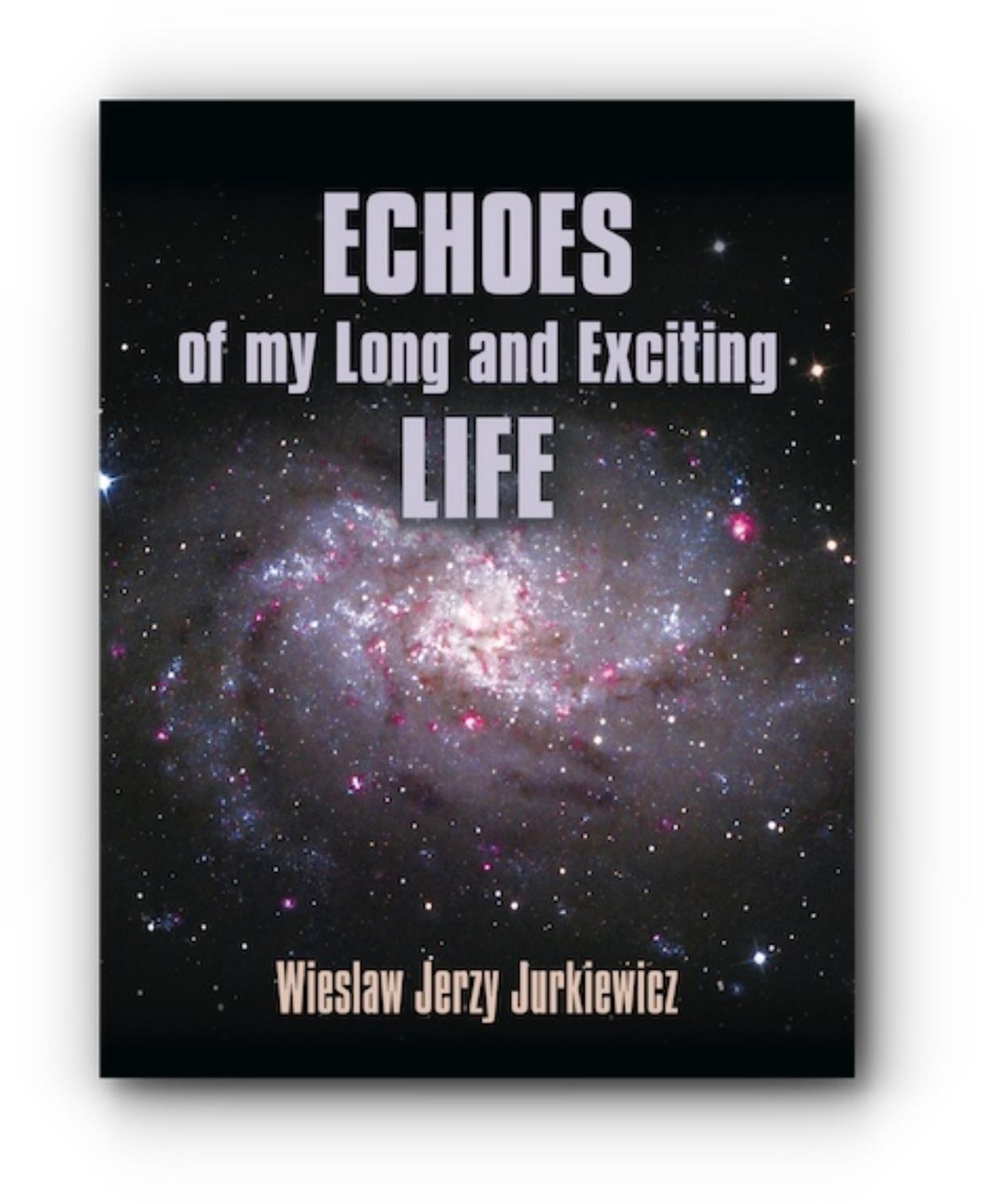
ECHOES of my Long and Exciting LIFE

by Wieslaw Jerzy Jurkiewicz

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Wieslaw Jerzy Jurkiewicz

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Title	Page	Photos
- - - -	Preface	--	--
Chapter 1	Birth	1	7
Chapter 2	Early Childhood	12	2
Chapter 3	Preschool Years	17	4
Chapter 4	School Years prior to 2 nd World War	25	6
Chapter 5	School Years during 2 nd World War	36	19
Chapter 6	Teenager at 2 nd World War - prior to Brzostek Tragedy	57	4
Chapter 7	The Brzostek Tragedy	66	3
Chapter 8	Teenager at 2 nd World War – after Brzostek Tragedy	76	5
Chapter 9	Teenager after 2 nd World War	85	16
Chapter 10	In Merchant Marine Academy	104	18
Chapter 11	Married Life in Poland – prior to the birth of my daughter	130	10
Chapter 12	Married Life in Poland – after the birth of my daughter	149	24
Chapter 13	Sailor on m/s Helga	170	13
Chapter 14	Sailor on m/s Deneb	179	17
Chapter 15	Architect and Sailor on m/s Elke Freze	198	11
Chapter 16	Living in Germany, 'Poor'	216	22
Chapter 17	Living in Germany, 'Rich'	230	38
Chapter 18	q/ss Arcadia and Start in Canada	250	34
Chapter 19	Living in Canada	266	46
Chapter 20	Living in Brazil, my Work	295	15
Chapter 21	Living in Brazil, my Family	314	54
Chapter 22	Living in Canada – again	357	40
Chapter 23	Living in the USA	391	45
Chapter 24	Living in Italy	431	45
Chapter 25	Living in Saudi Arabia	459	26
Chapter 26	Living in Poland – again	489	16
Chapter 27	Going to Africa	509	23
Chapter 28	Living in the USA – retired	533	69
Chapter 29	Last Chapter	573	11
	TOTAL	582	643

CHAPTER 6 – Teenager during 2nd World War prior to the Brzostek Tragedy

During the war and under the German occupation, possessing radios by Polish nationals was punishable by death. Therefore practically all information about the world political situation came from German and Polish newspapers printed with news supplied only by Germans. Additionally, some information arrived by the way of gossips, based on news heard by some individuals who dared to keep radio hidden somewhere and to hear news announced by BBC from London. At that time, it was well known that **Nazis Germany occupied almost the whole Europe**, except for Sweden, Switzerland, Spain and Portugal. In Russia, Germans conquered Ukraine, were close to Leningrad and to Stalingrad, with some German units already at the mount or Elbrus in Caucasian Mountains. In Africa, the English Army was retreating and the German army entered Egypt. On the Atlantic Ocean, German U-boats, almost unmolested, were sinking thousands of allied merchant ships. To many people the political situation appeared as if Germany was very close to win the war.

In Poland, besides the **started and gradually increased prosecution of Jews**, thrown to concentration camps and killed in gas chambers, Nazis started also to **eliminate certain Polish individuals – such as professors, engineers, doctors, and judges** – in order to cut their influence on patriotic belief among the population, possibly inviting Poles to acts of resistance against Germans.

One day in the early May 1942, three of my Mom's friends in Brzostek had been arrested, deported, and never seen again. This affected the following individuals greatly respected by the residents of Brzostek:

- 1) The doctor, who healed me in June 1941;
- 2) The pharmacist, the father of Kasia, my school colleague;
- 3) The judge, Drzyzga's tenant.

Even today I cannot forget the judge's wife full of tears, crying, "Jasiu, my dear husband, what did happen to you and what will happen to me now?" The next day after his arrest, the judge's belongings were packed, and his wife - accompanied by their two children - Elzunia (6) and Maciek (1) – left Brzostek to join her family in another town. In the school, I saw Kasia (12), the pharmacist's daughter, crying uncontrollably and being comforted by our teacher. The doctor was single and had no family in Brzostek, but he was our friend, who took care of me when I had pneumonia, and who sometime played bridge with my Mom. At home, my Mom and Victoria pretended of not being scared, but I saw them being very sad.

Holocaust. At that time in Poland, every Jew had to wear a white armband with an embodied blue Star of David. The same star was painted on the entrance door of every house occupied by Jews. Jewish children were not permitted to attend public schools, nor expected to play with Aryan children.

One day, in August 1942, a company of the SS-German army unit arrived unexpectedly to arrest all, deport some, and execute majority of the Jews, including their wives and children. At that time in Brzostek, about one fifth of the population was of the Jewish ancestry, identified formally as the Polish Jews. The Germans

arrived in several army trucks, very early, when it was still twilight, approximately one hour prior to the sunrise. By making very loud noises through loudspeakers, they awaked people in the houses, announcing that until the evening nobody is allowed to leave houses, and **any adult or child found outside, will be shot** immediately without any notice. Everybody in our house woke up, and I remember my Mom saying, "Something bad is going to happen." Through the window, I saw the SS-men armed with automatic weapons, dressed in black uniforms with the silver deadhead icon in their caps, walking and talking to each other. At one moment, I noticed in the nearby potato field one man, an adult dressed in a pajama, possibly a Jew, trying to hide himself between the green potato plants, only to be immediately **shot dead by one of the SS-men**. Seeing that, I was more baffled than afraid, and the whole situation excited me greatly. I was only 12 years old.

Guided by one Polish policeman, who knew where Jews were living, a group of German SS-men was visiting every Jewish house marked by the blue David Star. Screaming loud, the Germans forced whole families to leave their houses at once and to walk towards the marketplace.

The day appeared to be sunny, and the time was half to eight, when I decided to inquire about the situation myself. Pretending to be going to my school - but not telling about that to anybody in my family - I took my backpack and left the house so that nobody could notice me. Actually, my backpack saved my life later, as described below.

Not afraid, I walked unhurriedly on the right side of the road (there were no sidewalks) towards the marketplace located about one mile from our house. On the way I noticed all houses locked, driveways deserted, and no people around, neither the SS-men. "Evidently all Jews had been already gathered on the marketplace," I thought. When I came closer, in the far distance near the market place, I saw a few empty German lorries, but no people. **Aware that I must not show myself visible as then I may be shot**, I sneaked into the nearby bushes, and used the rear access to the marketplace, one along the creek, well known to me. This way I was able to crawl into one corner of the nearest building, to lay flat on the ground, and to observe what is happening on the marketplace.

What I saw, I will never forget. The SS-men were packing forcibly men into the lorries, screaming onto them and hitting some with butt-end of their rifles. Only a few old men but many women with their children were sitting in rows on the pavement in the middle of the marketplace. All women, gathering their kids around, were **weeping, their children crying loud, and two SS-men were screaming** at them to keep quiet. Among the children, I noticed some boys of my age, who were evidently scared but who did not weep, observing the SS-men with contempt.

At one moment, one SS-Man - whom I did not notice previously, but who kept guard at my corner of the marketplace - discovered my presence. He pointed his rifle at me, requested me to rise, and screamed: "**Was machst du hier?**" I was really scared, but I did not demonstrate that and replied bravely, "Schule, schule..." which means „School, school". He noticed my backpack, and this made him aware that I am not a Jew, but only one stupid Polish kid who wants to go to school. He told me loudly: "Raus, verschwinde!", indicating that I must immediately disperse and hide from view.

I was lucky, because according to the rules, **he could kill me on the spot or arrest me and place me jointly with the Jewish children** on the marketplace. At that moment, I realized that finding myself between the Jewish kids would mean the end of my life, and that my Mother would never be aware what had happened to me. Surely, the Germans had made clear, already in the morning, via loudspeakers, that anybody who leaves house will be shot. But, luckily, I was not shot.

Crawling through bushes along the creek, and then sneaking thought the potato fields, trying to become undetectable, I returned safely to my house. Nobody in my family discovered my escapade, and I **did not tell about it anybody**, and particularly not my Mom, for the obvious reasons to avoid being punished for my foolishness.

About noon, I heard Victoria saying that the **Jewish synagogue is on fire**. Looking through the window, I noticed wreaths of smoke emerging from the synagogue building, located about 500 yards from our farm. Later I saw many German lorries (my Mom said that they may be loaded with Jews) driving from the market place to the Jewish cemetery. Soon after, from about 3:00 PM to 6:00 PM, we were hearing constant and loud cries of frighten weeping women, crying children, and screams of the Germans, and also the typical scattered sound of automatic weapons. With tears in her eyes, my Mom said, “The **SS-men are killing all women, children and elderly men** on the Jewish cemetery.”

It was dark, about 8 PM, when the SS-men thugs were leaving, and we heard their loudspeaker advising – in German and in Polish - that their action is completed. This evening, even at night, nobody in Brzostek had the courage to leave home, and I never after went to the Jewish cemetery.

On the next day when going to school, I noticed that the front door of every Jewish house was sealed with a yellow ribbon, and that there was a white flyer glued to the door, with the following description, both in Polish and German languages, “Property of Germany - trespassing will be punished by death.”

A few weeks later, some of my school colleagues invented a **new game**, where one half of boys pretended to be Germans and the other half - Jews. The ‘Jews’ were standing at the brick wall, pretending to cry, and the ‘Germans’ were screaming at them and then ‘shooting’ them using wooden stick assumed to be rifles. The game was won, if the ‘Jews’ were collapsing and well simulating to be dead and the ‘Germans’ were brutal and sadistic. Actually, the boys agreed to play ‘Jews’ only because in the next round of the same game they became ‘Germans’. I did not like this game, but I played it only once, involved in both rounds. Thinking about that today, I believe that children accept the real tragedy differently than adults. At that time, being only 12 years old, I believed that the process of life is defined by acting adults, exactly as seen by me and heard by me. “**It must be as it is, and nothing can be changed by me,**” became my maxim. Not being scared, I felt sorry for Jews, myself being content of not being a Jew.

Referring to the holocaust, I must mention one Pole, Peter Pilat. Knowing that hiding Jews was punishable by death, he was hiding one Jewish family for over two years, endangering himself and his family. About this case I found after the war, in the year 1946, when visiting Drzyzgas in their house and meeting one Jewish lady, once our neighbor. She told me how she and her family had survived the war,

admiring the **bravery of Peter Pilat**, who with his family was residing in the leased part of her house as her tenant. At the moment of noticing the start of the Brzostek holocaust (as described above), Peter Pilat hid her, her husband, and their one child in a camouflaged part of the basement. Subsequently, he fed them regularly, allowing her Jewish family to leave the basement but only at night, and only for a few minutes. Also Pilat's wife and his two daughters were aware about the Jews hidden in their house, they pretended successfully as being completely unaware about this fact. When conversing with this Jewish lady, I saw tears in her eyes, when she said to me, "I am thankful to Pilat for saving my life and that of my family from the moment the Brzostek holocaust started, through the long two years, till the end of the war." When I asked her what she wants to do now, she said, "Now I am leaving my property to be owned by Pilats, with me and my family immigrating to America."

When the Jews women and children were shot by Germans on the Jewish cemetery in Brzostek, then in August 1942, neither I nor my family were conscious that in the nearby house Peter Pilat is hiding Jews. He risked his and his family life for over two years, until the time when Russian army entered Brzostek in January 1945.

In Torun. It was a rainy day in August, when Mom got telegram from Jadzia in Torun, informing that on July 29th 1943 my **grandmother, Franciszka born Wagner, died**. My Mom cried, and Basia and I were very sad. Three month later, we got another telegram, also from Jadzia, informing that on October 2nd 1943 **my grandfather, Maciej Jackowski, died**. It took my Mom more than one week to get permission from the German authorities for traveling to Torun, then located in the German Reich. It was evident that she will miss the funeral. Nevertheless, my Mom decided to travel and to take me with her.

First we traveled one hour by bus to Tarnow, then for another hour by train to Krakow, from where another train took us in about six hours directly to Torun. During our two hours spent in the crowded, tobacco smelling railway station in Krakow, waiting for the Torun train, my Mom explained to me the current situation in Torun. She said, "The city of Torun is the same as you remember it, but all **people there speak German only, and you must not speak Polish in public.**" And then she added, "If you speak Polish, you may be arrested, and I would have problems to get you out."

At the Krakow station, our train arrived already full of passengers, mostly German soldiers. Some soldiers looked to me as they had been wounded, because of white bandages on their bodies. We traveled at night, and there was no light in the train, except for flashlights switched on occasionally by soldiers. In our compartment, besides my Mom and me, there were also four persons, all German soldiers, smoking continuously. They let the window seats to be occupied by my Mom and me. One soldier, an officer, conversed with my Mom, of course in German, but I did not understand what about, except for words like "Stalingrad, artillery, Infantry, tanks, and Bolsheviks."

From my stay in Torun, I have two vivid memories. First, it was the air alarm, occurring each night and always announced by the loud and terrified sound of sirens. About a few minutes later, I could hear the deep sound of American bombers flying overhead. Yet, Torun was never bombed. Second, it was the explanation how a rifle

works, made to me by my cousin, Rafal, dressed in the German uniform. He and his younger brother, Roman had been drafted to the German army, because their parents were considered as Germans. Although their parents had been born in Poland and always believed being Poles, they became automatically the citizens of Germany, once they had decided not to be deported to General Government - the area of Poland under German occupation. Preferring to stay at home in Torun was equivalent to an automatic acceptance of the German citizenship called '**Ange-Deutsch**'.

All my relatives in Torun, including Jadzia - who during the war was taking care for my grandparents as long as they had been alive – became 'Ange-Deutsch'. There were also other two categories of German citizens. '**Reich-Deutsch**', applicable to any person whose parents had been the true Germans, and '**Volks-Deutsch**', applicable to any person who had been citizen not of Germany, but who wanted to become the German, by proving that some of his ancestors had been born as Germans. The true German was any person able to prove that all his ancestors were **German Arians** up to the third generation. The Polish underground organizations often assassinated individuals known as 'Volks-Deutsch', such ones who were living in the part of Poland under the German occupation.

WAR. It was late May 1944 when for the first time I heard the distant muffled and scarred sound of artillery, initially noticed only at night, but later even during the day. "The Russians are coming," said Victoria, and added, "our basement must be made ready for us to move there once the war comes to Brzostek".

A few weeks later, lorries full of German soldiers, armed cars, and many tanks were driving day and night, passing by our house. One day, a first-aid military point was made in our house, an artillery battery was installed in our garden. Victoria decided, and we moved to the basement. Any time the guns fired, our house trembled, and white slips of paint dropped from our basement ceiling, scarring the whole family except me.

Once in the evening, greatly excited, I snaked out from our basement to see what happens in our living room, converted to the first aid station. I never forget seeing one **German soldier, whose belly had been torn apart**. Using his hands, he tried to prevent his bleeding intestines to flow off his belly, yet he was oddly calm and did not cry, making me astonished. Then I sneaked also into the garden to see the guns, but when they started to shoot, I felt pain in my ears and run speedily back into the basements. Soon after, I heard the Russian **artillery projectiles whistling above** our house and landing with exploding clatter nearby. By then we knew that whenever the German artillery were shooting, the Russians responded instantly. One night, the Russians hit our neighbor's house and killed there my friend, Janek Dudek. Yet, the Russians were never able to hit directly our house, neither any of our two barns, nor any of the artillery guns in our garden.

We spent only three nights in the basement, because on the fourth day morning all population was ordered to leave Brzostek, declared by Germans as the war front area. The Germans advised by loudspeakers that all persons must leave latest by Friday night (the next day), and that **any person found hereafter will be shot without warning**.

The same day, Josef helped by Jendrek and Victoria, made an unusual hiding place for goods in the hay farm. After moving aside the hay, they excavated one about 12 ft long, 4ft wide, and 6ft deep hole in the middle of the barn. Then they buried there the two large American leather trunks, and covered them with the excavated soil, piling a lot of hay on top. The trunks had been previously loaded with valuable items, important documents, and also with my seven teddy bears, something that I had eagerly insisted upon.

Following the German order, we left Brzostek and moved to another farm, owned by a farmer named Cison, whose son had been released the previous year from Auschwitz thanks to involvement of my Mom, acting as his attorney. His farm was located high in the middle of an adjacent mountain range, about one hour walking time from Brzostek. Its location – relatively far away from the battle area – appeared to us as a safe place **to survive the fighting, until coming of the Russians**. One large dwelling house, three barns, one pig house, adjacent spacious garden, and several hectares of agrarian land – some parts adjacent to the farm - comprised the farm. From the garden, full of grownup apple-, pear- and plum trees, I got a panoramic breath taking view. Looking down the hill, I saw the wide flat surface of agrarian fields with the city of Brzostek in the middle, then the narrow silver band of the Wisloka river cutting the plane almost in half, and behind all that an another range of high mountains covered by dense forests.

Besides the farmer family and us – meaning Drzyzga's and my family - there were also six other families, all hoping to survive the war in Cison's farm. We were accommodated in the farmhouse, but the other families occupied the barns. There were a lot of children, but those of my age were only three, and I remember playing ball with them. We, children, were **not afraid about the sounds of war**. When hearing the deep sound of distant guns firing, followed by shriek of artillery projectiles, we knew that the artillery barrage just started. Then we stopped playing, and run to the wooded top of the mountain nearby. Laying flat on the grass, we looked down on the valley below, seeing where the explosions - marked by tiny blazing white spots of black smoke – take place. Mostly we found the artillery bullets landing down and exploding usually on agrarian fields, but sometimes they hit barns or houses of the village far below, creating fire and smoke, what particularly amazed all kids and me as well

Although in the Cison's farm we had spent already three weeks, It was obvious to anybody that the war front did not move at all. Some kind of a routine prevailed. Russian and German guns exchanged their shots a few times during a day, at similar hours, and occasionally also at night, but there was **no offensive action on part of Russians or Germans**. Usually the artillery bombardment was short, about 15 minutes, followed by a period of calm, but then repeated at unpredictable intervals, from 10 minutes to four hours or more. Evidently, the front line stopped, with Brzostek remaining in the no-man-land.

Two times I went down to our house in Brzostek in order to bring some forgotten items, usually clothing. All the time the weather was sunny and warm. My trip required my walking about 15 minutes down the hill, on a steep path through the forest, and then about another 40 minutes through an open space upon the narrow country road, between fields still covered by growing potatoes, cabbage, and rye.

Each time I **found Brzostek being almost completely deserted**: no people, no soldiers, except for birds and some cats. Approaching the city, I went always ready to hide, being fully aware that I may be shot whenever spotted by any German soldier. Somehow, whenever I was in Brzostek, I saw no Germans, nor any Polish people, and no artillery shelling occurred at that time.

The second time of my trip, in the kitchen of our house, I discovered our cat sleeping on the floor. But when I came closer, I found that our cat was dead. Feeling sorry for this friendly animal, I thought, “Why did our cat die of hunger when so many alive birds are still around?” To me the whole world look strange, making me fully aware that this is the world of adults, one that I must accept as it is, also one where I have to live now. Nevertheless, I liked my lonesome trips.

Then on Sunday, August 8th 1944 an immense tragedy took place, as described in detail in the next chapter.



BRZOSTEK



Brzostek, Poland – the place of my childhood and my teenager years from 1939 to 1944



Brzostek, July 1944 – German artillery in the garden



Brzostek, September 1939 – Polish Army on the march; just prior to start of the 2nd World War

CHAPTER 29 – The Last Chapter

When ending to write the previous Chapter, originally intended to be the last one, I realized that I must create one more Chapter, the LAST CHAPTER, dealing with the subjects of my death, the after-life, the God, our Earth, and the Universe.

Every Biography contains always the Start (Birth) and the End (Death) of the described person, but in comparison, any Autobiography must contain the Start but the End can be treated only as probabilistic.

“What is PROBABILITY?”, asked me once my daughter, Kasia, being then 10 years old, and my explanation was as follows:

“Throw the dice, and the probability of getting ‘1’ is low because there is only one chance in 6, meaning $\frac{1}{6}$ equal 17% probability, but for not getting ‘1’ there are 5 chances in 6, meaning $\frac{5}{6}$, equal 83% probability. Moreover, the probability of getting ‘1’ three times in a row is extremely low, because $\frac{1}{6} \times \frac{1}{6} \times \frac{1}{6} = \frac{1}{216}$, equal 0.463% probability.” When I finished my explanation about the probability, Kasia looked on me with her blue childish eyes and said, “Yes, now I understand.”

Hence, the probability of me **to die is 100%**, and the probability of me dieing in Houston and having my ashes being placed in an urn, adjacent to Kasia’s urn located in our family tomb in the Botanical Garden of Memorial Cemetery in Houston, is very high, **perhaps 90%**. The same probability may apply to my granddaughters being very sad and crying at my prepaid funeral, and a few months later, being happy by inheriting our real estate and the large amount of cash left in our bank accounts.

About who dies first, Olenka, my wife and my life partner, or I, I don’t want to dwell upon, and also not about the feelings one must have when attending the funeral of the other loved person. This is too sad to think and to write about, but the probability of this to happen is very high.

What is the probability of me and Olenka meeting at and living forever in the heaven? Of us meeting there our daughter Kasia? Of meeting my Mom and my sister Basia? My Father? My brother Andrzej? Janusz, my good friend? My other friends, the sea captains and colleagues from Merchant Marine Academy who are dead already? Will I see my Mom being friendly with Janette, the 2nd wife of my Father? Will Olenka meet her Mom and Stefan, her Father there? Will we be hearing the pleasant heavenly music and the enjoyable singing of angels? The probability of all that is **very high, but only** according to the Christian Religion, the Roman Catholic one, under which I had been baptized, and according to which I had my life lived good enough to be entitled to go to heaven after my death. All these events appear to me as to be too good to be true.

Nevertheless, in my opinion, the **Christian Religion is the best one**. Requesting not to revenge but to forgive, to live according to the 10th Commandments, this religion promises the heaven for all people who believe and whose life was proper, with all sins being forgiven by the God.

As we know today, the humankind comprises presently (2018) 7.2 billion of human beings and has 81 formally recognized religions, with Christian comprising about 32%, Moslem 24%, Hinduism 17%, Buddhism 12%, Judaism only 0.2%, but

as many as 19% are Atheists. Among these 81 religions, 66 believe in Paradise, Heaven and Hell; 17 refer to the Bible; and only 10 believe in Reincarnation and Nirvana. Although both Christians and Moslems refer to the Bible for the origin of the World, yet there always existed and still exists the serious conflict between Christians and Moslems regarding **who will go to heaven and who to hell** at the End of the World.

Where is the Heaven? When I was 10 years old, I had believed that the heaven is very high above the clouds and hidden behind the blue sky. Later, as an adult, when flying in an airplane, seeing through the window the blue (atmosphere) below and the black (sky) above, I found no place for the Heaven there. Only by being acquainted with Astronomy and by learning about our Universe, I found some answers that **tranquilized my brain regarding my death**.

According to the current science, **the Universe is huge**, comprising about 170 billion galaxies, arranged in flat circles each ranging from 1,000 to 1,000,000 light years in diameter, and separated by many millions of light years from each other. The probability of the Universe to exist is very high, at least 99%.

The Universe's galaxies and distances are measured in the light years, but **what is one light year?** This is the incredible distance of 5,843.053 millions of miles that the Light - traveling with the speed of 185.282 miles per second - reaches in one (1) Earth Year, that means in 365 Earth Days. With this fantastic speed, the highest in our Universe, the Light needs 8 minutes and 19 seconds to travel from Sun to Earth, and in within one second, the Light could travel 8 times around our Earth.

We know today that Galaxies contain Star Systems, Interstellar Medium of Gas, Interstellar Dust and Cosmic Rays, and about 90% of Dark Matter. Being about 13.2 billions years old – as old as the whole Universe - the Galaxies are moving with the speed of about 380 miles per second (611 km/sec), away from each other. By tracing their movement, scientists concluded that there had been one point from which all Galaxies had started at one and the same time, about 13.2 billions Earth's years ago, and this led to creation of the Big Bang Theory.

Our Galaxy, the Milky Way, is huge too. With the diameter of about 100,000 light years, but only 1,000 light years thick, it has about 300 billions of stars and about 10 billions of planets, and among them, our Earth. The entire Galaxy has the rotational rate of about 15 to 50 million Earth's years, meaning our Galaxy's one year, and it is moving with the velocity of about 380 miles per second, like escaping from other galaxies. Considering the number of people (7.2 billion) living on the Earth today (2018), we can assume that every human being living on our Earth could possess as many as 41 stars (300 /7.2), if all the stars existing in our Milky Way Galaxy would be distributed among all the people on our planet.

One of the 300 billions of stars in the Milky Way galaxy, **our Sun** is located somewhere in the middle of the Milky Way galaxy, between the Arms of Sagitarius and Cygnus Orion. Having its own planetary system - comprising eight (8) orbiting Planets, with our Earth being one of them - our Sun is a relatively small size star. Much younger than the galaxy where resides, our Sun is also relatively young because only about 4,600 million years old, meaning that it had been created during the last 35% period (4.6/13.2) of the total time of our Universe's existence. It is expected that our Sun will support life on Earth for at least 2,500 million years but not

more than 5,000 million years, because then our Sun, continually expanding, shall become extremely big, finally ingesting our Earth.

Although the birth of Earth occurred about 4,600 million years ago, our planet needed about 600 million years to consolidate and to cool enough to make the Life being able to appear on our Earth. The first extremely primitive organisms were the **Chemistry Proto-cells**, the primary molecules with encoded RNA. Able to multiply by division, to embrace and to mold themselves to each other, these molecules were floating in the hot ocean slimes comprising chemicals mostly such as hydrogen, but without oxygen. Another 200 million of years were needed for the appearance of the **Single Cell** organisms, called **Bacteria**, able to adapt themselves to the Earth's environment so well, that they survived and flourish even today. The **Multi-cellular Organisms** appeared only 700 million years ago and became the first organisms comprising special DNA proteins, allowing for identification of kinds. They were also the first organisms that multiplied not only by division but also by sexual interaction, with some of them moving out from the seas onto the land. At that time, Algae and Seaweeds flourished in water, and Mosses and Grass invaded lands, and all kind of Bushes and Trees appeared. These living organisms created the Oxygen, becoming the integral part of the atmosphere. Affecting also the previously slimy oceans, the Oxygen killed many Bacteria and thus reduced the previous voluminous mass of these organisms. Yet all these organisms were created without the Mind; in other words, they had and have no "Brain".

The structure of the **MIND** appeared only 6 million years ago, initially embedded in still primitive and later in more advanced organisms. The MIND allowed these organisms to make decisions throughout their life. During this period of the life on Earth, we had **Reptiles, Amphibians, and Dinosaurs**. The **Human Race** appeared already 3.9 million years ago, as confirmed by inspecting the remains of the female body of Lucy, discovered in East Africa in the year 1974. If you are interested in this subject, read the book (326 pages) entitled '*Vital Dust, Life as Cosmic Imperative*', written by Christian de Duve, the Nobel Laureate.

We can trace the **Human civilization** for about 10,000 years ago, but the birth of Jesus Christ - that had occurred only 2018 years ago - appears to us as it had happened very long time ago. Under the term 'civilization', we mean the ability of Humans to write and to conserve their knowledge gained during their life. Transferring this knowledge to the future generations of Humans ensured for the astonishing progress, observed even today. For example, 300 years ago nobody expected to see railway with steam locomotives, still 200 years ago there were no airplanes, and 80 years ago I was using my metallic pen, immersed in a black ink bottle, to write my school essay on a lined paper, and through the window I saw carriages drawn by horses that made shit on the street.

Our **humankind was and is smart**. Once able to walk only 6 miles per hour, or to move 20 miles per hour on a horse, now people have cars driving easily over 100 miles per hour, and not only that, they fly faster and higher than birds can fly. Today, we have computers and cell phones that govern our life on our Earth already. About 40 years ago, people were visiting and landing on our Moon six times, and in a few years, Humans will visit our nearest planet, Mars.

Today, there are perhaps **too many people** living already on our Earth. Multiplied almost like Algae and Grass about 500 million years ago, now Humans seem to infest our planet like vermin. With some cities gathering several millions of individuals, many people are living almost like ants in multi-story structures, also polluting their environment, including seas and oceans. It is evident that the number of people living on our Earth is increasing exponentially. For example, in the year 1700 there were only 0.6 billion, in 1800 – 0.9 billion, in 1900 – 1.5 billion. Then, within the next 100 years the human population almost tripled, reaching 6.0 billion in the year 2000. Today, in 2018, there are 7.2 billion, and the current rate of growth is such that each year about 8,500,000 more human beings exist on our Earth. Should some calamity occur in the future – such as the climate change leading to lack of food, or rise of the ocean level in some areas decreasing the habitable land - then affected people will migrate from endangered lands, invading the safe lands, creating havoc and changing the Earth environment drastically.

There is also **the Nuclear Energy** that can lead to extreme benefits but also to disappearance of the human race, all depending on a few individuals governing their obedient people gathered in nations. The history shows that people were always fighting with each other, killing and maiming many. At the time of primitive kind of arms, thousands were killed in one battle, but today, one multiple-head nuclear bomb can kill millions of humans in a few seconds.

Considering the very fast progress of Technology in general, and the human tendency to fight and to kill, there is – in my opinion – the very high **probability of 67%** (throwing the dice with ‘1’ to ‘4’ inclusive) that our **humankind will exterminate itself within the next 200 years**. The dinosaurs – once the smartest and the biggest animals - didn’t govern the Earth forever, and the Humans may not govern the Earth forever too. Most probably the dinosaurs were too big to survive, not finding enough food during the time of disaster, such as an asteroid hitting our Earth, according to our current belief. Similarly, Humans, so far the most intelligent creatures on our Earth, seem to be not smart enough to handle the atomic energy so as not to kill each other.

The **structure of the human as the animal is far from perfect**. Our average life span is extremely short when comparing with the age of our Earth. In our brains, made of meat-like substance, there are no chips that could allow us to communicate by radio waves, to remember all what had happen by making and storing lengthy videos in our brains, to make rapidly complex calculations in our minds, and to remember voluminous data as easily as our computers and cell-phones can do for us today.

Perhaps, the next organisms living on this Earth – our Planet is expected being able to support Life for the next 2,500 million years – will become **inhabited by creatures with built-in kind of cell-phones, also impervious to nuclear radiation**. Only the God knows what will happen in the distant future on our Earth.

Do I believe in God? Of course, I do, because being familiar with Astronomy makes it impossible not to believe in God, and with theses words, I end my Last Chapter. Learning about the Universe allowed me to see **my life as insignificant** enough to make me not to worry about my death, and **I thank God that had given me life that was long and exciting**.



Olenka and Wieslaw (in their 80-ties) in their house at Roxton in Houston

The resting place of Jurkiewicz Family in Houston, Texas



The Botanical Garden in the Memorial Cemetery in Houston



The JURKIEWICZ Tomb in the Botanical Garden of the Memorial Cemetery in Houston

Our Universe - 1

BIG BANG THEORY

BIG BANG

OUR UNIVERSE

OTHER UNIVERSES

The Big Bang theory explains what happened during and after creation of our Universe. Astronomy and physics show clearly that our Universe had a beginning.

Our Universe sprang into existence as "singularity" around 13.7 billion years ago, as an infinitesimally small, infinitely hot, infinitely dense, something - a singularity. Where did it come from? We don't know. Why did it appear? We don't know.

After its initial appearance, it inflated creating "Big Bang", and then expanded and cooled, going from very, very small and very, very hot, to the size and temperature of our and other universes. Our Universe continues to expand and to cool to this day.

We are inside of it: incredible creatures living on a unique planet, circling a beautiful star clustered together with several hundred billion other stars in a galaxy soaring through the cosmos, all of which is inside of an expanding universe that began as an infinitesimal singularity, which appeared out of nowhere for reasons unknown. This is the Big Bang theory.

The BIG BANG THEORY and the existence of many Universes - (Extracted from my PowerPoint Show)

Stars and galaxies within 3 million light-years from us

Milky Way

Andromeda

Triangulum

2 million light-years

1 million

Leo II

Leo I

Draco

Ursa Minor

Sextans

Milky Way

Sagittarius

Large Magellanic Cloud

Small Magellanic Cloud

Carina

Sculptor

Fornax

Phoenix

DDO 210

Pegasus

LGS 3

IC 10

And VII

NGC 147

NGC 185

And V

Andromeda (M31)

And II

And I

And III

And VI

NGC 205

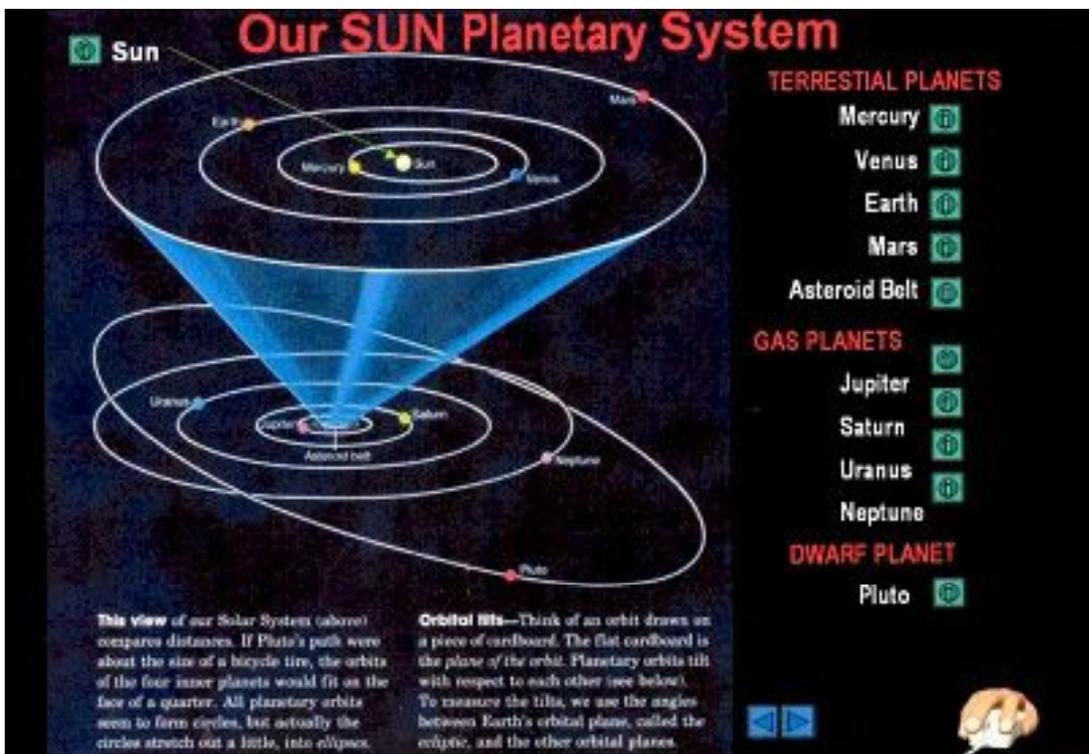
M32

Our Milky Way galaxy and the nearest galaxies - (Extracted from my PowerPoint Show)

Our Universe - 3

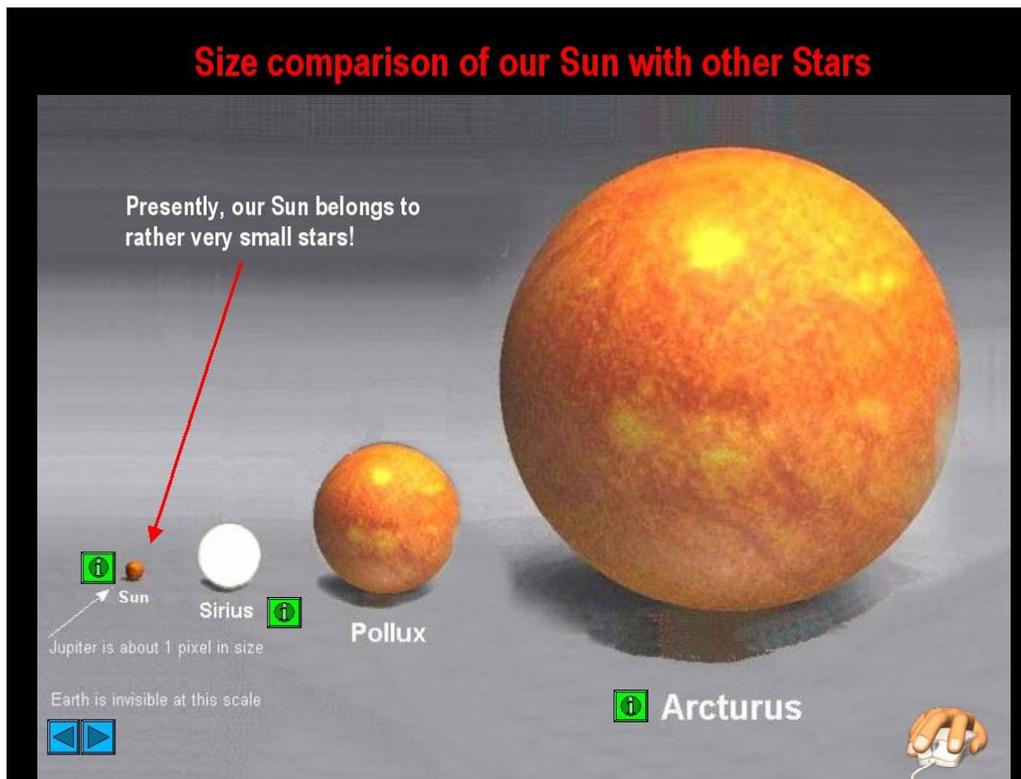


Creation of Sun's Planetary System started 4,500 millions years ago - (Extracted from my PowerPoint Show)

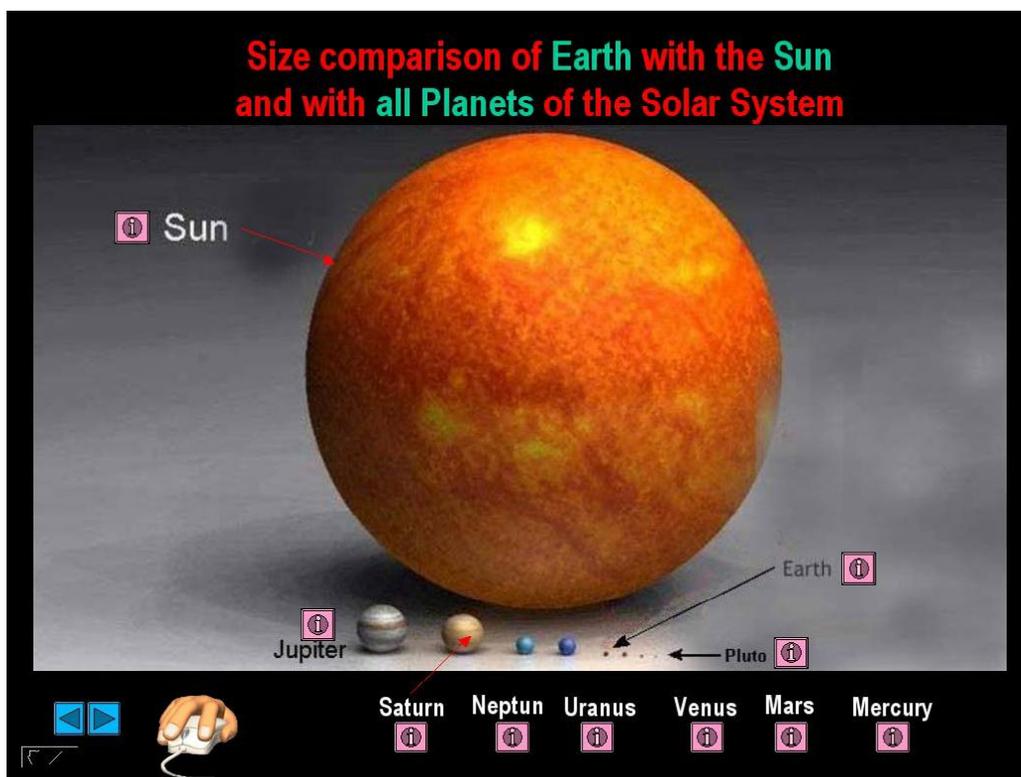


Our Sun's Planetary System - (Extracted from my PowerPoint Show)

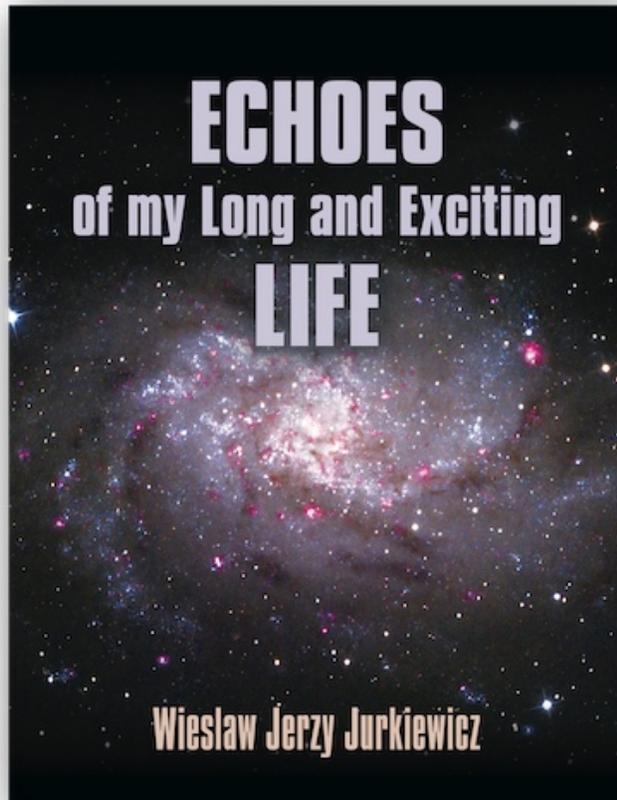
Our Universe - 4



Our Sun is small when compared with other Stars - (Extracted from my PowerPoint Show)



Our Earth is small when compared with other Planets and our Sun - (Extracted from my PowerPoint Show)



Portraying all events chronologically, Wieslaw (88) describes his childhood, teenager years during 2nd World War, witnessing Holocaust, attendance in Merchant Marine Academy, marriage, study at Gdansk University making him Civil Engineer & Architect, escape from communistic Poland as Sailor, and his residence jointly with his wife in 7 countries.

ECHOES of my Long and Exciting LIFE

by Wieslaw Jerzy Jurkiewicz

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