

# Our Yiddish Club in Chelm Visit a Hospital & Firehouse

by Philip *Fishl* Kutner

Members of Our Yiddish Club from Yenemsville journeyed to Chelm to learn more about their heritage. In the last issue the group's third day saw **Leybl the Librarian Tova the Teacher, and Mendel the Computer Maven** visit a school and a library.

At breakfast **Nar the Narrator** said that **Mendel the Computer Maven** would brief us on info found while *googling* on his computer. Mendel said that:

- The **Polish Genealogical Society of America** is at: 984 N. Milwaukee Ave. Chicago, IL 60622.
- Unlike our 911, the Poland emergency numbers are: Medical: 999, Fire department: 998, Police: 997
- There are towns in the United States named Poland in Ohio, Indiana, Maine and 2 in New York.
- To show solidarity after 9/11 firefighters in Poland sounded their sirens on September 12, and Hungarian firefighters tied black ribbons to their vehicles.
- Prof. Stanislaw Batawia, Poland wrote that in January 1940, the **Chelm Lubelski Hospital**, patients (128 women, 304 men and 18 children) were machine-gunned and buried in the hospital grounds, under the eyes of the Polish hospital staff. The SS needed the buildings for their quarters.

Today **Danny the Doctor** and **Fayvl the Firefighter** will travel together, for they have a common interest. Danny's practice is at a burn center, and Fayvl is interested in burn therapy. They learned that there was no Burn Center in Chelm and that the major one was at the Medical University of Silesia in southwest Poland.

## Katowice Burn Center

The Medical University of Silesia consists of three faculties: Faculty of Medicine and Division of Nursing in Katowice (the one that carries lectures in English), Faculty of Medicine and Division of Dentistry in Zabrze and Faculty of Pharmacy and Division of Medical Analytics in Sosnowiec.

By far, of all the members of Our Yiddish Club Danny would prove to be the one to have found the most needing to be done in Chelm. Danny decided that as a member of the American Burn Association Board of Directors and a speaker at the next convention, May 10-13 in Chicago, he would report on the need for helping Chelm set up a burn center.

His plan was to work with the Karol Marcinkowski University of Medical Sciences in Poznan. The University offers a 3-year study program in nursing. Graduates receive the degree of B.N. After a further 2 years graduates receive the degree of M.Sc. (Nursing). □

## Firefighting in Poland

Danny and Fayvl then visited a firehouse, and spoke with the fire chief. They learned that a fire department is called *straz pozarna* (fire guard), and a fire engine is a *wóz strazcki*. Professional firefighters belong to a national organization and are financed from the national budget—as are the police. To be a professional firefighter one attends a school in Czestochowa or Warsaw. The national organization website is at: <http://www.kgsp.gov.pl/>

Graduates receive the title of lieutenant-warrant officer (or second warrant officer in Polish, *chorazy*). They then lead firefighting actions. A prerequisite is that one has to be 170 cm tall (5'7"). Fire engines for professional firefighters are custom built, mostly truck make Star.

Also there are volunteer groups. A few people can organize, build a firehouse and rent it out for parties, weddings, etc. to finance their expenses, and may get funding from their town. They provide general help to the town: pump water out of flooded cellars, etc., and get most of their equipment from the professional group.

Poland participated in the 2002 International Firefighters Olympics at Christchurch, New Zealand. There were 55 events and each had categories. Poland, in its first appearance at the games, received 29 medals and 15 Gold medals. Poland came in 12<sup>th</sup>, and the USA 8<sup>th</sup>. There were 30 countries participating and there were over 1500 athletes participating.

On the way back Fayvl told Danny that during the time he was going to be at the IAYC conference in Minneapolis next June, that he was going over to visit the Burn Center at Regions Hospital in St. Paul. Fayl believes it is the best center in the Upper Midwest.

Back at the hotel the conversation at dinner was about how quickly time had passed, and how little time was left. Only Perele and Rokhl had not been heard from. Tune in next month as we follow Our Yiddish Club members on their final day in Chelm.