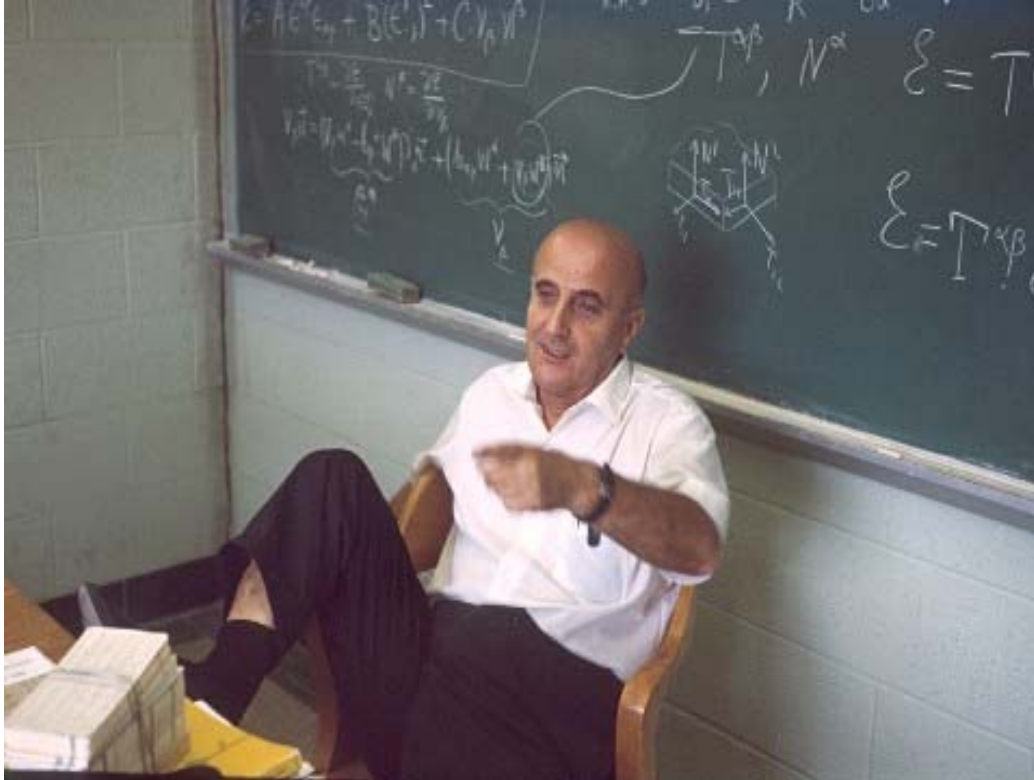


My father - Stefan Drobot. A personal perspective.

By Vladimir Drobot



My father was born as Samuel Djament on August 7, 1913 in Cracow (Kraków), Poland. He was born shortly before his twin brother, Jakub. His father, Itzak Djament, was employed as a timber surveyor and his mother, Chave, nee Lind, was a homemaker. In addition to his twin brother, he had three older male siblings: Abraham, Jósef, and Israel (Julek Rutkowski) - their biographies appear elsewhere in this site. No information is available about his primary education, but he attended the 7th State Gimnazjum (high school) in Cracow, named after Adam Mickiewicz. He graduated (got his “matura”) in 1931. His mathematical abilities showed early. While in high school, he tutored older students, including some of his brothers, in Euclidean geometry. He would occasionally reminisce on the subject and a word “dumb” (głupi, in Polish) would occasionally slip through. He also loved Latin and excelled in it, and would tutor in that subject too. While he was in his 30’s and 40’s, he would delight in reciting from memory long passages of poems by Virgil and prose by Cicero. He did not consider anyone to be properly educated if the person did not have a mastery of Latin. In 1932 Sam’s father died of a heart disease, and the family’s material circumstances worsened considerably. The five brothers did, however, stay together, and helped their mother the best they could. That was actually noted by the Jewish community in Cracow. Irena Lillianthal, Julek’s second wife, confided once that she remembered only two things about Djaments from the Cracow days: first, Samuel was tutoring her in geometry and she was smoking

big cigars during the sessions; and second, everyone in the city was admiring the way the brothers took care of their widowed mother. “Everyone” refers to the Jewish populace of Cracow, the Poles and the Jews lived in different worlds at that time.

After matura, Sam enrolled in the Jagiellonian University in Cracow in the department of philosophy, studying mathematics. The prospects of making a living doing mathematics were quite slim in that era, so he was simultaneously studying physics, also at the Jagiellonian University, and engineering at Warsaw Polytechnic. The residency requirements in those days were not what they are now. All these studies finally came to fruition in 1938: Samuel got his M.S. degree in mathematics with a thesis entitled “On the mathematical theory of struggle for survival.” At the same time, he got a Certificate of Completion of Studies in physics, and “Half-a-Diploma” from the engineering department of the Warsaw Polytechnic. During the year 1937-38 he taught mathematics at a private high school in Rabka-Zdrój, a small town south of Cracow. While in Rabka, he developed a taste for technical mountain climbing. Some of the ascents he made were blood curdling when viewed from below.



A blood curdling ascent



School in Rabka where Stefan taught mathematics

When the war started in September 1939, he and his twin brother sensed that it would be best not to remain under German occupation and they ran eastward. At the end of the commotion they ended up in Lwów, which was occupied by the Soviet army as a result of the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement. Sam tried to get a job at the Lwów University, and in fact, became an assistant in the department of theoretical mechanics. The prospects for a long term employment, however, were poor. At that time, the Soviet government encouraged the refugees, such as Samuel and Jakub, to resettle deep in the bowels of Russia. Strong hints were made



With Karol Mysels in 1933. Their friendship later soured.

that if they did not resettle more or less voluntarily, they might be shipped at a time and to a destination not of their choosing. There were “recruiters” looking for skilled workers and the brothers could have left Lwów and gone to any number of places. Sam and Jakub considered the then current geopolitical situation and decided that the safest place would be half way between Berlin and Tokyo, and that's how they ended up in the middle of Siberia, in the town then named Stalinsk, since renamed Novokuznetsk.



My origins: Stefan and Nata in Siberia

From the point of view of the Soviets, Jakub was a better catch - he was a genuine electrical engineer, and could and did start immediately designing power plants. Sam's request to work at an academic institution was granted, in the sense that he was made a “lab assistant” at the local technical college. One of his duties was to erase the blackboards at the end of the day. Stalinsk was actually in the center of a large industrial enterprise, there were huge steel mills and coal mines in the region. There was also an institution of higher learning there, and that's where Sam landed.

Sam would carry out his tasks diligently, and would engage the local faculty in mathematical discussions. They would soon realize that he was a genuine mathematician and promotions came in quick order. He ended up as a senior lecturer, corresponding roughly to an associate professor in American academia. He was even sent to Moscow for a year to engage in research, which was quite an honor and a recognition of his talents. While in Stalinsk, he met his wife, Natalie Taganovitch and they had a son Vladimir, born in 1941. Natalie was working in the same technical institute as he was - she was an instructor in the chemistry department. His exile in Siberia clearly saved his life. The part of his family which stayed behind was thoroughly exterminated by the Germans. Among his close family there was only one exception: his brother Israel, now Julek. Samuel was actually quite surprised to find out after the war that Israel was still alive.



Stefan with his co-workers in Siberia

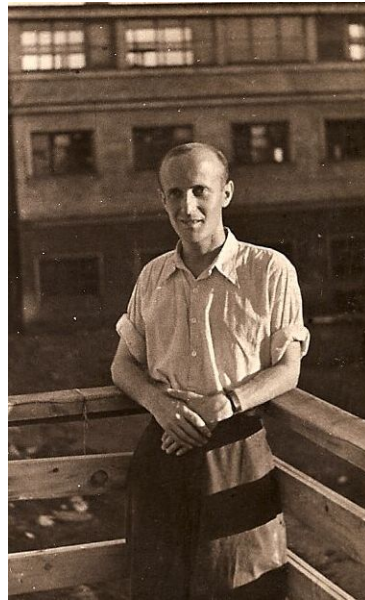
Samuel would reminisce quite a bit about his life in Siberia. There was no food available in the stores, and each family was given a plot of land to cultivate and to grow things to eat, mainly potatoes. After a day's work at their regular job, they would all gather the shovels, the buckets, and what not, march to their plot and work the land. They also kept a pig in the bathroom. They would buy a small suckling from some peasant, fattened it up on scraps, and then butcher it. That was, strictly speaking, illegal but everyone was doing it and the authorities looked the other way. Neither Sam nor his brother was drafted into the army; the Soviets never fully trusted them. Overall, his recollections of the life in Siberia were not all that grim. He was perfectly well aware that he would have perished if he stayed in Europe. He also learned Russian, which came quite handy in his later career.

When the war ended, the refugees, such as Samuel and Jakub, were permitted to return to Poland and both of them did so in 1946. Initially, Natalie and Vladimir were not allowed to leave and stayed behind, but Samuel was quite persistent, even wrote a plea directly to Stalin, and in 1947 the authorities relented and let his family join him in Poland. Things changed quite a bit after his return to Poland. Jakub joined the Communist party, and changed his name to Jan Drobot. Samuel did not join, but did change the name to Stefan Drobot. Incidentally, his other brother, Israel, survived the occupation and the German's hunt for the Jews. He obtained fake papers showing that he

was a good Catholic, named Stanislaw Juliusz Rutkowski. He kept that name after the war. The name “Djament” was just too Jewish - you never knew what might happen. Within the family, he was always referred to as Julek. Later, after he retired, he wrote a fascinating [memoir](#) detailing his experiences.



Technological institute in Siberia where Stefan and Nata both worked



Stefan in Siberia in the building above

Return to Poland coincides with the beginning of a very long and sometimes acrimonious feud Stefan had with his twin brother Janek. They would not speak to each other for years. According to my mother, Nata, this was a bit surprising since in Siberia the two brothers were very close and consulted each other before making any decision, even in the most mundane matters. It seems certain that the reason for this feud has to do with Stefan's unsuccessful attempt to emigrate to the United States right after the war. It is a fact, documented elsewhere in this site, that Stefan tried to arrange for this as soon as he returned from Siberia. He wrote several letters to his presumed relatives in the U.S. trying to obtain a "sponsor", i.e., someone in America who would vouch for him, and perhaps provide some initial financial assistance, if needed. He also wrote to his college friend, Karel Mysels, and solicited help in this matter. Apparently Mysels was successful to a significant degree in this endeavor, perhaps even expending some of his own money, and was fully expecting Stefan to arrive quickly. It seems that Stefan even had in his possession some necessary papers for his emigration, such as a visa and what not. I also believe that Nata and I were included in these papers. Then, Stefan suddenly broke off any and all contacts with Mysels and all the other people who were trying to help him.



The street in Wrocław where we lived.

The address was Kosynierów Gdynskich 2a apartment 4

The apartment is located to the right of the gate at the end of the street

Mysels was actually quite angry over this - it shows in some of his later letters to Stefan. In fact, later on, after Stefan finally came to the United States, Mysels gave him a rather cold shoulder - I think they met only once. The reason for this breaking off of the communication is a bit of a mystery. Apparently what happened is that Janek got hold of Stefan's papers and destroyed them. It certainly would have been to Janek's

disadvantage to have a twin brother in America. Janek joined the communist party, and was on his way to becoming a big wig, and in these days a relative in America, especially a close one, was a big detriment to one's career. It is hard to explain this to someone who has not lived in Poland at that time, but it would be a big black mark in person's personnel file.



The house where we lived. The open door led to four apartments.
Ours was upstairs, the three windows on the right.

This theory makes sense to a considerable degree. According to all accounts by the people who knew them, Stefan and Janek were extremely close both before the war and during the Siberian years. Then came the break, and it was a sharp one - it essentially lasted for the rest of their lives. There seems to be no other candidate for an explanation. The usual suspects, money and women, don't make much sense. Neither one of them had any serious money, really. Janek was a bit better off because of his trips to the West and his position in the party, but Stefan never really cared for money very much. There are mentions and hints of money disputes going back to their Cracow days: Stefan apparently supported Janek during his studies in Bratislava and was never repaid for it. Janek claims that he and Stefan started a bookbinding business at the age of 13, and gives a detailed account how Stefan got more money out of the deal than he deserved. Maybe. By the time they both got to Siberia, they seemed to have the accounts all squared away, so why would the issue re-surface once they got back to Poland? Woman? Well, I have no idea who could it have been, and there is not a speck of a hint, even the most circumstantial, pointing in this direction. Another possibility is that Stefan was angry because Janek

joined the communist party. Well, I don't think so. It was pretty clear that Janek made his move strictly for material reasons and never believed in any of the propaganda crap. Stefan chose not to join, but he never blamed anyone for doing it. It was perfectly understandable, and you cannot really blame people for trying to better their lot in life. We are not talking here about some extravagant villas on Capri or anything like that. In practical terms, what joining the party meant is that you could buy meat everyday without too much hassle - they had special stores for party members. Lots of his friends and colleagues were members, and he got along with them quite well. One more possibility is that while Janek did not destroy the papers himself, but urged Stefan to do so, Stefan obliged and later regretted doing it. That is a possibility, but it does not negate the basic premise that the spat between the brothers was over emigration matters. Whatever happened, Stefan's feud with Janek was a big part of his personality.

There is a dearth of hard evidence of exactly what and how it all happened. Julek corroborates the fact that Janek destroyed the papers, but he apparently did not see documents himself. Stefan would absolutely refuse to discuss the subject, and Nata, while being a firm believer in the story, was also essentially guessing what happened. I actually met Mysels once, the circumstances were as follows. Julek and Irena (Julek's second wife) were visiting us a long time ago in San Jose and Mysels' name came up. Irena knew him from Poland and very much wanted to meet him. I have a feeling, but no proof of course, that they were romantically involved back in Cracow. A few phone calls were made, and as luck had it Mysels was attending a conference in San Francisco area at that very moment and a visit was arranged. (He was a Ph.D. chemist at the University of Southern California). I picked him up at Stanford, I believe, and brought him to our house. He had a nice visit with Irena and Julek, lasting most of the afternoon, with all sort of pleasant reminiscences etc. Mysels would not stay overnight; he would not even stay for a dinner. After three hours or so, I drove him to the airport and he flew back home. I asked him about the subject of Stefan's emigration papers, but he was very evasive. Very politely so, but he would not say anything.

With the prospect of emigrating to the United States disappearing, Stefan went on with his academic career in Wroclaw. This was essentially a German town, called Breslau, which was given to Poland as a part of general rearrangement of geography agreed to by Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt in Yalta and Potsdam. The German population was loaded up in the cattle cars and shipped wholesale to some place in the West in the vicinity of Hamburg, I believe. In their place came the Poles, also shipped in the cattle cars, from the lands in the East which were absorbed by Russia. In any case, life in Wroclaw had to be organized from scratch, and Stefan became an adjunct professor (assistant professor) at the Wroclaw Polytechnic Institute. He got his Ph.D. in 1947 and became one of the pillars of the Wroclaw mathematical community. At various times, he held an assorted variety of administrative posts, and in general was very busy with his professional life. In 1949 he and Natalie became parents again with the birth of twins: Frank and Kathy. In spite of the material difficulties of life under communism, these were, from the professional point of view, fairly happy times for him, especially at the beginning. He did a lot of mathematics, was loved by his students, and very much

respected by his peers. He was quite well known in the Polish mathematical community. See an [obituary](#) of him written by two of his colleagues and former students from Wrocław: Waclaw Kasprzak and Rościslaw Rabczuk.

One traumatic experience for Stefan, while living in Poland, was the fact that Kathy developed diabetes at the age of 7 or so. She almost died, essentially because the local doctors did not know how to treat it properly: the insulin dose she was given was pathetically small. Stefan managed to get an appointment with a specialist in Warsaw, named Węgierko, who set her up on the right dosage. Before she went to Warsaw to see him, she was looking absolutely terrible, was completely lethargic, it didn't seem like she was going to make it. When she came back, she was a completely different, normal child. One person who helped secure the visit with Węgierko was actually Julek who knew Węgierko somewhat. Stefan was always extremely grateful to Julek for that. A problem then arose to assure a steady supply of insulin. Janek, Mysels, and several others were asked for help, and they all gave it readily, in spite of personal quarrels. At the end, a fellow in Israel, named Shapsenson I believe, became a regular supplier. I think he was a relative of Borkowski, and actually owned a pharmacy in Tel Aviv. Once a month, a package would come from Israel and someone had to go to the post office to fetch it. The drug was not reliably available in Poland in those days, and the quality was often questionable. It gives you some idea of the way things were in the old country in those days. It was a very traumatic episode in his life.

After a while, the grimness of life finally got to him. Various anti-Semitic undercurrents did not help either, and he wanted out. In 1956 it became possible for the Jews to emigrate from Poland. The most practical choice was Israel but Stefan was, for some reason, vehemently against going there. The next possibility was Australia, where his brother Julek went. The problem with Australia was a bit complicated. In order to get a passport to go to Australia, Polish authorities wanted Stefan to get an invitation from some outfit in Australia, or at least get a promise of an Australian visa. In that way, it would not appear that Stefan is leaving Poland because he hates the system, but rather it would look like a more or less normal career move. Stefan dully applied to a number of Australian and New Zealand universities, but he never got any offers. He also applied for a visa, assumption being that he would easily find a suitable job once he got down under. For about two years he would breathlessly wait for mail each morning, but nothing ever came. The suspense took a heavy toll on him, for two years he was a nervous wreck. All this was a bit surprising, since Australia gladly took a lot of immigrants at that time, Julek and his family being a prime example. What the Australian authorities cared was that the potential immigrant would become gainfully employed and not become a welfare case. It was pretty clear - it seems to me - that Stefan fit the bill quite well. Then, in the spring of 1959 a job offer came from the University of Chicago (Stefan never applied there) and a promise of an American visa. Mysteriously, shortly afterwards, a promise of an Australian visa also showed up in the mail. United States was a much more appealing destination, and that's where we went. It actually took about a half a year to get all the pieces together (passport, tickets, medical exams, shots etc., etc.), but we were getting out. Stefan finally got his exit passport, and the family arrived in the United States on November 30, 1959 to begin a new life. Within months of Stefan's arrival to the United

States, Janek also defected and settled in New York. There were no members of Djament clan left in Poland anymore.

It is interesting to speculate as to what exactly happened. The circumstances were, at first sight, quite mysterious: Stefan got a visa and a job offer from the United States without applying for either. The job offer was from one of the most prestigious universities in the world, and, frankly speaking, it was well above Stefan's head. Now, his brother Janek, after joining the Communist party, made a career in the diplomatic service, traveling all over the Europe, and finally was posted in India as a trade attaché. While there, he was recruited by the CIA to work as a double agent, which was a noble, if an extremely dangerous thing to do. Meanwhile, Stefan languished in Poland for a couple of years. Natalie at this point had enough. Here was Janek, going to diplomatic receptions right and left, and she was standing in line for hours at a time to buy bread. Literally. When Janek came to Poland for a periodic visit from India, she basically blackmailed him: "You either get us out of Poland or I will go to the security apparatus and denounce you." Whether it would have worked is not entirely clear, but it probably would have meant a considerable inconvenience for Janek - he would have been called on the carpet or worse. So Janek got back to his American handler and in short order an invitation came from the University of Chicago, together with a promise of an American immigration visa. This scenario is a bit more than speculation, in my opinion. I don't think there can be much dispute, based on various written material, my conversations with Nata, and the circumstances of our arrival in New York, that the basic outline is correct. To add a bit more credence to the story, is the fact that Adrian Albert, who was the chairman of the department of mathematics at the University of Chicago at that time, was an intelligence operative, a code breaker actually, during the Second World War. I am sure he was a part of the "old boys' network" afterwards, and surely more than willing to do some small favors for his old buddies.

It is much harder to explain why Stefan had so much trouble getting an Australian visa, and what follows is much more speculative, but not without some shreds of supporting evidence. It seems plausible that while in India, the British also tried to recruit Janek and blackmailed him over Stefan: You work for us, or your brother does not get the invitation. Janek had enough sense not to work for three outfits at one time, two was dangerous enough, and so he did nothing. The reasons for this conjecture are as follows: After Stefan settled at the University of Notre Dame he arranged for a year's visit for his colleague, and in fact his thesis advisor, Hugo Steinhaus. While still in Poland, Stefan solicited Steinhaus' help in his quest to emigrate. Steinhaus was a very prominent mathematician, he was well known in the mathematical community throughout the world. He had a friend, named Goldstein or something like that (not a mathematician), who was a big cheese in Australia. When Goldstein visited Poland, Steinhaus asked him for help in Stefan's matter, and the Australian visa came shortly thereafter. While at Notre Dame, Steinhaus told Stefan that, according to Goldstein, Stefan's case was handled "in a special way", whatever that meant. That's why I think Australian's refusals to grant a visa to Stefan was connected with Janek somehow, and the blackmail theory makes some sense. But, needless to say, I cannot provide a link to a report by an Australian or British operative who talked to Janek in India. I realize all this

is a lot of hearsay, and I am jumping to a conclusion, but there seems to be no other plausible explanation. Does anyone have a better theory? Probably not. Lots of people went to Australia from Poland in those days, Julek being among them, and I don't understand what the hang-up was in Stefan's case. He certainly looked like a desirable immigrant, and certainly would have been such. So, we almost became neighbors of Adam, but it was not to be.

The actual arrival to America of Stefan and his family had a bit of a cloak and dagger air about it. More cloak than dagger, but nevertheless the story is interesting. We arrived in New York and were met by a fellow who said he would help us. He took us to a nice hotel where we stayed for a couple of days. He would accompany us pretty much everywhere, had meals with us, took us on a city tour, etc. The treatment was quite royal. He claimed not to speak any Polish at all so we conversed freely in front of him in Polish, since no one knew English (except Stefan). Nata liked him very much, and in fact joked with Stefan: You would not kick a guy like that from bed, you know. She said that in Polish (*z łóżka go nie wyrzucisz*), of course, and right in front of the guy. (I am not making it up, the story is exactly as Nata told me, I swear.) Well, it turned out that the fellow was one of the spooks from the CIA, which we sort of figured out right away. But, as we found out later from Janek, he actually knew Janek well, and spoke perfect Polish, which we never suspected. Just checking, just checking. Smart are the boys that work for CIA, aren't they? How come they screwed up the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq so badly? But I digress.

After arriving in Chicago, the first thing Stefan had to do is to find a new job. The position at Chicago was not funded by the University of Chicago - he was paid with money channeled from the CIA and the arrangement was not going to last for a long time. The university was only a front. Within months he found a position at the University of Notre Dame, started his duties in September 1960, and began settling into American way of life: He bought a car, built a house, devoured oranges by the dozen, etc. Oranges were items of an unbelievable luxury in Poland. They were available maybe three times a year and it took many hours of standing in line to buy them. Whatever oranges that were obtained were first fed to the children, especially the young ones. Now, he could finally eat all the oranges he wanted. And the same could have been said for numerous other items.

Professionally, at Notre Dame he published his first book, organized a couple of high level conferences with Nobel laureates as speakers, guided his first Ph.D. student in the U.S., and in general was well on his way to join the American mathematical scene. He was not entirely happy at Notre Dame, though. It was a bit too provincial in his mind, and he was still haunted by the old ghosts of Catholic intolerance toward the Jews in Poland. In 1963 an opportunity came by of a position at the Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, and he took it eagerly. He was to remain there for the rest of his professional life.

In Columbus he finally found an ideal environment for doing his beloved mathematics. He had no administrative duties to distract him, his children were doing well, he was in a good health, and he was surrounded by high powered colleagues and

good students. He spent a lot of time on his students. He directed 8 Ph.D. dissertations while at Ohio State and devoted quite a bit of energy on each one of them. He was an excellent teacher, both at undergraduate and graduate levels, and took a very active role in the professional life of the mathematics department. In 1975 he spent one semester in Melbourne, Australia, at the University of Melbourne.



The house on 217 Irving Way in Columbus, Ohio.
Stefan's happiest days were spent there.

He enjoyed all things American, but he kept some old habits too. It was an annual ritual in the fall to prepare a barrel of sauerkraut and a barrel of pickles for the upcoming winter. You just could not buy these things, properly prepared, at Kroger. Every day he would bicycle to work, weather permitting, and do a half a mile swim. He took up photography in a serious way and enjoyed showing off his pictures. About 1965 he went

to India for a summer to lecture in mathematics. He brought back a large collection of photographs, a good portion of which were shots of sculptures from the Khajuraho temple. This is an ancient Hindu temple, about thousand years old, devoted to the art of sexual techniques. An incredible variety of incredibly complicated positions are depicted there in the most explicit way in these sculptures. Some of the positions would be challenging to the best acrobats and contortionists from the Cirque du Soleil. Look it up on the web. When a party got going good, he would show off these pictures. I am not sure Nata appreciated it very much.



Can't get more American than that. A great shot by his son Frank.

He enjoyed kvetching about everything, it was just his personality. It just would not have been Stefan if he didn't complain about something. Much of this complaining was about the Ohio State, in particular about the math department. There were the usual tirades about deans, academic vice presidents, and what not. This was a typical academic entertainment, and no one minded it too much. He did, however, openly belittle and complain about the intellectual quality of his peers. That was unfortunate, and was not received well. There were numerous mathematicians at Ohio State whose accomplishments and scholarship far exceeded what Stefan had to offer. Contrary to his oft expressed opinion, Ohio State was, from the academic point of view, an excellent place and in reality Stefan was lucky to be there. He made a lot of enemies among his

colleagues over this issue, unfortunately. He also complained, with a vengeance, about modern art, in particular about Picasso. At one point, Nata had enough and told him to go and paint something that would be better. He went to an art store, bought a real canvas, real oil paints and brushes, and did paint a picture in the garage. I think it took him two days to do it, but he did it.



Modern art, Stefan's rendition



Detail, with the signature

The picture hung for over 25 years in the living room in Columbus. It is now on display in Lake Shastina. Notice the detail with the signature. It is a quintessential Stefan.



At a croquet party at Franks' manor.
Conformity was not one of his traits.
The invitation read: "Dress: strictly white"

Stefan was not an easy person to live with and Nata bore the brunt of that. Among other things, he thought of himself as being a very handy person, or at least aspired to be such. The reality was exactly opposite. Changing a light bulb sometime turned out to be a major project. Once, he decided to put insulation in the attic, and was determined to do it by himself. He bought bales of the stuff, brought it home, stored it somehow in the garage, and bamboozled Frank into helping him with putting it in the attic. Frank knew it was going to be a nightmare of monumental proportions. A clever scheme was devised: Frank bought the parents a gift, a ticket to a symphony, or theater, or something like that. As soon as they left the house, Frank and Maureen worked fast and furiously and installed the insulation. It was a phenomenal lot of work, but they managed to do it before the parents returned. What actually happened next is that Stefan completely forgot about the pending project, didn't notice the bales were gone from the garage, and it was only by

accident that he discovered a few days later that it was all done. Life on Irving Way was certainly interesting.

Stefan and Nata did not have an easy life. For the first half of their lives, History threw all sorts of obstacles in their path: anti-Semitism, German Nazism, Communism, etc. Both of them lost close relatives to these calamities. They dealt with all these obstacles as they appeared, one by one, and never wallowed in self-pity. It was just something that had to be borne. Immigrating to America offered an opportunity to get away from all that nonsense and to lead a normal life, but it took a lot of courage on their part. When they landed in Chicago, Stefan was 46 years old and Nata was 48. They had \$25 in their possession - the amount allowed by the Polish government to be taken out of Poland. They did not have a pension plan nor any savings, did not have a house, did not have any friends, the job offer was clearly limited in time, and their English was quite iffy. They had three children who needed to be educated, and one of these had a potentially serious disease. If something went wrong, it would have been a disaster. But they doggedly persevered. In the end they did enjoy maybe 20 years of a good life. It is truly sad that it was not to be more. The real beneficiaries of their struggle are the children: Frank, Kathy, and Vladimir, whose life would have been quite different, had Nata and Stefan stayed in Poland. For that, we are very thankful.



Enjoying the good life: At Frank's wedding in 1975

In December 1982, after his daily swim, Stefan suffered a heart attack or a stroke, the blood did not get to his brain for several minutes, and he completely lost his intellectual powers. He never could tell, for example, what the current year was. Initially, Natalie took care of him, and after it became too much for her, he was moved by his sons to California, where he died on September 29th 1998. His ashes are buried in San Jose, California.

P.S. In the course of writing this story about Stefan, I received several comments and suggestions from (listed in alphabetical order): My cousin Adam, my wife Dolores, my cousin Eve, my brother Frank (who, in addition, provided a lot of pictures), and his wife Maureen. I have read and carefully considered them all. Some of the advice I took and some I did not - this was not meant to be a work by a committee. Some of the exchanges were mildly contentious - how could it be otherwise among Djaments? All of the suggestions, however, had an influence on the final product. In some cases they were accepted in full, and in some other cases they caused me to rethink and perhaps rewrite portions of the manuscript. In some cases I did nothing. I am very grateful, however, for all the comments and suggestions; in the end they made it a better article. Any remaining errors, both in facts and in judgment, obscurities, misprints etc. are entirely my responsibility.