

# I FELL IN LOVE WITH MICHALÓW



Maria and Ignacy Jaworowski. Michałów, early 80s



On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of Michałów State Stud we talk to **MARIA JAWOROWSKA**, the wife of the late Director Ignacy Jaworowski, who managed the stud for 44 years (36 under the communist regime in Poland) and was the creator of Michałów's greatest successes. Maria and Ignacy spent a round half a century together, since their marriage in 1954 to his death in 2004. As anyone that has ever dealt with

Michałów Stud agrees – Michałów wouldn't be what it is today if not for them. It's where they met and not only created a friendly home, but most of all a recognizable brand, which is acknowledged all over the world. Director Jaworowski was known for looking after things that were given under his care as though they were his own. He put his whole passion and talent into it. As other breeders agree, the rate of the breeding progress at Michałów was unparalleled. Whereas Maria not only welcomed guests which visited the studs in large numbers, but also offered paramedic care to the stud's workers and the inhabitants of the nearby villages. As a former nurse in the Home Army (AK)\* she treated wounds and gave injections. We must remember that in those times there was no medical facility in Michałów and the communication with the nearby town Pińczów wasn't easy at all – a ramshackle bus went to a fro once in a blue moon. Maria's skills, acquired during the underground period, often proved priceless. Also joining us is Maria's and Ignacy's daughter, Dorota Janiszewska, a French philologist by education, similarly to her sister Agnieszka Rozwadowska. Today Maria Jaworowska enjoys not only her grandchildren, but also her great-grandchildren.



Michałów today

photo: Krzysztof Dużyński

INTERVIEW BY: MONIKA LUFT  
PHOTOS: MRS. MARIA JAWOROWSKA'S HOME  
ARCHIVE, KRZYSZTOF DUŻYŃSKI  
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AN ARTICLE FROM POLSKIEARABY.COM

## Michałów today



photo: Krzysztof Dużyński

**Monika Luft: When did you two meet?**

**Maria Jaworowska:** In 1953. I didn't like coming to Michałów, because it was so ugly here. I associated the countryside with parks, lawns, nature. Whereas in Michałów there was no place where you could sit, listen to birds sing or to read a book. And that's what I expected, as a girl from the city, when I came to the country. But one time, in the summer of 1953, when I was weeding flower beds in my uncle Franciszek Mieszkowski's garden who managed a farm here, I saw a tall, young man walk by. We started talking and it turned out that he was to be transferred to Michałów with horses from a different stud – that he received such an order from the ministry. He was to transfer these horses from a very beautiful place, by the way – I'd been there once. A wonderful, large park, a palace... While here there was poverty all around. My uncle had once been in the Legions and did not fit into the new political system. So he was quickly gotten rid of. While we stayed, as a married couple. I remember that among the couple of mares that we found here was a colored, draught mare. My husband, basing on this one mare, restored the breeding of colored horses in Poland. He had an incredible love for horses and a huge talent. The Arabian mares that he transferred here were not pretty at all. Maybe three were of high quality, but the rest – not so much.

**M.L.: Have you ever dealt with horses before?**

**M.J.:** I was born in Warsaw and later lived with my parents in Lviv (that was part of Poland in that time). But in every spare moment I visited my uncle Wojciech Heydl, my mother's brother, who owned the Brzóza estate near Kozienice. So I rode horses since my early years up until I fell off a horse in Michałów, when I tore my tendons. But I fell on purpose. The horse wanted to turn back to the stable. I was afraid that he would bolt and that I would hit my head on the door frame. I fell and my displays of equine skills came to an end. I was in Brzóza when the war began. I enlisted in the Home Army in the Minoga estate near Cracow, owned by my uncle and aunt Skarbek-Borowski.

**M.L.: What did your husband say about his childhood and teenage years in Wrońska near Płońsk?**

**M.J.:** Their family was landed gentry. They lived in a small house, but close to other family members. Both grandfathers also had estates nearby. My husband always had a close contact with different animals. He didn't ride horses very much in his childhood, because his parents feared an accident. But when he became independent, horse riding was one of his favorite pastimes. Then came the war and the Germans seized great amounts of land, including those near Płońsk. The entire family had to leave Wrońska. My husband, aged 16 at the time, found himself in Warsaw. He passed the matura exam (secondary schools finals) and enrolled in the secret Warsaw Agricultural University (SGGW), which functioned under the cover of a vocational school at Banach Street in the Wolna Wszechnica (Free Polish University) building. He was taught by pre-war academic staff. At the same time he enlisted in the Home Army. He took part in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, fighting near the Mirowska Market-Hall in the "Zagrobla" detachment – hence the name of the famous Michałów mare later on. Luckily, he wasn't wounded, but he became very ill. After the uprising he found his way to the Lubelski region and worked at some farm. My husband did not like to talk about his past, so I don't know many details.

**M.L.: You were also active in the underground.**

**M.J.:** Yes, I had many tasks in the Home Army, mostly as a paramedic. I was also a messenger. But I didn't do anything special.

**M.L.: You are very humble, but we are aware of what that meant back then.**

**M.J.:** I remember when I rode a carriage from Minoga with my uncle, who was a young man at the time, to get weapons. I accompanied him, so that it looked like a normal date with a girl. Suddenly we saw an entire camp of Germans. My uncle said "If they stop us and start to dig through our things, aim for the legs and you will hit the abdomen...". Luckily the Germans paid no heed to us. However it all ended tragically later. Partisan detachments were fed at that estate and the German finally discovered this.

**Maria and Ignacy Jaworowski. Michałów, early 80s**



photo: home archive

**M.L.: After the war your husband worked first at Racot, then in Posadowo, Janów Podlaski and finally in Klemensów-Michałów.**

**M.J.:** As a young man with an agricultural education he got a job at Racot Stud. When horses started returning from their exile wanderings, Director Andrzej Krzyształowicz employed him in Janów Podlaski. Later it turned out that Arabian horses were split between several different places. That's when my husband found himself in Klemensów-Michałów. However it was concluded that the soil and climate conditions were not suitable there and a decision was made to transfer them here, to Michałów.

**M.L.: Urszula Białobok, the main breeder in Michałów, said in the interview for polskiearaby.com that he had a wonderful „breeding nose”. Was it an innate intuition?**

**M.J.:** Yes, without any doubt. He liked animals in general, not just horses. In his childhood, when he was riding with his mother to church for his first communion, he saw a wild duck leading her young. He jumped out of the carriage to gather the ducklings and save them from being run over... Once, I remember, he brought a hamster from the field, put him in a box and said that we would bury it. All was well, but the hamster escaped from the box and went somewhere under the floor. The animal slept in the day and made a great noise at night, as though he was moving stones. And since the house was small and the flats of other workers were right across the wall, they also couldn't sleep and were a bit unhappy with us. But what could we do to get that hamster out of there? We

figured that we would make a path of wheat. I stayed up half the night waiting for him to come out and my husband took over watch for the second half. In the morning the wheat was eaten and the hamster was still under the floor. But we finally managed to catch it! My husband took him to his friend in Bogusławice. There are tons of such funny stories.

**M.L.: You have also been educated in animal science, have you not?**

**M.J.:** Yes, I always liked the country. That's why I graduated from the Jagiellonian University of Cracow and later worked at the Research Institute of Animal Science.

**M.L.: Then, at the beginning, everything was against you – not only the ugliness of the surroundings and poverty, but also the landed gentry background and your education, which was something that the former system wished to fight off. And a negative attitude of the communist authorities towards Arabians. How did you manage to survive all the harassment?**

**M.J.:** There were many unpleasant situations. All the time they were waiting for my husband to slip, to find something that they could charge my husband with and get rid of him. For example there used to be a pig barn and several piglets died once. It was treated as a sabotage. My husband was locked up in jail in Pińczów for 24 hours. Luckily I was able to successfully intervene. I used to work at the Research Institute of Animal Science in Cracow where

Director Ignacy Jaworowski with Kenny Rogers. Michałów, 1984

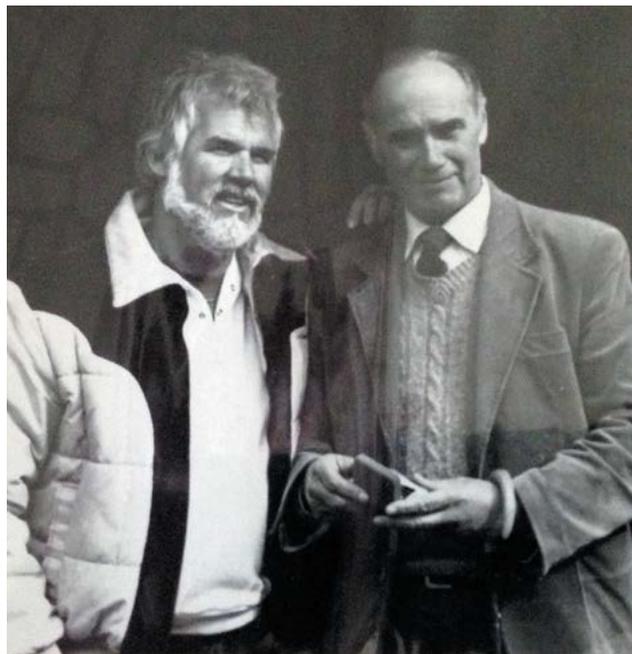


photo: home archive

one of the directors was this Marchlewski, a party official. It was said that he was a relative of “that” Marchlewski\*\*. I went there and obtained a certificate from him, stating that the piglets were properly fed and managed. Soon after the trial took place. Our attorney presented this document and all those party officials were dumbfounded. They had nothing to say in view of such an expert and my husband was set free. But that wasn't the end of problems with the local authorities, the harassment continued. But we endured. My husband had support from Warsaw, the authorities of Animal Breeding and Trade Federation always valued him and whenever something happened someone always came to his rescue.

**Dorota Janiszewska:** Once, during some rivalry between municipalities, my father refused to mow grain that was not yet ripe. The situation became dramatic. Director Paweł Warchoł from the Federation said then “If you don't like Jaworowski, then I'll remove him together with the horses”. And that's when the harassment came to an end.

**M.J.:** It helped that we liked what we were doing. We kept many animals at the house: dogs, cats and in the backyard: pigeons, poultry, pheasants, peacocks, rabbits, everything that we could. There were even Korean swans, brought from some breeder, but unfortunately they did not endure. Cats had to be tricolored. The horses became prettier and prettier and achieved better and better results at various shows. At first of course Janów was the best and we chased them, until we finally caught up. My husband had a great intuition not only towards breeding, but towards agriculture in general. When officials from Warsaw came for inspections it turned out that grains on nearby fields were lower than in Michałów. Everything was

perfectly managed. At one point my husband also ran a brewery and fish ponds. And apart from that he loved working around our household.

**M.L.:** Were there times that you discussed things together? Did your husband take your opinion into consideration?

**M.J.:** No, I had nothing to say. My husband made all the decisions.

**M.L.:** Was there ever a concept of you, as someone educated in animal science, getting a job in Michałów?

**M.J.:** No, it wasn't possible at the time, the local authorities would not agree to such a thing. I was a teacher in agricultural vocational schools. I was especially close with one of them and put in a lot of effort toward its development. So my superiors from the school-board much to my dismay made me an inspector. I had to travel all over the province, usually by coach. The coach sometimes came and sometimes it didn't. I often spent the nights in terrible conditions. Additionally I was aware that my visits were unwelcome. When I stepped over the threshold, the entire school quaked with fear. Because who likes inspections? I didn't like it at all.

**M.L.:** How did you manage to do everything? Work travels, work at home, guests?

**M.J.:** Without Gienia, our housekeeper who was extraordinary, nothing would be accomplished. At first she didn't know how to do anything, but she later learned. As a mother of an illegitimate child she was persecuted in her family. In those times such things were unthinkable in the country. So she moved in with us. There wasn't much room, but she found some place for herself. She was very close with us and very hard-working. She could take care of bloodstock and cook. And there are many funny stories associated with her. Once my husband's friends came for a visit and we had to kill a hen. The hen lay on the tabletop, ready for dinner. The entrance to the house was through the kitchen. My friend comes inside, leans over and says “What a beautiful hen!”. To which Gienia replied “She was beautiful, but she fell ill”. Another time I was absent and my husband had his friends and my female cousin over for bridge. My cousin was to spend the night at Pińczów. Suddenly the door opens, Gienia comes in and says “Now you've overdone it, all the coaches to Pińczów have left.” To which my husband said “But this is my wife's cousin!”. “I know all your wife's cousins!” Gienia exclaimed.

**M.L.:** People that we have talked to often recall your and your husband's hospitality. For example Marek Grzybowski told us that “You left Michałów with a full stomach and a head full of sensations”.

**M.J.:** The feeding of guests was very difficult, because in those times there was nothing to eat. I really don't remember what I fed those people with! We had a garden, a hen house... We had to live by our wits. Our kitchen's specialty were casseroles.

**M.L.:** **Yet you managed to satisfy even those guests which lived in luxury on a daily basis.**

**D.J.:** My father loved to show horses and then bring the guests over to our house. And at first all these guests had problems with their digestive systems until they got used to our Polish cuisine. Once, together with Urszula (Białobok), we went to get fish from a pond, which we knew was full of fish. We sat there an entire day and caught nothing. A terrible storm came and my mom came looking for us. Another time, when Mike Nichols was to come, we cooked broccoli from our garden. When we placed them on the table we discovered that they were full of caterpillars. Yet despite all these slip-ups guests loved coming to our house, because they had the opportunity to ask my father about breeding issues. He generally set up the breeding for many of them. I remember for instance Mr. Lipko, a breeder of American descent. He had a mare which produced a beautiful foal. The foal later made an incredible financial career. That mating was advised by my father. He was an incredibly social and funny person and liked people a lot. He could throw aside anything that he was doing when guests arrived and stroll with them through the stables for hours. And so people left Michałów enchanted with the horses, the hospitality and my father's charisma.

**M.L.:** **And yet the hospitality sometimes required great sacrifices from you.**

**M.J.:** Once, in the 80s, a singer from the States came – Kenny Rogers. He was to visit Michałów together with his entire entourage on Good Friday before Easter. And I insisted that there would be no meat on the table. So we devised some salads, some fish. He came in and... I remember it like it was yesterday: he looked, twisted his face, said "goodbye" and everyone left.

**M.L.:** **So much preparation for nothing? Weren't you hurt?**

**M.J.:** Not at all! I was very happy.

**M.L.:** **Your husband drew people to himself, he was known for being very open and could carry out conversations in almost every language.**

**M.J.:** He knew German from the war, he learned French in his childhood, whereas he didn't speak English very well. Of course he knew all the equine vocabulary very well. But he never felt any inhibitions in communicating. Many funny misunderstandings resulted from this, but still his language bravery was very helpful.

**Director Ignacy Jaworowski. Michałów, early 80s**

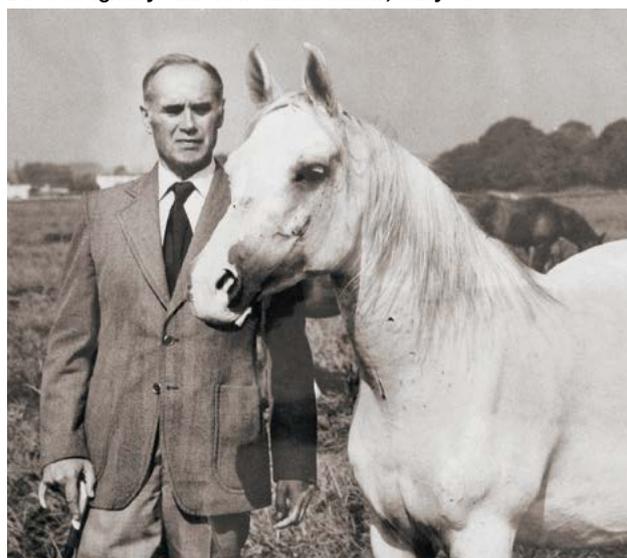


photo: home archive

**M.L.:** **„Tall, handsome, aristocratic man dressed in a blue Polish army uniform and hat, carrying a cane” – that’s how Kay Sharpnack-Patterson, later a frequent guest at Michałów, recalls her first meeting with him (in a memory published on polskiearaby.com).**

**M.J.:** It wasn't a military uniform, but a stud uniform. He carried a cane with him when he went to the stables, because he used it to direct and move the horses. He received it as a gift. It was very elegant, with a horn setting. He also never went out without his forage cap. If anybody had any doubts whether they would recognize him, all we had to do is say "the one in the cap".

**M.L.:** **„Part of Michałów’s magic was walking into the stables and seeing rows of beautiful gray mares with huge black eyes looking your way ” – recalls Kay Patterson. Did you also participate in these strolls?**

**M.J.:** Yes and no. I used to go to the stables in the evening. But during the day I had work to be done at home or in the garden. It was difficult to find time for everything.

**M.L.:** **Current Michałów’s manager, Director Jerzy Białobok told us that „Breeding doesn’t like sentiments”. Urszula Białobok in turn admitted that she is very sentimental. Did your husband grow close with the horses?**

**M.J.:** Of course, very much. Everyday he stood next to the stable when they returned from the pasture. Each evening he had to inspect everything, such was the ritual. He looked, wondered, planned matings. He was at every foaling, knew every foal and recognized each faultlessly. He told them apart by their "faces". He never mistook one horse for another, even if they were very similar. Even when they were swapped in their stalls, he was never fooled.

**The commemorative plaque honoring Director Ignacy Jaworowski, inaugurated during the celebration of the 60th anniversary of Michałów (September 2013)**



photo: Krzysztof Dubyński

**M.L.** Mrs. Patterson also told us that it wasn't easy to get your husband to sell a horse. "We had to ask him for several years, year after year for the same mare, until he might finally relent and put her into the annual Polish Sale, so we could bid against others to buy her".

**M.J.:** He had a rule never to sell the best horses. When someone came from abroad and wanted to see our horses, he hid the best ones.

**M.L.:** Quite famous is the story behind the would-be sale of the mare Wizja. Eugene LaCroix, an American breeder, arranged the sale through the Federation, but after the director's objection the mare returned to Michałów.

**M.J.:** I remember when she returned from a two year lease to the US where she won the championships. A wonderful mare, though I liked grey Saklavis best. And she was brown. But she returned from the States ill.

**M.L.:** Another one of the director's favorites was the mare Estebna, 1973 European Champion. It was the first large, international success for Michałów. How did you celebrate?

**M.J.:** I don't think there ever was any kind of special festivity, we just went back to work.

**M.L.:** Did you have your favorite horses?

**M.J.:** „My” horse was the mare **Emanacja**. She was very beautiful. Perhaps a bit too long – that's the only thing I held against her. She was wonderfully shown by Tadeusz Wojtal in Wels in Austria. She won the All Nations Cup in Aachen in 1998.

**M.L.:** Your task was to give names to the foals. Where did you find inspiration?

**M.J.:** Mainly in various encyclopedias, but when I read something I also underlined words that started with the letter "E". Because it was the hardest with those. **Emigracja**, **Emigrantka**, **Emanacja** – these are all my ideas. But also **Wilejka**, **Wilia**, **Wiaźma**. The latter I also liked very much. Perhaps she wasn't the most beautiful, but she had wonderful movement. It really mattered to me that our horses had nice names. Those that came to us in 1953 from the previous stud had terrible names, for instance **Gastronomia** ["Gastronomy" in English].

**M.L.:** **Gwarny**, **Probat**, **Nabor**, **Negativ**, **Comet**, **Monogramm** – all these stallions turned out to be not only significant, but epoch-making. Which of them was Director Jaworowski most fond of?

**M.J.:** Nabor and Comet were definitely his favorites. Monogramm turned out to be a great idea. He appealed to everyone, though not me. But I must admit that he had stellar movement, which he passed onto his get.

**M.L.:** What did breeding mean to your husband?

**M.J.:** It was absolutely his entire life. All the time. He wanted to have animals in the house as well. But of course horses were most important.

**M.L.:** Director Białobok said: „Breeding is more of a mutual activity than an individual act". How did your husband choose his co-workers?

**M.J.:** He chose them once and for good. Urszula has been at Michałów for 44 years now! She is an expert on horses, as well as on cattle. Then came Jerzy Białobok and he also stayed. At the time there were two of them, two trainees. My husband at once knew that the second would not be competent enough. Upon his retirement he said that he bequeaths the entire farm, and mainly the breeding, to Jerzy Białobok.

**M.L.:** Director Jaworowski travelled a lot. Did you accompany him in these travels?

**M.J.:** In the late 70s the Pattersons invited us to the US and organized our stay. Usually it ended there, with an invitation, but

that time it was different. We were to visit three places during this journey. When we spoke about this in Michałów someone noted that we don't speak English. Then someone else exclaimed "Mary speaks excellent English!". That was an exaggeration, we learned French in my family and I was fluent in that language, not in English, though I had visited the States before. My father, Waclaw Lednicki, a former professor at the Jagiellonian University of Russian studies, avoided prison when the Germans marched in because he had lectures in Brussels in 1939. He later emigrated to the US and was a professor at Berkley. It was from my father that Czesław Miłosz\*\*\* took over the department of Slavic Languages and Literatures.

**M.L.: How do you recall that mutual journey to the US?**

**M.J.:** I remember that my husband's luggage was lost. Our hosts' son, not aware of the Polish reality, belittled the situation: "Don't worry, we will go to the store and you will buy everything you need!". Of course we couldn't do that, because we had 5 dollars each. So he gave his clothes to my husband, everything that was needed. I in turn had everything except shoes. All I had was a hideous, worn down pair. I shrugged and decided to not think about it. But our hosts also had a 12 year old daughter. She was more down struck about my lack of shoes than I was. And she gave me her sandals. We had many adventures of this sort. But later my husband traveled alone.

**M.L.: He was known for a fondness for tidiness. Urszula Białobok said: "It was the Boss that taught me that when you enter a stable the horses should stand like if it was a beautiful picture". "The Boss taught us that even a register should be written in elegant way, in a nice handwriting and the documents shall be well-stamped – because it also contributes to the company's reputation".**

**M.J.:** That's all true, but not in his private life. He had a terrible mess in his room, but claimed that that's his method and refused any cleaning up. He never threw anything away and stated that it is only thanks to people like him that museums exist.

**D.J.:** To my father the most important were horses, then my mom, then there was a long gap, then dogs and only then – us. When we attended school there were feudal systems, until this day people speak about Michałów as a "manor", though there never was a manor here. Together with my sister we were considered to be dwellers of the "manor", so we never received bad grades. The teachers were afraid that the director would come and make a row. Whereas my father's foot never crossed the threshold of the school in Michałów. That could never happen, my father didn't have time for that.

**M.L.: Kay Patterson summed up her memories of Director Jaworowski the following way: „Mary – we**

**Mrs. Maria Jaworowska today in Michałów**



photo: Krzysztof Dużyński

**love you and realize what an important part you played in the story...". From today's perspective: was there a majority of difficulty or joy?**

**M.J.:** After these initial difficulties, harassments, I grew to love Michałów. It is here that our daughters spent their vacations and later our grandchildren, which there is eight of now. They were almost raised here. Today I have three great-grandchildren and there are more to come soon. 📷

\* Home Army (Armia Krajowa, AK) – 1942–1945, the dominant Polish resistance movement in World War II German-occupied Poland. It constituted the armed wing of what became known as the "Polish Underground State."

\*\* Julian Marchlewski (1866–1925) – an activist of the Polish and international revolutionary labor movement and communism, a co-founder of the Communist International. In 1918 he decisively protested against Poland regaining its independence, claiming that the only way to resolve the national questions is to carry out a socialist revolution.

\*\*\* Czesław Miłosz (1911–2004) – Polish poet, prose writer, essayist, translator; in exile during 1951–1989, in France up to 1960, later in the US; censored in Poland up to 1980; Nobel Prize Winner in Literature (1980); professor at the University of California, Berkley and Harvard University.

