



## My Personal Memory of HOW WE BEGAN

by: Diane (Shipta) Hupalowsky

That's Diane with her husband Paul

My parents met at a polka dance in what is now the Slavic Village area of Cleveland. One of my father's' best friends was the bandleader, Lenny Zadel, and an uncle of mine played with Ray Budzilek in his early days around the old neighborhood, before Ray started recording. It's safe to say that I grew up with Polka music!

In 1974 at 19 years old, my cousin and I decided that instead of going to our usual Rock & Roll bars, it might be fun for a change to go to one of the local Polka bars, namely, Brooksate Inn. We ran into some relatives and also met many new people of all ages. That's when I started going to dances.

I was dating a member of one of the local Polka bands at the time when a dear friend, Judy Spidak, explained her idea to have a cancer benefit dance after the very sad loss of her sister from cancer. Everyone she approached was eager to jump on board and do what they could to make it a success. Several bands volunteered their time while donations and door prizes flooded in. A couple dance groups would perform and Cleveland's media, local Polka promoters, and radio and TV personalities also got involved. My personal contribution\* was to hand-letter and create large eye-catching signs and flyers, which were to be hung at the local Polka bars and later at the event. The dance took place on April 20, 1975. We had a great group of people that worked well together that made it all happen.

Not long after that dance, Judy came to us again with the idea that the Cleveland area should have a Polish Polka organization. There were clubs based in other states but, not in Northeast Ohio. A few short months after the cancer benefit, our group got back together for a meeting. My memory recalls a group of about 30 charter members at the very beginning, but it didn't take long for more people to start joining.

I enjoyed reading Mike and Linda Pezo's memories in the January newsletter, and so glad Henelrae Budzilek had the notes from the first meeting in February. It's so nice to bring back the memories and see the names of all the people that formed the CPA, some of whom are no longer with us. I truly appreciate all the people over these past 50 years who continued their commitment and effort to keep it going strong, so we can commemorate this terrific milestone. Thank you for keeping this organization going so that my husband, Paul and I can still enjoy the music