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Famie finds the flavors of Poland

BY GREG KOWALSKI
STAFF WRITER

Gourmet chef, world traveler, TV show star and producer, Keith Famie ranks as more than a survivor, although he may have achieved the most attention for his appearance on the hit TV show of that name.

But that was several years ago, Now, he's embarked on a new adventure, creating a series of programs highlighting the diverse ethnic groups of the metro Detroit area.

Earlier this year, he produced a highly commended show on the Italian community. Next up are the Poles, who will be featured on *Our Polish Story*, which will air Saturday, June 16.

Our Polish Story will be an encompassing look at the local Polish community, its culture, heritage and history.

"What makes this special is that there is no script," Famie said, as he sat in the editing room in the production studio in Southfield.

Just two weeks before the air date, Famie and the staff are working long hours to put the final touches into the program. The story is carried along by the subjects, and subject matter, each meticulously collected and assembled like a complex mosaic.

"We build on hours and hours of interviews," Famie said.

Some 70 hours of videotaped recorded



Keith Famie went to the source for his production of "Our Polish Story." Part of the taping was done in Poland.

interviews done over the last 10 months will be distilled down into an hour. It will run a full 60 minutes when broadcast with no commercials.

And it will cover a lot of territory - literally. Famie and his crew have been videotaping across the metro

Detroit area at various Polish churches, fairs and events.

They were at the Pączki Day celebration in Hamtramck, the Polish Cultural center in

Troy, Christmas Eve Mass at St. Albertus Church in old Poletown in

Detroit, and even made a trip to Poland where long-separated friends were reunited in an emotional meeting.

As the last pieces are connected in the editing room, what is emerging is a cohesive, encompassing and fascinating look

at this segment of the culture. The story is skillfully told by the people and places it features. He asks questions and lets the

answers propel the story, drawing the personal responses and emotions from the subjects.

"I go into these interviews with a great deal of curiosity," he said.

PERSONAL TOUCH

Famie is no newcomer to the production



Keith Famie works in the editing room of his Southfield studio with Greg Meloche as they put the finishing touches on "Our Polish Story."

'OUR POLISH STORY'

What: Documentary on local Polish heritage, history and culture produced by Keith Famie.

When: 7 p.m. Saturday, June 16 (Channel 7)

business. He had his own cooking show on TV, did 32 episodes of a program for Food Nation that took him around the world, and he has his own production company.

"It's all about the wisdom of our elders," Famie said. The idea for the *Flavors of...* originated with his own father. As he

nearly died, Famie spent a lot of time with him and listened to the many stories his father had to tell, especially of his World War II experiences.

"He had these wonderful stories," Famie said. But they were never recorded.

That led Famie to wonder who else had metro stories to tell, and considering the

metro areas diverse ethnic population, Famie connected the two points to create the "Our Story Of..." series.

The Italians were first to be featured in a show that has garnered four Emmy nominations. The Poles will be followed by the Arab-American and Greek communities later this year.

Famie finances the productions, which cost hundreds of thousands of dollars each, through donations from organizations and individuals.

The main sponsor of the film is the Piast Institute; A National Institute for Polish and Polish-American affairs based in Hamtramck.

Executive director of the Piast Institute Virginia Skrzyziarz, who coordinated the Institute's support and the assistance with resources and fundraising for the documentary, said the film will allow all generations and different waves of immigration to better understand each other's experience.

"This would be a first step in building the next stage of our community which is exciting for us. The Piast Institute's major goal is the building of new Polonia for the 21st century," she said.