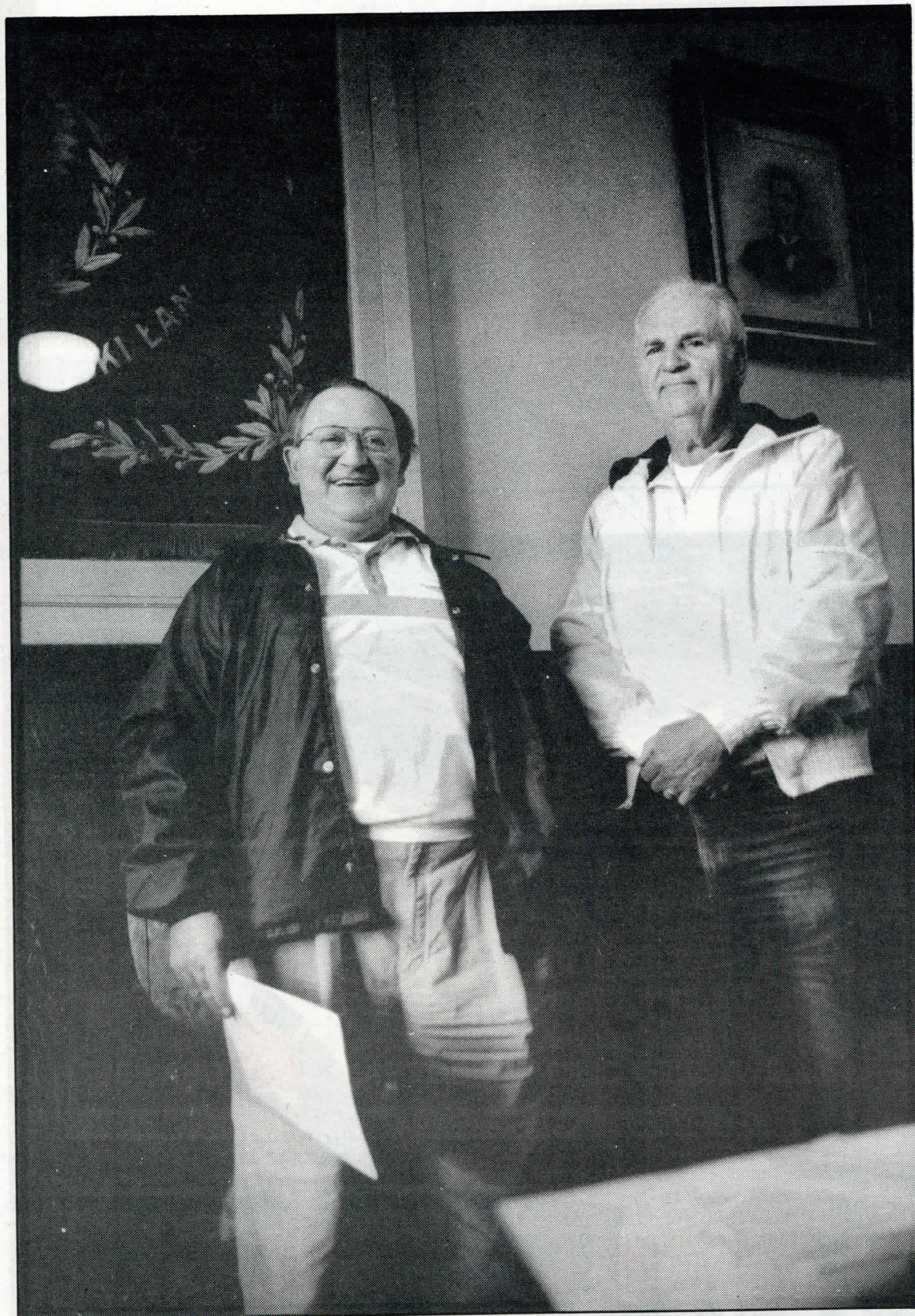


Polish Club



STEFANO ESPOSITO/DAILY WORLD
William Kalinowski, left, and Stan Sklodo, two Polish-Americans who are proud of their Central European heritage and longtime members of the Polish Club, stand together in the trustees room.

Poles apart from all the stereotypes

By Stefano Esposito
Daily World writer

WHAT does it mean to be Polish? Stereotypes abound.

Those who have no bond with the large central European country, perhaps envision a nation of ruddy-faced people who consume enormous amounts of sausage and, no thanks to all those "Polish jokes," aren't so smart.

"I think there are not too many very aggressive, high-strung (Polish) people," says Don Norkoski, a Harbor area Polish-American who is smart — and funny.

"The Polish people tend to be an easy-going, hardworking bunch, a little bit practical, and not really super-geniuses. Of course," he adds, "there are exceptions."

Stan Sklodo, a Harbor Pole whose family came here at the beginning of the century, defines the Polish character this way: "We're proud of our accomplishments. We try to do the best for our kids that we possibly can. The love of children is what it's all about."

But whatever you consider the quintessential Polish characteristic, most agree that on Grays Harbor what defines a Pole is his or her connection with the Polish Club at the corner of West First and Washington streets in Aberdeen.

For the last 80 years, the 10,000-square-foot, shingle-sided building has welcomed Poles of all sorts — from those who have just left the



Dombroski Norkoski

old country and are seeking a reminder of their former lives to people who grew up in the United States and who have only a trace of Polish blood.

Over the years, Poles and non-Poles alike have come to the club to socialize, to dance and, yes, to eat Polish sausage, sauerkraut and boiled potatoes.

And today, the club is also home to two dance studios, a tavern, and a soon-to-be-opened Christian "Pregnancy Center."

In the early 1900s, as Poles fled their homeland to escape a life of poverty and the seemingly endless struggle against foreign invasion, many came to the United States and then headed West where there were jobs in the sawmills and vast stands of timber.

The Polish Club in Aberdeen — like ethnic societies across the country — provided a place for families to ease slowly into the American way of life. Most of the established members spoke both Polish and English, and could help find work for the new arrivals.

"The (new arrivals) were
See POLES, Page 3

The ads in this special edition are from people with whom the Polish Club does business.

We believe in shopping locally!