

## 2007 GLOSSA Scholarship Awards

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### Maureen Dorothy Bresnahan (USA)

I can still remember those special trips to Bobaks, a local Polish grocery, whenever I visited my busia, and just being absolutely fascinated by everything around me. The moment I walked in the doors it was as if a whole new world sprang to life. I could just close my eyes and hear everyone speaking Polish and wishing I knew what they were saying. I always knew I was Polish; I have just never had the chance to really know what being Polish was.

Before I was born, my parents moved out of Chicago, Illinois and to Carrollton, Texas. With that move, any chance I had at knowing my Polish culture was pushed down the drain. North Texas is not exactly the prime spot of Polish culture. I would always brag about being Polish to my friends, but to be honest, I had no idea what it meant. I still do not. Which is why I want to study abroad in Poland this summer: to learn about my heritage.

Sure my family still celebrates all the Polish holidays, they still celebrate Polish traditions, and they still serve Polish dishes, but saying I am Polish is a lot different than actually being Polish. I would like to know why those Polish holidays are there, why we celebrate those Polish traditions, and find out what exactly is so special about kielbasa and Wigilia. All of my Polish relatives are still in Chicago and I was forced to find information about my heritage through U.S. History courses or whatever class may have mentioned something about Poland.

But learning about the Polish culture means so much more to me than just "finding something out." My busia and I were always very close, and it was devastating when she actually passed away. I want to learn more about the Polish culture so I can learn more about her. Her parents (as well as my dziadzia's parents) traveled to the United States from Poland, so being Polish meant a lot to them as well. She would try to teach me Polish, but I could never grasp it. Sure, I learned a few words that she repeatedly told me, but it was nearly impossible to take on a new language when I was living in Texas and she was still in Chicago. I feel that if I can learn

more about her culture and her life, I will not only become closer to her, but become closer to finding out who I really am.

This trip also comes at an extremely perfect time for me. I've just graduated high school and I'm about to set off on my own without any sense of the real world. I mean, the farthest I've been from home was Hawaii with my parents in the second grade. I haven't exactly gotten a chance to see the world or discover what it's like to even remotely be on my own. That's why this trip is so important to me. Not only will I be able to learn about my heritage, but I'll also be able to "be on my own" for the first time before the whole college shock hits me. This is my one chance to be able to experience the world before I'm shoved into the rough life of a college student, especially one that plans to go pre-med. I want this to be an opportunity to find myself and be able to use that to develop my life as it actually begins.

Finding out about this opportunity to study in Poland this summer was truly a dream come true. I have always been interested in my Polish heritage, but I just have not had a place to get answers. I am truly excited just for the chance to travel to Poland let alone find out more information about the Polish culture. Who knows, maybe after this trip I might even know what they are saying the next time I walk into Bobaks.