

BOOKS IN BRIEF

Proof that Education Leads to Success — and Survival

**HOW LANGUAGES SAVED ME:
A POLISH STORY OF SURVIVAL**
by Tadeusz Haska and
Stefanie Naumann
Koehler Books, 2019, 148 pgs.

Reviewed by Mary E. Lanham

For many, language is the great divide, but for others it's the bridge to a new life. In early twentieth century Poland, Tadeusz Haska used his unwavering desire to learn new languages to not only survive a hostile foreign invasion but to eventually thrive in his new home in the United States.

Haska was born in northeastern Poland in 1919. Of the six children born to his parents, Tad and his brother Antoni were the only ones to survive to adulthood. In his youth, the Haskas opened and operated a dairy that made butter and various kinds of cheeses. Tragedy struck the family when Tadeusz's father died when he was 12, made worse yet with the passing of his mother soon after, leaving Tadeusz and his brother orphans. Fortunately, their parents instilled in them resilience

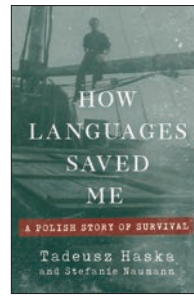
and the importance of education.

The pair of brothers continued their schooling and, with the help of scholarships, were able to graduate from high school. Throughout high school, Tadeusz excelled in his studies and was able to make a little money tutoring other students.

When Tadeusz was about to enter his second year of college to get a teaching degree, the Second World War began. He soon learned that the only way to avoid the Nazis was to not stay in one place too long. He continually moved from place to place, trekking the length and breadth of Poland while picking up jobs throughout the country. He used his affinity for languages to learn German which helped him to communicate with invading soldiers if he needed to.

After the war ended, he narrowly avoided jail from the Soviet Secret Police and managed to get to Sweden. There, he meticulously planned and then was able to smuggle his wife, Jadwiga, to the country by hiding her in a coffin on the ship.

The two of them were able to come to the United States with the



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Eventually, after working as a laborer, Tadeusz landed a job teaching Polish at the Army Language School in California which later became the Defense Language Institute. He earned his Ph.D. in Linguistics at UC Berkeley in the ninth language that he learned, English. He became chairman of the Polish Department and taught there for 35

years. excerpt below describing their entry at Ellis Island.

"When I was being questioned...I was asked where I learned English.

They thought I was from Fair Isle in northern Scotland. I said something like, 'That's okay with me, whatever you say.' I was just happy to be there. My Swedish friends later told me that some of the people I was around in Sweden came from the mountains and spoke a distinct Swedish-English that sounds like the dialect spoken in Fair Isle, Scotland."

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After Tadeusz's death in 2012, his granddaughter Stefanie Naumann, feeling the drive to tell his story, compiled and edited his memoirs, using correspondence, interviews, and journal entries, punctuated with family photos. *How Languages Saved Me* is a much-needed memoir and a testament of those that survived tragedy and were able to persevere and thrive in a new country.

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Stefanie Naumann earned her B.S. in psychology from Tulane University and went on to earn a Ph.D. in business administration in management from Louisiana State University. She has published numerous journal articles. Naumann is a Professor of Management in the Eberhardt School of Business at University of the Pacific in California, where she has taught for 20 years. She is also a member of the Polish American Genealogical Society of America and a member of the Academy of Management. Naumann is the recipient of awards for teaching, research, and service.