

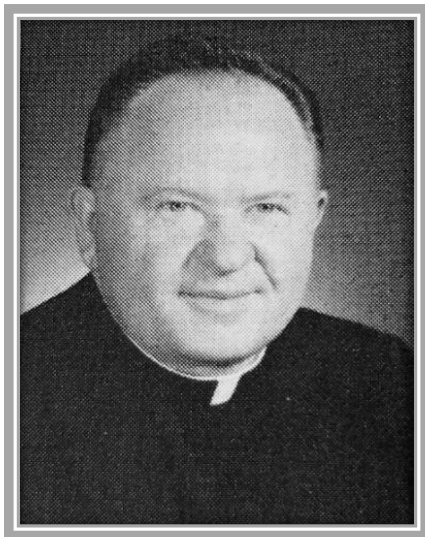
Reverend Peter T. Kolton

1910 – 1981

By Janet Dawson Ebrom

Peter was born on June 29, 1910, in Zaloscie [Reniów], Poland, to **Anna Angela Koltowski** and **Damian Koltun / Kolton**. When he was twelve years old, Peter immigrated to the United States under the name of “**Piotr Koltun**” and arrived in New York on the *Estonia* on December 21, 1922.

In 1931, while living with his parents and six siblings in Manhattan and working in a hotel, **Peter** made his Declaration of Intention. Three years later, he signed his Petition for Citizenship in the Southern District of New York. As a naturalized American, he exhibited his patriotic duty by joining the US Army during World War II. He was in the 88th Infantry Division and personally experienced the horrific bombing of Monte Cassino and the Po Valley campaign in Italy. He was wounded twice, and after five years in the Army, he joined the Navy because as he explained, “I wanted to see the world and I did.” His wounds flared, and he spent time in military hospitals. When **Peter** recovered, he began attending Eron Prep School in New York City under the GI Bill. In a personal interview, he related, “The



Jewish principal of the school became aware of my religious nature and one day said to me, ‘Why don’t you become a priest?’ He had a Catholic priest come and talk with me. I knew this was what I wanted. Since I spoke Italian, I decided to study in Rome” (Carmack, page 1-B).

Photograph from:

Archdiocese of San Antonio 1874 – 1974, page 270

Peter's dream of becoming a Catholic priest came true on December 16, 1958, when **Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński** ordained him at the age of 48 in Rome, Italy. Then **Father Kolton** moved to Texas and ministered at Our Lady of Sorrows Church in San Antonio. In 1966, to commemorate the millennium of Christianity in Poland, **Father Kolton** built a museum and shrine to Our Lady of Częstochowa at 138 Beethoven Street in San Antonio. The impressive shrine is 30-feet high and constructed of pink granite. Inside is a small chapel and museum.



Photograph courtesy of: Janet Dawson Ebrom

During his active pastoral duties, he took time to visit his mother in New York in 1966. While there, the priests and Sisters told him about a little boy from Poland who had come to New York with his adoptive family; however, after a year, the family wanted to send the child back to Warsaw. **Father Kolton**, who was very kindhearted, believed he could find a good home for the youngster, so he brought him back to Texas. Each time he thought he had found the ideal family, the boy would cry, "Father, please don't give me away." So, **Father Kolton** himself adopted **Mitchell**, enrolled him in Catholic school, and also sponsored his American citizenship (Thomas, page 2-A).

On Nov. 24, 1970, at the invitation of **Father Kolton**, two Sisters of the Daughters of Our Lady of Sorrows, **Sr. Alphonsa Bobek** and **Sr. Helen Haladyna**,

arrived in Texas. These Seraphic Sisters from Poland accepted the responsibility to take care of the Black Madonna Shrine and promote devotion to the Blessed Mother. With his jovial personality, **Father Kolton**, welcomed visitors and guided them through the museum which showcased beautiful statues of saints, chalices, rosaries, and religious art that he had enjoyed collecting through the years.

At the age of 70, **Rev. Peter T. Kolton** died on April 26, 1981, in San Antonio, Texas. **Archbishop Patrick Flores** was the main celebrant of the funeral Mass at St. Margaret Mary Catholic Church, and fellow priests of the archdiocese were concelebrants. On April 29, 1981, Father Kolton was buried in San Fernando Cemetery #2 according to his death certificate #24679 even though there is a prominent grave marker for him in Our Lady of Częstochowa Cemetery in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. An image of the Black Madonna for whom he had such devotion is fittingly displayed on this marker which is engraved with his name, birthdate, ordination date and place, and his place of death. Father Jan who has been at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Częstochowa in Doylestown for many years, recalled that Father Kolton had wanted to be buried in Our Lady of Częstochowa Cemetery but later changed his mind; the headstone was never removed (email to author dated December 21, 2021). According to the San Fernando Cemetery office, Father Kolton's remains were never transferred to Doylestown, Pennsylvania, and he is buried in Calvary Plaza San Fernando Cemetery #2, in San Antonio, Texas.

Sources:

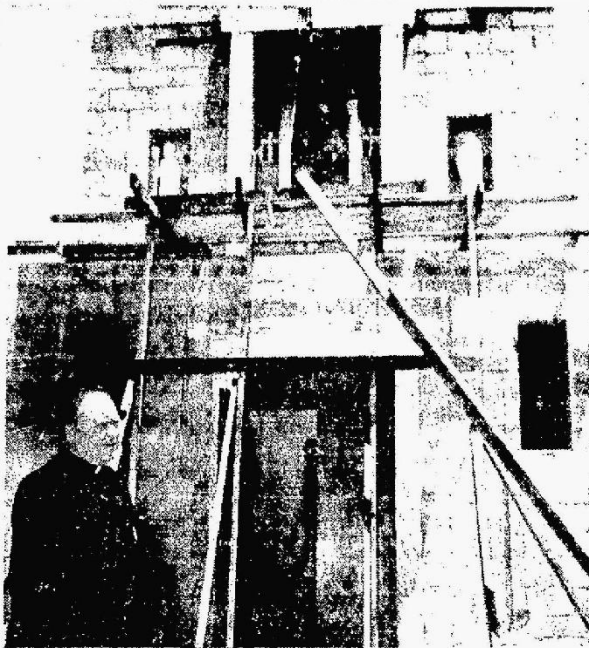
1930 Federal Census, New York, Manhattan Borough, sheets no. 18-B and 19-A.
Carmack, George, *San Antonio Express-News* [San Antonio, Texas], December 29, 1973.

Declaration of Intention, No. 323962, November 4, 1931; Petition for Citizenship, No. 241136, December 7, 1934; Southern District of New York.

Texas State Death Certificate #24679.

Thomas, Sylvia, *San Antonio Express* [San Antonio, Texas], November 4, 1971.

Note: On his WWII Draft Card, he wrote his full name as **Peter Theodore Kolton**; however, on his adopted son's Petition for Naturalization, he gave his full name as **Peter Thaddeus Kolton**.



DEDICATION SET—Rev. Peter T. Kolon shows the partly completed Grotto of Our Lady of Czestochowa located at 138 Beethoven St. The cornerstone will be blessed by Rev. Marion Oles of Rome at 2 p.m. Sunday. An open house will follow the ceremony.—Staff Photo.

Crusaders Set Observance Of Christianity in Poland

The Crusaders of Our Lady of Czestochowa will hold a celebration at 2 p.m. Sunday at the Polish-American Center, 138 Beethoven St., as Texas' only Polish millennium celebration.

Rev. Peter T. Kolton, curator of the Polish-American Center, said Rev. Marion Oles of Rome will take part in the ceremony by blessing the cornerstone of the grotto.

Rev. Oles will be enroute to take an assignment as attaché to the papal nuncio at Ecuador. He and Rev. Kolton became close friends during Kolton's assignment in Rome several years ago.

"We will have a very colorful procession, with costumes of

various Polish styles included," Rev. Kolton said.

"There will be an open house after the ceremony and we will have various artifacts, paintings and handmade crafts on display, many of them several hundred years old," the Roman Catholic priest said.

Rev. Kolton explained that the Polish millennium is a celebration of 1,000 years of Christianity in Poland. He visited some of the Polish events in Poland several months ago.

The Crusaders is the only Roman Catholic organization in Texas devoted to preserving, recording and emulating Polish contributions to Texas, Rev. Kolton said.

"Throughout the history of Polish immigrants in Texas the faith of the people was a dominant factor in giving them strength to carry on despite many hardships," the priest said.

Beth-El Slates Final Seminar

"Who Needs Religion?" will be the subject of a panel discussion at 8 p.m. Tuesday in the downstairs auditorium of Temple Beth-El, 211 Belknap Place.

Panel members will include adults H. Gordon Davis and Lester M. Lands and college students Mike Greenberg, of Macalester College, St. Paul, Minn., Susan Freshand of Our Lady of the Lake College, and Sherry Newman of Pitzer College, Claremont, Calif.

Hilten Goldman will serve as panel moderator.



515 No. Main
CA6-7201

EQUIPPED TO SERVE

- **WORSHIP**
10:50 & 7:30
- **EDUCATION**
9:30 & 6:30
- **RECREATION**
Gymnasium
- **MUSIC**
Graded Chorus

MANOR BAPTIST

2 Blocks West of
Jefferson High School

in Northwest
San Antonio

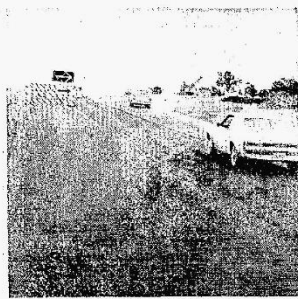
Action Express

Last week the north-bound line of U.S. 281 North, from FM 1904 South some three miles, was opened to traffic. Would you please answer the following questions concerning this project? When did actual work on this widening project begin? When is the projected completion date? Are there any reasons for an unusual delay? Does the Texas Highway Department require contractors to furnish performance bonds specifying completion dates and did the Contractor in this instance have to forfeit bond?

JOHN J. LUTHER

The project is in its 18th month, according to Garretto Wilson, Texas Highway Department district planning engineer. The projected completion date is the end of January 1972, Wilson added. He said there have been some delays caused by the heavy rains, but noted the construction is nearly back on its original schedule.

The Highway Department does require contractors to furnish performance bonds, but there was no forfeiture in this case since the completion date has not passed.



"Most people don't realize it takes longer on such a project because it is difficult to handle the volume of traffic while constructing the highway," Wilson repeated. He said all that remains to be completed is to "dress up the old highway."

Action/Express

ABC Violation

I have a friend who operates a number of bars and dances, Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission agents raised the devil with him because he did not have his books for each establishment on that business's premises. He has a central office and had them all there. I understand he is to receive a suspension on some of his places because of this. Isn't this a bit ridiculous?

R. C.

This is an ABC administrative rule. According to O. N. Humphreys Jr., Alcoholic Beverage Commission administrator, "a summary of each day's business must be maintained on the licensed premises in the form of a permanent record. This record must indicate the total receipts from all sources and the amount of gross receipts from the sale and service of alcoholic beverages."

Action/Express

Dr. Welby's Church

I understand that the church that actor Robert Young attended, the Service of Man Church, is credited by him with helping him stop a drinking problem and regain his health. Is there a branch of this church in this area?

MIKE PARKER

This column has been unable to find any local branches of the church, formerly known as the United Church of Religion of Science. The church has 20 branches on three continents.

Strict Housing Code Enforcement Backed

By JOY COOK
Of the Express Staff

The Mayor's Housing Advisory Committee Wednesday threw its support behind a plan to enforce strictly the housing code in an attempt to prevent landlords from continuing to rent out substandard homes.

Vice chairman J. T. Saunders and other members of the advisory board informally endorsed a proposed city ordinance designed to empower city inspectors to post "keep out" signs on vacant, dilapidated homes and to have city officials cut off to prevent reoccupancy.

City Planning and Inspections Director George Vann told the committee he had prepared such an ordinance and sent it to the city attorney for study. City Council last week indicated

Advisory group gives full support to a city campaign to put vacant, dilapidated homes 'off limits.'

it would be receptive to such a plan, but no date has been set for consideration of the changes.

Vann said the proposed changes are needed to strengthen further the city's hand in

preventing landlords from renting out their substandard homes as quickly as the city convinces a family to move out and begin proceedings to demolish the unsafe structures. Only vacant homes can be demolished under present legal provisions.

"Strict code enforcement is the only answer, although in some cases it may seem cruel," Saunders commented.

T. C. Neely, who heads an East Side rehabilitation program, agreed the enforcement "should have top priority. We're not going to move any old ladies out on the street, but catch these houses when they are vacant and prevent the landlords from renting them again."

Vann also urged the group to seek legislation next year to provide criminal penalties for violations of the building standards. At present only fines up to \$100 are provided for violations and can only be handled under city ordinance in Municipal Court.



PAUL MCCrackEN
... economist to speak

McCracken To Speak At Luncheon

Paul W. McCracken, chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisors, will be the luncheon speaker for the Business Outlook Conference Nov. 11 sponsored by the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce.

McCracken replaces Treasury Sec. John Connally, who previously had been scheduled to address the downtown session.

In making the announcement, Wednesday Conference Chairman W. W. Flannery explained that Connally's mission abroad for President Nixon takes him to Japan Nov. 9-14 and forced him to cancel his appearance.

However, Flannery added, "We are indeed fortunate that a national figure with Mr. McCracken's exceptional expertise on current economic issues has agreed to serve as our principal speaker of the day."

Alamo Heights Parents Eye Schools

By ADIZ SHIHAB
Of the Express Staff

More than 600 Alamo Heights School District parents met Wednesday to express concern about court decisions affecting school districts and to adopt a "plan of action" against enforced school consolidation.

The parents were addressed by Earl Allan Cannon, Board President. Paul Smith and At-

terrey Jack Locke Jr., who represents Alamo Heights in a pending suit seeking to consolidate the tax base of all Bexar County school districts.

Smith said, "There are three matters which concern us—busing, consolidation and the spreading of tax base."

He said busing will be "intolerable" and that the Alamo Heights school board will not "even consider it."

Smith said the board is "opposed to consolidation for any purpose."



Father and Son

Rev. Peter Kolton, pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows Roman Catholic Church, explains a portion of the Bible to his legally adopted son, Mitchell, Thursday morning. Mitchell, 12, will file a petition for U.S. citizenship.—Staff Photo.

Priest Who Is Dad, Proud Son Making Happy Home in S.A.

By SYLVIA THOMAS
Of the Express Staff

"I think of him first as my father: I even confess to him!" 12-year-old Mitchell Kolton declared happily, smiling at the Roman Catholic priest who legally adopted him two years ago.

Thursday morning, Mitchell, who currently refers to Rev. Peter Kolton, pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows Church, as "Dad," will file a petition for U.S. citizenship, writing another chapter in his unusual story, which began when he was an infant in a Warsaw, Poland, orphanage.

"I tell him, 'This is your country now,'" Rev. Kolton said proudly. "I don't want him to be a man without a country any longer, and after all, it is America that is raising him."

After he files his petition in the U.S. Immigration office at the Federal Building, Mitchell's naturalization will occur at the first hearing 12 days later.

"I feel proud to be an American," blond Mitchell said quietly. "I also feel lucky my father's a priest."

Mitchell and Rev. Kolton found each other five years ago in New York, when the priest was paying a visit to his mother.

A family brought Mitchell to New York in 1953 and adopted him but they wanted to send

him back to Warsaw a year later." Rev. Kolton recalled. "The priests and sisters told me about him when I was there visiting in 1956 as I went to the school to see him."

"He already had a ticket to Warsaw, but I said, 'Let's switch the ticket and take him to Texas,'" the priest priest chuckled. "I never had it in my mind to adopt him."

Rev. Kolton said he planned to keep Mitchell until he could find a good home for the youngster, because "I felt living with a priest would not be a good life" for him.

However, each time Rev. Kolton thought he found a place for Mitchell, the boy would cry, "Father, please don't give me away."

Rev. Kolton, 42, himself a naturalized Polish immigrant, said he decided not to send Mitchell and it church authorities agreed. "I would quit the priesthood and wash dishes after all, at my age, who else could I do?"

The objections never came. In fact, Archbishop Francis Porey referred Thursday to Rev. Kolton as "a one-man orphanage."

The priest supports Mitchell completely on his \$300 monthly salary, buys him clothes and sees he practices his religion and learns.

Mitchell, a fit, slender 12-year-old, lives at St. Margaret Mary School, 1000 E. 14th Street, where he is looked after by two nuns. "Whenever he's not in school he's with me," Rev. Kolton said. "I'm proud of him, he's a good, fine, intelligent boy."

Harmony Meeting Held



Weekender Visit... SECTION B

Saturday, December 29, 1973

Page 1-B



The Black Madonna

The original painting of the Black Madonna, attributed to St. Luke, is the heart of the Catholic Church in Poland. Father Peter Kolton has built a Black Madonna Grotto and Museum in San Antonio. He is shown here at the altar of a small chapel in the grotto. —Photos by Bonnie Carmack.

A Little Bit of Poland Lives in S.A.

By George Carmack
Rigby Street in southeast San Antonio is as matter-of-fact as its name.



Carmack
Rigby Street from New Braunfels Avenue and you'll come to where Beethoven Street intersects Rigby.

Turn right and you'll enter another world—a world as romantic as "Beethoven" suggests.

For on Beethoven just off Rigby is the Black Madonna Grotto and Museum. It was started in 1955 as part of the world-wide observance of 1000 years of Polish Christianity.

Though uncompleted, the 20-foot-high, pink granite shrine is still a marvel. Its builder, Father Kolton, says it is the largest grotto in the world.

Beside the shrine is a large, low building, the headquarters of the Soraphic Sisters. The Soraphic Sisters recently came here from Poland. San Antonio is the only place in the U.S. that the order can be found.

Hospitable

This shrine—and these sisters—illustrate one of the wonders of San Antonio. No place in America is more hospitable to those who come from a foreign land.

And in few other cities can be found little out-of-the-way corners where the old country lives so here.

The Beethoven Street shrine is pure Polish—dedicated to Our Lady of Czestochowa, the Black Madonna, so named for a miraculous painting of the Blessed Virgin.

Twice Visited

Bornie and I visited Beethoven Street twice. The first was just before Christmas when we were privileged to take part in the "Wigilia"—the Polish vigil—and share in the

wonderful dinner of Polish foods.

Then we visited the grotto and museum.

The Black Madonna Grotto and Museum is the dream of a most remarkable man. He is Father Peter Kolton, priest at Our Lady of Sorrows Chapel.

Father Kolton was ordained when he was 48. The first suggestion that he study for the priesthood came from a Jewish professor. And he studied for the priesthood in Rome under the GI Bill of 1945.

Polish Born

Father Kolton was born in Poland in 1910. He came to America with his parents when he was 16. He was a salesman and ran a little shop selling religious articles when he went in the U.S. Army in World War II.

He was in the 88th Infantry Division and took part in bitter fighting. He was at the bombing of Monte Castro and in the bloody Pe Valley campaign.

He was wounded twice. Only a miracle saved his life when a German bomb landed beside him—and was a dud!

Navy

After five years in the Army, he joined the Navy—"I wanted to see the world and I did." His stomach failed and he spent time in military hospitals.

"When I recovered, I started to Enroll Prep School in Manhattan under the GI Bill," Father Kolton said.

"The Jewish principal of the school became aware of my religious nature and one day said to me, 'Why don't you



become a priest?" He had a Catholic priest come and talk with me. I knew then this was what I wanted.

"Since I spoke Italian (he speaks seven languages—English, Polish, Spanish, Italian, German, Czech and Russian), I decided to study in Rome.

To Texas

Father Kolton was ordained in 1958 and came to Texas. He has been a "collector" all his life and added many prized Polish possessions while serving farm homes in this area. All are now in the grotto's museum.

There are many copies of the painting of the Black Madonna—all old and one several hundred years old.

There are also beautiful chalices, crosses of various sizes and statues of saints and many other religious articles dating to the early days of Polish churches in Texas.

Old Organ

An old organ is one of the museum's treasures.

"I saw this wonderful organ in this farm home and asked the owner for it for the museum," Father Kolton said.

"He declined to give it up. A few weeks later I got a call from him. A little tornado had ripped off the roof and he said he was afraid rain would ruin the organ."

"Sign"

Father Kolton doesn't say this—but there must be a suspicion that the organ's owner thought the letter might have been a "Sign" that he should donate the organ to the grotto.

There is a man devoted to Copernicus, the Polish scientist who was the father of modern astronomy.

And on the walls are zinc paintings made by a San Antonio woman who reports she is "the last living pupil of Grandma Moses."

The pictures have that Grandma Moses flavor.

Pola Negri

High on another wall is a

large photograph of a beautiful, milk-coated Pola Negri at the height of her movie fame. This Polish girl was once Hollywood's brightest woman star and now lives in San Antonio.

Though past 70 and in poor health, she has visited the Black Madonna Grotto and Museum several times.

The "Wigilia" was a night

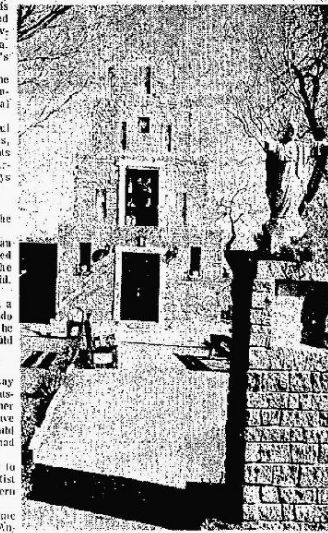
Bonnie and I will always cherish.

It started with an outdoor ceremony at the Matlyly scene. Father Kolton was St. Nicholas—and this is one St. Nicholas who does not have to have any padding.

Costumes

There were little angels and

See "WIGILIA" Page 1B



Poland in San Antonio

This is the Black Madonna Grotto and Museum—a bit of Poland in San Antonio. The shrine—still incomplete—has long been a dream of a San Antonio priest who was born in Poland, Father Peter Kolton. —Photo by Bonnie Carmack.