

Don't Miss Your Piece Of The

# "WORLD'S LONGEST SAUSAGE"

(8000 Feet — made from 100% pure pork and just the right amount of spices.)

We'll be at the Lakeside Park Pavilion starting late Friday evening. You're invited to come and watch us make it, and if things go according to plans, the sausage will be ready for sale early Saturday afternoon.

**BUY a FOOT, a YARD, or WHATEVER!**



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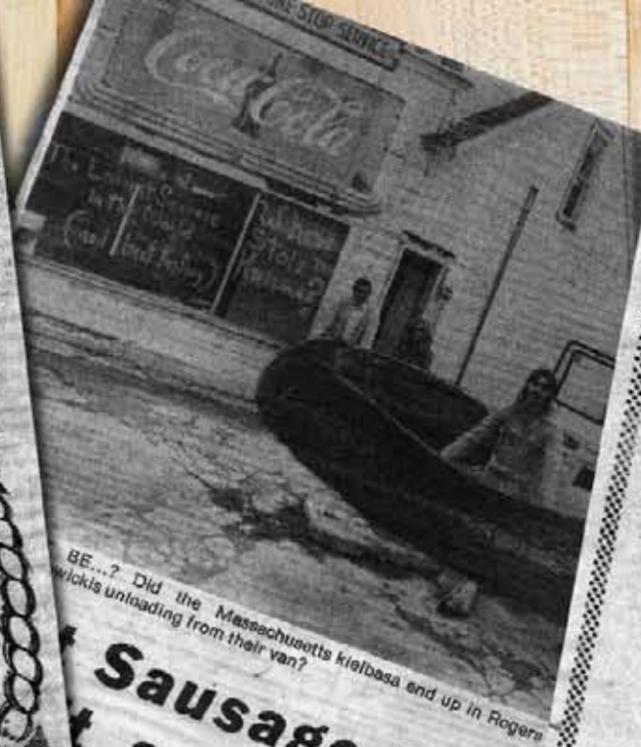
Besides a "Piece of History", you'll be getting a piece of the Best Tasting Sausage you've ever eaten!!!

**You can also order your sausage by phoning 734-4100**

Want your sausage smoked? — Ask Us —

**Nowicki's One-Stop Service**

106 N. 3rd St. Rogers City



BE...? Did the Massachusetts kielbasa end up in Rogers City? ... Nowicki's unloading from their van?

## Sausage Robb a publicity s

A wire service story... we had a couple thousand people eat ours (it was Ann... sold by the foot during the only Nautical festival, and everyone said they loved it." So Nowicki has painted a sign in his window proclaiming his family's mission to shop as "Home of the world's longest sausage in the world (and best tasting)."

Phil says the whole controversy is a matter of technicalities. "I called him and told him that he might have the world's longest sausage, but we were going after a Guinness record in the Guinness Book of World Records." "not the largest, but it was tied with it."

the making of the "Sausage" wouldn't have been possible. Phil Nowicki, Jr. & Luanne Gary



Philip Nowicki-jr and Luanne Gary (second and third from left) relax with some of the people who helped them break the record for the World's Longest Sausage.

## Gobble up world record sausage

BY SUSAN GRULKE  
ROGERS CITY—If you haven't gotten any of the world-record sausage yet, it may be too late. Thousands of persons took advantage of the chance to buy some of the 1½-mile link during the weekend and, as of this morning, there was hardly any left.

Philip Nowicki-jr and a dozen or so friends set out Friday at midnight to break the former world's record of 7,420 feet. Not only did they break the record, but they also added another 1,300-some feet for a grand total of 8,773 feet. Nowicki and his friends surpassed the record before noon Saturday.

Nautical City Festival and was conducted at Lakeside Park Pavilion in Rogers City. The area which the sausage was stuffed was partitioned off for health reasons, although festival-goers could watch the proceedings through plastic. Nowicki and his fiance, Luanne Gary, used a 100-pound sausage stuffer to fill the casings, then their helpers laid the link over rows of tables covered with plastic. A layer of plastic was placed over the kielbasa, then ice cubes were poured over the plastic.

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# PHIL NOWICKI'S 8,773-FOOT SAUSAGE

TEXT BY EMILY BETZ TYRA  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY TODD ZAWISTOWSKI

On a hot Lake Huron night, a gutsy 20-year-old set out to create a *meat marvel* unlike any the world had ever seen.



#### MASTER OF HIS CRAFT

Not only did Phil Nowicki create the world's longest sausage in 1977, but the man can also make a mean pickled smoked sausage and a fine smoked Polish sausage (PICTURED OPPOSITE).

## A rectangle of Lake Huron

beckons miragelike at the end of East Huron Avenue on a roasting Wednesday in Rogers City. A man I know immediately as Phil Nowicki III—the breast of his red shirt attests—is using a green gallon bucket to douse the thirsty window-box geraniums surrounding his downtown meat depot, Nowicki's Sausage Shoppe. The store has been in his family for five generations.

Nowicki, half-Polish, half-German, possesses a sausage-making instinct in every cell of his lanky 50-year old frame. Together with his wife, Michelle, sons Phil IV and Brian, and his father-in-law, Tom Kuznicki, he's made his meat shop into an emporium of sausage craft. Inside, the distinct sweet-sharp sausage-shop scent of garlic and marjoram in the air, Nowicki energetically points to the scores of homemade sausages in his case. There are traditional-recipe

sausages like his great-grandmother Kathleen Nowicki's fresh Polish sausage, braided and coiled on itself in one continuous string. There's weisswurst, German wieners and Nowicki's famous potato brat—sizzled up by the thousands at the nearby Posen Potato Festival each year—in regular, cheesy, cherry or horseradish.

“Did we make any Hawaiian brats?” he asks Brian across the counter. The Hawaiian brats are lavished with pineapple tidbits, maraschino cherries, rum, brown sugar and honey. “We make what we call the triple pepper brat,” says Nowicki, pointing to a plump wurst laced with black pepper, green peppers and pepper vodka. There's a Cajun brat. And a chicken cordon bleu brat made with ham, smoked Swiss and Leelanau Peninsula white wine. The recipe for the smoked honey barbecue brat, their second-best seller, Nowicki confides in a low tone, came to Michelle in a dream.

The sausages are all homemade, stuffed in natural casings and sold fresh to followers across Michigan, sometimes 30 pounds at a time. And they're ridiculously delicious. But of all Nowicki's sausage delicacies, none is as famous as one curious masterpiece he made the first week of August 1977.

**Nowicki**, then 20, was lounging in bed around New Year's of 1977, thumbing through the newest edition of the *Guinness Book of World Records*. Back then he was working at Nowicki's One-Stop (as the sausage shop was then called) with his parents, hanging out with his girl and his pals. “I started to think, We should make the world's longest sausage,” he says. The sausage to beat was 3,124 feet. His goal was 4,000 continuous feet, made using great-grandma Kathleen's fresh Polish sausage recipe.

It was a lofty idea, but his parents had no reason to believe that he couldn't do it. Nowicki came from a long line of stubborn strivers. His great-grandfather Cash Nowicki came first, from Poland by way of Detroit, to make a life in Rogers City. He



started his own meat market in 1917, and Kathleen, his wife, made Polish sausage and liver sausage to sell. Philip I took over next, and meanwhile, his son, Philip Nowicki II, left the shop to go into the service. He met Annamaria in war-torn Germany—her house had been bombed, and she was trading her family's furs and jewels for potato peelings—and brought her back to Rogers City as his wife. Cash made his distaste for Germans—and thus Phil II's bride, Annamaria—sorely known. She had it rough, but her father-in-law, Phil I, took care of her emotionally, Nowicki says. So when Philip I was dying of cancer, Annamaria made a promise to her father-in-law on his deathbed. She'd help keep the shop—and the family—going.

Phil I's wife, Louise, and three sons carried on, along with Annamaria. When she and Phil II took over, she installed the hand-painted, Old World sign that still hangs on the shop's north corner. It reads Nowicki *Am See*—German for by the sea. “It was my mom's idea to call it that. That was her little ocean out there,” Nowicki says, gesturing toward the Great Lake. “My mom was one of those stubborn Germans who was real particular, real caring,” Nowicki says. “She had her ways of doing things.”

Nowicki remembers learning her methods standing on a milk crate at the family's black hand-cranked sausage stuffer. “There was a pin to put in there to keep it shut,” says Nowicki. “Just one time I didn't put the nail in, and it popped open and got me right in the chest.”

But Philip III was never going to make the

world's longest sausage with his granddad's old hand-cranked stuffer. Not only was it Stone Age slow, but it also held only 55 pounds of meat at a time. Nowicki's parents were planning on investing in a fancy new water-pressure stuffer for the store eventually, so now with their boy on a mission, they took the plunge a little early.

The date for his great feat was set: Rogers City Nautical City Festival, the 5th of August, 1977. After the elephantine sausage was complete, festivalgoers would be able to buy their own hunk of it. Nowicki ordered the bulk meat, spices and casings—which came in 20- to 30-foot lengths—that he'd need to string the beast together.

Then, just days before his sausage exploit, Nowicki made a fateful call to Guinness to make sure all was in order for his sausage to be certified. That's when he found out that a company in Ontario had surpassed the former record—with a 7,420-footer. Nowicki amped up his meat order and his nerve. His goal jumped to 8,000 feet. The *Presque Isle Advance* reported on the mood around Nowicki's One-Stop in the final days before the sausage feat: “His mother said, ‘He's running around like crazy, but he's still going to do it. He has his heart set on it. I hope that he makes it, because this whole place has been upside down all week.’”

What a sight: splayed out on 40 banquet tables coiled back upon itself row after row, **one enormous wiener**, unbroken, for more than a mile and a half.

# A Sampling of Nowicki's Fine Sausages



## Mushroom and Swiss Brat

Mushrooms and hand-diced smoked Swiss cheese.

## Jalapeño-Cheddar Brat

Lean beef and pork with fresh hand-diced jalapeños and cubed smoked cheddar cheese.

## Fresh Polish Sausage

Great-grandmother Kathleen Nowicki's recipe, seasoned with onion and garlic. A traditional holiday delicacy.

## Honey Barbecue Brat

This brat came to Michelle Nowicki in a dream. Phil Nowicki III prepared the first batch for her to taste and she liked it, but said, "In my dream, it was smoked." This one is made with lean pork, honey, barbecue seasoning and cracked black pepper—and then it is smoked.

## German Wiener

Old World-style wiener made with lean beef and a little pork, seasoned with mustard, ginger, rum and honey.

## Potato Brat

The Nowicki family trademarked original, made with 25 percent potato and 75 percent lean pork and no cures or preservatives.

**11 p.m.** August 4, 1977, Lakeside Park Pavilion. Phil Nowicki, wearing the appropriate sausage king apparel of low-slung jeans and a cropped denim vest, his hair shoulder-length with face-framing feathers, pulled into the Nautical City Festival in a borrowed refrigerated milk truck. Inside were 3,500 pounds of ground sausage blended with spices, pepper and sweet leaf marjoram. To make the spectacle more spectator-friendly and sanitary, Nowicki built a see-through, plastic-sealed enclosure at the park, so the curious crowds could watch him and his team, comprised of girlfriend Luanne Gary and a slew of Rogers City comrades, as they created the world's longest sausage. At 11 p.m. Nowicki began to stuff.

One hundred pounds of meat went into the stuffer on the first round. Then Nowicki hit a snag. "We had a problem with the water pressure—our stuffer works off the pressure of water," Nowicki says. A plumber friend came by to get a pump going. Once back in action, they cranked out sausage at a serious clip. Nowicki and his team laid the growing sausage back and forth across banquet tables covered in ice. Scrupulous care went into not breaking the link.

Nowicki broke the record at 11:45 a.m.—more than 12 hours after he started—but he pressed on, a man obsessed. Finally at 1:15 p.m., he could go no more; his stockpile of casings had been exhausted.

What a sight: splayed out on 40 banquet tables coiled back upon itself row after row, one enormous wiener, unbroken, for more than a mile and a half. Presque Isle County prosecuting attorney Larry Farmer gave the official certification to the 8,773-foot wonder. Locals lined up to gape in awe at this giant piece of history, then take a few feet of it home to grill in their Rogers City backyards. Nowicki and crew posed for some photos with his masterpiece, then "I pretty much collapsed," he says. At dark, as the fireworks for the Nautical City Festival cracked and thundered over the lake, on the biggest day yet in his young life, the sausage craftsman was asleep in bed.

**Newspapers** went gonzo over Nowicki's feat, and word spread all the way to Chicopee, Massachusetts, the self-proclaimed kielbasa capital of the United States of America—and home to one Leon S. Partyka.

Partyka, manager of Chicopee Provisions Co., had just completed a five-hour smoking session to finish a 25-foot-long, 107-pound Polish sausage in time for the town's World Kielbasa Festival. Partyka went on the record dissing Nowicki's Polish sausage, calling it nothing more than "a big hot dog." Partyka claimed that his sausage was the real thing and deserved the world's largest title, because, he said, "ours is in a single and natural animal casing, not a bunch of casings tied together."

"I guess I was too young and naïve to think about making my record sausage any other way than with *all meat and spices*, the way my dad did it and his dad did it."



Nowicki snorts at this accusation even today. Partyka's quibbling over what constituted an authentic Polish sausage was a matter of culinary colloquialism, thinks Nowicki. Out East, a Polish sausage is a collar-shaped, single-link smoked sausage. As people of Polish ethnicity all over Michigan know, real Polish sausage is fresh and, yes, usually made by stringing together several casings so folks can buy it by the foot or the yard, depending on how many Polish cousins are showing up. It's the kind you boil first, then brown with sauerkraut for a wedding or a big holiday gathering.

While throwing around slurs about Nowicki's sausage, Partyka put his sausage on display for ogling—but not eating—at the Kielbasa Festival in Chicopee. But, curiously, the Sunday night after the festival, under the cloak of darkness, someone stole Partyka's 107-pound sausage. Partyka went on record again, hinting that someone in Rogers City might have been the snatcher. "It wasn't there Monday morning. We've asked around but nobody knows anything, everybody's innocent. Maybe ... somebody from Rogers City came down to take a look at it so they'd have both the world's largest hot dog and the world's best-tasting kielbasa."

Partyka said he would refuse to pay a ransom if

## MEAT MARKET

**ABOVE:** In addition to 26 flavors of brats, Nowicki's Sausage Shoppe crafts landjaegers, pickled hots, salami and ring sausages. The rings come smoked, prepared German style (with garlic and mustard seed) or farm style (with onion and summer savory). Come fall, Nowicki does custom wild game orders, making venison hinds or other fresh game meat into specialty jerky and sausage.



#### SAUSAGE SQUAD

Phil Nowicki IV; Phil Nowicki III; his wife, Michelle Nowicki; and father-in-law, Tom Kuznicki. The team handcrafts more than 70 varieties of Old World and gourmet sausage specialties. FIND THEM AT 106 EAST HURON AVE., ROGERS CITY, 989-734-4100 OR WWW.SACREDROCK.COM

anyone demanded one (nobody did). And he didn't even want it back. "But," he said, "if somebody calls, and they have it, I'll send them the rye bread and horseradish."

Nowicki suspects, still after all these years, that the theft was Partyka's own publicity stunt, intended to cover up a little secret: the Chicopee sausage was inedible, not made of quality ingredients, and Partyka needed to get rid of the evidence.

Nowicki shrugs. "I guess I was too young and naïve to think about making my record sausage any other way than with all meat and spices, the way my dad did it and his dad did it."

"I know people have broken the Guinness record since," he says [the most recent: J.J. Tranfield's 36.75-mile banger in Sheffield, South Yorkshire, United Kingdom]. "But they are never clear in the book about whether or not it was consumed afterward. I'd love to know that no one else's was edible."

The great sausage of 1977 remains a fine notch in Nowicki's belt, but Nowicki hasn't let his creative spirit dim. In addition to running the sausage shop headquarters in Rogers City, Phil and Michelle have taken an Old World sausage show on the road, traveling to gun shows and motorcycle shows across Michigan. They bring a cooler with a thousand pounds of their 26 flavors of brown-and-serve brats and grill up samples. They've garnered a loyal following around

Michigan, and they want to start doing shows only.

But the sausage business continues apace. Today, on this sizzling summer afternoon, a few pan-browned brat selections stay warm in a crockpot for people who come in hungry for a brat in a bun. Today it's the potato, the ham and Swiss, and the fresh jalapeño-onion, created by Nowicki and his son Phil IV. The cowbell above the entrance clangs in steady intervals. A tiny woman, with a snappy, matching head-to-toe outfit sits to eat a brat she holds with two hands. A U.S. Fish and Wildlife employee up from Ludington buys several varieties to take back and grill at camp.

"It is by no means easy in Northern Michigan," Nowicki says. "But what I'm hoping for is that my sons keep it going."

If his sons need proof of what's possible, even in a small Up North town, they need only walk past the metal rack of pickled sausages and open a nicely tattered paperback of the *Guinness Book of World Records*, 1979 edition. And there it is, right there on page 415 between the biggest salami and the largest sundae, a larger-than-life dream that came true exactly 30 years ago, at Nowicki's By the Sea. ■

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Emily Betz Tyra is associate editor of *Traverse*.  
Got something to say about Nowicki's sausage?  
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