



Polish Heritage

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2021 ACPC Annual Convention Hosted by PAAA

submitted by Celia Larkin, 2021 Convention Chair

The smiles may have been hidden at times by the mandatory masks but the eyes said it all: we are happy to be here and meet our friends and colleagues again in person. After almost two years of seeing each other as images on computer or cell phone screens, the delegates to the American Council for Polish Culture 2021 Convention were ready to “celebrate Polish culture in the nation’s capital.” The host organization, Polish American Arts Association of Washington, D. C. (PAAA) awaited this moment for two years, having to cancel the convention originally scheduled for 2020, then making adjustments along the way as restrictions due to the worldwide pandemic were lifted and reimposed with the changing local and worldwide situation and the final go ahead wasn’t confirmed until mid summer of this year. Despite all this, on September 21st all was ready and the first arrivals gathered in the Hotel Lombardy lounge for a welcome reception. The following morning PAAA President Celia Larkin formally welcomed attendees in the main gallery of the Arts Club of Washington, located next door to the hotel, and the convention was officially opened by ACPC President Raymond Glembocki.



Swearing-in Ceremony at the Convention Banquet in the President William Howard Taft Room at the University Club of Washington. (Photo credit Jacek Wojnarowski)

The keynote speech was delivered by the Deputy Chief of Mission of the Embassy of the Republic of Poland Adam Krzywosądzki, who thanked the ACPC for promoting Polish history, from telling the story of the first Polish settlers in the U.S., to the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Warsaw last year. He echoed the sentiments of hope expressed in a letter sent to the convention by Ambassador Piotr Wilczek, that all ACPC members “maintain their intense passion for building strong, genuine bonds between Polonia in the United States and Poland.”

The Arts Club of Washington President Henry Sienkiewicz welcomed convention attendees and encouraged them to feel at home in the historic mansion that once was the residence of President James Monroe and for the past hundred plus years served as a gathering place for artists and art lovers. Filled with paintings, sculptures, with its three pianos, historic objects and furniture, the club did prove to



Delegates met under the canopy of a white tent erected in the garden courtyard of the Arts Club.

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be an ideal venue for an organization devoted to promoting the arts. Plus, as an added bonus, no one could beat the excellent food prepared by the renowned chef Patrick Orange (former chef/owner of one of Washington's famous restaurants) and served under the chandeliers suspended from the top of a white tent in the Club's garden.

Business sessions on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday morning, included reports and presentations from executive officers, standing and ad hoc committees, and special project chairs. Elections on Thursday afternoon resulted in Raymond Glembocki was reelected to a second term as President; Mark Dillon was elected First Vice President; Lilia Kieltyka became Second Vice President; Tom Payne and Marcia Lewandowski were reelected as Treasurer and Recording Secretary respectively. Friday morning, John Cebrowski made a presentation on Panna Maria, the oldest permanent Polish settlement in the United States and the completion of the Polish Heritage Center there. He extended an invitation to the ACPC to hold its 2022 Convention in San Antonio, and include a full day visit to the newly opened \$14 million complex in Panna Maria.

The convention program featured luncheon speakers accomplished in the world of music but also well versed in other aspects of Polish culture. Dr. Laura Kafka-Price, a soprano, musicologist, and music and language educator, is on the faculty at the Peabody Conservatory of the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. She is the originator of a multi-dimensional project dedicated to teaching non-Polish singers how to sing in Polish. The forthcoming publication, *Polish Pronunciation Guide for Singers*, is centered around Karol Szymanowski's *Rymy Dziecięce (Children's Rhymes)*, op. 49 song cycle. Her lecture on Wednesday, *A Few Things You Might Not Know About Speaking and Singing In Polish*, was co-presented with pianist Tom Robak and violist Maksymilian Krzak, both of whom made a contribution to the *Rymy Dziecięce* project.

On Thursday, Music Director and Conductor of the National Philharmonic, Piotr Gajewski, expounded upon this year's convention theme Celebrating Polish Culture in the Nation's Capital. He provided a brief historical perspective and then went through a list of examples that mark the presence of Polish culture in the Washington, D. C. area. The examples are many, from the public statues of Kościuszko, Pułaski and Jan Karski in the most prominent public spaces, through Abakanowicz sculptures in the National Gallery garden, works by Jan de Rosen and Gordon Kray in churches and other places, a very large collection of Polish posters at the Library of Congress, Polish films at the National Gallery and the historic Avalon Theater, performances of works of Polish composers and by Polish artists at the Kennedy Center and other venues, the Polish Library, cultural events at the Polish Embassy, etc. Not the least is Maestro Gajewski's own National Philharmonic, where he champions Polish music and Polish performers. It was an inspiring and very informative presentation.

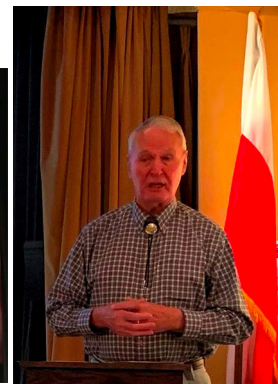
This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the ACPC Marcella Kochańska Sembrich Competition and this fact was highlighted by two concerts during the convention. First, on Thursday evening, this year's winner of the Sembrich Award, soprano Magdalena Kuźma, accompanied by pianist Martin Labazevitch, sang in a concert at the Arts Club,



After lunch presentation on Wednesday on singing in Polish by Laura Kafka-Price, assisted by Tom Robak and Maksymilian Krzak.



Right: Convention Chair Celia Larkin with Deputy Chief of Mission at Polish Embassy Adam Krzywosądzki.



Left: Arts Club of Washington President Henry Sienkiewicz welcomes guests. Right: John Cebrowski (or Big Jasiu as he calls himself) extended an invitation to come to Panna Maria in Texas next year.



After lunch speaker on Wednesday Maestro Piotr Gajewski talks about Polish Culture in the Nation's Capital.

(Photos this page: Celia and Richard Larkin)



 Celebrating Polish Culture in the Nation's Capital



Top left: Magdalena Kuźma, winner of the 2021 ACPC Marcella Kochańska Sembrich Vocal Competition accompanied by pianist Martin Labazevitch.
 Second left: ACPC Music Committee; Jarosław Golembiowski, Laura Kafka-Price and Celia Larkin with Magdalena Kuźma and Martin Labazevitch.
 Above: Featured at the Friday noon concert at the Arts Club were (left to right) Laura Kafka-Price, accompanist Eileen Cornet and tenor David W. Cook with 2021 Convention Chair and President of the PAAA Cecilia Larkin.

attended by convention delegates and music lovers from the local community. Ms. Kuźma presented a beautiful program of songs by Chopin, Mozart, Fauré, Moniuszko, and Poulenc. A competition judge found her tone quality, technique and interpretation superior and called her a fully professional great singer. These qualities were well illustrated in the concert performance, especially her dramatic expression in *Ha! Dzieciątko nam umiera* from *Halka* by Stanisław Moniuszko.

The Friday Noon Concert at the Arts Club featured two former Sembrich laureates from the Washington area: soprano Laura Kafka-Price, First Prize winner in 1997, and tenor David W. Cook, Second Prize winner in 2017. They were accompanied by pianist Eileen Cornet in songs by Polish composers: Chopin, Karłowicz, Moniuszko, Szymanowski, Petersburski and Różycki, as well as arias by Strauss, Verdi and Lehar.

Some PAAA and Arts Club members and guests joined the audience for the concert and attended the lunch served in the garden. Members of the newly elected ACPC board remained for a meeting while others took advantage of the free time to visit some of Washington's attractions, including the Library of Congress and nearby galleries, before returning to the hotel to get ready for the evening's festivities.

The Awards Banquet was held in the historic University Club of Washington, D.C., which was established in 1904 and whose first president was the then Secretary of War and later President of the United States William Howard Taft. The

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Top left: Alice Laning, 2020 ACPC Founders Award.
 Top right: Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, 2020 Distinguished Service Award.
 Bottom: Marcia Lewandowski (left), 2020 Jan de Rosen Award Recipient with Cecilia Glembocki.

(Photo credit this page: Jacek Wojnarowski)

banquet was set in the beautifully appointed Taft Room on the first floor of the historic building. Since there was no convention last year, the awards for 2020 were presented along with those for the current year.

The award recipients for last year were: Alice Laning, Founders Award for her many years of dedicated work on behalf of the organization; Brian Ganz, Cultural Achievement Award for his contribution to promoting Polish music by playing all the works written by Fryderyk Chopin in a series of concerts over a ten-year period; Marek Chodakiewicz, Distinguished Service Award for his contribution in promotion of the history of Poland as professor of history at the Institute of World Politics, where he holds the Kościuszko Chair of Polish Studies; Marcia Lewandowski, the Jan de Rosen Award for her lifetime achievements in creating and promoting Polish art, especially in the area of dance, theater, and folk art forms. Brian Ganz was away on a concert engagement and his award was accepted by Maestro Piotr Gajewski.

Two 2021 Awards were presented to: Laura Kafka-Price, Cultural Achievement Award for her work on the multi-dimensional project dedicated to teaching non-Polish singers how to sing in Polish and thus making operas and songs by Polish composers more accessible to singers and audiences; Elżbieta Chłopecka Vande Sande, Distinguished Service Award for her promotion of the Polish art through organizing exhibits of works by Polish artists, concerts, and other cultural events, and contributions to sustaining such institutions as the National Philharmonic and others.

Mary Flanagan received special recognition for her lifetime of dedication and work on behalf of the Polish community and Polish culture. Cecilia Glembocki, Debbie Majka, and Tom Payne received commemorative coins for their work on the Jamestown project.

As a thank you for her award, soprano Laura Kafka-Price sang Chopin's *Moja Pieszczotka*, accompanied on the piano by Maestro Gajewski. Entertainment throughout the evening was provided by Stasia and Olek Skrypczuk, otherwise known as the Joyful Skrypczuk Duo.

Oh yes, there was the usual raffle during the convention, presided over by Christine Panek, Fran Pudlo, Sophia Panek, and Gini Pudlo, which raised several hundred dollars for the ACPC Polish Perspectives exhibit. This just shows that despite the unusual circumstance, everything at the convention went as usual, which is very gratifying to the organizers.

Distinguished Service Award recipient Elżbieta Chłopecka Vande Sande and Cultural Achievement Awardee Laura Kafka-Price with their awards. (Photo Jacek Wojnarowski)



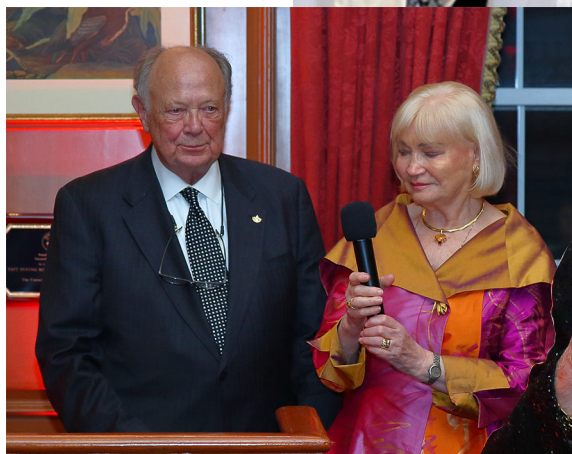
A month after the Awards Banquet, Celia Larking stopped to congratulate Brian Ganz on his 2020 ACPC Cultural Achievement Award after a concert at the new Capital One Hall in Tysons, Virginia (Photo: Richard Larkin)



Below: Raffle tickets are drawn and winners announced by Christine Panek, Fran Pudlo, Sophia Panek, and Gini Pudlo of the Polish Cultural Club of Greater Hartford in Connecticut. (Photo: Celia Larkin)



Right: President Raymond Glembocki and Celia Larkin close the banquet (Photo: Jacek Wojnarowski)



Mary Flanagan delivers remarks upon her reception of the ACPC's Lifetime Achievement Award. (Photo: Jacek Wojnarowski)



From the President

Dear ACPC Members:

May I first say on behalf of my wife Cecilia and myself, we hope you had a Happy Thanksgiving and wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

It was about a year ago that I wrote how we would attempt to schedule our events in the midst of the COVID pandemic. As the year continued it appeared the COVID issue was becoming more under control and our events went from virtual to a Washington, D. C. convention which was in compliance with CDC and D. C. guidelines. In the last several days a new variant of COVID was reported and the world seems to be reacting with great concern and imposing regulations as for the original COVID version. Please, everyone take extra care with your activities and be assured our members' safety is the primary concern for our plans for 2022.

Speaking of conventions, we had a great convention in Washington, D. C. hosted by Celia Larkin and the Polish American Arts Association of Washington which included our ACPC elections. Her report is enclosed in this newsletter. Tom Payne of the ACPC Convention Committee coordinated our member efforts for the event. For 2022, Tom and Debbie our Convention Committee, have begun to work with John Cebrowski and the Panna Maria Foundation Board, who have approved the convention, and they have been invited by Dave Krupinski of "Visit San Antonio" to begin planning the San Antonio part of the Convention. Debbie and Tom will keep us informed of their progress. One more convention item, 2023 will be the seventy-fifth anniversary of the meeting of our founders in Detroit. We have asked the Detroit organizations if they would like to sponsor a Seventy-fifth Anniversary Convention in Detroit in 2023.

Our founders established the ACPC to support the member organizations in their local efforts to promote Polish Culture and to share their activities with other members. Reading our annual report book is not enough, we need more interaction with our members. At a Virtual Board Meeting in 2021 we asked organization presidents to introduce themselves and their organizations. We had ten presidents enthusiastically make virtual presentations about themselves and their organizations. I now feel that I personally know ten members and perhaps I can help them with their organization goals.



President
Raymond Glembocki

A good example of how we can work together is when Rick Lapham set up a program in Detroit about the Polish craftsmen in the Jamestown Colony in 1608 who established a glass factory. Rick discussed the program with Cecilia, he used our NCSS material for posters and giveaways, invited Henrietta Nowakowski to speak about her research on the names of the craftsmen, and - using his creativity - invited a local glass blower to demonstrate the glassing blowing craft. He put together many of the resources ACPC membership could provide for his program.

I see a strong future for the ACPC. The Panna Maria Foundation is working with Ted to establish a membership structure which is required for ACPC membership. I know of several organizations which are actively working to join the ACPC. We have a broad mandate for membership when you consider the definition of *culture*: "Culture is an umbrella term which encompasses the social behavior and norms found in human societies, as well as the knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, customs, capabilities, and habits of the individuals in these groups."

Let's all encourage new organization members.

Sincerely,

Ray Glembocki



*Hej Kolenda, Kolenda!!
Wesołych Świąt Bożego Narodzenia
- Szczęśliwego Nowego Roku!!*

*Merry Christmas and
a Happy New Year!!*

Two Events Commemorating Our Faith and Heritage

Submitted by Cecilia Glembocki - Legacy Chairman

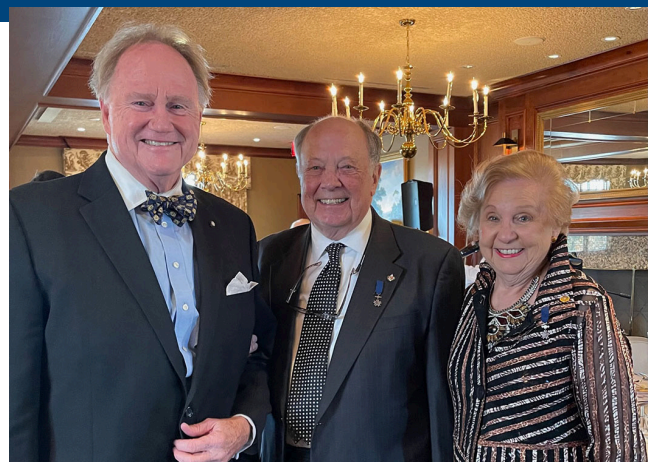
The Washington D. C. Chapter of the Friends of the John Paul II Foundation recently celebrated two important, long-awaited events in commemoration of the one hundred Anniversary of Karol Wojtyla's birth and the 43th year of his election to the papacy.

An Inaugural Event of the Eastern Region, U.S. Chapters was held October 30-31, 2021 at the Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. Representatives of five of the seventeen Foundation chapters in the USA were in attendance. An elaborate banquet was held with decorations honoring our beloved Pope and guests were presented with memorable gifts including holy cards and "Keep Your Heritage Alive" bookmarks. A children's book *Poland* was distributed to all guests to share with their families about the history of our Polish customs and traditions.

Raymond Glembocki and Mieczyslaw Bokszy were the masters of ceremonies and Father Krzysztof Wieliczko, OSPPE of Rome, Italy, was the keynote speaker. Presidents of the New England, New York, New Jersey, Philadelphia and the Washington, D.C. chapters were presented with American Flags that were flown over the United States Capitol on October 16, 2020, to commemorate the 43rd year of Karol Cardinal Wojtyla's ascension to the Holy See of Saint Peter. This also commemorated the anniversary of his 100th birthday. Father Lizinczyk, Prior of Our Lady of Czestochowa, Michael Blichasz- President of Polish American Cultural Center Museum in Historic Philadelphia and Bogdan Chemielewski, President and CEO Polish and Slavic Federal Credit Union were also presented with flags. The presidents of the Eastern Region Chapters were Michael Pajak, Mietek Bokszy, Marianna Eckel, Richard Krzyzanowski and Barbara Pysk. The Pope's favorite musical selections including *Barka* were sung by the entire group led by Skrypczuk Duo of Washington, D. C.

Mary Flanagan, a founding member of the Washington, D.C. chapter reminisced about the founding of the Dom Polski in Rome, Italy. She was presented "The Fidelity to the Legacy of Saint John Paul II Award" as a founding member of the Foundation. Most Reverend Witold Mroziewski, Auxiliary Bishop of Brooklyn, presented the award to Mary. Mary noted that it was through the efforts of Sir Walter Zachariasiewicz that chapters were established in the United States. To date, there are forty-seven chapters of the Friends of John Paul II Foundation in the world (five continents and thirteen countries).

On Sunday, after a breakfast, discussions were held among all the chapter presidents and their members. They shared the various activities including fund raising, problem solving, programming and membership development. Later in the morning a beautiful mass was concelebrated in the lower chapel where Most Reverend Witold Mroziewski, Father Krzysztof Wieliczko, OSPPE and Monsignor Anthony Czarnecki,



*Photo Captions:
Top: Hugh Demsey with Raymond and Cecilia Glembocki at the "Wadowice on the Potomac" event on Nov. 7.*

Center: Award recipient Mary Flanagan shares her comments with attendees and is congratulated by sculptor Gordon Kray at the Nov. 7 event.

*Bottom: Flag presentation to Father McCormick with Rosa Pace, Cecilia and Raymond Glembocki and Marianna Eckel.
Right: Musical selections of John Paul II's favorites were presented by Stacia and Olek Skrypczuk*

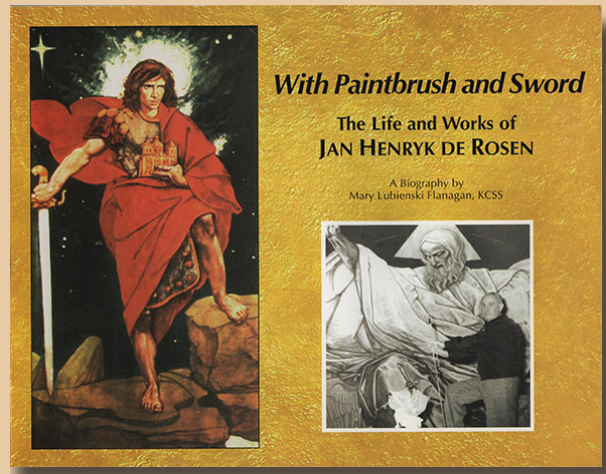
Opposite page: Concelebrated mass at the Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa in Doylestown, on Oct. 31, 2021.

the Chaplain of the New England Foundation participated. It was a productive and inspirational event.

On November 7, 2021, the Washington D. C. Chapter celebrated "Wadowice on the Potomac" at the Army Navy Club in Arlington, Virginia. The grand celebration also honored Mary Flanagan for being one of the founders of the Foundation. Hugh Dempsey, past director of the John Paul II Cultural Center and a Knight of the Order of Malta, reminded the guests that the initial work done to support the Cultural Center was done by members of Polonia as a museum to honor Pope John Paul II. Father James McCormick of the Marian Fathers addressed how John Paul II not only believed in the visionary Sister Faustina but also proceeded with her beatification and canonization. Fr. McCormick explained how Divine Mercy was sanctified through the early years of John Paul II's pontificate.

Gifts distributed to guests included DVDs of *Nine Days the Changed the World* by the Gingrich Foundation and *The Second Greatest Story Ever Told* by Michael Gaitley. Leaflets about John Paul II were distributed as an example of how we spread the legacy to three diocesan Catholic school systems in the greater Washington D.C. area- Arlington, Washington, and Baltimore. Marianne Eckel and Cecilia Glembocki presented Father McCormick with an American flag that was flown over the United States Capitol on October 16, 2020. Guests were entertained with musical selections from the Skrypczuk Duo.

More individuals are joining the Foundation in hopes of carrying on the legacy and the memory of a great man who we all knew so very well. As Pope John Paul II admonished, it is important to keep our heritage alive and open our Hearts to love life itself.



The Jan Henryk de Rosen Fund

Maestro de Rosen was a well known muralist both in the United States and abroad. He was a Founding member of the Polish Arts League of Pittsburgh and a member of the Polish American Arts Association of Washington, D. C.

He was born in Warsaw, Poland in 1891. Later, having established his reputation as a great muralist, he was commissioned by the Ambassador to the U.S., Count Jerzy Potocki, to paint two works for the Polish Pavilion at the New York World's Fair in 1939.

Having arrived in the United States early in 1939, he was prevented from returning to Poland when World War II began. He was active in the Polish war effort, working at the Polish embassy until the end of the war. After the war he chose to remain in the United States and achieved renown for his work both in the United States and abroad.

To acknowledge the great achievements of this artist, the ACPC decided to erect a monument in his honor at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. Gordon Kray, the well known Polish American sculptor was commissioned to create a cenotaph* at the Shrine which was dedicated in 2005.

Due to legal entanglements, we were unable to transfer de Rosen's remains to Doylestown, therefore it was decided to erect a proper marker at the grave of Maestro de Rosen at the Columbia Gardens cemetery in Arlington, Virginia.

In order to fund this project, we are asking for donations to be made out to:

Polish American Arts Association (PAAA)
with *de Rosen fund* on the bottom For line
and send to:

Mary Flanagan,
1733 Kirby Rd. #1109,
McLean, VA 22101-4831

Any donor of \$25.00 or more, will receive a copy of the book *With Paintbrush and Sword* de Rosen's biography containing photos of many of de Rosen's works (pictured above). All in beautiful color.

NEWS FROM THE POLISH CULTURAL CLUB OF GREATER HARTFORD, INC. (PCCGH)

The summer began with the great news that our recent young scholar, Ala Grabarczyk won 3rd place in the 7-9 age Category in the 2021 Polish Poetry Recitation Global Competition "Słowem - Polska" sponsored by Poland's First Lady Agata Kornhauser-Duda. The competition included participants from 45 countries, 252 Polish Language Schools, and 720 students. Ala was congratulated personally in a virtual meeting and conversation with the Polish First Lady on July 8, 2021. Nine year old Ala, a student of the Hartford Polish Saturday School, was the 2020 winner of the Club's first "Anna-Mae Maglaty Literary Competition." Matching funds for the Competition's 1st prize were provided by the ACPC's Wachtel Literary Award grant.

Five delegates from our Club attended the ACPC Convention in Washington, D.C. in September: Lilia Kieltyka, Fran Pudlo, Gini Pudlo, Christine Panek, and Sophia Panek. Congratulations to Lilia, who was elected 2nd Vice President of the ACPC. Interacting with other ACPC delegates from different states and exchanging ideas is always a highlight of the Convention, as is time for sightseeing.

The new permanent Kościuszko Squadron Exhibit was officially inaugurated on November 11 at the New England Air Museum in Windsor Locks, Connecticut. Several of our PCCGH members attended the event, which celebrates the heroism of the Kościuszko Squadron and Polish 303 Squadron RAF during World War II. This exhibit allows many years of work to be compiled into one modern display where history enthusiasts can come to learn more about the importance and accomplishments of these Polish fighter pilots.

On November 20, the PCCGH collaborated with the Ladies Guild of SS. Cyril and Methodius Church in Hartford to hold a "Holiday Bazaar" with a Polish flair. This replaced the Club's annual Szopka Festival and Competition which is currently on hold. The response from those who attended was heartwarming. Several szopki of former winners were displayed and proved once again that this ancient art form continues to hold interest for Polish Americans. The Club hopes to return to a full Szopka Competition format next year.

Sadly, we mourn the loss of one of the Club's founders and influential members, Krystyna Słowikowska-Farley, who passed away on November 19 at the age of 96. Krystyna was a survivor of the horrors of World War II in Poland and Siberia and was a life-long ambassador of her Polish heritage. She made an impact on many lives and was an inspiration to all who knew her.

We wish everyone a blessed Christmas -- *Wesołych Świąt Bożego Narodzenia* -- and a Happy New Year -- *Szczęśliwego Nowego Roku*.

Photo Captions:

Top: Cecelia Dillon (MN), Lilia Kieltyka, Chris Panek, Sophia Panek, Fran Pudlo, and Gini Pudlo (CT) doing some sightseeing at the ACPC national convention in Washington, D. C.

Second photo at right and bottom photo: Gini and Fran Pudlo at their recent "Holiday Bazaar with a Polish Flair"

Third photo at right: Young artists at the Fair's Szopka coloring page table.



SOLIDARITY TO REMEMBER SACRIFICE

Two Polish priests from different parishes, Fr. Cyprian Czop (Roman Catholic) and Fr. John Kutek (Polish National Catholic), joined three tenors from ACPC'S Polish American Cultural Institute of Minnesota (PACIM) affiliate in singing the *Mazurek Dąbrowskiego* at a November 11 Armistice Day memorial at Brit's Pub in Minneapolis. The tavern was rebuilt after being set ablaze in August 2020 during the city's riots. Diplomatic and cultural representatives from former World War I allies, as well as Germany attended the event, co-sponsored by Partners for Peace and the Minnesota chapter of Alliance Francaise.



POLISH MUSIC IN MINNESOTA

A Sunday, October 3 choral and wind instrument concert at the Polish Cultural Institute & Museum in Winona, Minnesota featured the Kashubian Voices of the Winona Polish Choir in traditional dress and the Sonora Winds classical chamber ensemble from Minneapolis. At the microphone is 2021 PACIM Polanie Scholarship recipient Carolyn Macon, the choir's co-founder, who is pursuing a career in architecture. ACPC affiliate PACIM increased its scholarship program awards to college students of Polish descent to \$2,000 each this year and named three recipi-



Representing the Land of our Ancestors

The American Council for Polish Culture is proud to acknowledge that two of our members are serving as Honorary Consuls representing the Republic of Poland in the United States. Richard Poremski (left in photo) serves as Honorary Consul for the Republic of Poland for Maryland and Deborah Majka as Honorary Consul for the Republic of Poland for Southeastern Pennsylvania. They met with the new Deputy Chief of Mission of the Embassy of the Republic of Poland Adam Krzywosądzki (right in photo) at the 2021 ACPC National Convention in Washington, D. C.

The duties of Polish Honorary Consuls include fostering the development of friendly relations and cooperation between Poland and the United States, providing consular assistance to resident Polish citizens, fostering the bond between Poland and Polish Americans, monitoring of the rights and interests of the Republic of Poland within their consular region including promoting the Polish economy, science, culture and language. Honorary consuls also interact with Americans seeking information on Poland or assistance in coordinating cultural, tourist and economic relations with that nation.



Chopiniana 2021

by Frank J. Dmuchowski

Celebrating Chopiniana 2021, the 35th Anniversary of APCS and Honoring Ray Okonski

This was a remarkably busy and exciting year for the American Polish Cultural Society (APCS) culminating in the Chopiniana on October 17, 2021 at the American Polish Cultural Center in Troy, Michigan. Due to the pandemic the annual concert celebrating the life of Poland's greatest composer, Frederic Chopin, had to be cancelled last year. This was the only cancellation in the 27 years of holding this concert.

Everyone was delighted that this year's Chopiniana would take place. There were 130 attendees most of whom enjoyed a wonderful dinner in a beautiful setting after having listened to a concert performed by the young 16-year-old pianist Richard Shao and baritone Christopher Borowicz.

Richard was discovered at the conclusion of the 2019 Chopiniana which he attended with his parents. While the adults were conversing, the 14-year-old wandered up to the piano and softly played a classical piece. The audience was amazed at his skill and asked him to play even more. He modestly obliged. Everyone recognized that Richard was an exceptional talent and wanted him to comeback as the principal performer for a future Chopiniana. Richard who is an 11th grader at Detroit Country Day is being tutored in piano by a professor from the University of Michigan and in violin by a professor from Goshen College in Indiana.

Richard is also a composer. He has performed on the piano in Perugia Italy. He has competed as a composer, pianist and violinist and won several first places.

At this year's Chopiniana Richard played a concerto by Schumann and a prelude by Rachmaninoff before concluding with two nocturnes and a ballade by Chopin. All were complex pieces which he beautifully performed from memory. The baritone, Christopher Borowicz, performed four melodies in Polish concluding with *Pieśń Janusza* from the opera *Halka* by Moniuszko. He was accompanied by Richard Shao on piano. Mr. Borowicz who is the Music Director at Our Lady of Refuge Parish received his master's degree in musical education at the State College of Music in Warsaw. He also studied at the State Office of Music in Hamburg Germany. He teaches voice therapy and instrumental music.

The American Polish Cultural Society which sponsors the Chopiniana takes considerable pride in presenting performers from many diverse backgrounds all of whom have a common appreciation of Chopin. The chair of this year's Chopiniana was Ms. Jacqueline Jadwiga Kołowski, and the Master of Ceremonies was Sebastian Szczepański.

An important part of this year's Chopiniana was the presentation of a Distinguished Service Award to Ray Okonski from the APCS. Sadly, Mr. Okonski - a very generous Polish American philanthropist and a board member of the APCS - was unable to personally receive the award due to poor health. (He passed away on November 12th at the age of 95).

Ms. Zofia Duniec-Dmuchowski who is a member of the APCS board of directors accepted the award for Mr. Okonski. In her remarks Ms. Duniec-Dmuchowski captured the essence of Mr. Okonski's generous spirit when she said, "Mr. Okonski who has done so much for Polonia, would have wanted to share his award with each and every one of you. He certainly would have closed his acceptance with: "Thank you to each of you for making the American Polish Cultural Society, the American Polish Cultural Center and Chopiniana such a great success."



Ray Okonski

IN MEMORIAM

Remembering Ray Okonski - Polish American Philanthropist, Dedicated Polonian, and Decorated WW II Veteran

by Frank J. Dmuchowski

Ray, as he liked to be called, graduated from high school in 1944 and planned to attend Wayne State University. However, this was at the height of World War II, and he was drafted into the U.S. Army. In March of 1945 Ray distinguished himself during the famous crossing of the Rhine at the Battle of the Bridge at Remagen where he was wounded. He received the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star for bravery.

Returning home after the war, the G. I. Bill allowed him to attend the University of Michigan where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial-Mechanical

Ray Okonski Tribute *continued*



Photo captions:

Top: Zofia Duniec-Dmuchowski poses with the Ray Okonski Award and performers Richard Shao (center) and Christopher Borowicz.

Center: Chopiniana Chair Jacqueline Kolowski greets concert attendees.

Bottom: APCS guests at the performance.

Engineering in 1949 as well as a Master of Business Administration in 1950. It was this combination of engineering and business education plus a focus on being the best he could be that propelled Ray to a successful career as an executive.

Through successful business entrepreneurship and astute investing, he was ultimately able to retire and pursue his life as a Polonian philanthropist. Ray's core principle of philanthropy was focused on the importance of education for Polonian youth and supporting other Polonian causes and institutions.

Ray belonged to many service organizations such as the American Council for Polish Culture, and often served on the board of directors of many of these organizations where he shared his knowledge of business and love of philanthropy.

For many years he contributed additional funds for scholarships and repeatedly gave funding so that two students at the University of Michigan Dearborn could attend the Jagiellonian University Summer Language program in Krakow, Poland. He also donated funding so that students in the Wayne State University Polish Club could travel to Poland for cultural study. He financially supported several organizations representing Polonia.

Many of these organizations and his beloved University of Michigan recognized his generosity and accomplishments through numerous awards of recognition.

Through Friends of Polish Art, he funded four memorial stones at the Battlefield in Savannah Georgia where General Kazimierz Pułaski was mortally wounded. Also, he financially supported development of the nationally recognized Polish Language Seal of Biliteracy Test which has encouraged more high school students to study Polish.

In closing, I would like to cite one more example of Ray's generosity and intellectual prowess. During his nineties Ray funded the development of an inexpensive and innovative "wheelchair escalator" which could be used at the homes of those who needed such assistance. He formulated the engineering concept and had it developed at the University of Detroit Mercy School of Engineering. Ray was awarded the patent rights to the wheelchair escalator shortly before his 95th Birthday which was the final triumph of his genius.

Ray leaves behind a legacy that makes us all proud to have been his friend and wanting to strive to follow in his example of his untiring service to Polonia.



