

Celebrating the 75th Anniversary of
The American Council for Polish Culture

As the American Polish Cultural Society prepared for the 75th Anniversary Convention of the American Council for Polish Culture, we searched and recruited members agreeable to commit their time and talents to work to make this event a success.

It is with a great pleasure and satisfaction that I would like to report, out of six people on the Convention Committee, five members were from the Friends of Polish Art. We worked diligently for the 5 months planning scheduling and arranging this celebration. The Convention was a great success because of the hard work and the untiring dedication of the committee and the members of FPA supporting the committee's work.

Donna Bielecki, Jacqueline Kolowski, Patricia Malski, Stella Szczesny, with Richard Tarnicki as an honorary chair, President of the American Polish Cultural Society/Center, and myself were the original 'cast'. However, preparing the Program Book, we must extend special thanks to our President Frank Dmuchowski and Zofia Duniec Dmuchowski for many hours of proof reading, correcting, and creating articles for the book to make it interesting and to illustrate our Polish roots in Michigan and our heritage. We thank Dr. John Radzilowski, Director of the Polish Institute of Research and Culture for his contributions and for sponsoring the venue for the Macella Sembrich Concert. Words of gratitude to Stella Szczesny and Patricia Malski for arranging the convention bags and its content that were distributed to every delegate, special thanks to the Piast Institute for the donation of books, and the wine glasses, to Polish Roman Catholic Union for the educational materials on Polish Nobles, to the Polish National Alliance for their contributions, to the Central Citizens Committee for the brochures on Gen. Casimir Pulaski, to Stella Szczesny for her donation, to Alina Klin for preparing an informative plan, "Tour of Detroit" with Polish points of interest that distributed to all guests interested in visiting the sites and last, but not least to Brian Malski for all the technical support in audio and visual assistances that saved us a hundreds of dollars by not hiring outside company. In addition, a word of gratitude to Jerzy Barycki from the Canadian-Polish Business and Professional Association of Windsor for sharing their amazing 12 panel exhibit on Mikołaj Kopernik (Nicolaus Copernicus) celebrating the 550th anniversary of his birth paying homage to his genius and his major astronomical discoveries.

The theme of the convention was "Celebrating Our Rich Past - Looking to a Bright Future" which originally was Brian Malski's idea, and we certainly did that. Here is the most fitting place to express our heartfelt appreciation to Alicja Karlic from Polish Weekly and her crew, Andrzej Miłosz for the most wonderful record of the opening of the convention and the Awards Banquet at the American Polish Cultural Center, immortalizing it on YouTube where we invite everyone to watch the video. In the video you'll see the Knights of Columbus leading in 'Presentations of Colors' escorted by Wawel Dancers in their full colorful costumes welcoming arriving guests and let us not forget Mike Ostrowski in his grand Winged Hussar Armor welcomed by a sigh of admiration as he entered. The Convention Committee is very grateful to Mark Szpak, President of the Polish Cultural Foundation of Boston for serving as the MC, where with his wit and commentary making it that much more enjoyable.

In addition, to commemorate this event, we published an ACPC Convention Program Book of congratulatory letters from officials and advertising from area businesses, organizations, and professionals. We truly appreciate Jacqueline Kolowski's efforts and her devotion in making this book not just a profitable venture for the Scholarship Fund at the APCS, but also a memorable addition to our celebration for this Convention Book will be archived and preserved for future generations.

The convention opened on July 27, 2023, with the welcome greetings by APCS President, Richard Tarnicki followed by the Mayor of Troy and keynote speaker Dr. Paweł Zyzak, Consul General of Poland, who was so very complimentary on the achievements of the organization and thanked all delegates for continuing the legacy of our predecessors. Followed by remarks by our Honorary Consul Richard Walawender who so accurately informed the delegates of the Polish roots here in Michigan.

Each day included a business session, reports from the affiliate organizations and historical presentations. The presentations included: "Returned Art from the Polish Pavilion at the 1939 New York World's Fair in New York." by Peter Obst, President of the Polish Heritage Society of Philadelphia; Henrietta Nowakowski's presentation on Blue Army Veterans of WW I; John Cebrowski showcased a newly published book titled *Surviving Genocide: Personal Recollections* written by Donna Chmara, a member of the Polish Arts Club of Trenton, an ACPC affiliate; and Frank Dmuchowski presented a short talk on famous Polish painter Jan Matejko outlining his art depicting historical events of Poland.

Friday afternoon all the delegates and guests traveled to the Holy Sepulchre Cemetery to visit and pay homage to Halerczycy, Polish World War I Veterans of General Józef Haler's Blue Army who fought for a free Poland. The delegates laid a flower wreath at the newly dedicated grave markers and the monument erected to honor their sacrifice. After the visit to the cemetery, we toured the beautiful grounds of the Orchard Lake Schools. We were welcomed by Dr. John Radzilowski, Director of Polish Institute of Culture and Research proudly informed all the visitors of the amazing history and the legacy of Orchard Lake. We also had a chance to see the insight of the St. John Paul II Shrine and the back of the main chapel. Following the tour, we had a delicious dinner at the OL Dining Hall, beautifully transformed to elegant setting with linens and fresh roses arranged by Genia Górecki and Sister Genowefa. We were also captivated by a special display of priceless Polish art, arranged by Dr. Radzilowski. To complete the wonderful day, we were captivated by a talented Dorothy Gal, a winner of the Marcella Sembrich Vocal competition with her angelic soprano voice in a Concert at the Steinway Concert Hall, with Dr. Jarosław Gołombowski at the piano, followed by an afterglow organized by Donna Bielecki.

Every year, we end the convention with the Awards Banquet, where we honor and recognize people of merit for their contributions in promoting Polish Heritage, this year was no different. Five awards were given out this year to deserving members. Out of the five awards, three honorees were from our own organization. How truly proud we are that Henrietta Nowakowski was awarded *The Lifetime Achievement Award* for her many years of research into the first settlement of Poles in Jamestown (1608) and now the last 15 years for devoting her time and energy researching the Haller's Army Veterans resting at the Holy Sepulchre Cemetery. Carol Surma so well-deserved recognition, *Founders Award* for her dedication to FPA for the last 3 decades in many functions, as the FPA President, as a treasurer and on the national level chairing a committee revising the by-laws and the constitution of the ACPC, as a parliamentarian for ACPC and a Co-chair of the ACPC Convention as well as a ACPC Board Meeting here in Michigan. Brian Malski was also honored with the *Founders Award*, for his many years of dedication to FPA, as an FPA Vice-President, as the Szopka Competition Chair, and for serving on Scholarship Committee not only for FPA, but also on the national level on behalf of ACPC, chairing the Eye of the Eagle Walter Zachariasiewicz Scholarship and in addition serving as ACPC Director. Drs. Barbara and Waldemar Niklinski and Krzysztof Zimowski from other organizations also received awards. Warmest and most sincere congratulations to all Honorees.

In closing, on behalf of the Convention Committee I must convey our gratitude to all who made this celebration a great success, celebrating our rich history and our accomplishments in those 75 years of ACPC.

Now, as we start a new chapter, we are looking to a bright future for the next 25 years, as we continue the legacy of the leaders before us.

Submitted by Barbara Lemecha