



# News of Polonia

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## Wiadomości Polonijne

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### Re-inventing Reality... In The Polish Manner

By: *Julia Wąchala*

Oh Reality! We are surrounded by it. Inundated by it. Even television has adopted it as a new form of entertainment. So it was refreshing to see a creative use of virtual reality on May 31...as the Polish American Congress of Southern California presented "Poland Forever" at the Pasadena Elks Lodge.

Instead of the predictable antics of some current Hollywood pseudo - personalities trying to get real, we saw five of the world's greatest Poles take the stage in a time-travel meeting of Polish intellect, heart and spirit.

From the 15th Century came Nicolas Copernicus (Mikołaj Kopernik), followed by Marie Skłodowska Curie, Helena Modjeska (Modrzejewska), Ignace Jan Paderewski, and Pope John Paul II (Karol Wojtyła). It was an impressive sight, only surpassed by the skill of those playing the roles; respectively, Richard Wideryński, Theresa Dudzick, Justyna Warecka, Wojciech Kocyan, and Zbysław Petryka. A solid gold, 100% Polish cast.

The costumes were correct and colorful, but it was their manner and their ability to articulate and impersonate these heroic characters that gave the audience an opportunity to suspend belief and enjoy the brilliant repartee.

The program was created, written and produced by Andrew Ettinger and moderated by his ancestral alter-ego, Andrzej Poznański. "I thought we'd experiment with only a partial script this year, and let the characters speak for themselves through interaction and imagination, as if they were in a meeting today, May 31, 2008, even though they came from the distant past."

„After their opening statements they each responded to a variety of questions regarding what makes the Polish spirit so

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## HAPPY BIRTHDAY AMERICA



### A Polish Declaration of Admiration and Friendship For the United States of America

Perhaps there has never been a more extraordinary gift given by one nation to another than the 11 volumes presented to the United States by Poland on the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of American Independence. These volumes consist of a declaration of admiration signed by an estimated 5,500,000 Polish citizens, representing more than one-sixth of the total population of Poland in 1926.

It may be difficult for Americans, who sometimes take democracy for granted, to understand the impetus behind this demonstration of admiration. For almost the entire history of the American Republic, Poland's political life had been dominated by foreign, autocratic powers, and Poles had looked to the United States as a model of political organization and to American democracy as a promise for their own future. It is, therefore, not surprising that Poland, only eight years after regaining its independence from foreign rule, chose to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of American independence.

The idea of having the Polish people participate in celebrating America's holiday was introduced in February 1926 by the American-Polish Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Poland, established in 1921, and the Polish American Society founded in 1919 by the renowned Polish composer and statesman Ignacy Jan Paderewski. These two organizations invited various government departments, the municipality of Warsaw and other important Polish institutions and associations to appoint thirty delegates to a national Sesquicentennial Committee to determine an appropriate tribute.

The committee decided to present the United States with a declaration expressing the esteem, gratitude, and friendship of the people of Poland. This remarkable document would

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### Monument to Lt. Col. Urban dedicated

By: *Glenn Gramigna*



#### THE TOP HERO:

(L.) Jennie Urban, the wife of Lt. Col. Matt Urban and her daughter, Jennifer Hurford, listen to Taps being performed at the unveiling of the monument to Lt. Col. Urban in front of the Rath Building in downtown Buffalo.

"I'm really touched," said Jennie Urban, the wife of Lt. Col. Matt Urban, the most highly decorated combat soldier in U.S. history, during the June 14 ceremonies to dedicate a monument to the Buffalo native.

State senators and assemblymen, veterans, and many dedicated citizens of our wonderful city paid tribute to Lt. Col. Urban that Saturday morning as the monument which celebrates his remarkable World War II valor was unveiled.

"He was someone of whom all of us in Western New York (WNY) can be proud," said Norm Skulski, who organized the effort to get the monument made and installed. "That was the first thing I thought of when I found out about Matt Urban. Here is a man who showed courage above anyone else during World War II and he was one of us, yet no one knows about him. That's why I decided to push this forward so that he could receive the honor he deserves in his hometown and those of us who live here can have something we can really be really be proud of."

Jennie Urban said her husband never sought recognition and even after he received the Medal of Honor from President Jimmy Carter, he would tell his fellow veterans that they were "represented in that medal."

Urban's niece Babbidean Urban Huber said no one knew of Matt Urban's exploits until he received that honor in 1980. She noted that while Audie Murphy has the same number of medals, Urban's medals were all combat related. "There is a vast difference in the value of the medals," she said.

Lt. Col. Urban earned seven Purple Hearts and, his wife said that at one point he was given the last rites and placed with the dead soldiers in an army tent. "He had a long talk with the Lord who gave him 50 more years," she added.

Matt Urban's daughter, Jennifer Urban Hurford spoke of her family's gratitude for what Western New Yorkers did to remember her dad.

"I think this is wonderful," she said. "I know how proud my father would have been because, even though he had to move to Michigan to take advantage of a job opportunity, he loved Buffalo and WNY and came back here as often as he could. To know that all of these people did so much to honor my father fills all of our hearts with love."

Art Dembik, Urban's friend through grade

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