

Symposium from 8**Mayor Richard Daley**

At this point, Chicago Mayor Richard Daley entered the auditorium to a standing ovation. (He has been named one of the five best mayors in the country.) He is known for his work with the Polish Community. Daley stated that immigrants come to the city for the American Dream of education and home ownership. Chicago has been the Sister City of Warsaw for 50 years. The Poles have built schools, churches, and hospitals. Now the former Polish neighborhoods have been taken over by Yuppies, wishing to live in the city. He also talked about a need for senior housing for all ethnic groups.

The mayor concluded by thanking Frank Spula, his hope for continual improvement of the city, and expressed his pride in the military who are serving this country.

Congressman Mike Quigley

Fifth District Congressman Mike Quigley spoke about the need for visa waiver for Polish citizens, health care reform, and the missile shield program. He feels that it is important to recognize the efforts of Poland and to serve arm in arm. He will move in that direction. Quigley referred to "The Burial List" show on MTV, which is like the movie "The Bucket List." He is already doing the things on his Bucket List.

Issue Session B1– Political Opportunities: Getting Involved, Being Active

This was a very outstanding session, featuring former Congressman and Secretary of Veteran's Affairs Edward Derwiński and former Illinois Attorney General Neil Hartigan. (He was the youngest Attorney General, and was defeated in his run for Governor by Edgar.) The moderator was Dean Anthony Bajdek, PAC Vice President for American Affairs and retired Senior Lecturer in History at Northeastern University in Boston.

The Honorable Edward Derwiński, a Republican, began by saying that "good government provides good service." Poles need to be active in politics because politics is positive and politicians should serve the public. In 1958 there were four Chicago Polish Congressmen. Today there is one -- Lipiński. There are none from Buffalo or Wisconsin and only one from Detroit. Political elections are also related to the Census and how districts are formed.

Neil Hartigan proposed the question: Why is there a loss of Poles in Chicago politics? Politics has changed. We all need to be involved and not wait for someone else to do it. Mr. Hartigan introduced the current recommended candidate, MaryAnn Somo (who was present in the audience).

The third panelist was Andrew Przybyło, President of the White Eagle Hall in Niles, Illinois, a Chicago suburb. Przybyło spoke from his experience as a Niles Village Trustee since 1989 and head of the Maine Township Democratic Party for 11 years.

Dean Bajdek stressed the need to be involved and active at all levels up to the White House. Singing and dancing are not enough. PAC President Rozmarek brought Poland's case to President Roosevelt—an example where the PAC stepped in and went right to the top. Politics need to be approached at the local level if we want to have access and clout at the national level. Altogether there are 1637 state senators and 4937 members of lower state houses in the United States; only 323 have Polish surnames. Over 60% of Members of Congress come from this pool of local officials; get involved with them while they are still state officials. The PAC has a presence in 18 states. Members should get involved and push for Visa Waiver resolutions by their state legislatures and organize Polish American days. Laws are made according to the interest of ethnic groups. In his state of Massachusetts Bajdek has been instrumental in sponsoring five Polish American Congress Days. He urged the audience, "Let's build something together."

A Q and A session brought out the question of Dan Rostenkowski, and it was unanimously agreed that he was wrongfully accused and was highly regarded by his constituents. A story was related of how a Homeless Shelter needed a van to transport a group of Polish men, who were living on the streets. A call to Rostenkowski brought a Chrysler van to the shelter the next day. He was a man of action – not just words.

Issue Session B2–Building Community Through Sports**By Wallace Zielinski, PAC Secretary, Panel Moderator**

Mr. Tomasz Bednarek, the coach of the Polish National Alliance Soccer Academy, said that he wanted to teach the skills of soccer that he learned by returning to the community his service. Mr. Bednarek is a young man about to graduate from college. The program consists of children 8 through 16 year olds. The children do not have to be members of the PNA to participate. Also the program has grown from 50 participants to 100 participants in only six months. Mr. Bednarek is appreciative of the PNA for supporting this program.

Mr. Edward L Kelly, a retired superintendent of the Chicago Parks, indicated the number of parks, pools and fields that are available in Chicago. He had hired several instructors to run the varied sports programs associated with the Chicago system. This is all done with the intention of giving the children of Chicago a place to go and getting them off of the streets.

Mr. Timothy Kuźma, National President of the Polish Falcons of America, spoke of the history of the Falcons which started with the Sokoli program in Poland in the 1860's and was brought to America in 1887. He showed how over time the Falcons of America have developed from only gymnastics into many other sports. This is conjunction with their motto, "A healthy mind in a healthy body". Mr. Kuźma mentioned how important sports and physical fitness was to Pope John Paul II. He said Cardinal Dziwisz in his book revealed that the late Pope would go off secretly with just a few friends to ski outside of Rome.

Mr. Janusz Rajewski, the director of the Sports and Recreation Center of Poznań spoke of the center as being the largest in Poland. They have many soccer teams that practice and play there. The Center is seeking to host the European soccer championships in 2012. Recently they held the largest marathon in Poland with over a thousand runners. Finally, if you are looking for a place to practice kayaking, the Center has some of the best courses.

Issue Session C1: Preservation and Promotion of Polish Heritage and Culture in the United States

The moderator of this session was Debbie Majka, PAC VP – Cultural Affairs and President of the American Council for Polish Culture.

Maria Ciecęła, President of the Polish Museum of America was the first to speak. She came to Chicago as a Displaced Person 43 years ago and is a cancer survivor. The Polish Museum has a very interesting history. The idea originated in 1935, and the museum opened in 1937. WW II and the Polish exhibit from the 1939 World's Fair brought more acquisitions. There are 50,000 books, sculptures, paintings, Kościuszko and Modjeska collections, a large Paderewski Room, records, and archives. At the end of 2010 there will an early Polonia Exhibit, coinciding with the 150th anniversary of Paderewski's birth. There are frequent lectures and events, as well as a photo restoration project.

Maria Zakrzewska, Chair of the Polish American Services Committee at the Chicago Polish Library since 1995 is also the President of Polish Collections. She presents Polish culture to non-Poles.

Barbara Lemecha and Henrietta Nowakowski (both from Michigan), Co-Chairs of the ACPC's Polish Resources Booth very enthusiastically presented a report on their participation in the National Social Studies Convention for 12 years. The idea of a Polish exhibit originated with Irena Szeziola, a former administrator and teacher in the Los Angeles Unified School District. Other cultures had booths, so why shouldn't the Poles? Up to 5,000 teachers attend this conference, which is held in a different American city each year. This year it will be in Atlanta on November 13 and 14. Each year a different part of Polish History is featured. In 2008 and 2009 the subject was WW II – highlighting the participation of the Poles in so many theatres of the war. A booklet prepared by the ACPC was presented to all attendees. The presenters said the best part is when someone with no Polish connection shows interest, and especially when they say, "I didn't know that." The PNA helped financially with a film on

Żegota, which can be purchased and used in the classroom. The fifth generation of Polish Americans does not realize the beauty of Poland. These ladies are truly dedicated, and all travel is done at their own expense.

Debbie Majka did not speak, but she should be given credit for the very special celebration in Jamestown in 2008, as well as other events she has spearheaded.

Issue Session C2: Networking in the Community

PAC VP for Public Relations, Dr. Susanne Lotarski was moderator of this panel.

Don Verson, a banker and civic leader who helped found the Polish American Leadership Initiative (PALI) with the Archdiocese of Chicago, opened the session by drawing attention to the conference subtitle, challenges and opportunities, and suggested it needed a third element – change. Change Causes Challenges; Change Creates Opportunities. He also noted the frustration he had heard (on visa waiver and declining political representation) that Polish Americans aren't the force that we once were. The way we can harness change to meet challenges and opportunities, he suggested, is to recognize that each of us in the course of a lifetime builds up spheres of influence beginning with family, classmates, colleagues, neighbors, etc., perhaps 18-24 spheres in total. We all do sales jobs all of our lives, often without realizing it. These spheres are the basis for networking. PALI served as a network, which is being merged into the PAC and along with PolOrg will present PAC with a website for networking with over a thousand Polish organizations countrywide. Successful people have good networking skills. As organizations and community, we need solid networks to overcome our frustrations and turn them into opportunities.

Philip Mullins, the Chief Operating Officer of United Neighborhood Organization, described how a British Irishman became an organizer of the Latino community and head of one of the largest Latino leadership development organizations in the country. He stressed the need for developing a network of relationships and mediating institutions which are the base for developing civic leadership. The starting point is identifying the problem then developing a strategic vision focused on building relationships to solve the problem.

Tony Muszyński, a lawyer from Calgary, Alberta, Canada, and Director of "Poland in the Rockies," provided a case study of the strategy described by Mullins. The problem he had identified was the loss to the Polish Canadian and American communities of young adults once they had graduated at about age 14-16 from the Polish Saturday schools, Polish Scouting, and other organized youth programs. His solution was to create "Poland in the Rockies," a biannual 11-day educational program in things Polish for young adults. Youth, he suggested, feel like guests in most Polish organizations; they need to feel like members. Young people are looking for networks. They have all kinds of choices. We want them to join a Polish network. We want them to be "Born Again Poles." The next session of Poland in the Rockies will be held July 21-31, 2010. See <http://www.polandintherockies.com/>

Agnes Ptasiński who participated in the School of Polonia Leadership sponsored by the Polish Senate, related the lasting impression made by the program's concluding Oxford-style debate where the question for the debaters was whether young people who aren't part of Polonia organizations should circumvent existing organizations and create their own or should they work within existing organizations.

The discussion session returned to many of the issues raised by the panelists. Don Verson pointed out the importance of mentoring and networking, pointing to the PAC as providing contacts and networks throughout the U.S. and even the world. Use these networks, he urged; pick up the phone. Phil Mullins noted that change is a challenge for all. Change is not comfortable. People resist change. There are always factions, but unity comes from success. Andy Gościowski of Buffalo, N.Y. said this was one of the most positive PAC meetings he's ever attended and has never seen so many young people before. He spoke of another tile the younger generation was adding to the Polonia mosaic, and that is the effort to record for posterity the history of what those who settled in Buffalo had gone through during WWII. Ewa Betka praised the panel and said it would be useful also to learn from and network with other ethnic groups. A specialist in network technology spoke in Polish (translated by the moderator) about the opportunities for networking offered by modern technology. Mr. Wrześniewski urged the participants not to resist, but to use social networking tools such as LinkedIn.

General Session 6: The Future of Polonia – Organizational Challenges and Opportunities

Moderator PAC President Frank Spula kicked off the panel stating: "The future of Polonia is up to you." Individually it starts with each of us. "Don't be a Monday Morning Quarterback," he urged; focus on issues and problems. He noted that Mayor Daley had come because of the Polish American Congress, its history, its accomplishments. There are many challenges, both public and private, but also many opportunities in the United States, in Poland, in the world. In order to make changes and meet challenges, we need to be united, work together, and respect each others' opinions. We need to learn from Solidarity. Individuals, groups and organizations need to unite as one -- Solidarity!

Dr. Donald Pienkos, Professor of Political Science at the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, began by saying "Yes, the organizations of Polonia do have a future!" This future is in the hands of the leaders and activists of Polish organizations. His introductory points were: 1.) All of the Polish organizations are voluntary. What they do and how effective they are is up to them and whether they attract or repel members. The key words are leadership and partnership. 2.) There are 11 to 12 million people of Polish heritage in the U.S. and they are very diverse. The Polish American fraternal have the largest number of members – 500,000. They have the power to transmit their message through their publications. The fraternal, however, face real challenges. There is tough competition from other insurance companies. The cultural societies and clubs are not mass membership groups and operate on the local level, except for some that are affiliated with the ACPC. The future for them is bright. It is hoped that they and the fraternal can work together. Academically, there are three: the Kościuszko Foundation, the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences, and the Polish American Historical Association. The Polish American Congress has been working on the American Agenda. However, the recent decision of President Obama not to develop a missile defense system in Poland – its loyal ally – may have "returned us back to earth." Things have changed since 1863. Poland now has the opportunity to strengthen Polish America – by sharing its rich cultural resources with our people. 400,000 people viewed the "Leonardo da Vinci and the Splendor of Poland" exhibit (brought from Poland) in three American cities in 2002.

Dr. Thaddeus Radziłowski, President of the PIAST Institute, opened by saying that "our ancestors did not create Polonia to have it disappear." Polonia has to be reinvented every generation. Poles have been in America for eight generations. Our identity can be maintained and renewed by creating a new public presence in America and altering our image. We have to an astonishing degree privatized our ethnicity. Our withdrawal from the public square has been largely the result of prejudice. Polish Americans have become "white" as a result of racialization of political dialogue in the United States. We need to reclaim the public arena. We need to begin to speak to the important public issues of the day, and we need to develop sophisticated strategies to be heard in the mainstream media and be part of the news. We need to widen the range of issues addressed, not limiting ourselves to those that serve Poland directly or the cause of anti-defamation. We must speak to the common good from our unique stance reflecting our beliefs, experience and culture on two continents. Polonia has something to say about key issues that transcend politics, like human rights and the dignity of work, as defended by Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński, Józef Tischner, and Karol Wojtyła. As concerns Poland and Polonia, Radziłowski suggested that Polonia needs greater understanding and support from Poland. It needs that there be an effort to understand and incorporate our story into the broad Polish story. Polonia, in turn, needs to know and incorporate modern Polish culture into Polish American culture with solutions for a new age; otherwise the split