# Polonia Technica-70 years bridging past and future

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From left: **Michael Niedzinski, Dominik Ras, Mrs. Ras, Mrs, Dymek, Maciej Dymek, Iwona Pietrus-Kozlowski**

**The Association of Polish-American Engineers in New York City celebrated its 70thAnniversary on May 13-15 at the elegant Polish Consulate De Lamar Mansion. Attended community leaders, Polish officials and distinguished colleagues from around the world proud to pass their heritage of achievement to the next generation.**

Polonia Technica (PT) is a prestigious Polish-American engineers nonprofit servicing the Mid-Atlantic States since 1941. Its 70th Anniversary drew guests from many corners of the world: New York, Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, San-Francisco, Seattle, Lexington (Kentucky), Tampa, Lincoln (Nebraska), Kalamazoo (Michigan), Bethlehem (Pennsylvania), Paris, London, Vienna, Toronto, Bialystok, Warsaw, Gdansk, Krakow, Wroclaw and so on. The goal was to inspire new generations to enter the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) and to honor the dedication of Polish technical professionals to innovation in the United States.

Under the honorary patronage of the Polish Ambassador Robert Kupiecki and invocation of Father Dominik Libiszewski, the anniversary festivities opened on May 13 with welcoming remarks by Consul General Ewa Junczyk-Ziomiecka, PT President Ryszard Bak, Honorary President Janusz Zastocki, Vice President Janusz Romanski and Board Member Magdalena Pietrzak. Congratulatory letters, formal introductions, upbeat Chopin played by Dawid Zarzycki from Bialystok and an impressive exhibit of Polish inventors were all topped off with traditional Polish dishes and spirits in the Bar Salon. The highlight of the evening was no doubt the city of Bialystok after its city council chairman Wlodzimierz Leszek Kusak humorously convinced the audience of its splendor and progress. The main sponsor of the event, ASTWA, and the brilliant young pianist-a graduate of the I. J. Paderewski Music School and current student of The Fryderyk Chopin University of Music in Bialystok, were a testament to Mr. Kusak's claim.



Photo: Andrzej Kozlowski, Congratulations from Dr. Janusz Romanski, Consul Ewa Junczyk-Ziomecka, Janusz Zastocki

May 14 was dedicated to a Scientific Symposium. Topics included the achievements of Polish engineers in the United States, the collaboration of Polish engineering organizations around the world, the first World Convention of Polish Engineers, the role of Polish Federation of Engineering Associations (NOT), history of the first railroad bridge across Mississippi River, security of bridges and tunnels, engineers' perspectives of the human genome, the role of Polish engineers in the European Union, scientific collaboration in the Age of Internet, best practices of technology transfer, emerging technologies in vertical lift, and opportunities in US universities.



Photo: Andrzej Kozlowski-From left: Prof. Piotr Moncarz, Eva Orlowska, Prof. Andrzej Targowski. Prof. Henryk Krawczyk

Most agreed that the historical perspective left a big impression. Prof. Andrzej Targowski from Western Michigan University reminded us that Polish specialists have contributed to the industrial boom of America for over 400 years since their first arrival in Jamestown Virginia in 1608. Polish glassware and wood experts, recruited to the colonies by Captain John Smith, helped establish the first American manufacturing company and profitable export to Europe.

The Golden Age of Poland (16$^{th}$ and 17$^{th}$ centuries), period of great expansion and prosperity, produced a large well-educated noble (middle) class and many advances in science, architecture, mining, metallurgy, military, forestry and agriculture. Many of those advances found their way to the American soil as Poles

began to flee political unrests at home in mid-1700's. The best-known example of technology transfer to Colonial America is Thaddeus Kosciuszko's fortification of Philadelphia, West Point and Saratoga. The Polish General made Head Colonel of Engineers in the Continental Army is credited with key successes of the American Revolution.

Poland's Partitions (1771, 1793, 1795) and subsequent loss of independence for 123 years caused massive fleeing. Over 10 million Poles left Poland prior to WWI. Three million chose America, furnishing the manpower for construction of railways, roads, bridges, factories, mills, mines, ships, canals, tunnels and military installations.

WWII, created a new wave of Polish immigrants escaping occupied Poland to the US via France, UK or Canada. The New York region experienced an influx of nearly 6000 technical professionals and a need for a nonprofit like Polonia Technica.



Photo: Andrzej Kozlowski-Polonia Technica board members Iwona Pietrus-Kozlowski and Janusz Zastocki

Janusz Zastocki spoke of PT beginnings and the famous engineers associated with the organization. PT was formed by Polish Consul Kazimierz Krasicki and three engineers: Walery Starczewski, Wiktor Przedpelski, Zbislaw Roehr (inventor of disposable syringe). From inception, the organization assisted in retraining and integrating the newcomers while maintaining ongoing professional ties with colleagues in Poland and Western Europe. As a social and education platform, PT offered lectures, publications, annual conventions, summer excursions, fundraising balls and holiday parties. During and post Cold War, the association sent trade journals to Poland spearheading Poland's transformation into a modern, stable economy.

In the 1980's, PT experienced a significant growth due to Solidarity immigration and renewed interest in technical fields sparked by Information Age. Adapting to new demands, Often collaborating with other prominent Northeast Polish American organizations like the Kosciuszko Foundation, Pilsudski Institute, Polish Slavic Credit Union and Polish Student Association, PT offered many valuable services: popular ComPract computer classes, Internet portal with financial and legal advice, scholarships and college prep workshops, "Studia 4U".

Results are many. One of the beneficiaries of Polonia Technica training, engineer Stanislaw Luniewski, returned to Bialystok in 1990's to start an eco-waste management company. Today, Mr. Luniewski's firm ASTWA is on the cutting-edge of energy recovery from waste. The firm gained 40% of local market share, employs nearly 100 and services brands like Mercedes, Man and Iveco. Mr. Luniewski, also Vice President of Podlasie Business Club in Bialystok, has become a prominent business man in his community, sponsoring events in Podlaskie Voidodeship as well as Polonia Technica 70th Anniversary in New York City.



Photo: Andrzej Kozlowski Prof. Andrzej Targowski, PT Sponsor ASTWA Stanislaw Luniewski, PT President Ryszard Bak

The list of famous PT honorary members is long and impressive: helicopter innovator Frank N. Piasecki, Boeing Vice President Nicole Piasecki, synthetic rubber inventor Waclaw Szukiewicz, metallurgist Tadeusz Sendzimir, US National Commission on Energy member Jan Grzybowski Holm, NASA scientist Wojciech Rostafinski, Patriot missile designer Zdzislaw Julian Starostecki, master bridge builder Ralph Modjewski, bullet proof fiber Kevlar inventor Stephanie Kwolek, editor of Grumman Aerodynamics Manual Stanislaw Wojciech Rogalski, V-tail aircraft inventor Jerzy Stanislaw Rudlicki, textile scientist Ryszard Chmielowiec, construction engineer Kazimierz Eljasinski, geologist tunnel builder Marek Miroslaw Luniewski, food textile scientist Alina Surmacka-Szczesniak, Information Technology pioneer Andrzej Stanislaw Targowski, bridge safety specialist Andrzej Nowak, mechanical engineer Janusz Zastocki, “American Inventor” winner Janusz Liberkowski, and aviation engineer Janusz Romanski.




Photo: Andrzej Kozlowski-Prof. Henryk Krawczyk, Prof. Jacek Zurada, Dr. Janusz Romanski and Janusz Zastocki

PT board needs to be congratulated for raising the awareness and promoting the achievement of Polish engineers and technicians in the United States.

It was equally inspiring to see so many young faces in the audience. In an era when science and engineering is loosing appeal among college students, it is encouraging to see young engineers take charge. PT board members Iwona Pietrus-Kozłowski and Magdalena Pietrzak were key organizers and gracious hosts of the event. The hope is that they will transform the organization into a magnet for young techies and scientists from Googles, Ciscos, Microsofts, Apples, Amgens, or Boeings of the world. For a start, some suggested that they apply for a grant to translate PT’s archives into English (language of technology) and include English speaking second and third generation Poles in the next anniversary.

Slawomir Nowak, Secretary of State of the Republic of Poland, urged all Polish engineering organizations to help Poland become more competitive and integrated into the global economy. University of Louisville Prof. Jacek (Jack) Zurada suggested offering membership to international engineering organizations such as IEEE, Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. Stanford University Prof. Piort Moncarz advocated for a comprehensive Think Tank-Polish engineering resource center and virtual meeting place under one portal. University of Nebraska Prof. Andrzej Nowak recommended additional scholarships and internships for Polish engineering students in US universities. The concern that Polish students will stay in the United States, thus creating a financial loss for Poland, could be easily addressed by a scholarship repayment contact according to Michal Urbanowski, Polish Consulate Trade & Investment Section Consul.

Following the lectures, an elegant award ceremony ensued in the beautiful Mirror Salon. PT 70th Anniversary and NOT medals changed hands. The day ended with an emotional performance by Metropolitan Opera mezzo-soprano Barbara Revi, bass Wojciech Bukalski and baritone Pawel Raczkowski. Standing ovations broke out into a patriotic chorus and not a dry eye in the De Lamar Mansion.

The time is now for Polish engineers to gain momentum. Building on the value created by the landmark anniversaries of Polish Engineering Associations in UK, France, Austria and US, by the Poland-Silicon Valley Technology Symposium (December 2010) and by the First World Convention of Polish Engineers (September 2010), when over 400 Polish engineers convened in Warsaw, the time is now to tap into the intellectual potential. The Council of Polish Engineers of North America recommends setting up a task force, clear goals, strategy, benchmarks and metrics to assess the effectiveness. The political power of Polish engineers will come from accountability and results not from political speeches. If anyone can design a system for efficient collaboration and value creation, it is the Polish engineers.

Polonia organizations around the world represent Poland's competitive advantage. More than 30% of the Polish population found itself outside of Poland after the Partitions, WWI and WWII. Now the organizations formed by immigrants are a catalyst to globalization. The common interest of Poland, United States and Europe today is igniting the commitment to Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM). Scientists, engineers and mathematicians, solving problems of hunger, healthcare, energy, security, transportation, and communication, contribute immensely to the wealth and wellbeing of nations. Polish engineering organizations working together have the opportunity to contribute to the talent and innovation in these fields. Thus, they can bolster the economies on both sides of the Atlantic.

The festivities concluded on May 15 with a Mass at the St. Stanislaw Church, symbolic blessing of the plaque dedicated to Polish engineers and a lunch reception at the Polish Consulate



Gift of Warsaw landscape from NOT President Ewa Mankiewicz-Cudny to Polonia Technia




City Council of Bialystok Chairman Wlodzimierz Leszek Kusak



The Fryderyk Chopin University of Music pianist Dawid Konrad Zarzycki



Magdalena Pietrzak, Poland Secretary of State Slawomir Nowak



Polonia Technica President and long time member Ryszard Bak



Polish & Slavic Federal Credit Union President Dr. Tomasz Bortnik




Father Dominik Libiszewski blessing of Polish Engineers' plague

Special thanks to:

*Sponsors **ASTWA** and **Polish & Slavic Federal Credit Union***

*Consul Ewa Junczyk-Ziomecka for opening De Lamar Mansion to guests from around the world*

*Polonia Technica for organizing a memorable event*

*Attendees for joining in celebration and representing the following:*

*Polish Federation of Engineering Association in Poland (NOT)*
*World Convention of Polish Engineers*
*Polish American Engineers Association in Chicago*

*Council of Polish Engineers in North America*
*Polish Engineers Club of Silicon Valley*
*Association of Polish Engineers in Austria*
*Association of Polish Engineers in Canada*
*Association of Polish Engineers and Technicians in France*
*Institution of Polish Engineers in Great Britain*
*City of Bialystok*
*Stanford University*
*University of Nebraska-Lincoln*
*Western Michigan University*
*University of Louisville*
*Warsaw University of Technology*
*Gdansk University of Technology*
*Krakow University of Technology*
*Bialystok University of Technology*
*Nowy Dziennik Polish Daily News*
*US-Polish Trade Council*
*Polish American Chamber of Commerce Pacific Northwest*
*Bisek Engineering Firm*
*Andrew Kozlowski Photo*
*Metropolitan Opera*
*St. Stanislaw Church*
*Poland's Law and Justice Party*
*Cabinet of Secretary of State of the Republic of Poland*
*Trade & Investment Section of Polish Consulate in New York*