

CONGRATULATIONS TO POLISH AMERICAN VETERANS' CLUB OF WILBRAHAM, MA ON ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. RICHARD E. NEAL

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 9, 1998

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity today to congratulate the Polish American Veterans' (PAV) Club of Wilbraham, Massachusetts on its 50th anniversary.

The PAV in Wilbraham has for half a century played a vital role in its community. In celebration of this noteworthy occasion, I take this opportunity to express my personal congratulations to each and every member of the Club, and to enter the complete history of the Polish American Veterans' Club of Wilbraham, Massachusetts into today's CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

THE HISTORY

The hostilities of World War II had come to a close and the veterans were returning to their homes where their families were anxiously preparing a warm welcome. The local Organizations and merchants also combined their efforts to extend their greetings through a "Welcome Home Day." The men and women who were being honored at these events formed a new segment in our community, "Veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States." The loose social association these men held in the months following their return coupled with their similarity of interests, ambitions and background inspired the idea for the formation of an organizational of local Veterans.

Uniting any group into a functioning organization required the leadership of a person who is familiar with the aspirations and problems of the group, along with a deep interest in their progress. The Veterans of the Tri-Town area were fortunate in having a man who qualified in every respect as an organizer. His interest in the welfare of this body must have had a great influence on leading them into organization. The man, Father A. Rys, then curate of the Immaculate Conception Parish. His uniting efforts during these important organizational meetings resulted in the formation of a strong "Polish American Veterans Club."

Father called the first meeting on February 23, 1947, where various types of Veterans groups were discussed. A committee, headed by Edward Haluch, was formed to do research into an organization that would function best in this area. The new club was to be founded by the Veterans of Polish extraction from the Indian Orchard, Ludlow and Wilbraham area to encourage social acquaintances among members for the advancement of social, educational and economic welfare of its members. With these ideals in mind, a committee was delegated the task of drawing By-Laws. Thus, the first meeting had set the organizational wheels in motion. During subsequent meetings officers were elected and committees for an efficiently functioning organization were appointed. The first few officers were: President, John Kiebania; First Vice President, Al Sambor; Second Vice President, Mitchell Kowalski; Clerk, Emil Wysik, Financial Secretary, Joseph Popeo; Treasurer, Bernie Smola; Service Officer, Dr. Francis Bacewicz; and Sergeant at Arms, Louis Grondalski.

The name of the club was to be "The Polish American Veterans of Indian Orchard, Ludlow and Wilbraham."

Founded on the principle of social unity and community service, the club prospered in the ensuing years. From its inception, a vigorous athletic program was sponsored, the most successful of all being the baseball team which drew an enthusiastic following. They identified the organization throughout the Western Massachusetts area when they captured the Knights of Columbus Tournament in 1949 and were runner-up for the Western Massachusetts Amateur Baseball Championship in 1950. The basketball team was no less successful, in that they shared the limelight in completing the season as Western Massachusetts Champions in 1952. The bowling league and hockey team kept the members active in the winter months. In addition to the organized league activities an intramural basketball program was initiated and impromptu volleyball games or golf matches filled what spaces remained in the sports calendar. Trophies representing championships in every major sport are held by the club.

In 1949, the Club Members remodels the old dairy building on 4½ Action Street as their temporary home and for ten years it served as an informal meeting place for members. The good management of the small clubhouse plus the aid of the members had placed the organization in a financial position which made the erection of new quarters possible. The purpose of this venture was to house all the club activities and to serve as a meeting place for the entire community.

A building committee was appointed and in January 1959 at a specially called meeting, the plans for the new building were accepted by a vote of the body. The dedication of the "Polish American Veterans Club" was held on January 30, 1960.

The membership broadened its scope in community service. We expanded our sports program to include the youth in the area by sponsoring baseball, girls' softball, hockey, soccer and basketball. We also sponsored a visit of the West Point Glee Club for a performance at the Springfield Auditorium. Many Club Members and their families had the pleasure of meeting the cadets personally by sharing their homes for an evening stay.

The Polish American Veterans were instrumental in the renovation of the Kosciuszko Garden at West Point Military Academy. The Sunshine Village and many charitable organizations receive annual donations. The Ludlow Hospital was given a sizable donation for their fund drive. The cost of a classroom was given to Christ the King Social Center. A new Church Altar was presented to the Immaculate Conception Church. The Fire and Police Departments in the Tri-Town area received life-saving and communication equipment. The area Libraries are given hard cover books periodically. The annual United Polish Clubs Scholarship Dinner-Dance is held in the Veterans Ballroom. Biannual bus trips to the Holyoke Soldiers Home fill buses with Members, the Auxiliary, Polish pierogies, rye bread, horseradish, kielbasa and home baked pastries plus prize winning money for Bingo Games which is shared with the resident patient veterans. The Post also adopted a wing at the Holyoke Soldiers Home for which we funded interior decorations and supplies.

The greatest highlight in the Club history was the founding of the "Polish American Auxiliary." The women organized in 1952 under the same policy and the same aims as the Veterans Club. The "Auxiliary" has been indispensable in providing assistance to the Club. They have been a mainspring in devising fund raising methods. Our major fund raisers are joint ventures of the Veterans and the Auxiliary. The Labor Day Weekend Picnic and the Annual Breakfast-Brunch.

In June 1962, the Wilbraham Post became affiliated with the Polish American Veterans of Massachusetts. Our Post hosted State Conventions in 1964, 1970, 1976 and 1984. The most outstanding was the 1976 Convention and Parade complete with 15 State Posts and their Marching Bands. The march was led by our own "Minute Men" dressed in Revolutionary War Uniforms. This Parade was one of our contributions to the year-long celebrations of the United States 200th Birthday Party. Many of our Club Veterans and Auxiliary Members served as officers in the State Department of the Polish American Veterans of Massachusetts. To this date, 6 Club Veterans have been elected State Commanders and 2 Auxiliary Members were elected State Presidents.

The Town of Wilbraham generously deeded to the Polish American Veterans surplus Pine School land along with a parcel which was taken from the Polish American Veterans by eminent domain for School purposes. This enabled the Club to construct additional paved off-aces parking, an outdoor pavilion and open land for recreational activity.

Socially we continue to celebrate the annual Dinner-Dance; the Joint Installation of Officers; a Spring-Fling; a Steak Barbecue; a Hawaiian Night; the Membership Jamboree and the Children's Party. There are also Bowling and Golf Tournament Banquets. This gives all our members and their friends additional opportunity for continued fellowship in a most friendly atmosphere.

There is a more serious side to this organization. Annually, the Members and the Auxiliary gather in their Parade Dress for a march to church to pray for the souls of the deceased Members and Comrades who perished in battle. The Gold Star Mothers were always revered at the ceremonies.

Services and wreath placing are also conducted at "Our Lady of Peace" monument adjacent to the Immaculate church, at the 1987 dedicated "Polish American Veterans Triangle" and concluding at our quarters "Memorial Monument Green." The Full Military Honors given the deceased are witnessed by the many who gather to join in prayer for their souls.

Many of our Members serve or have served the Community and State in various capacities. As trustees in Hospitals, Church Councils, Community Council, Senior Councils, in elected Political Offices and other service areas. The Polish American Veterans have established outstanding records and are a guiding influence in our community.

CELEBRATION OF THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BUTTS COUNTY COURTHOUSE IN JACKSON, GEORGIA

HON. MAC COLLINS

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 9, 1998

Mr. COLLINS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the 100th Anniversary of the Butts County Courthouse in Jackson, Georgia. The anniversary celebration is being held tomorrow, and I wish to submit the remarks I prepared for the occasion for the Congressional Record.

I want to express my deep appreciation to the citizens of Butts County for inviting me to be a part of the 100th anniversary celebration for our county courthouse. During the long and rich history of our county, this beautiful building has endured the test of time. It has long