

Polonia Bids Farewell to Sam Durbano



Sam Durbano, 57, passed away on Saturday, January 27, 2007, at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania after a six-month battle with leukemia.

Mr. Durbano, son of the late Grace and Samuel Durbano, raised in Linwood, was a lifelong resident of Delaware County and lived in Brookhaven for 18 years. He was a graduate of Holy Savior Parochial School, and St. James High School, and attended Delaware Technical and Community College.

He earned the rank of Staff Sergeant while serving in the army reserves as a paramedic. He was most recently employed in medical equipment sales by Aston Pharmacy.

In his earlier years, Mr. Durbano had been an active leader in many youth groups. Among them were the Chichester Crusaders, St. Hedwig's Boy Scouts, Sun Oil Little League and St. Hedwig's CYO.

Sam was an active parishioner of St. Hedwig Church in Chester. He was president of the Holy Name Society, an usher and an honorary member of the Fatima Sodality. He was President of the Committee to Save St. Hedwig's Church, an effort to keep St. Hedwig's as a personal parish in order to preserve Polish heritage and its customs.

He was an active member of many organizations: Friendship Fire House #2, Linwood; American Legion Post 546; Knights of Columbus; St. James Alumni Choir; Council of United Polish Societies; Polish National Alliance, Group 650; President of the Polish American Heritage Association of Delaware County; and Sergeant-at-arms of the Polish American Congress, Eastern PA District.

Sam, a devoted family man, will be remembered for spending time with his family and friends and was known for his sense of humor.

A Mass of Christian Burial was held on Friday, February 2, at St. Hedwig Church, Chester. Interment was at Our Lady of Czestochowa Cemetery, Doylestown.

The Polish American Congress, Eastern PA District, and the entire Polonia extend condolences to his wife of 32 years, Wanda, his children, Anthony, Angela and Krista, and the entire Durbano family. May he rest in peace.

Polonia Bids Farewell to Sophie Litwa

Sophie Litwa, 82, a Polish community civic leader, passed away on Sunday, January 21, 2007, at Atlantic General Hospital in Berlin, MD.

Mrs. Litwa, daughter of the late Frank and Mary Wysocki, was born in Chester, PA, lived in Upper Chichester since 1951, and was educated at St. Hedwig's Parochial School, Eddystone High School, Alliance College and Purdue University. Upon completing her studies, she pursued a career in business.



She was a lifelong member of St. Hedwig Church, Chester, and a member of the Fatima Society, serving as president for several years.

Besides being an active member of the Polish American Congress, Eastern PA District (EPD), Mrs. Litwa served as the regional Vice President of the Polish American Congress EPD, representing the Delaware County area. Mrs. Litwa was a former Commissioner of the Polish National Alliance District 6, America's largest Polish fraternal organization, where she served as financial secretary and sales representative for Lodge 650 for more than 40 years. She was also well-known for her active involvement with the United Polish Societies of Delaware County, Polish American Heritage Association of Delaware County, Polish Heritage Society, and St. Hedwig Church.

Over the years Mrs. Litwa has received numerous distinguished service awards from community and fraternal organizations. In 1995, she was the Grand Marshal of the Pulaski Parade in Philadelphia, PA.

Mrs. Litwa always maintained the beautiful Polish customs and traditions, which have been an important part of her family and social life.

A Mass of Christian Burial was held on Friday, January 26, at St. Hedwig Church, Chester. Interment was at Lawn Croft Cemetery, Lower Chichester.

The Polish American Congress, Eastern PA District, and the entire Polonia extend condolences to her children, Regina, Denise, Stanley and Daniel, six grandchildren, one great-granddaughter, and the entire Litwa family. May she rest in peace.

In Remembrance of George R. Szymanski, Sr.



George Remigius Szymanski, Sr., passed away at age 83 on February 5, 2007, in his Philadelphia home where he lived for the past 55 years. Born on February 23, 1923, in Jersey City, NJ, to Polish immigrant parents, Szymanski achieved a lifetime of success as a teacher, Merchant Marine officer, musician and Polish American activist.

His father, Stanislaw Szymanski, was born in Rypin in Russian-occupied Poland around the turn of the 20th century and fled to the United States to avoid conscription into the Czar's army during World War I. After serving in the U.S. Army during the War, he returned to Jersey City and married Victoria Brzesinska, also a native of Rypin.

Their first child, named George after the president whose birthday had been celebrated a day earlier, grew up in the downtown waterfront district of Jersey City, largely populated by Polish and Italian immigrants. Szymanski attended Our Lady of Czestochowa Roman Catholic Elementary School and served as altar server at the church for many years. A 1940 graduate of Ferris High School in Jersey City, Szymanski was the student manager of the football team, played several instruments in the school concert band and orchestra and was an accomplished pianist. Financially unable to attend a four-year college, he attended a technical school to develop skills in electronics, then worked as a technician for Westinghouse.

Szymanski attended evening classes at Columbia University in New York in the Department of Slavic Languages, where he studied the Polish language and Polish literature, which his parents had inspired him to cherish. Denied the opportunity to serve in the U.S. Army during World War II due to his nearsightedness, Szymanski chose to serve his country in the U.S. Merchant Marine, where he quickly rose to the esteemed rank of Radio Officer because of his electronics training. Between 1943 and 1946, Szymanski served on ships which transported food, equipment and supplies to U.S. troops.

Convinced by fellow Merchant Mariner and Villanova University football coach, Alex Bell, to resume his studies at Villanova instead of Columbia, Szymanski enrolled at Villanova in 1946. Szymanski became heavily involved in campus life, serving as assistant editor of the university paper, The Villanovan, tuba player in the marching band, and trumpeter in the concert orchestra. He funded his education by serving in the Merchant Marine every summer. He earned a B.S. in Biology in 1950.

It was through his involvement in the Polish Intercollegiate Club (PKM), a social organization of students of Polish descent, that Szymanski met his wife, Anna (Lerke), whom he married in the Villanova University Chapel in 1950.

After graduation, Szymanski worked as a research biologist, but soon discovered that the isolation of laboratory work did not appeal to him, and he decided to obtain certification as a secondary school teacher, a more people-oriented profession. While attending classes at Temple University, he worked for the well-known industrialist and inventor, Walter Golaski. Upon receiving his teaching certificate, Szymanski began teaching science at Camden High School in Camden, NJ, a position which he held for thirty-five years, from 1953 to his retirement in 1988. In addition to teaching a variety of science subjects to tenth through twelfth graders, he also directed the marching band for many years, served as audio-visual equipment coordinator, and inspired many students to pursue careers in electronics. During most summers, Mr. Szymanski worked as a radio officer in the Merchant Marine and on commercial oil tankers.

Mr. and Mrs. Szymanski settled in the Mayfair section of Northeast Philadelphia and raised three children. George, Jr., the eldest, practices law in Philadelphia and southern New Jersey; Paul is a media technician at Villanova University, and Alice Holt, the youngest, is a reserch coordinator for the National Cancer Institute in Boston.

Szymanski was one of the founders of Our Lady of Calvary Church in Northeast Philadelphia, where he served as organist almost till the time of his death. At home, he frequently entertained his wife and children by playing the piano, especially the works of Frederic Chopin and the Villanova fight song. He remained an avid amateur radio operator, turning his basement into a small radio station, and served as an officer in the Holmesburg Amateur Radio Club in Philadelphia. He also maintained a life-long interest in the Polish cultural heritage and language and served as an officer in the Polish Heritage Society of Philadelphia and as a member in the Philadelphia Chapter of the Kosciuszko Foundation in New York. He was also a member of the Polish American Congress, Eastern Pennsylvania District, Group One of the Polish National Alliance, The Associated Polish Home in Philadelphia, and the local chapter of the American Merchant Marine Veterans, Dennis A. Roland Chapter, South Jersey Branch.

In addition to his wife Anna, children and grandchildren, Mr. Szymanski is survived by his youngest brother, Henry, and by numerous relatives in Poland, with whom he had communicated regularly for many years.