

MATT DOBEK SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD



Edward J. Piszek

As the memory of Stan Musial permeates the 40th Anniversary celebration of the NPASHF, it is fitting that we bestow our 2013 Matt Dobek Special Recognition Award upon a man who was one of Stan's closest friends, Mr. Edward J. Piszek.

Born in Chicago in 1916, Ed Piszek is best known as the co-founder of Mrs. Paul's Kitchens, a frozen food empire that began quite by accident, when 30 year old Ed, while operating the food concession at a small Philadelphia taproom, inadvertently prepared too many deviled crab cakes – and decided to freeze the left-overs rather than throw them in the garbage. Thus, the multi-million dollar business was born.

Tonight, however, we honor Ed Piszek with our Matt Dobek Special Recognition Award, not for his business acumen, but rather, for his love of his Polish heritage, and his overwhelming philanthropy in support of Polish causes – particularly those involving the young people of Poland.

As a huge supporter of Little League Baseball, Mr. Piszek was the driving force behind the development of the Little League Baseball European Leadership Training Center in Kutno, Poland, to which he donated millions of dollars. To this day, European Little Leaguers play annually at Edward J. Piszek Stadium in Kutno, to decide which team will represent the European continent at the World Little League tournament in Williamsport, PA. Mr. Piszek saw the Little League program as one of America's finest exports of goodwill and as a proven vehicle for instilling values and leadership qualities in impressionable children. He felt strongly that future generations of Polish and European children must learn that teamwork; responsibility and discipline are the fundamental principles necessary for success. "Little League Baseball teaches these lessons," Mr. Piszek said.

In addition to his contribution to Little League Baseball, Mr. Piszek supported countless other causes. To list them all is nearly impossible; and to list the many honors he received is equally difficult. But consider these as just a few: In the 1960's Ed gave millions to battle tuberculosis in Poland. Said friend Harold B. Montgomery, "he literally stamped out tuberculosis (in Poland) starting with one ambulance." In the 1970's, he started the Copernicus Society to honor Polish achievements. In his hometown of Philadelphia, he bought the house where Tadeusz Kościuszko, the Polish statesman who aided the American Revolution, once lived, and donated it to the National Park Service. He befriended Cardinal Karol Wojtyła of Kraków before he became Pope John Paul II, and maintained a close friendship with the Pope for 20 years. In 1998, Mr. Piszek was awarded one of Poland's highest honors when he was presented the "Polonia Restituta" Commander's Cross With a Star by the President of the Republic of Poland, Aleksander Kwasniewski. The lists go on and on.

NPASHF old-timers may remember 1993, when Ed accompanied "Stan the Man" to the 20th anniversary of Stan's induction into the National Polish-American Sports Hall of Fame. To honor the occasion, Stan initiated the scholarship program that now bears his name. To no one's surprise, Ed Piszek reached into his pocket and wrote an extremely generous check!

For all of these reasons, and so many more, the National Polish-American Sports Hall of Fame is proud to honor Mr. Edward J. Piszek with our 2013 Matt Dobek Special Recognition Award. It is hard to imagine a more deserving recipient.