

Tadeusz Gonsik

(1918-2007)

Biochemist, community activist



Polish Credit Union

St. Stanislaus - St. Casimir's Polish Parishes Credit Union Limited



Polish immigrant, who called late Pope his friend, helped found world's largest parish credit union.

(Catherine Dunphy, obituary writer for The Toronto Star)

Although born in Lodz, central Poland, Tadeusz Gonsik considered Nowogrodek at the eastern border his home town – he lived there until 1938. (In 1939, following German and Soviet invasion of Poland, Nowogrodek was occupied by the Soviets and in 1943 incorporated into the Belarusian Republic, much of the Polish population having been deported to distant parts of the USSR).

A student at the military medical school in Warsaw when war broke out, Gonsik was eventually captured by the Russians and sent to an alabaster mine in the Ural Mountains where he laboured for two years. Released under the Polish-Soviet agreement after Germany attacked Russia in 1941, he joined the Polish army under General Anders and served out the war in its artillery units, moving from the Soviet Union to Iraq, Iran, North Africa and Italy. In 1949, he completed his medical studies in Beirut and immigrated to Canada. Settling in Toronto, he found work at the Toronto Western Hospital, where he became chief of the biochemistry lab and worked for forty years.

Becoming a member of the St. Stanislaus-St. Casimir's Polish Parishes Credit Union in 1949, four years after its establishments by Father S. Puchniak and Father Smith, Gonsik served as its president for twenty-six years and a board member for thirty-four, shaping this financial institution run out of a church basement into a cultural and community centre at 220 Roncesvalles in Toronto. At present, it is not only the largest Polish financial institution outside of Poland, but also the largest parish-based credit union in the world, with over 40,000 members and total assets of over \$315 million

Tadeusz Gonsik's community involvement was extensive. Among others, he was instrumental in the building of John Paul II monument in Toronto and co-founded a retirement home, Copernicus Lodge, there. He was supportive of youth sports and scouting and helped setting up what is believed to be the world's first Children and Youth Credit Union.

Tadeusz Gonsik was a recipient of the Order of Canada.

Photos from top left clockwise:

• Tadeusz Gonsik / Photo – I. Kremblewski archives • St. Stanislaus – St. Casimir's Polish Parishes Credit Union Head Office, Toronto / Photo – Ewa Szozda • With Pierre Elliott Trudeau at Copernicus Lodge Founders' Ball, 1977 / Photo – Copernicus Lodge archives • With Cardinal Jozef Glemp during his visit in Toronto / Photo – I. Kremblewski archives



POLISH SPIRIT