



Meet your CPA Officers and Board 5 Questions for Polka Ambassador Troy Gawlak

1. *How long have you been a member of the CPA*

My parents had been members when I was a kid, but I believe I signed up for myself shortly after graduating high school.

2. *You are an accomplished musician and we have seen you in several bands. Who are some of the polka musicians who have influenced you the most and why?*

I like to joke that I'm an old man trapped in a young body. I harken back to the original innovators and "godfathers" of polka music - Li'l Wally, Marion Lush, Eddie Blazonczyk, Happy Louie, Steve Adamczyk, Eddie Zima, The Connecticut Twins, etc. I also have a ridiculously large collection of 78rpms and really appreciate a lot of the Polish music that was being recorded in the 1920s and 30s by the generation that preceded those whom I just listed. Lastly, I also collect a ton of Polish folk music from Poland as well. That said, there are many fantastic bands and musicians today who I also consider inspirational and influential.

3. *This 'reporter' has heard other people say that your Polish is 'beautiful'. What inspired you to master the language and cultivate your Polish heritage.*

Well, I won't ever say I've "mastered" Polish, as I am not conversationally fluent. I can read, write, dictate, sing, etc., but my brain doesn't work fast enough to converse... maybe someday! I grew up in a full-blooded Polish household, attended a close-knit Polish church (where I used to do the readings in Polish), spent a month at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow studying Polish language and history, and have been listening to polka music since I was in the womb! I believe it's valuable for musicians in the polka field to at least make an effort to learn *some* of what we're singing, as I think it helps both us and the listener better appreciate these songs we hold so dear.

4. *As the CPA Polka Ambassador what are some of your responsibilities.*

I look at the role of Polka Ambassador as a combination of Communications Professional and Marketer. When I attend or play at a non-CPA dance and meet people, I tell them about what we do, who we are, and how we party! When I attend our own dances I try to enhance the experience and showcase the club, which is the drive behind our jam sessions and "CPA Choir" sing-alongs that have now become somewhat of a trademark of the CPA. Behind the scenes I have worked to expand our social media and digital presence and outreach in an effort to keep existing members informed and engaged, and hopefully attract new members.

5. *The average age of our CPA members is in the mid 70's. As one of our youngest members what advice would you give for helping us attract younger generations to our events.*

Young people are sometimes hard to interest and even harder to impress, especially in the era of instant gratification in which we all live. Younger people want EVENTS and PARTIES and EXPERIENCES. Dances that follow the same formula and pattern over and over will not attract a young crowd. The more we mix it up, offer unique experiences, and think outside the box, the better chance we have of catching the attention of the younger polka crowd.