

## **Profile: Frank Jarecki** **From MIG Pilot to Machine** **Shop Entrepreneur**



Frank Jarecki has every reason to love America. It gave him a home after he fled communist Poland. And it gave him the chance to become a millionaire.

"America is truly the land of opportunity," says Jarecki as he reflects on his life. "No other country in the world could have given me the chances I've had here."

Frank Jarecki's story began on March 5, 1953 when as a twenty-one-year-old pilot in the Polish Air Force, he flew his Soviet-made MIG fighter across the border to the safety and freedom of Denmark.

"I had to leave," says Jarecki, "even though the government took care of everything for pilots like me. We had comfortable lives. But we paid a very high price.

"I was told to join the espionage unit and spy on my friends," continued Jarecki. "I had to report anyone I believed wasn't loyal to the Party. When this happened, I knew I had to get out."

Jarecki's escape made him a Cold War hero, honored by President Dwight D. Eisenhower and by all who loved freedom. It also gave him a chance to see how different life could be in a free enterprise economy.

"Two months after my escape I came to the States for the first time,"

says Jarecki. "I remember looking out of my window from my room in Chicago and seeing a parking lot filled with thousands of cars—and every one was different. I had never seen anything like it in Poland. I knew then that I could make a good life for myself here. All I needed was talent and a little luck."

Frank Jarecki made the "American dream" come true for himself. He attended Alliance College in Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania and learned to speak English as well as a native-born American. (Jarecki graduated from Alliance in 1957 and now sits on its board of directors.) Then he spent twelve years selling and working in a machine shop. By 1969 Jarecki had saved enough money to open his own business—a machine shop that manufactured heavy precision valves for power plants, industry, and the government.

"When I opened my first shop in Franklin, Pennsylvania," says Jarecki, "I worked seven days a week, twenty hours a day. I wanted to get ahead more than anything else in the world. The banks believed in my future too. They loaned me the start-up money I needed. I couldn't have made it without their help."

Within two years, Jarecki opened a second shop in Erie, Pennsylvania, where he soon won a reputation for quality work delivered on time. Today, Jarecki Industries bills more than \$4 million in sales annually.

When Jarecki reflects on his life in the United States he is sure of one thing. "The free enterprise system is the greatest system on earth. It gives people like me a reason to work hard—to build something out of nothing.

"It's so different in Poland. The people have nothing to look forward to. Why should they put in extra time or take pride in what they do if the government owns everything? Communism takes the spirit out of business people. It kills something in their soul."