



Polish Heritage

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FORGOTTEN HEROES OF THE 1920 POLISH-SOVIET WAR

by Eva Niklinska and Barbara Joanna
Niklinska-Schirtz

The Russian invasion of Poland in 1920 almost brought the country to its knees. The rapid advances of the Bolshevik armies towards Warsaw threatened Poland's capital. Most of the foreign embassies and diplomatic services were evacuated to Poznań and Berlin, with only Cardinal Achille Ratti, the future Pope Pius XI, remaining in the city.

After creating the Polish Council of National Defense on July 1, 1920, Józef Piłsudski, the head of state, ordered the formation of a Volunteer Army commanded by General Józef Haller. The Council issued a national appeal, urging Poles to join the military and the response was massive and enthusiastic.

While the volunteer cohorts were comprised mostly of young, high school to college-age men, there was an additional strong representation of every profession from physicians and lawyers to architects, farmers and ordinary workers. Within two months, the volunteer army grew to 105,000 men. In alliance, the women's volunteer legion was formed and was responsible for organizing and motivating the home front. Together, this army of volunteers helped to defend Warsaw against the Russian invaders in a battle frequently referred to as the "Miracle on the Vistula," in reference to Warsaw's winding river and strong emphasis on faith.

Unfortunately, many brave heroes who fought in this battle for the independence of Poland have been forgotten. One of these heroes is Colonel Dr. Michał Wyrostek, the Volunteer Army Chief of Staff, second in command after General Haller.

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100th Anniversary
of the "Miracle on the Vistula"
commemorated



Performing at St. Stanisław Kostka Church are (left to right) Michał Sadowski, Marelena Dziś, and Jarosław Gołembowski (photo by Dariusz Pilka - all photos used are with permission of "Dziennik Związkowy".)

On August 16, 2020, two historic plaques were unveiled at the church of St. Stanisław Kostka in Chicago. These included a restored commemorative plaque with the names of 842 soldiers from the parish of St. Stanisław dedicated to the soldiers of Poland and the United States of America who took part in the First World War (1914-1918) and the Polish-Bolshevik War (1919-1921). The plaque restoration was possible thanks to the financial support of the Polish Institute of National Remembrance, the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Chicago and the parishioners of St. Stanisław Kostka.

The Chicago Chopin Society was invited to participate in an accompanying artistic program which included hymns and Polish patriotic songs performed by Marlena Dziś and Michał Sadowski with accompaniment by Jarosław Gołembowski.

On the same day, at the Polish Pastoral Mission at Holy

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Submitted by Jarosław Gołembowski, The Chicago Chopin Society



AMERICAN COUNCIL FOR POLISH CULTURE \$5,000 PULASKI SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

Six winners of the 20th annual \$5,000 Brig. Gen. Casimir Pulaski Scholarships were announced recently by of the ACPC's Pulaski Scholarship for Advanced Studies Committee. A large number of applications (16) was received this year. The scholarship program was initiated 20 years ago as a result of a sizeable endowment by the Conrad R. Walas family with continuing support from Polonia.

Serving on the 2020 Pulaski Scholarship Committee are Dr. Stephen Medvec, Chairman; Alicia L. Dutka; Deborah M. Majka; Carolyn Meleski and Peter J. Obst.

The exceptional qualities of school work and research plus dedicated community services performed by the applicants made the final selection process difficult. The Committee felt that most of the applicants deserved recognition for their outstanding achievements and honestly wished that funding was available which could have allowed for several more scholarship awards.

The Pulaski Scholarships Committee wishes these six outstanding students continuing success and is confident that they will attain their career objectives fully. The Committee trusts that they will honor their heritage by ultimately remaining close to the Polish community wherever possible during their careers.

Beata Kaminska-Kordowska



A native of Grajewo, Poland and a U. S. citizen, she earned a B.S. in Developmental Neuropsychology and a B.A. in Spanish from the University of Connecticut, Storrs. At present, she is pursuing a Ph.D. in Neuroscience and Behavior at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

Beata's research focuses on how individual differences in alcohol preference and alcoholism affect the workings of the prefrontal cortex. Beata's commitment to the Polish community has remained strong throughout her pursuit of higher education. She is very active as a Troop Leader of the Polish Girl Scout Organization in New Britain, Connecticut and is engaged in fundraising for Wielka Orkiestra Swiatecznej Pomocy.

Kamila Maria Orzechowska



A native of Wethersfield, Connecticut, she received a B.S. in Chemistry with a concentration in Pharmacy from the University of Saint Joseph in West Hartford, Connecticut. She is pursuing her Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) degree at the School of Pharmacy at University

of Saint Joseph in Hartford, Connecticut. Kamila has significant laboratory experience and has recently developed a drug compounding application, which has been available as ARx via Apple since August 2019. She is currently working on

an international weight loss supplement project in conjunction with graduate students from Alexandria University in Egypt. Kamila is also active as a Troop Leader of the Girl Scouts in Hartford and serves as a Polish lector at SS. Cyril and Methodius Roman Catholic Church in Hartford.

Joanna Podosek



A native of Chicago, Illinois, Polish was Joanna's first language to kindergarten. She is pursuing a Doctor of Occupational Therapy degree at the College of Health Sciences, Occupational Therapy Program, Midwestern University in Downers Grove, Illinois. She is a 2018 graduate of Monmouth College with a B.A. in Behavioral Neuroscience

(aka Biopsychology). Joanna's concern for the disabled derives from the cognitive experiences of her older sister, to whom Joanna is very devoted. She wishes to work especially with 3-to-5-year-old children and with stroke victims.

Helena Shoplik



A native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Helena is in her fourth year of Ph.D. studies in the School of Psychology at the University of Maryland in College Park, from which she also holds an MA. She expects to complete her doctorate work in 2021. Helena holds a BS in Psychological Science from Saint Vincent College in Latrobe, Pennsylvania.

Her area of specialization is to overcome anxiety among kindergarten children and their parents. Helena won the Kosciuszko Tuition Scholarship in 2019.

Joanna Szupinska-Myers



A native of Los Angeles, California, Joanna is pursuing a PhD in Art History from the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA). She also holds an MA in Art History and BA in Studio Art from UCLA, plus an MA in Curatorial Practice

from the California College of the Arts in San Francisco. She also studied at the School of Central and Eastern European Studies (SCEES) at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. After having worked a decade in museums, Joanna returned to her alma mater of UCLA to pursue her doctorate. Her research involves twentieth-century Polish art, in particular how communist-era artistic practices subverted official governmental narratives. She is focused upon the Polish photographer Zofia Rydet (1911-1997). (photo by Nikolay Maslov)

Ann Margaret Zelenka



A native of Baltimore, Maryland, Ann Margaret is a graduate of the University of Baltimore, in Jurisprudence (BA) and Negotiations and Conflict Management (MS). She also holds an MA in Law from Regent University in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Ann Margaret has spent a good part of her career with the federal government in Washington, D. C. At present, Ann Margaret is pursuing a Ph.D. in Leadership at the University of the Cumberland in Williamsburg, Kentucky. Her research entails the contributions made to business leadership by 19th, 20th and 21st century Eastern European women. Ann Margaret is of Polish and Czech heritage.



From the President



President
Raymond
Glembocki

Hello ACPC Members:

I am writing to thank our editor David Motak and the contributors of items to this issue of the *Polish Heritage* newsletter. Even under the current circumstances we have an excellent publication for our members.

Under normal circumstances we would be together at our annual convention exchanging greetings and sharing our personal experiences since we met at the last convention in Warsaw. We would also share our local organizations' activities and as presented in our group meetings.

Although circumstances have caused our convention to be cancelled it has not cancelled the creativity and positive outlook of our members. Read the activities of our organizations. Activities have been cancelled but people are communicating their commitment to a successful future, hopefully beginning in 2021.

As an example Celia Larkin offered to provide information on Marcella Sembrich. Did you know that was her stage name, her real name was Prakseda Marcelina Kochańska. Cecilia Glembocki will contribute information on NCSS. The 2020 convention was canceled but will be held in Washington, D. C. in 2021.

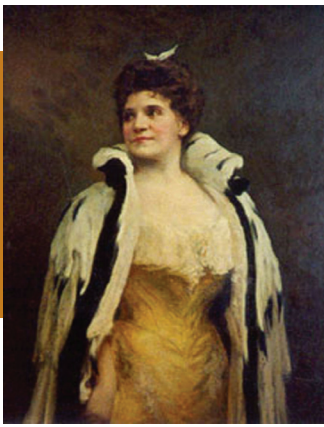
More good news about the 14 St. John Paul II organizations in the U.S. At a meeting with several organizations in attendance, Cecilia and I invited them to become members of the ACPC which was received with great interest. New membership is an important part of our activity. Maybe with a little effort on our part we could have 14 new member organizations.

I wish to describe another situation which may produce positive results from the current circumstances. Many of our members have participated in virtual meetings, certainly those who are working are finding it is now become a common part of the workplace. I have asked Mark Dillon to work with the membership to determine if we can have a virtual Board Meeting probably in November after the elections but before Thanksgiving. We will make a decision based on the number of members who elect to participate in learning the virtual learning process.

Remember Debbie Majka's radio show *Polonia Today*, is aired on Sundays at 1:30 p.m (Eastern Time) at WWBD-AM 860 in Philadelphia. Her program is both informative and very entertaining. Podcasts from Debbie's prior broadcasts can be found at <https://wwdbam.com>.

With warmest regards,

Raymond Glembocki



2020 Marcella Kočańska Sembrich Vocal Competition

submitted by Celia Larkin

For nearly fifty years, the most anticipated event at the American Council for Polish Culture Convention has been a concert by the winner of the Marcella Kočańska Sembrich Vocal Competition. The competition took place each year, except for the few times when the convention was held in Poland. Such was the case last year when we met in Warsaw, and the Music Committee was eager to resume its quest to find another young Polish American singer who would receive the 2020 Marcella Kočańska Sembrich Award. With the pandemic striking in mid-March and the convention being cancelled, it looked like we would also have to pass on this year's award. However, we soon realized that, now more than ever, artists - especially students and those in the beginning stages of career development - are in dire need of support. We agreed that it would not be right to deny young artists an opportunity to be heard and rewarded for their efforts.

It turned out that we were right. The response this year was higher than in previous years and we attracted ten talented applicants who met all the required qualifications.

The competition was advertised on the ACPC website and Facebook page, as well as in the social media of various affiliates and supporting organizations, and in *Gwiazda Polarna*, PNA's *Zgoda* and other Polonia media. Additionally, an ad was placed with the online audition service YAP Tracker.

Three independent judges listened to recordings forwarded by the contestants and provided their detailed evaluations. Based on the judges' ratings, the Music Committee made its decision on the awards. Due to a tie in the top ratings, instead of a First and Second Prize, the two were combined and split to give each of the top scorers an equal value Marcella Sembrich Award. The winners of the \$2,500 prizes are: **Soprano Laura LeVoir** from Fort Thomas, KY, and **Bass Leo Radosavljevic** from Chicago, IL.

Three other contestants received one vote each for the Second Prize and the committee decided to recognize each of them with a non-monetary Honorary Mention Award. They are: Tenor David Cook from Lexington Park, MD; Mezzo-soprano Rachel Deatherage from Astoria, NY; and Soprano Suzanne Lis from Berlin, Germany

The other contestants were: Soprano Monika Cachro from Lake Zurich, IL; Soprano Ahava Katzin from Turin, Italy; Soprano Jackie Schieffer from New York, NY; Soprano Lauren Nash Silberstein from Clifton Park, NY; Mezzo-soprano Natalia Smolij from Sugar Land, TX.

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LAURA LEVOIR

Soprano Laura LeVoir is a native of Minneapolis, Minnesota. She completed her undergraduate degree at the Juilliard School in New York City and made her recital debut at Alice Tully Hall, performed the role of Contessa in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, and toured the U.S. and Europe with Juilliard 415. She earned a Master of Music degree from Rice University's Shepherd School of Music,

where she was the soprano soloist in John Rutter's *Requiem* and in operatic scenes as Ann Trulove (*The Rake's Progress*), Blanche de la Force (*Dialogues des Carmélites*), Gretel (*Hänsel und Gretel*) and Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*).

Ms. LeVoir is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. While in Cincinnati, she gave the North American premiere of Sixten's *Johannespassionen*, and was the soprano soloist on a recording of the new English translation of the same work. This past year she sang as a soloist in Bach's *B-minor Mass* and Handel's *Messiah* with Collegium Cincinnati. Later this year, Ms. LeVoir will be performing with Cincinnati Song Initiative in a recital titled *Colorful Thoughts*, featuring songs of Slavic composers. Among those, she has a special affinity for Karol Szymanowski, the most celebrated Polish composer of the early 20th century, who is the focus of her doctoral research.



LEO RADOSAVLJEVIC

Poised for a breakthrough career on the international operatic stage, bass-baritone Leo Radosavljevic is sought after around the world for his "excellent musicianship" and "expansive delivery." A native of Chicago, and Juilliard graduate, he has been heard with Opera Colorado as Bonze in *Madama Butterfly*; The New Philharmonic as Don Alfonso in *Così fan Tutte*; Opera Theater of Saint Louis as

Manders in *Regina*; Teatro Nuovo as Orbazzano in *Tancredi*; and, most recently, covered the role of the King in *Aida* with Riccardo Muti and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. He is the 3rd Prize winner of the 8th Klaudia Taev Competition in Estonia, Grand Prize winner of the 2017 Bel Canto Competition, and was a Regional Finalist in the 2020 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. He has also appeared regularly as an art song recitalist at the Ravinia Festival in Chicago and Carnegie Hall in New York. Though his first love is opera, Leo is particularly passionate about art song from Poland and East European countries. Leo is a proud recipient of the 2020 Marcella Kočańska Sembrich Award.



FORGOTTEN HEROES

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Colonel Wyrastek was born in Lwów in 1876 where he attended Jan Kazimierz University, earning a degree in law. At the beginning of WWI, he joined the II Polish Legion of the Austrian Army.

After the creation of an independent Poland in 1918, he joined the Polish Army. In the critical summer of 1920, the successful mobilization and training of the Polish Volunteer Army should be credited to his service as Chief of Staff. After the war, Col. Wyrastek created the National-State Union Party in 1922 and served as a senator of the Polish National Assembly from 1930 to 1935. He died in Kraków in 1953. Despite his valiant contributions, he had not been recognized in published pictures until his identification card (photo above) was discovered in our family's private artifact collection. With this guidance, he has been identified in numerous photos, always standing alongside General Haller.



Another forgotten hero of the Polish Russian war was Lieutenant Józef Siła-Nowicki. While the volunteer army had plenty of foot soldiers, it lacked a cavalry to rival the Russians. The creation of one of the cavalry units was entrusted to Lieutenant Siła-Nowicki. On July 23rd, 1920 unit assembly began in Białystok. Lieutenant Siła-Nowicki named the unit the "Hussars of Death," a name fearful and mighty to inspire his soldiers and strengthen morale (see photo above). Within a few days, his unit was represented by two squadrons (one on horseback and one running due to a lack of hors-

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Presenters for the "Miracle on the Vistula" (Cud Wisły 1920) included (from left to right) Barbara Barbara Niklińska, Władysław Byrdy, (poetry recitation) Ewelina Worwag and Waldemar Nikliński (historical narration) CUD WISŁY 1920 (photo by Dariusz Piłka)

Trinity Parish, after the solemn "Mass for the Homeland," the Nikliński family, together with a group of friends and the Chicago Chopin Society, presented the artistic program "The Miracle of the Vistula, 1920." The musical setting was prepared by Marlena Dziś, Michał Sadowski and Jarosław Gołombiowski. The artists performed the *First Brigade*, *Warszawianka*, *Flowers of Zadwórze* and *Rota* as well as other patriotic songs. A poetry reading was presented by Władysław Byrdy. Barbara Niklińska, Waldemar Nikliński and Ewelina Worwag presented a historical narrative. American Polonia played a fundamental role in promoting knowledge of the history of Poland. Polonia's participation helped to preserve Polish identity and achieve the ultimate goal of regaining Poland's independence. In this spirit, Dr. Nikliński presents the merits of outstanding Poles with great passion. Thanks to him, our historical knowledge is constantly enriched with new details. The Chicago Chopin Society is proud of the many years of cooperation with such prominent Polish community activists. The program, "Miracle on the Vistula, 1920" was televised on Polvision and is currently available for viewing on YouTube at:

<https://youtu.be/2KFDyKcjj3U>



The restored memorial plaque honoring the 842 soldiers from St. Stanislaw Kostka parish who fought for Poland's independence. (photo by Dariusz Piłka. All photos used are with permission from "Dziennik Związkowy")

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Colonel Wyrostek (center) standing in foreground next to General Józef Haller (first man standing at left.)



es), as well as a platoon of heavy machine guns (totaling 500 sabers and 20 machine guns). As an act of unification, the soldiers pinned skull and crossbones cut out of tin cans to the caps of their motley army uniforms.

Only one week after unit formation, the Hussars claimed their first victory near the village of Dzierzki. Thanks to a few other victories, the division was able to commandeer enough enemy horses to fully outfit its cavalry. Shortly, under the direction of General Latinik, the Polish Mounted Police from Łódź was added as the third squadron of Hussars.

During the Battle of Warsaw, from August 13th-16th, the Hussars performed reconnaissance patrols. On August 17th, they located Bolshevik forces attempting to cross the Bug River. In this early battle, the Hussars captured four Bolshevik cannons. Russian Cossack units under the command of Gay Demitrievich (referred to in Polish as the Gaj-Chan Cossacks), were responsible for criminal and treacherous acts that included the murder of patients and hospital personal in Plock. As they knew that they could not count on the mercy of the Polish people the Cossacks attempted to flee to the Prussian border through Kolno, but they were pursued by infantrymen of the Polish 4th Army. On August 24th, near Myszyniec, their escape was thwarted by the Hussars of Death. Although they were up against a larger and better equipped army, the violent and coordinated attack of the Hussars under the command of Lieutenant Siła-Nowicki left the Soviets disorganized and weakened. The Hussars and Łódź police unit captured 13 cannons, 300 horses, and multiple prisoners of war.

Fresh from their victory, the Hussars were met the next day by the three squadrons of Red Cossack Cavalry. The battle proved to be no challenge for the Hussars. In the bloodshed, a mere 100 Soviet soldiers survived. The Hussar Death Unit, composed of only 500 men, became renowned in Mazowsze and Podlasie, eventually accompanying General Zeligowski to Vilnius.

After the war, Lt. Siła-Nowicki disappeared due to unknown circumstances, and the unit disbanded. No archive documents or photographic trace of the brave commander was preserved to accompany his legacy. In a rare twist of fate, Lieutenant Siła-Nowicki's saber made its way into our family's private collection (*photo above*).

On this anniversary of the "Miracle on the Vistula," we felt it was our duty to share the stories of Colonel Wyrostek and Lieutenant Siła-Nowicki, two brave men who helped to shape Polish history. Their names, stories and glory should be kept alive and no longer forgotten.



Brendan Reynolds

Wachtel Literary Awards

The Wachtel Literary Awards, established by the late Estelle Wachtel-Torres, MD, has awarded a matching award to Brendan Reynolds from the Polish Heritage Society of Rochester, NY for his essay on Kraków. Brendan has helped his grandfather for many years in demonstrating the art of pisanki at the St. Stanislaus Polish Festival in Rochester, N.Y.

This year, Brendan is a freshman majoring in biomedical engineering with a minor in business at Binghamton University. After completing his undergraduate degree, he plans to further his studies in biomedical engineering and seek employment at a biotech company in California because of the weather and his love of San Francisco.

The Wachtel Literary Awards (formerly Competition) was established to encourage Polish American youth with interests in the fields of journalism and/or literature. The Wachtel Literary Awards was named in the honor of Stanley Wachtel, Estelle's father, who was active in Chicago's Polish theatre and Detroit's Polish Radio as well.

To read Brendan's essay as well as his autobiography and further information regarding the Wachtel Literary Awards, please go to: www.polishcultureacpc.org and click on "Competitions and Awards." All Affiliates and Supporting Organizations are welcome to participate by conducting their own Literary Competitions according to the criteria on the ACPC website.

Carolyn L Meleski
Wachtel Literary Awards



2020 Sembrich Competition

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The judges for the competition were: Luis A. Galvez, Director of Music and Liturgy at St. Viator Church in Chicago; Stefania Kondella, Soprano from the Poznań Opera; and Mark Ohnmacht, musician and Principal Agent for Performing Arts Consultation Services.

At the present time, we cannot plan for a live concert by the winners of this year's competition. We are, however, making arrangements to hold a virtual concert later this year or early in 2021 to give everyone the opportunity to hear these excellent singers.

The Music Committee wishes to thank the ACPC Board of Directors for its support and everyone who has contributed to the success of this year's competition. These volunteers are: Celia Larkin, Chairman, and committee members: Alicia Dutka, Dr. Jaroslaw Golembiowski, Dr. Laura Kafka-Price and Richard F. Larkin.

POLISH PERSPECTIVES REPORT

The Polish Perspectives project has been an active exhibit project for the ACPC. Thousands of teachers attended the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) conventions for over 20 years when ACPC began attending this conference. The National Council for Social Studies will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2020.

Mr. Wally West courageously started this ACPC project; Henrietta Nowakowski and Barbara Lemecha carried on with a vision of creating new materials for these educators of history, civics, and government.

Project chairs Raymond and Cecilia Glembocki have planned and executed the exhibit for the past 11 conventions, not only attending the National Council for the Social Studies main event for eight years but also attending various affiliated conferences including the following: Williamsburg, VA; Roanoke, Virginia, and the Towson Maryland Middle Atlantic Conference with five states included: Delaware, New York, Pennsylvania, Washington D. C. and New Jersey.

Cecilia and Ray have organized the booth's activities, gathered materials, and presented our story at these locations. They attended the affiliate meetings with an attendance of 350 educators at each convention. Now hundreds of educators know that the Polish exhibit is filled with information, creatively presented and filled with books, leaflets, bookmarks, DVD's and CD's especially developed for these teachers.

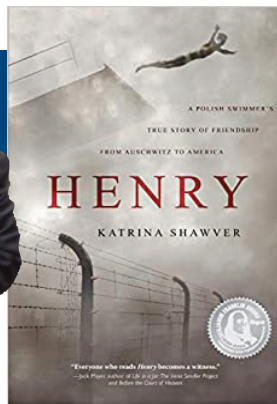
Many department heads and college professors who teach courses in civics and government attend NCSS and place these items in their media centers. These educators look for accurate and relevant materials for their students as: the anniversary of Warsaw Uprising, Solidarity, the Battle of Warsaw or the 100-birthday celebration of Pope St. John Paul II.

Many teachers have visited and studied in Poland and were extremely pleased with the country and its courageous people. These educators are looking for relevant materials not only on World War II but also on the contributions of Poles throughout history such as Irena Sendler, Marie Sklodowska Curie, Pułaski, Kościuszko and so many others. Our CD about Notable Poles presents various topics in a poster format so they can be printed and displayed for all students to read and study. These have been a great resource for teachers, and they are impressed at the number of authors, musicians, sports figures, physicians and scientists who have a Polish background.

These CD's and DVD's are available for free to all our affiliates and supporting organizations by contacting: raymondglembocki@gmail.com, Tel: 703 502 6253.



*Polish Perspectives Chairs
Cecilia and Raymond
Glembocki*



Book Review

by Mary Flanagan

Henry: A Polish Swimmer's True Story of Friendship from Auschwitz to America

by Katrina Shawver

308 pages

Published by Koehler Books

Information at www.JCGtesting.com

This book is based on a series of interviews which the author has with a Polish survivor of Nazi prison camps and his life prior to the war, sojourn in prison camps during the war and his post war experiences. It is amazing how much tribulation one person can survive. Truly, Henry was favored by destiny to have survived the horrors of the Holocaust.

Before the war, Henry Zguda lived in Kraków and was a swimming medalist in world-wide competitions. The author, an American writer, interviewed him at his home in the United States. The reader is well informed by the author's questioning since as an American she was not aware of some details. She did extensive research and travelled to Poland so that she was able to ask Henry details that he was able to clarify.

Although the book brings forth terrible details of suffering during internment, it ends on a high note. Future generations need to be made aware of such atrocities in the hope that they will not be repeated.



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