

Tracing Polish Heroes in America

BUFFALO, — The yacht *Kpt. Wagner II* and its crew, Captain Andrzej Piotrowski and filmmaker/sailor Piotr Rudziński, visited Buffalo as part of The Great Loop Polonia, a cruise tracing the footsteps of Poles who helped build the United States.

Piotrowski and Rudziński began their journey in June 2014 in Chicago. They traveled down the Mississippi, around Florida, up the Intercoastal Waterway, the Hudson River, along the Erie Canal, through Buffalo, and back to Chicago. The length of the entire trip is 4,500 miles.

The PAC WNY Division, associate professor and Digital Media Arts Program director at Canisius College, Przemyslaw "P.J." Moskal, and former PAC president Joe Macielag organized a welcome for the crew, which gave a presentation at the Buffalo Maritime Center.

Motoring along the Niagara River the sailors traveled under the International Railroad Bridge designed by Casimir Gzowski, a Polish-Canadian engineer. They spent an afternoon driving to Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., to visit Haller's Blue Army Cemetery, where Polish American recruits for the Polish



The crew of the *Kpt. Wagner II* — Andrzej Piotrowski, left, and Piotr Rudziński — are greeted by former Polish American Congress WNY secretary and Polonia organizer Helena Gołębiewska. The Polish yacht visited Buffalo as part of a cruise tracing the footsteps of Poles who helped build the United States.

War of Independence are buried.

And from the observation deck at Buffalo City Hall, they viewed an army of church spires rising above the old Polish neighborhoods on the city's East Side.

"The Polish spirit in the United States goes through us," said Rudziński, who is making a documen-

tary of their water voyage. "We care about our history. We care about our heroes. We try to go where history matters."

Piotrowski and Rudziński met in 2012 in the British Virgin Islands. Piotrowski, who grew up in Koszalin, Poland, within eight miles of the Baltic Sea, lives in Chicago. He had the Great Loop on his bucket list.

Rudziński, who is from Ostrołęka, Poland, and lives in New York City, was searching for a film project.

In Mobile, Ala., they discovered the tombs of Confederate Col. Hippolytus Oladowski and Confederate Gen. Braxton Bragg in Magnolia Cemetery. Oladowski's will requested that he be buried next to his friend in arms.

"This was a big story for us," said Rudziński.

In St. Louis, they found major league baseball legend Stan Musial,

Leshinskie Dually Celebrated

BALTIMORE — The Polish Heritage Association of Maryland (PHAM) honored its president Victoria "Vicky" Leshinskie with a gala surprise party, September 18, 2016 after a regular membership meeting.

Not only is Leshinskie retiring as its president after 14 years at the helm, she also celebrated her 90th birthday this past July 4, 2016 — Independence Day.

Leshinskie was born and raised in Shamokin, at the western edge of the coal fields in Northumberland County, Pennsylvania. She migrated to Baltimore, in 1944 after graduating from high school, and began an enduring and very successful career in the hospital administration field. She formally retired 19 years ago from the University Hospital Medical Center, but selflessly volunteered to work with medical students in its anesthesiology department until just recently.

Under Leshinskie's strong leadership and dogged perseverance, PHAM has continued its mission to celebrate, promote and preserve Polish culture, history and heritage through various programs and events. She was especially dedicated to PHAM's scholarship program that has provided college students



Polish Heritage Association of Maryland Director Richard Poremski with President Victoria Leshinskie.

of Polish heritage in Maryland with \$350,000 (and counting) over the years. In addition to the many official proclamations of merit and glowing accolades, her most prized gift at the celebration was the PHAM membership presentation of a \$2,000 scholarship to be granted in the name of "Victoria Leshinskie" during the 2017 scholarship awards program.

Leshinskie revitalized and grew the organization in all respects. The use of all new communications technology was emphasized in order to recruit new members, especially young ones, to introduce and immerse them in our rich Polish culture, and to proudly carry its legacy on into our Polonia future.

Members wished her a sincere "sto lat," and expressed good luck as she retires to her family home- stead in Shamokin.

Biedroń to Discuss LGBT Rights in Poland

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — Robert

sexual minori-

