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SPOTLIGHT

Ahwatukee author's book wins Polish Congress accolade

AFN News Staff Nov 30, 2018



Katrina Shawver received an award from the Polish American Congress and was accompanied by her husband Rick when she attended its recent meeting.

Special to AFN

Ahwatukee author Katrina Shawver has claimed another accolade with her book about a man who ultimately came to live in Ahwatukee after spending several years in two Nazi concentration camps.

She is one of the few non-Poles to receive the Polish Heritage Award from the Polish American Congress.

Her book, "HENRY: A Polish Swimmer's True Story of Friendship from Auschwitz to America" (Köehler Books, November 2017) was hailed as a "contribution to the documentation of the suffering inflicted on Polish people during the Holocaust."

Shawver spent 15 years researching and writing her biography of Henry Zguda, a competitive swimmer who was imprisoned in the Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps during the Nazis' occupation of Poland.

He and a friend defected from Communist Poland in 1956 at the height of the Cold War with the help of friends he met in Buchenwald, and eventually moved in 1980 to Ahwatukee, living in the same home at 48th Street and Warner Road until his death in 2003.

Shawver met him a year before he died, then set off on researching the Nazis' persecution of Poles, unearthing original documents in Germany and Poland that she used to tell both the story of Zguda's life and the treatment of Poles during the war.

The book has won numerous awards, including first place for published nonfiction in the 2018 Arizona Authors Association Literary Contest.

Her other awards for the book include: the 2018 IBPA Benjamin Franklin Award – Silver for Biography; 2017 The Wishing Shelf Book Awards (UK) – Gold for Adult Non-Fiction; and four 2018 Reader Views Literary Awards that include first place for biography and regional book, best nonfiction and best regional book. She also has won a Feathered Quill Award in the historical category and a "Best of 2017" award from Advice Books in Italy.

Shawver blogs regularly at katrinashawver.com.