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SPOTLIGHT

Library features local author as 'writer in residence'

AFN News Staff

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Ahwatukee journalist and author Katrina Shawver became good friends with Nancy and Henry Zguda before their deaths. Special to AFN

Ahwatukee author Katrina Shawver has been picking up awards for more than a year for her biography of an Ahwatukee man who was a survivor of two Nazi concentration camps.

Now, Shawver, author of "Henry: A Polish Swimmer's True Story of Friendship from Auschwitz to America," has attained another honor – a designation as a writer in residence at Glendale Public Library.

Shawver will be a writer in residence from March through May for both public workshops and one-on-one consulting at the library, 19055 N. 57th Ave., Glendale.

“The Writers in Residence program promotes writing in communities by connecting local, professional authors to serve as a one-on-one appointment with Katrina or attending a public workshop to learn new skills in craft and publishing,” the library said in a release. “All experience levels are welcome.”

The Arizona Talking Book Library has chosen “Henry” for its collection of recorded books for the blind and disabled. Once production is complete, about an eight-month process, it will be uploaded to the Library of Congress and made available nationwide.

Shawver’s book is the culmination of both a friendship and a 15-year research effort that took her to Poland and Germany, where she unearthed more than 80 records that further illustrated one of the key themes in her book – the slaughter of six million Poles during World War II by both the Nazis and Russians.

In 2002, she met Henry Zguda, an 85-year-old Polish Catholic survivor of Auschwitz and Buchenwald during WWII who lived a mile from her Phoenix home.

Before his death on Thanksgiving Day 2003, Zguda was a well-known figure around the Ahwatukee Recreation Center, but also an accomplished athlete throughout virtually his whole life.

In his youth, he was a champion swimmer – but that was interrupted by his internment for three years in two Nazi concentration camps, Auschwitz and Buchenwald, as a Polish political prisoner.

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.

Henry and his wife, Nancy, who died in 2013, moved to Ahwatukee in 1980 and lived in the same house near 48th Street and Warner Road until their deaths.

Shawver has been honored in the Polish American community for her efforts and presentations, has presented on Polish history at the community college level, and her book garnered first place for published nonfiction in the 2018 Arizona Authors Association Literary Contest.

The book also was posted by Poland's Consulate General to its website under the heading "Books from Poland and on Poland – in English."

For a schedule of her Glendale appearances or to arrange a one-on-one session:
glendaleaz.com/library.

Information: katrinashawver.com, email her at Katrina@katrinashawver.com or 480-329-9738.