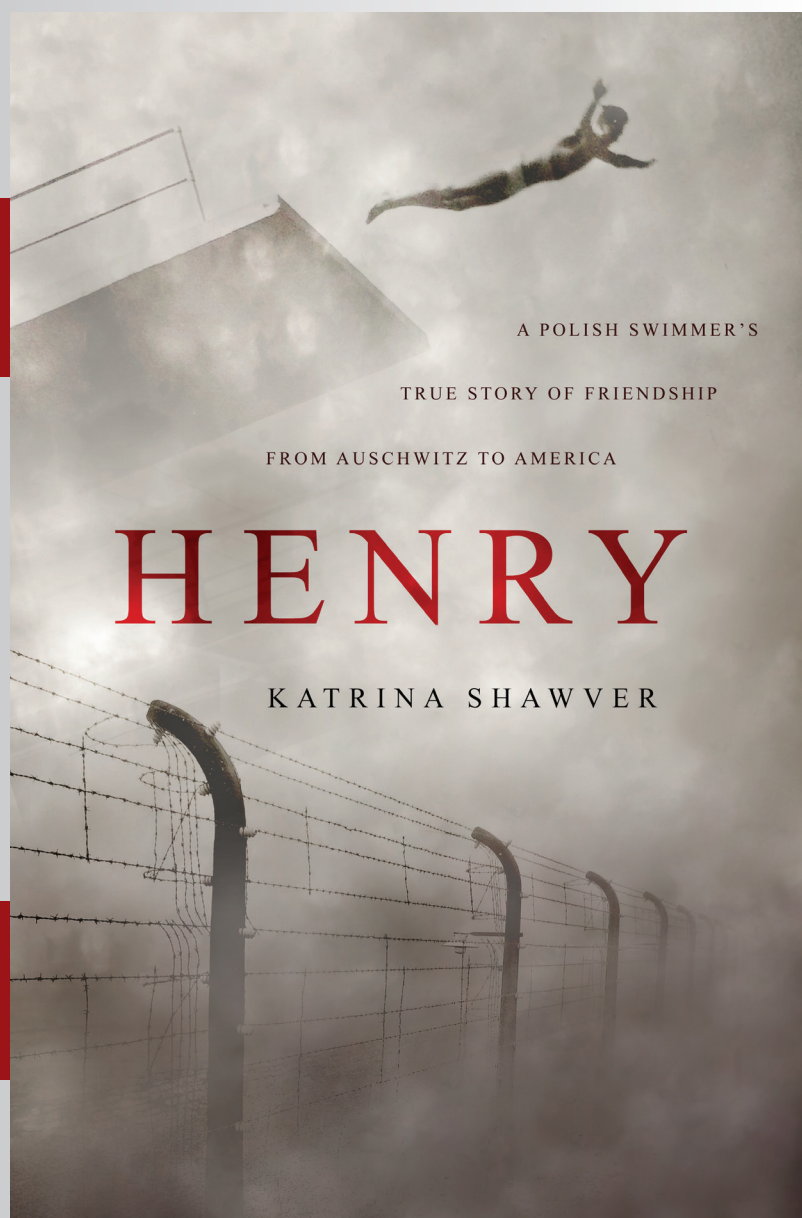


Meet Katrina Shawver



author of
HENRY

Meet Katrina Shawver

My accidental writing career began in 1996. I penned a letter to the editor of the *Arizona Republic* newspaper in Phoenix, and in it I complained about their coverage of schools. At the time I had three children under the age of eight, and was frustrated with the focus on schools and not parents. In this letter I added a “P.S. — I’m a mom, and I have a degree in English. If you don’t find anyone else to write it, I will.” Six months later they called and asked me to write a regular column in a new community section. I did that for eleven years until the paper downsized, and in the process I became passionate about the power of the written word to influence opinion, provoke discussion, and inform the community of interesting people and organizations. *Henry* is written in the same vein. The book is about much more than one man’s story. I hope that it informs the reader about historical events, interesting people, and provokes discussion.

Being asked to write for the newspaper changed the direction of my life, improved my self confidence, and taught me two lessons I carry with me to this day. First, be careful what you ask for, as you may get it. Secondly, you don’t get anything unless you ask for it. Just like in sales, you have to ask for the order. As I’ve become older, those lessons have empowered me to be bolder. I learned many other valuable lessons from writing for the newspaper. A deadline is a deadline. Writer’s block is not an option when you have to produce copy. You will be edited; learn from it. Not everything you submit may



get printed. And, once something is in print, or on the Internet, it can never be taken back, so check your sources, verify your facts, and be respectful.

The paper gave me a lot of freedom to choose my topics. I frequently wrote about my three kids, and life as a parent. Those columns were among my most humorous ones, and I still treasure many of the Mother’s Day columns I wrote. In those eleven years I worked, had three school-age children, and later an ill parent. Life was hectic, but through the newspaper I began to

meet very interesting people, and had a real reason to experience new things so I could write about them. Throughout everything, my husband Rick has been my biggest fan and hugest supporter.

I was shy and somewhat lonely as a child, so I became a voracious reader, which laid the foundation for writing. Even then I was drawn to biographies: Harriet Tubman, Nellie Bly, the von Trapp family, and so many others. These stories in turn fed an interest in history, and the story-behind-the-story from a very young age.

Meet Henry Zguda



Henry Zguda (1917 – 2003) was born in Kraków, Poland at a pivotal time in Polish history. In 1918 Poland regained its independence from the three powers – Russia, Prussia and Austria – who had partitioned the country for themselves. Skilled in sports, languages, and resourcefulness, he was a competitive swimmer and water polo player.

In September 1939 Germany invaded Poland from the West, and Russia invaded Poland from the east. In 1942 he was arrested by Germans and sent to Montelupich Prison. From there he went on to survive Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Flossenbürg and a death march before being liberated at Dachau at the end of the war. Unlike many memoirs related to the Holocaust, Henry was a Catholic Pole.

Henry would go on to live the American dream, marry the love of his life, and eventually retire to California and Arizona, the lands of Elvis Presley and Tom Mix he always dreamed of seeing.



Q&A with Katrina Shawver

Q How did this project begin?

A: When I met Henry Zguda my only goal was enough information to craft an interesting 600-word newspaper column. In fact, the only reason our paths crossed is because a friend called me and gave me his name and phone number as an interesting lead to write about. But from the very first interview I sensed a compelling and unusual story at risk of being lost forever. Henry had no siblings, and never had children, so there was no one else to hand his stories to. Conversely, he had already told me “nobody is interested in my stories. I’ve told Nancy (his wife) to throw everything out when I’m gone.”

And we ‘clicked.’ I still can’t explain why I impulsively called him up and suggested we work together to write his story. He was eighty-five years old, so I knew the stories had to be captured right away. From the very beginning, the story came to me unexpectedly and has stayed with me for reasons I can’t explain. I’ve set it aside more than once as the size of the task overwhelmed me and life intervened. But it kept calling to me, the right people kept coming into my life, so it was meant to be. I’m definitely following a higher power in finishing this book.

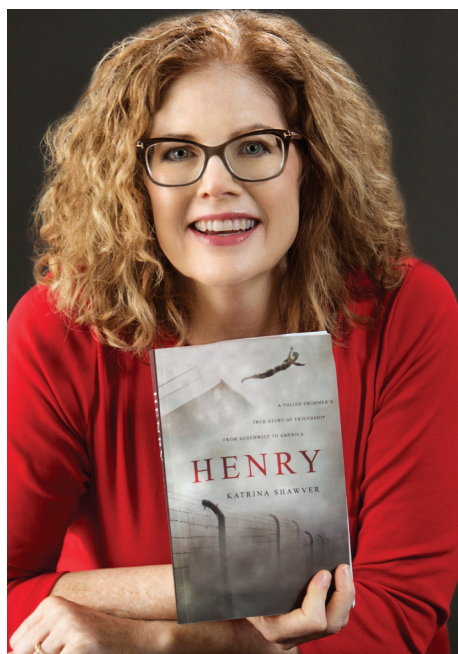
Q: How much research did you conduct for *Henry*?

A: A ton. When I began I had never interviewed a concentration camp survivor, nor was I Polish or Jewish. I knew very little about Poland, especially during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. It soon became evident that I needed to comprehend the social fabric and cultural biases of a pre-war Poland, and a country at war. And if I needed the history, then my readers would also, so a lot of history is woven into these stories to set the scenes and establish the historical context for a time and place few people alive have experienced. Beyond that, for credibility, I had to verify and cross-reference Henry’s stories, which also included a lot of fact finding.

The research component began with

visiting the university library, combing websites for credible museums and institutions, and subsequent translation of Polish and German documents. There came a point that I knew I needed to visit Poland and Germany, retrace Henry’s steps, and walk the grounds of Auschwitz and Buchenwald. There is no substitute for visiting in person, and while I had learned a lot of information already, our tour guide filled us in on key details not written elsewhere.

A key part of the research involved translation of many German and Polish documents. Once I had many of these translated in 2012, then I really knew what I had. Another



huge leap came in 2014 when I discovered 130 documents on file with the International Tracing Service with Henry’s name on them.

I’d been encouraged earlier to contact the ITS, but in my mind I didn’t need to ‘trace’ Henry. I knew all his facts and where he was. But I learned it is far more than a tracing service. It is an international repository of some 20 million documents from the Nazi era.

Q: How important is research to you when writing a book?

A: I value and strive for both credibility

and accuracy. To the extent research is needed to achieve both of those, then I research.

Q: What was the hardest part of writing this book?

During the interviews, when Henry discussed some of the brutal aspects of concentration camps, or looking at black and white photos next to someone who was actually there, I wanted to stop the conversation because with Henry it was real. There was one point where I started having nightmares about being in a camp. Had I told Henry he would have said ‘forget it’ and stopped the project, so I never told him. But I wanted to honor Henry, and so many others who didn’t have the opportunity to stop the tape, close the book, and change subjects.

Equally challenging was the need for extensive research, translation of documents, the work in transcribing interviews, and my learning curve. I can’t think of anything that was easy about this project.

Q: What do you hope your readers will gain from reading your book?

A: First of all, the devastating assault on Poles, their country, and their culture that Germany was determined to erase has received far less attention than other categories of prisoners. This story reminds us that no single class of people was safe from Hitler’s reach or imprisonment, and no country suffered more under Hitler and Stalin than Poland. I would love if every reader remembers that the Holocaust as defined and taught today is truly a subset of the full brutality inflicted on countries invaded and terrorized by both Hitler and Stalin.

I’ve also included stories of rebellion. There were people who fought back, even if unsuccessfully, and those stories need to be documented, remembered, and honored. Henry survived hell on earth, yet he went on to live a pretty incredible life. He’d seen the worst of men, and chose to look forward rather than back. I find inspiration in that philosophy.

Q&A with Katrina Shawver

Q: What is your favorite motivational phrase?

A: “What would you attempt to do if you knew you could not fail?” I keep the phrase near my computer where I can look at it every day.

Q: Have you always loved books?

A: Reading is like breathing. I’ve always been a reader, and always had access to books. I can’t imagine a home without bookshelves. A love of reading is the essential foundation for any writer.

Q: What is the most important thing about a book in your opinion?

A: The craft of writing and the ability to tell a great story. Fiction needs memorable characters, believable plot, something different than other reads, and twists and surprises that keep the reader turning the page. In both nonfiction and fiction, accuracy of facts and details is critical. For example, if the book lists the wrong date for a well-known event, or even misspells a name, credibility is lost. The best nonfiction will read like good fiction. But the absolute most important thing is the craft – is it well written, does the writer understand the concepts of how to construct a book and tell a great story? Books with mediocre writing have become runaway bestsellers. But that doesn’t make them great books. I like books that make me think.

Q: What books have most influenced your life?

A: Certainly *Man’s Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl. I read that after I started this project and it offered such a keen insight into the camps as to why some people gave up, and some like Henry kept going. I have both volumes of *This I Believe, Personal Philosophies of Remarkable Men and Women*. People fascinate me, and it’s an incredible challenge to write out your personal beliefs in 300 words or less. Every single person has a different angle. We can learn so much from each other if we stop to listen to the other person’s wisdom.

Q: What book do you wish you

could have written?

A: Several. *Ordinary Grace* by William Kent Krueger. *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak. *The Invention of Wings* by Sue Monk Kidd. And who doesn’t wish they could have written *To Kill a Mockingbird*?

Q: Which writer’s work do you believe most resembles your work?

A: My individual writing reflects my personality, so at times I had a hard time describing my writing because I don’t fit into a particular niche. I am biased towards good journalism on many levels. I do enjoy the persuasive writing of an editorial, the informing writing to convey information, and the combination of both to provoke discus-



sion and thought. There are multiple parallels between *Henry* and *Unbroken* by Laura Hillenbrand. I think the success of *Unbroken* proved an ongoing interest in World War II survival stories, so I’m happy to walk in Hillenbrand’s footsteps.

Henry: A Polish Swimmer’s True Story of Friendship from Auschwitz to America evolved into a format similar to *Tuesdays with Morrie* by Mitch Albom. I tried multiple styles, but the truest to Henry’s voice, and my notes, was the conversations we had during our meetings.

Q: Do you think the charm of public libraries has toned down much in the last decade?

A: I will always passionately vouch for libraries – they are more important and relevant than ever. They stand for both literacy for anyone, and uncensored freedom of speech. I took my children to my local library from about the time they were born. If anything, libraries have had to adapt to newer demographics and do more community outreach.

Libraries offer reading groups, presentations, ebooks, summer reading programs for children, Moms and Tots programs to grow early readers, and so many other programs. The Seattle Library has posted multiple videos to YouTube, including a great book domino chain to launch their 2013 summer reading program. The Phoenix Public Library, that I’ve been a friend of for over 25 years, reported more than 930,000 people held library cards in 2016, a number up from the previous year.

The Pew Research Center found that about 80% of Americans have visited a library or bookmobile in a year. Libraries are the heartbeat of every community and every writer should count their local reference librarian as their best friend.

Q: When can your readers expect your next book in print?

A: Currently, my full energy is on launching *Henry* to as many readers as possible. I believe in the story and believe it needs to be told. I would love to write a similar story of someone unknown but worthy of being remembered. I do have someone in mind who I met a year ago, but until I reach out again, and she were to agree, I don’t know if it would be possible.

Q: If Henry was here now, what do you think he’d say or think?

A: I can hear his voice and see him smiling. “Very nice, very nice.” And then we’d raise two glasses of good Polish vodka in a toast to our success. *Na zdrowie!*



Early Praise for *Henry*

*“By painstakingly reconstructing Henry Zguda’s remarkable story of survival, Katrina Shawver sheds light on one of the darkest chapters in human history—in particular, on the plight of Catholic Poles who found themselves in concentration camps like Auschwitz and Buchenwald. Henry is both poignant and inspiring.” – Andrew Nagorski, author of *The Nazi Hunters* and *Hitlerland**

*“Henry Zguda is a man you would like to know. When you read Henry, the interview-based story of his life, you will indeed come to know this hardy and hopeful soul, from his youthful days as a champion swimmer to his post-war life in Communist Poland and, finally, in the United States of America. However, it is the harrowing personal experiences of this Catholic Pole as a prisoner in the German concentration camps of Auschwitz, Buchenwald, and Dachau that yield information found nowhere else and keep the reader riveted to the page. Highly recommended.” – James Conroyd Martin, Author of *The Poland Trilogy* and IPPY Gold Medal Winner *The Boy Who Wanted Wings**

*“Katrina Shawver has done something rare. With her journalistic eye, she has created a book of outstanding research, divine instincts and the most human of components. Our hero, Henry Zguda, lives an extraordinary life filled with enough examples of strength and loyalty to warrant medals. As a non-Jewish survivor of concentration camps during WWII, this story deserves to be part of history. It is told with urgency and tolerance. A remarkable feat of writing! Bravo for humanity!” – Marcia Fine, author of *Hidden Ones*, *The Blind Eye*, and *Paper Children: An Immigrant’s Legacy**

“Katrina Shawver, a well respected journalist and public speaker has used her interviewing skills to write a solid biography on Auschwitz-Buchenwald-Death March-Dachau and Communist Poland survivor Henry Zguda. She weaves his memories with historical research to tell an important story of courage and tenacity. It is presented so that everyone will learn, and will not want to lay the book down. Additionally, there are numerous photos that greatly enhance the story, helping readers visualize the people and horrors as well as the beautiful times of Zguda’s life. We know that we should never forget the Holocaust, and Shawver is ensuring that we won’t.” – John Liffiton, Professor and Director Genocide Conferences, Scottsdale Community College

Henry:

A Polish Swimmer's True Story of Friendship From Auschwitz to America

by Katrina Shawver

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DESCRIPTION

When Katrina Shawver met the eighty-five year old Henry Zguda, he possessed an exceptional memory, a surprising cache of original documents and photos, and a knack for meeting the right people at the right time. Couched in the interview style of *Tuesdays with Morrie*, Henry relates in his own voice a life as a champion swimmer, interrupted by three years imprisoned in Auschwitz and Buchenwald as a Polish political prisoner. Henry's path of resiliency and power of connection are as relevant today, as they were in World War II. *Henry* reminds us that no single class of people was safe from Hitler's reach or imprisonment, and no country suffered more under Hitler and Stalin than Poland.

KEY SELLING POINTS

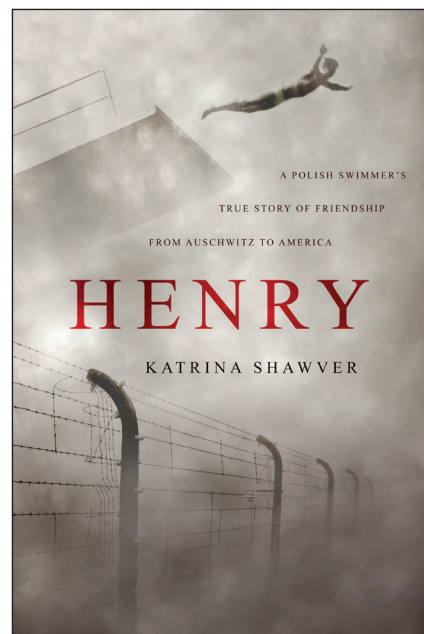
- Support and interest from the Polish community, and opportunity for Polish festivals
- More than 70 original photos and rare German documents back up this thoroughly researched book
- It's a story of friendship and hope, the refusal to give up and the power of connections then and now
- A timely reminder of the dangers in targeting a specific group of people because of who they are
- Strong potential for overseas sales: UK, Poland

AUDIENCE

- Polish Americans and those of Polish descent
- WWII history enthusiasts and scholars
- Nonfiction book clubs – Reader Discussion Guide included
- Holocaust museums, holocaust/genocide conferences, and workshops
- Competitive swimmers and Senior Olympics
- Strong potential for college-level courses on WWII and the Holocaust

MARKETING AND PUBLICITY HIGHLIGHTS

- The author has blogged for nearly four years from her content-rich website. She remains an active blogger and will promote the book through various social media outlets, including her Facebook author page and targeted Facebook ads.
- Two specially produced videos: One will be a short book trailer, the other a more extended "meet the author/the real story behind the book."
- The author is an experienced speaker and Toastmaster. She is confirmed as a presenter at the 2018 Genocide Awareness Week at Scottsdale Community College, in Phoenix, Arizona. She will apply as presenter and panelist at other conferences.
- The author is active in multiple literary organizations in the Phoenix and Southwest area.
- Multiple endorsements and advance reviews are in process, and *Henry* will be listed on NetGalley for additional early reviewers September 1.
- The author has entered the book in multiple contests and award programs.
- Media releases will be sent to local newspapers and radio in advance of the book launch.
- Press releases and author interviews are also being scheduled to all major Polish publications and Holocaust museums/related events.



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BIOGRAPHY: Historical/WWII

AUTHOR BIO



Katrina Shawver wrote hundreds of newspaper columns over eleven years for *The Arizona Republic*, holds a B.A. from the University of Arizona in English/Political Science and has excelled at the School of Trial and Error. In addition to a variety of previous careers in software support, the paralegal profession, tax preparation, and answering phones for a forensic psychiatrist, she has presented at the community college level on Poland under Hitler and Stalin. She lives in Phoenix, Arizona with her husband and still wishes sweet potato fries counted as a vegetable. Visit her website katrinashawver.com where she blogs regularly. This is her first book.

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