

Dr. Szyryński from 7

what would become of them. Would they be sent to Siberia as slave labour for the camps, or would they be taken from their cells in the middle of the night and executed with a bullet in the back of the neck?

Decades after the war, Dr. Szyryński confided that he had triumphed over his captors because God had come to him in a dream. After that, he said, "it was easy to look into my interrogator's eyes with no fear. It made the cold nights in the prison warmer."

To keep their spirits up, Dr. Szyryński and his friends recited as much Polish literature as they could remember. They also managed to read all of the many volumes of Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdue*. They shared their meagre food and dreamed of the day when they would be released and reunited with their families.

In June, 1941, Germany invaded the Soviet Union and finally the Kremlin decided to release tens of thousands of Poles, including Dr. Szyryński. He joined Polish forces under British command in Iraq as a medical officer and spent the next five years in Africa and the Middle East, treating Polish orphans living in refugee camps. When the war ended he was awarded Poland's Silver Cross of Merit, with swords.

By that time, he was back in Iraq working at a military hospital near Baghdad. On the staff were a number of Polish nurses, one of whom caught his fancy. She was about 10 years younger than him and, to his eye, there was something very appealing about her.

Her name was Jadwiga Szczebiot and he set to thinking about how they could be properly introduced. It was not long before he had enlisted the help of a priest, who invited the nurse to come by for tea. When she arrived, she discovered the priest already had another guest - Dr. Szyryński.

It wasn't long before romance flourished between the two compatriots, far from home

and facing an uncertain future. They traded stories and Jadwiga shared how, she, too, had been rounded up by the Soviets and shipped to Siberia. He told her of his experiences in Lubyanka Prison, and of being sent to Moscow on a train full of political prisoners. To their astonishment, they realized they had met before. Jadwiga was the Girl Guide who had fetched the wafers.

Two years later - seven years after they had unknowingly met amid the human flotsam and jetsam of a world war - the couple were married in Jerusalem on April 12, 1947.

"We just liked each other," Ms. Szyryński said this week of their meeting outside Baghdad. "He was nice, very pleasant. We went swimming, walked by the river together."

After Jerusalem, they emigrated to Britain, where Dr. Szyryński completed postgraduate studies. They arrived in Canada in 1948. After completing his doctorate in psychology at the University of Ottawa, he taught psychiatry. He also specialized in neurology and psychotherapy. In 1964, he was named head of the psychiatry department at Ottawa General Hospital.

For four decades, Dr. Szyryński's research and clinical work focused on the community and he became an early proponent of preventative psychiatry and the team mental health approach. "He advocated tirelessly for prompt recognition and assistance of mental health problems by co-operation among family, community, professional and religious services," said his granddaughter, Christina Stachulak.

The author of more than 70 articles, he was a fastidious man who expected high standards among his peers. Over the course of his career, he was awarded many honours, including fellowships in the Royal College of Physicians, Canada, and the American Psychiatric Association.

A central figure in Canadian-Polish community relations, Dr. Szyryński spent a lifetime contributing to his church. In 1969, at his Ottawa home, he entertained an obscure Polish cardinal called Karol Wojtyła, who later became Pope John Paul II. The two hit it off and corresponded over the years, meeting five times in all. "His religion was deep inside, he never talked about it," said his wife. "It was deeds that counted."

Victor Szyryński

Victor Szyryński was born Oct. 10, 1913, in St. Petersburg, Russia. He died of natural causes in Ottawa on Sept. 21, 2007. He was 93. He leaves his wife, Jadwiga, daughters Barbara and Theresa, grandchildren Anna, Christina, Sebastien, Vincent and Alexandre, and great-granddaughter Rose. □

Pope John Paul II Polish Center

3999 Rose Drive,
Yorba Linda, CA 92886

Mass Schedule:

Saturday 4:00 PM ENG

Sunday 7:00 AM Tridentine

9:00 AM ENG 10:30 AM PL
Tuesday - Friday 8:30 AM ENG.

First Friday of the month

8:30 AM Eng 7:30 PM. PL

First Saturday of month

8:30 a.m. ENG

Director: Rev. George P. Blais
Assisting: Rev. Henry Noga SVD

714-996-8161 office

714-996-8130 Fr. George P. Blais

www.polishcenter.org
office@polishcenter.org

Consulate General

Republic of Poland in Los Angeles

website: www.PolishConsulateLA.com

(310) 442-8500

Consul General

Paulina Kapuścińska ext. 109

e-mail: mailing_list@consulplla.org

Culture, Science Education,
Public Affairs

Consul *Jakub Zaborowski* ext. 108

e-mail: culture@consulplla.org

Administration and Finances

Consul *Małgorzata Kopeć* ext. 104, 105

e-mail: admin@consulplla.org

Passports/Visas/Citizenship Section

Consul *Marzena Gronostajska*

ext. 103, 106

e-mail: visapascit@consulplla.org

Legal Affairs/Consular Protection

Consul *Dariusz Dobrowolski* ext. 102,

e-mail: legal@consulplla.org

Economic and Trade Division

Vice-Consul *Michał Urbankowski*

ext. 114

e-mail: wehla@consulplla.org

fax: (310) 442-8526

website: www.pan.net/tradeconsul

Receptionist X 115

Polish Women's Alliance

Out of state members

WE NEED YOU

Helen Simmons

National Director

Tel: (818) 360-7707

Fax: (818) 366-5083

e-mail: nickoush@aol.com



HOLIDAY GREETINGS AND BEST WISHES

from the

Pope John Paul Polish Center - Yorba Linda,, CA !

*Tak obyczaj każde stary, według naszych ojców Wiary
Chcemy złożyć Wam życzenia w dzień Bożego Narodzenia
Niech ta gwiazdka Betlejemska, którąwschodzi tuż po zmorku
Da wam szczęście I pomyślność w 2008 roku !*

Rev. George P. Blais, Director - Rev. Henryk Noga, SVD, Assistant