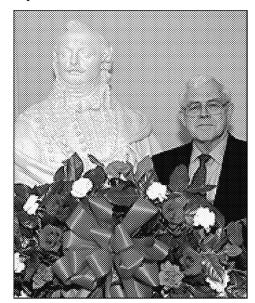
General Pułaski honored again on Capitol Hill by the National Polish Center

By: Edward Pinkowski



Stirling Elmendorf

Honored guest Dr. Charles F. Merbs standing at the bust of General Pulaski

The Pinkowskis aren't the only people excited about the lives the memory of General Casimir Pułaski touched on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. You couldn't escape the presence of singers in a meeting room filled to capacity of the Rayburn House Building on the 263rd anniversary of Pułaski's birthday.

As American and Polish flags stood on the sides of the podium, four women formed an impromptu choir in a corner, without a band to help them, and led the audience in singing the American and Polish national anthems. Never before, in the history of the federal government, were the two anthems sung like that.

If the Polish hero of the American Revolution were living today, he would have to thank the ingenuity of the Polish women and the National Polish Center for the ceremonies in his honor.

The singers who made history on March 6, which is still not listed in all references as the anniversary of Pułaski's birth in Warsaw, Poland, were Mary Ann Evan, once upon a time, in the days of Dr. Kaya Ploss, a hostess and valuable assistant at the National Polish Center; Debbie Majka, past president of the American Council of Polish Culture and now president of the Polish Heritage Society of Philadelphia; Teresa Wójcik, president of the Philadelphia chapter of the Kościuszko Foundation; and Dr. Monika Król, executive director of the National Polish Center.

Pułaski Award

The ceremonies drew the attention of several members of Congress, including Dennis Kucinich of Ohio and Daniel Lipiński of Illinois; the Polish Legion of American Veterans and the Pułaski Cadets. Monsignor Philip S. Majka, Catholic Chaplain at Dulles Airport, read the opening prayer.

The master of ceremonies, Professor Jack Pinkowski, welcomed everybody and recognized the heads of many Polish societies, who came from near and far, and read letters supporting legislation to make Pulaski an honorary citizen of the United States. He took time, while waiting for Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur to arrive, to talk about Pułaski and quote from his writings.

Representative Kaptur handed out the Pułaski Achievement Award to Dr. Charles F. Merbs, professor emeritus of Arizona State University, in recognition of his study which proved that General Pułaski's remains were laid at rest in Savannah, Georgia, and not at sea.

Last year, the honorable congresswoman from Toledo, Ohio, gave a plaque, then known as the Marcy Kaptur Award, to Dr. James Metts, coroner of Savannah, Georgia, and chairman of the Pułaski Identification Team, for the support he gave to forensic scientists in the search for DNA evidence.

In addition, the recipient received an honorarium of \$1,000. "These awards go to individuals and organizations that have done outstanding work in preserving the legacy of General Pułaski," said Dr. Pinkowski. "This is just our way to show how much we appreciate the work they do to preserve our roots in America."

Dr. Merbs traveled from Temple, Arizona, where he lives with his wife of many years, to speak to a small group in Washington about Pułaski's remains and receive the award. He noted the wear and tear of the bones of a horseback fighter and how everything matched with physical findings and records.

Merbs was a professor at Arizona State University in the spring of 1996 when his daughter, Heather, called him from Savannah, Georgia, to mention the discovery of human bones under the Pułaski Monument. Shortly after, in December, he went to Savannah with his wife, and together with five members of the Pinkowski family, saw the forgotten bones of General Pułaski. Not since 1853 had anyone else outside of Georgia seen them. They were hidden in a brick vault that Savannah had forgotten about since 1852. "I never dreamed," Dr. Merbs said, "that we would learn as much about Pułaski as we did. It changed everything previously written about him."

The Merbs and Pinkowski families were unable to talk about what they saw in a Georgia morgue until Dr. Metts issued his report. Professor Merbs was glad that he went to Savannah to work on the case. He will never forget it.

Pułaski Bust

Joe Davis, director of Public Affairs at the Washington office of VFW, delivered the keynote address and read a letter from George Lisicki, commander of the 2.3 million members of the VFW in support of the House resolution which will make Pułaski in death an honorary citizen of the United States.

Alexander Koproski and his wife, Patricia, received awards in recognition of



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L. - Prof. Jack Pinkowski presents award to Alexander and Patricia Koproski

their devotion to the National Polish Center over many years. They turned the offices they held to younger hands but remained as board directors.

In just two years, the National Polish Center has found enough partners in the Pułaski tribute on Capitol Hill to make it harder and harder to accommodate them in laying wreaths at the bust of Pułaski. The space around the sculpture in the Senate Vestibule is very tight.

Owing to new security regulations, which require a senator's intern, page, or guide to accompany each group, no more than 15 persons at a time, through the Senate wing, each group took turns.

It meant that most of the March 6th celebrators soon lost touch with one another. Until the senators find a larger place where the Pułaski bust can be moved, the piecemeal method of wreath laying will remain.

The last time the Pułaski bust was moved to a more prominent spot in the Senate Vestibule was 1972, when Senators Hubert Humphrey and Edmund Muskie used their influence to change the location. \square

Minister: Czechs should start new radar talks if Poland withdraws

March 10, 2008

Czech-U.S. negotiations on the planned U.S. radar base on Czech soil should go somewhat back, possibly to the very beginning if the complementary base with interceptor missiles finally were not built in Poland, Czech Defense Minister Vlasta Parkanova said Sunday.

In a program on Czech Television (CT), Parkanova did not rule out that the missile defense radar installation could operate even without the Polish base.

Nevertheless, this would be a completely new situation, different from what has been planned so far, she added.

"Last year we started the negotiations in expectation of a radar being built in our country and a base with missiles in Poland," she said, adding that it is the reason why it would be necessary to assess things such as the possible new variant's technical possibilities.

Czech Deputy Defense Minister Tomas Pojar recently said that even the radar base alone, without the missiles in Poland, would enhance the Czech Republic's security.

Washington conducts negotiations with Prague and Warsaw separately. For the time being it seems that the Czechs will sign the agreements on the radar project with the United States sooner than the Poles, who might do so only after six months at the earliest.

According to Parkanova, another round of the Czech-U.S. negotiations on the SOFA agreement (Strategic Framework and the Status of Forces Agreement) that creates a legal framework for the stay of the U.S. soldiers on Czech soil will be held on April 9-11. \square

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