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“A Sto Lat Reality for Walter Zachariasiewicz”

Text & Photo by Richard P. Poremski

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100th Birthday Party Held at Polish Embassy. Walter Zachariasiewicz is shown above addressing his well-wishers after extinguishing the numerals 1-0-0 on his birthday cake, and being serenaded with a robust singing of “Sto lat.” At center is Ambassador Robert Kupiecki, his wife Małgorzata and daughter Magdalena.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — It’s a very old Polish tradition to sing “Sto Lat” – “May You Live 100 Years” to someone at birthday parties, on name days, and at other special occasions. But due to the short life spans in the old days, almost no one ever achieved the unattainable century mark. Even today with all the vast modern medical and scientific improvements it’s still something of a rarity for a person to achieve centenarian status. But the ever remarkable Walter Zachariasiewicz did just that recently on November 7, 2011. Ambassador Robert Kupiecki hosted a gala black tie birthday celebration for acclaimed Renaissance man Zachariasiewicz, Nov. 19, 2011, at the Embassy of the Republic of Poland. Approximately 130 guests were in attendance. The event, conducted in Polish, featured a slide show of photos depicting Walter Zachariasiewicz’s amazing life, narrated by maestro Jerzy Sapieżyński playing at Paderewski’s piano. This was followed by a 1930s style cabaret show by a troupe of local Polish performers during which Walter was humorously scripted into the program.

Among the many gifts Walter received was a commemorative officer’s sword from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which complimented his announced promotion to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the Polish Army. Many congratulatory letters were presented from the highest officials of the Polish government. Medals and awards too numerous to mention have already been bestowed upon Zachariasiewicz. Chief among them is Knight Commander and awards too numerous to mention have already been bestowed upon Zachariasiewicz. Chief among them is Knight Commander with the allies against Nazi-Germany. Russia, and later served with Gen. Anders Polish Army that fought in independence of Poland. He graduated from Kraków’s acclaimed Jagiellonian University. During World War II he was arrested and deported to a gulag by the Russians. He was later released in 1942 and worked in the newly established Polish Embassy in Kujbyszew, Ukraine, and later served with Gen. Anders Polish Army that fought with the allies against Nazi-Germany.

Upon emigrating to America in 1948, Zachariasiewicz worked as a Group Director for the Democratic Party, as well as an Assistant Postmaster General. He became very active and a major leader in Polish American organizations, as well as an effective and recognized lobbyist for the Polonia and Poland agendas on the national level. And thankfully, he still maintains a presence today. It was pleasingly obvious Zachariasiewicz is only closing out one century in order to start another when Ambassador Kupiecki said that since “Mr. Zachariasiewicz has already lived sto lat — perhaps we should wish him another 100 years,” to which Zachariasiewicz replied with his usual quick wry wit, “Why not?”

“Sto Lat” (100 years) was the birthday wish given by Ambassador Robert Kupiecki to Walter Zachariasiewicz. The wish was made possible through a very old Polish custom in which the centenarian is serenaded with a song and then presented with a sword as a symbol of their importance to the nation.

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During February, the month Kosciuszko was born, or anytime throughout the year, visit the Kosciuszko Room in Ansonia, CT. The Kosciuszko Room, established in 1980 by Joseph Wardzala, who devoted more than 50 years of his life studying the life and accomplishments of General Thaddeus Kosciuszko, and sponsored by the Kosciuszko Historical Society of Ansonia, Derby, Shelton and Seymour, is located on the second floor in the historic home of General David Humphreys House, 37 Elm Street, Ansonia, CT.

While in the United States, Kosciuszko befriended and spent much time in the home of General Humphreys. The Kosciuszko Room displays many artifacts honoring General Kosciuszko, including photographs, books, portraits, dolls dressed in traditional Polish dress, and a letter written by Humphreys to Kosciuszko in 1791. It is open, admission free, Monday through Friday, from 1 to 4 p.m., or by appointment by calling Joseph Wardzala at 203-732-5886.

Thaddeus Kosciuszko Park , Dublin, Ohio

On September 12, 2011, the City Council of the City of Dublin, Ohio, voted to name 40 acres of Kosciuszko’s former property as “Thaddeus Kosciuszko Park. Kosciuszko was awarded 500 acres on the Scioto River near Columbus for his service in the Continental Army during the American Revolution.

The park is to be dedicated in the Spring of 2012. The park will have amenities including hiking, trails, fishing, a shelter house, and on site parking.

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