

## OPEN LETTER

The Newsday coverage of the November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013, “Cedarhurst Holocaust survivor, rescuer meet after decades” was unfortunately slanderous to the Polish people and Yad Vashem, Israel that gave the Medal to the Polish family that saved 5 Jews during the Holocaust of WW II. Yad Vashem is the sole authority in deciding who is deserving of the “Righteous Among Nations” recognition by bestowing them with the prestigious Medal.

The first Press Release regarding the arrival of the Polish rescuer coming to New York to be reunited with Dr. Leon Gestner of Cedarhurst, Long Island, the man, then a young boy, was announced by The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous via Steinreich Communications. It stated that “Polish Nazi collaborators eventually did raid the farm and beat the father after suspecting the family of hiding Jews”. The Polish community leaders and the Polish American Congress, Long Island Division, immediately went into action to investigate the statement. They wrote to the Israeli Embassy in Poland for a copy of the testimony given during the official ceremony of handing the medal, posthumously, to the family of Maria and Stanislaw Polzec. Their son Czeslaw Polziec was coming to New York to be reunited after almost seventy years. This was arranged by the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous. A second Press Release was issued by the Jewish Foundation removing one word “Polish”(Nazi collaborators). That was not enough of a change. In the meantime Newsday’s reporter Aisha Al-Muslim decided to go with the first Press Release (Polish Nazi collaborators) writing to me that she saw no difference between the two Press Releases. Soon the answer arrived from Poland from the Israeli Embassy in Warsaw, and was sent to the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous and the Polish Consulate. A third Press Release was issued by the Foundation stating “When there was a German general roundup through two villages the farm was raided. When they arrived, they knocked on the door and heard somebody running. Suspecting the family of hiding Jews, they mercilessly beat the father. The Gersten family lived with the Polziec until the area was liberated in 1944”.

Polish Consul wrote a letter to the Jewish Foundation and to Newsday to retract that statement. On Nov. 19<sup>th</sup> I wrote to Newsday reporter Aisha Al-Muslim asking for a retraction/correction of that story. She wrote back “I was sent documents in Polish from a Polish community leader. I translated the lines that were highlighted using Google Translate since I couldn’t find a fluent Polish speaker. One of the translations says that Czeslaw Polziec never confirmed that his father was tortured by Polish Nazi collaborators. I reported my findings and forwarded your e-mail along with the community leaders letter to my editor Tim Drachlis who said: Never confirmed does not mean Polish Nazi collaborators did not do the deed . . . for us to do a correction, we need to be positive who attacked the dad”.

On December 30, 2013, a correction appeared in Newsday stating: During WW II, German gendarmes raided a home in Poland whose owners hid a Jewish family, according to the Manhattan based Jewish Foundation for the Righteous and the Polish Consulate. The information about who raided the home was incorrect in a Nov. 28<sup>th</sup> story.

It is very important and even crucial that the Media not interpret a Press Release their own way to sensationalize their own news story. Issuing a Press Release requires finding the truth and carefully reporting it. That takes time and good research. Yad Vashem did their research slowly and carefully before giving the Righteous Among Nations Medal to the Polziec family. I congratulate the members of the Polish American Congress, Long Island Division and the Polish Consulate of New York for standing up for truth and honor.

An anonymous author