

Thanks Rita!

On Tuesday September 20th, The Polish Mission Welcomed 3-time Emmy award winning journalist Rita Cosby to the historic campus in Orchard Lake. Starting early in the morning, Rita gave a special presentation to the student body of St. Mary's Preparatory gathered in the Shrine Chapel of Our Lady of Orchard Lake. Students were very responsive as she presented the story behind her most recent book, *Quiet Hero: Stories From my Father's Past*. Rita's unique perspective on the proud story of 1944 Warsaw struck a special chord with the students. Her experiences as a journalist allowed her to color the black-and white story with a vivid engagement of the fine details that made up one of the most tragic moments of world history on Polish soil. Reporting from the front lines of modern-day Middle Eastern battlefields gave Cosby

the tools necessary to reach the young generation: dynamic accounts and clear message. The St. Mary's Prep AP World literature class was treated to a special guest as she led an in-depth discussion of her work as a late addition to the course syllabus. Headmaster Jim Glowacki's students held the class over for an extra 45 minutes filled with questions that reached deep into the young men's lives, some of whom related especially to the story, due to modern day veterans in their own families. Over 500 students gained powerful appreciation for the Polish story; none over the age of sixteen.

Thanks to Cosby and the Orchard Lake Schools team, The Polish Mission



reported their first-ever sold-out event later that evening. Extra tables and chairs had to be rolled out to accommodate the last minute guests to the dinner and presentation. The evening began with a very special event at the Ark museums. Led by Polish Mission team member JJ Przewozniak, a team of volunteers logged over 140 hours to completely renovate the Polish Second Corps museum on the third floor of the 1914-built building. A crowd of 25 veterans, friends and Orchard Lake leadership were in attendance as Przewozniak presented Cosby with an 1850 Staff and Field Officer's saber, which she used to cut the ribbon to the freshly-furnished room. When asked why the American saber was chosen specifically, Polish Mission staff replied that it "...was a fitting tribute to when our campus was known as the Michigan Military Academy. It used to be known as the second West Point..." Warm lighting, larger-than life murals, and a new multi-media display were only some of the new features that greeted a crowd that included Chancellor Father Tim Whalen, State Representative Moss, and prominent Polish WWII veterans Halina Konwiak and Juliusz Presmycki. Cosby's father was a Second Corps veteran, so the ceremony was especially poignant as she mingled with happy guests amidst preserved collections of medals and artifacts from Monte Cassino. The Polish Mission safeguards a number of museum rooms dedicated to various branches of the Polish armed forces in WWII, most of which had been developed and maintained by Veterans groups and fraternal organizations. This Second Corps museum effort was the first ever renovation formally undertaken by The Polish Mission, and Przewozniak attributes the success to the volunteers, all part of the Batalion "Burza" history organization: Ken Koskodan, Tiffany Hands, Jeffrey Mogle, and Nicole Sedlak. All are in anticipation for the next museum project. Guests are welcome to tour the museum by making an appointment, or attending the monthly open house on the first Sunday of every month at 12 noon.

Rita's dynamic portrayal of her Polish past was especially memorable due to her ability to move a very diverse crowd to applause. A number of WWII veterans, active duty servicemen, and the SS. Cyril and Methodius Seminarians listened as she detailed how she came to grips with her father through his experiences from the front lines of Warsaw in 1944. The story was richly colored by not only detailed accounts from the streets of Warsaw, but also the challenges she faced in re-opening a dialogue with her father. A moving presentation of a unique Polish story brought the crowd to their feet at the evening's close.