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"Julia Brown"

Why the Joseph Conrad Korzeniowski literature and accomplishments inspired the founders of the Yacht Club to name the Club after this famous author

The founders of Joseph Conrad Yacht Club made an excellent choice in naming their club after a valuable writer and sailor of Polish heritage, Joseph Conrad. His literature is an inspiration to others, a door to another universe that allows people to read all about adventures to foreign countries, cultures and languages without even leaving their homes. He spent most of his memorable days on a boat sailing around the world, or at least wishing that he was, which I think that any sailor feels when on land. After his death, a friend of his commented that, "*Wherever he sailed, it was as if he was wishing that he was sailing back to his home country... Poland.*" The dedication and passion that Joseph Conrad had for sailing is conveyed through his literature and the effects it had on the future generations of writers and readers. Having the Yacht Club named after this famous author is an honor to Joseph Conrad as well as a reminder to members and their families of his great works and accomplishments.

Born in Berdichev, in the Ukraine, in a region that had once been part of Poland but was at the time under Russian rule, Joseph Konrad Nalecz Korzeniowski was introduced into a life of hardship and sorrow. His father Apollo Korzeniowski was a poet and translator of English and French literature, but following an anti-Russian rebellion, his political activity forced the family into exile to Volgoda, Northern Russia, in 1861. In spite of this, his father still managed to introduce Polish and French versions of English novels to Konrad, and maybe that's what sparked his interest in traveling the world. Both his parents died by 1869 because of the conditions that they were presented to live and work in caused them to die of tuberculosis. Konrad was sent to Switzerland to his uncle Tadeusz Bobrowski, who held a great influence on Konrad's life and views of the world. While attending a school in Krakow, he persuaded his uncle to let him go to the sea. He fell in love with its beauty and decided to join the French merchant marine as an

apprentice, and made three voyages to the West Indies between 1875 and 1878. This same passion for sailing is shared by members of JCYC in our time, through annual races and regattas.

After being wounded in a duel, Konrad continued to sail the seas for 16 years in the British merchant navy. His obvious dedication to sailing was shown through his rise in rank from common seaman to first mate, and by 1886 he obtained his master's mariner's certificate and began to command his own ship, Otago. The same year he was officially accepted to Britain as a citizen and officially changed his name to Joseph Conrad. In this way Joseph Conrad is an example to the Yacht Club's members who migrated from Poland to the United States in search of widening their horizons and opportunities. Once a citizen, he developed a deterministic view of the world, which he expressed in a letter in 1897, "*What makes mankind tragic is not that they are victims of nature, it is that they are conscious of it. To be part of the animal kingdom under the conditions of the earth is very well - but soon as you know of your slavery, the pain, the anger, the strife. The tragedy begins.*" Following his own words and breaking out of his "slavery", in the following years, Conrad sailed to many parts of the world, following his instinct and interests and in whichever way the winds decided to blow his sails. He visited Australia, various ports and city's along the Indian Ocean, Borneo, the Malay states, South America, and the South Pacific Island/ in 1890 he fearlessly sailed in Africa up the Congo River. Through this example of curiosity and dedication, Joseph Conrad remains a great example to members of JCYC.

At the age of 36 he moved to England, and Conrad's sea adventures and life on a boat came to an end. After years of breathtaking sights and rich cultural experiences, he decided to settle down and devote himself entirely to literature that expressed himself. Although he is known mainly for being a novelist, he also tried being a playwright. His one-act play was not that successful but after finishing the text he wrote a satirical essay about a civil servant, and it was then when he wrote these humorous words, "... *one wonders that there can be found a man courageous enough to occupy the post. It is a matter of meditation. Having given it a few minutes I come to the conclusion that in the*

*serenity of my heart and the peace of my conscience that he must be either an extreme megalomaniac or an utterly unconscious being.*” His play on words allow a reader to become a little more comfortable with the author and allows them to understand his views through his writing. The last couple of years of his life were shadowed by rheumatism. He was offered a knighthood in 1924 as he had earlier declined honorary degrees from five universities for his literature. On August 3, 1924 he died of a heart attack and was buried in Canterbury. His influence upon the 20-th century literature was wide, and the impact of his works could be seen among other works of Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemmingway, Arthur Koestler and Graham Greene. Joseph Conrad made his mark not only among Polish writers, but deeply affected other international writers as well. Based in Chicago, JCYC has the same opportunity to make its Polish-cultural mark in one of the most diverse cities of the world.

Joseph Conrad's often quoted goal as a writer can be used as motivation for the everyday person in the way they express themselves, *“My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel- it is, above all to make you see. That and no more, and it is everything.”* The Joseph Conrad Yacht Club has similar goals that are to spread the values of Polish people and their culture. Through the Club and its various meetings with Polish professionals, businessmen and women, the Polish people are becoming more and more important in the business world, starting with making a statement on Lake Michigan that we, Polish-Americans, *are* here. Through the past 35 years, the Club has allowed the Polish people follow in the patron's footsteps, following their dreams and sailing with them.