



Office of the City Clerk

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Legislation Text

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Honoring Joe Polowsky

Whereas, on October 2, 2016, Joe Polowsky would have turned 100 years of age.

Whereas, Joe Polowsky graduated from Tuley High School (now de Diego Community Academy) -Chicago, IL, with former classmates Saul Bellow, a Nobel Prize winner and Sydney J. Harris, the former Daily News and Sun-Times columnist.

Whereas, he served as a US army rifleman in the 69th Infantry during World War II. Was the interpreter for the first-ever contact between US and Russian troops (they were allies in both World Wars) on the Elbe River in Strehla, Germany on April 25, 1945. This linkup split the German army in two and led to the Russians taking Berlin five days later and unconditional surrender by the German army on May 2, 1945.

Whereas, upon returning to Chicago in 1946, he attended the University of Chicago before leaving school on the second anniversary of the linkup to begin focusing on promoting world peace. In the early 1950's he went to work for the Chicago Transit Authority as first a conductor, later as a bus driver.

Whereas, in 1955, he and eight other former American GI's traveled to Moscow to meet with Russian veterans to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the linkup. Short of funds, they paid for the trip by appearing on the nationally televised game show "Strike it Rich." While in Russia, veterans from both armies signed "The Oath at the Elbe" - which Polowsky had drafted two years earlier.

Whereas, it was the first of eight trips Polowsky and/or other American GI's took to Russia over the next 10 years.

Whereas, in January of 1959, Polowsky and his wife Marie briefly hosted Soviet Deputy Premier Anastas Mikoyan in their apartment at 4126 N. Sheridan Rd. during his U.S. tour. Soon after, Polowsky left the CTA to join the Checker Cab Company, for whom he drove a taxi in the Uptown neighborhood for the rest of his life.

Whereas, beginning in the early 1970's, Polowsky began holding an annual vigil for peace in front of the Wrigley Building on Michigan Avenue. Upon his death from cancer at the Lakeside VA Hospital on October 17, 1983, he was remembered by news outlets around the world as a tireless advocate for world peace.

Whereas, despite numerous obstacles, he was buried in Torgau, East Germany on November 26, 1983. To this day, his gravesite is visited by thousands of people each year, and there are numerous schools, streets and parks named after him around the world.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That we, the Mayor and Members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, assembled this fifth day of October, 2016, hereby call for honoring Joe Polowsky as an exemplary Chicagoan and peace advocate; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution is presented to Joe Polowsky's family as a gift of gratitude from the City of Chicago honoring all the work he has done to advocate

James Cappleman Alderman, 46th Ward
for peace.