

A story of **Gliding** by

**Dr. Maciej Zwierz** later **Dr. Matthias Zeville** 1918 - 1988

Army Medical Academy..... Szkoła Podchorążych Sanitarnych or SPS - Ujazdów, Warsaw

**PROMOCJA XIV – 1935-1939**

Przyjęto w roku 1935: Gupa lekarzy - 32



This story on his experiences with gliding in the mid 1930's is taken from his memoirs.

The present University of Warsaw, then called Marshal Pilsudski University had for 1935/36 academic year only 32 places reserved for students at its Faculty of Medicine. They always wore army uniforms, lived communally at Ujazdów, and receiving during University vacations, full training of an Infantry officer in addition to the army and war medical functions training.

All the summer vacation during the first few weeks were spent on army maneuvers; in the beginning years, in separate camps under tents in the mountains, once on the Baltic Sea with the higher NCO ranks awarded, we were attached as acting doctors to various infantry or cavalry regiments for the usual summer and winter maneuvers

After academic lectures, labs etc., we had during the academic year obligatory sports: horse riding (by an NCO of the same "my" szwolezer" (szwoleżer is a type of light cavalry), boxing under an Olympic trainer, and fencing lessons (sabre). Already wearing glasses, I hated to box or fence: in those days there were no contact lenses and try, for instance, short-sighted and without glasses to fight with a wire mesh of the fencing mask. Nevertheless a few made it: one of my seniors was a champion of Poland in sabre and a member of the Olympic team.

After summer manoeuvres we were obliged to spend 2 or more weeks in various sport camps. Three of us selected **GLIDING**: Tadeusz Garlinski who was executed by Gestapo in the infamous Pawiak prison in Warsaw and Zdzislaw Walczak, later M.O. in Monserrat, BWI and I. There were other courses like mountaineering, hiking, sailing and kayaks.

Gliding was very much encouraged by our Ministry of War which knew about Soviets permitting airborne troops of Germany training in secret in the USSR. Germany being first in this “war sport” and knowing that doctors will be needed for the airborne troops. In the good game of military intelligence, all our training was paid by a private firm Polish Aircraft Industries.

They were internationally recognized with 4 categories: A, B, C and a “virgins”- the badge was of some 3 long winged silver birds on a blue field and around what we called “wedding virgin



wreath” – category D.

The Ministry of War (by special order) permitted to wear these badges on military uniforms on the opposite (i.e.. Right) side to the Air Force “wings” like RAF or USAAF.



Maciej in his glider with likely Garlinski or Walczak.  
In such a way we three became amongst top Polish glider pilots.





For New Year's Eve and New Year 1939 week, the ministry decided to test (first in the world as far as we've been told) whether flying over the snow at low temperatures with open cabin is at all possible. Accordingly, we were sent to Sokola Gora (Hawks Mountain) near a town of Krzemieniec Podolski, an old Soviet frontier(now Western Ukraine). Sokola Gora was not a mountain at all but a long very high cliff.







Sokola Gora 1935

We found ourselves there early morning on New Year's Day. A lot of snow, many degrees below 0 Celsius. Unfortunately for me, in Krzemieniec Podolski was stationed a cavalry regiment. We were invited for celebrations of the New Year 1939 which due to the excellent bar supplies ended about 4 am. Our flying tests were scheduled for 8 am. With awful "morning after" (I still remember the headache!) I found myself with others, looking from the cliff over the valley long, long below with deep melancholy.....there was only a very weak wind. "Test pilot Zwierz was always the lightest (Stanislaw Sosabowski was the son of General Stanislaw Sosabowski and his nick name for me was "Cadaver") and everyone knew that if Maciej cannot fly, no one should even attempt. Well, the director of the tests asked me to try. I started, turned, and followed the cliff. I immediately found that there is not enough wind to lift the glider and finding myself some 10-15 feet below the edge of the cliff, I decided to land. According to the rules, to land on the valley below meant hard work of hoisting the glider by several of us, up the cliff. Besides, I also decided to show the juniors and lads the highest possible class of landing: against the hill and as high as possible so that the hoisting of the glider was very short. Decided – soon done. Following the cliff, I found ahead, a suitable, not very steep, spot. The technique of such a landing, when described, is very simple: approaching the chosen spot and flying parallel to the mountain/cliff, you lower the wing nearest to the cliff, thus skidding the glider toward the landing spot. When the wing, you judge, almost touches the landing spot, you turn the glider to be straight ahead of the landing spot and at the same time raising the nose, (ie stalling) and the head. However, the theory not always works! I forgot (for example from skiing or winter driving) that to judge the distance on the snow is much, much different to doing the same over a meadow.

To make matters worse, just before the point my wing was skidding to, fate, previous wind and my "head" created a huge snow drift, not recognizable from a distance. The end was obvious. My wing caught the snow drift, the glider turned, stalled, or rather was stopped by this drift. I landed as planned to show my "high class" indeed against the mountain and only 10 feet to

hoist to the top BUT buried in this deep snow drift. It took my friends several hours to dig me and the glider from the snow.

In this undignified way, my gliding career ended-fate this time-original decreed it to be my last gliding. I had been booked for the middle of September for a month of distance gliding, but war interrupted me.

**Z. P. WALCZAK**, M.B., CH.B. Dr. Z. P. Walczak, formerly district medical officer of health and medical superintendent of the Glendon Hospital, Montserrat, West Indies, died on 20 September at the age of 55. Zdzisław Piotr Walczak was born on 29 June 1915. He was a medical student in Warsaw at the beginning of the second world war but managed to escape from Poland before the country was overrun. He served with the Polish Navy and later completed his medical training at the Polish University of Edinburgh, graduating M.B., Ch.B. in 1942. In 1949 he joined the Leeward Islands Medical Service and served in Nevis and Anguilla before he was transferred to Montserrat in 1955. In this island he did duty as district medical officer and medical superintendent of the Glendon Hospital until his retirement on the grounds of ill-health in 1965, and on two occasions he acted as senior medical officer. After retirement he continued in private practice until his death. He had many friends among his patients who were appreciative of his many kindnesses and loyal to him to the end. He is survived by his wife, formerly Diana Munro, of Edinburgh. -C.N.G.

WAGŁAWCZYK Miecz.	Wacławczyk Jan
Wagner Ignacy	Bucław Józef
Walczak Władysław	Walczak Kazimierz
Walków Franciszek	Walków Janina
Waluk Waleria-Jadwiga	Waluk Michał
Warcholak Władysław	P. C. K.
Wasilewski Aleksander	Franczyk Emma
Wasilewski Janusz	Wasilewska Kazim.
Wasiluk Witold	Falkowska Jadwiga

	<b>NEKROLOG</b>
	<b>Dnia 8.09.2015 w wieku 59 lat zmarł</b>
	<b>Ś.P. Zdzisław Walczak</b>
	 <b>Przedsiębiorstwo Pogrzebowe</b> Piotr Skrzypczak