

Translation of a letter from Sgt Stefan Wojtowicz's sister Matylida, read by Nina Britton Boyle.

It is an honour for me today to address all of you on behalf of Stefan's sister Matylida, who resides in Poland.

Matylida wrote about her brother Stefan as follows:

As a young child my brother Stefan was mischievous by nature. When a young boy he would often enjoy visiting our neighbour's farm who kept many pigeons. Many a day Stefan would flush out the pigeons, standing enjoying watching them as they fluttered then rose into the air flying high upon the wing. Stefan would avoid agricultural chores by escaping to hide within a tree, only I would know where to find him. It was our secret.

One of Stefan's loves was reading books, losing himself within the pages of one adventure or another, sitting high upon the bow of a tree, as he read in our family's orchard.

My brother was very emotionally attached to our family.

I adored my young brother Stefan*. He was tall, slim, very handsome, full of energy, always cheerful and kind towards people.

My brother was a gifted boy, graduating from the local school, after which he wanted to continue his education. Together with my father, Stefan's stepfather, "whom he was very close too" they looked for information about different schools. In that way they learned about recruitment to the non commissioned officers school of aviation at Bydgoszcz. My father wrote an application for Stefan to the school. After sitting the exam that Stefan passed with flying colours, he was accepted to Bydgoszcz aviation school.

In 1939 Stefan qualified as a fighter pilot. Then came the horror of the war. In mid September 1939 Stefan, with his commanding officer and two of his friends, arrived on motorcycles at our farm. Stefan had come to say his goodbyes to our family before the squadron he was in was to evacuate to Romania. Our mother pleaded with Stefan to stay at home. My brother replied "Mother I must go, you will see our grandchildren will read about my actions in books." And so it happened.

Presently three members of our family continue the aviation tradition, one in America and two in Dęblin, Poland.

On behalf of my family and I we give thanks and gratitude to all the wonderful people who have contributed to the cost of another memorial to honour the memory of the heroic deeds of Polish pilots and this day to my brother Stefan. I cannot find sufficient words to express my gratitude to John Kaye for his construction of the monument and Ronald Kellett's daughter Louise Pemberton for organising this day, along with all the other contributors.

We thank you with all our hearts. My family's thoughts and prayers are with all of you today at the unveiling of my brother Stefan's memorial.

Thank you.

* Matylda always referred to Stefan as her young brother, meaning he was the youngest brother in the family, but older than Matylda.