

A Guide to the city of Buffalo, Niagara Falls and the WNY region.

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History / Veterans

1st Polish Armoured Division

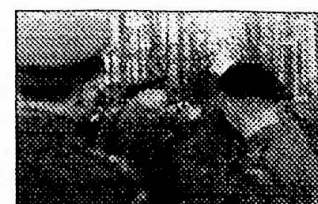
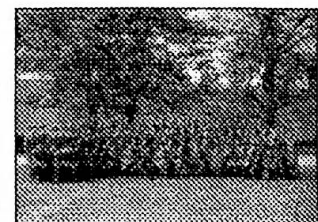
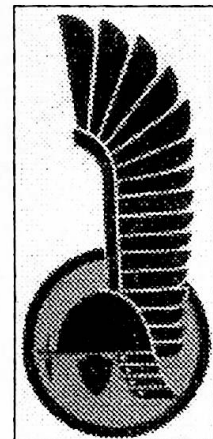
Lance Corporal Waldemar Czyz

The outbreak of war in 1939 found sixteen year old Waldemar Czyz, a first year university student and member of the Strzelec, (a para-military organization for teenagers) in his hometown of Wilno. (which at the time was part of Poland, not Lithuania as it is now) Within weeks, organized Polish resistance began to crumble as the Soviet Union invaded from the east and Czyz's organization was broken up and it's members sent home. Czyz immediately joined an underground resistance movement and participated in minor acts of sabotage against the Russians until his arrest and deportation by Russian authorities in April of 1940.

After a thirteen day railroad journey in a cattle car, Czyz found himself in Kazakhstan, where he was used as forced labor building additional railway lines from the coal mines there. The hard labor in unbearable heat continued for what seemed an eternity, until one day the Polish workers saw a uniformed Polish NCO (Non-commissioned officer) standing by a train which was stopped. Disregarding the shouts of their guards, they all ran over to talk to the soldier and were informed of the 1941 prisoner exchange agreement with the Soviet government. Threatening to strike if not allowed freedom to proceed to the Polish gathering points, the Polish workers were released in groups of ten as the Russian authorities found other laborers to replace them.

After exiting the Soviet Union by sailing the Caspian Sea and receiving some basic military training in Polish Camps in Iran and Palestine, Czyz found himself as a guard on a troopship of German prisoners bound for North America in 1942. After supply stops in Durban, South Africa, and Rio De Janeiro, Brazil, the ship (laden with veterans of Irwin Rommel's Africa Corps) finally reached it's destination of New York City only to be informed that the POW camps being prepared in Watertown, NY (Camp Drum) had not been completed as of yet. The POW's were then delivered to Canadian authorities in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

With the task completed, Czyz's main intent now was to get back to Europe and the fighting that was to come. This he did by securing passage for himself in a one hundred ship convoy bound for Glasgow, Scotland. Upon arrival, Czyz volunteered for service in the 1st Polish Armored Division. After being trained, he saw



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combat action in all of its major campaigns and engagements. From the Normandy landings, through the Battle of the Falaise Gap, to the capture of the German Port of Wilhelmshaven, Czyz experience all as a radio operator in the division's independent machine gun squadron.

After the war in 1945, Czyz continued his military training, raising his final rank to that of Cadet Officer. He also served as an interpreter for three years (1946-1949) for the British Army, who at the time was receiving large numbers of Polish Veterans and civilians from Italy and Africa. This is how Czyz came to see his father for the first time since 1939. His father had been fighting with the Polish II Corps in Italy since his release from Russian captivity.

Leaving his father in England, Czyz immigrated to the United States in 1951. He met and married his wife Diane in Utica, New York in 1953. Diane's travel to the United States from her native Poland had been via Russian labor camps and Polish civilian shelters in East Africa. In 1952 they settle in Buffalo, New York and raise three sons, Bohdan, Witold and Robert.

In 1984, Czyz opened the Polish Armed Forces Exhibit on the decommissioned light cruiser, USS Little Rock, in the Buffalo Naval and Serviceman's Park in Buffalo, New York. The exhibit was developed to honor the part played by Polish soldiers, sailors, and aviators in World War II. Czyz had been it's main curator since its inception in 1984 until his death in April of 2000.

In addition to working for the Ford Motor Company for 34 years, Czyz also attained the rank of Colonel in the New York State Guard before retiring in 1991.

Veterans Home Page

Polands Contribution in WWII

Monument in honor of Polish Veterans of WWII at the Buffalo Naval Park.
 Local organizations SPK Post No. 33 and Polish Army Veterans Association Post No. 1 (SWAP).

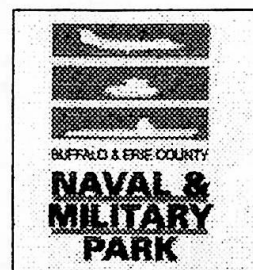
Image Gallery - Click here to view pictures from local veterans in the Czyz family.

Czyz Family Genealogy - A military history and ancestry.

1st Polish Armoured Division

Commanding General [Stanislaw Maczek](#) and Poland from Wikipedia.

Orders, Decorations and Medals from the Republic of Poland, UK and USA that Waldemar Czyz received while with the First

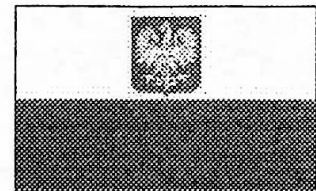
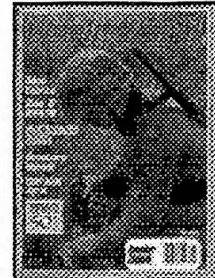
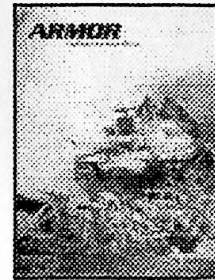


Buffalo & Erie County Naval & Military Park
 From opening ceremonies of the Polish Armed Forces Exhibit aboard the USS Little Rock.

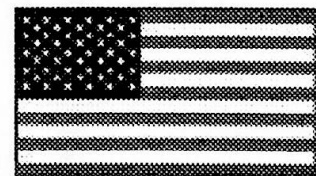


Polish Armor Division.

- Order of the Polonia Restituta (for bravery)
- Cross of Valor (on battlefield)
- Cross of Merit Gold (for equal rights)
- Cross of Merit Silver
- Cross of Merit Bronze
- Polish Army Active Service Medal (+2 oak leaves)
- Cross of September Campaign 1939
- Polish Armed Forces in the West Military Action Cross (Falaise Chambois campaign)
- Medal for Participation in the War of Defence (of fatherland)
- 1Dyn Panc (First Armoured Division)
- KDP
- SWAP
- Medal Komisj Edukacji Narodowej
- The 1939-1945 Star
- The Africa Star
- The France and Germany Star
- Defence Medal (UK)
- War Medal (UK)
- Normandy Campaign Medal

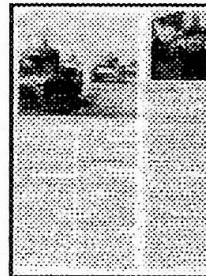
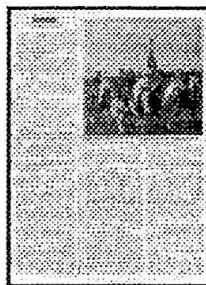
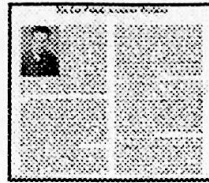


"Czesc Ich Pamieci"

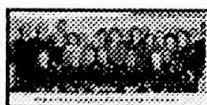
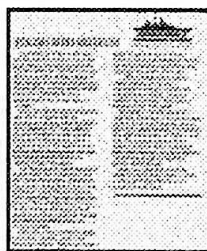


August 19th-25th has been proclaimed "Polish Soldiers Week" in Buffalo, New York.

Historic accounts and some articles written by Waldemar Czyz and published in popular magazines, Armor and World War II:



Articles published in local newspapers, **Buffalo & Erie County Naval & Military Park**, the **Hamburg Sun**, the **Buffalo News**, and **Ampol Eagle**. Czyz was Citizen of the Year for Organizations in 1984:



Letters from prominent Americans Jack Kemp, Ed Rutkowski, and former

presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush:

