

JÓZEF STOPA, Breda

Józef Stopa was born on February 16, 1910, in Pogwizdów near Rzeszów, the son of Katarzyna and Walenty Stopa. In 1922, the family moved to the Byszów colony. In 1931, Józef Stopa married for the first time, to the widow Marianna, and moved with her to Rzeszowice.

When Germany and the Soviet Union divided Poland, the most tragic period of deportation of Poles deep into Soviet Russia began. In February 1940, the Stopa family was deported along with other families to the Arkhangelsk Oblast, where they arrived after a grueling 2,500 km journey by freight train.

After Hitler declared war on the USSR on June 22, 1941, the Soviets began negotiations with the Allies and the Poles. As a result, in July 1941, the Sikorski-Mayski Pact was signed. An amnesty for Poles was then declared in the Soviet Union. Poles regained their freedom and moved to the area where the Polish Army was being formed under the command of General Władysław Andersa 🇵🇱.

The Stopa family also left Reczka and headed south in 1941. Józef Stopa lost his wife and daughters during this difficult and long journey, covering over 5,000 km. After reaching Uzbekistan, Józef Stopa placed his son Stanisław in a military orphanage and joined the Polish Armed Forces in the USSR.

Józef Stopa began his service in the Polish Armed Forces on February 10, 1942. He traveled by ship with the 7th Infantry Division to Iran, where he guarded the oil fields. During the reorganization of the Polish Army in the Middle East, Józef Stopa was assigned to the Polish Armed Forces in Great Britain. He arrived there on September 6, 1942. A week later, he was transferred to the 1st Anti-Tank Artillery Regiment of the 1st Armored Division.

He participated in the entire combat history of the 1st Polish Armored Division under the command of Stanisław Maczek, serving with the 1st Anti-Tank Artillery Regiment; from the Normandy landings, through the liberation of France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, including Breda, to the surrender of the German port of Wilhelmshaven. He then participated, as a corporal, in the occupation of the German secessionist zone until its demobilization on December 9, 1946.

After the war, Józef Stopa lived in Breda and on September 27, 1945, married Dutchwoman Hendrika Adriana Teunissen in Bentheim Nordhorn, Germany. They had six children. Józef worked as a grinder in a factory producing coal stoves and ovens, and later gas cookers. He was a social

activist, sensitive to the plight of displaced persons and refugees. For two years, he cared for a family of refugees from Hungary after the 1956 uprising. He sang in the Polish community choir and sent his children to a Polish school on Saturdays.

He found his family in Poland through the Polish Red Cross. He first visited his family in Poland after the war, and later with his family. From then on, Józef visited his family in Poland almost every two years and supported them financially. His son, Adrian Stopa Co-founder and first president of the Association of the 1st Polish Armored Division Netherlands.

Currently, Consul for Foreign Affairs and Embassies representing the Association of the 1st Polish Armored Division Netherlands He decided to return to Poland ❤️.

Mr. Józef Stopa died on July 4, 1978, and was buried in Breda at the Zuylen Cemetery.