

Record of Aleksander Pietrzak's death in a training accident August 1945

Operation: Training
Date: 2nd August 1945 (Thursday)
Time: 11.15 hrs
Unit: No. 309 Squadron (Polish)
Type: Mustang III
Serial: FX876
Code: WC-0
Base: RAF Andrews Field, Essex
Location: Oaksfield, Goulds Farm, Rayne, / Andrews Field, Essex.

**Pilot: W/O. Aleksander Pietrzak CV 2 Bars. VM 783147 PAF Age 28.
Killed**

Aleksander Pietrzak ð Polish fighter pilot ð V1 ÓAceŃ ð husband ð father ð the starting point for Aircrew Remembered. Additional details can be found at the end of the page. We welcome any new information/photographs.

REASON FOR LOSS:

This pilot originally served with 302, 309 and 316 Polish Squadrons carrying out escort duties and diver patrols against the incoming V1 flying bombs.

This is the brief account of a Polish fighter pilot who served with the Royal Air Force during WWII. Prior to this he had served in the Polish Air force escaping via Romania to join the fight in France. We have no details of this period. Although in 2010 we were contacted by a French family who had taken him in. They sent some remarkable photographs that we have never seen. After the fall of France he escaped (again we have no details of this) to England when in January 1943 Sgt Pietrzak started his retraining flying Tiger Moths and Spitfires at 58 OTU (Operational Training Unit) at Grangemouth, Scotland. Following this he then joined 302 Squadron.

On the 27th September 1943 he transferred to 316 Polish Squadron and flew on operations from February 1943 - March 1944 and took part in the defensive operations against the German V1 flying bombs. Joined 309 Squadron in February 1945.

Aleksander Pietrzak's total flying time as pilot by day was 784 hours, of which 246 hours were in Mustang fighters. He became senior NCO pilot of the Squadron stationed at Andrews Field and was highly thought of by his Squadron Commander. He had distinguished himself

beyond the call of duty in the defence of this country during the V1 rocket attacks of 1944. He survived the air battles of World War II only to tragically lose his life in a flying accident on the 2nd August 1945 at Andrews Field.

Whilst serving with 302 and 316 Squadron Aleksander Pietrzak carried out fighter escort duties protecting Allied bomber sorties to Germany.

On two occasions Sgt Pietrzak was involved in combats with defending Messerschmitt Bf109 / FW190 fighters:

11th September 1943 - Weather: Cloudy and ground mist - wind S/S.S/W - Visibility 1.000-1500 yds. Cloud 5 to 8/10ths at 15.000 ft. 14 aircraft airborne at 16.00 hrs Ramrod S.216 Pt. 1 Escort cover to 21 Mitchell bombers bombing at Rouen. Sgt. Pietrzak damaged FW190 near Rouen at 17.10 hrs. Squadron landed at

September 27th 1943 - Weather Fair - Wind 10/15 mph - visibility 2.000 yes. Cloud 4/10ths. 09.35 hrs take-off - 12 aircraft acting as top cover for 1st fighter sweep with 72 Marauder bombers to St. Valary and area - Ramrod 250. Sgt. Pietrzak shot down FW190 at 11.00 hrs 10 miles West of Le Treport. Several landed at 11.35 hrs - others landed at various airfields due to shortage of fuel at 16.30 hrs.

14th October 1944 - Whilst with 316 squadron shot down a Bf109 10 miles north west Duisburg at 08.40 hrs.

18th October 1944 - 316 Squadron shot down a Bf109F shared with Karnkowski 10 miles north east Aalborg 12.05 hrs.

18th October 1944 - 316 Squadron shot down a Bf109F 10 miles north east Aalborg 12.05 hrs.

23rd February 1945 - Whilst with 309 Squadron damaged a Me262 in the Ruhr area 15.52 hrs.

23rd March 1945 - 309 Squadron damaged a Me262 10 miles south Dummer Lake 15.52 hrs

Shortly after Aleksander Pietrzak, now promoted to Warrant Officer, was transferred to No. 309 Polish Squadron stationed at Andrews Field (Great Saling) Essex

No. 309 Squadron 1945

1st August 1945

P-51 Mustang III with the serial No. FX 876 to workshop to undergo routine minor inspection. The airframe was built North American Aviation Inc., its total flying time was 307 hours. All modifications affecting airworthiness except No.691 had been embodied. The engine was built by the Packard Motor Car Company, No. V 324217, total running time was 664 hours. Both airframe and engine

had been properly maintained and serviced, both had been certified fit for flight at 08.45 hours on August 2nd.

2nd August 1945

At 10.15 hours Mustang FX 876 took off on its first flight since the inspection was completed. It should be noted that the aircraft was not test flown.

The pilot W/O. Pietrzak had been briefed to take part in a Squadron formation exercise which was to be followed by dive bombing practice. FX 876 was one of the first pair in the formation to leave the ground. The other member of this pair was the Squadron Commander.

Almost as soon as the two aircraft were airborne W/O. Pietrzak overtook his leader and a few seconds later called him on the R/T. (radio transmitter) to state that his rudder control had jammed and that he could not use starboard rudder but he could still apply port rudder.

The Squadron Commander immediately ordered him to return and land and W/O. Pietrzak thereupon turned away and disappeared.

Some four minutes later, after the rest of the Squadron had formed up with the leader and W/O. Pietrzak's original place in the formation had been filled, FX 876 reappeared and W/O. Pietrzak requested permission to re-join, stating that his aircraft was now serviceable.

This permission was granted. Various squadron formation manoeuvres were then carried out for a period of forty minutes, during which FX876 appeared to fly normally. Dive bombing practice then began from a height of about 12,000 feet.

The Squadron formed line astern with W/O. Pietrzak as number 7. Each aircraft in turn pulled up into a stalled turn to the left and entered its dive, the instructions to each pilot being that recovery should be effected at 5,000 ft. FX876 entered its dive in exactly the same way as had those aircraft ahead of it but instead of pulling out at 5,000 ft its dive was seen by the pilot of number 8 aircraft which was close behind, to become suddenly steeper until it reached an angle over the vertical. Number 8 realised that something was amiss endeavoured to follow FX876 in order to keep it under observation.

The pilot of number 8 stated that when FX876 started to dive over the vertical he also noticed that it was side-slipping to the left and he declared that he had great difficulty in following it. He stated that he then saw it carry out an aileron turn one and a half

times round and the pulled out of its dive inverted at an altitude well under 100 feet. The pilot of number 8 lost sight of it at this point because his own airspeed was over 500 mph.

I.A.S. and his height was only around 3,000 ft. He therefore had his attention fully occupied in recovering normal flight, which he did by using his tail trim after unsuccessfully trying to ease back the stick. He then caught sight of FX876 again. It was still inverted and climbing. Although he himself was still travelling at very high speed FX876 overtook him, nosed over into a dive which continued to the ground.

It subsequently transpired that W/O. Pietrzak had fallen out of his aircraft whilst it was inverted and travelling at tremendous speed across Andrews Field aerodrome at a height of only about 20 ft. He had undoubtedly been thrown from the cockpit under high negative 'G'.

The fact that no pieces of the cockpit hood were found away from the main wreckage suggested that the hood was open when the pilot was ejected, W/O. Pietrzak was killed instantly.

Examination at the scene of the accident at Gould Farm, Rayne, Essex showed that the aircraft had struck the ground whilst diving vertically at very high speed. The force of the impact and subsequent fire which broke out reduced the wreckage to such a condition that no technical evidence was obtainable from it, except that it was possible to state that there had been no structural failure of any major component in flight.

The engine had penetrated the ground to a depth of about 12 ft and had been smashed by the force of impact into three main portions.

There were indications that it had been running at high speed when the aircraft hit the ground.

Burial details:

W/O. Aleksander Pietrzak CV 2 Bars. VM. Bury Lane Cemetery, Epping, Essex. Row Z. Grave 11. Wife of 'Binky' Josephine Pietrzak (née Duffield), father of Stefan Pietrzak of Hounslow, Middlesex, England. The funeral of Aleksander Pietrzak was held at 3.00 pm on Tuesday, 7th August at Epping Cemetery. The car provided by the RAF for his wife to take her to the funeral was late - they arrived after the service!