

FO Vaclav Jelinek 61918 RAFVR
Za chrabrost před nepřítelem (Czech
Gallantry Medal), Polish Krzyż Walecznych
(Cross of Valour).

Vaclav was born on 13 December 1915 in Svaté Pole, Příbram, Czechoslovakia. Educated locally, in 1936 Vaclav enrolled in the Czechoslovak Air Force Academy at Prostějov for his obligatory two year National Military Service. On completion of that service, he returned to civilian life and was employed as a clerk.

On 8 August 1939, after the Germans occupied Czechoslovakia, Václav escaped over the border to Poland and reported for duty at the Czechoslovak Consulate in Krakow the following day. He joined the Polish military on 28 August and, after the German invasion of Poland on 1 September, fought with valour during the short-lived Polish campaign. In the closing stages of that campaign, with Germany invading from the West and the Soviets from the East, Václav and many of the defeated Polish tried to escape to the south, from Poland into Romania, but they were captured and imprisoned by the Soviets. Following negotiations, the Czechoslovaks were released from Soviet imprisonment and were able to make their way to India.



On 17 September 1940 he sailed from Bombay on the S.S. Narkunda bound for Liverpool, arriving on 27 October. Václav was accepted into the RAFVR and trained as a navigator before he was posted in March 1941 to 311 (Czechoslovak) Squadron based at RAF Honington, Suffolk.

For his service in Poland with the Polish Air Force in 1939, Václav was awarded the Polish Krzyż Walecznych (Cross of Valour). This was presented to him on 23 July 1941 at RAF East Wretham, Norfolk by Polish General Stanislaw Ujejski. In November 1941, he was awarded the Czechoslovak, Za chrabrost před nepřítelem, Gallantry Medal.

On 23rd January 1942 Vaclav, in a crew of six airmen, was posted from 311 Sqn to 138 Sqn at RAF Stradishall, Suffolk.

At 00:06 on 10 March 1942 Vaclav, operating as the Navigator, and the crew departed RAF Stradishall in Whitley V Z9125 (NF-A) on Operation Frensham I, which was a supply drop to the French resistance.

The aircraft failed to gain height and crashed at the end of the runway. Rescuers managed to save the rear gunner before the aircraft exploded, killing the rest of the crew.

Also killed : Sqn Ldr Boris Romanoff MiD (Pilot); Sgt Ladislav Fornůsek (WOp/AG); Sgt Jan Janek (Pilot); Sgt Maximilian Politzer (Observer)

Vaclav is buried in Haverhill Cemetery, Suffolk

Vaclav is commemorated on Wall Panel 189

Photo Source : Suffolk FHS