

Giants of Science

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Stanisław Wojciech Rogalski

Stanisław Wojciech Rogalski (born 25 May 1904, died 6 February 1976). A graduate of the Adam Mickiewicz Gymnasium in Warsaw, he joined the army after abandoning his studies at Warsaw Polytechnic (which he eventually completed in 1929) and graduated from the Pilot Training School in Bydgoszcz in 1925. During his activity in the Aviation Section of the Mechanic Students' Club at the Polytechnic, he developed, together with Stanisław Wigura, a prototype of a two-seater sports plane. After Jerzy Drzewiecki joined the team in 1927, another design was developed – this time it was a high-wing cantilever monoplane, called RWD-1. After 1933, and establishing the Experimental Aviation Works at Okęcie, as many as 25 versions of the RWD were developed (a trainer aircraft plus a mail airplane, a tourist airplane and military airplane, called Czapla [heron]).

The RWD-6 plane, flown by Polish pilots, was stunningly successful in a number of different competitions: In 1932, Franciszek Żwirko and Stanisław Wigura won the third International Tourist Plane Competition, and two years later Jerzy Bajan and Gustaw Pokrzywka followed suit. Stanisław Skarżyński crossed the Atlantic in an RWD-5 in 1933. In total, over one thousand airplanes were produced before the war broke out. Many of them, as well as the licenses to produce them, were sold overseas.

After the outbreak of the war, Rogalski, together with project documentation, fled to France through Romania and then on to England. In 1941, he found himself in Turkey where he managed a design office. In 1948, he moved to the US, where he became involved in the aviation industry, pursuing at the same his academic career (for instance, at Princeton University). He contributed to the construction of the United States Air Force's General Dynamics F-111 supersonic swept-wing fighter and attack aircraft and was appointed consultant



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to NASA in the construction of the lunar rover wheeled vehicle used during three of NASA's explorations of the surface of the Moon.

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