



## Kazimierz Edmund Skrzypczak Spak, M.D. PH.D.

November 8, 1925 - March 3, 2012

Kazimierz (“Kazik”) Edmund Skrzypczak Spak, MD, PhD, passed away peacefully at home with his loving family on March 3, 2012. He was born in Poznan, Poland, November 8, 1925. He was the third of four children of Józef Skrzypczak and Kazimiera Bednarska Skrzypczak. His father died in May, 17, 1930, from a massive heart attack. Despite this tragedy he had a happy childhood and demonstrated tremendous intellectual talents at an early age. He completed his primary education in Poznan and began high school in the autumn of 1938 at the prestigious German-Polish boarding school known as the Berger Gymnasium, which had been founded in the 19th century under the German Empire, and where he had begun comprehensive coursework in both Polish and German. This promising education was suddenly halted after the invasion of Poland by Nazi Germany on September 1, 1939. Within those first few weeks the Nazis closed all schools and banned the use of Polish language.

On a cold autumn night the Nazi soldiers surrounded the school and ordered all the boys to come out their dormitories. Kazik knew this was not going to turn out well and slipped out the window. The students were then forced to build a bonfire of their school books in the main courtyard. As the books burned, the students were then machine gunned in cold blood by the Nazi soldiers. The fourteen year old Kazik was now on his own with nothing and needed to find his way back to his mother in Poznan. He made his way to Szadek, an ancestral village about 200 kilometers from Poznan , where his

family had some property and managed to fend for himself, gathering food and assisting others with bartering for goods and services. He witnessed terrible atrocities during those first few months. Thanks to his wits and the Grace of God, he escaped the Nazis, but he was far away from his mother and family and had to use his creative mind and language talent to return back to Poznan. After several weeks he had gathered enough money and, posing as a German teenager, illegally returned back to Poznan with a cache of banned Polish textbooks. Penalty for possession of such contraband under the Nazi regime was death.

Over the next 5 years he continued in the underground resistance in Poznan against the Nazi oppression. He taught himself his highschool curriculum at night and was forced to work 12 hours a day at several German firms. He first did menial labor but his talents were quickly recognized, and in 1943 he was put to work as a draftsman at the firm "Waldemar Heinrichs, Architekt". Here he made important contributions to the Polish Underground Resistance, as he passed information on Nazi construction projects to the Allies. His proudest achievement was passing building plans for the notorious camp at Auschwitz which led to a prison break of several hundred Polish prisoners. In the waning months of the war he saw military action with his brothers as the Red Army besieged Poznan. Total war surrounded him on all sides, and he slept those last months of the war on the ruined streets of his hometown without food or shelter. He survived thanks to the teamwork with his two brothers and in his own words "the continued Grace of God".

By March 1945 the Germans had withdrawn from Poznan, and he matriculated at the University of Poznan to study medicine. Conditions were obviously chaotic. Students did not have any kind of proof of education. He was granted admission on the spot by passing an oral examination on Latin Grammar, which he had taught himself. While in medical school he and his classmates not only learned to become medical doctors but also worked to rebuild the school itself. They secured textbooks in German, Russian, French, and English. They even had to find their own cadavers from the remains on

the battlefield of their ruined hometown.

In May 1946 he was arrested by the newly established Communist regime as an anti-government agitator. His life was again in jeopardy and he was in prison for several weeks. The secret police were unable to get him to sign any kind of confession, and he was released.

Dr. Kazimierz Edmund Skrzypczak finished his general medical education in 1951. He continued his specialty studies in ophthalmology at the Eye Clinic of the Academy of Medicine and was awarded his specialization in 1955. As a newly trained expert in ophthalmology, he volunteered with the Polish Red Cross to participate in a medical mission to North Korea and worked as the only ophthalmologist for one million persons in the rural town of Hamhung. He spent over a year in the area, and then he had to journey on the Transsiberian railroad across the Soviet Union and was an eyewitness to the harsh and bleak reality of Communism on his return to Europe.

He returned to Poland in 1957. After a bout of malaria and amebic dysentery, he returned to his clinical duties but was drafted into the Polish People's Army and appointed as head of the Department of Ophthalmology at the Military District Hospital in the Silesian city of Wroclaw. He continued his research activities under the mentorship of Dr. Witold J. Kapuscinski, and received his doctorate (Ph.D.) in ocular pharmacology on June 27, 1962, the thesis title of his research being "Wplyw alfa-chymotrypsyny na wysciólke sródblonkowa przedniej komory oka" ("The influence of alpha-chymotrypsin on endothelial lining of the anterior eye chamber"). He had a productive career during this time training additional physicians, serving as an expert witness in legal matters involving ophthalmology, and publishing 45 papers in Polish, German, Hungarian, Czech, French and English. In addition he presented at scientific meetings in Germany, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia.

The political reality of the dead end of Communism was evident despite his productive career in medicine. The situation in neighboring Czechoslovakia and its "Prague Spring" was uncertain and dangerous. Newly married to Lucja

Czupajllo on August 25, 1967, he and his wife had decided to start a new life in a place away from the oppression of Communism. In September 1967, he had made the decision to defect from Poland to the West. Thanks to his previous academic contacts he received an invitation to become Deputy Chief of Ophthalmology at the ocular clinic of Växjö, a smaller city on the coast of Sweden. After 2 years in Sweden, he received an invitation to the United States. He was recruited by Dr. Louis Girard at Baylor College of Medicine. He came to Texas and started his life as the American Dream. He had \$2000 in his suit pocket and his wife and one year old daughter, Zofia. He recognized the difficulty of his name with the consonants and shortened his last name to "Spak" (SkryzPczAK). He studied for the medical boards and was awarded his Texas state medical license in 1970. He became clinical faculty at the Department of Ophthalmology at Baylor College of Medicine. He settled in Bellaire, Texas.

After three years at Baylor he relocated to private practice at Spring Branch Medical Center in Houston. He established a productive career as a community ophthalmologist for almost thirty years. He cared for thousands of patients and enjoyed clinical practice until he retired in 2002. Afterwards he relocated to Galveston, Texas, where he was able to continue as a medical consultant and also contribute parttime clinical duties in a variety of circumstances.

He is survived by his wife of 45 years, Lucia (Lucja) S. Spak, his three children, Witold Skrypczak, Zofia Spak, and Cedric W. Spak, and his eight grandchildren, Isabella Skrzypczak and Adam Skryzpczak, Nicolas, Angelica and Philip Havard, and John Paul, Joseph, and Eva Spak.

Catholic Funeral Mass will take place at 1pm on Tuesday, March 6, 2012, at Sacred Heart Catholic Church , 1302 Broadway, Galveston, Texas. In lieu of flowers please make donations to Galveston Island Tree Conservancy; checks may be sent to Galveston Island Tree Conservancy, PO Box 2123, Galveston, Texas 77553, in memory of Kazimierz Edmund Spak, and a tree will be planted in his honor. When contributing on the Conservancy website please

email [treesforgalveston@yahoo.com](mailto:treesforgalveston@yahoo.com) and let them know the donation is in memory of K. Edmund Spak M.D.

# Previous Events

## Funeral Mass

MAR 6. 1:00 PM (CT)

Sacred Heart Catholic Church  
1302 Broadway  
Galveston, TX 77550

# Tribute Wall



“ Kazimierz Edmund Skrzypczak Spak, M.D. PH.D.

October 08, 2023 at 10:52 AM



“ Kazimierz Edmund Skrzypczak Spak, M.D. PH.D.

October 06, 2023 at 01:12 AM



“ Kazimierz Edmund Skrzypczak Spak, M.D. PH.D.

October 05, 2023 at 09:45 AM



“ Kazimierz Edmund Skrzypczak Spak, M.D. PH.D.

October 05, 2023 at 01:54 AM



“ 1 file added to the album New Album Name



cedric spak - March 17, 2012 at 10:19 AM

MM

“ I am sorry to read of your loss. Many have lost loved ones and want see them again. The Bible actually speaks of how you may see your loved one again. It's at John 5:28,29, which says, "Do not marvel at this, because the hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who did good things to a resurrection of life, those who practiced vile things to a resurrection of judgment." So through the resurrection hope, you can see your loved again. May this be of encouragement to you.

Mike M. - March 15, 2012 at 12:05 PM

ZS

“ 5 files added to the album New Album Name



Zofia Spak - March 08, 2012 at 01:48 PM

PS

“ I am sorry for your loss Dr Spak. Your family and you are in my thoughts and prayers. Take care



Poonam Sharma - March 07, 2012 at 12:31 PM

RC

“ *I am sorry, Cedric, and I will pause and think of you and your beautiful family in solidarity and observance of your loss. Be well.*



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**Roberto de la Cruz** - March 07, 2012 at 09:09 AM

SL

“ *I pray that may God give you and family strength and courage to endure this loss.*

*Shamim Lalani*

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**Shamim Lalani** - March 06, 2012 at 08:40 PM

CQ

“ *Our thoughts and prayers will be with you.*  
*Carolyn and Wim*



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**Carolyn Quan** - March 06, 2012 at 07:19 PM



“ *Anna Rosinska lit a candle in memory of Kazimierz Edmund Skrzypczak Spak, M.D. PH.D.*



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**Anna Rosinska** - March 06, 2012 at 07:07 PM

KM

“ *Kathy Miller lit a candle in memory of Kazimierz Edmund Skrzypczak Spak, M.D. PH.D.*



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**Kathy Miller** - March 06, 2012 at 03:19 PM

RH

“ *Renee' Herndon lit a candle in memory of Kazimierz Edmund Skrzypczak Spak, M.D. PH.D.*



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**Renee' Herndon** - March 06, 2012 at 03:19 PM

AP

“ *Allen Peden lit a candle in memory of Kazimierz Edmund Skrzypczak Spak, M.D. PH.D.*



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**Allen Peden** - March 06, 2012 at 01:23 PM

MW

“ *I'm very sorry to hear of your loss. I've never had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Spak but my experience working for his son, the man he raised, leaves no doubt that he himself was a great man. May the peace of God be with you all in your time of sorrow. Your family will be in my prayers.*

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**Michelle Winters** - March 06, 2012 at 10:31 AM

AS

“ *Kasek will be greatly missed. He was part of our lives. Lucia, Zofia and Cedric, our thoughts and love are with you today. With love from Anna and Alexander*

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**Anna Soroko** - March 06, 2012 at 10:19 AM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Kazimierz Edmund Skrzypczak Spak, M.D. PH.D..*



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March 05, 2012 at 10:32 PM

CC

“ *Zofia, I am so sorry for your loss. I remember moving to Houston and working at Spring Branch Medical Center. I was looking for a good ophthalmologist and everyone told me your dad was the best, and he was. You and your family are in my prayers.*

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**Christa Clifton** - March 05, 2012 at 09:38 AM