



John S. Zielinski

John Stanley Zielinski

John S. Zielinski (aka John S. Selinski) was born on or about November 18, 1899, in Babica in the Kingdom of Poland, which at that time was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. At the age of 25, his mother, Apolonia Zielinska emigrated from Poland departing from Antwerp, Belgium on a ship named *Finland*, arriving in the United States on March 26, 1906. According to Ellis Island records, she was accompanied by Marcin Pasternak (age 34 years) who was a relative from Babica, and they were traveling to relatives Michal and Jan Pokrywka in Elizabeth, New Jersey. Her little son John did not accompany her, and it is not clear when he arrived in the United States to join his Mother.

John eventually re-united with his Mother and they lived in the small town of Powell, Bradford County, Pennsylvania. By then, Apolonia had married Joseph Kosiba, who became John's stepfather. It is believed that at some point John worked in nearby mines. At age 17, according to his *Enlistment Record*, John joined the United States Army at Fort Slocum, New York, on February 11, 1915. (Family report that, in reality, he was only 14-15 years old at the time, and was "tall for his age," and was thus accepted. The name recorded on his enlistment paper was "Selinski" which he continued to use throughout his military service.)

John was initially assigned to the 27th Infantry Regiment of the United States Army. During WWI John served with the American 2nd Division in France where he was gassed and injured. According to a family story, John was captured by the Germans and in an exchange of prisoners (that was common at that time) he was returned by the Germans "because they liked him as he was good at playing pinochle!"

According to his original *Enlistment Record*, he was sent to Siberia as part of the American Expeditionary Forces (A.E.F.) arriving with the first contingent on August 16, 1918; he re-enlisted in July 1919 for an additional year with the A.E.F. serving in the 44th Infantry from March to July 1920. He received an Honorable Discharge in July 1920. John later described his A.E.F. experiences in Siberia in two accounts *When a Girl's Tears Saved a Town* (published in the *Buffalo Sunday Times*) and *Warm Hearts in a Frozen Land* (1931).

His children remember that he participated in the infamous protest, the *Bonus March*, on Washington on July 28, 1932, when over 40,000 veterans sought the promised additional compensation for their service in WWI.



Elizabeth Migdal

He may have suffered from shell shock (now referred to as post-traumatic stress disorder), perhaps due to his combat experiences during six years of service and a possible head wound. He was hospitalized briefly in the 1940s at the Veterans Hospital in Tupper Lake, New York.

In 1923, he married Polish-born Elizabeth Migdal, and went on to raise a family of eight children. All five of their sons served in the United States military, and his three daughters became registered nurses.

He and Elizabeth briefly ran a tavern on Hertel Avenue in the Black Rock section of Buffalo, New York in the 1930s, and then John was a salesman for All-Refrigerated Fixtures, Inc. during the 1940s. John became a naturalized citizen on November 5, 1926, and remained a staunch patriot until his untimely death in 1946.



John Zielinski in his 27th Infantry dress uniform