

Gifts from Min-Hi-Go

By Kim K. Hopkins Griesemer

Members of the Journalism Club of Mingo High School published school newsletters that included military service letters during World War II. They were sent to Mingo High alumnae serving in the armed forces around the world and were treasured, read and re-read, and sometimes passed along to other servicemen and women who had never even visited Mingo Junction. Wrote P.F.C. Alton Killgo,

While walking up the road into positions on the front lines, one rainy night, I noticed a white envelope in front of me. I picked it up, and when morning came, I again looked at the envelope, but for secrecy purposes the address was cut out. I read the paper and found it to be one of the most interesting High School papers I have ever read. . . . I would gladly subscribe for your paper if you would only allow me. Just name your price and I will gladly pay.

It hasn't been too long ago since I graduated from a High School in Texas. My school has no such paper. I can see now that such a paper would have been a great improvement in my school. . . .

Min-Hi-Go Index Copy, p. 136

Like Private Killgo, as I indexed the newsletters, I was drawn into the stories of young people I had never met. Just as an epistolary novel reveals a story through a sequence of letters, the Min-Hi-Go newsletters enveloped me in time, gradually and delicately unfolding what it felt like to be a teen in Mingo Junction, Ohio during the war.

In order to share that wonderful experience, following are just a few selections from the Min-Hi-Go, supplemented by additional information from various internet sites. With all my heart, I thank the staff and advisors of Min-Hi-Go. They unintentionally created a treasure.

Technical Sergeant Andrew Bezak

Bulletins!

LONDON-Saturday, Feb. 27—Back from the giant American bomber raid on Wilhelmshaven, Germany, Gunner Sergeant Michael Rufkovich of Fayette City, Pa., disclosed last night that he passed up a two-day leave and a date in London to take part in the attack. Gunner on another bomber, the "Miss Swoose," was Staff Sergeant Andrew Bezak of Mingo Junction, Ohio.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, February 27, 1943

<http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1129&dat=19430227&id=IMMwAAAAIBAJ&sjid=A2oDAAAAIBAJ&pg=5324,1332170>

"We were all relieved when we heard that Kite Carmony and Bob Cornelius and their gang had landed on foreign soil, and maybe you think we weren't proud to read that Paul Kendrach took part in the Sanandana raid and that Andy Bezak had been decorated. I don't know what for, but I'll bet old Andy is still keeping his mouth shut and his eyes open.

Excerpt from letter written by M.O.P., Min-Hi-Go, March 12, 1943, p. 9, Index Copy p. 33

Missing Air Crew Reports, WWII

Report on Capture of Members of Enemy Air Forces

Post: Receiving Detachment
Place: Halle/Seale
Date: 26 November 1944 0700 a.m.
Regarding: Crash: (downed) of Boeing B 17, 25 November 1944, 1231 a.m.
EM landing: at Meuschau, 1 km northeast Merseburg
Name (Last or Surname): Bezak
First Name: Andrew
Serial Number (USA) 15069851
Result: (dead or captured) found dead
Place and time of capture: place of crash
Name of Hospital:
Place, Date and time of Interment: Will be reported later
Funeral will be arranged by Town Mayor of Meuschau

<http://www.fold3.com/image/28724095/>

World War II and Korean Conflict Veterans Interred Overseas

Name: Andrew Bezak
Inducted from: Ohio
Rank: Technical Sergeant
Combat Organization: 708th Bomber Squadron 447th Bomber
Death Date: 2 Nov 1944
Monument: Ardennes, France

Last Known Status: Buried

U.S. Awards: Purple Heart Medal
Air Medal
Distinguished Flying Cross
Additional Army Awards

<http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?rank=1&new=1&MSAV=0&msT=1&gss=angs-c&gsfn=Andrew&gsln=Bezak&mwpn ftp=Mingo+Juncction%2c+Jefferson%2c+Ohio&uidh=zp6&pcat=39&h=10932&recoff=9+10+30&db=ww2korint&indiv=1>

First Lieutenant Paul Kendrach

Graduates Obtain Commissions

Graduates of Mingo High who have received commission in the armed forces are listed.

. . . Lieutenant Paul Kendrach. . .

Min-Hi-Go, December 4, 1942, p. 5, Index Copy p. 23

Four Graduates Earn Wings

Lt. Paul Kendrach, Henry Becker Jr., Frank Derenberg and Dan Di Thomas, who are graduates of Mingo High School and are in the Army Air Corp, were the first to receive their wings.

The first of these to receive his wings was Lt. Kendrach in 1941 and he is now serving on foreign soil.

In June, 1942, Lt. Becker received his wings and a few months later met with accidental death, the first casualty to happen to any Mingo boy in the Armed Forces.

Lt. Derenberg, who recently received his wings, met with a slight accident and is in the hospital suffering with a broken jaw.

Lt. Di Thomas just received his wings Monday morning, January 4, 1943 at La Junta Army Flying School along with the class of '43-A.

Min-Hi- Go, January 15, 1943, p.6, Index Copy p. 25

Dear Teacher,

. . . Joe Schiffman is in the company that I am attached to, and we are together all of the time. Joe is well and getting along fine. He told me that when I wrote to you to be sure I said "hello" for him, so "hello" for Joe. I also see Wayne Loyer, Mike Maty and Nick Slivka, but not very often. They are also well and getting along fine. I haven't seen Paul Kendrach since the day I left home for the army. Wherever he is, I hope he is well and getting along fine. It sure would be fun to bump into Paul over here. I sure would love to go for a ride in a plane with him as a pilot. . . .

Corp. T. John Vargo
Med. Det. 145th Infantry
A.P.O. 37 % Postmaster
San Francisco, California

Min-Hi-Go, February 25, 1943, p. 9, Index Copy p. 30

Lieut. Kendrach "Missing in Action"

First Lieutenant Paul Kendrach, more commonly known as "Ack," a graduate of Mingo High, and one of the first four letter men, was reported missing while patrolling the coast of New Guinea.

"Ack" was the pilot of a Liberator bomber. He received his diploma in 1936 and went into the air forces in 1939. He was graduated from Kelly Field Texas in 1941 and went into active service immediately.

He has been stationed in New Guinea about five months.

Min-Hi-Go, March 26, 1943, pp. 1, 4, Index Copy pp. 35, 37

Dear Mr. Hertzog,

. . . In this strange and New War-Torn-Africa there are ever so many different things one comes into contact with. I have been here close to five months and cannot find enough words to describe the strange things I have seen. The only way Africa could really and fully be described is to see it and be here. The sun is burning hot during the day, at nights the air is freezing cold. It seems as though, when the sun goes down the earth opens up its pores and lets out the cold and dampness.

I can imagine the time you are having with your plays, the sports and everything that has to do with school. This War has taken many of the people away from home, but this time it will be the last war.

Over here we are getting more and more "Kraut-Heads" and "Wops". Soon it will be that the whole Africa will be rid of every "Kraut-Head" or "Wop" that ever set foot on its soil.

With men like my cousin and closest buddie Paul Kendrach on the South Pacific you can rest assuredly- because there will not be many "Slit-Eyes" left to talk about. . . .

Yours,
Pfc John Beresick
Hq., Co 751st Tank Bn (M)
A.P.O. 302
New York, NY

Min-Hi-Go, May 14, 1943, p. 1, Index Copy p. 47

Paul Kendrach was born in Mingo Junction, Jefferson, OH, USA 3 JAN 1918. Paul died 12 MAR 1943 in Mt. Murray area, Owen Stanley Range, New Guinea, at 25 years of age.⁽¹¹⁰⁹⁾ Paul served in the USAAF in various locations, 7 DEC 1942 - 12 MAR 1943. He was attached to 89th Bomb Squadron, 3rd Bomb Group at Kila Drome near Port Moresby, New Guinea during World War II. The aircraft he piloted was an A-20A, serial #40-089, named the "Flying Ginny." When returning to Kila Drome after completing a mission against Salamaua, the "Flying Ginny" was last seen entering a cloud in the Mt. Murray area, Owen Stanley Range, New Guinea. When the flight leader looked back, he could not see Paul's plane. It was feared the plane went down in the mountains, but no remains of him or the plane were ever found. He was declared Missing In Action on March 12, 1943.

<http://www.3rdattackgroup.org/>

Our Service Flag

As this great world conflict draws near to its ultimate goal, Victory, we look toward our service flag and find there are 480 Mingo Alumnae in the Service. We also find that the single gold star represents fourteen that have payed [sic] the supreme sacrifice.

Seaman Joseph DiBeradino, P.F.C. Paul Di Beradino, Lt. Paul Kendrach, Ensign Harry Becker, Lt. Wm. Lohman, Cpl. Michael Bosak, Cpl. Elmer Kushner, Lt. Danny DiThomas, Pvt. John Takach, Lt. Robert

Molnar, Sgt. Bob Nicolls, P.F.C. Howard Hayes, P.F.C. Louis Varney and Robert McCall, have given their lives for their country.

Sgt. Harry Parlette, Sgt. Wm. Freiling, and Lt. Fred Derenberg are missing in action. . . .

Min-Hi-Go, October 6, 1944, p. 6, Index Copy p. 97

Lieutenant Frank Derenberg

Last moments of fighter plane attack recalled

July 17, 2012

Weirton Daily Times

Richard Cook of Naples, Fla., shares a story about the final moments of the San Antonio Rose, a B-17F 42-3462 (ET-B) World War II Flying Fortress destroyed by German fighter planes on Feb. 21, 1944.

It is dedicated to the memory of its co-pilot and his cousin, 2nd Lt. Frank W. Derenberg, with his name on a headstone in New Alexandria Cemetery, near Mingo Junction.



The story is primarily told through the eyes and words of an eyewitness on the ground near Zegveld, Holland, and through a letter to Derenberg's mother, Jessie, and was written by Sgt. Barclay W. Glover, one of two survivors of the 10-man crew. Blown free of the aircraft when it exploded in mid-air, he parachuted into the hands of the Germans and was a Prisoner of War until the end of the war.

"I never knew my cousin, as I was 18-months-old when he died, but I recall my father recounting a story about his last visit to our house before he shipped overseas. Dad would sadly tell how Frankie asked to borrow his new electric shaver. My only other recollection of him is going to a cemetery near Mingo Junction in the mid-1950s and standing before a grave marker bearing my cousin's name with a pair of wings," Cook said.

"The eyewitness account, as seen from the ground, is made known in a letter to a friend on Feb. 26, 1944, four days after the crash. I believe it was translated into English," he said.

The account follows:

"We saw the Flying Fortress coming from the East. It was flying rather low, so I watched through my binoculars. It appeared that two of the four engines weren't running, one left and one right, so the aircraft was flying pretty slow and probably couldn't keep altitude anymore. It wasn't flying higher than 600 or 700 meters above us, it was noted.

"All of a sudden we saw eight or nine German fighters, ME-109F. They came straight in, circled a bit, perhaps waiting for instructions from their commander, and one by one fired a burst at the tail, then dove down. It was just as a few years ago over the North Sea Canal on that Monday morning," the Dutch writer explained.

"It struck me that the bomber returned fire with one gun only, while it can fire to the rear with at least three or four guns. I suspected some of the crew were either wounded or already dead. But I wasn't certain of that," he said.

It was pointed out in the letter that the Germans didn't have much success with their one-by-one-method and apparently found this out-for suddenly some six fighters started flying around the bomber and attacked at the same time from different angles. Then the wing of the Boeing was set afire but it went out again.

There was another attack and this one was definitely more successful for in an instant the aircraft rolled over to the right, dove nose down and started to burn as its tail broke off. It came down some three to four kilometers away.

Two men bailed out and came down onto the ground. One had injured his wrist pretty badly but was treated right away. It must have hurt a lot, for he didn't laugh much. In contrast, the other one was grinning and waving to bystanders when the Germans took him prisoner. Some of the boys around got chewing gum and cigarettes from them.

Six men were killed or were already dead.

At least one parachutist said they had been under attack for quite some time by the fighters and one was shot down by the pilot himself. Because of those attacks some of the crew got killed or wounded.

"Never before have I witnessed an air battle so well from the beginning to the end," the Dutch man said.

"My aunt and uncle were devastated when they were told their son was listed as missing in action. They knew very little about the circumstances of his death until receiving the following letter from Sgt. Barclay Glover, one of the crew members. It was written sometime after the close of the war and is undated," Cook said.

Here is the letter:

Dear Mrs. Derenberg,

I received your most welcome letter and also a form from the Army as to the status quo of the rest of my crew. I am forwarding all information I know that concerns them to you.

We were bombing Brunswick (Braunschweig, Germany) and one engine was shot out by flak. Lt. Marks, the pilot, and your son the co-pilot, gave orders to prepare to bail out. I was in the right waist and only connected to them by radio phone so I couldn't see what happened in front. (There was a rough drawing of the plane and crew positions included.)

We still had our bomb load and the pilot asked if we wanted to drop the bombs or bail out. The crew said to go ahead and drop and that they would stick.

The bombs were dropped and in trying to get back to our base, we were attacked at various times by enemy fighters. To the best of my knowledge we flew alone for an hour and 40 minutes.

We shot down five planes and while over Holland, we flew over a fighter base. They sent up flak and destroyed the left wing and tail of the plane while we were up about 12,000 feet. We continued to fly but were dropping down lower. Twelve fighters came after us and we tried to keep them off. The last I remember was being hit and my gun was blown out of the plane.

I saw that the left waist gunner and ball turret were dead and I tried to get up and get to the radio phone. As I did, I felt a wave of heat and a violent heave and I was in the air. I dropped quite a ways until I pulled my chute and then I saw the plane all in flames. Planes circled around me until I landed. I ran toward the plane but it was on fire.

Lt. George Amberg, first officer, was thrown clear. I dragged him away, only to learn he was dead. I couldn't get near the plane and was bleeding very badly. Then I saw Tech Sgt. Chuck Barnsthnson coming toward me. We carried Amberg to a woods but were picked up by Germans.

To the best of my knowledge, I believe the rest were consumed by the flames, although I do not like to say this. It seems cruel but I believe in the truth. I know your grief must be great but he was a brave boy and one of the best. If there is anything I can do to help in any way, please advise me. When I am discharged, I shall make an effort to visit you, the letter concluded.

American heroes on the San Antonio Rose on her last mission were:

2nd Lt. Morris Marks, pilot, Lake Park, Iowa; 2nd Lt. Frank W. Derenberg, co-pilot, North Braddock, Pa.; 2nd Lt. Delmar Decker, navigator, Montgomery, Pa.; Lt. George Amberg, Bronx, N.Y.; Tech Sgt. Harold Cook, Detroit; Staff Sgt. Rodney Hines, Columbus; Staff Sgt. Larry Cuyler, Mount Clemens, Mich.; and Staff Sgt. Arden Miner, Provo, Utah; all killed in action. Tech Sgt. Charles Barnthson, Troy, N.Y.; and Sgt. Barclay Glover, Philadelphia, were taken as prisoners of war.

"A government website of World War II casualties shows my cousin Derenberg as FOD rather than KIA. FOD is military jargon for Finding of Death, a term that indicated he was declared dead but his body was not recovered. To the best of my knowledge, the last survivor died in 2004," according to Cook.

"My brother says my cousin's remains were located in the plane wreckage in the North Sea sometime in the early 1950s. He believes the Germans dumped the wreckage in the sea as it crashed very near the coast. He also thinks the remains are interred in the New Alexandria Cemetery. I'm not so sure," Cook said.

"I must acknowledge my brother, Dr. Palmer Cook's assistance in contributing to this article and thank the kind souls who shared their information on the Web," he said.

<http://weirtondailytimes.com/page/content.detail/id/585248/Last-moments-of-fighter-plane-attack-recalled.html?nav=5006>

