



Related story of the Sachtleben Crew 607 Crash

We accidently stumbled upon this account while surfing the web. Within a website for "The Delaware Valley Rhythm & Blues Society, Inc" are pages devoted to honoring the war dead of Camden County, New Jersey. There we found a story of two firefighters who were killed while trying to control the blaze of the Sachtleben Crew 607 crash. We present an edited portion of their story here.

Firefighter Ted Bunalski

Private Ted R. Bunalski was born on September 5, 1921. He had lived with his mother at 711 Birch Street in Camden NJ. He graduated from Woodrow Wilson High School in Camden NJ, where he was a star football player, and participated other sports and school activities. After graduating from high school he took a job at the New York Shipbuilding Corporation shipyard in Camden. Ted Bunalski was inducted into the Army on April 6, 1943.

After basic training, Private Bunalski was assigned to the 2033rd Engineers Fire Fighting Platoon, which was attached to the 44th Bomber Group. Crossing the ocean on HMS Queen Mary, his unit served at the aerodrome near Shipdham, England.

The 2033rd Engineers Fire Fighting Platoon was responsible for extinguishing fires that occurred when planes crashed. This was very hazardous work, due to the bombs, ammunition, and fuel on the aircraft. The British government furnished the platoon with what one platoon member described as "an antiquated fire truck that had a large tank of water and foam to fight plane fires. Most fields in England had a small pond... and we were able to suck water out of these ponds to fight planes fires off the airdrome with our available equipment." The aircraft engines also had magnesium in them which was impossible to put out once ignited. The engines would have to be separated from the burning aircraft and be allowed to burn themselves out.

On the evening of June 4, 1944, a B-24 Liberator bomber of the 856th Bomber Squadron, 492nd Bomber Group, piloted by Second Lieutenant Raymond J. Sachtleben crashed into an unoccupied house at approximately 5:30 PM local time at Hardingham, near Garveston, Norfolk, England killing all ten men in the crew.

Private Bunalski and Sergeant Monroe A. Atchley of Anderson, Indiana were eating dinner when they heard men yelling that a plane had crashed. They left their meals, ran out on the road, and jumped on the first truck going to the fire. Joined by other members of the platoon, led by Staff Sergeant Charles Provenzano, upon arrival at the crash site they immediately went to the burning plane and proceeded to extinguish the flames, disregarding the danger of bombs and a gas tank which was burning and full of gasoline.

The plane was loaded with Model 201b fragmentation bombs, and while the fire was being combated, a bomb exploded. Sergeant Atchley was killed instantly. Private Bunalski received multiple shrapnel wounds, and a severe wound to the left side of his neck, which caused him to bleed to death. With shells firing and bombs exploding, medics attempted to get to the wounded men, but were too late. The other members of the platoon continued to attempt to fight the fire until ordered away from the crash.

Private Bunalski and Sgt Atchley were posthumously awarded the Soldiers medal for heroism. Staff Sergeant Provenzano was awarded the Bronze Star along with four other members of the 2033rd Fire Fighting Platoon, Sergeant Antonio M. Suplizio, and Privates First Class Anton Bauo, Michael Lazarowicz, and John J. Schrack.

Ted Bunalski was buried on June 5, 1944 at the Cambridge American Military Cemetery in England. In 1948 his body was returned to the United States, and he was buried on July 22nd of that year at the Beverly National Cemetery in Beverly NJ.

Ted Bunalski was survived by his mother, and four sisters.

More to the story

John Hey, a research historian in Holland, informed us Bunalski and Atchley were buried side by side at the Cambridge American Cemetery. Bunalski was buried in plot G-3-16 and Atchley was laid in plot G-3-17. After the war, both bodies were sent back to the US. The above story accurately says Bunalski was buried in New Jersey but didn't mention Atchley, who was buried in his native state of Kentucky (town unknown).

Sources / credits:

• www.dvrbs.com, Camden County, New Jersey

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