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## WWII airman's remains to be buried with honors

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JOHNSTOWN — A former resident will be buried with full military honors today in Arlington National Cemetery – more than 65 years after his plane was shot down in the Pacific.

Second Lt. Frank J. Arhar grew up in Beaverdale and enlisted in the Army Air Force during World War II. His younger brother, Ernest, enlisted as well.

Arhar was a navigator on a B-24 Liberator, fighting the Japanese in the skies over the Palau archipelago when his plane was shot down.

The date was Sept. 1, 1944, two days before his 22nd birthday.

The 11 servicemen on board were declared missing in action and their families were notified.

Theresa Arhar Krasovic, now of Loraine Borough, recalled the day she heard the news that the older brother she looked up to was missing.

“I worked in the office at a coal mine,” she said. “They called me before my mother knew about it.”

Krasovic recalled leaving work and going to the home of an aunt and uncle who lived near the office.

“She had me kneel down and pray,” she said.

Krasovic said the tragedy haunted her parents the rest of their lives.

“My mother was never the same,” she said.

“The Legion had a service for the missing in action at the time and they had the mothers on the



Theresa Arhar Krasovic (center) looks at documents and photos regarding the search for her late brother. With her are her sons, J.D. (left) and Frank Jr. (right).  
Randy Griffith



Second Lt. Frank J. Arhar  
Randy Griffith

stage.

“My mother just looked like a ghost.”

Krasovic said her mother never really talked about it.

“But we used to go to the post office every day,” she recalled. “We thought maybe we’d get some good news or something.

“They didn’t declare him dead until a year and a half after that.”

The loss of his eldest son nearly destroyed Krasovic’s father as well.

“He would go in the mine (where he worked) and he would just throw his food down,” she said. “He couldn’t eat. He felt so bad.”

Krasovic said she had long given up on anyone finding her brother’s remains. Her other brother, Ernest Arhar, had a memorial stone placed in the cemetery near their parents’ grave, but the body of their missing loved one was not there.

In 2004, Krasovic was notified that her brother’s plane had been found.

“They were looking in the wrong place,” she said. “That’s why they couldn’t find it.”

The plane was located by a group known as The BentProp Project based in California.

The organization developed after a group of friends, historians and scuba divers found a Japanese ship that was sunk in the Pacific by President George H.W. Bush. The group positively identified the ship and the munitions on board – ending rumors that the former president sank an unarmed ship.

“Dr. Pat Scannon (team leader) became very intrigued with aircraft debris that none of the locals could tell him anything about, and that started him on his quest,” said Dan O’Brien, a member of the team.

BentProp volunteers spend a month each year looking for missing planes. Countless hours also are spent in research and talking with locals who may have been witnesses.

They have identified about 30 U.S. aircraft in waters around the Palau islands, 10 of which were associated with MIAs.

O’Brien estimated that the group has aided in the recovery of the remains of nearly two dozen missing servicemen.

After a wreck has been found and identified, BentProp turns the investigation over to the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), a division of the Department of Defense.

JPAC is charged with recovering the remains and returning them to the states.

O’Brien said it took his group 10 years to find Arhar’s plane.

After the case was turned over JPAC, workers contacted Krasovic and visited Johnstown to collect her DNA.

When Krasovic learned her brother's remains were found she could not believe it.

"After 60 years," she mused. "It was like a shock, cause you never thought you would ever hear."

Although Ernest Arhar and other members of the family will be in Washington for the burial today, health issues will keep Krasovic from making the trip.

But she will be there in spirit.

"It means a lot to us," she said. "To at least know that they found him and he'll be buried and we can have peace."

O'Brien said bringing some form of closure to the families of MIAs is what keeps The BentProp Project going.

"We love doing something that matters," he said.

Krasovic is grateful to the organization.

"I think what they do is great," she said.

"Some of them used their own money. Isn't that something?"

For more information on The BentProp Project, go to [www.bentprop.org](http://www.bentprop.org).

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