

by Lynne Belluscio

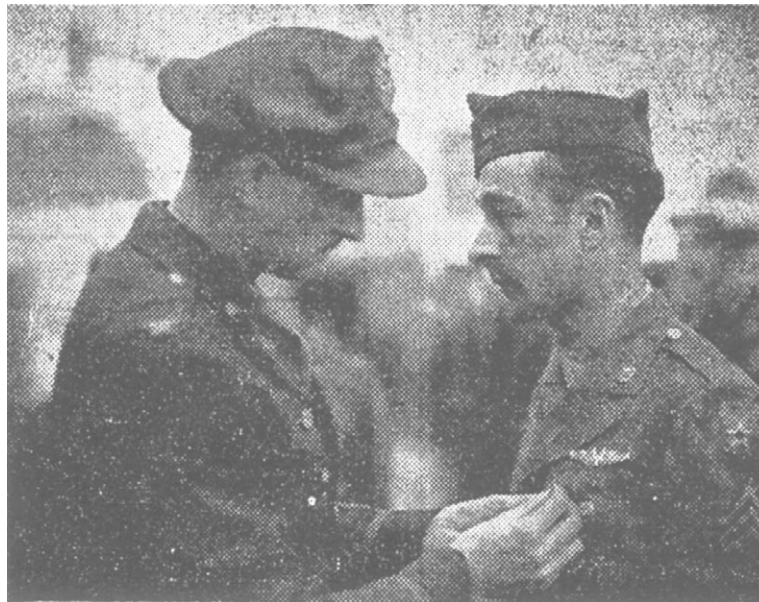
Marlene McMahon called last week to tell me that her father, Joe Beswick had died. Anyone that knew Joe, will remember a quiet, unassuming man, who was a true hero in so many ways.

I met Joe back in 1996 and he told me a little about his experiences in World War II. He never once mentioned that he had been awarded the Presidential Citation as a member of the 405th Fighter Group and later, while he was attached to the 483rd Bomb Group of the 817th Bombing Squadron he was awarded the Air Medal for his extensive service in the Italian Theater of operations.

Before the end of the war, Joe had flown 35 combat missions over Europe and was awarded the Third Oak Leaf Cluster to his Air Medal for "meritorious achievement" in aerial flight as engineer and top turret gunner aboard his B-17 Fling Fortress. (I was talking with a friend of Joe today and he remarked that it was remarkable that Joe survived all those missions. Many turret gunners didn't return.)

Joe had put together a scrap book which he shared with me and with his permission I printed part of it in the *LeRoy Historical Society Newsletter*. Here are some excerpts: "In the summer of 1942 I was working at the Jell-O Company, the third shift from 10 pm until 6 am. It was only part time so I worked at Walt Heim's gas station when I was not at the Jell-O. One day while working at the gas station, things were slow and it gave me time to think about the war and about all the young fellows leaving for service. I made up my mind then that I was going to enlist. That night I told my mother what I was going to do. She got very upset and said why don't you wait until they draft you like the rest of the fellows are doing. That night she told my youngest brother Francis what I was going to do and the next day he came down to the gas station to see me and asked if it would be OK if he enlisted with me. I knew it was going to be rough on our mother because our father had died only two years

LE ROY RECEIVES AIR MEDAL



Le Roy, April 14.—Staff Sergeant Joseph Beswick of Le Roy, who is attached to the 483d Bomb Group of the 817th Bombing Squadron of the United States Army Air Forces in Italy, was recently awarded the Air Medal. Sergeant Beswick has seen extensive service in the Italian theater of operations. He is a son of Mrs. Mary Beswick of No. 116 Myrtle street, Le Roy.

before and my older brother, Bill, was classed 1 A and was being drafted shortly, so that meant in the space of two years she had lost a husband and three sons were going into the service and she would be left alone.

Francis and I both enlisted in the Air Corps and my brother Bill wound up in the medical part of the Air Corps so we all ended up in the same branch of the service ... One mission we were on, we got a puncture right wing gas tank and the gas ran down the inside of the wing and into the bomb bay. It was so strong you could taste it, even with the oxygen mask on. The pilot called and gave the order to unplug all the heated suits and not to use the intercom unless it was absolutely necessary. We were like a flying bomb — one spark could have set it off. We made it back OK but I think it was the longest return trip I ever made .

Erik our ball turret gunner was flying waist gunner position. It was the right waist gunner's job to throw out winrow. It was like tinfoil you put on a Christmas tree. It was thrown out when we were on the bomb run and it was supposed to interfere with the German's radar on their flak guns. As Erik would empty a box, I

would hand him a full one which was stacked closer to me. As I handed Erik a full one, a chunk of flak came in through the plane and hit Erik in the right shoulder. I will never forget that moment, it must have been about 40 degrees below zero ... I knew Erik's electrically heated suit was out of commission because the wires had been broken by the flak.

I gave Erik a shot of morphine and put the sulfa powder on the wound. Then I took off my

heated suit and wrapped it around him the best I could to keep him warm. The wound was in such a place that you could not put a tourniquet on it and stop the bleeding. I was afraid he was going into shock. Erik remained conscious and I took care of him the best I could until we got him to the hospital in Foggia. ... I guess there was an angel sitting on my shoulder that day because I was only about 10 inches from Erik and I never got touched.

After my 29th mission I began to think I had only six more missions to go. I thought maybe I am going to make it after all ... in ten days I flew my last six missions.

One day after my discharge, I went to Jell-O to see a friend who worked there. When I was walking in, I met Ellsworth Bradbury on the loading dock. He stopped me, shook my hand and said, "We want to thank you boys for all you did for us over there. I will never forget Mr. Bradbury and the lady on the dock. They were the only ones outside my family and close friends that ever said thanks and welcome home."



GRATITUDE

The loved ones of

Robert E. Brightenfield

want to express their gratitude to the many friends and family who offered condolences on the passing of our Robert.

Thanks go especially to Patrick Reeves of the Genesee County Sheriff's Department who responded to the call, to Father DiGiullo for performing the mortuary service and to the staff at Pizza Pantry for a fantastic dinner.

Your sympathies are much appreciated.

Thank you. Pat, Mary and Bud.