

GEORGE FIKES FATHER.
GEORGE WAS HOWARDS CO-PILOT

February 20, 1947

Dear Folks:

The past three years have been a series of heartaches to a great many people and to us, especially, who have had the trials of waiting in vain for a word of hope and then finding the inevitable had taken place.

The word "presumed dead" which we received after nineteen months of waiting, concerning our son, George, was not enough and we did not accept it as such. We knew from some of the boys, who had returned, and also from several letters we had received from Belgian people, that the boys had been hiding in a woods near Chimay, Belgium, and that they had been captured April 22, 1944, by the Germans.

Although the government had photostats of the letters we received and the information from the boys that returned, apparently nothing had been done about it.

We invoked the aid of our Senator James Mead, who asked for a complete investigation as to the death of our son. The investigation was finally finished and the findings were returned to the War Crimes Department in Washington, D. C., in a complete report.

My wife's uncle, Roy DeLano, made it possible for us to read this report. He has been a wonderful help and has used his influence with the War Department to get us most of our information concerning both of our boys. My wife and I went to Washington and read the report in the files of the War Crimes Headquarters, in the Pentagon Building, about three weeks ago.

The investigation on George brought to light what happened to the seven other boys as they were all together hiding in the woods at St. Remy, Chimay, Belgium.

My wife and I believed it only fair to write now and let you know exactly what happened according to the complete report. The report consisted of thirty-three typewritten pages of testimonies with a summary of what took place. The testimonies were taken from some of the Belgians, who had helped the boys and from some Belgian collaborationists, who are being held by the Belgians for their part in the crime.

The story goes as follows:

On the morning of April 22, 1944, a secret raid was made on the hideout of eight American fliers, who were hiding in the woods at

There were nine different organizations participating in the raid including one organization of Russians, under German leadership. A Belgian traitor had notified the German Gestapo and a Belgian collaborationist organization that the boys were in the woods. About 1,500 men participated in the raid.

The eight fliers were living in a hut that belonged to a Belgian farmer, who was helping the boys by sending them food and clothing. This farmer's son and another Belgian stayed in the camp with the boys the night of the 21st and, of course, were captured with the boys.

A Civil Engineer, Fernand Dalporte, a Belgian leader of the Underground for that particular district, had called on the boys the eve of the 21st and had given them some money as they were planning to escape--two at a time.

The boys had just finished breakfast when they were captured. It was about 8:00 A.M.

The boys were taken to the second floor of a school house in Chimay and were stripped of all their identification. When the boys were captured, they all had their dog tags and were in civilian clothes with the exception of our son, George, who had on his Army pants, Army shirt and Air Corps leather jacket and Benninger, who had on Army pants and Air Corps shirt. The boys were questioned two or three hours in the school house.

About 2.30 P.M. of the same day (April 22, 1944) the boys were put in a truck guarded by Germans and taken back to a section of the woods where they were ordered to line up single file at the edge of the woods. Two Germans with pistols were behind each boy. The boys were ordered to march into the woods with the Germans behind them. After they had gone about 500 feet in the woods, each boy was ordered to take a separate direction, the two Germans still behind each boy. At a predetermined signal, the Germans shot each of the boys through the back three or four times and then left them dead in the woods.

Sometime later, the Germans buried the seven boys in a common grave on an air strip near the town of Gosselies, Belgium. George was buried in an unmarked grave in a cemetery near Gosselies. The bodies of the boys were later removed by the Americans and are all reburied in the U. S. Military Cemetery at Margraten, Holland.

One of the men, who did the shooting of one of the boys in the woods has been captured and several of the Belgian collaborationists have been captured. They have been turned over to the Belgium government. Their fate has not yet been determined in Washington, but as soon as the War Crimes Headquarters has any new findings, they will let me know.

The boys had written their names and addresses in their own handwriting and they are as follows:

George W. Eike	0748164	2813 Elmwood Ave., Rochester, N. Y.
Robert Benninger	0685369	1135 Woodbourne Ave., Pittsburgh, Pa.
Billy Huisch	0730196	1009 5th St., Douglas, Arizona
John Gamborski	36608853	1250 N. Maplewood St., Chicago, Ill.
Orian G. Owens	37426819	Lisbon, Iowa
John Pindroch	15329492	3236 Saymore Ave., Cleveland, Ohio
Vincent J. Reese	33468736	2812 Gaul St., Philadelphia, Pa.
Charles A. Nichols	39082264	2070 E. Market St., Stockton, Calif.

I am sending this letter to all of the boys' next of kin as I feel that they want to know, as we did, what actually happened.

As you know, we lost both of our boys in the war. Our son, Richard, was pilot of a fortress and was shot down near Aachen, September 28, 1944, and was killed when the plane exploded.

Knowing the facts does not help the deep sorrow that has come to all of us, but it does help to know that they did not suffer long and the mental agony they might have had was of short duration.

We pray that they did not die in vain and that generations to come will never forget their great sacrifice.

We would like to hear from you and would be glad to help you any way that is possible.

Sincerely yours,

Elmwood W Eike

2813 Elmwood Ave.
Rochester, N. Y.

EIKE, BENNINGER &
PINDROCH WERE IN
MY CREW.
H.S.