

# Navy Airman Paul Edward Hart

From Janice Bolinger  
The Wall That Heals

The name of Paul Edward Hart is not on The Wall. However, he gave service to his country, lost his life during Vietnam, and is being remembered.

Navy Airman Paul Edward Hart was born in Somerset, Ky., on June 28, 1948. His parents were Fred and Mamie Duff Hart. Moving to the Paragon area while young, Airman Hart graduated from Martinsville High School with the Class of 1966. Following graduation, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy, taking basic training at Great Lakes Naval Training Center and then at San Diego before being sent to Hawaii. After time in Hawaii, he was based in Okinawa.

Hart was part of a patrol squadron VP-6 that was origi-

nally established as Bombing Squadron VP-146 in 1943.

On Jan. 1, 1968, the squadron, known as the Blue Sharks, was deployed to WestPac based at NAF Naha, Okinawa, with detachments also in the Philippines and Cam Ranh Bay, South Vietnam. During the deployment, VP-6 conducted the first patrols over a combat zone since the Korean War.

On April 5, 1968, Hart's squadron aircraft, a Lockheed P-3A-35-LO Orion, BuNo 151350, crashed on patrol over the China Sea with 12 aboard. It has been reported that the aircraft was searching for submarines and the pilot came too close to the surface of the sea causing the plane to go down.

Eight crewmembers were lost including Hart, Comet, Stolz, Leach, McHale, Norris, Poplin and Fitzpatrick. LC D.R. Jones, Lt. J.G. Jones, Petty Officers Lewis and Pavlov survived. November 1972 marked the last deployment for VP-6 in the Vietnamese theater of operations.

Hart was posthumously promoted to ADJ3 (Aviation Machinist's Mate, Petty Officer 3rd Class). His memorial is located at Mannan Cemetery.

Family members of Navy Airman Paul Hart are requested to contact The Wall That Heals, Morgan County Committee member Janice Bolinger at [dlbjeb@comcast.net](mailto:dlbjeb@comcast.net) or 765-349-9862. The committee hopes to make

## 'More Than a Name on a Wall'

Twelve young men from Morgan County gave their lives during the Vietnam War. The names of 11 are listed on The Wall at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

As *The Wall That Heals* will be on display in Morgan County Aug. 15-18, memorial tributes will be printed about each of the 12 so that their service and sacrifice will be remembered. To all the citizens of this community, each one is "More Than A Name On A Wall."

(The title for this article must be credited to a song written by Jimmy Fortune in tribute to those whose names are listed on The Wall.)

contact with family members of all young men who sacrificed during the Vietnam War.



## July 1944: World War II at 80

### Air Missions in France & Burma

By Ronald P. May  
MCC Contributor

Operation Overlord brought the Allied forces to France on D-Day, June 6.

But it was only the start of their campaign to liberate France and defeat Germany.

Punching through the hedgerows of Normandy proved a difficult undertaking as German forces were well hidden and put up stiff resistance.

It took four weeks after the landing to finally break through the cumbersome dense shrubbery mounds that intersected the landscape and formed natural fence lines across the Normandy farmland.

The U.S. 1st Army progressed as far south as the city of St. Lo when German Panzer divisions brought a halt to their advance.

That is when Lt. Gen. Omar Bradley, field commander of American soldiers in Normandy, conceived the idea of using a massive air strike to pummel the German forces.

### Operation Cobra, Normandy

Code named *Operation Cobra*, the plan designated 550 Allied fighter-bombers and 2,000 B-17s to drop their massive bombs on the German forces and Panzer tanks along a 4-mile stretch of road outside of St. Lo.

It was a tricky operation.

U.S. 1st Army infantrymen were located just to the north of the target area, close to the Germans' position, standing by to attack the Germans following the aerial assault.

On July 25, 1944, the 2,550 aircraft, mostly from the U.S. Eighth Air Force, flew from England and began the massive bombardment on the German position.

The bombs did indeed decimate the German Panzer divisions.

But the carnage from the 5,000 tons of dropped bombs tragically drifted over to the U.S. side, prompting a frantic and terrifying effort to find cover from the deadly explosions.

When the aerial campaign ended, 111 American soldiers were dead and almost 500 were wounded.

Indiana native combat correspondent, Ernie Pyle was on hand to witness the terrifying spectacle from a barnyard about 800 yards from the 1st Army's frontline position.

He wrote of it in one his articles to readers back home.

*"From then on for an hour and a half that had in it the agony of centuries, the bombs came down. A wall of smoke and dust erected by them grew high in the sky. ... Then we were horrified by the suspicion that those machines, high in the sky and completely detached from us, were aiming their bombs at the smoke-line on the ground — and a gentle breeze was drifting the smoke-line back over us!"*

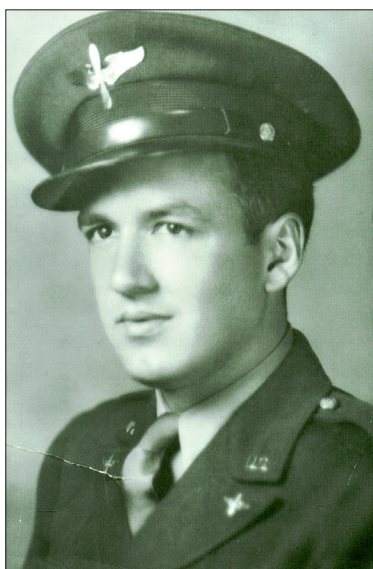
### A local recollection

Martinsville native Verle Maxwell would have been in one of those B-17 bombers during Operation Cobra if he hadn't already almost lost his life in a mission five months earlier.

Maxwell, a B-17 tail gunner in the 8th Air Force, was hit in the chest by flak on Feb. 25,



Verle Maxwell service photo (Courtesy photo)



Jerry Morehead service photo (Courtesy photo)

1944, while flying just his third mission over Germany.

He remembered getting shot. Some of his crew came over to his compartment to drag him to the radio room.

The cold temperature from the high elevation helped to slow his bleeding and keep him alive.

Someone gave him a shot of morphine to help with the pain.

When the bomber safely returned to England hours later, Maxwell was transported to the American Station Hospital.

He spent the next four months in the station hospital, having several surgeries and being treated for the wounds in his shoulder and chest.

Maxwell returned to the U.S. in June 1944 and spent the next two years in hospitals recovering from his wounds.

### Medical evacuations in Burma

While Allied bombers were pummeling German forces in Normandy, much smaller planes were conducting medical evacuations over the jungles of Burma.

Jerry Morehead, a Mooresville resident, piloted one of those planes.

The small planes were ideal for evacuations because of their capacity to land almost anywhere — roads, sand bars, level ground, sand, and even rice paddies.

"My job was to fly the specially fitted Piper Cubs (small planes) to pick up wounded and injured soldiers along the Burma Road and in the jungle fighting areas," he recalled.

The Piper Cubs were small but could transport up to 11 injured soldiers.

After picking up the injured men, Morehead and other pilots transported them to the surgical Army units in Myitkyina, Burma, where more than 100 operations were performed each day by Army surgeons.



B-17s drop their bomb loads near St. Lo in Operation Cobra. (Public domain photo)



Mooresville resident Jerry Morehead piloted a Piper Cub before breaking his back in a hard landing when he tried to avoid a midair collision. (U.S. Air Force public domain photo)

Japanese forces were located just a few miles from the surgery tent.

"You could see the Japs cooking breakfast," Morehead recalled of his view from the air.

Morehead's missions were dangerous.

He flew over enemy territory and took off and landed on tricky cleared jungle runways.

"Since we had to fly low when flying our missions, the Japanese would often shoot at us with their rifles and machine guns," Morehead recalled.

Although he was never shot down, Morehead broke his back during a landing in Missional, Burma, where he had to nose-dive to avoid colliding with another plane.

He was taken to a hospital in Ledo, India, where he spent the next two months recovering in a full-body cast.

The back pain and uncomfortable body cast were not his only challenges. Heat and humidity plagued him as well.

He recalled, "I remember it being so hot, over 100 degrees, and there was only one fan in the hospital. Luckily for me, it was beside my bed."

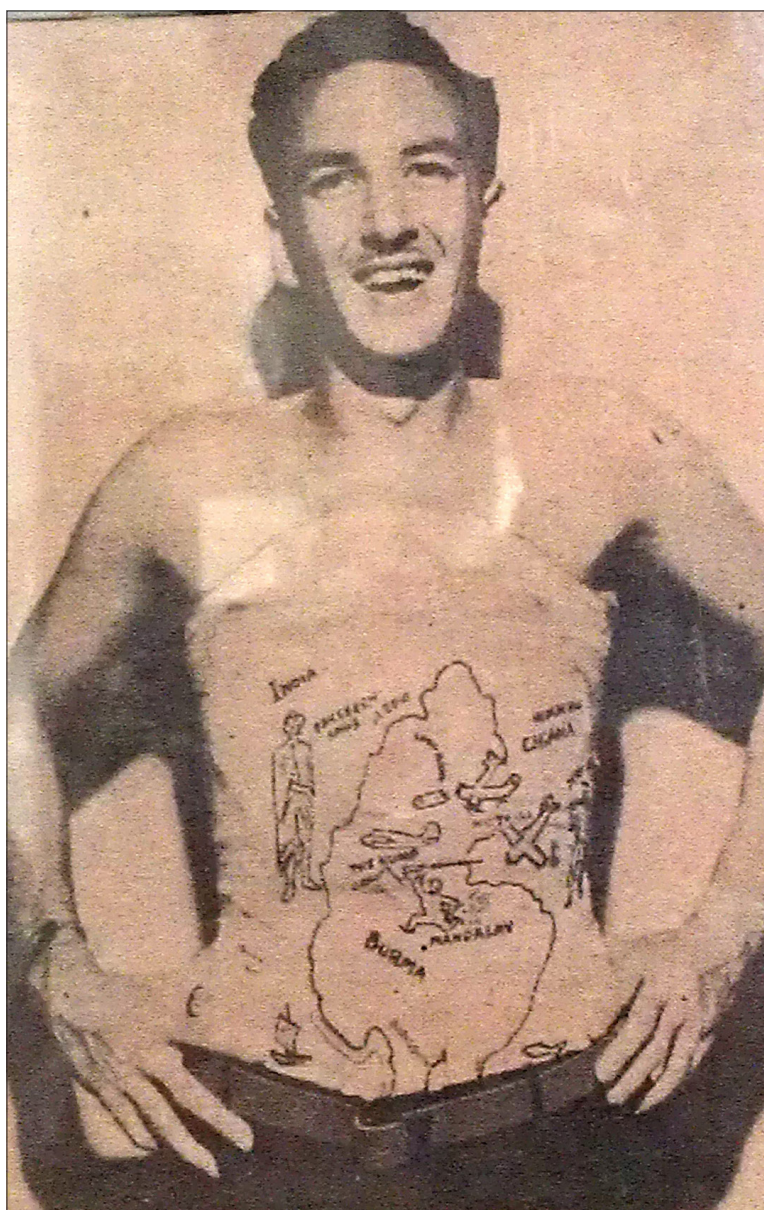
In September 1944, Morehead was sent to Billings Hospital at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana, where he completed his recovery.

Both Maxwell and Morehead lived full lives into their 90s and enjoyed the fruit of their military service as representatives of the Greatest Generation.

The stories of the two appear in the book, "Our Service Our Stories" by Ronald P. May. Maxwell died in 2015, at the age of 91. Moorehead died in 2016 at the age of 94.

Next time: August 1944

Learn more about Ronald P.



LAST ILLUSTRATES FEATS—Technical Sergeant E. Morehead, 1415 West Twenty-fifth street, new arrived from the China-India-Burma theater where served as liaison pilot. "models" the map-embel

Mooresville resident Jerry Morehead shows off his body cast, now decorated with a map of Burma. (Courtesy clipping)

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