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War Department Files

1 LT Paul U. Avritt
Class 55-43

ID: O1178691

Branch of Service: U.S. Army

Hometown: Weatherford, OK

Status: DOW 20 Sep 1944



Still in High School when he joined the National Guard. The Guard mobilized September 16, 1940 and he was assigned to the 158th Field Artillery Group, 45th Infantry Division and assigned To Panama. He returned To Fort Sill, Oklahoma, where he attended Officer Candidate School (OCS) and commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the Army. From there he went to North Africa in 1944 and assigned to combat duty. Participated in the Anzio Beachhead. He was with the 160th Field Artillery for the Rome-Arno Invasion and participated in the Southern France Invasion. One of nine pilots to fly off LST on the Southern France Invasion. He was awarded the Air Medal, Purple Heart, Silver Star, 2 European Theatre Medals with Numerous Battle Stars, American Defense Medal and The Distinguished Flying Cross. Three of these Medals were awarded posthumously to his parents at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, as he was killed in combat during WW II. He was a pilot serving with the Artillery as a Forward Observer, near Dijon, France and heading back to base when 2 Messerschmitt's got on him. To avoid leading them to the base he flew in a different direction. They fired on his plane and got a direct hit. He was able to land the crippled plane, but it was engulfed in flames. His crewman was badly injured and unable to get himself out. He pulled him out and to safety but incurred burns himself all over his body. This was on September 19, 1944. He died the next day, September 20, 1944.

Just a few weeks before, he had received National attention when he landed his plane behind German lines to rescue a grounded New Zealand pilot. He was brought home to Weatherford, Oklahoma and buried.

From Sharon Kay Andersen, Niece

SILVER STAR



(Citation Needed): Paul U. Avritt, United States Army, is reported to have been awarded the Silver Star under the below-listed General Orders for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action against the enemy while serving with the 45th Infantry Division during World War II.

General Orders: Headquarters, 45th Infantry Division, General Orders No. 246 (1944)

The Distinguished Flying Cross for action on August 30, 1944

State Mother Gets Hero Son's Medal

FORT SILL, Jan. 20.—(FAS)—The Distinguished Flying Cross, awarded posthumously to First Lieut. Paul V. Avritt, field artillery liaison pilot, was presented to his mother, Mrs. Mattie D. Avritt of Weatherford, by Maj. Gen. Ralph McT. Pennell, commandant of the field artillery school, at ceremonies Saturday evening at 6 o'clock on the post field parade ground here.

Lieutenant Avritt, a graduate of the officer candidate school and liaison pilot course at Fort Sill, was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for "extraordinary achievement" in France when he rescued a "Spitfire" pilot who had been forced down behind enemy lines.

"While participating in aerial flight on 30 August 1944, in the vicinity of —, France," the citation reads, "Lieutenant Avritt, while flying behind enemy lines, noticed that a 'Spitfire' had been hit by antiaircraft fire while strafing an enemy column, and was being forced to make a landing in an open field that was entirely controlled by the enemy.

"Lieutenant Avritt, completely ignoring all personal danger and aware that he was in enemy territory, made an emergency landing, rescued the uninjured pilot and returned him safely to the Division Artillery air strip."

Lieutenant Avritt, who subsequently died of wounds, was born January 2, 1921. He was graduated from the field artillery officer candidate school and received commission as a second lieutenant on March 11, 1943. Later he took liaison pilot training and was graduated on July 9, 1943.



*Buried in Greenwood Cemetery, Weatherford, Oklahoma
Plot A*