

RAYNHAM FALLEN HERO

SERGEANT CHARLES P. HASKINS, US ARMY AIR CORPS

Charles P. Haskins was born in Freetown in 1923. His family moved to Raynham shortly thereafter. He graduated from Taunton High School. Charles had one sister and he was not married.

Charles enlisted for the duration of the war in the United States Army Air Corps in Boston on February 10, 1943 and was assigned serial number 31296463.

Sergeant Haskins was trained as an aerial gunner on a B-24 Liberator, which was a four engine heavy bomber, flown by a crew of nine. Sergeant Haskins flew with the 754th Squadron of the 458th Bombardment Group (H). The 754th Squadron arrived in Buncher, England in December 1944. Sergeant Haskins was assigned to aircraft serial number 41-29596-R named "Hell's Angel's", which was piloted by Second Lieutenant Daniel F. Hunt, Jr.

After one month of practice missions and indoctrination into the European theater, they flew their first combat mission on January 28th, 1945 over Dortmund, Germany. Then they flew three straight missions to Magdeburg, Germany. This was followed by a mission to attack the railroad marshaling yards at Peine and Heldensheim, Germany.

Sergeant Haskins flew his last mission on February 23, 1945, which was a bombing run over the marshaling yards at Gera and Reichenbach, Germany. He was assigned as the nose gunner in the B-24, just forward of Flight Officer/Navigator Ivan Norris. During the flight to the target, his plexiglas shield had a hole knocked in it from a .50 caliber shell casing from the lead bomber's test firing of its guns. After completion of the bombing run, the plane commander allowed Sergeant Haskins to withdraw to the Navigator's small compartment to avoid freezing to death from the draft in the broken nose shield.

Upon arriving at their home airfield in England, they encountered heavy cloud cover. As the formation was making the first ten minute circle over the airfield at 16,500 feet altitude, Navigator Norris saw that another B-24 was about to collide in mid-air with the plane he was in. He yelled a warning to Sergeant Haskins to grab his parachute and prepare to bail out. Without hesitation, Sergeant Haskins opened the escape hatch. Then he reached for his parachute which was four feet away. At that moment the two heavy bombers collided. Sergeant Haskins aircraft lost a left stabilizer, while the other lost a wing. Navigator Norris and two other crew members managed to parachute safely out of the stricken aircraft and tell this story. Sergeant Haskins did not make it out. Both aircraft crashed with the loss of fifteen brave airmen.

Sergeant Haskins received the following military awards for his honorable service:

Purple Heart Medal with white cross distinguishing device to denote a posthumous award

American Campaign Medal

European African Middle Eastern Campaign Medal

World War II Victory Medal

Sergeant Haskins is buried in the Assonet Burying Ground in Assonet, Massachusetts. His headstone is located in Plot 11, Lot # 8. He was only 22 at the time of his death.

Sergeant Haskins home is believed to be in North Raynham. For this reason, it is appropriate that his FALLEN HERO sign be erected on Broadway, at the highly visible intersection with Carver Street.