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Elmira, N.Y.

A WWII thank you from Britain

Elmira native's family gets a history lesson from across the pond

HORSEHEADS — An Englishman who went to some effort to return a military book to its former owner, Elmira native Manny Panosian, wants us to know how much he and his countrymen appreciate the sacrifices made by Manny and others like him during World War II.

Brian Farrow of Sheringham, a seaside town in Norfolk, came across an old paperback book at a kind of rummage sale last May. Inside the book, "AAF: A Guide to the Army Air Force," he found a label with the name of Air Force Lt. M.N. Panosian and some notes that mentioned two fellow lieu-



ROGER NEUMANN
Roger That

tenants, Marvin Gasser and Francis Farmer.

According to a clipping from his local paper, the Eastern Daily Press, which Farrow mailed to us, he contacted a military library in his town for help in tracking down the book's former owner and went on the Internet to do a search of his own. He learned that the three officers were members of a B-24 Liberator bomber crew that flew out of a former airfield near Norfolk.

Manuel Nazar Panosian was the navigator, Gasser the pilot and Farmer the co-pilot.

Farrow found that Panosian was still alive. Then, on the Horseheads school district website, he saw a photo of him that showed Manny talking with students about the war.

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Manny Panosian was a B-24 navigator during World War II. PHOTO PROVIDED
At left, Panosian, 89, holds the book that was found in England. ROGER NEUMANN / STAFF PHOTO

Roger That

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Farrow mailed the book to Manny with a note and received a note of thanks in reply from Lucille, Manny's wife.

Farrow also sent us a note, in which he wrote: "I feel it is important for your people in the USA to understand that we here in the UK still appreciate the valiant efforts and sacrifices made by the people of the USA in the 2nd World War. I hope in some way that this newspaper cutting will bring this across to you.

"Manny was jut one of the many thousands of American servicemen active in the bombing of Germany. He was one of the lucky ones who returned home. The station at which he operated suffered huge losses. ...

"Nearly all the stations have memorials built on them to the memory of all the servicemen who served on those airfields. A few veterans still journey to visit and they are always given a well-deserved heroes' welcome."

In Elmira after the war, Manny Panosian became a successful businessman, a credit to his community and a good husband and father. He and the former Lucille Arikian, a fellow native Elmiran and his wife of 57 years now, raised five children, one of whom they lost to cancer.

Manny owned several stores, mostly selling furniture, shoes and clothing, in Elmira (on South Main Street and later in Langdon Plaza), at Arnot Mall, and in Horseheads, Corning, Sayre and Utica.

He was very active in the community over the years, from the Chamber of Commerce to the Kiwanis Club to Junior Achievement. It was his idea that became the Mark Twain Scholars program, which honors the region's top high school students.

Now 89 years old, Manny lives with Lucille at Bethany Village, the senior living complex in Horseheads.

He doesn't remember the 23 missions he flew aboard that Liberator, or the men who flew with him. And his family never heard much about them even when he had total recall.

Lucille said the letter from Brian Farrow shed more light on Manny's military career than her husband ever did.

"We never realized how dangerous it was," she said, "because he never talked about it."

So thanks, Mr. Farrow, for shedding some light on a story that an old soldier never could bring himself to tell.

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To Mrs. Eileen Panosian

Dear Eileen,

I apologise for not replying to your letter earlier, but I have found that since I retired I seem to be busier than ever, and become tired at the end of the day which is when I do my correspondence. I am always falling asleep, especially if I have spent most of the day in my vegetable garden.

I understand totally your determination to keep Manny out of the nursing home. I had similar circumstances with my wife when she was diagnosed with terminal cancer. She did not want to spend her last days, no matter how difficult, in hospital. The family all rallied around and she spent her last days at home with us. It wasn't easy but it was the correct thing to do.

Thank you for all the eulogies detailing Manny's life. It is plain to see that he was a wonderful person and one I would have enjoyed to meet. He was a man of high principals and who had values to be admired. Reading of his benevolence and service to his community it is no wonder that he received wonderful words of praise from all over America.

It is strange how I came to be in contact with yourselves. The people of Norfolk have always held the American servicemen of World War Two in high esteem. There were 16 American air bases in Norfolk County each with approximately 2000 men, that's about 30,000 men in total. They have never been forgotten and never will be. A week does not pass without a story of those days appearing in the local newspaper. A few of the veterans still return for a visit to see their old bases. When I found the book and identified it's owner it was with a sense of duty that I returned it to his family.

Whilst Manny was only one of the many thousands that served here, he arrived at the Tibenham base at a particularly difficult time in 1944. The base had just suffered on September 27th 1944 the largest loss of any base in the whole of the war. Of 36 aircraft despatched only 5 returned, each plane had 10 crew. That was 310 men lost or missing in one day. Imagine going onto a base with that history. The men that followed in those lost men's footsteps were brave, brave men. Manny's children and grandchildren should take great pride in his service.

I enclose a photograph of the memorial to the servicemen of Tibenham airbases. I also found a photograph on the Internet of Manny's aircraft . It was posted to the 2nd. Air Division Memorial Library at Norwich by Marvin Gasster's (Manny's pilot) grandson. It can be viewed online at

[2ndair.wordpress.com/exciting enquiry](http://2ndair.wordpress.com/exciting-enquiry)

Base of page -exciting enquiry follow up.

The name of the aircraft was "Marvins madhouse" . Perhaps one of your family can download it for you to see.

Once again thank you for your kindness and thoughts. There is a Norfolk saying which says "Keep on keeping well". That is my wish for you and all your family

Brian

Brian Farrow

My Granddaughter has copied the photos
for you — B



445TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)
 2ND COMBAT WING 2ND AIR DIVISION
 8TH UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
 4TH NOVEMBER 1943 TO 28TH MAY 1945

FROM THIS AIRFIELD THE 445TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP LAUNCHED
 280 MISSIONS AND FLEW 6323 SORTIES.

THIS MEMORIAL IS HUMBLY DEDICATED TO THE 445TH BOMB GROUP
 IN MEMORY OF THOSE AIRMEN WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES
 AND THOSE WHO SERVED FIGHTING
 FOR THE LIBERATION OF EUROPE DURING WORLD WAR II

700TH BS. 701ST BS.



702ND BS 703RD BS



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An Exciting Enquiry: Following Up

A while back, we were contacted by a gentleman who'd picked up a copy of 'Official Guide to Army Air Forces' published in 1944 and belonging to a Lt. M.N. Panosian. There were several other notations in the book which indicated the man was likely stationed at Tibenham and was part of the 702nd squadron with the 445th bomb group. There were also two other gentlemen listed: Lt. Marvin Gasster and Lt. Frawigs Farmer.

Unfortunately there was no other information regarding Panosian's enlistment, and a lot of extra information which had us running in circles for a while. We started our search by looking at the [roll of honor](#) available on our website. None of the three men were listed there so we then turned to other resources. The first was [ancestry.com](#) (which is available to anyone at the Library), we found several promising leads but without a date of birth or hometown we were not able to clearly locate any of the individuals. Next we tried the [National Archives and Records Administration](#), which has some searchable military records and at last: success! We were able to identify all three of the individuals and found they all enlisted within 2 months of each other in 1942.

After this we turned back to the unit histories for the 445th. Scanning through the periodicals we found that Panosian (the owner of the book) was a navigator for a B-24. Gasster was a pilot and Farmer a co-pilot. It seems likely they were sent to Tibenham in late 1944 and one of the dates in the book indicates that Panosian at least was still in England when the war ended in May 1945....

A blog reader contacted us via that post, introducing himself as Samuel Gasster, the grandson of the pilot in the original story. Samuel then very generously sent us an image of the plane associated with the story, "Marvin's Madhouse", as well as a crew photo bearing all those involved, including (of course) his grandfather.

Many thanks to Samuel for helping us to "illustrate" the story!

In crew photo: 1 – Lt. Marvin Gasster, Pilot, 2 – Lt. Frank Framer, Co-Pilot, 3 – Flt. Officer Robert Leonard, Bombardier, 4 – Lt. Manual Panosion, Navigator, 5 – Richard Ramp, Upper Turret Gunner, 6 – Edward Giff, Nose Turret Gunner, 7 – Ted Manville, Ball Turret Gunner, 8 – Glen Sabowin, Radio Operator, 9 – William Gillett, Tail Turret Gunner, 10 – Samuel B. Sampson, Engineer

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