



FROM MY BACKYARD

By Byron Higgin, Mascot Publisher

Amongst the row, upon row of well-kept gravestones at the Taunton cemetery, I found Terry and Karen Swed

zinski. (Photo, middle, right).

It was Memorial Day and we all came to honor those veterans who came before us. Terry and Karen came for a special reason. They've turned their pride in their father Ray into a very special memorial. A beautifully polished gravestone in honor of Ray Swedzinski tells volumes about his life — his family and his years serving his country.

On the back of the stone is a replica of the old bomber that once was Ray's fortress as he flew as co-pilot with Kennon Sorgenfrei on bomber runs across Europe. The Reader's Digest story, "Saga of the Sorgenfrei Crew," said, "Their target — the railroad yards of Munich — was one of the harshest on the continent; black anti-aircraft blossoms were everywhere around them. But they had been over it, and others as bad, many times."

The bomber carrying the Sorgenfrei crew was hit and a course was plotted for neutral Switzerland. They had to lighten the load by throwing out many items.

“The crew had absolute confidence in Sorgenfrei and co-pilot Ray Swedzinski,” the article said. Since their first days of training together in Casper, WY, they had been known as “The Sorgenfrei crew.”

The article said, “With their tongue-twister names — Polish, Swedish, Jewish, Norwegian — they were proud of their polyglot all-Americanism. They were also a disciplined outfit and knew from perilous experience — three times their aircraft had been so badly damaged it had to be scrapped — that they could make it as a group.

But this time, they didn’t make it. Sorgenfrei ordered all hands to jump, as they were coming down, the bomber exploded.



They thought they were in the Swiss Alps, but instead, landed in German-occupied Vichy, France.

Fortunately, many members of the crew landed where patriots found them and vowed to get them to Switzerland. They spent two nights on the forested hilltop they’d landed on. It was between two garrisons of Germans.

The plan was to truck them north toward Switzerland.

As they began, the Germans were in hot pursuit of the fliers. They feared being arrested, tortured, or even killed as resistance fighters.

After 12 days of hiding, they began to climb the mountains as dive bombers roared overhead. They had to abandon carts and animals and took turns carrying two leg-amputees on stretchers.

“That afternoon the lower slope swarmed with the gray-green uniforms of a German Patrol,”

said the article.

Eventually they had to leave the amputees behind and once again began to climb.

It was freezing cold at night.

“Suddenly the fortunes of war changed, the Allies had landed on the coast of Provence and had broken the German stranglehold on south-central France. The fliers could hear artillery fire from their perch on the mountain.

Finally, 37 days after their crash, they walked down the mountain and into liberated Grenoble where they were met with a city wide celebration and a hero’s reception.

They later learned the two amputees were safe after being rescued.

The war was over for the Sorgenfrei crew.

Ken Sorgenfrei became a commercial airline pilot. And Ray Swedzinski went back to his family farm in Minnesota.

There would be a reunion and moments they could laugh about.

All of that isn’t available just by looking at the grave of Ray Swedzinski. That comes from the pride of a family ... from folks like Terry and Karen, who loved Ray enough to establish this monument in his honor.

Ray Swedzinski was one who gave everything he had, and nearly paid the ultimate price.

Guys like Ray Swedzinski shouldn’t be forgotten.

End of an era ...

It’s the end of another era and 37 years doing anything is good to celebrate.

Thanks, Barb Guttormsson, for all the great recipes and hints you’ve shared with our readers over the years. We appreciate it!

Barb is ending her time providing recipes for Mascot readers.

However, don’t panic. We’ll be unveiling a new recipe column we hope will satisfy all you cooks out there.

We can’t begin to Thank You enough Barb. But as we know, “All good things must come to an end.”

LAUGH A LITTLE: Ole and Lena were watching the flooding waters in Granite Falls a couple years ago when Lena saw this hat float up stream, then back down stream and then up stream again. “Ole, did you see that hat floating up and down stream?” she said. “Oh, Lena, that’s just Sven, he said he was going to mow, come heck or high water.

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: As my Ole Pappy used to say, “Don’t be penny wise and dollar short.”

Now Ole Pappy used to give me this kind of riddle to try and figure out my life.

I guess he was trying to tell me not to pinch pennies if it was going to cost me a lot more in the long run. Thanks Ole Pappy.