

On Saturday, April 24, 1943, a Beechcraft SNB-2 Navigator, S/N 39236, on a training mission from Opa-locka to Key West, Florida scheduled to return at 2305 that evening disappeared over the Gulf of Mexico. Aboard the aircraft were the following:

Lt. John Linherr Masterson, USN(R), pilot
Lt. Roy Gordon Jones, USN(R), co-pilot
Ens. Paul Peirce Hart, USN(R), flight instructor
Aviation Cadet Eugene Victor Louis Aiello, USN(R)
Aviation Cadet Charles Franklin Bacon, USN(R)
Aviation Cadet Arris Gordon Banke, USN(R)

This was the cadets' last training flight prior to commissioning.

US Navy War Diary of Commander, Gulf Sea Frontier dated April 24, 1943, has the following entry regarding the area's weather that date:

Weather

High pressure area now centered over Illinois, has pushed southward and covers the western half of the Gulf. The low pressure trough now over the Florida peninsula is moving gradually eastward, but it is also filling up. A weak cold front associated with this trough will pass over the Florida peninsula tonight. Forecast for tonight and tomorrow for the northern Gulf Area: Clear to partly cloudy skies. For the Florida peninsula: Broken cumulus clouds at 2,500 feet with frequent showers and occasional thundershowers along front late this afternoon and tonight. Improving conditions tomorrow with clear to partly cloudy skies. For Miami and vicinity: Continued cloudy skies with occasional showers remainder of the day and probably thundershowers inland tonight. Weak cold front mentioned above should reach the Miami area by midnight and generally good weather is expected tomorrow.

Flying conditions were bad to poor at Corpus Christi; bad to fair at Galveston; fair to good at Banana River and Morrison Field; good at Key West, Pensacola, New Orleans, Biloxi and San Julian; fair at all other Frontier bases.

The Diary noted on April 24, 1943:

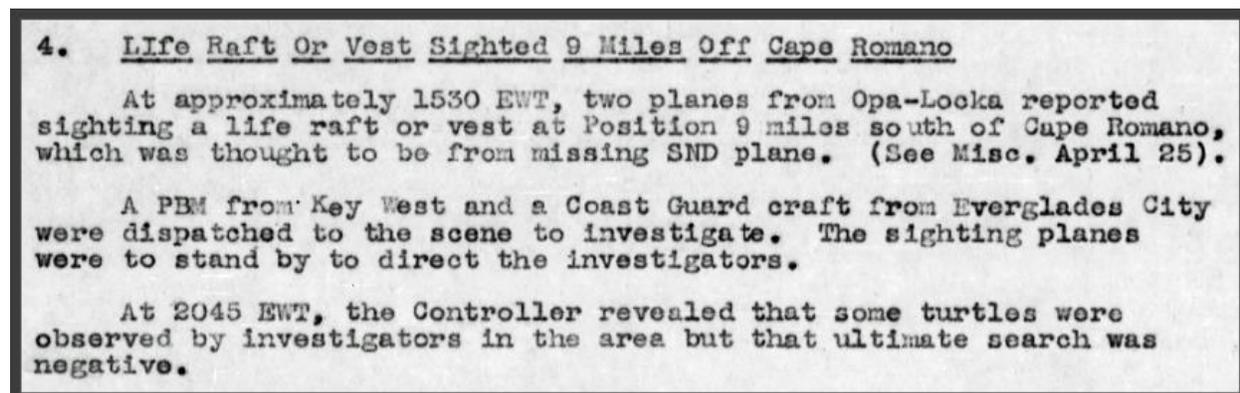
10. Plane Missing:

One plane of a group of SNB's on a training flight from Opa Locka to Key West due to arrive at 2305 is overdue. Pilot and co-pilot are both said to be experienced men. Five planes from Opa Locka and one from Key West are to be sent out at dawn to search.

On April 25, 1943, the War Diary stated:

One Navy PBM left Key West to search for plane reported missing on flight from Opa-Locka to Key West.

Another entry for that date:



Cape Romano is due west of Everglades City.

No information regarding the missing aircraft was observed in the War Diaries of either NAS Miami or Key West for that period. There appeared to be considerable activity regarding convoys, German submarine sightings and general naval activity that limited the search efforts.

A personal letter provided by a relative of Lt. John Masterson from his sister Carol to a family friend on May 6, 1943, she documented Lt. Masterson's brother Walter's trip to Florida and his attempts to search for the missing aircraft. He advised that search efforts, although officially limited to two days, went on longer and 50 aircraft searched over Easter Sunday and the following Monday. When the Coast Guard couldn't take him out to search, Walter hired a private fisherman. He subsequently found an uninflated life jacket and a student's compass watch belonging to the aircraft, badly damaged, "30 miles offshore in the Gulf of Mexico."

The letter advised that there was no ship traffic in that portion of the Gulf and no moon the night the aircraft went missing until 2AM. The flight took off at 8:30PM, and the compass "signified that it stopped 44 minutes later". According to the letter, 38 minutes after leaving the base the aircraft would have been over the Everglades. Once the life vest was found, searches in the area continued until the following Saturday when they were discontinued. Walter stated that the search for Amelia Earhart "was nothing compared to this."

The following article appeared in the Tampa Bay Times, St. Petersburg, FL, on April 29, 1943. It stated that the Navy found the life jacket and watch in the Gulf of Mexico 16 miles off Everglades City on April 28th, as opposed to 30 miles as described in Carol Masterson's letter:

Navy Lifejacket From Lost Plane Found in Gulf

MIAMI—(U.P.)—A lifejacket and a watch identified as belonging to one of six naval fliers missing on a navigation flight since last Saturday were found floating in the Gulf of Mexico 16 miles off Everglades City yesterday.

Miami Naval Air station officials said there was no doubt that the preserver and the watch were ones issued to each of the six men before they took off from Miami Saturday night on a routine training flight. The articles were discovered in the water by a Navy plane which had been searching since Saturday for the missing twin-engine training ship and its occupants.

The missing men are:

Pilot Lt. John L. Masterson, USNR, Nearwater Cove, Norton, Conn.; Co-Pilot Lt. Roy Jones, USNR, Miami, and Port Huron, Mich.; Ensign Paul P. Hart, USNR, Coral Gables; Cadet E. V. L. Aiello, Brooklyn, N. Y.; Cadet Charles F. Bacon, Tulsa, Okla.; Cadet Arris Gordon Banke, Matawan, N. J. The Navy continued the search last night.



The flight, as noted above, was the last training flight from the United States Navy Air Navigation School located at the University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida. I was able to obtain a hard cover copy of the "Navy Wing", the school's yearbook, from Ebay. It documented the efforts of two classes, 4-43(i) (commissioned officers) and 3-43(c) (aviation cadets).



It is of interest to note that Cadet Aiello was an editor of this book.



OFFICIAL U. S. NAVY PHOTOGRAPH

. . . four months, crowded with a new subject, a new vocabulary, the new world of celestial space and time . . . four months of intense concentration, broken here and there with a few hours of quick relaxation . . . four months of preparation for the exacting job we are to do . . . four months with a fine group of men from classroom and laboratory, counter and factory the country over . . . this full, new life we have sought to portray on the pages that follow. The classbook, conceived by a masterly young hand, was completed by friends who would hope their efforts are worthy of his praise.

NAVY WING STAFF

EDITORIAL
AV. CAD. E. V. L. AIELLO
LT. (J.G.) CLAUDE SIMPSON
LT. (J.G.) F. F. MIDDLESWART
LT. (J.G.) L. K. MARQUIS
LT. T. M. FUNK

ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY
LT. A. B. MEWSBORN
ENS. R. C. BARTHOLOMEW
AV. CAD. B. C. SCOTT, JR.
SPECIAL PHOTOGRAPHY BY
MISS MADELINE ROESSLER

BUSINESS
ENS. E. M. UHRY
LT. (JG) T. J. BASS
AV. CAD. J. J. McMENAMIN
AV. CAD. E. L. BERRY

The book contains a dedication to the lost crew. It also appears that the three cadets were the first three in class 3-43(c), indicating that their flight assignments, and thus their fate, were decided by alphabetical order.

DEDICATION

THE SPAN of man's life is full, but it is not always long. To us in our last days here has come great tragedy—the loss of our brothers-in-arms. Grief is a deep, quiet thing, stabbing us to the heart in small hours of the night. We shall go on with the day's work today, but we cannot forget those whose absence leaves an emptiness within. To the memory of six gallant gentlemen who met an untimely end on April 24, 1943, we inscribe this book.

LIEUTENANT JOHN L. MASTERSON
LIEUTENANT ROY G. JONES
ENSIGN PAUL P. HART
AVIATION CADET EUGENE V. L. AIELLO
AVIATION CADET CHARLES F. BACON
AVIATION CADET ARRIS G. BANKE



†EUGENE V. L. AIELLO 3911 Ave. K, Brooklyn, N.Y. • CCNY • Football • Artist • U.S. C.G.R., B.M. 1/c • Pre-Flight, North Carolina.

†CHARLES F. BACON 508 N. Rosedale, Tulsa, Okla. • Tulsa University • Petroleum Publishing Co. • Pre-Flight, Georgia.

†ARRIS G. BANKE 64 Wyckoff St., Matawan, N. J. • Newark College of Eng. • Manufacturing • Pre-Flight, North Carolina.

The Pan American Navigation and the University of Miami jointly ran the Navy Air Navigation School since September of 1942 and these two classes were the last to be trained there prior to the opening of the new facility at Hollywood Beach, FL. The "farewell article" in the wave characterized the officers' cadets' time there:



Adios

WITH GRADUATION of the classes 4-43(i) and 3-43 (c), the first Navy Air Navigation School ever to be established bids farewell to the Pan American Navigation Section and the University of Miami, and completes its transfer to the greatly enlarged quarters in Hollywood Beach which its success has made necessary. From the arrival of the first class of officers on September 17, 1942, to the graduation of the last classes on May 7, 1943, the Coral Gables school has trained four classes of officers and three of cadets, and has sent out more than two hundred and fifty skilled navigators to serve in the Navy's flying squadrons and training schools. The men of these first classes have borne a critical responsibility, for upon the quality of their work has rested the Navy's opinion of the school. We are proud that that work has met the Navy's high standards.

Much of our success has been due to pioneering of the Pan American Airways Navigation Section, which was originally opened in August, 1940, to give Army cadets

the benefit of Pan American's great experience with long-range celestial and dead-reckoning navigation. High credit is due to Captain Charles Lunn, whose ideas led to the establishment of the school, and to Lieutenant Commander T. C. Brownell, whose enthusiasm led to the Navy's contract with Pan American.

Pan American's Army and R. A. F. graduates have proved the quality of their instruction. They helped to open the northern air route to England. They guided Doolittle to Tokyo. They have navigated our far-flying transports and bombers along a score of newly-opened routes, winning sixty-five decorations including the Distinguished Cross, the Distinguished Service Cross, and the Silver Star with Oak Leaf Cluster. Upon Pan American graduates the Army, the Royal Air Force, and the Navy have drawn heavily for instructors in the new navigation schools made necessary by war.

It is a source of satisfaction to us who are members of these last classes that we were here before the close, that we did our work under Pan American and are Pan American graduates. We shall not forget Charles Lunn and his airplot and shadow pin, nor Robert Askew and Charles Howell, nor our aerology instructors, nor the flight instructors on the "Tin Goose," nor the group of Navy flight instructors, nor Lieutenant McCabe and his assistants. For many of us, Coral Gables was our first station in active service. To the cadets, it will always be the station where they received

their commissions. Stumbling through close order drill in the chill and inky blackness before Coral Gables sunrise is an experience that will be with us for a long time. So will check-outs, and star classes, and long bus rides to Opa Locka, and chow in the University Dining Hall, and watch duty at French Village, and Cadets and co-eds in the patio, and “O.K., fellows, let’s take a break”—and a hundred other memories, trivial or serious, which are the color of our daily life here.

But our regret at leaving Pan American, the University of Miami, and Coral Gables, will be tempered with pleasure at getting more active duty, whether it be bombardier training at Jacksonville, instructing at pre-flight school, or moving to the new Air Navigation School in Hollywood under Lieutenant Commander Brownell. We are glad to have been here, but now we must go elsewhere to use what we have learned. It is time for us to get on with our part of the war.

The yearbook, which I plan to donate to the Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola, has photos of all the staff, instructors and students, as well as the facilities. It must have been an exciting time – preparing for an adventure in Naval Aviation during war time, in a spring, tropical environment on a college campus with the many young coeds in attendance.



Pilot John Linherr Masterson, LT, USN(R)

John was born September 25, 1905 in Brooklyn, NY, to Walter Joseph Masterson, (insurance and real estate) and Mary L. Linherr. He spent his early childhood in Brooklyn, and moved to Connecticut before 1920, residing in Stamford and Darien. John was the third of six children – younger brother George was also a Naval Aviator, flying off carriers in the Pacific during the war.

A graduate of Columbia University, John was an experienced pilot before joining the Navy – he had bought his own airplane prior to Pearl Harbor and accumulated 600 hours flight time before receiving his wings at NAS Corpus Christi on January 2nd, 1943 at 37 years of age.



John appeared to be “well-connected” in the business community in New York City, working for the textile firm Galey and Lord where he managed the Rayon Cloth Division when he entered the service. In a January 12, 1942 letter from the Office of the Chief of Air Command, US Army Air Corps, his interest in joining the Air Corps Ferry Command – the entity that transported military aircraft from the production lines in the US to combat areas overseas – was acknowledged. The respondent indicated he had two possibilities – a commission in the Air Corps or employment as a civilian pilot. The author of the letter, Captain C.C. Barrett, appeared to be a former co-worker of John’s and was very encouraging. John apparently opted for service in the Navy and a year later received his wings. Due to his age he was commissioned as a Lieutenant (O-3) as opposed to an Ensign.

John was to marry Peggy Wilkes of New York City the following Saturday after his disappearance.

Because of the high esteem in which Lt. Masterson was held, executives of the New York textile industry established a “Jack Masterson Memorial” effort in which a pipe organ was donated in his name to the Holy Innocents Church.

Flight Training Pilots at Opa Locka. • Ens. C. N. Schwartz; Lt. R. G. Jones†; Lt. (j.g.) H. S. Howard; Lt. J. R. Ryan; Ens. R. C. Clark; Lt. W. P. Comstock; Lt. (j.g.) P. L. Birthisel; Lt. (j.g.) C. D. Phillip; Ens. O. C. Pobanz; Lt. (j.g.) H. F. Owen; Lt. (j.g.) I. N. Rowell; Ens. A. P. Stehle; Ens. R. E. Garnett; Lt. (j.g.) W. J. Murphy (*not shown*); Lt. A. W. Berthold (*not shown*); Lt. J. L. Masterson (*not shown*)†.
—Official U. S. Navy Photograph

†Missing in line of duty.



Co-pilot Roy Gordon Jones, LT, USN(R)

Roy was born November 7, 1920 in Wiseton, Saskatchewan to Jonathan Humphrey Jones and Hedvig Broberg Jones, the third of five children. His father, born in Michigan, was a boiler operator in a Marysville, MI rubber mill; his mother was a Swedish immigrant.

Residing in Marysville, MI, he attended Port Huron, MI, Community College and the University of Michigan prior to enlisting in the Navy, where he was commissioned as an ensign. He commenced flight training at NAS Pensacola, FL, on November 25, 1940 and received his wings in August, 1941.



On June 10, 1942, he married the former Annette June Stuber, a native of Port Huron, MI, in Pensacola. Their daughter Prudence Ann Jones was born June 29, 1943, two months after her father was reported missing. Annette subsequently married Robert John McIntosh, a decorated USAAF P-47 pilot, in 1946. Robert, who eventually became a US Congressman representing Michigan, subsequently adopted Prudence. Anne died in 2014.

**Commissioned Ensign
In Navy Air Reserve**

A black and white photograph of a young man wearing a dark flight helmet with goggles resting on his forehead. He is wearing a dark flight jacket and looking slightly to the left of the camera.

ENSIGN ROY G. JONES

Marysville, Aug. 30 — Roy G. Jones, formerly of 1709 New Hampshire street, has been commissioned ensign in the United States Naval Reserve air corps and will be assigned to the U. S. naval air station at Pensacola, Fla. Ensign Jones received his commission after completion of his advanced training course at Pensacola.

Ensign Jones enlisted in the navy air corps last summer and after completing his preliminary training was transferred to Pensacola Nov. 25, 1940. He attended Port Huron Junior college and University of Michigan before enlisting.

**Lieut. Roy Jones
Reported Missing**

Lieut. Roy G. Jones, husband of Mrs. Annette Jones, the former Annette Stuber, has been reported missing since 11 p.m. Saturday after a regularly scheduled navigation training flight in a twin-engine plane in the area of Miami.

Aboard were Lieutenant Jones and another officer of the Miami Naval Air station, a third officer and three cadets from the navigation school at Hollywood. A widespread search has failed to produce any trace of the plane or its occupants, the Navy reported, but a search was continuing in the area between Miami and Key West.

Mrs. Jones is the daughter of Mrs. Edwin W. Stuber, 714 River street. Her aunt, Miss Amelia Clegg, also of 714 River street, left Sunday night to join Mrs. Jones in Miami. Lieutenant Jones is the son of John H. Jones, Marysville, and the brother of Leslie Jones, 1515 Seventeenth street.

Find Evidence Of Jones Plane Crash

A lifejacket and a watch identified as belonging to one of six Navy flyers, one of whom was Lieut. Roy G. Jones, Port Huron, missing on a navigation flight since Saturday, were found floating in the Gulf of Mexico 16 miles off Everglades City, Florida, Wednesday.

The articles were discovered in the water by a Navy plane which had been searching the area since Saturday.

Mrs. E. W. Stuber, 714 River street, mother of Lieutenant Jones' wife, Mrs. Annette Jones, Miami, Fla., has received no word from Navy authorities other than an announcement that her son-in-law had been officially listed as "missing." Lieutenant Jones is the son of John H. Jones, Marysville.

Articles from the Port Huron Times Herald, 8/30/1941, 4/26/1943. 4/29/1943

Flight Instructor Paul Peirce Hart, Ensign, USN(R)

Ensign Hart was born December 31, 1916 in Birmingham, AL to Canadians Elsie Maud Smith Hart and Second Richard Hart, a traveling salesman. Paul was the third of four children.

He attended the University of Florida, was president of the Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity in 1939, was a member of the Phi Kappa Phi honorary scholastic society and graduated in 1940 with a BS in architecture. He was employed as an architect when he joined the navy.



On September 10, 1942, Paul married Margaret Sparke Martin in Greenwood, SC. After Paul's death, she remarried James Henry Look in 1947 at Pensacola, FL. She died in 2010.

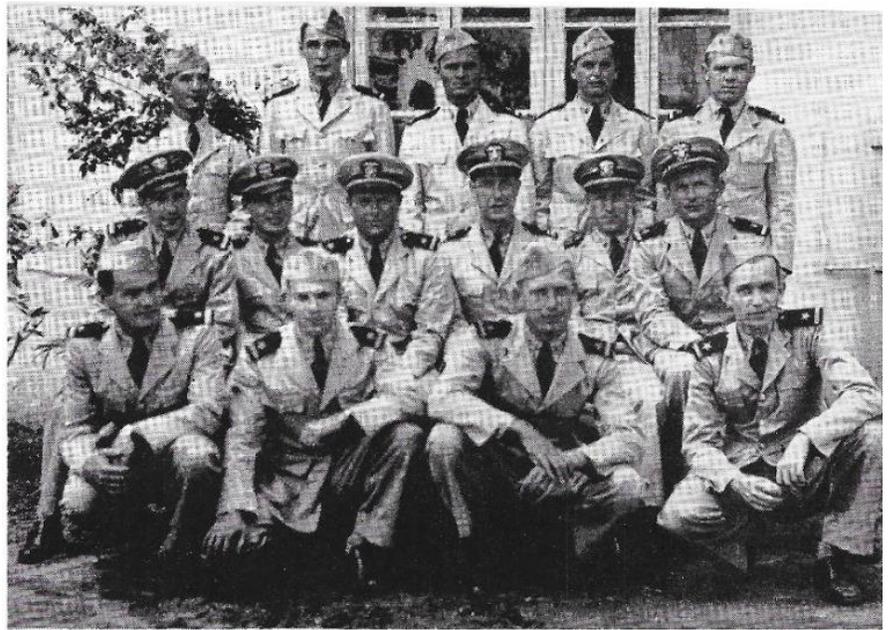
Ensign Paul Hart Of Ormond Listed As Missing

Ensign Paul P. (Bitsy) Hart, son of Mrs. E. M. Hart of Ormond, has been listed by navy officials as one of six fliers attached to the Miami naval air station who were aboard a two-engined plane which has been missing since Saturday, the Associated Press said last night.

Mrs. Hart, who was yesterday notified by the navy, has gone to Miami to await results of a search for the missing plane, which was on a regularly scheduled navigation training flight. Ensign Hart, who entered active service last September, was a navigation instructor.

Miss Dorothy Hart, sister of the missing flier, said at their home last night that "we're not giving up hope." She said she believed there was a basis of hope the fliers would be found alive because of the many keys off south Florida. With her at their home was another sister, Jane.

The Miami naval air station reported yesterday that a life jacket and watch known to have been in possession of one of the three cadets aboard the plane had been found in the Gulf of Mexico off Everglades City.



Navy Flight Instructors • *First row:* Ens. G. H. MacMahon, Jr.; Ens. L. F. Bachrach; Ens. W. D. McKinnie, Jr.; Ens. L. G. Huntley • *Second row:* Ens. J. T. Phillips; Ens. R. T. Daniel; Ens. R. F. Stuhr; Lt. (j.g.) J. M. Bates; Ens. W. B. Scobey; Ens. P. P. Hart† • *Third row:* Ens. C. T. Breaux; Ens. P. L. Harris; Ens. A. S. Robinson; Ens. H. E. Prinz; Ens. J. D. O'Fallon.

Daytona Beach Morning Journal
April 29, 1943

Aviation Cadet Eugene Victor Louis Aiello, USN(R)

Eugene, the youngest of three children, was born June 9, 1916 in New York City to Italian immigrants Francesco “Frank” Aiello and Felicetta Vitolo Aiello. Father Frank was the head of the Aiello Bank on Manhattan, which was in business for forty years in the late 1800 – early 1900s.

Eugene was an extremely talented young man – a gifted artist who attended the City College of New York. Prior to entering flight school, he attained the rank of BM1 in the US Coast Guard reserves. After college he worked as a commercial artist for Paramount Pictures and their advertising agency, Buchanan & Co, and posed such notables as Eleanor Roosevelt, Vivian Leigh, Veronica Lake and Lucille Ball. While in pre-flight school in North Carolina, he would identify classmates’ favorite stars and obtain autographed pin-ups for them. He designed the Naval Aviation wings emblem, which was approved by his commanding officer and forwarded to Washington. Throughout his training regimen he was active in the units’ newspaper and yearbook productions.



He was to be married May 8, 1943 to Ruth Margaret Valastro, a soloist with nationally known orchestras who performed on New York City radio stations. She was killed in a car accident in 1948.



Ruth Valastro

Cadet Aiello Still Does Art Work While Taking Pre-Flight Training

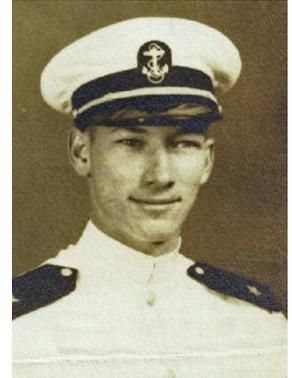


IT WAS ALL A SURPRISE and a most pleasant one at that when Cadet Gene Aiello, artist extraordinary, presented a colored portrait of Comdr. John P. Graff to Mrs. Graff. The presentation was made at a Public Relations dinner held at the Carolina Inn before the Christmas holidays. Shown here, left to right, are Comdr. Graff, Mrs. Graff, the picture, and Cadet Aiello.

Aviation Cadet Charles Franklin Bacon, USN(R)

Cadet Bacon, the second of three children, was born July 2, 1921 in Tulsa, OK, to Frederick Willard Bacon and Twylo Alberta Seely Bacon. Charles' father and mother were divorced in the 1920s.

Charles graduated from the University of Tulsa and worked in the oil industry prior to joining the navy. He attended Pre-flight school at Athens, Ga.



**Tulsa Airman
Lost, Another
Believed Dead**

Sgt. Joseph C. Sewell, son of Mr. and Mrs. T. G. Sewell, 519 N. Rose-dale av., has been missing in action since July 2 over Hungary, his parents have been notified.

The navy has announced that a neighbor of the Sewells, Air Cadet Charles Franklin Bacon, is now presumed dead. Young Bacon has been missing since April 24, 1943, in a night flight over the Gulf of Mexico. His mother is Mrs. Twylo Seely Bacon, 503 N. Rose-dale av.



Charles and unidentified woman, Tulsa, c. 1942

STANDARD TIME INDICATED RECEIVED AT 113 EAST 4th STREET TULSA OKLA TELEP (04) TELEPHONE YOUR TELEGRAMS TO POSTAL TELEGRAPH	Postal Telegraph <i>Mackay Radio</i> <i>All America Cables</i> <i>Commercial Cables</i> <i>Canadian Pacific Telegraphs</i>	THIS IS A FULL RATE TELEGRAM OR RADIOGRAM UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED BY SYMBOL IN THE MESSAGE OR IN THE ADDRESS OF THE MESSAGE. SYMBOLS DESIGNATING SERVICE SELECTED ARE OUTLINED IN THE COMPANY'S TARIFFS ON HAND AT EACH OFFICE AND ON FILE WITH REGULATORY AUTHORITIES.
--	---	--

Form 16

TU.KA151 K.NB241

N.MFB276 (TWO) 35GOVT 3 EXTRA REPORT DELIVERY=
 =PXX NA MIAMI FLO 12 348P=
 =MRS T A BACON=
 508 NORTH ROSEDALE (TULSA OKLA)=

UNLESS OTHERWISE REQUESTED MEMORIAL SERVICES FOR YOUR SON THE LATE AVIATION CADET CHARLES F BACON DECEASED WILL BE HELD SUNDAY MAY SIXTEENTH AT TEN AM AT THE CHAPEL NAVAL AIR STATION MIAMI=
 =NAVAL AIR STATION MIAMI=

MAY 12 PM 3 36

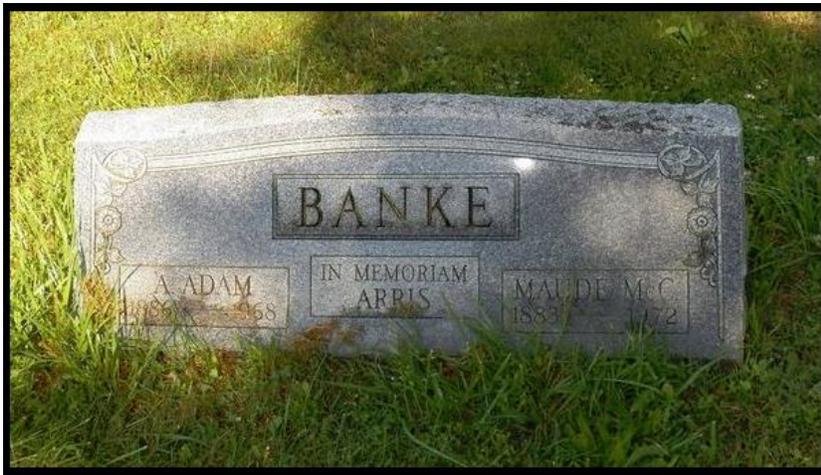
Aviation Cadet Arris Gordon Banke, USN(R)

At 19 years of age, Cadet Banke, born Oct 1, 1923 in Matawan, NJ, was the youngest crewmember. A talented musician, he was the only child of a musical family – father Adolph Adam Banke, a clothing salesman, was active in the First Baptist Church of Matawan choir and taught piano, while his mother Maud Bogart McCheney Banke was the church’s organist. Arris’ grandfather, Adolph Banke, Sr, was a musician in the 2nd US Infantry Regiment prior to and during the Civil War. Arris wrote the music for the Matawan High School’s Alma Mater in 1939, which was sung at the graduations of my three children.



Graduating from Matawan High School in 1939, he attended the Newark College of Engineering for three years. Prior to enlistment in the navy he completed the Civilian Pilot Training Course and graduated at the top of his class. In the fall of 1942, he went to pre-flight training at Chapel Hill, NC and then to navigation school in Hollywood, Fl.

According to an acquaintance of mine in the Matawan American Legion, that individual mowed the Banke’s lawn in the 1950s. The parents kept Arris’ bedroom untouched and it remained that way until they both passed away.



Matawan Flier Missing.
Arris G. Banke, 22, son of Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Banke of Matawan, a naval air cadet, is listed as missing on a training flight in Florida. Cadet Banke was one of six men aboard a two-engined plane which was reported missing on a training flight over Florida since Saturday afternoon.

This research initially was conducted by me in 2014 as part of a project for the local American Legion of memorializing Matawan, NJ, residents killed in World War II. Another individual who resided several houses down the street from where I currently live, a Naval Aviator, was the co-pilot of a Navy Privateer that was reported missing off Malaysia in June of 1945.

As I did the research, it became quite an emotional undertaking as I read and learned about these young men whose lives were tragically cut short. My mother's cousin, a co-pilot of a USAAF B-24, was lost on a raid in New Guinea in 1944, and I had a similar experience in 1971, while a freshman NROTC midshipman.

At 19 years old – like cadet Banke – I caught a military hop aboard a Navy S-2 Tracker from Albuquerque where I attended college to my parents' home in Corpus Christi, where Lt. Masterson received his wings. Corpus was socked in and the pilot flew out into the Gulf to make his approach into NAS. As he was banking to come in, an overheated electrical component in the plane exploded, filling the aircraft with smoke. The crew chief advised we would possibly have to ditch, and quickly instructed me how to leave the aircraft and inflate my life vest. Fortunately the pilot was able to land safely at the base.

I was subsequently able to have a family and a career and enjoy my life. The brave airmen above did not, and I deeply appreciate their sacrifice.

I was able to identify next of kin of all six airmen (distant cousins for Cadet Banke, since he was an only child), and will provide all with this information. Additionally, with modern technology the possibility does exist that this aircraft may someday be recovered. I have been in contact with Project Recover in the past offering my services, and will provide them, as well as the US Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola, with a copy of my research. Biographical information regarding the crew and their families is available on Ancestry.com, family tree: Missing SNB-2, SN 39236

Mark Chidichimo
7 Schenck Ave
Matawan, NJ 07747
Markc666@gmail.com

Next of kin contacted:

- 1) John Masterson – niece Mary Masterson Germain, 15 Washington St, Rocky Hill, NJ 08553
- 2) Roy Gordon Jones – niece Pamela Jones Bielen, chrstsvsb6@att.net
- 3) Paul Pearce Hart – niece Connie Hart Steinlicht, connie.steinlicht@gmail.com
- 4) Eugene Aiello – niece Katherine Aiello Meyers, kathymeyers327@msn.com
- 5) Charles Bacon – nephew Stephen Spees, twotexans@gmail.com
- 6) Arris Banke – I originally contacted 2nd cousin Christine Ann Banke at banke@us.ibm.com; however, that email address is no longer valid