

## War Era Story Project 2012

Submitted by: Gabrielle Strand

Current home town: Liberty Township, Ohio

Age: 74

### Snow in the Most Unlikely Place

December 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked the Navy Fleet at Pearl Harbor. Our country and our family would never be the same after that infamous day. My oldest brother, Charles, was at the University of Cincinnati majoring in Aeronautical Engineering. Flying was the love of his life! He had taken his flying instructions as soon as he was eligible and so enjoyed being a private pilot. Soon after the U.S. joined the war, the need for pilots was dire. Charles felt he could answer that call; he had been a pilot since he was 17. He had two years of engineering under his belt and he could finish at UC when he returned with the added help of the GI Bill. He enlisted in the Air Force (at that time it was called the Army Air Corps). He was soon on his way to Texas to flight school. He emerged as a pilot of the B-24 Bomber.

Fast forward to the winter of 1943-44. It was a picture-perfect winter wonderland here in Ohio. My sisters Edie and Phoebe and I spent many happy hours outdoors snow balling, sledding, building forts and making snow angels. Mother was right there with her trusty camera catching every memorable moment. Picture now Christmas Day, 1943. War was raging. Halfway across the world, on a God-forsaken island in the South Pacific, was my brother Charles. It was beastly hot and humid, morale was low, no one had seen mail in three months. The mail planes just could not get through safely. Even Christmas songs couldn't boost their spirits.

But, lo and behold, on that Christmas Day, a mail plane appeared out of the blue! Charles said the atmosphere changed in a millisecond! They could not contain their excitement. Everyone received multiple letters and packages. They were absolutely jubilant! They spent the rest of the day and night sharing goodies and reading each other's mail. For a few precious hours, they were all back home and didn't have to live war. When Charles opened one of Mother's letters and found the snow pictures of us, he lined them all up in a row. All the guys took turns sitting in front of them by the hour, talking and laughing and just enjoying that glorious snow that helped ease the discomfort of the sweltering heat that was their destiny for now.

In his letter home, Charles said that that was the most wonderful Christmas he had ever experienced in his whole life! Little did any of us know that that would be his last. Less than two months later, his plane was shot down in the ocean. Parts of the plane were floating in the sea, but there were no survivors and no bodies recovered. February 2, 1944. May they rest in peace.