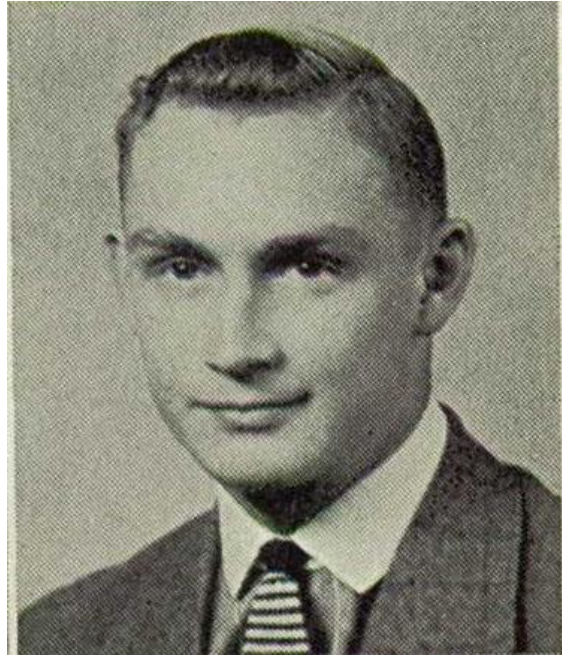


Herman Loeffler Jr.

Compiled by Judy Hansen
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Herman Loeffler Jr. was born on the 18th of October 1919 in Stuttgart, Wurtenburg, Germany to Herman Sr. and Berta Stitzbardt Loeffler. He had a sister and brother Ester and Werner. His parents were converted to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. They left Hamburg on the SS Ohio Dec 9, 1924 heading for Salt Lake City, Utah and immigrated to Salt Lake City, Utah where they lived for two years before moving to American Fork, Utah. While in American Fork at the age of 14, Herman 'proved to be a real hero' when he rescued his drowning friend from the Mill Pond as the boys were swimming. Warren Dee Hall, age 16 who was not a good swimmer got tired when trying to swim across and he went under. Herman who was farther out in the water heard the cry for help and was dismayed to see his friend go down. Herman swam frantically to save him and as Warren was going down the third time, Herman caught his right arm and started swimming to shore. Herman was exhausted as he pulled Warren onto the bank.

In 1935 the family returned to Salt Lake City, Utah where Herman graduated from East High. He was involved in various sports. He then attended the University of Utah from 1939 to 1941 and played for their football team as left tackle. He enlisted in the Army Air Force on January 15, 1942 in Salt Lake City as an Aviation Cadet. He trained in Air Corps Basic Flying School Higley Field, Chandler, Arizona which is called Williams Air Force Base. He was commissioned in August 1942 at Stockton, California to 2nd Lieutenant. His service number was 19072781 and he was described as 6'1", 190 pounds, Hazel Eyes, Brown Hair, and Light Brown complexion.

On Tuesday the 22nd of December 1942, Herman left with his crew from the Sacramento Air Depot for a routine 90 minute operations flight. Officials from the McClelland Army Air Base started a wide-spread search for the twin-engine plane when it did not return. The search lasted for several days. The first search crews were hampered by poor visibility. After five days of searching a Ranch hand, Bob Mattox found it on an Al Cerida ranch near Fairfield, Solano County, California. The plane apparently struck while in a flat glide as it appeared to have cut off treetops for several hundred yards before crashing into a gully where it then exploded. The Army retrieved the five badly burned bodies of:

2nd Lt. Ralph Martin Duffle – pilot from Bromley, Kentucky
2nd Lt. Herman Loeffler Jr – co-pilot from American Fork, Utah
2nd Lt. James A Howell – navigator from Middleton, Illinois
2nd Lt. J. M Russell – navigator from Huntington, Indiana,
Master Sergeant Reginald D Tolar – crew chief from Ennis Texas.

Five days after the crash on Sunday evening a long distance phone message to the parents told them about the finding of the wreckage and the loss of their son. Lt. Loeffler's body arrived in American Fork, Utah by Union Pacific Railroad on Thursday December 31, 1942 where his closed casket funeral services were held Saturday January 2, 1943 at 1:00 pm in the American Fork 2nd Ward Chapel. He was buried in the American Fork City Cemetery. His name is honored on the American Fork City Veteran's wall.

This story is a combined effort of the Lehi Historical Society and the Stories Behind the Stars project, a national effort of volunteers to write the stories of all 400,000+ of the US WW2 fallen on Fold3. Related to this, there will be a smart phone app that will allow people to visit any war memorial or cemetery, scan the fallen's name and read his/her story.

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