

# No Greater Love: Ricks College Pilots in World War II Europe

This article is the third in a series honoring Ricks College and BYU-Idaho alumni who made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of their country.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13)

## 2nd Lt. Joseph Gordon Beesley

In 1945, after years of battling the Allies in Italy, the Germans were consigned to {{areas of}} the Po River Valley in {{the northern part of}} northern Germany. {{the country.}} Now, it was Rexburg native Joseph Beesley and his squadron's job to decimate their supply lines.

Feb. 28 started as a fairly typical day for the 65th Fighter Squadron of the U.S. Army Air Forces, but it would become an unforgettable one for Lt. Rip Hewitt.

In an email to Beesley's nephew, over 60 years after the fact, Hewitt recounted his first mission as flight leader. {{that this mission was his first as flight leader.}} His wingman was Beesley, nicknamed "Beez," and the squadron was tasked to take out a railroad bridge and ammunition dump. {{— a target Air Force headquarters had not quite pinpointed.}}

After Hewitt and Beez {{they}} sparked the railroad bridge, they traveled to a German ammunition dump. As soon as they lit it, the building exploded. {{Rip}} Hewitt managed to avoid the blast, but he watched as Beez, inside of his P-47 Thunderbolt nicknamed "Kiss D," fly into the blast.

"I've been hit," Beez said as he emerged from the smoke.

**Commented [J11]:** Lowercase "pilots" because it is not a proper noun to follow AP style.

**Commented [J12]:** In this article, you jump back and forth between Rip and Hewitt as the lieutenant's attribution. Pick the lieutenant's last name as attribution to follow AP style.

**Commented [J13]:** This doesn't make sense to me, is there a more active way to word this part? If it is not integral to the story, leave it cut.

"Check how bad," Hewitt replied.

All of his instruments were working except for his oil pressure, which was slightly high. Hewitt flew next to him and saw no holes, so they headed back to base. **Minutes before Beez flew overseas to base, he realized he had no oil pressure.** {{Minutes passed before Beez announced that he was heading for the sea — he had no oil pressure.}}

**Commented [J14]:** This sentence is confusing to me, I reworded it in bold. His plane seemed OK, but before flying out to sea, he had no oil pressure, correct?

{{When Hewitt flew up next to him again, he}} **Hewitt** saw flames and smoke pouring from the supercharger exhaust **as the** {{. The}} plane {{was losing}} **lost** gasoline, and the propeller was windmilling.

**Commented [J15]:** I'm making slight changes, I need you to make sure that you are writing in active voice, especially with longer/technical pieces like this! With passive voice, I find myself getting easily confused with your story. If you use less words to describe what you are depicting, you will leave a greater impact to your reader. I don't want to take away the heart of your article, but I think it would be good to cut back in some places.

At about 5,000 feet, **insert correct action.** {{Beez bailed.}} {{Hewitt's official account states he never saw him open his parachute, though in the email to Beez's nephew he says he did. Whatever the case, Beez encountered 40 mm anti-aircraft fire on his descent. Likely he waited to deploy his parachute to avoid becoming more of a target.}}

**Commented [J16]:** What do you mean bailed, did he parachute out of the plane? Did he die in the plane? Be specific!

In a letter to Beez's wife, Donna, Lt. Colonel G.O. Wymond, Jr. said that **out** of all the pilots he had seen come through the 65th, there were none that he "had more confidence in and showed more promise than Joe."

**Commented [J17]:** The conflicting sources are not important to the story and it adds more confusion for your reader. Clarify that he was not seen again after this point — reword this section!

The commander continued that with 19 missions under his belt in which he "inflicted untold damage" on the Germans, the young pilot was on his way to becoming a superior leader. Who are you referring to when you say "commander?" Wymond?

**Commented [J18]:** Keep your paragraphs 2 to 3 sentences to follow AP style!

"Guys like Joe are saving our heritage for us, to them we owe everything." Who said this?

## 2nd Lt. Bert Middleton Beattie

Known to his commanding officer by his "cool, quiet manner," Bert Beattie was still no pilot to mess with.{{, he}} **He** performed every mission effectively. {{and efficiently.}}

Born in the Burton area, just outside Rexburg, {{Bert}} attribute by last name **Beattie** would {{go on to}} graduate with a degree in aviation engineering before enlisting in the Navy Air Corps.

On Jan. 20, 1944, **Beattie** {{he was in}} commanded {{of}} a torpedo bomber {{conducting an}} operation near the Azores island. {{ group.}} When **Beattie** {{he}} and his crew were due to return to their aircraft carrier, his plane sent a radio transmission to the ship. The carrier promptly responded with directions to its location, {{but from that point,}} **and** Bert's radio stopped receiving transmissions.

**Commented [J19]:** Where is this? Azores? Can you set the scene more clearly?

{{Bert}} **Beattie** remained in the area about 60 miles from the carrier for about an hour as command continued to **search for him**. {{send transmissions every two minutes. As they were about to send a search party,}} **Eventually**, Bert's plane made a detour to Flores Island. The carrier crew continued to transmit messages until they knew his gas was depleted.

Before a search party could make it out to the island, Bert and his two other crew members were seen that night by people on the island. **They were** struggling in the surf, **and** unable to reach land. A major storm that night made rescue attempts futile. At the time of his memorial services more than two weeks later, his body had not been found.

In his final moments, {{there is little doubt he would have}} **Beattie** displayed the "rare courage" his superiors attributed to him.

## 2nd Lt. William Parkin Dean

William "Billy" Parkin Dean was from Sugar City, Idaho. He left behind a fiancée when he joined the 385th Fighter Squadron of the Army Air Forces.

On Aug. 8, 1944, he was conducting a low-altitude bombing mission in his P-51 Mustang near Rouen, France, when he was hit by German ground-to-air artillery. He would go on to receive the Purple Heart and the Air Medal for his sacrifice.

**Commented [J110]:** I think it's jarring for the reader to have two long stories and then two short ones. Can you cut the first stories down more to match the tone of this one? Or, cut this section out to match the mood of this article.

## 2nd Lt. Dean Edgar Secrist

After being turned down the first time due to a heart murmur, Dean Secrist was inducted into the U.S. Army Air Corps on March 5, 1942.

Before he was shipped off, **Secrist** {{he was working}} **worked** in the St. Anthony office of the American Automobile Association. He {{had previously been}} **was** a student at Ricks College and Utah State Agricultural College. He {{would leave}} **left** behind his wife, Ernestine, and his daughter, DeAnne, to join the 96th Bomb Group of the 337th Bomber Squadron.

With only a handful of missions under his belt, Dean was already making a name for himself with a rank promotion looming ahead. Days before his final mission, his squadron executed a mission that would earn them the Distinguished Unit Citation.

On April 11, 1944, while co-piloting a Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress near the Polish-German border, Dean's plane was shot down. He was shot in **his** {{the top}} **left leg** and parachuted out **of the plane**. It was thought that he was taken prisoner by the enemy, but the German government reported him killed in action months later.

**Commented [J111]:** Left leg of his body or left of the plane? Clarify, or take out if not needed.

{{His loved ones likely remembered his positivity.}} In {{his}} **Secrist's** last letter to his mother, he jokingly described his new mustache and haircut while assuring her to not worry about him.

"I am fine and will stay that way. All my love. Dean"

**Commented [J112]:** Lets get this article cut down to 800 words.