

Newsletter of the MASON HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Mason, Ohio

and Alverta Green Museum

July 2021

THE DEVASTATING CRASH OF A B-50 BOMBER

A Nuclear Scare in Mason

Sally Sherman Caudill, Contributing Editor

In the summer of 1950, Cold War tensions were nearing the freezing point. President Harry Truman was anxious about Russia and China's communist influence in the Korean conflict, and in a reversal of policy, he entered the U.S. into the Korean War at the end of June. In alliance with NATO, American forces were on the ground with South Korean troops by July 5th.

Just one week later, on July 13, 1950, 16 U.S. Air Force (AF) officers and airmen of the 97th Bomb Group, boarded a B-50 Superfortress bomber at Biggs AF base in El Paso, Texas (now Fort Bliss). Captain Paul Anderson, the 29-year-old navigator, was never permitted to discuss his missions or destinations, even with his family. He and his



A B-50 Superfortress bomber similar to the plane that crashed.

wife though, had a secret code: if he was going to fly with a nuclear (atomic) bomb on board, he would leave a gun cartridge on the dining room table before leaving for his flight. That morning of July

13th, Lucille Anderson awoke to find a gun cartridge on their table.

On that fateful day, just before 3 p.m., Warren County residents heard the unmistakable sounds of a troubled airplane. Clyde Shutts, a Lebanon farmer, heard "motors racing wide open"¹ and looked up to the sky to see the large, four-motored bomber nosing down, spinning around, engines continually gunning, trying to pull up. Ralph Melampy of Lebanon, and Anthony VonHolle of Mason were simultaneously alarmed by the revving engines of a plane in obvious distress. They both saw the

bomber low in the sky, and heard it gun its engines one last time. Five-year-old Carolyn Koehler (Sargent), who lived on Hamilton Rd., was out playing in the yard with her two siblings. She has never forgotten the sight of the plane dropping altitude quickly, spiraling and then in a near vertical line, go nose-down into a wheat field just 1/4 mile away.

The plane crash caused the earth to shake with an horrific roar that could be heard at least 20 miles away. The explosion created a crater in the ground that was 25 ft. deep and at least 125 ft. wide. An AF pilot flying over Fairfield at the time, noticed a flash from the ground. "Immediately thereafter there was a mushrooming, billowing, grayish black cloud of smoke which shot skyward...to 7,000 feet...it looked like a picture of the atom bomb, only on a smaller scale."¹



The Western Star, July 20, 1950

The Western Star photographer Herbert Schwartz was one of the first to arrive on the scene. He observed that "there were no visible signs of any parts of an aircraft, just a great opening in the middle of a large field. Loose dirt was scattered all over the area for probably 50 feet around the hole." Onlookers can be seen at the top left, which gives perspective on the massive size of this crater.

story continues on next page

The Mason Historical Society and Alverta Green Museum are located in the heart of downtown Mason, Ohio. Established over 40 years ago, the Society's aim is to create, promote and preserve the history and heritage of Mason.

TO SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER

Join the Mason Historical Society at
Masonhistoricalsociety.org
or Call 513-398-6750

New Museum Hours

The Museum is now open Thursdays only from 2-8 pm. We hope the addition of evening hours will allow more opportunities for visits. Museum tours outside these hours will still be available by appointment.

B-50 Bomber Crash, cont.

The B-50 was obliterated, and the scene was grisly. Wreckage, baggage and body parts were strewn for more than a half mile; some wreckage was found almost three miles away. It was horribly obvious that there were no survivors.

The Mason Fire Dept. was the first rescue unit to reach the scene, followed shortly afterward by the Lebanon Fire Dept.² The crash site was quickly becoming chaotic. There wasn't much the local rescuers could do because of the intense heat from the burning fires scattered across the crater. Additionally, occasional explosions of .50 caliber ammunition from the wreckage would send them diving for cover. Adding to the chaos, upwards of 5000 onlookers were arriving by the carloads to the crash site, blocking traffic for miles. Frieda Koehler, mother of five-year-old Carolyn, filmed a short home movie of the crash site aftermath.

The crash happened on Mattie (nee Beedle) Bishop's farm on Hamilton Rd., 1/4 mile west of Rte. 741. Mattie's great nephew, 23-year-old Ralph Spaeth of Mason, drove out to the site with his father to help in whatever way he could. He found that very nearly all of the windows in Mattie's house were shattered, and the barn doors were blown off. (Mattie was eventually reimbursed \$12,000 (\$132,000 today) by the government for damages and loss of farm land. Due to the excessive amount of metal in the ground, the land was unable to be farmed for many years.)

Within a few hours after the crash, officials and rescue crews from Wright-Patterson AF Base in Dayton arrived. They quickly "shut down" the scene and barred all locals from the site. The wreckage burned for four hours before being extinguished.

The day after the crash, the official story out of Biggs was that the plane was on a routine training mission and carried practice bombs. AF personnel soon began the process of trying to figure out the cause of the crash. This was a monumental task. The sheer quantity of the debris pieces ("blown to bits" as reported by the *Dayton Daily News*³) was staggering.

But it soon became clear to everyone on Hamilton Rd. that the AF had a more pressing objective than the cause of the crash...they were looking for something. Clamshell diggers and bulldozers were brought in to search through the crash

site. They implored area residents to turn over any debris that was "borrowed" from the scene. One unconfirmed report states that a parade of concrete trucks dumped their loads, one after another into the crater. About a week or two after the crash, the large hole was filled in with dirt from a nearby hillside.



The caption for this *Cincinnati Enquirer* photo read: "Mason firemen pour water on blazing wreckage. Demolished nose of plane can be seen at left."

Locals claimed that the AF came back at least once, possibly twice, in the years after the crash to continue their search.⁴ An unconfirmed report stated that the State of Ohio would send someone out every year for 20 years to take well water samples.

A few years after the crash, the AF changed their story about practice bombs causing the huge explosion, and claimed hydrogen and oxygen tanks were responsible. At one point in the 1970s, the AF claimed that the crash never happened.⁴

In 1981, the Dept. of Defense (DOD) declassified documents,

which confirmed that this crash was an accident involving a U.S. nuclear weapon, but emphatically stated that there was "no nuclear capsule aboard."⁵ This info was shared with Congress, but not Hamilton Rd. residents.

After decades of denials and changing stories from the AF, in 1995 (under pressure from *The Columbus Dispatch* who investigated the crash for an article) they acknowledged that the bomber was indeed carrying a Mark IV atomic bomb. (This was similar to the "Fat Man" bomb, which was



Mark IV bomb which used a 2,830 lb. steel casing.

dropped on Nagasaki, Japan in 1945.) The bomb, thankfully, did not have its "physics package" installed. The physics package is what contains the plutonium core, which when imploded by high explosives (HE), causes the chain reaction necessary for a nuclear explosion. This Mark IV did however contain its HE, which accounted for the tremendous explosion and mushroom cloud.

The physics package may not have been installed, but to this day it is not known whether the bomber had it onboard. As long as this component is not installed in the bomb, it cannot cause an atomic reaction,

story continues on next page



This land is today owned by the State of Ohio Bureau of Prisons. It is a "No Trespassing" zone.

B-50 Bomber Crash, cont.

but it would've contained plutonium, which would've dispersed fragments at the crash site.

The Columbus Dispatch reported that AF officials maintained the physics package was not on the plane.⁴ The newspaper utilized the Freedom of Information Act to request additional documentation but received only a heavily-censored crash report. (This author has recently received a copy of the declassified and uncensored crash report from the 1950 investigation. While it is very interesting reading, nowhere in the report does it state that there was an atomic bomb onboard.)

Frieda Koehler, later found a briefcase full of maps in her yard, which she turned over to the AF. She also found a loose, torn piece from a map, which she kept. The scrap shows Glasgow, Scotland, which just happened to have a NATO air base. Was the plane on a secret mission to deliver its nuclear bomb to the UK? Given the AF's changing stories and denials over these many years, this appears to be a very likely scenario, but with so many unanswered questions, we will likely never know what really happened.



Frieda Koehler and husband, James, give their witness statements to investigators. James had been out plowing in the fields and narrowly avoided becoming a casualty.

NEVER FORGET

These officers and airmen who were victims of the crash, gave their lives in service to our country. They were not from here, but they will forever be honorary native sons of Warren County.

Cpt. John Samuel Adams, Jr., 27
Cpt. Paul E. Anderson, Jr., 29
Sgt. Alcide Danos, 22
T/Sgt. Burnham Wade Diggle, Jr., 29
1st Lt. John Joseph Jarnot, 27
1st Lt. Harvey E. Martin, 26
Sgt. Russell E. Moore, 22
PFC George Leroy Morton, 21
S/Sgt. Thomas James Mullen, 22
T/Sgt. Charles W. Pickett, Jr., 30
S/Sgt. Andrew Preston Robinson, 25
Sgt. Eulis Eugene Smith, 40
S/Sgt. James Meador Tennille, Jr., 34
S/Sgt. Wallace O. Timmons, 27
Sgt. James A. Travis, 29
T/Sgt. Joseph Veid, 28



Capt. Paul Anderson (far left), navigator on the doomed flight was a decorated WWII veteran, a loving husband and father to four young children. Shown here with Audie Murphy (far right) at a September, 1947 banquet honoring medal recipients.

MHS 2021 PROGRAMS

FATAL FLIGHT & THE NUCLEAR SCARE IN MASON

SAVE-THE-DATE – WED. SEPTEMBER 15TH, 2021

Please mark your calendars. The location will be announced in the August newsletter.

Sally Sherman Caudill, author, designer, researcher and newsletter editor, will be giving an in-depth look at the crash.

Program highlights:

- Uncensored Crash Report
- 8mm Crash Site Video
- Photos and previously unpublished details
- Special guest speaker, Ron Hoffmann from Wright-Patt – Ballistic Missile Division will discuss area military plane crashes over the years.
- Display of Crash Artifacts

Wednesday, Sept. 15 at 7 pm
RSVP: 513-398-6750, or email
Masonhistoricalsociety.org

This large piece of fuselage is one of the artifacts that will be on display.



¹AF Crash Report (uncensored), Wright-Patterson AF Base Archives, Aug. 18, 1951.

²*The Cincinnati Enquirer*, July 14, 1950.

³Dayton Daily News, July 14, 1950.

⁴*Columbus Dispatch*, Oct. 17, 1995.

⁵Dept. of Defense, "Narrative Summaries of Accidents Involving Nuclear Weapons," 1950-1980. *The Western Star*, July 20, 1950.

Many thanks to the following: Carolyn (Koehler) Sargent; Dwight Rowe (Warren County Historical Society); Ron Hoffman (Wright-Patt AF base, Ballistic Missile Division); Roger Snell; Ralph Spaeth; and Walter Anderson. This article would not have been possible without their knowledge, their stories and their willingness to share.

THE STORY OF ENOCH HARKER

Gina Burton Arens, Editor

Sometimes we see entries in Rose Marie Springman's book *Around Mason* that are so odd and puzzling that we are compelled to investigate further. Such is the case with the comments made in Eliza Nixon's diary entry in 1867.

Eliza Nixon, the wife of Dr. J.T. (John Troutman) Nixon was an avid Mason diarist. Rose Marie quoted Eliza's diary often. She reported on social activities, triumphs and tragedies but never commented on city government, although her husband served on council and was once mayor.

On April 10th Eliza recorded: "Mr. Harker was buried on this day. The guests who were invited to his wedding on that day followed him to his grave. She committed suicide." Intrigued by these comments, further investigation was in order.

Enoch Harker was born on June 28, 1804, in Ocean Grove, New Jersey to Daniel W. Harker and Rachel Ann Snover. On February 21, 1826, at age 21, he married Christiana Sheets in Salem County, New Jersey. Enoch and Christiana moved to Butler County, Ohio in 1830. By this time, they had two sons, David and Charles. They were to have seven more children after arriving in Ohio, four boys, William, Daniel, Enoch and Isaac and three girls, Sarah, Hannah, and Christiana.

According to Rose Marie's book, Enoch Harker was elected a trustee of the Mason Methodist Church in 1837.

Later, he was mentioned in an *Enquirer* article as a United Brethren Preacher and a doctor. By 1860 Enoch had moved to Goshen Township in Clermont County. Sadly, his wife, Christiana died the following year on April 13, 1861, at age 56.

On May 4, 1867, a Columbus newspaper, the Daily Ohio Statesman, reported that Enoch Harker had committed suicide by taking a lethal dose of laudanum, a common over the counter medicine of the day used for a variety of ailments but principally for pain and as a cough suppressant.

The day before Enoch's alleged "suicide", he had applied for a license to marry Rachel F. Hughes, age 40 in Clermont County. Due to his untimely demise on his wedding day at 62 years, 9 months and 13 days, it is unlikely the marriage took place. He was buried in Shiloh Cemetery in Goshen Township next to his first wife Christiana.

I believe it is unlikely he committed suicide and not sure why his death was reported as such. It is more likely that Enoch accidentally overdosed on his cough/pain medicine and thus his untimely death occurred. Eliza's diary entry meant to report "he" had committed suicide not "she". And that, my friends, is the rest of the story!



Enoch Harker,
date unknown

Ancestry.com
Around Mason, Ohio: A Story, RM Springman

THIS MONTH IN MASON HISTORY

Excerpt from *Around Mason, Ohio: A Story*, Rose Marie Springman

1798: On July 15, 1798, John Briney paid \$1,920 for 640 acres, Section 36 in the township, to John Cleves Symmes. He also bought Section 6 just west of Section 36. John Briney was unable to meet his contract with John Cleves Symmes for Section 36 in Deerfield Township and on June 1, 1803, at the Cincinnati courthouse William Mason had his bid of \$1,700 accepted for the same 640 acres. The Briney family continued to live in the area for many years and in 1804 John Briney married Hannah Demop. **Editor's note: If John Briney had retained ownership of the 640 acres which William Mason later purchased, Mason would certainly have a different name.....maybe "Brineyville"!*

1880: On July 11 the new Methodist Church in Mason was dedicated by Dr. Leonard.

1908: The village marshal was instructed in July to enforce the ordinance controlling the speed of street cars and automobiles in the corporation.

1912: Ordinance 154 was read and passed by the Mason council on July 8. It allowed to S. S. Wyer "the right to lay pipes, mains and other appliances in the streets, lanes and other public places within the corporate limits of the village of Mason for the purpose of conveying and supplying natural gas to consumers thereof." A second ordinance was passed fixing the price that could be charged for natural gas.

1930: The July 23 meeting of the village council was limited to the effects of the great fire. The officials agreed that all new fire equipment would be purchased to replace that damaged in the east end fire.

1950: July 13th, Boeing B-50 Bomber crashed on the Bishop farm north of Mason. See feature story pages 1-3.

1952: The annual firemen's fete was held on the last Saturday in July. Afterward the men passed a motion to pay an annual "donation" of \$75 to the company's president, \$50 to the secretary and \$25 to the treasurer. In late summer Richard Fussner was accepted as a member of the force.

Around Mason, Ohio: A Story (Bicentennial Edition) is available for purchase at the Alverta Green Museum.

The Board Report

Jay Meibers, President



Amazing how quickly time goes by once we hit Memorial Day. One day it is May 31 then before you know it September has arrived. I always thought it was due to being out of school for the summer, but it hasn't changed as years have passed.

The good news is the cicada invasion is about done and the Reds are still in the hunt. Seems odd that when the cicadas hit their peak the Reds went on to sweep both the Cardinals and Brewers on the road for the first time in eons. Could there be a connection? I guess we will find out after the cicadas head back to their 17-year nap!

A "MANUFACTURED" MASON LOVE STORY

Sally Sherman Caudill, Contributing Editor

After our story on Deerfield Manufacturing ran in the May newsletter, I heard through the grapevine that the company inadvertently played a role in an enduring Mason love story. Well, this was catnip to me and I needed to find out more...

In the summer of 1956 or 1957, a tall, young accountant by the name of Ronald Jerome Goulet showed up in Mason for a summer job at Deerfield Manufacturing. "Ron" hailed from the small town of Scobey, Montana, 1,500 miles away. The 25-year-old, Korean War Air Force veteran, had heard about the job from John Vandenberg, a WWII Army vet from his hometown, who had moved to Mason after the war.

Jobs were nonexistent in Scobey, and Ron who grew up in a large, poor, farming family, was looking for something more. His father had died when he was 13, and he felt a keen responsibility to help out his widowed mother. Little did he realize where this determination would lead him.

Lydia Zachman, a co-worker of Ron's at Deerfield, thought he might be a good match for her W. Church St. neighbor, Barb Campbell. She was a 1951 Mason grad, who had moved to town in the 1940s with her parents, sister Gloria, and brother Dan (known far and wide, as "Zeke"). By all appearances, Ron and Barb must have looked like opposites; Ron was quiet and reserved, Barb was chatty and outgoing. However, Lydia obviously saw something and set the young couple up on a blind date.

That blind date led to another and another, and it soon became clear that Ron was not going to return to Montana at the end of the summer.

June was a busy month for the Historical Society. On June 3 we set up a booth downtown for the first Music in Mason night. We had many visitors while enjoying good music on a nice evening. The next morning many Board members and volunteers worked on the landscaping at the museum. The Ice Cream Social occurred on June 14 with a nice crowd on what turned out to be a pleasant evening. Thanks to all who made it a successful event!

I also want to thank the many members who renewed their 2021 memberships in the past month. Just a reminder that if you have not renewed for 2021 by the end of July we will revise our Newsletter mailing lists reflecting only 2021 renewed members. If you are not sure if you have renewed for 2021 or not then please send an email to the museum or leave a voice message and we will get back with you.

Wishing all of you an enjoyable Summer!

In June of 1958, Ron and (newly-converted) Barb were married in the priest's chapel at St. Susanna. Their first home was an apartment in the old Miller funeral home at the far west end of W. Main St. Except for one short year in Asheville, NC, they spent the rest of their lives in the Mason area. For most of those years, they lived on the street where their romance started, W. Church St. It was there that they raised their three children: Jeff, Cindy (Meibers) and Rod.



"Just Married" – Barb and Ron Goulet, June, 1958.

Even though he never went back to Montana to live, Ron never forgot his resolve to help his mother. Cindy, his daughter, recalled that every Sunday her dad would write out a check and mail it to his mother. He would do this weekly without fail, until her death in 1990.

In 2001, this devoted son, husband and father passed away at the age of 68. He and Barb enjoyed 43 years of marriage, love and laughter; all made possible by Deerfield "Cupid" Manufacturing.

ICE CREAM SOCIAL SUCCESS!

We are pleased to report a wonderful turnout for our annual Ice Cream Social and Bake Sale Fundraiser in June, generating almost \$1700 for the Historical Society. Perfect weather, scrumptious ice cream, 42 delicious donations, and an entertaining auctioneer made for a most enjoyable evening. We extend a huge thanks to Culver's for once again providing us with their delectable custard. A special thanks to Sue Erbeck Rapp for coordinating the details of the event, as well as all other volunteers who helped including many of our Board members. We also want to thank Larry Jeffers and his son who set up the tent which worked out perfectly. We especially appreciate the time and talents of Gene Steiner, our auctioneer, for his professional assistance and entertaining commentary. Finally, we would like to recognize all those who donated bakery items, coupons and participated in the event. The success of our programs and events would not be possible without the endless support of our members!



42 delicious desserts (and coupons) were auctioned.



"Sold!" Gene Steiner charmed and entertained the audience.



FOURTH OF JULY TRIVIA QUIZ

- 1 Where was the first celebration of Independence Day held?
- 2 Every Independence Day, how many times does the Liberty Bell ring?
- 3 Which American president was born on July 4th?
- 4 Which president of the United States was the first to host a Fourth of July celebration at the White House?
- 5 Every July 4th, what food is most commonly consumed?
- 6 Which two presidents of the United States died on July 4th of the same year?
- 7 What was the estimated population of the United States on July 4, 1776?
- 8 What is the location of the nation's oldest Fourth of July parade?
- 9 In what year were fireworks first used to celebrate the Fourth of July?
- 10 Which country declared independence from the United States on July 4, 1960?

Parade.com

Answers below

- Answers:
 1. Philadelphia
 2. 13
 3. Calvin Coolidge
 4. Thomas Jefferson
 5. Hot Dogs
 6. John Adams and Thomas Jefferson
 7. 2.5 million people
 8. Bristol, Rhode Island
 9. 1777
 10. Philippines

MUSEUM VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Seeking friendly, part-time volunteers to help with our Museum open hours which are Thursdays from 2-8 pm. Shifts are typically 2-5pm and 5-8pm but we can work to accommodate your schedule. Volunteering for one or two Thursdays a month would help a lot! Volunteers greet and welcome visitors, answer telephone calls, and may assist with small jobs around the Museum. If you are interested in volunteering call the Museum at 398-6750 or email us at mason.oh.historical@gmail.com and someone will contact you.

MUSIC IN MASON BOOTH

The MHS had an opportunity to show off some of our musical artifacts in our booth at Music in Mason on June 4. Look for our booth again on July 30th!




Jay Meibers, left, presents an honorarium check to Vedarsh Shah, right.

CHECK PRESENTATION

Jay Meibers, President of the Mason Historical Society, presented a \$1,000 honorarium to Vedarsh Shah for his four years of support of the historical society during his Mason High School years. Vedarsh was responsible for completely revamping our digital presence by improving and updating our website, developing eCommerce solutions for online membership enrollment and gift item sales, also invaluable technical assistance on many other projects. According to Jay Meibers, “Vedarsh is a humble and kind personality wrapped up with a get it done work ethic with incredible technical skills.” We will most certainly miss Vedarsh! He will be attending Duke University this fall.



 We recently learned of the passing of **Mark Merrill Johnson**, 67, who joined our MHS family just a year ago. Mark was the son of Kenneth “Paul” Johnson, a long-time Society member and a graduate of the MHS class of 1942; and was the grandson of Merrill “Beebe” Johnson, Mason’s rural mail carrier from 1921-1964.

Mark died suddenly from a car accident in Lancaster, California on June 8, 2021. He was retired from the L.A. County Coroner’s office after working for 32 years as the Head of Forensic Photography and Support Services.

We offer our sincere condolences to his father, wife Cathy, siblings Candy Johnson, Beth Martinez and Jim Johnson and his entire family and many friends for their heartbreaking loss.



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

- Tim Hill
- Rodney Goulet
- Larry Meibers
- Bobby Robbins
- Denise Uhl
- Michele Uhl

LANDSCAPING REFRESH

A big thank you goes out to our landscaping crew last month who helped spruce up the grounds of the Alverta Green Museum.



Helpers included *front row (L-R):* Jeff Raines, Jay and Cindy Meibers, *back row:* Missy Courts, Darlene Henn, Dennis Courts, Ray Mueller, Perry Denehy and Sue Rapp. Not pictured, Lou Rapp and Chris Henn.

BUSINESS MEMBERS *and* PARTNERS

LIFETIME MEMBERS

Air Authority Heating and Air Conditioning
Al's Heating and Cooling
American Legion, Post 194
American Legion Auxiliary Unit 194
Brunk Excavating, Inc.
Chris Champ – State Farm agent
Jeff Hill Video
Mitsubishi Electric Automotive
People's First Savings Bank
R.E. Middleton Construction LLC
Senour-Flaherty Insurance
Shorten and Ryan Funeral Home
Voorhis, Slone, Welsh and Crossland, Architects
Walldogs – Mason Sign Company
Yost Pharmacy, Inc.

BUSINESS MEMBERS

Artis Senior Living of Mason
Lt. Robt. N. Mount V.F.W.
9622 Aux.
Mason Bowl, Inc.
Mason Health Care Center
Minuteman Press of Lebanon
Mueller Funeral Home
Terry's Lawn Care, Inc.
Warren County Historical Society
16 Lots Brewing Co.

PARTNERS

City of Mason
Culver's – Mason
LaRosa's – Mason
Mason City Schools
Mason Community Grange
No.1680
Mason-Deerfield Chamber
Mason Public Library

