

Merlo, Samuel J.

Lieut. Samuel Merlo, Nazareth, Listed As Prisoner Of War

MAY 19 1944

The best birthday present that a father could receive in the war-torn world of today was given to Charles Merlo, 255 South New Street, Nazareth, when word was received that his son, Second Lieutenant Samuel J. Merlo, who had been missing in action since April 13, is alive and a German prisoner of war.

The fact that his son had been missing in action was kept from Mr. Merlo by his family, in consideration of his failing health, as he has been a semi-invalid for the past eight years. Yesterday, however, when a telegram was received from Dunlop, Acting Adjutant General, saying that "report just received through International Red Cross states your son Second Lieutenant Samuel J. Merlo is a prisoner of war of the German government. Letter of information follows from Provost Marshal General," the news was gently broken to him. Today marks the 68th anniversary of Mr. Merlo's birth, and the knowledge that his son is alive and well, although a prisoner of war, acts better than a strengthening tonic might.

Hope burns anew in the heart of Mrs. Merlo as telegram bearing the news of her son's safety came as a somewhat belated, but very welcome Mother's Day greeting. Last evening she and her family held a joyous reunion, talking happily of the past achievements of Lt. Merlo and looking forward hopefully toward the time when he may be released to come home.

Though only 22 years old, Lieut. Merlo had a career that took him from the Pacific front to the European theatre of war. He enlisted in August, 1940, and was at the West Point Prep school in Hawaii when Pearl Harbor was bombed, causing the school to be abandoned.

Later he was sent to the Army Air Base at Santa Ana, Calif., where he was commissioned on April 17, 1942. He went to Texas for advanced training and in October of last year was sent to England, becoming aerial navigator on the Flying Fortress which as the "Ham on Rye" had made 24 missions, according to the last letter he wrote his parents under date of April 2.

On January 30 of this year, the Fortress, while on a mission, was hit by flak and the pilot and Navigator Merlo brought the craft back to base, though both were wounded. Merlo received the Purple Heart and the Air Medal for this service.

He graduated from Nazareth with the class of 1939.



LIEUT. SAMUEL J. MERLO

A letter of commendation awarded him, signed by Dale O. Smith, Colonel, Air Corps, Commanding, dated April 20, 1944, was received by the Merlos. It reads: "Although you failed to return from our last mission over Germany on April 13, 1944, I take pleasure in being able to commend you for your meritorious achievement on that date. Your performance of duty on that important mission was superior. In spite of heavy fighter and flak opposition you coolly accomplished your duties as Navigator. By your skillful airmanship and courage you enabled our Group and Wing to deal a vital blow to the enemy. It is through such acts that we are able to continually press home our blows to the enemy and assures us of ultimate victory."

The courage, coolness and skill displayed by you reflects great credit upon yourself, the 384th Bombardment Group, AAF, the Army Air Forces, and the armed forces of the United States. As commanding officer of the 384th Bombardment Group, AAF, I speak for its entirety in saying that we are proud of you for your gallant actions; we sincerely hope you are safe and that we shall again be able to fly with you wing to wing."

It has also been reported that the Bombardier, Leonard Griffith, of New York City, and the Co-Pilot, "Scotty" Brisley, of the "Ham-on-Rye" are also prisoners of war in Germany.

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