

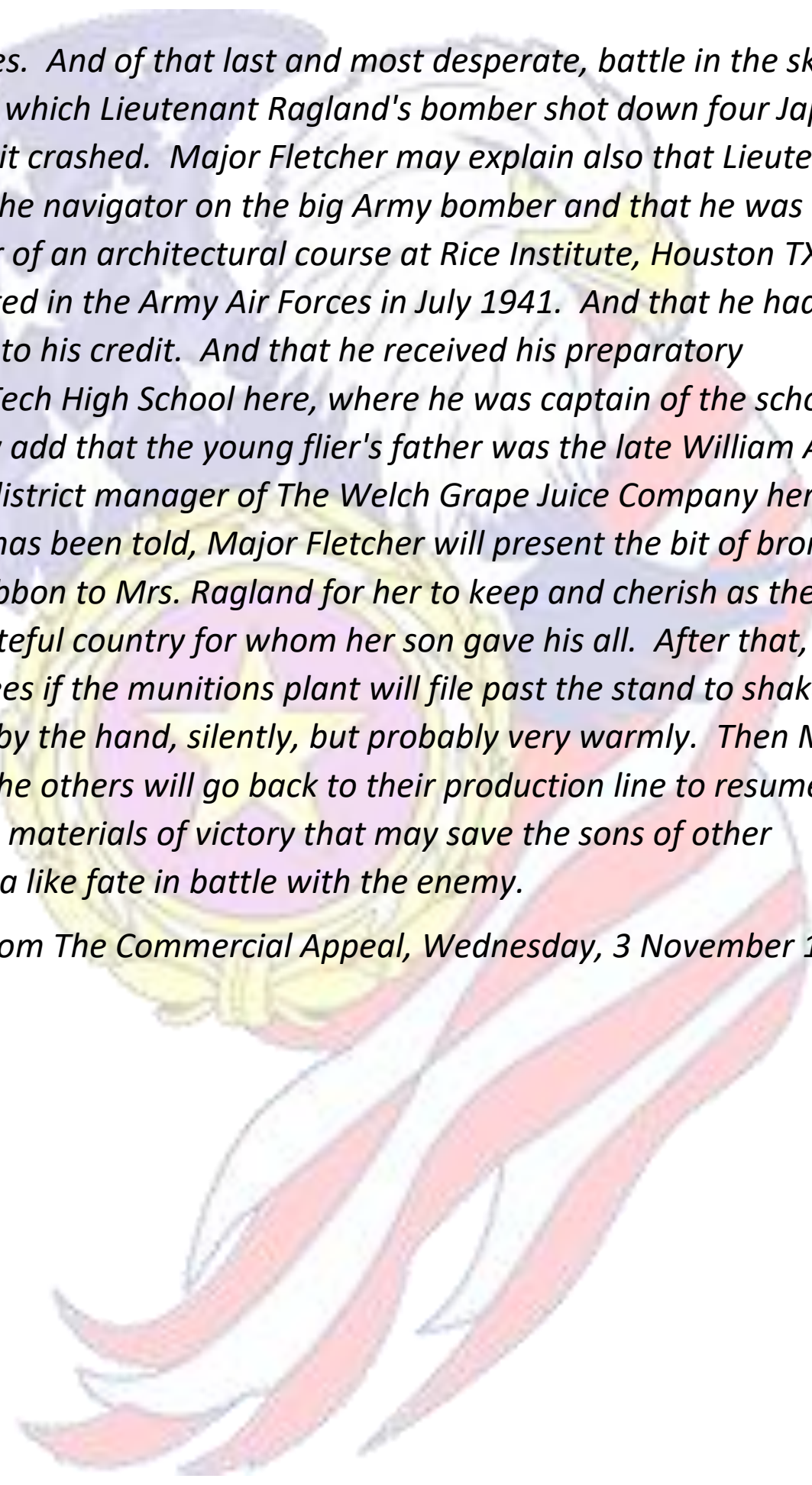
William Andrew Ragland, Jr., T-37

8 January 1920 – 13 March 1943

(aged 23)



Mrs. William A. Ragland Sr. who works seven days a week on the production line at the National Fireworks Company plant near Cordova as she makes materials for America's fighting men, will pause in her work today. The interval will be just long enough for her to receive the Distinguished Flying Cross, awarded posthumously to her son, Lieutenant William A Ragland, Jr., of the Army Air Forces. He died in action, shot down from the skies over Burma while leading a raid over Japanese positions last March. The brief ceremony will take place at the plant at 2:30 p.m. as all work stops for a few minutes and other employees look on. The medal will be presented by Major Eugene Fletcher, of the Fourth Ferrying Group here, who will be introduced by Captain Russell Gohring, public relations officer. Ed H. Luce, resident manager of the National Fireworks Company, will preside. The invocation will be offered by the Rev. William L. Wheeler, pastor of Cordova Presbyterian Church. Major Fletcher will read the War Department's citation for the decoration, which had been recommended for Lieutenant Ragland shortly before his death. He doubtless will tell, too, of how Lieutenant Ragland had already won the Air Medal, being personally decorated by General Arnold, chief of the



Army Air Forces. And of that last and most desperate, battle in the skies over Burma in which Lieutenant Ragland's bomber shot down four Jap Zeroes before it crashed. Major Fletcher may explain also that Lieutenant Ragland was the navigator on the big Army bomber and that he was in his fourth year of an architectural course at Rice Institute, Houston TX, when he enlisted in the Army Air Forces in July 1941. And that he had 288 combat hours to his credit. And that he received his preparatory education at Tech High School here, where he was captain of the school's band. He may add that the young flier's father was the late William A. Ragland, Sr., district manager of The Welch Grape Juice Company here. When all this has been told, Major Fletcher will present the bit of bronze and colored ribbon to Mrs. Ragland for her to keep and cherish as the token of a grateful country for whom her son gave his all. After that, the other employees of the munitions plant will file past the stand to shake Mrs. Ragland by the hand, silently, but probably very warmly. Then Mrs. Ragland and the others will go back to their production line to resume fashioning the materials of victory that may save the sons of other mothers from a like fate in battle with the enemy.

Information from The Commercial Appeal, Wednesday, 3 November 1943.