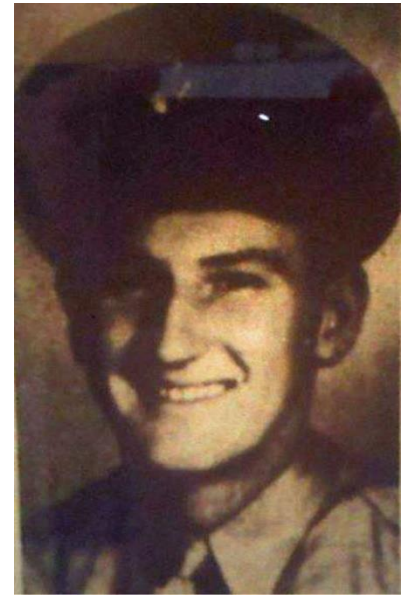


Paul Bell Slankard, T-38

3 June 1921 – 2 November 1981

(aged 60)



MEMPHIAN BOMBS NAZIS: AWARDED THE AIR MEDAL

A Memphis Flying Fortress bombardier has won a medal for bombing the Germans over Western Europe. He is Staff Sgt. Paul B. Slankard, 23, son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Slankard, 2391 Lamar, who last week was awarded the Air Medal by the Eighth Army Air Forces headquarters in London. Sgt Slankard, a native of Memphis, is a graduate of Tech High, where he played halfback on the football team. He had served a three-year enlistment in the Army before the Pearl Harbor attack and when the war began, he re-listed within a week. Trained as a bombardier, he was transferred to England in September. On a recent picture of himself Sgt Slankard sent home to his mother; he wrote "your baby Paul." Said his mother: "It is front news in my book when my baby does something like that (winning the medal.)"

Information from The Press-Scimitar, Tuesday, December 29, 1942.

WAR MIRACLE: GIVEN UP FOR DEAD, LIVES

Staff Sergeant Slankard Comes Home After Months in English Hospital

The days of miracles are not past. If you think they are, Staff Sergeant Paul Slankard, 21, Memphis bomber gunner, will tell you are wrong. His

buddies said he is a "walking, talking miracle" and he is willing to admit it. Son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Slankard, 2391 Lamar, arrived home last night after spending more than five months in an American Army Hospital in England. Before entering the hospital, he went on 44 bombing missions as tail gunner on a B-24 Liberator Bomber, first stationed in England, then North Africa, then in the Middle East and finally back in England. He has to his credit 11 enemy fighter planes, confirmed, and eight probables. He has the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Purple Heart, the Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters, besides a hatful of campaign ribbons and several group citations, several of which came from King George of England. Swarms of Germans and then there was the "Miracle," his last mission. The target was a group of German submarine pens. As the crew took off they were told to look for heavy opposition. Swarms of German fighters met them over the North Sea before they struck the German coast. As the first enemy planes came in for the attack, Paul, from his tail turret of the "Shoot Luke," downed a Focke-Wuff. He shot down two more enemy planes before they reached their target. On the way back the "Shoot Luke" was trying to protect another crippled Liberator whose co-pilot was the former co-pilot of the "Shoot Luke." Then a swarm of Heinkel's came in for the kill. Coming up from the front and underneath, a German got a perfect deflection angle on the "Shoot Luke," ripped her with string of 20mm explosive cannon shells from one to the other. One shell wounded the bombardier and the navigator. Another wounded both waist gunners. Then there was the shell destined for Paul, the tail gunner. An armor piercing explosive, struck his seat, ricocheted and struck Paul squarely in the left hip, and after entering his body, exploded. The explosion knocked out the tunnel gunner several feet away. It blew Paul thru the top of his tail turret and it was only one ankle that caught in some of his gun mechanism that held him attached to the plane. Here he

dangled in the whipstream of the plane, being hammered up and down by the wind, at almost 30,000 feet. The radio operator first tried to help him. Then came the engineer. An emergency oxygen mask was put over Paul's face. They tried to give him first aid, but there wasn't much they could do. The hole in his hip was big enough to put a hat in. The blast that blew him thru the turret top broke his collar bone, four ribs, and his right ankle was broken from the weight of his body hanging on it when he went out the top. They poured sulfanilamide into the gaping hole and that was all. If the German fighters had returned to attack, the "Shoot Luke" would have been a perfect target. All her guns were out. There were six wounded men aboard. It was two hours and 45 minutes before the "Shoot Luke" landed. "Every second seemed like two full hours," Paul said today, "and I was fully conscious all the time." Back at the base, the squadron surgeon took a look, shook his head. He gave first aid, loaded Paul in a plane, sent him to a base hospital. Here the fight began. Paul remained conscious long enough to give information about his family. Then they put him to sleep. For two months his life hung by a thread. Doctors said he couldn't live, but he did. Weeks after the fight the doctor came in and said, "Well, Paul, it looks like you are going to live." Said Paul today, "I had prayed nine thousand times that I'd live to get home and see mother. Now I want to sit on her lap and cry like a little baby." And that is only part of the "miracle" Paul can walk. Doctors grafted pieces of bone in the hip to replace shattered bones. They grafted and regrafted flesh to fill the huge gaping hole. After a 30-day furlough he must go back for more grafting of flesh. But today, at home he stood up and walked to meet friends who poured in to see him. Going up the stairs to the porch, he refused help. He made it too, by helping with his hands. Paul was perfectly willing to tell his story but insisted that the war was full of such stories. "We aren't heroes, and we don't want glory. I had to

drive myself to keep from quitting sometimes. The only thing that kept me going was the thought of my family. When I went to Europe I didn't amount to much. I even had to prove to myself that I was a man. "All the boys overseas ask for is faith and cooperation from the folks back home. Many of the boys are afraid of the job they are doing but they do it. Information from The Press-Scimitar, Saturday, September 11, 1943.

He walks on a "new" living leg rebuilt with grafted bone and flesh after it was shattered by a German explosive shell. He is Paul Slankard, bomber gunner, 2391 Lamar, recovering from flirtation with death after 44 bombing missions in which he shot down 11 planes for sure and probably eight more. The shell exploded in his hip, blew him thru the turret, leaving him dangling outside the plane by an ankle.

Information from The Press-Scimitar, Saturday, September 18, 1943.

