



Former Olympian buried in Columbus City

By Mary Masonholder Wilson
Gazette Staff

As the summer Olympics have just drawn to a conclusion in London, England, local people of this area need to be reminded that we have a bit of Olympic history in our Columbus City Cemetery.

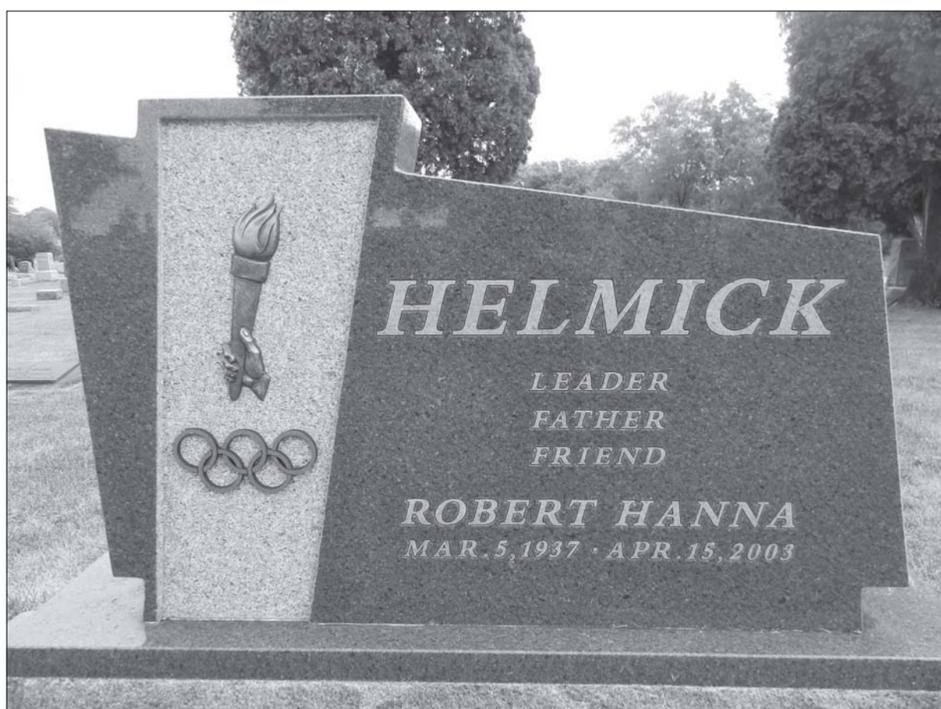
Robert Hanna Helmick is buried in Columbus City in the area with the other Helmick family members. Robert H. Helmick was once the president of the United States Olympic Committee. His tombstone bears both the Olympic rings and the Olympic torch.

Helmick was born on March 5, 1937 in Des Moines, Iowa. He lived the majority of his life there and attended Drake University, receiving his bachelor's degree in math and music. In 1960, he graduated from Drake Law School as valedictorian and was editor of the law review.

In high school, Helmick played water polo, and he continued to do so during his life. In 1972, he received his first Olympic experience by managing the United States water polo team in Munich, Germany, where they received the bronze medal.

In 1976, he was named secretary of the international swimming federation, which goes by the acronym FINA. In 1984, he was elected its president, serving until 1988. From 1978 to 1980, he was president of the Amateur Athletic Union.

In 1985, Helmick became president of the United States Olympic Committee. As president, "Helmick was known as an innovator. He pushed for a change in the rules so athletes could receive financial support while training."



His position as US Olympic President ended in 1991. All along, Helmick continued his ties with Drake University. His childhood home actually was on the Drake University campus. Robert's father, Paul S. Helmick, was the former head of the Drake physics department and a part of the Drake faculty from 1923 to 1964. Dorothy H. Helmick taught mathematics at Drake from 1954 to 1960. Other Helmick family members also attended Drake and received a total of 14 degrees from the school.

Then, too, there is now an area at Drake University called "Helmick

Commons". It is outside and includes a patio area, wetlands, parking, and landscaping of the area. It is a place for students to "get outside, a place to be proud of, and a meeting place for students."

Paul and Dorothy Helmick, Robert's parents, are buried in the Columbus City Cemetery as Paul's family was originally from this area. There are still Helmick relatives currently living in CJ. Robert Helmick died of cardiac failure at Iowa Methodist Medical Center in Des Moines in April of 2003. He was 66 years of age. He chose to be buried in the

quiet cemetery of Columbus City near his parents. He loved this area and its quaint farms, which is supposedly why he bought a farm outside of Des Moines. Even though this farm was not his permanent residence, he loved to go there and experience nature. His wife, Georgia, and four children survive him.

The 2012 Olympics are over; however Robert H. Helmick, former president of the United States Olympic Committee, will forever be buried in the Columbus City Cemetery. (info from Drakepedia website)

The Story of Lawrence Herrick Chapter 7

By Mary Masonholder Wilson
Gazette Staff

In our last chapter, Major Lawrence Herrick's plane exploded right after he had strafed a locomotive to a train carrying in German supplies. Herrick made a low pass and with his four 0.50 machine-guns, he blew up the boiler of the locomotive, and it exploded right underneath his plane. After the pass, he started a chandelle to the left, released two bombs to no specific target (which is important to note) and climbed to 2500 feet. At that moment the plane just exploded. The noise of the explosion was deafening, debris and plane parts flew everywhere, and the local people of Reugny, France ran to the crash site.

Was Lawrence's body seen? Was it found? What happened after the crash?

There are, once again, different versions of this event. After our May 8, 2012 visit to Reugny, France the following is what we believe to be true, despite the fact that some people long ago say they saw him parachute from the plane and walk away.

Herrick's plane exploded and a parachute did open and fall to the earth; however all reports, especially the one from Mr. Duchemin who was 10 years old at the time guarding sheep right below the explosion, says that Herrick's body was not attached to the chute. Herrick probably was ejected from the plane by the force of the explosion, the chute opened on its own and floated to earth, and Herrick's body fell to the ground below.

What caused the explosion? Was Herrick trying to parachute from the plane? Why did he release two bombs on no particular target? Did he know something was wrong with the plane (perhaps from the locomotive explosion) or that one of

the new fused type bombs were still on board and had been damaged and exploded?

We'll never know the answers to these questions. However, most reports indicate, and we believe, that Herrick was ejected from the plane and was killed instantly.

A ways from the crash site, a sanatorium (a type of recovery hospital) was located. A lady doctor, Lucie Dezderli, ran through the timber to the crash site to see if she could help. She could tell immediately, as Lawrence Herrick lay among the grapevines, that there was nothing she could do for him. She and others moved the body out of the sun. She cut a lock of his hair and several months later sent it to the pilot's widow, Jeannette Helmick Herrick, living in Columbus Junction with her now two baby boys.

Soon Herrick's body is transported to the neighboring farm known as Bel-Air Farm. A wooden ladder is used to carry the body. A local man, Mr. Bremon and his brother go to the crash site armed with tools. When they arrive the Germans are already there. The Bremon's therefore wait for the Germans to leave before dismantling the propeller pitch mechanism and carrying it away. (This will play a part in a later chapter.)

The Germans are informed that there was a second pilot in the plane. Also, some people saw the parachute descend, but they hadn't noticed that there was no pilot attached. Nevertheless, that is all it takes for the Germans, and the next morning, the Feldkommandant of Tours issues an order stating that, "The individuals harboring the American aviator must turn him in, if not, 20 men will be shot". Another means used to spread the word is described by Michel Tricot, who tells us, "I still can see the German car pass in front of my house with the mayor, Mr. Cruche, a revolver under his nose and looking as white as snow, being forced to announce the news to the residents."

A list is made of the twenty men

to be killed if the second pilot is not produced. The father of Michel Tricot, a teacher, knows that his name is on the list of possible hostages. Some hide in the woods, as does Mr. Bodet, or inside the wells, as is the case for Mr. Simier, then 19 years old, who hides all night in a well with his brothers and sisters. The Lebeau family, who live at La Logerie on the other side of the Brenne, is alerted by the baker, Mme. Fontaine. Accompanied by their cow and their goat, they hide for two days in a cave 5 km from their home. The following day, the center of Reugny is deserted; only a few men braved the threat and remained in the village.

During the night, someone convinces the Germans that there was indeed only one pilot and that this pilot is dead. The death threat to 20 male villagers is lifted. However, the Germans want no homage paid to Major Herrick's body and want it buried as simply and quickly as possible by 15:00 hours with no one in attendance. Mr. Celestin Haguenier, the gravedigger, was immediately requisitioned to dig the grave by Mr. Delmon, the secretary of the town council.

Little do the Germans know that the brave people of Reugny have already started the plans for Major Herrick's remains. Mr. Jacques Boucher, an apprentice at the Dardard Carpenter Shop, built a coffin for the pilot. He tells that while laying the body in the coffin many residents come to place medals on the body to honor the dead pilot. Mme. Ferrand, who is present, sees a German vehicle arrive with an officer holding a revolver to the head of Mr. Cruche, the mayor. The German officer demands to see the body of the pilot. Mme. Ferrand sees the casket covered by the French flag and the German officer angrily removes it.

The French people have now made plans to hide the body from the Germans. (Once again, there are different versions. Some people say the Germans knew all along where the body was. Others say the French

people hid the body from them.) In the night, Major Herrick's body is taken from the farm to a church, a church right in the center of town; a place seen daily by everyone who lives there. His body, now in the coffin, is placed in the lowest region of the church where there is a tiny "dirt room, a room not ever used."

Our next chapter will look at the defiance of the French people of Reugny as they begin to plan a funeral in defiance of the German soldiers.

Imagine the surprise of my family this May 2012, when Mr. Duchemin showed us the wooden ladder that had been used to carry the body of Major Lawrence Herrick from the crash site to the Bel Aire Farm. Mr. Duchemin still had it! Tears came to my eyes, and somehow I could visualize these brave French village people showing deep respect and honor for a deceased man, an American pilot, a man they did not know, who was beginning to become their hero.

(As always, thanks for the wording, testimonies, and information from the people of Reugny, France who compiled this information and to Axelle Trehin, editor-in-chief. Thanks also to FORCED LANDING who is indeed the force behind all of this.)



Briefly -

CCHS 1982 Class Reunion

Attention Columbus Community Class of 1982 (and parents): Some of us have been making plans for our 30th year class reunion. We still need some addresses; if you can help – that would be great! We want to find as many classmates as possible. Our plans are: Columbus Day Weekend – Friday, October 12th at 7 p.m. meet and greet at Rumors and Excuses; Saturday, October 13th watch parade at Rumors and Excuses, 5-8 p.m. dinner at the Thirsty Camel, then go to exclusive location for a night of fun. Any questions or addresses please call Deb (Sands) Halstead at 319-750-2636.

Jack Cecil Columbus Day Car Show

The 2nd Annual Jack Cecil Columbus Day Car Show will be held on Saturday, October 13th from 8-noon, registration ends at 10 with awards at 11:15. Bring your hot rod, custom, muscle or classic car or truck, even motorcycle to join in raising money for a local family impacted by cancer. This is held in conjunction with the Columbus Day Celebration. Come join the festivities, join in the parade after and have fun with the crowd. We are asking a \$20 entry donation to help raise funds. Top 25 awards, Best of Show, special awards also. Door prizes are being sought, for more information contact Curt Larkin 641-990-4436 or curt.larkin@johnston.k12.ia.us. Special invite to the class of '82 to bring out your special rides and relive some of the "high school" spirit during your reunion!

Community Bank Travel Club

The Community Bank Travel Club will meet in the Columbus Junction Community Bank basement on Tuesday, August 28th, to get the details on the group's upcoming trip to beautiful Hawaii. Appetizers will be served at 5:30. The informational meeting with American Vision Travel will start at 6:15. You can R.S.V.P. to Carol Ann by calling 319-728-2226. Walk-ins are welcome.

Habitat for Humanity work day

Habitat for Humanity will be holding a workday at the Burlington Street address in Columbus City on Saturday, August 18th from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Those wishing to help, can show up at any time and for however long they wish.

Louisa County Tractor Ride

The 8th annual Louisa County tractor ride will be held on Saturday, August 25, 2012. The ride will be 50 miles, with a minimum speed of 10 miles per hour. The starting point is Liquid Grow in Morning Sun with enrollment time at 8:30 A.M. The roll out time is 9:00 A.M. Lunch will be at Columbus Junction sponsored by Precision Equipment and provided and served by Louisa Cattlemen's Association. For more information, contact Lee Harris 868-7872, Dan Harris 850-8188 or Dwight Schaper 728-8961.

Conservation Board to meet

The Louisa County Conservation Board will hold a regular meeting on Wednesday, August 15, 2012, at 5:30 p.m. at the Louisa County Conservation Office.

Lone Tree Fall Festival

The annual Lone Tree Fall Festival is sponsored by the Lone Tree Chamber of Commerce (P.O. Box 675, Lone Tree, Iowa 52755). This year's festival will be held on August 17-18. Events begin at 5 p.m. on Friday, and the festival closes Saturday night at 10 p.m. For more information, call 319-629-4222 and ask for Ken, Kris, Elaine or Russ. Also visit our web pages at www.lonetreeiowa.com.

Masonic Spaghetti Supper

All Masonic members are invited to a spaghetti supper served by the Eastern Star Chapter #445 prior to the regular Masonic meeting on Thursday, August 16, 2012. Serving starts at 6 p.m. Menu will be: Spaghetti, lettuce salad, bread, a variety of desserts, coffee and iced tea.

Shellbark Club to meet

The Shellbark Club will meet on Thursday, August 16th at 11:30 a.m. at the Club House golf course in Winfield.

Main Street Gifts Open House

Main St. Gifts & Antiques at 204 Main St., Columbus Jct, will be hosting an Open House on Saturday, August 18th from 5-7 pm. Melanie DeVore will be performing old folk songs on acoustic guitar from 5:30-6:00 and from 6:30-7:00. In celebration of her upcoming birthday, cake, mixed nuts and cold beverages will be served throughout the evening. Stop in and browse the shop, listen to music, enjoy some cake, and relax in the Stone Garden.

Joe Howell celebrates 50 Loyal Years with the Columbus Junction Jct. Fire Department

