

THE HOME FRONT

Places - Morris Field

Second Lt. Budd Harris Andrews – Pilot and Hero



Morris Field staff trained many pilots who did heroic things all over the world, but probably no one did anything more heroic in Charlotte than 24 year old Second Lt. Budd Andrews.

April 2, 1945 was a quiet day in Charlotte. It was “Easter Monday,” a holiday commonly celebrated then in North Carolina. Most Charlotteans were at home enjoying the beautiful spring day.

Second Lt. Budd Andrews probably had his mind on other things. He had 3 more hours of flight training left before he could leave with his pregnant wife, Elaine, to go for a two week visit with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Harry F. Andrews of York, PA. As soon as he finished this last flight and his visit home, he would be transferred to Okinawa to fight in the war.



As he was flying back in formation from the east towards Charlotte, his right engine, which he had been monitoring, started smoking. Rather than return to base as he requested, he was told to move to a more forward flight position so his buddies could escort him back to Morris Field. However, it was too late to make it back for an emergency landing. The voice from the plane’s radio told him to bail out, but he refused. His plane veered off to the right, away from the railroad tracks, paralleling Monroe Road, which the pilots were following. Neighbors witnessing the accident on the ground felt like he stayed with the plane to try to guide it towards the nearest open field, Hillcrest Golf Course, to the right of Commonwealth Avenue.



His plane’s engine fell off before impact and tore up the roof of the house at 1300 Morningside Dr. Lt. Budd Andrews was thrown from the wreckage, landing near a creek where he died instantly.

Mrs. Elaine Andrews, who was then living in an apartment at 1111 S. Tryon St., had heard the bomber fly over the city. Within an hour, she had been notified of the accident. She left Charlotte, had his baby, Brenda Andrews, and later remarried. When Mrs. Elaine Kirk died several years ago, she asked to be buried in Pennsylvania next to her first husband, whose tombstone is shown below.



Many people of the Morningside neighborhood thought this stranger had saved their lives. To memorialize his heroism, many wanted to name a new park, the former 18 acre golf course, for him. However, it was called



Veterans Park, when it opened in 1956. There was some

opposition because some felt that a facility should not be named for just one veteran, when so many had served in the military. Councilwoman Martha Evans was in support of naming the park after Andrews. The park commissioners decided not to name the park after him but agreed to place a marker in an athletic field in his honor. No ceremony happened or marker was placed.



Melvin Preston was a young boy who witnessed the crash in 1945. The memory of the heroic act performed by Andrews led him years later to raise the level of interest in obtaining a memorial plaque for this young pilot. His efforts were useless until Kays Gary, a reporter for *The Charlotte Observer*, wrote a story that brought this memory of the young pilot to the public again. Within two weeks, a bronze marker was placed in the field.

Although the first plaque was adequate, it did not give the details of the importance of Budd Andrews' actions. Commissioner Parks Helms, his staff and Sharon Preston requested that Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department put another plaque in its place with more explanation. The new plaque shown here was placed in Veterans Park in April 2003, to commemorate the anniversary of Andrews' death.



For more information, please read:

- *Charlotte's Yankee Hero Flyer Lt. Budd H. Andrews* by Clifford A. Presley and Melvin G. Preston, both eyewitnesses to the crash.
- "Remembering a Hero," *The Charlotte Observer*, 4/20/2003, 1M
- "He Flew Overhead, Stayed in their Hearts New Veterans Park Plaque Commemorates a Pilot's Act of Heroism 58 Years," *The Charlotte Observer*, 4/20/2003, 2M.

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