

# NANTICOKE LEGACY

## NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Samantha Mill House, 495 E. Main Street, Nanticoke, PA – 570-258-1367

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### NEWS:

- Breaker Paintings Highlight of LCCC Red Carpet Event
- “Celebrate Nanticoke History” Day Brings New Information
- High School Coaches Honored, Society Continues School Project
- Mystery Answer and Photos
- In Honor of Our Military
- In Memory of George E. Shern

### FEATURES:

**Hometown Hero Served in Unit Known as Merrill’s Marauders  
After 90 Years, Portrait of “Rozila” Back in Nanticoke  
City’s History Influences New Name for Former Convent**

## NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY MISSION STATEMENT:

*The object of this society is for educational, charitable, and literary purposes with a primary focus to research, preserve, develop and disseminate the history of Nanticoke, Pennsylvania. To collect artifacts, memorabilia and historical documents and facts of Nanticoke, Pennsylvania and to store such items in a central location or specific area where these articles may be preserved, appreciated and used by the citizens of Nanticoke to enhance their heritage.*

### MEETING SCHEDULE

Meetings take place at 7 p.m. the last Thursday of the month at the Samantha Mill House located next to the Mill Memorial Library.

Enter the parking lot off Kosciuszko Street.

To get directions call the society office at 570-258-1367.

### NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Samantha Mill House

(Next to the Mill Memorial Library)

Off Kosciuszko Street

495 East Main Street Nanticoke, PA 18634

570-258-1367

Our Web Site

[www.nanticokehistoryonline.org](http://www.nanticokehistoryonline.org)

Email

Office email - [history@nanticokehistoryonline.org](mailto:history@nanticokehistoryonline.org)

Newsletter email - [nanticokehistory@aol.com](mailto:nanticokehistory@aol.com)

### OFFICERS

President: Julianna Zarzycki

Vice-President/Treasurer: Chester Zaremba

### NEWSLETTER EDITOR, NEWS AND STORIES

Judith L. Minsavage

### MEMBERSHIP FEES

Individual \$20

Family \$30

Lifetime \$100.00 Individual

Please inform us of any changes in email or home mailing address

### RESEARCH

Non-member – research fee \$25 for the first hour – By Appointment.  
See our website for more information.

## SOCIETY NEWS:

# Breaker Paintings Highlight of LCCC Red Carpet Event

“It was truly a red-carpet event” Nanticoke Historical Society President, Julianna Zarzycki said after attending the Luzerne County Community College Schulman Gallery 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with Featured Exhibition “Tunnel Vision” on Friday, October 22.



A tent was set up for cocktails and hors d'oeuvres

Due to the historical content of the exhibition The Society received a special invitation.

Upon entering the large-tented area just outside the gallery, Zarzycki was greeted warmly by LCCC President, Thomas P. Leary and Schulman Gallery Curator, Robert R.



Guests enjoy paintings and memorabilia on display

The evening's program included a rededication of the Schulman Art Gallery along with a ribbon cutting ceremony and special tribute to the gallery's recently deceased founder, Dr. Norman Schulman. The highlight of the evening was an exhibition of paintings of regional coal breakers by acclaimed artist, Sue Hand. A sizeable collection of mining memorabilia was on display from the private collection of Joseph Husty Jr.



Nanticoke Historical Society President Julianna Zarzycki enters the gallery after ribbon cutting ceremony

Husty. Heaters were provided, and champagne and hors d'oeuvres were passed by servers. Photos were taken of guests on the red carpet and were posted on the college's photo site.

After the Schulman family performed the ribbon cutting ceremony, the gallery was opened to guests who took in the historical imagery artist Sue Hand describes as “Surrealistic aquarelle acrylic paintings on paper.” Each painting depicts the coal



The Schulman Gallery at Luzerne County Community College





Susquehanna #5 Coal Breaker painted by local artist, Sue Hand

breakers of the Wyoming Valley, but also holds images of people that lived during the time giving those attending a look back at when King Coal ruled the area, and families depended on the mining industry for their livelihoods. It is a fitting memorial to the lives lost in the countless mining accidents which occurred up and down the valley during the Anthracite Mining Era. Among the 50 paintings were locals Susquehanna #7, Susquehanna #5, The Bliss Breaker, and the West Nanticoke #15.

Joseph Husty Jr., who contributed his mining memorabilia collection to the event became interested in collecting at

the age of 13 after listening to the many stories told about his paternal grandfather's mining experiences and his death at the age of 42 from burns received in a mine explosion. His maternal grandfather succumbed to "Black Lung" disease. He continues to display his collection to keep alive and honor the memory of his grandfathers.



Joseph Husty Jr., contributed items from his mining memorabilia collection



Guests view paintings and mining memorabilia

The Nanticoke Historical Society was extremely grateful to receive the invitation to honor the special 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the Schulman Gallery and to have the opportunity to see the complete collection of these magnificent historic paintings. The paintings remained on display until December 17.

## The Nanticoke Historical Society is holding its Spring Raffle

**First Prize – \$125**

**Second Price - \$50**

**Third Prize - \$25**

**Tickets are available at the Historical Society offices Samantha Mill House (Next to the Mill Memorial Library) Off of Kosciuszko Street 495 East Main Street Nanticoke, PA 18634 or by calling - 570-258-1367 Donation - \$2 each or 3 for \$5. Drawing will be held at the 7 P.M. regular historical society meeting. Deadline to purchase tickets March 19, 2022**

# “Celebrate Nanticoke History Day” Brings New Information



As soon as The Nanticoke Historical Society’s Celebrate Nanticoke History Day began, 10 a.m. on Saturday, October 23, there was a steady stream of visitors to its Samantha Mill House offices carrying precious photos, documents, and memorabilia. The day was set aside by the society to give residents and former residents of Nanticoke a chance to add not only to the city’s history but also to their family histories for future generations.

In weeks prior, the society asked residents to go through their collections and bring items to scan into the society’s database. Collections were so large John Sherrick, Information

Officer for the Society, politely asked if he could have more time to go through the items and then return them at a later date. Although Sherrick was inundated with photos and documents on that day, he related that he had also received items in prior weeks leading up to the celebration. As one who loves Nanticoke history, Sherrick said joyfully, “I have months of work ahead of me.”

Cindy Sawicki, of Nanticoke, brought items showing her late father’s Nanticoke-based business and a post card that Society Vice President, Chet Zaremba was completely thrilled to see, telling Sawicki, “We have lots of post cards of Nanticoke, but do not have this one in our archives.”

A Stegmaier and Susquehanna Brewing Company history buff, Jack Kuligowski, came from the Pittston area to see what the society might have on both companies that were once found in Nanticoke.

Delaware resident and frequent visitor to the area, Serge Yow, brought items that will be added to the historical society archives.



Jack Kuligowski and Cindy Sawicki take part in Celebrate Nanticoke History Day held on October 23



Attorney Charles Petrillo talks about items he brought to add to the society’s memorabilia collection

Attorney, Charles Petrillo, presented Vice President, Chet Zaremba with two framed posters. One from the State Theatre circa 1970s advertising a Musical Swing Era Review entitled

“Remember When?” And another showing John S. Fine as a candidate for Pennsylvania Superior Court prior to becoming the 35<sup>th</sup> Governor of Pennsylvania.



Society Vice President, Chet Zaremba holds up rare State Theatre poster donated by Attorney Charles Petrillo



It was a day to remember all aspects of our history from the hardscrabble miners who built Nanticoke, to those who came after and opened businesses and continued to live and raise their families in the city. We appreciate all who took part in our Celebrate Nanticoke History Day and brought precious items to be scanned and will now and forever be available for future generations to appreciate. 📷



Visitors look over items in the society's collection on Celebrate Nanticoke History Day



Delaware resident, Serge Yow shows Information Officer, John Sherrick, his collection of documents and photos

## Society Continues High School Sports Project, As Coaches are Honored in 2021



Display of GNA sports memorabilia

teacher and a football coach. The school's football field was recently named after another memorable football coach, Frank Chicknosky, an influential Nanticoke football coach back in the 30s and 40s. Both men had an authoritative manner tempered by a mentoring philosophy that remained with students long after graduation.

In honor of both events, the Nanticoke Historical Society is continuing to bring the history of the school's sports programs to the students and faculty in the form of a hall display that details the achievements of various athletes and their teams. The society is not only aiding in supplying photos, facts and stories about the various athletes and coaches, but also takes part in a project to obtain trophy cases to display the sports trophies that are currently in storage. "It is imperative

Two men, extremely important in the history of Nanticoke Sports, Dan Distasio and Frank Chicknosky were recently honored by the Greater Nanticoke Area School District. A new scoreboard donated by the Distasio family, will carry the name of Distasio remembered as a mentor to high school students in the 60s and 70s while serving as a



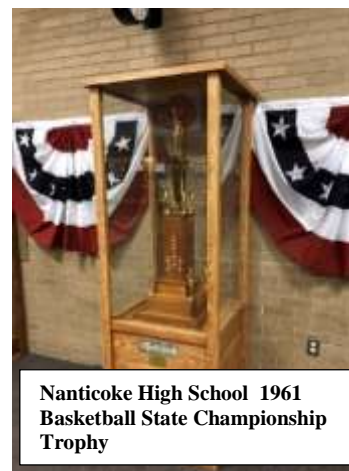
Displays with sports trophies and memorabilia line GNA main hall

that we showcase the past achievements of Greater Nanticoke Area Sports” Chet Zaremba, Vice President of the Nanticoke Historical Society said recently.

A February 2020 issue of Nanticoke Legacy featured an article entitled “It Started with a Medal.” It detailed how one donation of a gold medal once presented to David Price a member of the Nanticoke High School State Championship Basketball Team in 1926 came into the possession of the Nanticoke Historical Society. Zaremba donated the medal to Greater Nanticoke Area School Board Vice President, Ken James. That donation spurred a joint initiative between the society and the school to recognize past and present team athletes and their accomplishments. An Athlete Wall of Fame in the main hall pays tribute the school’s athletes who achieved state recognition. Cases line the hall to display the school’s sports trophies won over the years.



1926 Gold Medal donation that started the GNA/Historical Society initiative



Nanticoke High School 1961 Basketball State Championship Trophy

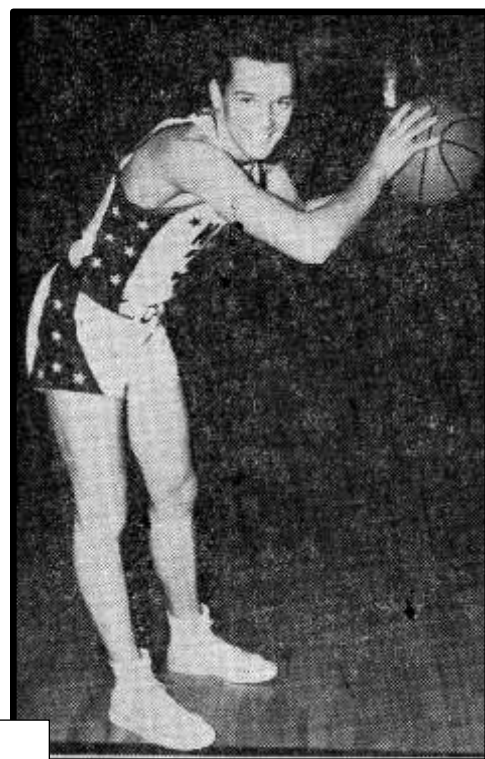
There is still work to do, as trophies are still stored and awaiting restoration and more display cases are needed. As Zaremba stated at the time, “We owe it to our GNA students to show that the school has a rich history in athletics and that anything can be achieved and perhaps instill a sense of pride in their school and community.” If anyone would like to donate toward this effort, please call the society offices at 570-258-1367. 🇺🇸

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## The Billy James Collection

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For anyone who grew up in Nanticoke in the 1960s, or anyone who is a fan of Nanticoke High School basketball, the name Billy James is well known. Billy was the co-captain, along with Ken Legins, of the 1961 Nanticoke High School State Championship Basketball Team. He was a first team All-Scholastic, an All-State Basketball Selection and is also enshrined in the Nanticoke High School and Luzerne County Sports Hall of Fame.



Billy James – co-captain of the 1961 Nanticoke High School State Championship Basketball Team

Recently, Billy and his wife Ann made a very generous monetary donation to the Nanticoke Historical Society and at that time Billy also entrusted us with his entire personal collection of memorabilia from those championship years. The collection even includes the cow bell that made so much noise at all those playoff games. Billy and his wife have decided to move to the warmer climate of Florida, and we wish them well and send them off with knowledge that all his priceless mementos will be well cared for at the Nanticoke Historical Society.



**Nanticoke High School 1960-1961  
P.I.A.A. Class A State Champions**



Nanticoke High School 1960-1961  
P.I.A.A. Class A Champions

Kneeling: E. Bertles, Mgr; G. Bagawalla, Mgr; H. Grublewski, Asst Coach  
S. Bertleski, Coach; A. Testremski, Faculty Mgr; H. Siro, Mgr  
T. McLane, Mgr  
Standing: E. Skelley, L. Skelley, J. Grublewski, H. Yonchik, M. James  
T. Leginsy, H. Grublewski, J. Datrik, J. Skelley, C. Rybak  
H. Burrows, D. Ford

**A generous donation was made to the Nanticoke Historical Society:  
BY LIFETIME MEMBER, ANDY SHERBINE**



**IN MEMORY OF CELIA CABOSCO**

**A generous donation was made to the Nanticoke Historical Society  
BY MARGARET M. WATKINS**



**IN MEMORY OF ROBERT SCHELL**



# UPCOMING EVENTS ANNOUNCED:

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## **ANTHRACITE MINING HERITAGE PROGRAM**

In observance of Anthracite Mining Heritage Month, the Nanticoke Historical Society will host a program headed by Dr. Robert Wolensky, Professor Emeritus at the University of Wisconsin, Stevens-Point, adjunct professor of history and sociology at King's College author of many studies of the Anthracite Coal Region of Pennsylvania. The program which will be held on Thursday, January 13 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at the Cultural Centre of St. Faustina, 38 W. Church Street, Nanticoke, will include a panel discussion and question and answer session. More details and information will be available in the near future on the society's website [www.nanticokehistoryonline.org](http://www.nanticokehistoryonline.org) and Facebook page.

## **VIRTUAL TOUR OF NANTICOKE**

A "Virtual Tour of Nanticoke" will be sponsored by the Nanticoke Historical Society at the Nanticoke City Building, 15 E. Ridge Street. Take a tour of the city with Society Vice President, Chet Zaremba and Information Officer, John Sherrick as they screen some of the thousands of photos in the society's archives. Audience members can request to see a family home as it looked in the past, or businesses that lined city streets. There will be more information on this event in the coming weeks on the society's website [www.nanticokehistoryonline.org](http://www.nanticokehistoryonline.org) and Facebook page.

## **HELP THE NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY WHILE SHOPPING AMAZON.**

### **What is AmazonSmile?**

AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support your favorite charitable organization every time you shop, at no cost to you. When you shop at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com), you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com.

### **How do I support the Nanticoke Historical Society when shopping on AmazonSmile?**

Log on to [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com), you will be prompted to list your charitable organization to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping. List the Nanticoke Historical Society. Amazon will remember your choice. From then on log onto at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) to purchase from Amazon - Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to the Nanticoke Historical Society.



## In Honor of Our Military

The Nanticoke Historical Society is honored to hold a vast amount of military information in its archives. It is our pledge to focus on those hometown heroes who sacrificed so much for our country's freedom. A new partial list of the names of local veterans of all wars will be listed in our "In Honor of Our Military" Section of each Newsletter. The lists are long, so if a loved one's name has not appeared, please follow upcoming issues. Information obtained from the Nanticoke Historical Society archives.

### WORLD WAR I

*Charles Gayesfski* – Pvt. Co. C 41<sup>st</sup> Infantry

*John Gaynor* – POW

*Joseph Gedrowicz* – Wounded in Action

*Carl George* – Battery C, 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Artillery

*William George* – Co. G Local Infantry PA Reserve Militia

*Reynold George*

*Joseph German* – Member of the Blue Jackets Guard

*Anthony Gesecki* – US Infantry – Served in France

*John Gibbs* – Aviation Corps - Army

*John Gillis* – Battery C, 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Artillery

*Joseph Gizinski* – Joined the French Army in Canada

*Stanley Glowzynski* - US Army

*Gustave Gommer* – Aviation Corps - Army

*Peter Paul Gonsher* –US Army

*Frank Gorka* – Served in France

*Anthony Gorski*

*Edward Gorski* – Battery C, 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Artillery

*Joseph Gorski* – US Navy

*Harold Graboske* – 109<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Wounded in Action

*Frederick Graboski* – Wounded in Action

*Harold Grabosky* – Battery C 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Artillery

*Hobart Grabosky* – Battery C, 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Artillery

### WORLD WAR II

*John Klem* – POW

*Walter Klinitski*

*Frank Kloputki or Keoptoski* - KIA Germany

*John Kmetz* – KIA North Africa

*Stephen Kmetz* – KIA Europe

*Stephen Kobulski* – US Navy

*John Kochan*

*Leonard Kocaj or Kacaj*

*Leonard Kolodziejczak*

*John Korcz* - Pvt

*George Kotch* - KIA

*Joseph Kotch*

*J. Kotulak* – KIA

*Joseph Kotulak* - POW

*Method Kotulak*

*Henry Kovalski* – KIA

*George Kovalich* – US Marine Corps

*Steve Kovalich* – 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Co. B 20<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion 20<sup>th</sup> Armored Div.

*John Kozej* – KIA

*Clete Kresge*

*Steward Kresge* – US Army

*Charles Kriss* – Radar technician

**NOTE: These names are as listed in our Historical Society Records. If there are misspellings, we apologize. Please contact our office to correct any discrepancy. Thank you....**

## SEE WHAT'S IN OUR ARCHIVES

FOR A COMPLETE LISTING OF ALL THE RECORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS THAT ARE IN THE NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVES, GO TO OUR WEBSITE [www.nanticokehistoryonline.org](http://www.nanticokehistoryonline.org) you will find a full listing on our Research Page.

**A generous donation was made to the Nanticoke Historical Society:  
BY PHILLIP SHERN**



## **IN MEMORY OF HIS BROTHER GEORGE SHERN**

### **My Memories of George**

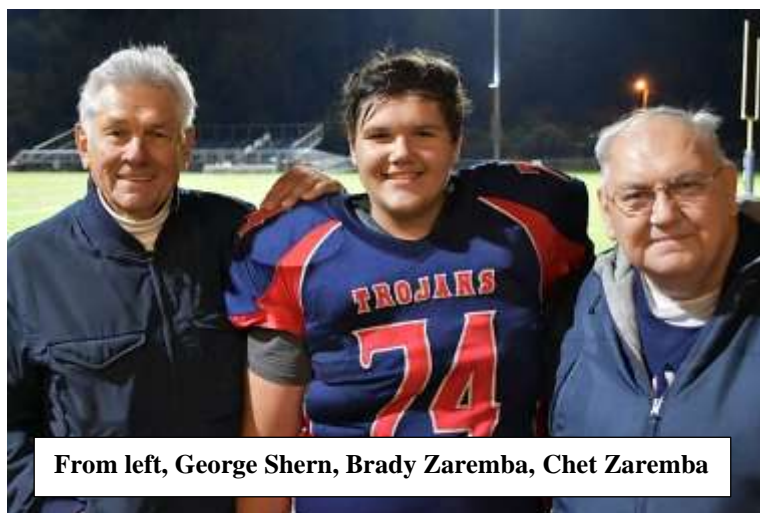
**By Chet Zaremba**

*Nanticoke Historical Society Life Member  
George E. Shern of Little Falls, New Jersey  
passed away on Saturday, September 4<sup>th</sup>. He  
was my friend. This is our story.*

George and I grew up together in the Dewey Park section of Nanticoke. We were two months apart in age. George's father had passed away when he was about four years old, but he had a mother and two older brothers to keep him in line. We rode our bikes together down to the armory where we played on the U.S. Army tanks parked there. We used ashes from our coal burning stoves to draw lines on the alley to simulate the lines on a football field. As we grew older, we sat around watching Home Run Derby on TV while listening to Buddy Holly records.

Then on a July day in 1960, George's world fell apart when his mother died. George went to Moosic to live with his aunt and uncle. We stayed connected by mail, and I visited him whenever I could. George was a terrific football player and was the starting tackle on the Riverside High School team as a sophomore. I was able to see one of his games and he knew I was there because he played great.

In June 1963, I had graduated from high school and weeks later had joined the Air Force. We still exchanged letters but soon lost touch with each other as I was in Germany, and he was getting ready to graduate from high school. He had started school in Nanticoke a year later than I and he lost a year during



From left, George Shern, Brady Zaremba, Chet Zaremba



his transition from Nanticoke to Taylor-Moosic High School. Upon his graduation, George followed me into the Air Force where again he was a great football player for various Air Force teams. As the years went on, we lost touch. With the advent of the Internet, I made a number of attempts to find George, but I never met with any success.

One day in 2017, I was working at my desk at the Historical Society office when John Sherrick answered the phone. He had the phone on speaker, and I could hear the conversation. The caller asked, "Is Chet Zaremba there?" John answered that I was. Then I heard "Tell him George Shern is calling." I could not believe what I was hearing. I took the phone and after a short conversation I asked him how he found me. He said that he had just got a computer and was looking for things about Nanticoke on the net when he came across our Historical Society web site. He then saw my name listed under the officers and decided to try to call at that moment. Impressed by the web site and the on-line newsletter; he became a life member of our society. In the months and years following that he was very generous to our group and was always there to help when we had a special project or need. For the next few months, we caught up with each other's lives and we met in New Jersey to find that neither one of us had really changed since our days in Dewey Park so long ago.

At one point George said that he would like to make a trip back to Nanticoke to see a high school football game. When I told him that my Grandson Brady was on the team, he said that that would make it all the better. That day came and he and I rode around Nanticoke so he could see how much it had changed. A visit to our Historical Society building was high on our list and he was extremely impressed. We toured the old neighborhood and reminisced about a prank we once pulled off. No detail concerning that will be revealed here. The night at the game went well with Nanticoke posting a victory and he said that he wanted to meet Brady. We did that and took the opportunity to take the accompanying photo.

Back in Jersey we continued our phone calls and text messages quite intensely. One message I regretted ever reading was the one that he told me that he had cancer. George was a big man, and a tougher man than you can imagine. George fought and overcame many things in his life, but this was one thing he could not beat. George leaves his wife Stephanie, in Little Falls where they enjoyed a marriage of over 50 years; he leaves his brother Phil of Virginia, whom I know he held in extremely high regard, and he leaves a world better off because he was here. 🇺🇸

## **BECOME A MEMBER OF THE NANTICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

### **MEMBERSHIP FEES**

**Individual \$20**

**Family \$30**

**Lifetime \$100.00 Individual**

**Please inform us of any changes in email or home mailing address**

# Hometown Hero: Henry Konczynski

**By: Judy Minsavage**

## Time running out

It was December 12, 1945, and 22-year-old Henry Konczynski, lay alone in a foxhole somewhere in Burma, his leg mangled by Japanese machine gun fire. He must have thought of his parents Zigmund and Josephine at home at 406 Grand Street, in Nanticoke. After two days of waiting to be rescued in what must have been excruciating pain, Konczynski's hopes of ever seeing his family and his home again were undoubtedly gone. He knew that if help did not soon arrive, his parents may never know the fate of their son.



**PVT Henry Konczynski**

## Served in Unit Known as Merrill's Marauders during WWII

Konczynski entered into active service on February 26, 1943. His assignments were listed as a Rifleman, Messenger, Ammo Handler and Mortar Gunner. But it is Burma, the location marked on his paperwork, that tells a darker story of the terrible, sometimes unbearable conditions Konczynski and his fellow soldiers faced during World War II. Japanese occupied Burma was known as one of the most violent theaters of conflict in the entire history of WWII. In a recently Disabled American Veterans (DAV) magazine, Russell Hamler, who also served in Burma said, "The only thing they told us is that they were forming a special outfit and that the work would be dangerous."



**Merrill's Marauders Patch**

The unit that Konczynski and Hamler were preparing to join was Merrill's Marauders. According to [www.marauder.org](http://www.marauder.org), the unit was designated as the "5307<sup>th</sup> Composite Unit (Provisional) Code Name "Galahad" It later was named Merrill's Marauders after its leader Brigadier General Frank Merrill, who was in Burma serving under General Douglas MacArthur and then under General Joseph W. Stilwell. Merrill formed the Marauders for the hazardous mission in Burma. Training and operations were conducted under strict secrecy. The Marauders hacked their way through hundreds of miles of dense jungle to clear the Burma Road an important supply line that would enable Chinese allies to receive supplies.

Onward these brave men marched fighting the unyielding Japanese troops, monsoons and disease. They carried with them only what was necessary. Food was scarce and sometimes there wasn't water to

drink. The Marauders were attacked repeatedly over four months of treacherous conditions, suffering casualties and wounded along the way. Yellow jaundice, malaria and stomach disorders were rampant among the men. But they hadn't time to stop and recuperate, their highly secretive mission was at hand. an article in the New York Times published in May 1944, stated, "For Brig. Gen. Frank Merrill's American Raider detachment this week's attack on Myitkyina is the climax to four months of marching and combat in Burma jungles. No other American force except the First Marine Division, which took and held Guadalcanal for four months, has had as much uninterrupted jungle fighting service as Merrill's Raiders. No other



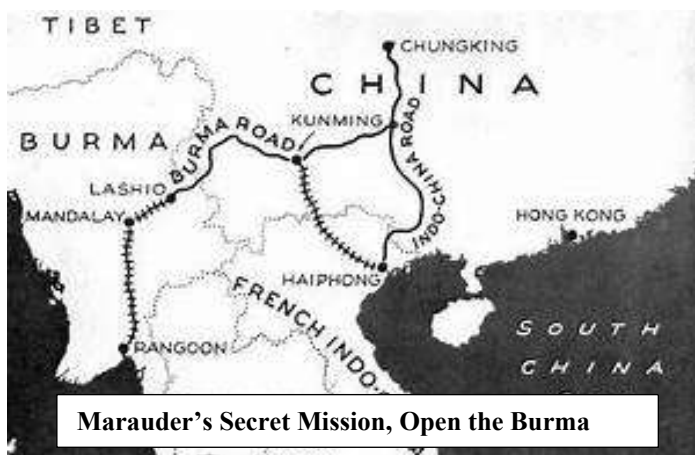
Myitkyina Airfield, 1945

American force anywhere has marched as far, fought as continuously, or has had to display such endurance, as General Merrill's swift-moving, hard-hitting foot soldiers. When the Americans attacked Myitkyina they had behind them 800 miles, marching over jungle and mountain roads and tracks. They had already fought four major engagements and since early March had been in almost daily combat with large and small Japanese forces. Before the Burma Raiders had reached Myitkyina they had killed more than 2,000 Japanese for losses to themselves of only a fraction of this number."

Marauder, Captain Fred O. Lyons gave a detailed account of the four months the unit slashed their way through the Burmese Jungle to reopen the Burma Road that led to the

Myitkyina Airfield. "The unit made up solely of volunteers were instructed to not speak in the jungle above a whisper, never to pull away the blood-sucking leeches and never drink jungle water, but those instructions were mild compared to what the Marauders experienced in their vicious battles with the enemy. "At first there were accident casualties - men who broke their legs in falls on the ridges: men whose ribs were smashed in by kicks of cantankerous pack animals. After the first roadblock, disease began to take its toll. "After the second roadblock and then after the battle of Nhpum Ga, the need for air evacuation grew more insistent with battle wounds and ailments. As we finished each job it looked as though we'd be relieved. Not a man of the Marauders went back to India a walking, well man. Everyone was ordered out by the medics; every man who marched into Burma so proudly and confidently three months before all either went out as a medical casualty or was left in a Burma jungle grave"

It was close to the end of the four-month mission that Konczynski lay unable to move in the fox hole with his leg all but shot off. But then, someone from his unit, found Konczynski and took him by oxcart to a remote medical facility where he could be treated. There his leg was amputated, and after a short recovery period he was strapped to a litter which was then attached to a Piper Cub, to airlift him out of the field of battle. During the war and especially in remote settings like Burma, the Piper Cub was invaluable as it flew volunteer surgeons into jungle bases to treat casualties. The planes were then used to transport the most seriously wounded, out of the jungle one at a time. It was a painstaking process.



Marauder's Secret Mission, Open the Burma

As for Konczynski, he returned home and was initially treated at the Pratt Army Hospital in Coral Gables, Florida formerly the Miami-Biltmore Hotel and Country Club. In 1946, the hotel became an Army



general hospital, and the Veterans Administration (VA) took over in July of 1947. The VA Hospital was closed in 1968 with ownership eventually being transferred to the City of Coral Gables in 1973. A grand re-opening of The Biltmore took place on December 31, 1987, 61 years after it first opened.

Konczynski's nephew, Nanticoke native, Mike Stachowiak, remembers Konczynski, as a quiet man who worked in the machine shop for Biscontin Coal Company. After the war, he built a house in Sheatown across from the St Stanislaus orphanage. "He told me after returning home, he was in a hospital in Florida, "He had a balcony overlooking an Olympic -size pool. One day a guy came in and asked, who he was that he had a balcony overlooking the pool? Uncle Henry said he just must have lucked out. He figured he would be kicked out of the room, but the guy came back, and they became friends." That guy was General Hap Arnold, the head of the Army Air Corp. They both watched as Olympic swimmers trained during the day in the former hotel's swimming pool. By 1946, Konczynski was at Thomas England General Hospital in Atlantic City, NJ. The hospital was functioning as a neuro-surgical, amputation and thyroid center and a hub for the study of



**Gen. Hap Arnold visiting wounded veteran**



**Amputees in therapy at Thomas England Gen. Hospital in New Jersey**

administration and therapy of streptomycin, in addition to the continued functioning of all the usual sections of a surgical service. By January 1946, the need for the hospital was drawing to an end. It was decided to close the hospital on June 30, 1946.

Stachowiak, remembered that his Uncle Henry, "Built one of the first inground pools locally." He also stated, "My uncle had a lump on his wrist that got larger over the years to the point that he was having trouble buttoning his shirt sleeve. The doctors at the VA Hospital removed a 30 caliber round that was there for decades. They gave him the bullet."

According to Konczynski's discharge papers, he received The Burma Campaign ribbon and Star, Good Conduct Medal, The American Theatre Campaign Medal, , The WWII Victory Medal, The WWII Purple Heart and The Combat Infantry Badge According to the Marauder's website, the Marauders were awarded the Distinguished Unit Citation in July 1944. The award was redesignated as the Presidential Unit Citation in 1966. Every member of the unit received a Bronze Star.



**Medals from left, Burma Campaign ribbon w/star, Medals Good Conduct, American Theatre Campaign, WWII Victory, Purple Heart, Combat Infantry Badge and Bronze Star**

## Steps to Congressional Medal of Honor

House lawmakers approved a Bill in September of 2020, that would award the Congressional Gold Medal to Merrill's Marauders. The Senate passed a version of the bill, and then-President Donald Trump signed legislation in October of 2020 awarding the honor to the 5307th Composite Unit and the more than 3,000 volunteers in the outfit's three battalions. The medal will be bestowed to the group and will be displayed at the Smithsonian Institute. At last check there are seven members of the Marauders that survive today.

On June 21, 1954, the 475th Infantry was re-named the 75th Infantry from which descended the 75th Ranger Regiment an elite infantry unit and special operations force within the United States Army Special Operations Command.



### The medal process begins

According to the Congressional honor website, "Presently, there are three variations of the Medal of Honor. Steeped with symbolism, the Medal has become an historic symbol of our nation's bravest. Out of respect for those who have earned it, its appearance has remained largely unaltered in over 150 years.



However, in researching this article, various news releases noted, A design for the Merrill's Marauders' Congressional Gold Medal will be selected and then created by artists and engravers and will be cast as a single gold medal. Replicas, cast in bronze, will be made available for purchase.

### Watch the movie

In 1962, Merrill's Marauders, the movie, hit the big screen. The film depicts the battles and struggles of the men of the unit. Based on the book, "The Marauders" written by Charlton Ogburn, Jr., the movie was filmed in the Philippines and starred Jeff Chandler, in his final role before his sudden death at the age of 42. Others in the film were lead actors from popular American television shows. The supporting cast included Ty Hardin from Bronco, Peter Brown, from Lawman, Andrew Duggan from Bourbon Street Beat and Will Hutchins from Sugarfoot.



*The Nanticoke Historical Society is extremely honored to have received a portrait painting donated by Mike Hill and his sister Kathy Stanitski of Redwood City, California. In his letter to the Society, he described his family history as well as the origin of the painting. The following is his account:*



## After 90 Years, Portrait of “Rozila” Back in Nanticoke

**By Mike Hill**

Our father, David Franklin Hill, was born in Silverbrook, near Hazleton, to Welsh and German immigrant farmers and miners, but grew up on Ridge

Street in Nanticoke. He got his first job at the age of 6 or 7 pumping the organ at the Bethel Church on Sundays for a nickel, until he got too tall to fit inside the organ where the pedals were. At 10 he was working in the Duplan Silk Mill. Later he worked in the mines, in the area where his father Frank Hill and grandfather Civil War vet Shadrach Reese and his wife lived. Dad attended school at night after work, where he said he was practically the only English-speaking student. In 1925-26, he attended Nanticoke High School as a full-time senior and while working nights at the mine he played on the great Nanticoke High School 1926 State Championship basketball team. After graduating from NHS, Dad went on to Penn State and earned a BS in Mechanical Engineering.

Our mother, Jean Marie McCarthy Hill, was born in Nanticoke in 1910. Jean was lucky to have been born after her father, Plymouth coal miner John Francis McCarthy, was severely injured in a roof collapse. He spent a year in the miner's hospital in Wilkes-Barre, another year studying accounting in the Wilkes-Barre Business College learning accounting and going on to

work for a Wilkes-Barre brewery. Eventually he became a successful executive living in Nanticoke, married to a lovely teacher by the name of Elizabeth McManaman. ( Our Mom's sister Alice McCarthy enjoyed a reputation for being the most terrifying teacher ever at Nanticoke High). Mom grew up as 'lace curtain Irish' thanks to her dad turning a catastrophe into the American dream. She fell in love with my dad, who lived a few blocks away from her fairly fancy home on Green Street. She demanded that he go to college, which he



**1926 State Champs, Franklin Hill seated fifth from left**

1926 CHAMPIONS—Members of the famous 1926 Nan team were, first row, left to right: John Lentz, Gerald Danohue, Frank Domzalski, Henry Morgan, Franklin Hill, David Price.

Second row, left to right: faculty manager Ted Salack, Ed Baker, William Sherwood, coach Richard Leary, Ed Beckley and Ed Estwanick.—(Photo courtesy Dave Price)



did. She graduated from Syracuse with a BA in English during the Depression, something fewer than 5% of women in America were able to do at the time.

## Rozila comes home

Nanticoke portrait artist Dennis Jacob Bestecki painted this portrait of his pretty wife, Rozila, festooned in traditional Polish garb. Dennis and family lived in Nanticoke for about 24 years before he died of peritonitis in 1934, at the age of 50. Dennis and my grandfather, John Francis McCarthy were friends. During the Depression when orders for portraits were scarce, Dennis tried to convince John that he should have his portrait painted (John was fairly well off in those days). John wasn't interested in having his portrait painted, but he did agree to buy one of Bestecki's paintings. Bestecki's portrait of Rozila was the one that John favored, figuring that Dennis could always paint another. John enjoyed it and took good care of it. After John died in 1948 his eldest daughter, Alice McCarthy, enjoyed it until her death in the early 80s. After that, it found a home with my mother, Jean McCarthy Hill, on our living room wall in York, PA. Altogether, our family enjoyed Bestecki's painting and took care of it for about 90 years. It's time to pass it along to a new caretaker, Nanticoke Historical Society, where the people of Nanticoke can enjoy it. 🖼️

## Love of Nanticoke and its History brings new title to former St. Joseph's Convent



**The Noble House Residential Treatment Facility**



**Noble House Therapist, Danielle Antonini**

Danielle Antonini moved to West Nanticoke in 2020. She is employed as a therapist at the Children's Service Center housed in the former St. Joseph's Convent on Nobel Street. According to their website [www.cscwv.org](http://www.cscwv.org), "CSC is a behavioral health care system, deeply committed to the wellness of young people in the community with services designed to meet the individual needs of children, adolescents and their families."

As Antonini stated recently, "I would walk around Nanticoke during lunch breaks and after work taking in the fresh air, sights and sounds. It was on these jaunts I became enthusiastic about city history as related to coal mining, diverse nationalities, churches and schools."

In the Spring of 2021, Antonini visited the Mill Memorial Library to find books that would help her better understand the history of the city. She checked out, "Nanticoke, Images of America" by Chester J. Zaremba, Vice President of the Nanticoke Historical Society and "History of Nanticoke City and Newport Township, by C. Charles Ciesla. After reading the books "cover to cover," Antonini became fascinated with

the changes the city had experienced and impressed with its early development and decline with the end of Anthracite Mining.

During that time, she discovered the existence of the Nanticoke Historical Society and attended her first meeting in July 2021. But this isn't the end of the story, as she recently explained, "Due to my interest in the society and my blooming passion toward Nanticoke, when the opportunity arose to submit a proposal for a new name for the CSC location on East Noble Street, I used my experience with the city to develop a name that would positively reflect not only my job, but Nanticoke itself."

Using her new-found knowledge of Nanticoke and the determination and shared experiences of its residents, Antonini submitted a proposal to CSC to name the facility The Noble House Residential Treatment Facility, stating "Whether you are an historic city or a person, to go through trauma, not give up and have commitments to growth and change, is noble, a word that reflects qualities of high moral character, such as courage, generosity and honor." Antonini acknowledges, "There were many votes and approvals to be obtained before the decision was approved."

The Nanticoke Historical Society is proud of the fact that the books penned by Zaremba and Ciesla helped to bring about an appreciation of the city, its residents, and its historic past and gave Antonini the motivation to channel Nanticoke's diverse history as a basis to write and send her proposal.

## **St. Joseph's Slovak Catholic Church**

### **A Little History**

From 1875 to 1887, residents of Slovak descent attended Mass offered by Rev. Joseph Kosalko at St. Francis Church or at St. Stanislaus Church both in Nanticoke. But they longed for their own house of worship, so they banded together forming a fraternal society known as Branch 18 of the Pennsylvania Slovak Catholic Union. They met to formalize plans for the new church and each family was asked to donate \$50 toward construction.



**St. Joseph's Slovak Catholic Church, Prospect Street**

On July 22, 1888, a cornerstone was laid for the first church on Prospect Street. The first pastor was Rev. Samuel Bella. He remained at the church for only one year. Rev. B. Gramlewicz and Rev. Andrew Zycholwicz stepped in to administer the spiritual needs to the congregation. In 1907, Rev. John S. Sobota, was assigned to St. Joseph's and served there for more than 22 years.

As the congregation grew, a need for a larger church was necessary and in 1914 there were plans to build a new church and rectory on East Noble Street. In 1916, construction on the church was completed at a cost of \$51,678 . According to the US Inflation Calculator that figure today would be \$1,299,524. The first Mass was celebrated on June 16, 1918. Rev. Sobota's dream was to then start working toward the construction of a parish school at which Sisters of SS Cyril and Methodius would instruct the students.



St. Joseph's Church, Rectory and School, Noble Street

By 1926, the church acquired a lot bordering the rectory on Noble Street. By 1931, a new pastor Rev. John M Puskar, held a meeting to complete plans for the school at a cost of \$52,000. Today that figure would equate to \$938,428. In 1956, plans were formulated for building a new convent on the lot next to the school. Construction and furnishings cost well over \$100,000. The convent was dedicated on Sunday, August 19, 1962. And served the parish until the school closing in 1976.



Undated photos show, St. Joseph's Ladies Auxiliary

In 1960, St. Joseph's School Guild was organized to support the school and raise money for various educational needs. Originally an all-woman organization, in later years it included men, electing Jerry Hudak as the first male president. On September 4, 1988, St. Joseph's celebrated its 100 Anniversary Jubilee. At the time according to the parish history, it was "one of the most flourishing parishes in the Scranton Diocese and the fourth oldest Slovak parish in the United States." In 2010, after 122 years St. Joseph's Slovak Church closed with a final mass. 🇸🇰

### **LOOKING FOR A YEARBOOK?**

**THE FOLLOWING YEARBOOKS ARE LOCATED AT OUR OFFICES:**

**Check our website for availability –**

**Nanticoke High School**

**John S. Fine or GNA (Greater Nanticoke Area High School)**

**Newport High School, Wanamie,**

**Newport Twp.**

**GAR High School**

**Bloomsburg University**

**Wilkes University**

**Kings College**

**Duplicates from each high school are available for purchase.**

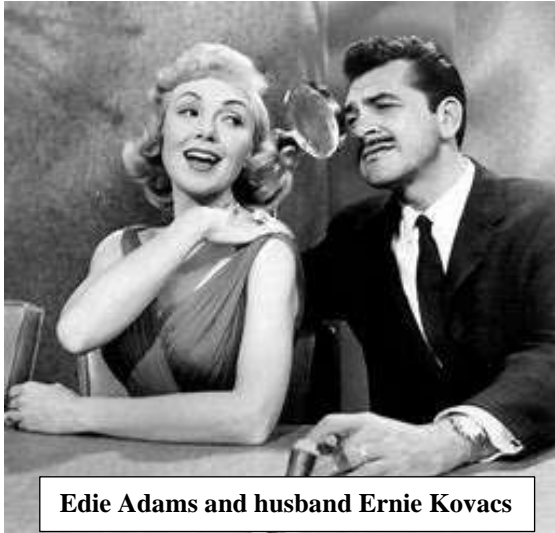
**For more information call our office at 570-258-1367.**



# Mystery Question – Answered

**Phillip Shern of Centerville, Virginia, was one of the first to answer our last issue's Mystery Question: Friends also shared memories of Edie on our Facebook Page. Thank you.**

## Edie Adams.



Edie Adams and husband Ernie Kovacs

An article in the Sept 17, edition of the Sunday Independent announced that Edith Enke, was “Miss Television of 1950.” Edith professionally known as Edie Adams, was born on April 16, 1927, lived in Nanticoke and attended the State Street School. Adams was a comedian, actor, singer and businesswoman. She was a Tony Award winner and an Emmy Award nominee. The Miss U.S. Television title that launched Adams’ career, was a series of contests sponsored by the DuMont Television Network and its affiliates during 1950. The contest searched for the woman “with the most outstanding talent and beauty.”

Edith was the daughter of Sheldon Enke and Ada Adams Enke a former Nanticoke school teacher. They lived on Prospect Street. Although there is no conclusive evidence in our files, she may have been a niece to A. A. Enke, president, of the Nanticoke National Bank who was listed in our last issue’s story about the bank’s history entitled Through “Great Opposition” Nanticoke National Bank was established..

Edith was destined for stardom after winning the title, as she started appearing on shows for the DuMont Network. One of those shows was hosted by cigar smoking comedian, Ernie Kovacs. The two met in 1952 and married in 1954.

Her stage appearances included Wonderful Town for which she received the Best Newcomer Award, Li'l Abner, The Merry Widow, Sweet Bird of Youth and Free as a Bird. In 1960, she turned her talents toward the big screen and appeared in films such as The Apartment starring Jack Lemmon and Shirley MacLaine; Lover Come Back starring Doris Day and Rock Hudson; Love with the Proper Stranger starring Natalie Wood and Steve McQueen, and It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World starring a host of Hollywood A-listers.



She then went on to establish a presence on the popular TV shows hosted by Jack Paar and Dinah Shore and appeared on the Lucy Desi Comedy Hour. But it would be the line for the Muriel Cigar company “Why don’t you pick one up and smoke it sometime” that made Adams one of the most recognizable television celebrities.

Adams died in Los Angeles, California on October 15, 2008, at the age of 81. She was laid to rest at Forest Lawn Memorial Park in the Hollywood Hills.

# Join our team

The society is looking for volunteers. Students doing in-service or school projects, retired individuals or anyone who would like to give an hour or two to index or alphabetize materials in our library. Those interested if they are so inclined can also help with digital records. Call us at 570-258-1367.



**Follow the Nanticoke Historical Society on Facebook**

## MORE MYSTERY PHOTOGRAPHS

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Over the years the Nanticoke Historical Society has obtained photos contained in collections from various families and events, but unfortunately do not know who are in the photos. We will be placing these photos in this and future newsletters. If any match the ones in your collection, or perhaps you recognize a family member, please let us know by calling our office at 570-258-1367 or emailing [history@nanticokehistoryonline.org](mailto:history@nanticokehistoryonline.org) . Just give us the number on the photo and the name or any information you may have, so we can add them to our records. **See more of these photos on our website at [www.nanticokehistoryonline.org](http://www.nanticokehistoryonline.org) click on our PHOTOS page.** . 