

# Flyer Dies Of Wounds, But His Heroism Is Not Forgotten By The War Department

News of the death of Capt. Robert J. Salitnik was received from the War Department yesterday, by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Albert Salitnik, 409 Sixth Street, Alhambra.

Last night the War Department announced that Captain Salitnik has been awarded two Oak Leaf Clusters for heroism. Previously he had participated in the 133-bomber raid on the Paris Chenault plant, and had received the Air Medal

when as a lieutenant he skippered the first American plane to bomb German soil early in February.

Captain Salitnik received his fatal wounds while acting as navigator aboard the plane of Brig. Gen. Frank Armstrong during a raid on Antwerp, April 5.

A graduate of Alhambra High School and Pasadena Junior College, Captain Salitnik at one time was a navigation instructor at Mather Field, Sacramento, and flew overseas in September.

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## Capt. Robert Salitnik, Air Hero, Dies From Wounds

Capt. Robert J. Salitnik, heroic 23-year-old flying son of Mr. and Mrs. Albert Salitnik, 409 South Sixth Street, is dead.

In a tersely phrased wire, the War Department notified Capt. Salitnik's parents Monday afternoon that their son, who was group navigator of his squadron of American Flying Fortresses and one of the outstanding flyers of this war, succumbed April 16 of wounds suffered in the massive Allied raid on Antwerp April 5.

Hope that he might recover was given his parents a few days after the Antwerp raid when reports came that his wounds were not so serious as first believed.

And then on Monday came this telegram:

"The Secretary of War desires me to express his deep regret to report news received from commanding general, European Area, that your son, Captain Robert J. Salitnik, died April 16 of wounds received in action in defense of his country. (Signed) Adjutant General."

At almost the same time his death was announced, the War Department announced the award to Capt. Salitnik of two oak leaf clusters for service in action including bombardment and escort operations against German-held territory and against the German air force in the European theatre. Previously, in February, he had been awarded the Army air medal for "meritorious achievement."

Capt. Salitnik suffered leg wounds in the Antwerp raid. His commanding officer, Brig. Gen. Frank Armstrong, himself faint from lack of oxygen, applied a tourniquet and gave other first aid treatment to his injured navigator until the Fortress fought off German planes and returned to its base. A 20-mm. shell from a Focke-Wulf pierced the nose of the ship, wounding Salitnik, and another shell crippled oxygen and hydraulic systems.

### General Risks Life

Gen. Armstrong grabbed a "walk around" oxygen bottle, containing a temporary emergency supply, and crawled through a narrow passage to Capt. Salitnik's side.

Blood transfusions were given the wounded flyer when his ship returned to its base.

On the day before he was wounded, Capt. Salitnik took part in the American raid on the Renault works near Paris when 133 Flying Fortresses rained tons of explosives on their target.

Capt. Salitnik was the navigator of the first American bomber to raid German soil.

Born December 7, 1920, Capt. Salitnik was graduated from Alhambra High School and Pasadena Junior College. He won his wings at Miami in June, 1941. He was one of three cadets to be graduated with highest honors in his class.

Stationed at Mather Field, Sacramento, as an instructor for the first navigation class at the now-famous navigator training school, his request for overseas service was granted and he was sent to Wendover Field, Utah. Upon graduation, he received a medal for expert marksmanship.

He flew to England aboard a Flying Fortress last September and won his first lieutenant's commission soon after his arrival. Later, he was made navigation officer of his group. He was promoted to the rank of captain last February.

"Sally," as he was affectionately known to his comrades of the flying forces, was considered by officers a great navigator, "the best now in England," as one who knew him intimately recently put it.

The last letter, received by his family here, written March 21, contained the following: "This war business is getting rather interesting just now." He wrote perhaps with the knowledge then that important operations were impending, as they were.

Capt. Salitnik's father is superintendent of mails at the Alhambra Post Office. His brother, Staff Sergeant Eugene Salitnik, a liaison pilot with an observation squadron at Laurel, Miss., talked with his parents today by telephone. Capt. Salitnik also leaves two sisters, Mrs. Virginia E. Henney and Mrs. Arthur Clayton, both of Alhambra.



CAPT. ROBERT SALITNIK  
Died For His Country

Saltzman, ROBERT

AM OLC 3/3/43

OLC 3/16/43

DFC 4/10/43

AM OLC 4/10/43

PH 4/8/43

SILVER STAR 4/28/43