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Home at Last: Honoring the return of a Flying Tiger whose name and legacy family would not forget or let be forgotten

By Air Force Senior Airman Savannah Carpenter (Dept. of War)

DECEMBER 23, 2025 - For years, there was only a name and a legacy his family never let fade. On the afternoon of Dec. 14, family members and uniformed service members moved toward a granite headstone at a cemetery in Greenville, South Carolina, that had stood for more than eight decades without the man it was meant to honor. On this day, that changed. The memorial finally met its purpose. Army Air Forces 1st Lt. Morton Sher was killed in action Aug. 20, 1943, when he crashed the P-40 Warhawk fighter-bomber aircraft he was piloting during a combat mission over Hunan, China, during World War II. Sher's remains were finally accounted for this summer. What had once been an empty marker became a place of return, bringing closure to his family and community. A name once lost to history is spoken aloud again. He is accounted for, remembered and finally home.

Sher, a Greenville native, was a 22-year-old fighter pilot in the Army Air Forces. He was assigned to the 76th Fighter Squadron, 23rd Fighter Group, 14th Air Force, the unit that carried on the legacy of the famed Flying Tigers. Sher flew combat missions during World War II as part of the Allied air effort in China, and like many of his generation, he entered the war at a young age, trained for a dangerous role and left behind a life and a future still just beginning. Sher's time in China wasn't only about the mission that would end his life, but it was also marked by moments that revealed both the dangers he faced and the connections he made along the way. Flying a P 40 Warhawk, he escorted bombers and flew hazardous combat missions in the China Burma theater. During an October 1942 mission, engine damage forced him down in a Chinese village, where villagers welcomed him with food and celebration. The villagers, grateful for U.S. protection from Japanese forces, celebrated Sher as a hero with a feast. He entertained 15,000 with songs and a story, received a silk banner for his missions and was warmly escorted through nearby mountain villages back to his base. Sher later recounted the experience in an Army newsletter that the Associated Press picked up: "I sang a few American songs for them, and they were highly pleased," he said. "The banquet turned out to be one of the biggest surprises of the trip." Through his letters and interviews, Sher consistently conveyed that he was where he was meant to be, fully committed to his duty and the people he served alongside. That sense of purpose and vitality has left a lasting impression on his family. "We never knew Morton, but he was larger than life in the stories



Army Air Forces 1st Lt. Morton Sher finally finds a resting place when he is brought home and given honors. (Photo/courtesy: Dept. of War).

our family told us, his photos and his writings," said Bruce Fine, Sher's nephew. "He was certainly a man who filled his pages of life with meaning, and he lived every day to its fullest. In fact, the day before he died, on Aug. 19, 1943, he wrote a letter home telling his parents, 'I let another pilot take that instructing job, for I find things too exciting here to leave right now,' and the very next day, he was gone."

His dedication wasn't just in words, but it was also evident in the choices he made every day in the air. "Lt. Sher was shot down on Oct. 25, 1942, and returned to the 76th Fighter Squadron to fly, fight and win another day," said Mark Godwin, 23rd Wing historian. "He had an opportunity to return home and become an instructor pilot but chose to stay and continue the fight. He personified the last two core values: service before self and excellence in all we do." In the summer of 1943, Sher's service placed him directly in combat. He was killed during a mission near Hengyang City, China, when his aircraft crashed and burned in a rice paddy in Xin Bai Village. The local villagers honored his bravery by placing a memorial stone at the crash site. He was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart in September 1943, presented to his mother, Celia, at the family home in Greenville. Despite a postwar U.S. search and recovery effort, a board of review concluded on Sept. 8, 1947, that his remains had been destroyed in the crash and officially classified him as killed in action and unrecoverable. Even in that brief time, Sher left a lasting impact. "Sher spent just over a year in China during World War II," Godwin said. "He racked up three aerial victories before his

untimely death. ... He gave his life to protect his fellow Flying Tigers. He should forever be remembered for his courage and sacrifice." Decades later, that same courage and sacrifice inspired a renewed effort to bring him home. In 2012, a private citizen contacted the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency with a photo of his memorial site in China. The agency visited the site in 2019 but found no remains. A more extensive search in 2024 recovered the plane wreckage and Sher's remains, which were positively identified through DNA testing using his nephew's samples after the remains were returned to a lab in Hawaii. After more than eight decades, Sher finally returned home to his family. The successful return of Sher's remains reflected a shared commitment that transcended borders, with the Chinese government, local civilians, DPAA personnel and his family working together to bring him home. "This was through team effort," said Air Force Col. Brett Waring, 476th Fighter Group commander. "The teams that continue to scour the earth for our missing and KIA are beyond impressive. They're part of that American commitment to individuals that endures across generations." Waring said even though the security landscape has evolved and the War Department must meet pacing challenges, moments like these when people work together for a common purpose should be treasured. "We understand that Morton fought for the Chinese people in that war and theater, and when he was shot down, the local populace protected him when he survived the first, and then prevented the enemy from taking his aircraft and body when he was killed in action," he said. "That speaks to the humanity that

connects us all, even when other circumstances point towards adversarial actions." This is a personal connection that transcends politics and nationalities, Waring continued. "It's a respect that allows us to understand that, should we ever be the ones at the focus of such a

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search, there are incredible teams that work tirelessly to ensure that we all come home," he said. "That commitment and purpose remain foundational to every crew member associated with the combat search and rescue mission as well." Sher was welcomed home by his family and community during a memorial that reflected the significance of his sacrifice. From remarks delivered by his nephew to the precision of the honor guard and a flyover conducted by the 476th Fighter Group, each moment underscored a long-awaited homecoming. What began as a name etched into stone more than 80 years ago became, at last, a place of remembrance, closure and honor for a pilot who gave his life in service to his country and was never forgotten. Sher's homecoming not only honored his sacrifice but also connected past and present generations of service members. "The legacy that we're honored to carry on today was started by that generation of warriors who left home to fight for another

country in a cause that they absolutely believed in," Waring said. "It was a level of commitment that we are challenged with maintaining. It's a legacy that goes beyond painted teeth on an airplane or a patch on our shoulder. It's history, it's heritage and it's a legacy that we're proud to carry on through our generations." The bond of commitment to one another is enduring between all service members, Waring continued. "None of us knew Morton Sher; we didn't know his name until recently, but as soon as we learned of his coming home, we leapt at the opportunity to honor him and support his family," he said. "From the maintainers coming in to generate sorties, to public affairs researching facts about him, to the wing historian finding additional media and stories, to the pilots who flew the jets emblazoned with the same shark's teeth that the 76th Squadron dominated the skies in 1943 with, it emphatically states that the bond that we share never dies, and no one is left behind or ever forgotten." For years, Sher's story existed in fragments through letters, photographs and a name carved into stone. Now, those pieces had come together, allowing his journey to move forward at last. The pilot who once left Greenville to serve his country was finally returning, not as a memory, but as a son brought home. Sher's homecoming closed one long chapter, but it also points to a story still unfolding. Across battlefields and oceans, thousands of service members remain unaccounted for, their families holding onto the same hope that guided Sher's return and the same promise that continues to drive the mission to bring them home. For pilots like Sher, that hope and dedication are echoed in the skies

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themselves. As family and friends poured dirt from Israel and the surrounding ground onto Sher's grave, the memorial was finally made whole. What once stood as a marker of loss now stands as a place of return, where absence gave way to remembrance, and sacrifice to honor. Sher loved what he did and created a legacy that endures. His story, once unfinished, now stands a complete testament to service, sacrifice and a nation's promise to remember those who gave everything. That enduring legacy, woven from history, heroism and personal courage, continues to inspire both the families who remember him and the generations who follow. "There's no limit to the commitment that we share with the generations that formed the legacy that we carry," Waring said. "Up

"Our family tree produced a real hero," Fine said. "The kind you read about and see on the big screen, except he was real. We hope his bravery and his courage will inspire the family members who follow us to believe anything you can dream can be truly possible if you're willing to commit to it and work hard to achieve it."

until a few months ago, I may never have known of Lt. Morton Sher. Now, I'll never forget his name, and I know that's the same for every member of the 476th that heard his story over the last few months. They say that a warrior dies two deaths: one physical, and the second when their name is forgotten. If that's true, then Morton lives on in the hearty laughter and boisterous camaraderie that flows from the 76th Fighter Squadron today." His heroism is not only preserved in his family's memories but also carried forward by those who follow in his footsteps, ensuring that his name and story remain alive. "Our family tree produced a real hero," Fine said. "The kind you read about and see on the big screen, except he was real. We hope his bravery and his courage will inspire the family members who follow us to believe anything you can dream can be truly possible if you're willing to commit to it and work hard to achieve it."

Neal McCoy to appear on Fox & Friends on January 4; McCoy partners with Allied Flag

McCoy Partners with Allied Flag To Commemorate 10th Anniversary of daily Pledge of Allegiance recitation

FORT WORTH, Texas – Neal McCoy, multi-award-winning country music star, will be honored with the "Spirit of Texas" award during the 2026 Cowboy Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony. The annual celebration, presented by The Norris Foundation and JJ & Bobby Norris, will take place at Billy Bob's Texas on Wednesday, March 25, 2026, beginning at 6 p.m. The evening will feature cocktails, a silent

auction, and a cowboy-inspired dining experience leading up to the 7 p.m. induction ceremony. Proceeds benefit the Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame's reimagined 20,000-square-foot museum expansion, educational programs, and ongoing preservation efforts. In addition, Neal McCoy has partnered with Allied Flag, America's premium manufacturer of 100% American-made flags, to launch a limited-edition Premium American Flag celebrating unity, freedom, and shared American values as the nation approaches its 250th anniversary. Each flag is 100%

sourced and made in the United States and crafted to government specifications. The partnership aligns with a major milestone for McCoy. On Wednesday, January 7, 2026, McCoy will mark the 10-year anniversary of reciting the Pledge of Allegiance live every day to his followers, a commitment he has maintained without missing a single day. Allied Flag will begin shipping the limited-edition flags on January 7 in honor of that anniversary. To celebrate that milestone, McCoy

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