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### J. Bradley McManus '36



J. Bradley McManus with a model of a P-38 fighter like the one he ditched on Greenland.

J. Bradley McManus, 92, of Phoenixville, the last surviving pilot of a World War II mission that had to ditch eight planes in Greenland because of bad weather, died of pneumonia Monday, March 21, at Phoenixville Hospital. Mr. McManus was a real estate broker and developer.

In 2007, nearly 65 years after the Army Air Corps squadron aborted its mission on Greenland's ice cap, a plane dubbed Glacier Girl that had been recovered there and restored was flown from Teterboro Airport in New Jersey on its original mission: a flight to England.

Mr. McManus, whose late friend Harry Smith had piloted the plane, accompanied Glacier Girl as a passenger in a World War II P-51 Mustang fighter for the first 100 miles.

Mr. McManus, 89 at the time, told USA Today that it was a "thrill to know this is occurring and to think they are actually going to fly it over the same route that we flew in 1942."

He crash-landed his P-38 Lightning during Operation Bolero, the United States' attempt to fly fighters and bombers to England. He was piloting one of six double-boomed, twin-engine fighters escorting two B-17 bombers when the weather turned bad on their way to a refueling stop in Iceland.

With five minutes of fuel left, he told USA Today, he made an emergency landing on an ice cap. His landing gear sank and the plane flipped, but Mr. McManus escaped with only a scrape.

After three days, the men's distress signals were picked up, and cargo planes parachuted supplies to them. After nine days, rescuers arrived on dogsleds to take them to a waiting Coast Guard vessel.

In 1992, Glacier Girl was found under 268 feet of ice. For four months, workers excavated the wreckage, finally hoisting it to the surface, with Mr. McManus watching the salvage efforts.

Surviving a crash-landing wasn't the only highlight of the pilot's war years. During a tour of duty, he met Lois Bebout, a nurse in the Army Air Corps who became his wife and mother of their nine children.

After his military discharge, Mr. McManus joined the family construction business in Delaware County and developed shopping centers, housing developments, and office buildings across the region.

In addition to his love of flying, he enjoyed golf and was a member of the board of trustees of Cabrini College.

Besides his wife, he is survived by sons Joseph, Thomas, and David; daughters Suzanne O'Neill, Lois Jean Shannon, Marion "Polly" McGowen, Donna M., Mary Louise Paski, and Madeleine Spitz; 16 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; and two brothers.

A viewing will be held from 5 to 8 p.m. Friday, March 25, at D'Anjolell Memorial Home, 2811 West Chester Pike, Broomall. A Funeral Mass will be said at 11 a.m. Saturday, March 26, at St. Andrew's Church, 3500 School Lane, Drexel Hill.