

AVIATION WALL OF HONOR



First Lieutenant Erwin Antilla Killed in Action

Erwin Antilla, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Axel Antilla, was born on March 21, 1915 in Republic, Michigan. He graduated from Republic High School in 1932 before enrolling in the University of Michigan. He graduated from there in 1937 with a degree in Civil Engineering. For the next few years, he was employed by the Standard Oil Company in Whiting, Indiana before accepting a position with the United States Government in Panama.

In 1942, he enlisted in the Air Corps and received his wings and commission at Foster Field, U.S. Army Air Corps School, in Texas on January 14, 1943.

As a pilot of a P-38, he was assigned to North Africa and with action on the Italian front at which time he earned an Air Medal with one Oak Leaf Cluster.

On September 12, Mr. and Mrs. Axel Antilla received word that their son, Lieutenant Erwin Antilla, U.S. Army Air Corps, was missing in action on the Italian front. Shortly later they received a letter from Lieutenant John Homan, a buddy of Antilla:

Dear Mrs. Antilla, "It is with a great deal of regret that I write this letter to you. On a raid over Italy on August 20, your son Erwin crash landed there. He apparently had engine trouble

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and was forced to land. One of the other pilots followed him practically to the ground and your son's plane was seen to be under control. We have every reason to believe that Erwin is alive and a prisoner of war. As such he will receive excellent care, contrary to belief."

Unfortunately, on November 30, 1944, Mr. and Mrs. Antilla were informed by the War Department that he is now reported as dead.

The following message came from J.A. Ulio, Adjutant General:

"Since your son, Second Lieutenant Erwin Antilla, Air Corps, was reported missing in action on August 20, 1943, the War Department has entertained hope that he survived and that information would be revealed dispelling the uncertainty surrounding his absence. However, as in many cases, the conditions of warfare deny us such information. The record concerning your son shows that he failed to return from an operational mission over Benevento, Italy in which he took part as the pilot of a P-38 fighter airplane.

"Full consideration was given of all available information bearing on the absence of your son, including all records, reports, and circumstances. In view of the fact that 12 months have now expired without the receipt of evidence to support a continued presumption of survival, the War Department must terminate such absence by a presumptive finding of death."

P.S. Erwin Antilla's brother Emil was a P-38 fighter pilot; he made it home.

TJ Mudge, April 2004