

June 5, 2017

# MEDAL OF HONOR: WILLIAM A. SHOMO

## Medal of Honor Series

*Our "Medal of Honor" series explores the stories behind the courageous Pennsylvania veterans who have been awarded the prestigious Medal of Honor for their exemplary service in the United States military. In this entry, we recognize the achievements of William A. Shomo, who received the Medal of Honor on April 7th, 1945.*



Shomo joined the Army Air Corps from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in August 1941.

Shomo was assigned to the 82nd Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron. His unit had moved from airstrip to airstrip along the northern coast of New Guinea and then to Morotai supporting General MacArthur's drive to the Philippines performing dangerous photo recon and ground attack missions.

In December 1944, the squadron was given F-6Ds; Mustangs designed for armed photo reconnaissance. On 24 December, Shomo was put in command of the squadron and ordered to move it to Mindoro, an island off the southwest coast of Luzon, to support MacArthur's landing at Lingayen Gulf. During that landing on January 9, Shomo led his first combat mission in the squadron's new planes. The low-level reconnaissance was to gather intelligence on the air strength of Japanese in northern Luzon.

Though Shomo flew more than 200 combat missions in World War II, he saw only a total of 14 enemy aircraft from his cockpit and destroyed eight of them.

Maj. Shomo was lead pilot of a flight of two fighter planes charged with an armed photographic and strafing mission against the Aparri and Laoag airdromes. While enroute to the objective, he observed an enemy twin-engine bomber, protected by 12 fighters, flying about 2,500 feet above him and in the opposite direction. Although the odds were 13 to 2, Maj. Shomo immediately ordered an attack. Accompanied by his wingman he closed on the enemy formation in a climbing turn and scored hits on the leading plane of the third element, which exploded in midair. Maj. Shomo then attacked the second element from the left side of the formation and shot another fighter down in flames. When the enemy formed for counterattack, Maj. Shomo moved to the other side of the formation and hit a third fighter which exploded and fell. Diving below the bomber, he put a burst into its underside and it crashed and burned. Pulling up from this pass he encountered a fifth plane firing head on and destroyed it. He next dived upon the first element and shot down the lead plane; then diving to 300 feet in pursuit of another fighter, he caught it with his initial burst and it crashed in flames. During this action, his wingman had shot down three planes, while the three remaining enemy fighters had fled into a cloudbank and escaped. Maj. Shomo's extraordinary gallantry and intrepidity in attacking such a far superior force and destroying seven enemy aircraft in one action is unparalleled in the southwest Pacific area.

He would stay with the Air Force after the war and was promoted to lieutenant colonel on 20 February 1951. Lieutenant Colonel William A. Shomo died on 25 June 1990 and is buried in St. Clair Cemetery in Greensburg, Pennsylvania.