



**Paul Golnik**

## Paul Golnik

Born July 3, 1924

Killed in Action August 8, 1945

“Always smiling” is how Paul Golnik is remembered by his family. During 1944, World War II was still in full swing in both Europe and the Pacific. At this time Paul was 19 years old and decided to enlist in the Navy, following his two older brothers into the war. He had a good job and was not obligated to enlist because his brothers were already serving in the military, however Paul felt it was his patriotic duty to serve.

Paul Golnik was born on July 3, 1924, the youngest child of Charles and Anna Golnik of Prince George, Virginia, both who were Russian immigrants. Charles was born in 1871 and immigrated to America in 1903. Anna was born in 1882 and also immigrated here. They got married on August 4, 1909. In addition to Paul, Charles and Anna had a daughter, Margaret and two other sons, Emmett and George. Charles’ first wife, Christine Hannus, passed away earlier, however they had three daughters, Annie, Emily and Christine, and two sons, Bedrick and Christian “Chris”, who were Paul’s half sisters and brothers. Paul’s paternal grandparents were David and Caroline Golnik, and his maternal grandparents were Joseph and Catherine Wolfe.



*Paul before enlisting in the Navy.*

The Golniks made their living as farmers, living on at least two different farms in Prince George, Virginia. They had a farm on Route 635 near the intersection of Centennial Road and Old Town Road, and afterwards had a farm at the intersection of Route 156 and Route 460. After leaving the last farm, they lived with their daughter, Margaret, on Custer Street in Petersburg and after the war with their son, Emmett, on Dinwiddie Avenue in Prince George west of Hopewell. In 1940, Paul was living with his parents on the Route 635 farm, at which time he was 16 years old and attended Disputanta High School. After finishing school and prior to enlisting, Paul was employed at Hercules in Hopewell.

As mentioned above, Paul was not at risk of being drafted because his brothers, Emmett and George, were already serving in the war; Emmett in the Navy and George in the Army. George landed at Normandy on D-Day and served afterwards in France. A newspaper article about all three serving in the military is included later in this biography.

On May 9, 1944, about two months before his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday, Paul enlisted in the Navy. Upon induction he was 5'-7" and weighed 127 lbs, with blue eyes, blond hair and had a light complexion. He had a faithful pet dog that ran away and never returned home when Paul left for the Navy.



*Paul holding his faithful dog,  
with nephew Jimmy Brantley on the left.*

Paul attended basic training for about two months at Camp Perry, Virginia, so he wasn't too far from home at that time and possibly came home on leave afterwards. From Camp Perry he transferred to the Naval Air Technical Training Command at Memphis, Tennessee, on July 12, 1944 where he was trained in aviation ordnance for 18 weeks and airborne radar operations for another two weeks.



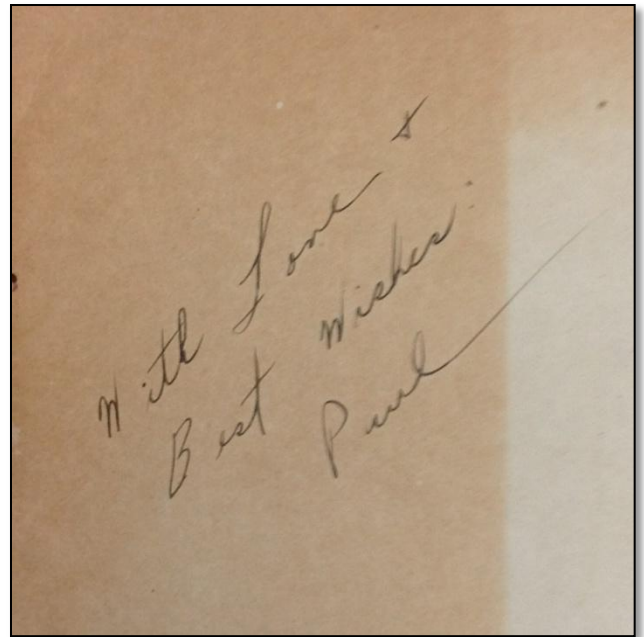


*The picture above was taken at the Naval Air Technical Training Command in Memphis, Tennessee, in December 1944, probably upon Paul's graduation from training there. Paul is on the left end of the back row with a broad smile on his face. The plane was a World War II Douglas Dauntless torpedo dive bomber, possibly only for display purposes at the facility, although Paul may have trained in this type aircraft.*

On December 16, 1944, Paul transferred to Corpus Christi, Texas, for air gunnery and air crewman operational training, which he completed on May 9, 1945, exactly one year after he enlisted. He was transferred to the Naval Air Station at San Diego, California on May 10, 1945. At San Diego, he passed his Naval Aviation Swim Test on June 12, 1945. While Paul was stationed in the United States he stayed in contact with his parents and sister, sending them presents, such as the robe and scarf pictured here.



*The robe that Paul sent from California to his sister, Margaret.*



*Handwritten note from Paul with one of his presents.*



*A scarf that Paul sent to his mother.*

On July 21, 1945, Paul was transferred to Patrol Bombing Squadron 27 based in Okinawa in the Asiatic-Pacific theater of operations. About two weeks later, on August 6, 1945, the first atomic bomb was dropped on Japan by U.S. forces. The next day, August 7, 1945, Paul was part of a two-plane night mission from which neither aircraft returned. On August 9, 1945 the second and final atomic bomb was dropped. After the second bomb was dropped, there was a lot of optimism throughout the country that the war with Japan would soon be over. The Allies had informed Japan that if they did not surrender the bombing would continue. Paul's parents also must have had a sense of relief that the war would soon be over and that Paul would be returning home.



However, on August 14, 1945, his parents were notified that Paul was missing in action. At this time they were living with their daughter, Margaret Brantley, on Custer Street in Petersburg. Paul's niece, Jeanette Brantley, remembers a taxi with military men arriving at their house to deliver the telegram informing her grandparents that Paul was missing in action. The following day, August 15, 1945, Japan surrendered. The news of Japan's surrender spread quickly the next day by radio and newspapers, such as the one below dated August 16, 1945.

The Evening News, LONDON, FRIDAY, AUGUST 16, 1945. The front page features a large headline: "JAPAN SURRENDERS" with a sub-headline: "They ask only to keep the Mikado". Below the headline are three photographs: a group of people celebrating, a portrait of a man, and a scene of a military parade. The page is filled with news articles, including "BIG 4 TERMS ACCEPTED: MINISTERS GET 'SHOCK'", "EMPEROR'S 'BID TO END SUFFERINGS'", "PICCADILLY GOES WILD: BIG CROWDS CELEBRATE VICTORY", and "SUZUKI TELLS SOVIET ENVOY: 'WE GIVE IN'".

Another letter sent on August 23, 1945, confirmed to the Golniks that Paul was missing. Then in a follow-up letter dated September 24, 1945, the Navy informed his parents of the following details:

*“Additional information is now available concerning the disappearance of your son, Paul Golnik, Seaman first class, United States Naval Reserve.*

*According to the report received, your son has been in the missing status since 7 August 1945 when the plane he was aboard failed to return from a night mission over the Sakishima Island Group. Weather conditions at the time were reported to be excellent. A message received from the lead plane stated that the planes had strafed and beached*

*three enemy motor torpedo boats and added that they were continuing the assigned mission. There was no indication that the planes suffered any damage in the attack, but no further word was received from either aircraft. When radio contact could not be made, search planes were immediately dispatched to cover the same track assigned to the missing planes, but no trace of wreckage or survivors was discovered. When special searches were abandoned, regular day and night sectors in the area were alerted to be on the lookout for evidence of the planes or survivors.”*

The letter goes on to say that Paul would be carried as missing in action until it is determined that he did not survive or that he is alive.

But as it turned out, Paul did not survive. If he had lived another week, by which time Japan had surrendered and the United States stopped offensive operations, he probably would have returned home from the war as did his brothers. After over one year of training, Paul had only been in the combat theater for less than three weeks when he perished.

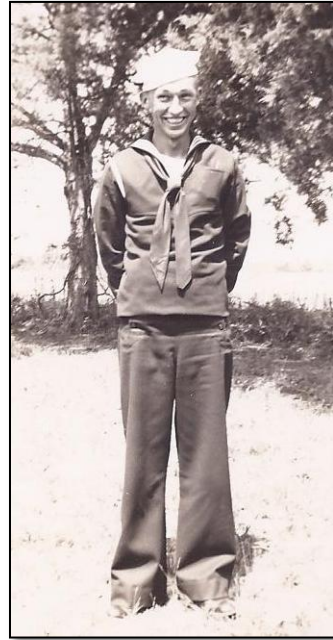
About a year later, on August 12, 1946, Paul's parents were officially notified by letter that he had lost his life. This letter indicated the only possible trace of the two planes in Paul's last mission was a "PBM wing float" found adrift in the search area eleven days later. The PBM was the type of aircraft that Paul was on, which is verified in the Patrol Bombing Squadron 27 "War Diary, August 1945" report dated September 3, 1945 and declassified on December 31, 2012. The War Diary description of the mishap, in which 24 servicemen perished, is included below as well as information about the type of aircraft on which Paul was a crew member.

In addition, carbon copies of the telegram and letters recently obtained from the Veterans Administration are included below in this biography. The originals would have been on letterhead and had signatures of the senders. The home addresses for the Golniks on these copies have been marked out by the Veterans Administration.

In memory of Paul, his name is inscribed at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, Hawaii, the Virginia War Memorial in Richmond, Virginia and the War Memorial Monument at the Prince George Regional Heritage Center at Prince George, Virginia. In addition, Paul is listed in the book *Gold Star Honor Roll of Virginia in the Second World War*. Paul was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart pictured below and is cherished by his family to this day.

At the time this biography was developed, Paul was survived by his nephew, Jimmy Brantley, and niece, Jeanette Brantley Wallace, who continue to treasure his memory. The collection of information, mementos and pictures included in this document were provided by Paul's niece and nephew, and great-nephew, who have preserved these items on behalf of their family.

## *Paul and His Parents*



*The pictures above of Paul in the dark uniform were possibly taken after he had completed Basic Training at Camp Perry, VA. At that time his father was 73 and his mother was 62.*



***Paul with other family members***



*(l to r): sister Margaret Golnik Brantley, Paul and sister-in-law Mary Golnik (George's wife)*



*(back): sister Margaret Golnik Brantley & Paul  
(front l to r): nieces Jeanette & Nancy Brantley,  
nephew Garland Slagle*



*(l to r): sister-in-law Mary Golnik, Paul, sister  
Christine Golnik Slagle  
(front): nephew Garland Slagle*



*(l to r): Paul, sister Margaret Golnik Brantley  
& brother Chris Golnik*



### **Three Golnik Brothers in the Service**

*The article on this page appeared in a local newspaper about Paul and his brothers serving in World War II. The date is unknown, however it was after the June 6, 1944 Normandy invasion and while Paul was in training during 1944 at Memphis, Tennessee, so the article would have been published late in 1944.*

**Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Golnik of Prince George County have three sons in the service, two in the Navy and one in the Army.**

**At top is Pvt. George Golnik, who entered the service on May 10, 1943 and took his basic training at Fort Bragg, N. C. He was stationed at Fort Meade for a month and was then sent overseas November 18, 1943. He landed in Normandy on D-Day and has been fighting in France ever since. He is the husband of Mrs. George Golnik of Richmond and before entering the service he was employed at Bellwood.**

**In the middle is Paul Golnik S 2/c, who entered the Navy on May 9, 1944 and took his boot training at Camp Peary, Va. He is now at the Naval Air Technical Center at Memphis, Tenn. Before entering the Navy he was employed at Hercules.**

**Below is Emmett Golnik S 2/c, who entered the Navy in March, 1944 and also took his boot training at Camp Peary. He left the States in May, 1944 and is now serving overseas in the Navy. All three boys attended Disputanta High School.**



Copy of the initial MIA notification telegram

NAVPER-1484 (Rev.5-45)  
CASFORMEL 1

~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~

TELEGRAM

Para-53211-vb  
35852-A-24-10  
14 Aug 1945

MR. & MRS. CHARLES GOLNIK

I DEEPLY REGRET TO INFORM YOU THAT YOUR SON PAUL GOLNIK

SEAMAN FIRST CLASS USNR

IS MISSING IN PLANE FLIGHT 6 AUGUST 1945 IN THE SERVICE

OF HIS COUNTRY. YOUR GREAT ANXIETY IS APPRECIATED AND YOU WILL BE

FURNISHED DETAILS WHEN RECEIVED. ~~TO PREVENT POSSIBLE AID TO OUR ENEMIES~~

~~PLEASE DO NOT DIVULGE THE NAME OF HIS SHIP OR STATION UNLESS THE~~

~~GENERAL CIRCUMSTANCES ARE MADE PUBLIC IN NEWS STORIES.~~

~~XX~~

VICE ADMIRAL RANDALL JACOBS

THE CHIEF OF NAVAL PERSONNEL



*Copy of the MIA confirmation letter*

Pers-53230-mh  
936 57 45

23 August 1945

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Gelnik  
[REDACTED]

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Gelnik:

It is with regret that this Bureau confirms the report that your son, Paul Gelnik, Seaman first class, United States Naval Reserve, is missing. Detailed information in connection with his disappearance has not been received in this Bureau.

Sincere sympathy is extended to you in your anxiety. Should any information be received which can be released, it will be promptly forwarded to you.

You are urged to read the enclosed booklet carefully as it explains matters of importance concerning naval personnel in the missing status.

By direction of Chief of Naval Personnel.

Sincerely yours,

H. B. ATKINSON  
Commander, USNR  
Officer in Charge  
Casualty Section

Encl:

*Copy of September 1945 letter with more details*

Pers-5323a-eb  
936 57 45

24 September 1945

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Golnik  
[REDACTED]

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Golnik:

Additional information is now available concerning the disappearance of your son, Paul Golnik, Seaman first class, United States Naval Reserve.

According to the report received, your son has been in the missing status since 7 August 1945 when the plane he was aboard failed to return from a night mission over the Sakishima Island Group. Weather conditions at the time were reported to be excellent. A message received from the lead plane stated that the planes had strafed and beached three enemy motor torpedo boats and added that they were continuing the assigned mission. There was no indication that the planes suffered any damage in the attack, but no further word was received from either aircraft. When radio contact could not be made, search planes were immediately dispatched to cover the same track assigned to the missing planes, but no trace of wreckage or survivors was discovered. When special searches were abandoned, regular day and night sectors in the area were alerted to be on the lookout for evidence of the planes or survivors.

Inasmuch as additional information is becoming available daily, it is hoped that a decision regarding the status of the personnel aboard these planes can soon be made. However, your son will be carried in the status of missing until such time as evidence is received which clearly establishes the fact that there is no hope of his survival, or until word is received that he is alive.

At the present time every effort is being made by our forces to liberate prisoners of war and to locate and clarify the status of other personnel being carried in the status of missing. In this connection, the Chief of Naval Operations has directed that all islands and areas not previously explored, shall be subjected to a thorough and exhaustive search.

Your anxiety is realized and it is regretted that further details are not available at this time. If more information is received, you will be promptly notified.

By direction of Chief of Naval Personnel.

Sincerely yours,

H. B. ATKINSON  
Commander, USNR  
Officer in Charge  
Casualty Section



*Copy of the August 1946 KIA confirmation letter*

Form 53211 ds  
Prep by Lt. Comdr Alanya  
45688-12-6  
936 57 45

12 August 1946

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Golnik  
[REDACTED]

My dear Mr. and Mrs. Golnik:

Your son, Paul Golnik, Seaman first class, United States Naval Reserve, has been carried on the official records of the Navy Department in the status of missing in action as of 8 August 1945. The plane in which he was flying, a unit of Patrol Bombing Squadron TWENTY-SEVEN, took off from Chimu Wan, accompanied by one other plane for a night search over the Sakishima Gunto, Japan, scouting harbors, coves and inlets for enemy shipping. At 7:55 p.m. a message was received at the base "attacking enemy vessel." At 8:20 p.m. an amplifying report stated: "Strafed and beached three enemy motor torpedo boats. Continuing mission assigned." No further word was received from either plane. The weather in the area was good. An extensive search by air was initiated the next day and continued for two days. After the special searches were abandoned, regular search missions were flown daily. The only trace of the missing planes or crews was found eleven days later when a search plane discovered and photographed a PBM wing float adrift on the water. To date no further information has been received by the Navy Department concerning the fate of your son.

In view of the probability that the plane in which your son was flying crashed, and that he lost his life as a result thereof, or while he was in the water, because no official or unconfirmed reports have been received that he survived, because his name has not appeared on any lists or reports of personnel liberated from Japanese prisoner of war camps, and in view of the length of time that has elapsed since he was determined to have been missing in action, I am reluctantly forced to the conclusion that he is deceased. In compliance with Section 5 of Public Law 490, 77th Congress, as amended, the death of your son is, for the purposes of termination of pay and allowances, settlement of accounts, and payment of death gratuities, presumed to have occurred as of 9 August 1946, which is the day following the expiration of twelve months in the missing status.

I know what little solace the formal and written word can be to help meet the burden of your loss, but in spite of that knowledge, I cannot refrain from saying very simply that I am sorry. It is hoped that you will find comfort in the thought that your son gave his life for his country upholding the highest traditions of the Navy.

Sincerely yours,  
[REDACTED]



**Patrol Bombing Squadron Twenty Seven**  
**War Dairy, August 1945 (transcribed)**  
**Declassified December 31, 2012**

The squadron suffered the most severe casualty in its history during the month when two planes took off on a night shipping search through the Sakishima Gunto and failed to return. The planes left the base at 1800 on 7 August and at 1955 sent in a CW message, "Attacking Enemy Vessel." At 2020 an amplifying report was sent by the planes which said, "Strafed and beached three enemy motor torpedo boats. Position 24-50 North, 125-09 East. Continuing mission assigned." No further word was ever received from either plane. Weather in the area was good with only a few scattered cumulus clouds, although there was no moon. An extensive search was initiated the following day with six PBMs covering the area and two B-25 Mitchells searching the island proper. On the next day, four more PBMs covered the same sector and after that special searches were abandoned although regular search missions over the track were flown daily. The only trace of the missing planes was discovered eleven (11) days after the mishap when one of our planes, flying the regular search mission in the area, located and photographed a PBM wing float adrift on the water at 24-36 North, 123-52 East. Pictures of the float positively identified it as from a PBM. No other evidence of survivors or wreckage was located. The assumption of the squadron is that the two planes collided in the air and probably crashed into the sea. Otherwise, presumably one of the planes could have dispatched a distress message to give some sort of a hint as to the difficulty encounter by the aircraft. A total of six officers and 18 enlisted men were lost with the two planes. The planes and personnel lost were:

Lieut. (jg) Otho Leonard Edwards Jr.  
Lieut. (jg) James Leslie Bistodeau  
Ensign William McMaster Holligan

PBM-5 BuNo.....59023

BACH, Carl Paul, AMMF1c(T)  
NEARY, George Patrick, AOM3c  
HEATH, John Daniel, AMMF3c(T)  
STEWART, James Clifford, AMMF2c(T)  
LEE, Jack (n), ARM1c(T)  
SHAW, Robert Wheeler, AOM2c(T)  
MARTYAK, Michael, AOM3c(T)  
KORZIN, Fred Michael, ARM2c(T)  
SUMNER, Wallace Carey, ART2c(T)

Lieut. (jg) Bernard Austin Gallagher  
Ensign Albert Preston Breeden Jr.  
Ensign Ralph Elmer Wolfe

PBM-5 BuNo.....59154

GREGORY, John Lucian, AMM3c  
KELLY, Paul Richard, S1c(AOM)  
HOWSARE, Lamar Eldory, AMM3c(T)  
GOLNIK, Paul (n), S1c(AOM)  
BLAKE, Harley William. AOM3c(T)  
WOOD, James Edwin, S1c(ARM)  
BOARMAN, Joseph Augustin, ARM3c(T)  
LOONEY, Hollis "B", ARM3c(T)  
GOODIAN, Francis Curry, S1c(AOM)

## *The Martin PBM Mariner Aircraft*



*The PBM Mariner as pictured above was the type of aircraft that Paul Golnik was on when he perished. The aircraft was used for patrol purposes in World War II to search out and attack submarines and shipping vessels. It carried a payload of bombs and had several gun turrets, thus an effective offensive aircraft. Designed for long flights, it typically had a galley, bunks, refrigerator and other features to keep the crew rested.*

*Paul's plane left on August 7, 1945, from a temporary airstrip at Chimu Wan, on the east coast of Okinawa. There were twelve crew members on board when Paul's airplane was lost, along with a second PBM which also had a crew of twelve. The pontoon visible under the wing is the wing float, such as was observed eleven days later adrift in the ocean after the planes did not return to base. Based on the coordinates given in the War Diary, the wing float was found about 80 miles from the location of the last radio message from the squadron.*

*Paul Golnik's Purple Heart Award (front below and back next page)*







FOR  
MILITARY  
MERIT  
PAUL GOLNIK  
S.1c  
USNR



*Honolulu Memorial, National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific  
and Paul's name as inscribed on the Tablets of the Missing*



*Virginia War Memorial, Richmond, Virginia  
and Paul's Inscription*



★ PAUL GOLNIK

*Prince George County War Memorial and Paul's Inscription  
at the Historic Prince George Courthouse*



PAUL GOLNIK



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Mrs. Jeanette Wallace

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