



1LT John B. Goettke Class of 1943 Enshrined 2021



John Bernard Goettke grew up in Deer Park, Ohio, and graduated from Purcell High School in 1939, and then from Xavier University in January 1943. While at Xavier John was a multi-year member of the Clef Club, and earned a membership to the Order of Military Merit. His class was the first and only early graduating class; graduating to meet the growing demands of a world at war.

He was ordered to Ft Sill, Oklahoma, trained as a Forward Observer and commissioned under the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) in the Field Artillery. He further qualified as an Aerial Forward Observer.

He trained as a pilot in the United States, and then again in England, where he was stationed on D-Day, June 6, 1944. By mid-June he was in France, spotting for the 908th Field Artillery BN of the 83rd (Thunderbolt) Division.

1LT Goettke's made efforts, in between flying duties, to find Catholic churches, attend Mass, etc., while in both England and France. From a letter dated July 2, 1944: "I have been driving a jeep quite a bit, and passed a church. Sometime later I drove back by the church... I went to visit (the priest). Since he knew little English, and I knew a smattering of French and we both knew more Latin, we talked for about half an hour. Today I took about 15 men from the Battery and we went to Mass at that church. For many it was the first time they had been to Mass since leaving the States. I served and received communion. The church was built in 1180."

On the morning of August 10, 1944, 1LT Goettke and LT William Reichert gave the ultimate sacrifice for their country. He and LT Reichert were performing their duties as forward observers in the sky, flying a slow moving, unarmed, Piper Cub parallel to Allied lines and calling down artillery fire on the enemy. At some point the plane was hit, plunging to the Earth, killing both men. He is buried in the Britany American Cemetery located in Saint-James, Normandy, France.

1LT Goettke was awarded the Purple Heart and the Air Medal posthumously. In 2015, 1LT Goettke's name and the names of five other spotter pilots who were killed in the local area were added to a monument in the Pleurtuit, France, town square for all posterity.

