

1943, but decided to join the Eighth Air Force. "But then I 'washed out' as a pilot," he said, "because of air sickness. So, a bunch of us washed-out guys were sitting in a room, commiserating with each other, wondering about our Air Force careers when an officer came in and yelled:

"All youse guys is gonna be gunners!"

Off they went to gunnery school in Nevada, practicing firing at targets being pulled by planes over the desert. They were then shipped to England where Gross became the belly gunner, probably the most dangerous gunner spot of the six gun positions on a B-17.

"I flew 35 missions over Frankfurt, Cologne and other German cities, firing 50 caliber machine guns. The flak (anti-aircraft fire) was heavy, but I came out okay; one time, I counted over 200 scars on my turret. I think the dangerous situation sort of cured my air sickness, although I often felt queasy."

After V-E Day, Gross returned to the U.S. and helped train forest rangers in Washington state to aid in detecting and deflecting incendiary bombs attached to balloons sent by the Japanese. One had exploded and killed a teacher and five children at a picnic. Gross earned a Bronze Star during his service, but shyly won't explain the reason. He also was awarded five Air Medals with Oak Leaf Clusters.

Working as an electrician following his return to civilian life, Gross and his wife, Harriet, were married 47 years before she died in 1995. They had four children and five grandchildren.

Paul, 86, a June, 1941 Central grad, tried to enlist in the air force on the Monday morning after the Sunday Pearl Harbor attack, but was told he had to complete two years of college (at Lawrence Tech in Southfield, now Lawrence Technological University) before being accepted.

"As soon as I finished," he said, "I joined and trained for 18 months in Mississippi, Florida and Alabama before getting my wings as a second lieutenant."

Shipped to an air base near Paris — he was offered the bunks of any one of four airmen who "didn't return" — Paul flew his P-47 Thunderbolt fighter bomber over selected targets like ammunition dumps, trains and bridges, rather than large cities hit by the big bombers. The P-47 carried two, 500-pound bombs and eight 50-caliber machineguns for strafing.

"We went into a dive at 500 miles an hour, dropped the bombs without a bombsight, then we had to pull out fast to avoid crashing," he said. "We couldn't

rely on the altimeter to know our height because it wasn't accurate at our speed.

"After the pullout, we blacked out for about 20 seconds due to the gravitational forces, but we had to regain our wits quickly to know our position. The flak was so thick you could hardly see. One time, I was strafing a train when a boxcar suddenly opened and two huge anti-aircraft guns came out and started firing. That kind of thing can make you nervous."

He earned an Air Medal and seven Oak Leaf Clusters and left the service as a first lieutenant.

Paul and his wife, Phyllis, were married 40 years, having three children, and she died in 1985. He operated Larry Paul Refinisher, Inc., in Detroit for 54 years before retiring. Remarried, his wife, Martha Zausmer Paul, is an award-winning artist. □

His Own Little Shul

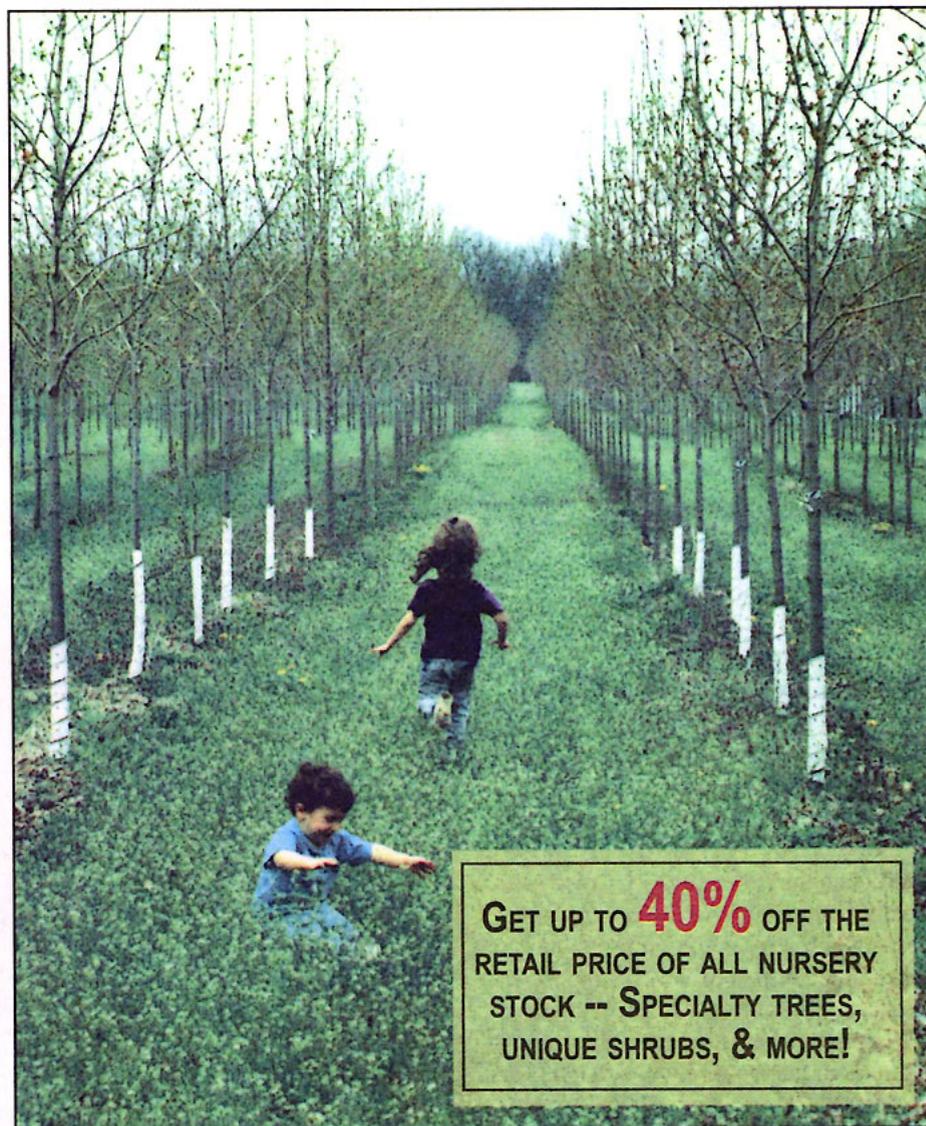
One of only two Jews among 800 airmen in the 314th Fighter Squadron during World War II in Europe, Larry Paul found it a bit difficult to form a *minyán* for Jewish services in between dive bomber runs over Germany.

So he attended church services every Sunday morning, clutching a small book titled *Abridged Prayer Book for Jews in the Armed Forces of the U.S.* He recalls: "I at least felt closer to God in this way, and I just prayed privately with my own book. I also took the book with me on my missions. I needed all the help I could get. I learned quickly that a person can get *geharget varin* out there (get killed).

"My father somehow found a way to *daven* twice a day while fighting in three big battles in World War I."

Did Paul experience any anti-Semitism? "On the contrary," he exuded. "When many of the Christian airmen found out there were a few Jews in our group, they sought us out to meet us and talk to us — just to see what a Jew was like."

— Bill Carroll



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