

Soldier's bracelet unearthed in Germany, returned to family

It's March 12, 1945, on the outskirts of the village of Bubingen, Germany, and near the Germans' Seigfried Line, putting the U.S. 63rd Infantry Division under intense German artillery fire.

Pfc. Gordon J. Strom, carrying a Browning automatic rifle, and

another member of his unit were in a foxhole on a wooded hilltop, lying low as the rounds of shells flew by.

But one of them didn't. A German

88 mortar shell, called a "screaming meemie" for the terrifying sound it made, landed directly on the two men's foxhole.

The other man was mortally wounded and soon died. But Gordon was killed instantly.

He was 19 years old.

Moorhead High grads

Gordon's body was temporarily buried in a military cemetery in France, and then returned home for reburial.

"Home" was Moorhead.

Gordon was the son of **Gust and Hulda Strom**. He had two older brothers, **Glenn and Arnold**. All three boys graduated from Moorhead High School, and Gordon attended the North Dakota Agricultural College (now North Dakota State University).

Glenn and Arnold served in the Navy in the South Pacific during World War



Gordon Strom

II. Both escaped injury.

It was while he was stationed in the South Pacific that Arnold received a letter from his parents informing him of Gordon's death.

After the war, Glenn and Arnold returned home and joined their father in the Strom Construction Co. as road construction contractors until they retired in the 1980s.

Glenn died of cancer in the early 1990s. Arnold, 90, still lives in Moorhead.

It was Arnold's grandson who was instrumental in the almost miraculous discovery of a link to Gordon six decades after his death.

Link to the past

Nick Pladson, an attorney in Minneapolis,

is a history buff who loves to ask his "Grandpa Arnie," as he calls Arnold, about Gordon.

Last fall, for a diversion after a long day, Nick plugged "Gordon J. Strom" into Google and bingo: He found someone had created a post with the title, "Looking for the family of Pfc. Gordon J. Strom."

"To say I was surprised is an understatement," Nick writes Neighbors.

So he clicked on the link

and found the name of a man in Germany who is a member of a group of volunteers who attempt to locate and excavate locations in Germany where aircraft were reported to have gone down.

Nick learned that one day this man, **Tim Flaus**, was searching in some woods and found several metal objects.

The woods were near Bubingen. Among the items found there was a bracelet. The name on the bracelet

was Gordon J. Strom.

Tim had found the spot where Nick's great-uncle Gordon had died.

Making his day

Nick corresponded with Tim, who then sent Nick the bracelet just after last Christmas, with a note written in English with the help of a translator. It said, in part, "I hope that you will be happy about knowing the bracelet is back in your possession, and I hope you will not recall the sadness, but all

Michael Vosburg / Forum Photo Editor

This bracelet for Gordon J. Strom was lost when he was killed in action during World War II and was recently found by a German resident and returned to Strom's brother, Arnold, in Moorhead.



the good moments with your brother instead."

Nick gave the bracelet to his Grandpa Arnie, who, Nick says, "was thrilled to receive it; it made his day, and maybe his year."

After all, it was the bracelet that was worn by Arnold's young brother the day he gave his life for his country 68 years ago this week.

If you have an item of interest for this column, mail it to Neighbors, The Forum, Box 2020, Fargo, ND 58107; fax it to (701) 241-5487; or email blind@forumcomm.com