

## **RICHARD LEONARD PIAZZA**

### **UNITED STATES ARMY**

#### **Persian Gulf Command 231st Signal Operating Company**

Richard graduated from De La Salle High School in Minneapolis in 1942 and joined the service in December of that year. He was sent to St. Petersburg, Florida for basic training. The training took place in the Vinoy Hotel which the U.S. Army took over for this purpose.



From there to he was sent to Camp Crowder, Missouri. It operated as a Signal Corps Replacement Training Center. He received his AIT (advanced individual training) there. His brother August (Gus) Piazza was also being trained there at the same time.

In March of 1943 their mother Providence and sister Bernadette went to visit Richard and Gus there. The 4 of them spent time together in Joplin, Missouri which is about 30 miles north of Camp Crowder. It was Richard's first time away from home so Mama wanted to check in on him!

Next stop for Richard was Greenville, Pennsylvania which was the staging area for GI's before being sent overseas. Once again Mama Providence, Bernadette and his 10 year old kid brother Jerry took the train to visit Richard there. On the way they changed trains in Chicago and ended up on a military troop train. Jerry was totally in awe of all the soldiers and Providence had quite the time keep the GI's away from Bernadette!

Soon Richard was on his way from New York, over the Atlantic and Mediterranean to Alexandria, Egypt. And then by truck to Baghdad, Iraq and finally Abadan, Iran. The year was 1944.

Private Richard was stationed at Abadan Air Force Base in Abadan, Iran. He was part of the Persian Gulf Command and worked in the control tower of a large refinery. There was an airplane assembly plant nearby. Plane parts would come there via ship and the US assembled them. (See the attached for official information of the purpose of the base at that time.)

In short, Richard was a teletype operator and he was an excellent typist the rest of his life because of it. The Americans were supplying their allies, the Russians, with all sorts of equipment including trucks and planes, and the unit that Richard was attached to was unloading, building and reshipping equipment. Uncle Jerry believed that they were assembling Douglas Aircraft specifically the A220 Bomber. Once the planes were assembled the Russian pilots flew them back to Russia.

Uncle Gus was also a teletype operator, and occasionally Richard and Gus would make contact over the wires. Gus was stationed in Tehran, Iran. Eventually Richard suffered a foot infection and was hospitalized. Gus took a leave and traveled 200 miles in an army truck to visit Richard.

After that Sgt. Gus was sent to Italy. Two of their other brothers were also in the Army at the time. Sgt. Joseph Piazza (Café Di Napoli) was in the North African invasion and later was also sent to Italy, he was a cook. Pvt. Samuel Piazza was stationed at Camp Lee, Virginia. Uncle Jerry would have only been a preteen/teen during this time. He was 8 years younger than Richard.

In the summer of 1944 Richard went on leave to Sicily to visit his maternal grandmother Giroloma Badali. He found her to be safe and very glad to see him.

We also know that three of the brothers, Richard, Gus and Joe had a reunion in Italy. The Stars and Stripes Military Newspaper may have covered that reunion.

Even though the climate in the middle east was miserably hot and dirty he was very lucky to have traveled to other parts of the area including Jerusalem and the Great Pyramids and Sphinx in Egypt.

When we were kids he told us about cooling off in the swimming pool at the base. He and his buddies would have pool fights and he was always the guy walking the pool with another GI on his shoulders!

Richard was discharged with the rank of sergeant on December 31, 1945 after a three year stint in the army. He became engaged to Mary Jane Inveen on April 16, 1946 and they were married on October 19, 1946. The rest is history! We are proud of Richard's military service.

Of interest...The Vinoy Hotel in St. Petersburg, Florida is still there as of this writing. Richard returned there in on a trip with Mary Jane in 1954. He took a movie of it which is on Disk 1 of the Piazza Family Events.

This information is a compilation of emails with my brother Paul Piazza Sr. and interviews with Uncle Jerry Piazza. As well as comments from the eulogy by Uncle Jerry at Richard's funeral.

Written by Anne Piazza Hedlund (Richard's daughter) January 2024



CAMP CROWDER MISSOURI  
1943



Two Soldiers! Jerry & Richard Jan. 1943



Lincoln Nebraska Spring 1943



Richard, Bernadette, Mama Providence, Gus  
Joplin Missouri 1943



Abadan Air Force Base  
Iran



# Photos of Richard in Abadan Iran

Fixing the lines      Armed and ready      Cooling off at the pool



ABADAN IRAN



Iran, Nov. 1944



GUS & RICHARD

## A Sick Call . . .

. . . made recently by Sgt. August Piazza on his brother, Pvt. Richard Piazza, was really something. The two had a reunion visit when both were stationed near Iran, Persia. Later Richard was ill and in a hospital about 200 miles away. His brother made the trip on a leave and traveled in an army truck. Since then Sgt. Piazza has gone to Italy.

Pvt. Richard Piazza made quite a visit in Sicily when he called on his grandmother, Mrs. Giroloma Badall, whom he found safe and very glad to see him.

Sgt. Joe Piazza was in the North African invasion and also went to Italy. A fourth brother, Pvt. Sam Piazza is stationed at Camp Lee, Va.

They are sons of Mr. and Mrs. D. L. Piazza, 616 Morgan avenue N.

Uncle Gus and Richard



## Soldier Brothers Meet in Desert



**GI REUNION.** The two happy-looking soldiers pictured above are the Brothers Piazza, who recently met in Persia, where they are assigned to the same company. At the left is T-4 August J. Piazza and the other guy is Pvt. Richard L. Piazza. (Story below.)

### PIAZZA BROTHERS REUNITED, ASSIGNED TO SAME PGC UNIT

Desert District—Meeting in a foreign land half-way around the world recently were two brothers in the Persian Gulf Command, T-4 August J. Piazza, 30, and Pvt. Richard L. Piazza, 20, of the 231st Signal Operating Co. here. August, who has been in Iran since last June, met brother Richard exactly seven months later to the day, to find him assigned to the same camp and the same outfit as his own.

Of Italian descent, the two boys hail from Minneapolis, Minn. and are both teletype operators. Of the five boys in the family, four are in the Army of the United States, and three are now overseas. One of the brothers is a mess sergeant in North Africa, while the fourth was just inducted into the army last month. August has been married for three years and is the father of an infant girl, born Jan. 9. Richard is unmarried.

August entered the army in June, 1942, took basic in Virginia and was then transferred to the 231st Signal Corps and sent to Camp Crowder, Mo. In the meantime, brother Richard entered the service in December of 1942, and was sent to Florida, and from there to Camp Crow-

### ARMY RECALLS YOUTHFUL GI FROM PACIFIC

Red Oak, Iowa (ANS) Pvt. Faunce C. Collins is headed home from the South Pacific. His draft board has finally caught up with him.

Collins was drafted in March, 1943, when he was only 16 years old, through an error on the part of the draft board. Since he wanted to get into action, he never corrected the error.

He went to the Solomons and saw his first action at Bougainville.

Meanwhile the draft board discovered it had made the error, and the War Department was notified.

Collins has a brother, Pat, a lieutenant in the Air


Missing page 8  
continuation



Richard ↑  
Cairo Egypt 1943



Richard ↑  
Holy Land April 1945

  
 The Holy Sepulchre

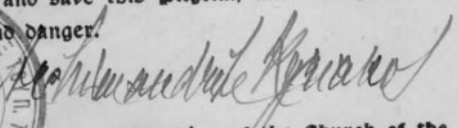

**Certificate of Pilgrimage.**

The undersigned, the Very Reverend Archimandrite Kyriakos, Guardian and Superior of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, hereby certifies that

RICHARD L. PIAZZA

has duly visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and the other Holy Shrines within the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre and as a Pilgrim has made therein his pious devotions on this the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of April in the year of Our Lord 1945; Whereof this Certificate signed and sealed in the Holy City of Jerusalem is a Witness.

We pray and beseech the Almighty and Eternal God that He will bless and save this Pilgrim, and will preserve him from all evil and danger.

Signed   
 Guardian of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre



JULY 20, 1944 THURS.

DEAR DON:

WAS REALLY GLAD TO HEAR FROM YOU, BUT YOUR V-MAIL TOOK LONG ENOUGH, ONLY ABOUT A MONTH AND A HALF. YOU SURELY HAVE BEEN WORKING THE SOUTH PACIFIC PRETTY MUCH LATELY HAVEN'T YOU? DON'T YOU EVER GET AROUND THIS PART OF THE WORLD? WE ARE PERMITTED TO REVEAL OUR EXACT LOCATION NOW, IN THIS COMMAND, SO IF YOU EVER COME AROUND ~~XXX~~ HERE, I'M NEAR THE PORT WHERE YOU'LL PROBABLY LAND, AND THAT IS KORRAMSHAR, I'M AT ABADAN AIR BASE, ONLY ABOUT 8 MILES FROM THERE. THIS IS THE PLACE WHERE THE PLANE'S ARE ASSEMBLED FOR RUSSIA. IT WAS PRETTY INTERESTING WHEN WE FIRST CAME DOWN HERE TO SEE THEM BUZZ AROUND BUT THE NOVELTY WORE OFF SOON ENOUGH. ATC HAS A PRETTY BIG SET-UP HERE NOW TOO, SO THERE ARE A LOT OF TRANSPORTS COMING IN AND OUT ALL TIME. GUS IS AT A PLACE CALLED ANDIMESHK, WHICH IS NORTH OF HERE ABOUT 160 MILES OR SO.. HIS CAMP IS THE LAST ONE BEFORE GOING INTO THE MOUNTAINS, AND BEING RIGHT ON THE FRINGE OF THE DESERT IT GETS PRETTY WARM UP THERE, NOT THAT IT'S SO COOL HERE WHERE I AM. WE HAVE A LOT OF DUST HERE AS WELL AS HEAT. SEEMS AS THOUGH A DUST STORM BLOWS UP AT THE SAME TIME EACH DAY, AND IT GETS EVERYWHERE. IT USUALLY BLOWS UNTIL MIDNIGHT OR SO, THEN IT COOLS DOWN A BIT AND <sup>CLEAR'S UP.</sup> ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ BUT THIS IS A HELL OF A COUNTRY, ANY WAY YOU LOOK AT IT, BELIEVE ME. NO PLACE IS AS GOOD AS HOME, AND I THINK YOU'VE FOUND THAT OUT YOURSELF TOO. I WAS GLAD TO HEAR THAT GORD WAS GOING TO GET A LEAVE. HE'S BEEN AWAY FROM HOME FOR QUITE SOME TIME HIMSELF, HASN'T HE? HEARD THAT BOB NEILSEN GOT A FURLOUGH TOO, HE'S BEEN HAVING SOME TROUBLE WITH HIS ARMS AND LEGS, AS I GUESS HE'S HAD DAMN NEAR BOTH OF THEM BUSTED. HEARD TOO THAT SHIRLEY HAD HER BABY GIRL, AND THAT LENORE WAS DUE SOON. ALICE GIVES ME ALL THE NEIGHBORHOOD GOSSIP WHEN SHE WRITES. DO YOU EVER GET ANY HOME TOWN NEWSPAPERS OR ANYTHING? GUS GETS THE SUNDAY ~~XXX~~ PAPER AND SENDS THEM ON TO ME WHEN HE FINISHES. SAME OLD STUFF, THOUGH. THE MILLERS STINK, PATRICK HENRY WON THE STATE BASKETBALL CHAMP, "D" WON THE STATE CATHOLIC CHAMP, (ABOUT TIME) AND I GUESS WASHBURN RAN AWAY WITH THE BASEBALL LEAGUE AGAIN. WELL, DON, THAT'S ALL FOR TODAY, HOPE TO HEAR FROM YOU SOON. YOUR PAL, *Dick*



PERSIAN GULF COMMAND



IRAN



## CHAPTER XIII

### **The Air Corps Takes Over**

#### **Aircraft Assembly**

The assembly of aircraft for the USSR under the several protocol agreements, by which the United States in conjunction with the United Kingdom and the Dominion of Canada promised material aid to the Soviet Union, was one of the tasks assigned to the Iranian Mission and continued by its successors. In accordance with the pattern of the 1941 planning period, operating responsibility for aircraft assembly at Abadan was at first exercised by the Douglas Aircraft Company under contract to the U.S. Army Air Corps. During the period of Douglas operation, ending on 31 March 1943, about seventy-five planes on an average were delivered monthly to Soviet pilots who flew them off to the battle lines. During the period of Air Corps operation, from 1 April 1943 through 31 January 1945, when the Abadan aircraft assembly plant was disbanded, deliveries to the Russians averaged 182.9 aircraft monthly. The flow of aircraft from the United States to the USSR was greatest during the period of the Third (London) Protocol, 1 July 1943 through 30 June 1944, when 5,735 planes were delivered by the United States to the Russians at Fairbanks, Alaska, the north Russian ports of Archangel and Murmansk, and via the Persian Gulf. In this year, 2,902 aircraft were delivered by the U.S. Army in the Persian Corridor. During the peak year of American shipments of aircraft to the USSR, Abadan, therefore, accounted for half of all the aircraft delivered, in contrast to its one third share of the total made available by all routes for the entire period of lend-lease deliveries.<sup>1</sup>

Excerpt from U.S. Army Center of Military History (.mil)

<https://history.army.mil>



