

Branford's William Brody, 96, to be honored as Grand Marshal of Memorial Day Parade

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PHOTO COURTESY WILLIAM BRODY

Air Force Sgt. William Brody (third from left) in Hanau, Germany just after World War II ended.

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BRANFORD » Air Force Sgt. William Brody still remembers a young pilot he encountered while working on test planes for the 9th Tactical Air Force in World War II. Not long after, he learned that the pilot had taken up a P47 fighter aircraft for a test run.

“The pilot looked like

an ad for joining the Air Force,” said the 96-year-old master woodcarver from Branford who, as Grand Marshal of Monday’s Memorial Day parade, will deliver the keynote address. “Then something happened. It crashed and he was killed.”

A few months later, he was working on a P47 Thunderbolt pursuit ship. “It needed a wing,” said the Brooklyn native, who

was involved in battles in France, Luxembourg and Germany. “But the replacement wing didn’t look right. It looked messed up.” He asked the head mechanic to take a look. The head mechanic agreed.

When he presented a discard request to have the wing taken out of circulation, the officer tasked with signing off on the request refused, maintaining that the wing’s value was \$25,000, an amount that’s equivalent to \$346,885 in 2017.

Young Sergeant Brody protested. “You don’t think the pilot’s life is worth \$25,000?” he recalled asking. His words fell on deaf ears. Brody took matters into his own hands.

“I found a truck and somehow dragged the wing off into the woods,” he said. “There was no way I was putting that back in stock.” Then he awaited punishment.

“He’s one of the good ones and there were a lot of them, including the boys in Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War, and Iraq and Afghanistan,” said Petty Officer Third Class, USN, Gary Tercyak, who served three combat tours in Vietnam and will be among the veterans stepping off from the town green. “But still there aren’t many guys like Brody left.”



PHOTO BY LINDA BRODY SREBNIK

Bill Brody at his Branford home.

Indeed. According to 2016 statistics released by the Veteran’s Administration, only about 620,000 veterans remain of the 16 million who served the United States in World War II.

That’s why Brody’s story matters, according to Army Sgt. Grant Briggs, chaplain for American Legion Post 83. “Hearing it from the ones that were actually there is the only way that the younger people will understand it,” he said.

As it turned out, there was no punishment meted out for Brody’s quiet act of defiance. Still, the nonagenarian insists he was no hero. “I just couldn’t see putting someone in mortal danger just to save money,” he said.

“I didn’t look for any glory,” he added. “I just did what I thought was right.”



PHOTO COURTESY WILLIAM BRODY

Air Force Sgt. William Brody on P47 in an airfield near the town of Hanau, Germany just after World War II ended.

Branford celebrates Memorial Day on Monday, May 29. Ceremonies on the Town Green, including an opening prayer, the National Anthem, a reading of the Gettysburg Address, and Air Force Sgt. Brody’s keynote address, begin at 10 a.m. The parade, featur-

ing five marching bands, steps off at 10:30 a.m. In the event of inclement weather, the parade will be cancelled and ceremonies will be moved to the Branford High School gymnasium at 10 a.m. Check www.branford-ct.gov/parks for notice of cancellation.