

Douglas H. Hamberg Memorial Scholarship



My dad, Douglas H. Hamberg, had just one regret during his long life -- he never earned a college degree. This scholarship will help you to achieve that goal, and in doing so, you will honor his memory.

Elsie and Harold Hamberg joyously welcomed their first child, Douglas, on October 25, 1921. They were very proud of their Swedish heritage and their blond, blue-eyed baby boy certainly looked like a Swede! After an 11 day maternity stay at Noble Hospital, they paid the \$39.94 bill in full and took Doug home to their farm in Southwick. He grew up on a traditional, well-run family farm complete with chickens, dairy cows, hay fields, corn crops, broadleaf tobacco and endless chores.

As much as he loved working the land, Doug loved learning even more. His formal education began at the Mooretown one-room schoolhouse in Southwick, and continued at the Consolidated School through eighth grade.

Before he even entered high school, Doug used his math intellect to design and build a fully functional cabin on the farm property.

Westfield High School was a completely new experience for Doug, but he excelled there. He made the Honor Roll every semester, was inducted into the Honor Society, and received the senior writing award. His own words best described his future plans: "When I was a senior at Westfield High School, Class of 1939, our principal interviewed each and every member of our class in regard to our post-graduate plans. In my interview, I told Mr. Abernethy that I had not made plans to go on to college, as I came from a farm family that had not been able to accumulate the money that was needed for me to attend a college. Instead, I planned to go to work in the field of carpentry, save my earnings for college tuition, and then apply for admission. Mr. Abernethy told me that I was well qualified to succeed in college."

True to his word, Doug did work for Anderson Construction right after graduation and went on to work for Wackerbarth Box Shop in Granville. As the war in Europe began to escalate, life changed course for a generation of American young men. In April 1943, Doug enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Force and in May he was notified of his acceptance into the Aviation Cadet Training Program. On July 5, 1943, Doug left his loving family and familiar life behind as he reported for Active Duty and an uncertain future.

After Army Air Force Basic Training, all Aviation Cadets were sent to selected colleges around the country to complete one semester of core academic courses. Doug, along with 120 Cadets, was shipped to Mount Union College in Alliance, Ohio. He wrote a letter to his family almost every day while in the military, and his letter of August 18, 1943 states, "I'm in college now! Our teachers are all typical college professors -- rather elderly men with an amazing vocabulary." Doug thrived in this collegiate environment, and finished the semester as the group's Valedictorian with a 95.8 grade point average.



Doug completed the equivalent of another semester of college in his Pre-Flight and Advanced Navigation training in Texas. He was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant, trained with his B-24 Liberator crew at Westover Field, and prepared to be shipped overseas. Doug and his crew were assigned to the 449th Bomb Group in the 15th Division of the U.S. Army Air Force based in Italy. Doug completed 30 bombing missions, primarily over Germany and Austria. As a lifetime member of the Methodist Church in Southwick, Doug's faith grew even stronger during World War II. He attended church nearly every Sunday during his military service. His prayers were answered when he returned home safely, and finally resumed a civilian life in October 1945.

Like most of the returning soldiers, Doug wanted a "normal" life again. He went back to work at Wackerbarth Box Shop, helped his family with farm chores, and sang in the Methodist Church choir. One Sunday in November 1945, Doug noticed a new girl sitting in the pews. Her name was Rheta Fuller and she became his bride on August 10, 1946.

Finances, military service and supporting his new family made completing college an impossibility for Doug.

He and Rheta were blessed with three children, Claudia, Cynthia and Charles. Doug lived a life of unwavering faith in God and love of his family. Early in their marriage Doug and Rheta bought an acre of wooded land in Southwick halfway between his family's farm and the Fuller family lakeside cottage. Doug designed his home and took three years to build it himself, with some help from family. He raised his family there, lived there for 58 years, and died peacefully in his beloved home on October 20, 2012.

Douglas H. Hamberg was hard-working throughout his life, displayed an abundance of quiet strength, and was always available to help others in need. He was the embodiment of the "greatest generation" because faith, family and patriotism truly defined his life. In 1998 Doug wrote, "In 1943, I risked my all -- even my life -- by joining the military 'for God and my country' when my country was at War. But God watched over me and protected me, and in the 55 years since then, He has rewarded me a thousand times over."

Written by: Cynthia Neary,
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For Dad, with all our love.

