

## Family learns true story of fallen Pittsfield Soldier during World War II

by [Ross Lippman](#) | Jan 29, 2021 | [Show Segments](#) | [0 Comments](#)

PITTSFIELD – When Eugene Kalinowsky left his home in Pittsfield in 1942 to serve during [World War II](#), he wanted to bring something with him for good luck. That's where Carole Brooks' story begins with her "Uncle Gene."

"I was a baby when my uncle left for Germany. He had taken my baby shoes and put them around his neck for good luck. I've always kind of felt a bond to him that way."



*Carole Brooks, of Pittsfield, holding a picture of her "Uncle Gene" (Photo Credit: Ross Lippman/NEPM)*

Brooks never got the chance to know her uncle. She was 5 when his body was returned home and buried in [Pittsfield Cemetery](#).



*Eugene Kalinowsky during his service in World War II (Photo provided by Carole Brooks)*

On October 15th, 1944 Army Air Force Staff Sgt. Eugene Kalinowsky took off for his 50th and final mission. Gene, along with the other 9 crew members aboard the bomber plane "Maggie's Drawers", were shot down flying over Germany. Of the 10 men, two died, including Kalinowsky. For nearly all Carole's life, this is the story she'd tell about her uncle.

"We just always thought of him as our uncle that was killed in the plane crash," she says while standing by his grave in Pittsfield. "That's how I understood it. That what I was told. I think that's how they (her family) thought of it too."

It was only a few years ago, that Carole learned the truth behind how Gene really died. As the plane was crashing, all 10 soldiers parachuted out, with Kalinowsky landing near the German town of Laubenheim. Witnesses say Kalinowsky was found and taken by SS soldiers, though he would not be held as a prisoner of war. He was shot in the neck and killed by an SS officer. Kalinowsky was 24 years old.



*Eugene Kalinowsky's grave in Pittsfield (Photo Credit: Ross Lippman/NEPM)*

When Carole discovered this new information, she was shocked, "I couldn't believe it. I didn't know if it was true."

As the real story behind Kalinowsky's death reached Pittsfield, residents in Laubenheim sought to make sure the tragedy of that day in 1944 was not lost to time. In schools, students are taught history lessons that include Kalinowsky's murder. It's one of many dark chapters from Germany during the Third Reich. Some residents have even contacted Carole to learn more about Gene's life before the war, including Joachim Hennig.

Carole and Joachim have been emailing each other since 2016, translating the messages for each other in German and English. She sends pictures of Gene when he was young, with family and friends in Pittsfield. Hennig has helped produce articles for local papers and for textbooks about Kalinowsky's death.

“This was luck for me to have met Carole,” says Hennig when he and Carole met face-to-face for the first time on a Zoom meeting arranged by New England Public Media. While he says he hasn’t spoken English for nearly 50 years, it comes back to him easily. “To be in contact with the family (is important) so that his story will be alive.”



*A picture of Eugene Kalinowsky on top of Christmas decorations at his Pittsfield grave (Photo Credit: Ross Lippman/NEPM)*

In one email with Carole, Joachim says that a person never truly dies so long as their story lives on. He’s determined to make sure Kalinowsky’s story stays alive.

“We must learn from our history. Learning for the future from the past, and we must learn what had happened, so that this may never happen again.”

Video:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ttnSPrNb\\_co&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ttnSPrNb_co&feature=emb_logo)