

Falls City, NE

Bill Schock, a war hero who helped save the world from fascism and a beloved pillar of the Falls City community his entire remarkable life, years ago penned his own obituary and tucked it away for safekeeping. "Papa," as he was affectionately known by his grandchildren and great-grandchildren the past 50 years, used just six small paragraphs and half a sheet of paper in understating an iconic life worthy of a weighty tome, chapters of which could be mistaken for fiction. Words like "hero," "beloved," "pillar," "remarkable," and "iconic" were not included, nor even considered. There was no mention of "Bill Schock Blvd." or the myriad of individual honors and awards earned either professionally, during a 70-year career at The Falls City Journal, or civically, when he served on the City Council, School Board, Hospital Board, Rotary Club, Veteran's Service Committee and Nebraska Outstate Daily Publishers Association, just to name a few. It read only that "Bill has served on numerous boards." It was that modesty that helped make Falls City's love for Bill Schock rival only Bill Schock's love for Falls City. The community's greatest champion passed away last Thursday morning, June 21, 2018 - six weeks shy of his 100th birthday. He didn't use a single adjective in his summation of an exemplary life lived to the fullest, wasn't comfortable with the effusive praise often showered upon him and didn't want to be called a "hero." Novelist Raymond Chandler once said a hero "must be a complete man and a common man...a man of honor, by instinct, by inevitability, without thought of it, and certainly without saying it. He must be the best man in his world and a good enough man for any world." In other words:

George William "Bill" Schock was born on Aug. 6, 1918 at Colorado Springs, CO, to William A. and Gertrude (Gavillino) Schock. His father died Oct. 21, 1935 at the age of 53, when Bill was just 17. He was a lifetime resident of Falls City, graduating from FC High School, where he was a heralded football and basketball player under Hall of Fame Coach Jug Brown, in 1936. After sitting out his freshman year due to a life-threatening case of the mumps, Bill quarterbacked the Tiger football team and played guard on the basketball team, leading each to a trio of Southeast Conference Championships. In 2003, he was enshrined into the Falls City Public School's Wall of Fame.

He went on to UNL and was a member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity. While in Lincoln, Bill roomed with Heisman Trophy runner-up, Olympic shot put medalist and NFL No. 1 overall draft pick Sam Francis, perhaps the greatest athlete in Nebraska history.

Following graduation in 1940, Schock became a decorated World War II pilot in the U.S. Army Air Corps, earning his pilot's wings at Roswell, N.M. in May 1943. Flying with the Mighty 8th Air Force, Schock's B-17 "Flying Fortress" crew, part of the 384th Bomber Group, successfully carried out 24 bombing raids, leaving just one more remaining to make quota and effectively complete their tour of duty. On Easter Sunday, April 9, 1944 they dropped a 25th payload at Marienberg, Germany, but upon returning to Grafton-Underwood Air Base in England, and just five minutes from the safety of the North Sea, the plane was fatally wounded by anti-aircraft fire at 12,000 feet. Schock was the last to leap from the burning plane and into enemy-occupied Europe. He would spend the final 13 months of the war at Stalag Luft I on the Baltic Sea. The

journalism major took meticulous notes during his time as a prisoner of war and later chronicled the experience in a memoir, titled “Thrills, Chills and a Spill.”

Schock’s service earned him the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with three Oak Clusters, the European Theatre of Operation ribbon and more. He was promoted to Captain at the time of his discharge in June 1945.

Following his discharge from the service, he married Dorothy Lunsford and they had two children, son, Scott, and daughter, Laurie. Dorothy passed away in 2008, two years after the Schocks celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. Scott died in April 2017.

Bill worked a year as a Richardson County service officer before rejoining The Journal as a sports editor on Dec. 1, 1946. Then he served as city editor and brought photography to the pages of the Journal in 1950. Bill eventually purchased Jim Todd’s interest in the paper and in 1973 he and his sister, Marj Loucks, bought Leo Nussbaum’s interest and took full ownership of the company. Marj died in 1995 and Bill was publisher until 2001, when his son Scott assumed the position. At the age of 96, he was still working five days a week at the paper.

He is a past president of the Falls City Rotary Club and the Nebraska Outstate Daily Publishers Association. He served on the Richardson County Veterans Service Committee for 34 years, many of those years as chairman; served a term on the Falls City City Council; two terms on the Falls City Board of Education, serving as President and spear-heading a successful effort to build North and South Elementary Schools; six years on the Community Hospital Board of Directors; over 20 years on the Board of Directors of the Falls City Savings and Loan Association, the Nebraska Committee for Employer Support and the Guard and Reserve. Bill was a member of the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Ex-Prisoners of War, and the Elks Club.

The local Jaycees named him “Outstanding Young Man” and “Boss of the Year.” He won the Terry Backer Community Service Award, received Mayor Marshall Maddox’ Key to the City in 2002 and was recognized by the Nebraska National Guard as a Legion Merit Award winner. He was also Richardson County Fair King and Grand Marshal of the Cobblestone Parade. In 2015, Bill became a recipient of the Falls City EDGE Wall of Fame.

He was an avid photographer with a darkroom in his basement, loved to golf at the Falls City Country Club and did so deftly. In his office at The Journal, he hosted as many as a million guests and was regaled, in depth, with an infinite number of anecdotes and tall tales, most of which were rehashed at even greater length at subsequent impromptu meetings. In his later years, his favorite haunt was in a particular booth at the One Stop Cafe. Bill always had the special.

On June 27, 1945, Bill’s train pulled into the station at Falls City and he hitched a ride. En route to the house, he saw his mother’s car parked at a grocery store, quickly stopped the car and got out. Gertrude, who hadn’t received word Bill was home safely, was standing in an aisle looking over items on a shelf when she glanced up and caught the image of her son. He gave her a hug and they held each other tightly for a long time, not speaking a word. Gertrude died in 1976. Its

comforting to imagine that around 6 a.m. last Thursday, somewhere they embraced again. But unlike in 1945, this time she knew he was coming.

Bill is survived by his daughter, Laurie Obbink of New York City, grandchildren, Elisabeth Obbink of New York City, Amy Meinzer and her husband Dave of Omaha, NE, Jason Schock and his wife Alicia of Falls City, Great-Granddaughters, Emma, Chloe and Evi Schock. He was preceded in death by his parents, wife, son, Scott, and a sister, Marjory Loucks.

His funeral will be held on Tuesday, June 26, 2018 at 10:30 AM at First United Methodist Church with Reverend Paul Weinert officiating. Interment will be in Steele Cemetery. Military graveside honors by Falls City Ceremonial Honor Guard.

The family will receive friends on Monday from 7-8:00 PM at Dorr and Clark Funeral Home.