

Collection #
P 0801

**JOHN A. BUSHEMI PHOTOGRAPHS
CA. 1942–1944**

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Processed by

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

**VOLUME OF
COLLECTION:** 1 folder of photographs

**COLLECTION
DATES:** Ca. 1942–1944

PROVENANCE: Gift from Richard Kremer of Vermont, October 2015

RESTRICTIONS: None

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**ALTERNATE
FORMATS:**

**RELATED
HOLDINGS:**

**ACCESSION
NUMBER:** 2015.0325

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

John A. Bushemi (1917–1944) was a photographer for the *Gary Post-Tribune* from 1936–1941. He enlisted in the Army in July 1941 and eventually became a photographer for *Yank*, a weekly magazine run by enlisted men. He was killed in the line of duty during World War II in the central Pacific, and was posthumously awarded a Bronze Star and Purple Heart. He was inducted into the News Photographers Hall of Fame in 1944 and into the Indiana Journalism Hall of Fame in 2001. In 1946 a post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Gary, Indiana, was named for him.

He was born John Aloysius Buscemi to Italian immigrants Pietro Buscemi (1880–1971) and Angelina Cariota Buscemi (1883–1935) on 19 April 1917 in Centerville, Iowa. John was the seventh of nine children. His father worked in a coal mine. By 1930 the family had moved to Taylorville, Illinois, and by 1935 to Gary, Indiana. The family name was Americanized to Bushemi ca. 1940–41, with John’s father using the name Peter Bushemi.

John quit school in his junior year at Lew Wallace High School and joined his father and brothers in working at the Gary steel mills. With wages from his job he bought his first camera, a small Univex that he used to photograph his family members and special occasions. He developed film in a darkroom he created in his mother’s closet. In 1936 the *Post-Tribune* hired him as an apprentice photographer. He covered a variety of community events, but earned a reputation for taking sports photographs, for which he won numerous awards.

Upon joining the Army, John was sent to Fort Bragg in North Carolina for basic training. The Army recognized his photography skills and assigned him to the base’s public relations office, where he joined other privates, including Marion Hargrove, who wrote about the group’s experiences in the best-selling book *See Here, Private Hargrove*, published in 1942. Hargrove was sent to New York to join the staff of the newly created *Yank* magazine. John sent a portfolio of his best photographs to *Yank*, resulting in an invitation for him to join the magazine’s staff also.

Soon, John was sent with journalist Merle Miller to Hawaii to open *Yank’s* Pacific bureau. They spent many quiet months in Honolulu covering training stories, but John also received instruction in motion picture filming from Colonel Frank Capra, the famed Hollywood director. In the summer of 1943, John was sent to photograph combat operations in the southwest Pacific. Hargrove said his friend turned in to *Yank* “excellent studies of jungle operations and portraits of the bearded infantrymen who had sweated out the battles of the Munda airstrip and Hastings Ridge.” On 19 February 1944, Staff Sergeant John Bushemi and Miller were covering an operation on the beaches of Eniwetok, an atoll at the far northwest end of the Marshall Islands in the central Pacific, when Bushemi was mortally wounded. With his last words, Bushemi told Miller, “Be sure to get those pictures back to the office.”

Family and friends held a memorial service for John in Gary on 3 March 1944. His remains were not received until November 1947, when they were buried at Mount Mercy Cemetery in Gary, where his parents are also buried.

Sources:

Ancestry <ancestrylibrary.com>. Accessed 27 January 2020:

Find a Grave

U.S. City Directories, 1822–1995

U.S. World War II Draft Cards Young Men, 1940–1947

U.S. World War II Hospital Admission Card Files, 1942–1954

United States Federal Census, 1920–1940

Boomhower, Ray E. “Bushemi, John A.” In *Indiana’s 200: The People Who Shaped the Hoosier State*, edited by Linda C. Gugin and James E. St. Clair. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 2015: 37–40. General Collection: F525 .I59 2015

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of photographs taken by John A. Bushemi. It may be added to if the Indiana Historical Society acquires more photographs by Bushemi, but currently includes two portraits of soldiers in the Pacific during World War II.

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CONTAINER

Candid portrait of PFC August Coleman [ca. 1943–1944]

Folder 1 of 1

Unidentified soldier in mufti, seated on cot in a tent, tying his shoe. Stamped on back: Yank / The Army Weekly / Honolulu Bureau / Photo by Sgt. John A. Bushemi. [ca. 1942–1944]

Folder 1 of 1