

» BARR

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Two months later, he was accepted as part of the ultra-secret plan put forth by aviation legend Lt. Col. James Doolittle.

Barr served on one of 16 Army bombers that were improbably ferried to within a few hundred miles of the coastline of Japan and launched to bomb Japanese cities just four months after the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor. It was a feat that most aviation experts would have deemed impossible, and stunned the Japanese, who believed their island nation was immune to air attack.

The raid was an overwhelming strategic success, not because of the damage that it caused to the Japanese war machine, but because of the sharp boost it gave to American morale — Pearl Harbor had been avenged. It was equally demoralizing for the Japanese and eventually led to the ill-fated attack on Midway Island, where four Japanese aircraft carriers were sunk, changing the course of the Pacific war.

But Barr and the other members of his B-25 bomber were not able to celebrate that success. His aircraft ran out of fuel as it made its escape over China. He and his crewmates bailed out and were captured by the occupying Japanese.

For three and a half years, he endured torture and isolation, starvation and the constant threat of death from his captors. The plane's pilot, Lt. William G. Farrow, and engineer/gunner Sgt. Harold A. Spatz were among three Doolittle raiders executed by the Japanese.

Barr was the last of the raiders to be released at the end of the war, literally days from death, and he spent a year in military hospitals and at home recuperating from his experiences.

Still, he spent another year on active duty before being medically retired from service in 1947.

After the war

Barr went on to earn a master's degree from Columbia University, serve as a high school coach and teacher in the Chequamegon Bay area before becoming a civilian weapons specialist until his death at the age of 50 in 1967. He is buried in Ashland's Mount Hope Cemetery.

Jason Janeczek, commander of the Chequamegon Memorial Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 690 in Ashland, said that the more he learned about Barr and his involvement in the Ashland area, the more he was convinced that his story should be retold.

"He deserves to have more recognition. His story of perseverance and survival is inspiring," Janeczek said.



No one had ever launched medium bombers from an aircraft carrier before the Doolittle Raid. The bombers were stripped down to carry as much fuel as possible, but most still ran out of gas over China before making it to safety. (U.S. Air Force photo)

If You Go

- The Ashland VFW will hold a public event on April 18 at 1 p.m. commemorating the 80th anniversary of the Doolittle Raid and the life of Raider and Ashland resident George Barr.
- The ceremony will include a presentation on the raid, presentation by the VFW of a painting it commissioned of George Barr as well as remarks by the state VFW Commander and a proclamation by Ashland Mayor Debra Lewis. The VFW Post is at 211 Sixth St. W.

"Being a Japanese prisoner of war is bad enough, but the Doolittle Raiders were given 'special treatment,'" said Walter Gurske, a member of the Ashland Sons of the American Legion organization, who is serving as a research collaborator in the project to recognize Barr and the 80th anniversary of the raid.

In Barr's case, "special treatment" meant repeated beatings, torture, solitary confinement and near starvation until the Japanese surrender finally brought liberation for the surviving prisoners.

"Even then the Japanese didn't admit that they had the Doolittle raiders until they were confronted about it," Janeczek said.

Gurske said the war really didn't end for Barr when the Japanese surrendered. It lingered with him for years.

"After he got out, he went through another ordeal, going through different military hospitals, with bureaucratic problems, what we would now call severe post-traumatic stress," he said.

It took the intervention of Doolittle, who by then had been promoted to lieutenant general, to get Barr released from what was essentially a mental hospital just in time to attend the first reunion of the Raiders.

Soon thereafter Barr returned to Ashland, the place he thought of as home, beginning a new chapter in his life.

His Ashland home

Part of the legacy of that life is reflected in



George Barr still is considered the best basketball player ever produced by Northland College. (Photo contributed by Northland College)

the time he spent at Northland, said Jackie Moore, the college's director of alumni relations and annual giving.

"George Barr is an alumni, and a notable one at that. We have a George Barr Memorial Award that is given to students and he is a component of our history," she said. "He did a great thing for our country and wanted to come back here. It is reflective of Northland and Ashland, that for someone in their hardest moments, this is where they wanted to come back to. That speaks volumes for the entire community."

Gurske said Barr should be remembered as someone who never gave up and overcame the odds, not once but several times. And he hopes the community will join in celebrating that life.

"All of that just shows that it is a life of service, a life of hard work, of determination, and even up to his death, he was continuing to serve. He is a great example," Gurske said.



This stir-fry uses sweet fennel, a relative of the carrot native to the Mediterranean that has a hint of licorice flavor. (Contributed photo by Kara Berlage.)

Carrot relative brings big taste to stir-fry



Sometimes, certain veggies may not be part of your regular cooking repertoire. But also, sometimes, you fall in love with a new veggie because you were pushed outside your culinary box. This can certainly be true for fennel, which looks rather like dill with a chubby bulb at the bottom. While we have grown fennel on occasion, we've been spurred to try it more in response to members with food allergies to onion and garlic.

Now, fennel has become one of Chef Kara's new favorite inclusions into a dish, with its slightly licorice overtones and celery crunch. You can try it too with this delicious sweet-and-savory style stir fry. Feel free to substitute different veggies with what you have on hand
Laura and Kara Berlage are co-owners of Farmstead Creamery & Café, a farm-to-table destination on their family's historic homestead in the Chequamegon National Forest. www.farmsteadcreamery.com 715-462-3453

Sweet Fennel, Carrot, and Chicken Stir Fry (Serves 4-5)

2 Tbsp coconut oil, divided
1 cup red onion, sliced
2 carrots, sliced into 1/8 inch coins
3 ribs celery, sliced
1/2 cup mushrooms, quartered
1 fennel bulb, sliced like an onion
2 Tbsp pickled ginger (or 1 tsp fresh ginger, minced)
2 chicken breasts, cubed
1 tsp of your favorite herb blend
3 Tbsp peach, peach-mango, or apricot jam
4 Tbsp soy sauce
2 cups cooked rice
In a large skillet over medium-high

heat, cook the onion, carrot, celery, mushroom, and fennel in 1 Tbsp oil for 5 to 10 minutes, until it starts to become tender. Add in the ginger and cook for 1 min. Push the veggies to one side of the pan and melt the last Tbsp of coconut oil. Add the chicken to this cleared space and top with your favorite herb blend. Cook for 3 minutes, then flip the chicken. Cook the second side for about 2 minutes. The chicken will start to take on a golden color. Scoot the chicken under the veggies and cook, covered, for 5 minutes, until the veggies are nicely tender and starting to brown. Stir in the jam and soy sauce, cooking until a nice sauce forms (about 3-5 minutes). Serve with cooked rice.

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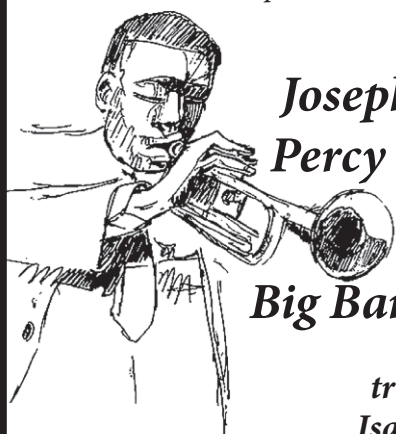
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