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hey called him "One Shot", but his real name was John Bushemi. He was a legend in the world of photography.

And he was born right here in Centerville.

John Bushemi was born in Centerville, Iowa in 1917. He would go on to become a revered photo-journalist, earning the nick-name "One Shot" for his uncanny ability to capture perfect action photographs of athletes or soldiers in one snap of his Speed Graphic camera. Over the course of time, John Bushemi would earn high praise and numerous awards, some posthumously, for his outstanding photography.

John Bushemi's life began in Centerville. John's father, Pietro, had immigrated from Villarsosa, Sicily in 1906, and was later joined by his mother Angelina in 1909. As most immigrants to our county did, Pietro became a coal miner, and worked in the Block Coal Mine. His wife Angelina helped with the family business – The Bluebird

One Shot Bushemi

Café, which was originally located on "The Midway" or "Pill Row". (This area is actually the block of North 13th Street that runs from the Majestic Theatre to the southeast corner of the Square). Apparently, many of Pietro's relatives from Italy also immigrated to the United States, and specifically to Centerville. Several entries with the name "Buscemi" appeared in the Centerville City Directory by 1922, and all appear to be affiliated with the operation of the Bluebird Café for several years. In 1926, the Bluebird Café moved to its current location on the square when Buscemi & Buscemi sold their North 13th building to Pauline Adams who made it into the Midway Fruit Store (see Patty Timmens' article elsewhere in the Progress Edition).

John was one of nine children in the Buscemi home on South 21st Street. He attended Centerville schools until 1925. Many members of the Buscemi family remained in Centerville, but in 1925, Pietro, Angelina and their children moved on to Illinois where Pietro took work in the Peacock Coal Mine. A few years later, the family moved on to Gary, Indiana, where Pietro became employed in a steel mill. In 1930, the family chose to change their name to "Bushemi". During that era, it was not uncommon for immigrants to "Americanize" their names. The Bushemi family would stay in Gary, Indiana for 35 years. However, when Angelina died of cancer at only 52 years of age

in 1935, her body was returned to Centerville's Oakland Cemetery to be buried.

John Bushemi grew up during the Great Depression and as a teenager tried to find creative ways to earn some money. He boxed in some Golden Gloves tournaments, and gave haircuts in his basement in an old barber chair that his father bought for him. John left high school before his junior year to join his father and brothers in the steel mills. Saving up his wages, his main goal was to buy a camera. He had always wanted to take pictures. He bought a small Univex camera and took pictures of family at special events and would develop them in a darkroom he created in a closet in the family home.

In June of 1936, John's dream to be a photographer was realized when he was hired by the Post-Tribune in Gary, Indiana as an apprentice. John had sometimes assisted the Post-Tribune's first photographer, just to learn more about the business. John would soon prove that he had impeccable timing when catching action shots. It was here that he captured the nickname, "One Shot". He went on to win several awards for sports photos in contests sponsored by the Indiana Associate Press and the Inland Daily Press Association. John's career with the Post-Tribune had him covering many stories and some turned out to be quite an adventure.



A photo from the Indiana Historical Society Press Collection

photos graced the cover of the inaugural issue.

John originally worked in the New York office of Yank, with several interesting assignments, including coverage of the last game of the World Series. In November of 1942, he and another Iowa native, Merle Miller, moved to Hawaii to open the magazine's Pacific bureau. Several months were spent locating qualified people to staff the Hawaii office. Also, during this period, John received training in motion picture filming from Colonel Frank Capra, now famous Hollywood director.

Although John and Merle were based in an island paradise, they longed to be in the thick of the action, to get more of the flavor of real combat for their articles for Yank. Eventually, they were allowed and encouraged to travel to combat zones as Guadalcanal, New Georgia, the Gilbert Islands, Kwajalein, Munda and Vella LaVella. John was excited to submit to Yank "photography from a rifle's length vantage point." John did receive injuries while covering the action in Kwajalein, but he was undeterred in his effort to cover the front lines of the war. This was John Bushemi's most amazing year of photography, and was over far too soon.

On February 19, 1944, Americans landed on the Island of Eniwetok. John Bushemi was covering the landing. The fighting escalated in intensity and most of the journalists retreated, but not John. He stayed at the front lines and was mortally injured when a Japanese mortar shell exploded and left him with a serious neck wound and a shattered leg. He screamed out, "Where's my camera?"

John received medical treatment, but to no avail. He died a few hours later. His final words were "Make sure these pictures get back to the office right away."

(If you would like to know more about John Bushemi's life, visit the Appanoose County Historical Museum and view our copy of "One Shot" – The World War II Photography of John Bushemi" by Indiana Historical Society Press. The photographs accompanying this article are used with permission from the Indiana Historical Society Press)



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