

OPERATION AIRMAIL

Information Packet — Nominating Lt. Col. Buzz Wagner for a U.S. Postage Stamp

Thank you for joining Operation Airmail. This packet contains everything you need to write and mail your own letter nominating Lt. Col. Boyd “Buzz” Wagner to the U.S. Postal Service’s Citizens’ Stamp Advisory Committee. There is no petition, form, or app for this — the Postal Service only accepts individual letters sent by mail, which means your letter, written in your own words, is the mission.

Who Was Buzz Wagner?

Boyd David “Buzz” Wagner was born in 1916 in Cambria County, Pennsylvania, and graduated from Nanty-Glo High School. He studied for two years at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown before transferring to Pitt’s main campus to study aeronautical engineering, leaving school a year early to enlist in the Army Air Corps. He built a reputation as an exceptional pilot and leader — his low-flying skill earned him the nickname “Buzz” — and as a first lieutenant was given command of a flying squadron in the Philippines.

When Japan attacked the Philippines within hours of Pearl Harbor, destroying nearly half of America’s bombers and fighters on the ground, Wagner led what remained of his squadron into repeated combat. In his first week of fighting, he shot down five enemy aircraft, becoming the first U.S. Army Air Forces ace of World War II. His story ran nationally, including a feature in LIFE magazine, and gave the country hope at one of its darkest moments. He earned the Distinguished Service Cross and the Distinguished Flying Cross, and became one of the youngest lieutenant colonels in the Army before he was killed in a 1942 plane crash whose cause has never been determined.

For nearly seventy years, the location of that crash was lost to history — until a fellow airman, Colonel James Moschgat, tracked it down in 2008 and helped bring Wagner home with the full military honors he was denied at his original funeral. Today, Air & Space Forces Association Chapter 221 in Johnstown bears his name, and a replica of his P-40 Warhawk stands on display at the John Murtha Johnstown-Cambria County Airport.

Why He Qualifies for a Stamp

- Deceased more than three years — Wagner died in 1942, decades past the Postal Service’s minimum waiting period.
- American subject with extraordinary and enduring impact — the first U.S. Army Air Forces ace of World War II, honored nationally in his own time and still commemorated today.
- A story of national significance with strong local roots — exactly the kind of widely appealing, community-anchored history the stamp program looks for.
- Not a living person, a disaster, or a negative event — a clear story of heroism and sacrifice.

How to Write Your Letter

- One topic per letter. Your letter should be about Buzz Wagner only — don't combine it with other stamp ideas.
- Write it in your own words. Every proposal is reviewed by the Committee without attribution and given equal weight, so a personal letter carries just as much weight as anyone else's — there's no advantage to copying a template word-for-word, and a genuine voice reads better regardless.
- Include historical information and important dates. At minimum: his 1916 birth in Cambria County, his combat achievements in December 1941, his death in November 1942, and (if you'd like) the 2008–2010 discovery and repatriation of his remains.
- Say why it matters to you. A sentence or two on why Wagner's story resonates with you personally — as a veteran, an educator, a Johnstown neighbor, or simply someone who found his story compelling — helps your letter stand on its own.
- Keep it professional and concise. One to two pages is plenty. This is a formal proposal, not a petition signature.

Key Facts & Dates for Your Letter

1916	Born in Cambria County, Pennsylvania
1937	Enlisted in the Army Air Corps; commissioned after flight school
Dec. 1941	Shot down five Japanese aircraft in his first week of combat in the Philippines, becoming the first U.S. Army
1942	Awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and Distinguished Flying Cross; promoted to lieutenant colonel
Nov. 1942	Killed in a P-40 crash of undetermined cause en route from Eglin Field, FL, to Maxwell Field, AL
1943	Buried with full military honors at Grandview Cemetery, Johnstown, PA; approx. 15,000 mourners attended
2008	Crash site located by Col. James Moschgat, USAF (Ret.), after years of research
2010	Additional remains repatriated in a ceremony including the military flyover denied in 1943

Where and How to Send Your Letter

The Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee accepts nominations by U.S. Mail only. Emails, phone calls, and in-person appeals are not accepted, and no materials you send will be returned.

Mail your letter to:

Stamp Development

Attn: Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee

475 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Room 3300

Washington, DC 20260-3501

What Happens Next

Every letter that meets the basic criteria is presented to the Committee at its next quarterly meeting, without attribution, and given the same level of consideration regardless of who sent it. The Committee plans stamp subjects two to three years in advance, so this is a patient process — and if Wagner isn't selected the first time, letters can be resubmitted after a three-year interval. No credit or compensation is given for a successful nomination; the reward is simply seeing Buzz Wagner's story reach the country.

Questions about Operation Airmail or Buzz Wagner's story? Visit buzzwagner.org or contact Air & Space Forces Association Chapter 221, Johnstown, PA.