

‘The greatest loss of life at sea’



It is believed that Sgt. Joseph Pisinski of South River, a casualty of the Rohna attack, is memorialized at the North Africa American Cemetery at Carthage, Tunisia. His body was never found. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY JACK BALLO

‘Rohna Classified’ premiere to honor sailors of deadliest naval attack

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Five years ago, Jack Ballo stumbled upon a box of 23 yellowed handwritten letters from Sgt. Joseph Pisinski, Ballos’ wife’s great-uncle.

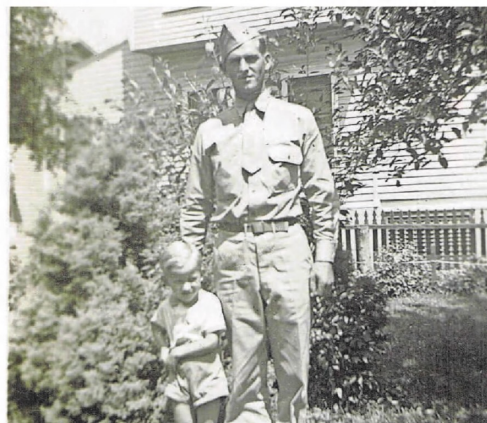
Most were written 80 years ago to Pisinski’s mother, Mary, during his service in World War II. They spoke of the young soldier’s experience far away from his home in Middlesex County.

Pisinski died in the attack on the HMT Rohna on Nov. 26, 1943. He was 23 years old.

It was his second official day of war.

That day, the United States experienced its greatest loss of life at sea by enemy action – 1,105 soldiers killed. But no one knew of the loss until about half a century later. And it was only in 2018 – 75 years later – that Ballo discovered Pisinski had been on the ship sunk by the German Luftwaffe in the Mediterranean off the coast of Algeria.

This find sparked something within Ballo, already an accomplished filmmaker. Telling the story of the HMT Rohna became his mission.



Sgt. Joseph Pisinski of South River, here with his nephew Frederick Fulham, was killed in the attack on the HMT Rohna.

Now, after years of dedicated research and filming, Ballo’s documentary “Rohna Classified” will premiere at 6 p.m. Nov. 25 at the New Brunswick Performing Arts Center. “Rohna Classified” tells the story of the ill-fated ship, honoring those who died and those who survived.