

George N. Dragnich Biography

Pre-WSC Background

George Nick Dragnich was born on August 27, 1920 in Republic, Washington to Nick and Stella Knoxevich Dragnich.¹ He had four brothers and one sister. Dragnich's father, Nick, was an immigrant from Montenegro who became a naturalized United States citizen on October 15, 1912.² The town of Republic, in Ferry County, was founded by gold prospectors and it was originally named Eureka Gulch; it is located in the north central part of Washington.³ Ferry County saw its first wave of development at the end of the nineteenth century when the Colville Indian Reservation was opened for mining exploration in 1896.⁴ An influx of men helped spur the growth of small towns in isolated areas, and Republic's next phase of development oversaw the growth of investment bankers, mine companies, and transport systems, all of which enabled mine development. Ferry County has historically been defined as "Washington State's most prolific producer of gold."⁵

Around 1921, a truant officer visited the Dragnich homestead and informed Nick Dragnich that "education was compulsory in America," and this began George Dragnich's

¹ C. James Quann, *WSU Military Veterans: Heroes and Legends*, Spokane, Washington: Tornado Creek Publications, 2005), 178; "Nick D Dragnich," *Ancestry.com*, <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/84016111/person/130051329838/facts> (Accessed August 7, 2019).

² "Washington, Naturalizations, 1853-1980 for Nick Dragnich," *Ancestry.com*, https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/2379/33228176_83878350-7b19-4234-9a7a-ec2dcca3b247/2164?backurl=https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/84016111/person/130051329838/facts/citation/560190605464/edit/record (Accessed August 7, 2019).

³ "Republic, Washington," *republicwa.org*, <https://www.republicwa.org/history/> (Accessed August 8, 2019).

⁴ "A Mining History of Ferry County," *The Ferry County Historical Society*, <https://www.ferrycountyhs.org/mining.html> (Accessed August 8, 2019).

⁵ *Ibid.*

siblings' introduction to formal education.⁶ George graduated from Republic High School and enrolled in Washington State College in 1940.⁷

WSC Experience

Dragnich attended WSC from 1940 through 1943 as an Industrial Arts major.⁸ His brother Stanley also attended WSC, and was a member of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers.⁹ Dragnich resided in the Pine Manor dorms his freshman and sophomore years, where his brother had also lived.¹⁰ Dragnich enlisted in the United States Air Force Reserves in 1941.

Wartime Service and Death

Dragnich enlisted in the United States Army Air Corps on February 28, 1943.¹¹ He gained his pilot wings at La Junta Army Airfield in Colorado, an advanced two-engine pilot school of the Army Air Force training command.¹² He received his commission as a Second Lieutenant and was assigned as a reconnaissance pilot and P-38 squadron operations officer in the Hawkeyes photo unit of the Fifth Air Force in the Pacific theatre.¹³ The Hawkeyes were constituted as the 25th Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron on February 5, 1943; their field of

⁶ "Alex N. Dragnich, Obituary," *Legacy.com*, <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/spokesman/obituary.aspx?n=alex-n-dragnich&pid=132343471> (Accessed August 8, 2019).

⁷ Quann, *WSU Military Veterans*, 178.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Chinook*, 1938, WSU 46, WSU Publications – Chinooks at Washington State University Libraries' Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) <http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc>.

¹⁰ *Chinook*, 1940, pg. 263; *Chinook*, 1941, pg. 242, WSU 46, WSU Publications – Chinooks at Washington State University Libraries' Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) <http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc>.

¹¹ Quann, *WSU Military Veterans*, 178.

¹² "Inland Empire Men Gain Pilot's Wings," newspaper clipping, Box 1, Folder 6, Washington State University Libraries' Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) <http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc>.

¹³ "Republic Air Corps Man In Pacific Zone," newspaper clipping, Box 1, Folder 6, Washington State University Libraries' Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) <http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc>.

operations included combat assignments in the Southwest Pacific and Western Pacific from February 5, 1944 through August 14, 1945.¹⁴

Dragnich flew seventy-two missions in the Pacific theater during World War II, earning the rank of Captain. He was awarded the Air Medal and the Distinguished Flying Cross.¹⁵ Even after the Allied victory against Japan in August 1945, the 25th continued to perform missions in the months following. Dragnich was in the midst of performing a routine flight on October 12, 1945 when his plane inexplicably crashed after ten minutes in the air over Honshu, Japan.¹⁶ He did not survive.

Postwar Legacy

Dragnich is buried at Golden Gate National Cemetery in San Bruno, California.¹⁷ His brother, Major Stanley Dragnich, survived the war. Captain Dragnich was survived by his parents, a sister, and all four of his brothers.

¹⁴ “25 Flying Training Squadron (AETC),” March 16, 2010, *Air Force Historical Research Agency*, <https://www.afhra.af.mil/About-Us/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/432836/25-flying-training-squadron-aetc/> (Accessed August 9, 2019).

¹⁵ “Taps Sounded For P-38 Pilot,” newspaper clipping, Box 1, Folder 6, Washington State University Libraries’ Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) <http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc>.

¹⁶ Quann, *WSU Military Veterans*, 178; “Capt Dragnich Killed In Crash,” *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, newspaper clipping, Box 1, Folder 6, Washington State University Libraries’ Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) <http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc>.

¹⁷ “George N Dragnich in the U.S. Rosters of World War II Dead, 1939-1945,” *Ancestry.com*, https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=1102&h=85546&tid=&pid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=ixh835&_phstart=successSource (Accessed August 9, 2019).