

# New book remembers train wreck

Fifty-eight years after the crash of the Pennsylvania Railroad train carrying the 109th Field Artillery Battalion on September 11, 1950, a new novel is telling the story of the historic train wreck and the soldiers killed that tragic morning.

Thirty-three local men died in the wreck near Coshocton, Ohio, when a famous west-bound streamliner, the Spirit of St. Louis, running through stop signals, came out of a morning fog and slammed into the rear of the troop train.

The novel, "Smart Boys Swimming in the River Styx," by Robert Phillip Bomboy, a widely-published magazine writer and former Shavertown resident, meticulously reconstructs scenes in Wilkes-Barre, Kingston, Harvey's Lake and the Back Mountain during the years after World War II and follows the lives of five fictional characters and the women who loved them.

The novel is available at the Barnes & Noble Bookstore in the Arena Hub Plaza next to the Wyoming Valley Mall and at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

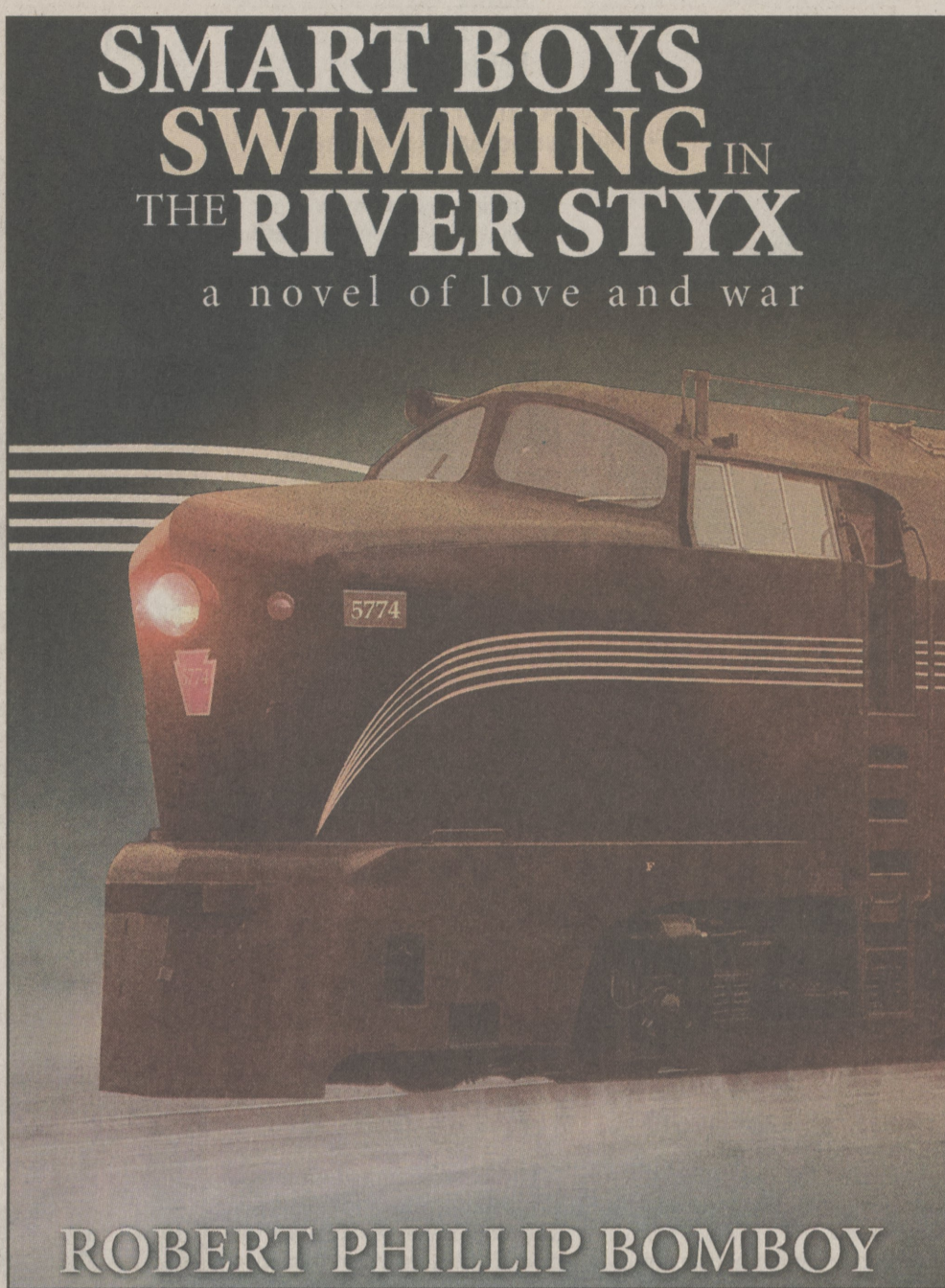
"The story of the 109th train wreck has haunted me all my life," Bomboy says. "I was nine years old, in the fourth grade, when the catastrophe happened, and several of the men who died were from my neighborhood. One of them lived on the next street and delivered our winter coal. I remember sitting perched on our front porch banister watching him send the pea coal down the chute into our basement. All the kids did that. We didn't have television then."

Thousands of people still remember the train wreck and honor the men who died and the 60 who were injured.

"I was one of the more than 100,000 men, women and children who lined Market Street watching the 33 weapons carriers bring the men home from the Lehigh Valley Railroad station, across the memorial bridge to the 109th Armory," Bomboy recalls. "Everyone was quiet. They had just left the valley the afternoon before. No one expected them to come home that way."

The novel follows the crack streamliner as it races west from Pittsburgh and, hour-after-hour, overtakes the troop train with 600 soldiers on board. The artillerymen were on their way to Camp Atterbury, Indiana, for training during the first months of the Korean War.

Readers have commented on how much of life at that time the book contains; several scenes are set at the popular beaches and amusement park at Harvey's Lake and at



## BOOK SIGNING

A book signing for the novel, "Smart Boys Swimming in the River Styx," written by former Shavertown resident Robert Bomboy, will be held from 7 to 9 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 2, at Barnes & Noble at the Aruba Hub Plaza in Wilkes-Barre Township. Light refreshments will be available.

Fernbrook Park in Shavertown. Shoppers jam buses and trackless trolleys on their way to Wilkes-Barre, buy mangoes and red beets at the open-air Grand Union market on Public Square, eat lunch in the crowded Betsy Ross restaurant, watch a matinee at the newly-refurbished Paramount Theater (now the Kirby Center) or stroll down South Main Street to see vaudeville at the Penn or Orpheum theaters.

The novel celebrates that sweet youthful moment, exactly in the middle of the last century, that many look back upon as a time of innocence.

Reviewers have had high praise for the book. Says one: "A woman's love, a brother's hand, a father's faith, this is a novel that will make you remember how it was. It's a great read for those who grew up during that time, or for soldiers and their families at any time. And it's a fine story for those who are much younger."

The 109th Field Artillery train wreck stands as one of the worst in American railroad history. In the intervening 58 years, only five U.S. train wrecks have had more casualties. The new novel contains a memorial to the dead and injured.

## DO YOU REMEMBER?

- Here are 100 items mentioned in Robert Bomboy's "Smart Boys Swimming in the River Styx." How many of them can you remember?
- Sandy Beach
  - Sunset
  - Hanson's Picnic Grounds
  - Horses That Fell Through the Ice
  - ChrisCraft Launches
  - Sandy Beach Drive-In
  - Hanson's Roller Coaster at Night
  - Pizza and Cokes at Hanson's Lunch Counter
  - Hanson's Penny Arcade
  - Swimming Off the Raft at Sandy Beach
  - Sunbathing on the Traffic Island at Sunset
  - Point-to-Point Sailboat Races at the Yacht Club
  - Artillery Park
  - Balut's Furs
  - Bartels Beer
  - Betsy Ross Candy Kitchen
  - Blight Brothers
  - Blue Ribbon Bakery
  - Camp Acahela
  - Campbell's Ledge
  - Coal Shop
  - Comerford Theater
  - Coney Island Lunch
  - Carverton Road
  - Circle Cleaners
  - Dallas Dairy
  - D.L.&W. Railroad Station
  - Dreamland at the Boston Store
  - Dupont Dynamite Plant
  - Edwardsville Theater
  - Fernbrook Park
  - Fogarty's Road House
  - Forty Fort Airport
  - Forty Fort Cemetery
  - Forty Fort State Bank
  - Forty Fort Theater
  - Garden Restaurant
  - General Cigar Company
  - Gibbons Beer
  - Grand Union Market on Public Square
  - Half Circle Barbecue
  - Hottle's Restaurant
  - Howard's Barbecue
  - Hoyt Library
  - Irem Temple Country Club
  - Kearney's Barbecue
  - Kingston Coal Company
  - Kingston House Restaurant
  - Kingston Provision Co.
  - Konefal's Restaurant
  - Laurel Line
  - Lazarus Cafeteria
  - Lehigh Valley Railroad Station Miniature Operating Steam Engine
  - Leslie Fay Sewing Factory
  - Little Big Store
  - Luzerne Theater
  - Ma's Old-Fashioned soft drinks
  - Mayfair Supper Club
  - McCroly's 5&10
  - Memorial Bridge
  - Miners Bank
  - Mr. Peanut
  - Nay Aug Park
  - Nesbitt Memorial Hospital
  - North Lake
  - Orpheum Vaudeville Shows
  - Old Meetinghouse
  - Page Street Roundhouse
  - Paramount Theater
  - Paris Bridal Shop
  - Penn Theater
  - Planters Peanuts
  - Pomeroy's
  - Pringle Hill
  - Public Square
  - Ricketts Glen State Park
  - Rocky Glen
  - Sanitary Dry Cleaners
  - Sans Souci Amusement Park
  - Seven Tubs
  - Shady Side Milk
  - South Main Street
  - St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
  - Stapleton's Drugstore
  - Stegmaier Beer
  - Trackless trolleys
  - Walters Shoe Store
  - Wapwallopen Creek
  - West Market Street
  - Westmoreland Club
  - White Haven State Hospital
  - John White's Tavern
  - White Rock
  - White's Hardware
  - Wilkes-Barre Indians
  - Wilkes-Barre Traction Company
  - Woodlawn Milk
  - Woolworth's 5 & 10
  - Wyoming Valley Hospital
  - Wyoming Theater

# The Meadows Nursing & Rehabilitation Center



The Meadows Nursing & Rehabilitation Center is located on a 15-acre tract in Dallas, Pennsylvania. This 130 bed skilled nursing facility offers both skilled and intermediate care to their residents. Along with the 24-hour nursing care, the Meadows Nursing & Rehabilitation Center offers rehabilitative therapy to those needing to improve or maintain their current condition.

## CHECK US OUT

The Meadows Nursing and Rehabilitation Center would like to invite the community to attend the Grand Opening of their newly renovated and expanded Therapy department on December 17th from noon to 2pm. Stop by for a tour of our 3,500 square foot rehabilitation center and learn about physical, occupational and speech therapy. A representative from the Therapy department will be available to demonstrate the use of the equipment and answer any questions you may have. Refreshments will be available.

Meadows Nursing & Rehabilitation Center offers superior nursing care, which rehabilitates and improves the residents' health, and, when necessary, helps them to accept declining health with dignity and comfort in a loving, caring atmosphere. Their nurses are on duty around the clock, and a physician is always on call. In addition to excellent medical care, residents and their families benefit from the spiritual, social and emotional support offered at Meadows Nursing & Rehabilitation Center.

# WE'RE GETTING BIGGER TO SERVE YOU BETTER

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