

## Henry W. Antheil, Jr.



*Henry W. Antheil*

*Photo Courtesy of the Library of Congress*

Henry W. Antheil, Jr.'s career in the U.S. Foreign Service was cut short when the Finnish passenger plane Kaleva exploded at 14:05 on Friday, June 14, 1940 about ten minutes after taking off from Tallinn's Ülemiste Airport. According to an Associated Press wire story that ran the following day, Henry was serving as a diplomatic courier when his plane exploded en route to Helsinki.

Henry was carrying several diplomatic pouches from the U.S. legations in Tallinn and Riga on the very day that the Soviet blockade of Estonia went into effect. Soviet troops had already been based in Estonia since October 18, 1939 as a result of the secret protocol to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact signed between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. Some Estonian researchers believe that Henry's diplomatic pouches included secret information detailing the Soviet Union's future plans for the Baltic region that the Estonian General Staff had turned over to an unidentified U.S. Government official earlier that same day. Back in the United States, the news of the Soviet blockade and the loss of the Kaleva were overshadowed by a much bigger story that broke on the other side of Europe on June 14: the Nazi occupation of Paris.

Henry W. Antheil, Jr., was honored at the American Foreign Service Association's (AFSA)

Memorial Plaque Ceremony at the State Department's Diplomatic Lobby on Friday, May 4, 2007. The event, part of the annual Foreign Affairs Day celebration, honors those U.S. Embassy employees who lost their lives while serving their country overseas in the line of duty. U.S. Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns read a message from President Bush and paid his respects to the families of those employees who were added to the plaque.

The employees honored in 2007 were:

**Margaret Alexander**, a Foreign Service Officer serving as Deputy Director with the USAID Mission in Nepal, killed on September 23, 2006 in a helicopter crash. Finnish Chargé d'Affaires Pauli Mustonen was among the 24 people killed in the same crash near Ghunsa in the Himalayan Mountains.

**Doris Knittle**, a Foreign Service nurse in Kabul, Afghanistan, found murdered in her home in August 1970.

**Henry W. Antheil, Jr.**, a clerk at the U.S. Legation in Helsinki, killed on June 14, 1940 while serving as a diplomatic courier when the Finnish passenger plane Kaleva was shot down over the Gulf of Finland near Tallinn, Estonia.



This solemn ceremony offers an opportunity to remember and honor fallen colleagues who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country and serves as a reminder of the dangerous and difficult conditions that U.S. Foreign Service personnel face around the world. The addition of these three names to AFSA's Memorial Plaque brought the total number of Foreign Service employees who have died in the line of duty to 225.

The U.S. Embassy in Tallinn has been helping the Estonian film company Polarfilms document Henry W. Antheil, Jr.'s life and death. The initial results of this ongoing research appeared in the *Foreign Service Journal* (May 2007) and *Akadeemia* (June 2007), and will be featured in the forthcoming documentary film *The Story of the Kaleva*.



Kaleva (Courtesy of Eesti Filmiarhiiv)