

Topic: My Grandfathers Experience in World War II

Abstract: My Grandfather joined the Air Core in 1942. He flew a B-24 fighter plane called Satins Little Sister where he was a radio operator and sight gunner. He endured terrible conditions in boot camp, along with his pre war training. He based in Bungey, England during the war, and, while there, he experienced the Battle of the Bulge where Hitler avoided the Allied Armies who were going to invade Germany. At the age of ninety he was invited to the White House in honor to meet up with his remaining crew members and talk about the past memories that are still with him.

Key Words: grandfather, World War II, Air Core, radio operator, sight gunner, father

### Grandfathers Experience in World War II

My grandfather never talked about his experiences in World War II until his sixties. One day I called him on the phone, in which he lives in Texas, to see if he could answer a couple of questions about his experiences in World War II. It was hard to get a lot information out of him because war is a difficult subject for most people that survive, seeing fellow crew men being killed and looking back, thinking about those near death missions that they survived. Because of that, I made sure I did not ask him to many questions so he did not feel uncomfortable.

My grandfather was born on September 4<sup>th</sup> of 1923, in Ravenna, Ohio. He was raised by his two parents in a household of four boys and two girls, him being the third boy. The fourth brother ended up dying at a young age in a sled riding accident, so there were just three boys while he was growing up. His first reason for joining the war was to “get the hell out of Ravenna, Ohio”, but then reveals that his second oldest brother had joined the Air Core two years before him in 1940. His brother ends up making the Air Core his life long career. My grandfather also said that he joined because he knew that it

was the right thing to do and, most of the time, if you did not join you would be looked down upon.

My grandfather joined the Air Core in 1942 at the age of nineteen. He was sent out to Atlantic City, New Jersey for his basic training. The first thing my grandfather said when I asked him how boot camp was, "it was terrible". He said the conditions were not very pleasant. They would have to march on a dump and it was windy and cold most of the time. The only good thing he saw was that he got to travel around a little bit of the country. He said that the boot camp did not make him fearful. It was not until combat that he became scared because you never knew what was going to happen to you or your fellow crew members who were like your brothers.

After boot camp, he was then sent off to Ireland for pre war training. Men that had just finished training ahead of my grandfather, did not give him an accurate depiction of what to expect, but instead taught him and hid crew directly from the book. One example that my grandfather told me was that his leaders told them, when they were up in the plane, to make sure you take off your gloves if you gun jams in order to fix it. My grandfather soon learned that when you get up in the air and experience your gun jamming, the first thing to do is keep your gloves on. This reason was because when you're flying, it is so much colder and the temperature was about twenty below zero most of the time. Instead of taking your gloves off to make sure your fingers did not freeze, they would just toss the gun out of the window and get a new one. When it came to my grandfather's turn for him and his fellow members to teach the up coming soldiers about the pre war information, they made sure they taught from the book when the officers were around. When they were not around, then they would make sure to teach the new

crew how it really was going to be, because they wish someone would had done that for them instead of learning the hard way.

After the pre-war training, my grandfather was based at Bungey, England for World War II. Bungey is located on the Northeast side of England. This area is very pretty and is located right off shore. At the base there were six crews and they slept in metal quients that were made out of sheet metal and were half round. During their free time at the base, my grandfather said they would do nothing if they were not in the air. He said some men would write letters to their families and loved ones which was called v-mail (stands for victory mail). Occasionally, they would ride their bicycles into town to get a beer. Other times they would go to a shot gun range to practice their aim or to just get a way from the base.

When it came down to talking about details of the war, there was not much mentioned. My grandfather did answer my questions but did not give much detail. The plane he flew was a silver B-24 that was called Satins Little Sister. His job was the radio operator and sight gunner. As a radio operator you are “the brain” of the operation were they receive orders from the control center so he can tell his crew what has happening or going to happen. As the sight gunner my grandfather shot a fifty caliber machine gun. Sometimes crew members would become injured and he would have to do his job and also the jobs of the wounded. In order to be sent home my grandfather said the crews had to go on a certain amount of missions; however, they kept on upping how many missions they had to do. By the end of my grandfather’s career in the Air Core, he had a success of thirty-five missions and was sent home on January 14, 1945. From the day he joined,

to this very day, my grandfather hates flying due to his experiences of the planes being constantly bouncy, freezing cold, and him not being able to move out of his stations.

One large event that my grandfather experienced while being in the war was The Battle of the Bulge. This took place in Ardennes Forest in Belgium, Luxemburg and Germany. This surprise offensive took place from December 16, 1944. What was supposed to of happened was the Allied Armies were ready to invade Germany. Hitler tried to avoid this happening so he ordered a re-take French territory and to capture port city of Antwerp. All my grandfather said was that the weather made it difficult mostly forthe ground force, due to it happening during the winter season.

The fiftieth anniversary of my grandfathers deployment, my father and two uncles took him back to visit his base in Bungey, England. When arriving there, they drove around to see if my grandfather could remember where his old base was. Two nice girls where riding there horses could tell they were looking for something, and stopped to ask if they needed help. My father said how his dad was in the Air Core and they were looking for the base he stayed at. The girls told them that it was down the road back the other direction now on someone's private property. They said to go knock on the door of the house and most likely they will let you tour the old base. When a lady answered the door, she said with no hesitation to go ahead and look around. On their property there was still the old control tower, several barracks, and the supply shed. My father said my grandpa became emotional over all the things he saw and the memories that came to mind while walking on his old base. After they were done looking at the base they were driving and saw that there was a museum of World War II between the base and town. As they pulled up, they saw the museum owner closing up and asked if they could take a

tour. The museum owner took them throughout the museum and my father said that my grandfather was naming off people in the pictures that even the museum owner did not even know. My father said when they went he had no expectations and at the end they were in awe of how amazing the trip turned out.

This last winter my grandfather who will be ninety years old, received a letter asking him to join his remaining crew members from World War II to the White House in Washington D.C. in the first week of May. They will receive a tour of the White House and will get the opportunity to meet the President of the United States. One of my uncles will have the privilege of going along side my grandfather on this emotional trip to remember the past memories.