

James Hubert Almond

My friend Hubert Almond, who is 87 years old, called me several weeks ago and wanted me to come see his World War II pictures and medals. He wanted to tell me about his experiences in World War II. Last Thursday, Elaine Stewart, Lucy Tremblay, Kevin Tremblay, and I went to his home on the Millingport Road and taped our two hour interview with him and his wife, Doris Eudy.

He was 20 years old when he was drafted into the Air Force during World War II on April 25, 1943. His older brother Horace was already in the armed forces serving in the Navy. I asked Hubert if he had a choice of which branch of the service he would go into and he said he didn't.

He entered the Army Air Corps in April, 1943, took his basic training at Miami, Florida, and then went for six weeks of armament school at Denver, Colorado, 12 more weeks of gunnery school at Fort Myers, Fla.

He said that while they were in gunnery school in Fla., the pilots would take the gunners out one at a time to practice using their machine guns. One of the pilots was flying low over the Gulf and the gunner started firing and didn't quit firing. His pilot yelled back to him to "save your brass." The young gunner thought he said "save your ass" and he parachuted out of the plane and had to be picked up by the Coast Guard. Hubert told this for the truth but he may have been kidding us!

After Gunnery School at Fort Myers, Fla., he went to Columbia, S.C. where he crewed up to fly on the B-25 Mitchell airplane. This is the airplane named for General Billy Mitchell, a pioneer of U.S. military aviation.

Hubert said the B-25 Mitchell's were the planes that General Jimmy Doolittle used when he bombed Japan in retaliation for their attack on Pearl Harbor.

Hubert said his pilot painted a scantily clad woman on the side of their plane and they named the plane the Shady Lady.

Hubert said they then went to Brazil and on to the Ascension Island. From there they flew to the Mediterranean Island of Corsica which became their home base for all of his 70 missions. He said the pilots and crew slept in big tents. During the winter they had a stove in the center of the tent to keep them warm. He said they took few baths in the winter until a shower was rigged up with a kind of tank that had hot water in it. Hubert said in the warmer months they just stripped off and bathed in the creek near their tent. Hubert said the food was pretty good to him. They were served a lot of the infamous S.O.S. but he considered it a treat. He said they never flew on rainy days or cloudy days. Those times they would spend the day playing poker. He also said they did not go on night raids.

Hubert said the airmen who were stationed in England were the ones who usually went on missions over Germany. He said they flew their missions over Italy and France. Hubert said their missions were to bomb bridges, dams, and roadways to make travel difficult for the German Army.

While flying over Avignon, France, Hubert shot down a German M.E. 109 fighter plane. He said, "We were on a bridge busting mission. The Germans did their best to make it hot for us. When we left the

target area, our interphone system had been shot out. This meant we couldn't warn each other of approaching fighters."

I heard the German 109s before I saw them. Their shells whizzed past our plane. One formation had been broken up, so the odds were even. Three German ME 109s against our three B-25s.

They all came in close, but I concentrated on the last fighter. I let him have between 75 and 100 rounds. The last I saw he was going down smoking."

On the day he shot the German fighter out of the sky, they had started with six B-25s flying in formation to knock out a vital railroad supply line. Hubert's plane and crew were the only one to make it back. Three of the six B-25s were shot down by anti-aircraft fire from below. One ditched in the Mediterranean. The other damaged B-25 crashed north of the island.

Two months before, on June 6, 1944, D-Day, Hubert flew two missions as Allied soldiers hit the beach at Normandy.

He said at 10,000 feet I could look back at the big ships and I could also see the smaller troop ships headed for the beach. He said, "I remember thinking about how many were going in that day who would never come back."

After Hubert flew his 70th mission, he was able to return to the states. He was discharged July 25, 1945. Hubert said that he still feels sad when he remembers all of his buddies in WWII who never made it back home.

His awards include: the Presidential Citation, the Air Medal with 10 Oak Leaf Clusters, the European Theater Ribbon with six Battle Stars and the Good Conduct Medal.

/



1944 James Hubert Almond
Flew 70 missions in a B-25
1st mission in April, 1944 over France.
70th mission on November 13, 1944 over France.