

LIBERTY AVIATION MUSEUM



Gerald Rasmussen Collection

MH.17.2

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Introduction

This collection of papers was given to the Liberty Aviation Museum by Mr. Gerald Rasmussen in March 2013. This collection of papers is a small collection of personal and military related papers that were the property of Gerald Rasmussen. Permission to use this collection for research purposes was granted by the donor.

Biographical Sketch

This collection features archives of papers from Gerald Rasmussen. Mr. Rasmussen served in the United States Army Air Forces in the 303rd Bomb Group (H) (Hell's Angels), 360th Bomb Squadron of the 8th Air Force as a ball turret gunner on B-17 Flying Fortresses during World War II. His active service was in the European Theater of Operations. Gerald Rasmussen was born in Calamus, Iowa in 1927 to Rasmus and Edith Rasmussen. He grew up on his family's farm in Iowa which mainly planted and harvested corn and oats. He enlisted in the Army Air Forces in December 1943. The same day after graduating from high school on 5 May 1944 he was on a train headed to Des Moines, Iowa for basic training in Amarillo, Texas. After basic training, he was transferred to Arizona and Tampa, Florida for advanced training. After completing training, he and other Army Air Force personnel were sent to England.

While in England serving in the famed 303rd Bomb Group, "Hell's Angels" he flew fourteen (14) bombing missions over Germany and German occupied territories. He flew mainly in B-17G bombers in the ball turret gunner position. After returning home from active military service, he traveled to Cincinnati to reconnect with Darline Cotton whom he had met before the war while she

was in nursing school. Eventually they were engaged and were married on 4 November 1945. After wedding, they moved to Clinton, Iowa and had four (4) children. Mr. Rasmussen worked for a lumber company for ten (10) years during the 1940s-50s. He then took accounting and business machine classes and eventually became a manager, then a supervisor for the Imperial Oil Company in the 1950s. While in their employment, he traveled throughout the state of Iowa auditing gasoline service stations. In 1969, he was transferred to Ohio and continued to work for the Imperial Oil Company as an auditor.

Eventually he left that position and became a service station dealer in Sandusky, Ohio on Perkins Avenue. In 1978, he retired from the Imperial Oil Company. Soon thereafter, at age 51, he became a janitor for Sandusky City Schools and a year later was promoted to Supervisor of Building Services. A few years later he retired and moved to Florida with his wife, and in his early 70's, became a captain of 100 passenger boats at Disney World.

During his lifetime, he earned his pilot's license while living in Iowa as a result of the GI Bill, became an avid boater and was a member of the Coast Guard Auxiliary while in Ohio. He taught safe boating classes, enjoyed woodworking, and, in 2006, wrote an autobiography of his life. In 2012, he took part in a Northwest Ohio Honor Flight for veterans that traveled to Washington D.C.¹ For approximately thirty (30) years after WWII, Mr. Rasmussen was not aware that members of his former WWII unit had formed a reunion group for their squadron. He joined in the mid-1970s and regularly received newsletters and learned all that he could about the reunion group. He discovered that they had all the declassified mission reports that he was a part of during his service and acquired them from the group.

Scope and Content

This collection consists of select, declassified mission reports of the 303rd Bombing Group of the 360th Bombing Squadron of the 8th Air Force (USAAF) from March 1945 through April 1945, 303rd Bombing Group (H) Association "Hell's Angels Newsletter" collection from December 1989 through November 2007, combat mission narratives, articles, photocopies of photographs, commemorative history booklet, bombing crew rosters, and miscellaneous related papers relating to Gerald "Jerry" Rasmussen's time of military service in the United States Army Air Forces while stationed and serving at Molesworth, England during World War II. These documents demonstrate

¹ Hadley, Catharine, "WWII gunner flew 14 missions," News Herald (Port Clinton, OH.), June 2, 2012.

the fine details of how bombing missions were carried out and documented afterwards, history of the personnel during and after World War II, and photographic evidence of the war effort by the 303rd Bombing Group. The papers are categorized and organized by theme, and chronologically, and alphabetically into two acid-free, archival quality boxes and five (5) archival file folders in Box 2.

Inventory

Box 1

Declassified WWII 303rd Bombing Group (Official, Photocopied) Mission Reports

Minden, Germany Bombing Mission, dated 14 March 1945

Zossen, Germany Bombing Mission, dated 15 March 1945

Erfurt, Germany Bombing Mission, dated 17 March 1945

Gladbeck, Germany Bombing Mission, dated 23 March 1945

Furstenau, Germany Bombing Mission, dated 24 March 1945

Unterlusz, Germany Bombing Mission, dated 04 April 1945

Leipzig, Germany Bombing Mission, dated 06 April 1945

Wolfrathausen, Germany Bombing Mission, dated 09 April 1945

Oraienburg, Germany Bombing Mission, dated 10 April 1945

Freiham, Germany Bombing Mission, dated 11 April 1945

Royan, France Bombing Mission, dated 14 April 1945

Dresden, Germany Bombing Mission, dated 17 April 1945

Box 2

Folder 1

Hell's Angels Newsletters—303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc.

December 1989

June 1990

Sept. 1990

March 1991
July 1991
October 1991

January 1992
April 1992
July 1992
October 1992

January 1993
April 1993
July 1993

May 1994
August 1994

Folder 2

February 1995
May 1995

May 1996
November 1996

May 1997
August 1997

May 1998
November 1998

May 1999

May 2000
August 2000
November 2000

Folder 3

February 2001

May 2002

August 2002
November 2002

February 2003
August 2003
November 2003

February 2004
May 2004
August 2004
November 2004

November 2005

February 2006
August 2006
November 2006

February 2007
August 2007
November 2007

Folder 4

Miscellaneous Papers

My Bombing Missions Over Europe w/ the 8th Air Force, List, (Page 1)

303rd Bomb Group (H) Combat Mission No. 33 Narrative,
dated 4 May 1943

303rd Bomb Group (H) Combat Mission No. 340 Narrative,
dated 19 March 1945

303rd Bomb Group (H) Combat Mission No. 342 Narrative,
dated 21 March 1945

Bombing Missions of 303rd Bomb Group (H) from 2 Feb. 1945 thru 21 Apr.
1945

Bombing Missions of 303rd Bomb Group (H) from Nov. 1942 thru Apr.
1945

“Hell’s Angels Bomb Raid: A Fortress Gunner’s 15th Mission” article,
Flight Journal, October 2004, p.p. 23-26, 28.

Email to Gerald Rasmussen: *The Molesworth Pilot Newsletter*, 25 Nov.
2012, Vol. IV, Issue 11, “The “Jackie” Nose Art Story.”

Folder 5

Photocopied photograph of 303rd Bomb Group members signing names on
the Hell’s Angel B-17 for US tour, 20 January 1944 (printed from internet)

Photocopied photograph of Liberty Bond Tour of “Hell’s Angels” in
Hollywood, dated 1944 (printed from internet)

Photocopied photograph of John W. Rapp 360th Bombing Squadron Crew,
dated 01 March 1945

Commemorative history book of 303rd Bomb Group, titled “The First 300,”
printed and distributed in 1945 (original).

* Objects in relation to the Gerald G. Rasmussen papers of the Rasmussen Collection, Accession
2012.14, can be viewed upon request, on site, at the Liberty Aviation Museum in Port Clinton,
Ohio. *