

John H. (Buddy) Westhues, Jr.

Dates of service: 26 January 1943 to November 1945

Rank & role: Tech Sgt, U.S. Army Air Force, radio operator

Unit[s]: Sent first for training to Sheppard Field, Texas, then for further training in Utah; deployed to England in April 1944 and assigned to the

369th Squadron (Fightin' Bitin'), 306th Bomb Group

Medals received: Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal

Familial link to William & Theresa: Third generation through John and

Olive.

Notable actions/deployments/stories:

Military service was the defining event of Buddy's whole life. He was drafted in 1943 and was honorably discharged abut three years later. Like his cousin Norbert (whom he chanced to meet in England), he was in the Army Air Force, member of the nine-member flight crew for a B-17, the "Flying Fortress," to bomb targets in occupied France and in Germany. Bud had the job of radioman.

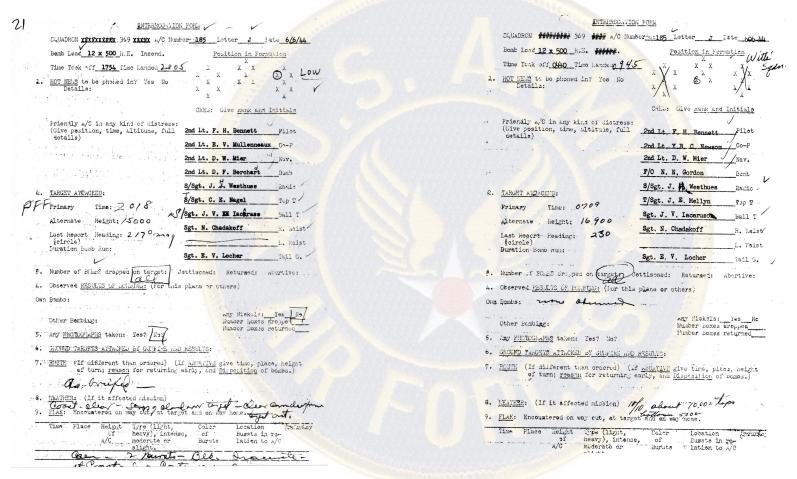
Bud began flying the bombing missions in May 1944, and completed whatever was the requisite number (probably 30 or 35 -- the quota changed from time to time) for that tour of duty. Below are scans of his crew's debriefings from the two missions they flew on D-Day, June 6, 1944. For their first mission, they left England at 4:40 AM, bombed the target on the Normandy coast at 7:09, and got safely back to England at 9:45. The D-Day attack began at 6:30 AM, so Bud's first mission that day was at the start of it. Then, after some hours of sleep, they left again at 5:54 PM, returning from their second mission at 11:05.

Bud could have returned to the United States and stayed safe for the rest of the war, but instead he volunteered to be part of the "India-China Ferry," an Allied operation to airlift supplies from Assam, in British India, across the Himalayas to Chiang Kai-Shek's army in Kunming, China. The operation lasted from 1942 until the surrender of Japan in 1945, so Bud was at the tail end of it. The airmen called it "Flying the Hump." The route was treacherous on account of the mountains as well as Japanese attack. About 3,000 planes went down, making what was called an "aluminum trail" over the mountains. Bud had good luck. He declined, however, to fly back to the United States at the end of the war, choosing instead to come home by ship from Karachi, in what is now Pakistan.

Bud would be angry with me if I did not add here that his military service left Bud hating war with every fiber of his being. He was not proud of his service or of the medals he received for it. He would have thrown them away if Mom had not kept them. When I was growing up on the farm, Bud was an executive at Chrysler in Detroit, but his medals were collecting dust in the upstairs attic of our farmhouse.

During the Vietnam War, Bud was not just embarrassed but enraged that Chrysler was making military vehicles for the U.S. government.

PDFs of the debriefings from the two missions Bud's crew flew on D-Day:





Bomber Command Memorial in London for WWII Allied Aviators