



**Melvin
Strunk**

Army Air Corps

Melvin Strunk

Oct 21, 1923 - Apr 13, 2013

BIRTHPLACE: Abilene, Kansas

SOLDIER DETAILS

DIVISION: Army Air Corps, 447th Bomb Group:
Eighth Air Force

THEATER OF OPERATION: European

SERVED: Dec 11, 1942 - Sep 12, 1945

HONORED BY: Marie Strunk

BIOGRAPHY

Melvin John Strunk enlisted in the Army Air Corps at Fort Riley, Kansas, December 11, 1942. Melvin was inducted at the Wyandotte County Courthouse February 25, 1943 at the age of 19. He traveled by train, his first train ride, from his home in Abilene to Kansas City. He was sent to Jefferson Barracks for basic training. They had coal-burning stoves; they were allotted one bucket of coal per day. He remembers the shoes he was issued did not fit. Wooden rifles were used for the 'manual of arms' training. He was sent to Michigan State University where the cadets attended classes from 7AM until 10PM, 7 days a week. Melvin received 19 hours of college credit and was paid \$21 per month. He was there till July of 1943. At San Antonio Classification Center, Melvin was given a battery of tests for 7 days. He qualified for the three categories - pilot, navigator, and bombardier. Because there was such a backlog of cadets wanting pilot school, Melvin opted for navigator school. Melvin was sent to Ellington Field, Houston, Texas. His pay increased to \$75 per month. He received his silver navigator wings and was commissioned a second Lieutenant in the Army Air Force on March 18, 1944. His pay increased to \$220; plus a clothing allowance (\$150 month pay; \$75 flying pay; and \$21 subsistence). He was transferred to Ardmore, OK for transitional training, combat and crew training before leaving for overseas duty. On May 29, 1944, Lt. Strunk was sent to Kearney Army Air Field in Kearney, Nebraska. A new B-17 had been flown from Seattle, Washington by two WASPS. On May 31, Melvin and crew flew to Bangor, Maine, Gander, Newfoundland and landed in Wales, United Kingdom, then by train to Rattlesden. On June 26, 1944, he was assigned to the 447th Bomb Group, 709th Squadron, 8th Air Force. Not enough planes were available, so he waited till July 12, 1944, to fly his first mission to Munich, Germany. Melvin flew 35 missions in 100 days, all before he was 21 years old. He flew 248 combat hours. He was awarded the Air Medal with four Oak Leaf Clusters, the Distinguished Flying Cross, three bronze stars for the European Theatre Ribbon, Presidential Citation, and the French Diplome for the liberation of Normandy. Melvin returned to the United States on the U.S.S. Westpoint, zigzagging all the way across the Atlantic, landing at Newport News, Virginia. He returned to Ft. Leavenworth on November 20, 1944 for reassignment. Strunk was sent to the AAAF

Distribution Center, Santa Ana, California. On January 6, 1945, he was sent to Navigation Instructor's School at Ellington Field, Texas. On April 12, 1945, he was sent to Pilot's School at Chickasha, Oklahoma, then to Mission, Texas. By September 12, 1945, the war was over, and Melvin was discharged at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, and he returned home to Abilene by train.