

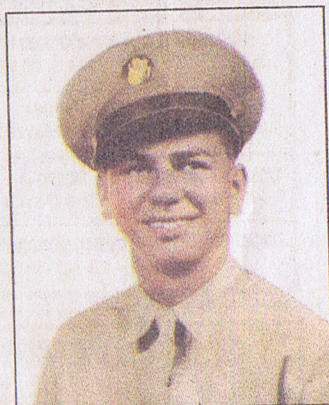
WORLD WAR II MEMORIES



STAFF PHOTO BY BRETT DUKE

Nemours 'Nem' Montz of LaPlace served in the U.S. Army Air Corps from 1941 to 1945.

Army Air Corps vet remembers his luck



Montz in 1941.

*Crew stayed intact
after 30 missions*

By Judy Creekmore
Contributing writer

Sixty-two years ago, Nemours "Nem" Montz of LaPlace was serving in the Eighth Air Force, 384th Bombardment Group in the U.S. Army Air Corps, assigned to Grafton Underwood Station

in England.

He was a waist gunner on a B-17 that carried a 10-man replacement crew, including six gunners. His crew formed in the United States and stayed together for the duration. They flew 30 missions together over France and Germany, each time returning safely to base.

"We were just lucky," Montz said, summing up his World War II experiences as many locals prepare to observe Memorial Day on Mon-

day.

Montz, a LaPlace native, attended St. Joseph boarding school in Covington, and then attended LSU before joining the family business, A. Montz Co., as overseer. He was drafted into the regular army at the beginning of 1941, for "one year plus duration," so he served until August 1945.

Because he had trouble with his feet, he was assigned to the Army Air Corps.

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Nem Montz poses front and center with his crew after they flying a mission.

WW II stint ended in Alexandria

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"I told them I had trouble with my feet, and they said, 'That's OK, you just have to fly,'" he recalled with a chuckle.

His crew received training in Washington and Oregon before ferrying a new plane to England. The crew turned the plane over to the British for modification and they became a replacement crew after more training.

His crew had to abort its first mission over France because of engine trouble, and landed at an RAF base just across the English Channel. They went on to fly 30 missions over France and Germany. "Some were easier than others," Montz said.

He said his crew flew whatever plane was available when they needed one. He said bombers were often chased by German fighter planes and took flak

from the ground; sometimes, planes blew up beside them from direct hits. He said that although his crew took some flak and received general battle damage, they returned home intact each time.

Their most dreaded mission was one over the city of Berlin.

"Everyone was worried about Big B; we were afraid there would be a lot of defense around it," he said.

On other missions his crew had bombed factories in Berlin, but this time their bombs fell on the whole city.

"The anticipation was bad for Berlin. By that time the war had turned in favor of the Allies and the bombing of the city was to lower German morale," he said.

They again returned safely to base.

Their last mission was the day before D-Day, supporting

the invasion with attacks along the French coast where the Allied Forces would land and bombing inland to keep Germans from reaching the coast.

No matter what their mission, Montz said, credit was due to the escort planes.

"The prettiest sight we ever saw was when the American escort planes came to meet us when we got close to the target," Montz recalled. "Their job was to protect bombing crews by luring away German fighter planes. They were a big help, but they suffered casualties. Some carried bombs, some machine guns. Many went down. They were young and not afraid of anything. They were daredevils."

Montz returned to the states in August 1944. He spent the rest of his enlistment in Alexandria, training new bombing crews.

Hopes for ne season

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