

ill since late November. In October, he drove all the way up to Boston, MA for his 50th high school reunion. He told me that "This one may be the last one I get to attend." He also attended your 9th reunion in Nashville, TN, on the way back home.

Enclosed you will find a copy of the obit that was in the local paper. Hopefully, that will tell you a few of the things that he did in the war time. I know that he really enjoyed coming to the reunions that you had, and I'm sure he would have been at the 10th one in Kansas City, if he was still here.

My mother died when I was only four years old. She had a brain tumor that was malignant and she lived for about eight months after she had brain surgery at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. My father had a massive heart attack in 1970, about two months after my mother died. Heart disease runs in my father's family. He was very close to death at the time but said that he asked God to let him live to get me raised up and get a good start on life.

He never remarried and I had the best childhood that any child could ever ask for. We took many trips. We went on a cruise to the Bahamas when I was in the 7th grade and when I was going into the 11th grade, he took me to beautiful Hawaii. My father was a best friend to me and a wonderful dad. I have two brothers and two wonderful sisters and we are a very close family.

I have never had the pleasure of meeting Dot Fetter, but I have talked to her on the phone several times. She is a very nice person and I know that my father was very fond of her and her husband.

My father was buried at Arlington National cemetery beside my mother. The day of the funeral was very nice. The weather was really nice. He was buried with full military honors including a 21 gun salute and the playing of taps on April 12, 1991. Of course I miss him very much as I saw him every day of my life.

After I got married in 1986. I really felt responsible for going by and checking on him, although he was very independent. He knew that death was near as the doctors had told him he could go at any time. He faced death very bravely and he was as prepared for it as anyone could have been. He told me that God had granted his wish (which I mentioned earlier) and much more. I stayed with him quite often at his house and I was with him the night he passed away. We stayed up talking until about 11:30 and when I woke up at 5:00 in the morning he was gone.

My family and I take comfort in the fact that he lived his life to the very fullest and that he was such a wonderful person. My husband and I will be moving over to my father's house soon.

Sincerely,
Lisa Mulligan Selix

Ralph D Pierson
826 squadron

Ralph D Pierson 69, Navigator on James E Kennedy's crew, 826 squadron passed away June 25, 1990. Multiple sclerosis prevented him from attending the reunions. He was extremely proud of his service to the country, and his family was proud of him.

He was the holder of the DFC, Air Medal and clusters completing 35 missions.. He was shot down over Yugoslavia and He flew his first combat mission October 31, 1945 to Podgorica, Yugoslavia to attack German troop concentrations. On his second

mission to attack a Vienna oil refinery, his squadron was diverted to bomb the Kafenburg tank works, near Brux Austria, their aircraft "Vicious Virgin" was hit by enemy fire. Number one engine could not be feathered. Engine caught fire and Lt Robert S Simkins the pilot on this flight, ordered the crew to prepare to bail out. On the way back to base number two engine went out and could not be feathered. Two men were able to jump, but the airplane was losing altitude so fast that all the others elected to stay with the plane. The airplane plowed into a valley between Ribnik and Medak, Yugoslavia in a controlled crash. They were picked up by partisans and were eventually turned over to the American Mission who transported them to the seaport at Bari, Italy after 18 days in enemy territory. The plane was later destroyed by Yugoslavian troops.

The crew picked up after the crash besides Pierson and Simpkins were: Cpl Robert C Rourk, Cpl Walter F Menn-photographer, Lt James E Kennedy-C/P, Cpl Howard Armknecht-B/G, Cpl Thadddeus J Mayewski-T/G, Lt Watson B Smith-B, Calvin Milam-R/O who had jumped earlier was reunited with the rest of the crew some time after the crash landing. With the exception of Robert S Simkins who was flying his 32nd mission, the rest of the crew were on their second mission.

Because this was an inexperienced crew the regular pilot James E Kennedy was flying co/pilot and Robert S Simkins with 31 mission experience was flying as first pilot. This and similar transpositions of individual crew members was quite common in the 484th Bomb Group with crews flying their first missions.

William Roller
825 Squadron

June 25, 1923 - May 15, 1991

Bill was a captain and a bombardier with the 484th, Bomb Group, 825th squadron, on a crew piloted by Elvin W Brush. According to his leather bomber jacket, he flew missions over Germany, Austria, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Bulgaria and flew 52 missions or more.

On one occasion a 500 lb bomb had hung up in the bomb bay crosswise and easily dislodged. It was caught by Bill and the engineer struggled to free it before the peller spun off allowing the lives so that only



Bill Roller,
(Bill Roller photo)

the bomb to become a slight jar would set it off. Now the problem was, could they free the bomb without hitting other planes of the formation flying below. Here is a case where the lives of the other members of the crew depended on the skill of the bombardier and the engineer. Jim Pool the crew's navigator said this was the cement that held the bomber crews together, the sharing of a common danger. He goes on to say that Bill Roller was very conscientious about dropping his bombs directly on