

Jack Douglas Messersmith, 824 Squadron



Jack Messersmith was the tail gunner on Vincent DeMaio's crew 824 squadron. The crew is shown left to right back row: Vincent DeMaio-P, Ira Kessler-CP, Leonard Waterman-B, and Gary Lloyd-N. Front row: Joseph Pastelak-E, Joseph Seeley-RO, Ormond V Schusterick-BG, Frank Taylor-NG, Leonard Nucero-UG, and Jack Messersmith-TG.

Dear Bud:

This is to inform you of the death of our father, Jack D. Messersmith on December 15, 1996, and to thank you and your staff for the kindness and consideration you have shown him.

Words cannot express how proud Dad was the day Torretta Flyer No. 29 arrived at our home. There on the cover was the plane that represented to him the best group of guys he ever had the pleasure of knowing, and Dad knew a lot of people in his lifetime! When he read the notes from his diary printed on page 33, he stood a bit taller, and again he related to his family the bravery of the men involved. He never talked about his own contributions, only those of others.

Although he fought a brave battle with Alzheimer's for several years and experienced memory decline toward the end, Dad never forgot the 484th Bomb Group or his buddies on the B-24, "Wheels Wagon". Therefore, we feel it is only fitting that our family share the enclosed "Tributes to Jack" with you.

Dad was one of the great comedians and entertainers of all times, for which he received no compensation. No compensation? Only the laughter and love of all the people his humor and caring touched. You see, he knew how an "owie" on the knee of a grandchild could disappear when Bugs Bunny appeared, his teenager's broken heart would mend when Elvis Presley appeared playing "You Ain't Nothing But a Hound Dog" on the fireplace broom, and what adult couldn't face the day when Dad would break into his favorite Laurel and Hardy comment, "This is a fine mess we got ourselves into this time Stanley".

Jack's zest for life was infectious, which made him an easy target for anyone in the mood for great conversation. His command of subjects from airplanes to zebras drew people to him, and after the initial meeting they were back for more. He had many friends....few acquaintances. Recognizing mankind as one family, he knew no race, color, or religion - all were welcome at his table.

His daily life was representative of his faith in God, and his faith and wisdom increased with age. Striving to improve only himself, he left judgment of others to a "higher power". His love was unconditional and he not only could forgive, but had the rare ability to also forget. Integrity, respect, love, and compassion were not just words, but qualities woven into every fiber of his being. His love for his family prompted him to attempt to instill these qualities into his children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren throughout his life.

A fierce love of country prompted him to serve during World War II as a tail gunner in a B-24. His respect for the American flag can best be summed up in his own words, "It represents all the brave men and women who love and defend the principles for which it stands". He was proud of "Old Glory" and he had earned the right to be.

He left a legacy and a huge pair of shoes to fill. Only time will tell if each member of his family passes the test.

Born August 28, 1923

Passed away December 15, 1996

Dawn Master,
daughter