

10-17-99

Dear Kelly,

Yesterday I received your very nice letter, and was thrilled to receive it. I will be delighted to give you the highlights of experiences of my tour of duty in World War II.

In February of 1943 I was inducted in the United States Army. At the time I was 19 years old. After our processing at Ft. Meade, Md. we were sent to the Field Artillery Training Center at Ft. Bragg, N.C. for basic training.

After completion of basic training, I applied to the Army Air Force for pilot training. At that time, there was need for Aerial gunners rather than pilots.

After qualifying for gunnery school I was sent to Kingman, Arizona to complete our training on B-17's. When this was completed, we went to MacDill Field in Tampa Fla where we were assigned to a permanent crew. This was called Overseas Crew Training, and I was to be a Tail Gunner.

On completion of the crew training we sent to 15th Air Force in Italy. We were part of the 301st Bomb Group.

Our crew flew 13 missions before the War in Europe ended.

From our base in Foggia Italy we flew to Southern Germany, Austria and Northern Italy. Most of our missions were bombing of railroad yards, bridges and factories. We also gave support to our Infantry and Artillery by dropping fragmentation bombs on enemy troops. The troop support missions were very successful and kept the German Army retreating.

Fortunately our crew returned to the United States in good shape. Our Flight Engineer (top turret gunner) was the only crew member to have wounded. This happened on a mission to Austria when a piece of anti-aircraft shrapnel hit him on the hip. He recovered completely after about ten days of rest.

We returned in July of 1945 from Italy to the United States. We were scheduled to train on B-29's after a furlough but the Japanese surrendered while we were at home. We were happy it was over.

In October of 1945, I was given an Honorable Discharge from the United States Army Air Force. Also received the Air Medal for flying in combat during the war, as well as campaign ribbon for our part in the European Theater of Operations.

I hope this letter will help you understand my contribution, as well as my comrades contribution to our great Country in World War II. Kelly, I want to thank you for your interest and writing to me. I hope to see you at Christmas.

I love you!
Grandpa

S/Sgt Thomas A. Coyne
U. S Army Air Corp.