

AVIATION WALL OF HONOR



First Lieutenant George W. Hager

George W. Hager was born in Michigamme, Michigan on October 1, 1922. After graduating from Michigamme High School in June 1940, he attended Michigan Tech from 1940 to 1941 and Northern Michigan College from 1941 to 1942. In 1946, he returned to Northern earning his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1950 and Master of Arts degree in 1961.

His military service began at Fort Sheridan, Illinois, in March 1943. Air Force Basic Training followed at Miami Beach, Florida. After additional training at Clemson and Nashville, Tennessee, he entered Navigator Training School (Preflight and Advanced) at Selman Field, Monroe, Louisiana, where he was awarded his 2nd Lieutenant commission on July 3, 1944. After Crew Training at Monroe (Edwards) Air Base in California, he was deployed to the western Pacific assigned to the 26th Squadron, 11th Bombardment Group, 7th Air Force. Advancing to 1st Lieutenant, he flew fifteen bombing missions from Truk Atoll in the Carolines, Marcus Island, and Guam to targets in Japan and China.

Additional forays of interest were five days of parallel search between Johnston Island and Kwajalein in late March 1945 looking for General Harmon's plane lost in the Pacific. General Harmon was carrying the plans for the invasion of Okinawa. Not a trace was found.

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Hager mentions an interesting experience while on a bombing run of a naval air station at Iwakuni, Japan approximately 20 miles from Hiroshima. There was so much haze that they had to bomb on radar. They had been warned to stay out of the Nagasaki area. On the return trip, they observed the flash of the bomb dropped on Nagasaki from what Hager measured as 80 nautical miles. On the 12th, he flew on their final mission past Nagasaki to a place called Kurume. The clouds were still red with brick dust.

Post war, he flew in several patrol missions along the China coast. He also was in two missions to Clark Field in the Philippines transferring liberated prisoners out of Japan (twenty per trip). They were brought to Okinawa from Japan by the Air Force Transport Command.

The plane flown was a B-24 Liberator Bomber assigned to the 26th Squadron, 11th Bombardment Group, 7th Air Force.

His citations and decorations include an American Theatre Ribbon, a Victory Medal, the Asiatic Theatre Ribbon with five bronze Battle Stars, and two Overseas Service Bars.

In July 1944, Hager married Muriel Christenson and in subsequent years fathered five children, two girls and three boys. The two older boys served in the Navy during the Vietnam War.

In his return to civilian life, Hager was a Public School Secondary Teacher and served as Alger County Superintendent from 1955 to 1957, followed by District Superintendent from January 1957 to September 1977.

TJ Mudge, Feb. 2004