

AVIATION WALL OF HONOR



Lieutenant Colonel George Edwin Salmi Bomber Pilot USAAF WWII, Korea

George Salmi was born on November 28, 1918 in Houghton, Michigan to Aina and Carl Salmi. He was raised in Diorite and attended the Champion schools, graduating from Champion High School in 1936. He began his military career as a private in 1941 and ended it at K.I. Sawyer Air Force Base when he retired as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1966. Over almost twenty-five years of active duty with the United States Air Force included domestic duty in Florida, Ohio, Louisiana, Texas, Maine and Michigan. His foreign assignments included England, Okinawa, Morocco, and Guam.

In missions over Europe in World War II, he piloted a B-17 bomber named “Memphis Belle”. This plane gained considerable notoriety by being the first B-17 to make it through 25 combat missions over German occupied Europe in one piece. The plane was featured in a motion picture by the same name.

Salmi recalled: “The B-17 was a heckuva plane. Tough and fast for the time, they would come back shot up, pieces of the tail missing and holes all over. But it still came back..”

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Targets included assaults on industrial complexes at Dresden, Pilsen and the German ball bearing works at Regensburg.

Following World War II, Salmi returned to the U.P. and operated a logging business for three years. He also continued his education at Northern Michigan University. In his second semester of his sophomore year, he was recalled to active duty when the North Korean Army crossed the 38th parallel and pushed the South Korean forces and a small contingent of Americans against the South Korean Sea at Pusan.

For this engagement, he was trained for flying the B-29, which he described as a "much more complex plane, a lot faster." Assigned to the 307th Bomb Troop in Okinawa in October of 1951, he flew sixteen missions over North Korea.

In 1952, he returned to the U.S. to Carswell AFB in Texas for training in the B-36 and later assignment to Biggs AFB, Texas until 1959. At this point, he was transferred to Castle AFB in California for training in the B-52. He then served as aircraft commander at Loring AFB in Maine and finally K.I. Sawyer where he retired in 1966.

Awards include the Air Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal, Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation, American Campaign Medal, United Nation's Service Medal, American Defense Service Medal, and the European-African, Middle Eastern Campaign Medal.

Colonel Salmi died June 1, 2002 and is survived by his wife Eleanore Anderson Salmi (formerly of Ishpeming), daughter Christine Salmi Taylor of Bossier City, Louisiana, and son Robert Salmi of Ishpeming. There are also three grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

TJ Mudge, Aug. 2004