

AVIATION WALL OF HONOR



Ray Windsand Distinguished Bomber Crewman USAAC WWII

Ray "Ace" Windsand was born in Ishpeming, Michigan on October 10, 1919. While in Ishpeming High School, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. Ray, along with others, dropped out of school to fight for their country. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps with an entry date of March 31, 1942. After six weeks of boot camp, he signed up for gunnery school and two days later was on his way to McCarren Field, Las Vegas, Nevada.

In December, 1943 he left the States to join the new 15th Air Force in Cerignola, Italy. As a Right Waist Gunner on a B-24 Liberator bomber, he was a member of the 455th Group A, where he flew 50 missions bombing German-held targets in Europe. When honorably discharged after four years of active duty, he received the Air Medal with Four Oak Leaf Clusters along with his Purple Heart.

Windsand was wounded on April 2, 1944 when his plane was hit by anti-aircraft gunfire over Styr, Austria. The ball bearing factory there was a No. 1 priority target in Europe. A piece of flak hit him in the right leg and, at the same time, severed his oxygen hose and knocked out his heater. His facemask froze to his face and his gloves to his hands. The lack of oxygen

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combined with the blood loss from his wounded leg caused him to lose consciousness. When he came to, he was in a medic tent in Cerignola, Italy. He was told: "We thought we lost you. It took a lot of work to bring you around." He remembers them having to cut his gloves off and bandaging his face so he had to drink through a straw. But being the tough Yooper that he was, he recovered and ultimately was back flying again.

Following discharge, Ray returned to Ishpeming where he still lives with his wife Dorothy. They have a son James in Haslett, Michigan, and two daughters, Mary in Negaunee, Michigan, and Doris, in West Richland, Washington.

Ray's love of flying was not diminished by his military experience as he held a private pilot's license for 49 years.

TJ Mudge, Mar. 2005