

## Arthur Dietrich



This is the fourth in a series of articles that we hope to publish for years to come. With this series we want to honor Service Members that served our great Nation. As I mentioned in the last article we need your help to honor these fine Americans. If you have someone you would like us to include, please help us research and develop articles. Our email address is [mhamlegionpost113@gmail.com](mailto:mhamlegionpost113@gmail.com)

Art Dietrich was born to Robert and Marie Dietrich April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1921 in Hollandale, Wisconsin. He grew up in Clear Lake, Wisconsin and entered the Army Air Force 13 April, 1943. Art was trained as a nose gunner on B17's. As such, he was responsible for protecting the bombers with his 50 caliber machine gun from his position in the nose of the aircraft.

Art was assigned to the 642<sup>nd</sup> Bomber Squadron, 401<sup>st</sup> Bomber Group, in the Eighth Army Air Force. The 642<sup>nd</sup> was stationed at Peterborough, England and flew bombing missions across Europe. Art flew with several different crews due to personnel shortages. He also ended up pulling double duty on many flights as the bombardier. While they were on their way to their targets or on their way back to home base Art would man his 50 caliber machine gun. When they would get over the target, as the bombardier, Art was responsible for pulling the pins to release the bombs. He flew 29 missions over Europe on missions that targeted industrial facilities in Frankfurt, Schweinfurt, Cologne, Berlin, etc...

On Art's final mission the aircraft was shot down behind enemy lines. He slid through the forward hatch and parachute to safety before the aircraft went down. Throughout his lifetime he never found out what happened to the rest of the crewmembers when the aircraft went down, so he never knew if anyone else made it

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out alive. Art landed on the French side of the Rhine River and was fortunate enough that the French Resistance helped him. Over the next couple months Art hid out in barns, cellars, haystacks on his way to Paris. When he got close to Paris he could hear the sounds of American guns firing. He heard a group of Soldiers speaking English and turned himself over to them. He was sent back to the United States to recuperate.

After recovering Art began training for assignment to the Pacific Theater but the war ended before he had to go. Art attained the rank of Staff Sergeant and received the following awards: Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters, American Theatre Ribbon, Good Conduct Ribbon, European African Middle East Theatre Ribbon with 3 Bronze Campaign Stars.

Art was discharged on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October, 1945 and took a train back to Wisconsin. He built a house Southwest of Mount Horeb and married Joan Dolohanty in May of 1951. Together they had 7 children. After Joan's passing in 1966 Art raised his children and in 1979 he married Rosemary. Art died November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014 at age 93.

**Let us Never Forget that Freedom is NOT Free**

Compiled by Jerry Hook