

Master Sergeant William McKendree Andrews

From Paul Carter in the Orange County Historical Society *Record*:¹

“MSG William McKendree Andrews, son of William Price and Anne Belle Andrews was born on 19 January 1898 in Evington, Bedford County, Virginia. He enlisted in the Army on 19 July 1918 to serve in the infantry. Since his enlistment was at the end of World War I, he only served one year and was discharged in 1919. He furthered his service in the government after his discharge and worked for the post office in Fairfax.

“His love for the military was still in his bones, and he enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1928 and served with the 25th Bomber Squadron in Panama in 1929. His devotion to duty made him a prime candidate to attend the Spartan School Aeronautics in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and he graduated on 7 March 1941 to become an aircraft mechanic.

“While he was still in school, William met Emily Jane Smith of Orange, and they were married on 5 March 1940. They had one son, William, Jr., born 11 September 1942. Today William Jr., is living in Crozet, Virginia and also has a home in Orange. Just about any Sunday you can find him playing gospel music at Dogwood Village.

“William Senior’s early years in the Army Air Corps took him to Maxwell Field, Montgomery, Alabama; Langley Field, Hampton, Virginia; MacDill Field, Tampa, Florida; Barksdale Field, Shreveport, Louisiana; and Greenville Air Base, Greenville, South Carolina. He rose through the ranks from a private at enlistment to become a master sergeant in 1942. From 1942 to 1944 he served in the Southwest Pacific with service on Iwo Jima and Hawaii.

“With 18 years of military service under his belt—service that took him halfway around the world—his life came to a tragic end on 31 March 1946. He was attending a school at Fort Knox, Kentucky and living in a private dormitory when he was found dead. His wife pressured the military for a complete explanation and the cause was noted as died from asphyxiation by gas by accident. They stated that he had been at the NCO Club the night before and apparently came back, turned on the gas stove to cook some dinner, and went to sleep. The family was never quite satisfied with this explanation since he had left for Fort Knox just a few days before with \$300 in his wallet, and when his belongings were returned to Orange, there was on \$15 in cash included. The family still believes that someone at the club that night saw how much money he had and followed

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him back to the dormitory, robbed him, and turned on the gas to hide the crime. His remains were returned to Orange and he is buried in Graham Cemetery.

“The medals awarded to William included the American Defense Service Medal with one Bronze Star, Good Conduct Medal, Asiatic Pacific Theater Medal with two Bronze Stars, and a Unit Citation. One of his good friends from Orange was Atwell Somerville who had served with him in the 90th Bombardment Group, ‘The Jolly Rogers,’ 5th Air Force, U.S. Army Air Corps. Although he officially didn’t lose his life in a war, he is declared as losing his life during wartime. President Truman did not declare “End of Hostilities” until 31 December 1946. His name is listed on the plaque as died during World War II on the Orange County Courthouse porch.

“Raising a four-year-old son was very difficult for Emily after the war, so for many years she worked in the Orange Elementary School cafeteria serving lunches for hundreds of youths. Emily passed away in 2011. Although she had remarried in 1964, Emily is buried next to her soldier husband, William, in Graham Cemetery.”