

Everybody's Grandpa

By Marvin Gough #25852

When you first suggested we put our World War II stories in writing, I never thought of being someone who had something to tell or write about, but the other night our granddaughter (second year at Friends University, Wichita, Kansas) asked, "Granddad, what did you do in World War II and where did you serve?"

We were sitting in a restaurant in Wichita at the time, and I started to relate a little about my experiences during World War II.

I told my granddaughter the story of being drafted, and after basic training, I was assigned to the base unit at Great Bend, Kansas, Air Corps Base as a mechanic on B-17s, which were used to train flight crews before they went overseas.

In November 1944, I ate Thanksgiving dinner in Kansas. After dinner, I was transferred to a B-29 group in Grand Island, Nebraska, and ate another Thanksgiving dinner up there.

It was so cold in Nebraska the winters of 1944 and 1945 we had trouble getting the engines to start. We were moved to Puerto Rico to finish training. In the spring of 1945, I was sent back to Nebraska to put the outfit together to go overseas. On our way, we crossed the International Dateline and celebrated two July 4ths, arriving on Guam on the 4th of July.

I was assigned to a B-29 named "35 or Bust," which stood for 35 bomb missions, then R and R to Australia. I was ground crew. Hopefully, the ground crew would get to go to Australia, too. A painting of a nice looking young lady





adorned the nose section of the plane. After each bomb run, another bomb symbol was added to the painting. The schedule was for our plane to go on a mission every other evening, with Japan as the target. In six weeks, until the war was over, our plane missed only one mission.

Shortly, the war was over and our planes hauled supplies to Japan for the occupation troops. Some planes were being sent back to the United States. Four B-29s were flown from Japan to Washington, D.C. I was chosen for engine and carburetor specialist for the crew to prepare the planes for General Armstrong to make the flight. The planes encountered bad weather and had to land at an alternate airport. We readied

four more planes; they made it to D.C. But one plane had enough fuel that it flew on to a base in Florida. That was the longest flight of record at that time.

While my granddaughter was still in a receptive mood, I threw in another story.

There were four guys who played old hillbilly music. When our planes were ready or on mission, we got together to entertain ourselves and sometimes others. We had a fiddle, guitar, banjo and mandolin.

On the troop ship home, two of us musicians played with a USO group to entertain a couple of evenings. Since we entertained, we didn't have to do K.P.

My granddaughter knew this, but I continued talking.

After discharge, I married a girl who played piano and guitar. We raised five boys and taught them our music.

Now, Mom and I, five boys, two daughters-in-law and five grandchildren all play whenever we have the chance.

The grandchildren are the fifth generation to play with the old family fiddle I have.

When I stopped talking, a young lady at the next table came over to our table. She thanked us for letting her listen in. She said her grandpa had died when she was small and she didn't have any grandparents to talk with. I guess I am glad she enjoyed the story, and in a way I was her grandad, too, for a little while.