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Family of WWII Veteran Dr. Everett Linn shares his recollection of service as a B-17 Bomber bombardier



In Flight School ... Former Waukon area veterinarian Dr. Everett Linn is pictured above during Flight School he attended prior to serving in the U.S. Army Air Corps during WWII as a bombardier aboard B-17 aircraft. Following his service from 1942-1945, Dr. Linn attended Iowa State University to study Veterinary Medicine and begin a career in that field that would span more than three decades, including moving to Waukon to first serve as a District Veterinarian for the State of Iowa from 1963-1965 and then continue in private practice until his retirement. Submitted photo.

Bomber jacket ... Former Waukon area veterinarian Dr. Everett Linn is pictured above wearing his Bomber jacket displaying on the back the number of missions completed while serving as a bombardier aboard his plane nicknamed "Nasty Nan." Prior to his career as a veterinarian, Dr. Linn flew 33 missions over Europe in WWII during his years of service from 1942-1945. Submitted photo.

Honoring those who have served as Veterans Day approaches

Dr. Everett Edward Linn was born January 17, 1918 on the farm of his parents, Franklin Bryce and Elizabeth (Walker) Linn, near the western Iowa community of Shelby. He graduated from Shelby High School in 1936 and attended the University of Iowa, where he studied political science for three years.

Following the outbreak of WWII, he was a 1st Lieutenant in the Army Air Corps from 1942 to 1945, serving as a bombardier on B-17 aircraft. Linn was stationed in England and flew 33 missions over Europe with the 100th Bomb Group of the 8th Air Force, flying his missions over such countries as France, Germany, Belgium, Russia, Italy, Yugoslavia, Holland and Spain.

Following the service, he attended Iowa State University, where he graduated in Veterinary Medicine in 1950 and continued his fondness for animals first acquired while growing up on his family farm. He practiced in Ackley from 1950 until 1963, when he moved to Waukon and served as District Veterinarian for the State of Iowa until 1965. He then went into private veterinary practice in the Waukon area until his retirement.

Dr. Linn married Jane Triller in Tampa, FL December 31, 1942, and they had five children, Janet, Steven, John, Mary and Lisa. Dr. Linn passed away October 26, 2002 in Waukon and his wife, Jane - who taught English, Science and Home Economics at

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Waterville and Waukon Junior High Schools, passed away October 12, 2010 in Waukon.

As part of a family publication for reunion and other purposes, Dr. Linn penned an account of some of his experience serving his country during WWII. His family shared that account in honor of Veterans Day, and it is reprinted below with permission:

I was assigned to the 100th Bomb Group - 351st Squadron. On a good day we could put up 45 planes. In early 1944 we had 10 men on a crew, but it was cut down to nine, as a waist gunner was eliminated so one man watched both waist guns.

A B-17 (bless her soul) was mounted with four turret double action 50 cal. machine guns and two flexible guns in the waist. I had two in the nose, the engineer had a top turret, as did the tail gunner. Plus the little guy in the underneath ball turret which could swing in almost any direction.

When I got to England in the summer of 1944 the German fighters were pretty well under control, but the flak got worse and worse, so it looked like you could walk over it. We had flak suits that weighed about thirty or forty pounds to put over our shoulders and cramp up around our butts when we were over the targets, but at that time they felt like summer night gowns and too small.

One time we went into Ploesti Oil Refinery and they were supposed to have 750 guns protecting that area. Most of these were 75 mm, but as the war progressed a lot of 120 mm railroad guns were backed up toward Berlin. One morning at briefing we were told that the Germans were getting so hard up for gasoline and manpower that they had to push planes to the runway to get them started and nothing but grandmothers were on the flak guns. We decided the grandmothers were a lot better shots than their grandsons!

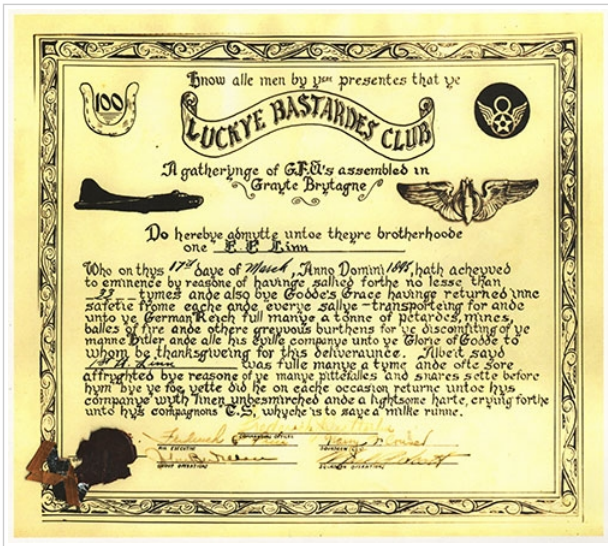
Possibly you don't know how a B-17 was run - the navigator was strictly a high altitude bookkeeper, and most were good at their jobs. The Bombardier was armament officer, in charge of all bombs and guns, also checked every five minutes to see if all were alive and well. The two pilots were usually too busy to take care of incidental things.

One time on a run over Germany we got whacked in the hind end and I called all the crew, but the tail gunner could just push his button and go 'eech, eech'. I called the waist gunner and told him he just as well go back and pull him out. A couple of minutes later they were both laughing on the intercom. He had taken a hit with flak inside his suit over the back that had knocked out his wind, tore his shirt and longjohns and got nothing but a red mark on his back. No Purple Heart and he had to pay for a new shirt!

Speaking of medals - we used to have the wing tanks topped off after the early morning warm-up, and 90% of the time we took off



Lucky, indeed ... The image at left is of a certificate received by former Waukon area veterinarian Dr. Everett Linn documenting his inclusion in the "Lucky Bastard Club," which is described as an informal group of WWII bombers who completed a tour of duty - considered to be 25-30 missions during the WWII era. "The Dispatch," the official magazine of the Commemorative Air Force, reported that the life expectancy of a WWII bomber crew member averaged 15 missions, with more than 40,000 airmen having lost their lives during WWII. Dr. Linn was credited with completing 33 missions over Europe during his service from 1942-1945. Submitted image.



full throttle with brakes on, then brakes off
and full throttle as we went down the runway.
Excess gas would be streaming down the
wings over the exhaust, but all you could do
was get a little altitude and go back to land,
which we never did. One time we had a
General from London with us and I see in the
Stars and Stripes that he got a medal for
bravery for flying on such a mission!

Actually, a day with the 8th Air Force started
about 3:30 a.m. A kindly sergeant would
shake you awake and say this was your day.
We then went to pre-dressed, went out to the
line - checked all guns, ammo, etc. - and
waited for the call. In the month of January I
got up 23 times, but was credited with three
missions. Usually you would go back to the
sack around 10 a.m. and be too tired to take
off your longjohns.

I suppose I should explain how we got into

formation. We took off every 60 seconds, whether you could see or not. We started as early as 6 a.m. in the dark. We had a 7,000-foot runway with lights at the other end. Anybody who didn't get in the air by that time got bulldozed out of the way later that afternoon.

After getting out of the ground traffic each group had identification flare guns - red-red, green-green, etc., so you would swoop around in the dark trying to get into your group. There were radio beams so you couldn't get too far out of the pattern. This would take until 9:30 or 10 to get the show on the road. At that time you'd "luck it in" in close formation and you could just about walk wing to wing across the whole bunch.

One time we flew almost to the coast of Norway in intermittent clouds. A guy ahead of us - no doubt new - throttled back in the fog. It was a disconcerting situation, to say the least. As a matter of fact, some curse words were exchanged. Some General in England got word of our difficulties and scrubbed the mission. We turned back into the crap and headed home, but didn't get credit for the mission, as we were not over the continent.

In early training I spent six weeks in gunnery school in Las Vegas, and lucked out as sixth in the class. We had to learn how to operate and fire all guns, from a BB gun on up. We could assemble the 50 cal. Browning blindfolded, etc. When I was in England a ball turret operator did at least six things wrong. He started taking the barrels out with the switch on, and then let it fire with the link open. Can you guess what would happen with a swivel gun at the three-foot level with 200 rounds to expand? It destroyed three planes and everybody grabbed the closest nurse or Red Cross to save them.

We had a coal burner in the barracks, but had a genius who converted it to old oil. One night we ran out of oil, so requisitioned a Jeep and went to the line to get some more. We didn't know until we got back the 50-gallon drum was new oil - it worked just as well.

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