

First Lieutenant Kenneth Larsen served in the United States Army Air Corps from 1942 to 1945. Upon completion of flight training at Army Air Corps Pilot Schools in San Antonio, Garner Field - Uvalde, Texas, Blackland Army Air Field- Waco, Texas, Dodge City Army Air Forces Pilot School- Dodge City, Kansas and Barksdale Air Force Base- Shreveport, Louisiana he was assigned to The 573rd Bombardment Squadron (Medium) of the 391st Bombardment Group of the 9th Air Force.

Lieutenant Larsen piloted primarily the Martin B-26 Marauder. The Marauder was believed to be the most controversial combat aircraft in WWII because of its high-accident rate. The B-26 had a high landing speed of 130 mph, which demanded a higher standard of training from its pilots than similar bombers. The B-26 could carry two 2000-LB bombs in the main bomb bay, but up to 4800 pounds of smaller bombs could be carried if the rear bay was used as well.

His first mission was on November 28, 1944 flying from Roye-Amy, France targeted a railroad bridge on the Rhine river south of Cologne, Germany. Weather conditions grounded many subsequent missions allowing him to complete 5 missions before the start of the pivotal "Battle of the Bulge". He contributed vital assistance to the ground forces during the Battle of the Bulge by attacking heavily defended positions such as bridges, railroad lines and viaducts. On Christmas Day 1944 he flew 2 bombing missions against a heavily defended German position at Bitburg targeting the German front-line supply system and a bridge fortification near the German city of Tabin in a single day.

The missions from December 23-26 1944 were often flown without fighter escorts and in the face of heavy and accurate antiaircraft fire, and overwhelming attacks from German fighters. During that time period his unit – the 391st Bomb Group dealt fierce blows at other strategic enemy targets that provided vital assistance to the ground forces at a most critical time.

Due to their exploits from the 23rd to 26th December 1944 the 391st Bomb Group was awarded on February 24, 1945 a Presidential Distinguished Unit Citation. That citation read in part:

"The inexorable determination, outstanding skill, and unhesitating courage of the officers and men of the 391st Bombardment Group (M) in so brilliantly carrying the attack of the enemy, are in keeping with the highest traditions of the Army Air Forces."

From January to May 1945, and using the A-26 Bomber beginning in April of 1945 the 391st Bomb Group concentrated its attacks on the German transportation and communications system. Kenneth's 36th and last mission of the war was on April 26, 1945 against a German airfield in Platting, Germany.

He left the service of the Army Air Corps in October 1945 having been awarded the Air Medal with a silver oak leaf cluster and The European/African/Middle Eastern

Campaign Medal with 3 Bronze Battle Stars signifying his participation in the Allied campaigns in Rhineland, Ardennes-Alsace, and Central Europe.

The following citation is quoted from General Order 12, dated 24 February 1945:

The 391st Bombardment Group (M) is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action, against the enemy from 23 to 26 December 1944. On the morning of 23 December 1944, 30 aircraft of the 391st Bombardment Group(M) were dispatched in an attack upon a railroad viaduct at Ahweiler, Germany. Despite the fact that fighter escort was lacking, and both the Pathfinder aircraft were forced out of the formation by intense, heavy, and accurate antiaircraft fire, the formation gallantly continued to the target. Approximately 60 enemy fighters intercepted the second box of the formation during the bombing run. A violent and bitter aerial battle ensued and, ignoring the continuous enemy attacks, the second box bombed the objective with devastating effect. Enemy aircraft now swarmed about the two boxes, attacking from the rear in waves 4 deep and 15 abreast, while the combat crews of the 391st Bombardment Group (M) fought magnificently despite the overwhelming odds. Men who were wounded remained at their posts and continued firing, and the aircraft shot out of the sky went down with their guns still blazing at the enemy. In this heroic action the enemy lost 16 aircraft, and 3 probably destroyed, and 16 so badly damaged that they were driven from the conflict.

That afternoon, despite losses sustained earlier in the day, the 391st Bombardment Group (M) displayed outstanding aggressiveness by preparing in record time an attack upon the heavily defended village of Neuerburg. Twenty one aircraft were dispatched and attacked the target with outstanding results. Maintenance personnel worked feverishly and with untiring zeal. On the following day the 391st Bombardment Group (M) attacked with 39 aircraft the railroad bridge at Kons Karthaus, Germany. Despite intense, heavy flak, the bridge was destroyed. During the following 3 days, the group dealt fierce blows at other strategic enemy bridges, contributing vital assistance to the ground forces at a most critical time.

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