



San Diego Chapter 1 Member Biography

Bill Brooks

I was born in Lovell, Maine, May 9th 1921.

I enlisted to serve in the Army Air Corps, January 1942. I was trained as a navigator and commissioned as Second Lieutenant on December 17th 1942.

My first assignment was in the 572^{od} Bomb Squadron, 391st Bomb Group flying Martin B-26 "Marauder" in January 1943.

After flying a full year in the USA, we flew the southern route (South America, Africa, Morocco) to England, I flew 54 combat missions against German forces in France, Belgium and Holland, including the invasion of France on D-Day, June 6th 1944 (from February to August 8th 1944) when I and my lead crew were shot down.



Consequently, I pulled the rip cord on my one and only (chest pack) parachute but, unfortunately, the chute was not released!!

Instantly I clawed the flap over the release pins and the chute "blossomed"! My spinal column was fractured on hitting the ground, which immobilized me and I was captured by three German soldiers.

Following my capture, I spent 9 months in captivity and was liberated on April 29th 1945.

After the war was over, I spent 14 years in the Strategic Air Command, flying B-29, B-50, and B-47 aircraft, always in medium bombers!

Then, I retired from active duty October 1962 as a Lt-Colonel, Master Navigator. The 13 decorations which I have received include: Distinguished Flying Cross, Purple Heart Medal, Air Medal with 10 oak leaf clusters, Prisoner of War Medal, American Defense Medal, European Theater of Operations Medal, World War II Victory Medal, and the highest award given by the French Government, the Legion of Honor Medal.