



San Diego Chapter 1 Member Biography

Bill Milton

Born in Buffalo, New York on 5-13-23. Moved to San Diego, CA in 1935 when father transferred with Consolidated Aircraft.

Graduated from La Jolla High School in 1940. Worked at Consolidated Aircraft for several years. Joined the Army Air Corps in late 1942. Called to service in February 1943.

Basic training at BTC No. 8 in Fresno, CA. College Training Detachment at Washington State College in Pullman, WA. Pre-flight training at Santa Ana Army Air Base in Costa Mesa, CA where

I was selected for pilot training. Primary flight training in the Ryan PT-22 airplane at King City, CA. Basic flight training in AT-6's at Marana, AZ (some BT-13 training under the hood). Advanced flight training in AT-6's, AT-9's and then the RP-322 (early version of the P-38) at Williams Field, Chandler, AZ.

After getting my wings as a new second lieutenant in March 1944, I had operational training in P-39's at Ephrata, WA and transitional training in P-38's at Van Nuys, CA. On a formation training flight above the San Gabriel Valley, the turbo regulator on one engine



went out. The engine blew up resulting in fire which I could not put out. I bailed out and the airplane crashed in the hills above Santa Anita.

Transferred overseas to the 37th Fighter Squadron of the 14th Fighter Group in the 15th Air Force operating out of the Foggia/San Severo area near the spur in the boot of Italy.

Primary mission was escorting heavy bombers into Germany, Austria, etc at high altitudes. Some missions lasted 6 hours. Very cold and no heating system. We did fly some ground support missions and in October 1944, we attacked two German airfields in Salonika (Saloniki), Greece.

I was shot down along with 6 other P-38 pilots on my 11th mission and became a guest of the 3rd Reich.

Transported by truck convoy, JU-52 tri-motor airplane, passenger train, and finally 40'x8' cattle cars through Yugoslavia, Hungary and Austria into Germany to an interrogation center in Wetzlar(?) and then on to Stalag Luft III in Sagan, Germany southeast of Berlin sometime in early November 1944.

In late January 1945, the Russians were coming, so we were marched out of Luft III for a six day hike to Spremberg and loaded onto 40'x8's for a multi-day trip to Stalag 7A in Moosburg, north of Munich, where we lived in squalid conditions with much ill health until liberated by General Patton's 3rd Army on 4-29-45.

We were transported by truck to Landshut, Germany and then by air to Rheims, France for debriefing after which we got on a ship at La Havre, France and headed back to the good old USA.

While sitting on the airfield in Landshut, a JU-87 dive bomber came in attempting to surrender. He was fired upon the entire time he circled the field and successfully landed. Three people were on board and no one was touched.



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Another story of interest - I trained with a fellow named Martin Monti. I lost track of him, but he evidently made it overseas about the same time I did. At some point, he flew a P-38 into Germany, surrendered and became a radio propagandist (Martin Weithaupt) and a member of the S.S. Elite Guard. After Germany's surrender, he was caught and sentenced to 25 years in prison.

After the war, I did my pre-engineering studies at San Diego State College and obtained an engineering degree at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington. I went to work at Lockheed Aircraft Corporation in Burbank, CA in 1952. Later transferred to Lockheed Missiles and Space Company in Sunnyvale, CA where I retired in 1980.

I was involved in many interesting classified and unclassified programs, including the Hubble Space Telescope.

Doll and I married in 1955 and have spent 58 wonderful years together. In addition to my work at Lockheed, Doll and I dabbled in real estate sales and investments.

Our son, Mike, lives in New York City and has been in the

entertainment business for many years.