

Albert A. Kennedy Sr.

Albert A. Kennedy Sr., Hopwood, Pennsylvania a retired USAF Lt. Col., World War II veteran bomber pilot, retired college professor, researcher, business man, and, above all, consummate and loving family man, died at his home Saturday, June 25, 2016, surrounded by family. He was 95.

The youngest of six children, Mr. Kennedy was born to Frank Sr. and Ida M. (McLaughlin) Kennedy, at their North Union Township home on Christmas Day, December 25, 1920.

He attended North Union Township schools and after graduating high school in 1938, he enrolled at West Virginia University, Morgantown, where he eventually earned a bachelor's degree.

With the advent of World War II, he enlisted in the United States Army Air Corps in 1942 and underwent flight training at Lackland Field (now Lackland AFB), San Antonio. After completing his training as a mid-to-low-level bomber pilot, he was assigned to the 71st Squadron, nicknamed the 'Wolf Pack,' of the 38th Bombardment Group, 5th Air Force.

In October 1943, while still in flight school, he met Ann Geraldine 'Jerry' Byer, of San Antonio. They were married on Tuesday, May 23, 1944.

A few months later, the 71st Squadron shipped off to the Philippines, where then 1st Lt. Kennedy flew bombing missions until the war's end on Sunday, September 2, 1945. After Japan's surrender, he served as a B-25 flight instructor and flew cargo or relief missions that included ferrying American POWs back to freedom.

In one case, he and another pilot, whom he had not met, and years later whose name he could not remember, were assigned to fly a group of former American POWs from Yontan Airfield, Okinawa to Manila, Philippines, where the former prisoners would catch commercial flights home. The two pilots were assigned a B-24 four-engine aircraft. In contrast, the B-25 was a twin-engine craft. It was customary for instructor pilots of a specific aircraft to offer a newcomer the courtesy of taking a plane out. When the two men met, the other pilot offered the 'left seat,' that is, the pilot's seat, to 1st Lt. Kennedy. Never having flown a B-24, 1st Lt. Kennedy, thinking the other man was a B-24 flight instructor, eagerly accepted the offer, taxied the craft to the runway and took off. During mid-flight conversation en route to picking up the former POWs, the other pilot casually turned to 1st Lt. Kennedy and asked, 'So how many hours do you have in the B-24?'

'None,' 1st Lt. Kennedy said.

'You?' 'None,' replied the startled pilot.

Regulations required the two pilots to cancel the flight once they landed and wait for a qualified B-24 pilot.

However, both men, not wanting to force the former POWs to wait any longer to get home, remained silent when they landed at Okinawa. They boarded the former prisoners, took off from Okinawa and delivered them to Manila in time to catch their flights home.

That story, two more of Mr. Kennedy's personal stories, and the personal stories of numerous members of the 38th Bombardment Group (m), are featured in a history book titled, 'Sun Setters of the Southwest Pacific Area: From Australia to Japan - An Illustrated History of the 38th Bombardment Group (m), 5th Air Force, World War II - 1940-46.'

Following World War II, 1st Lt. Kennedy became Mr. Kennedy as he returned to civilian life. However, he enrolled in the USAF Reserves.

With the threat and subsequent outbreak of the Korean War, Mr. Kennedy returned to active duty in 1950

and was stationed again at Lackland where he ascended to the rank of Captain and served as a flight instructor of jet aircraft until war's end.

From 1956-60, he and his family were stationed at Evreux Air Force Base France, just northwest of Paris. While there he was among the first group of pilots to ferry the C-130 cargo aircraft from the United States into France, thus introducing the craft to Europe. In addition, he flew the C-130 on cargo and other non-combat missions throughout Europe, Turkey, the Middle East, the Pacific Rim, including Vietnam, and Africa.

According to his wife Jerry, his flights into Turkey were secret missions involving the retrieval of American U-2 spy planes.

Years after his retirement, when asked about those flights, Mr. Kennedy replied with a wry smile, 'I don't know what you're talking about.'

After he and his family returned stateside, he was stationed first at Lackland, then Kelly, later Randolph, then back to Lackland Air Force Bases, all in San Antonio, between 1960-1968. During that time he was promoted to Major.

While stationed at all three bases, and in addition to his duties as a pilot, Mr. Kennedy, having earned his master's degree in psychology from the University of Texas, Austin, was assigned to the Air Force's Pathfinder Group - a panel of 12 officers whose task was to develop selection, placement and career aptitude testing to be administered to Air Force recruits. The group's research - the first of its kind for the Air Force - proved successful and the Air Force now uses newer generations of those tests. On Monday, January 1, 1968, after 22 years of service, Mr. Kennedy retired as a Lieutenant Colonel, and moved his family from San Antonio to Uniontown, Pa., where he accepted an administrative position at Penn State's Fayette Campus.

At the end of the 1968-69 academic year, he left Fayette Campus to teach psychology at the Community College of Allegheny County's Boyce Campus, Monroeville, Pa. After 26 years of teaching, he retired in 1995, a tenured professor.

Never idle, Mr. Kennedy, during his time with CCAC, parlayed his education and military experience into developing Industrial Research Associates - an apprentice selection testing service he provided to numerous construction trade unions across Pennsylvania, New York, Michigan, Wisconsin and Ohio.

But of all his accomplishments, Mr. Kennedy loved and cherished none more than his family, which, according to all his children, he always put first. That love was returned, too. The evidence rested in his final moments - his wife and the children who could be with him, were.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by a son, Joseph Ralph Kennedy, who survived only one hour after his birth in 1964; a grandson, Eric Michael Kennedy, in 2010; three brothers, Frank Kennedy Jr., Paul Kennedy and Walter Kennedy; and two sisters, Mary Kennedy and Amy Kennedy.

In addition to Jerry (Byer) Kennedy of Hopwood, his wife of 72 years, Mr. Kennedy is survived by seven children: Albert A. Kennedy Jr. of Katy, Texas, Howard C. 'Chris' Kennedy of Hopwood, Pa., Stephen P. 'Pat' Kennedy of Kansas City, Missouri, Michael D. Kennedy of Chadron, Nebraska, Lisa A. (Kennedy) Gearing of Uniontown, Pa., Scott F. Kennedy of Pittsburgh, Pa., and Kimberly M. (Kennedy) Lux of Harrisburg, Pa.; 25 grandchildren and 33 great-grandchildren; nieces and nephews.

Friends will be received in the THOMAS M. DOLFI FUNERAL HOME, 136 North Gallatin Avenue, Uniontown, Pa., today, Thursday, June 30 2016 from 10:30 until 11:00 a.m. at which time a Service will be held.

Interment will follow in Sylvan Heights Cemetery, Uniontown, where Military Rites and Honors will be accorded.

Donations may be made to the Fayette County Community Action Food Bank, 108 North Beeson Boulevard, Uniontown, PA 15401 in memory of Albert.

Visitation was also held Tuesday, June 28, 2016 from 6 to 8 p.m. and on Wednesday, June 29, 2016 from 2 to 4 p.m. and 6 to 8 p.m.