

LT. COL. ROY B. PRATT, SR. – Pilot
9th AIR FORCE, 453rd BOMB SQUADRON, 323rd BOMB GROUP

It is with great sadness that we share news of the passing of Lt. Col. Roy B. Pratt, Sr. at the age of 91 in Conneaut, Ohio on Thanksgiving Day, November 24, 2011. Surviving is his wife Bertha Pratt, three of his four children, 7 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren.

Roy enlisted in the Army Air Corps as a young, 20-year old Flying Cadet in November 1940 and separated from the service in April 1946. He completed basic and advanced flight training in Texas at Randolph Field and Brooks Field respectively. During the war, as part of the 9th Air Force in the European Theater, he piloted the B-26 Marauder, (his plane was named Miss Fortune). He flew 52 missions over enemy territory as a Group and Wing Leader, becoming proficient in leading formations as large as 108 ships. He was Squadron Commander of the Medium Bomb Squadron during part of his overseas posting at Earls Colne air base in England, between April 1943 and August 1944.

His official records show that he held the following positions: Pilot, Flight Commander, Squadron Commander, Group Air Executive, Director of Operations and Training, Deputy Base Commander and Base Commander.

Among the medals listed on his Certificate of Service is the Distinguished Flying Cross. We hope that he was as proud of that medal and his courageous service as his family was and is of him. He rarely spoke of his military service unless asked, but his memory for names, faces, dates and events remained crystal clear until his death. He especially loved attending Squadron reunions over the years. His fondness and respect for the men with whom he flew was enormous ... Kenny Class, Cas Sochocki, Dick (Itty Bitty) Baker, Jack Kelsey, Bill Timmons, to name just a few. We believe the admiration was mutual. Son Roy Jr. and his wife Dixie attended the 1995 Squadron Reunion in Norfolk, VA., which, we believe, was the last reunion Roy Sr. attended.

During the war, two sons were born to Roy, Roy B. Pratt, Jr. born in 1943 and Walter John Pratt, born in 1945. Both served their country, Roy in the U.S. Army with postings in South Korea and Germany in the 1960s; Walter (now deceased) was career Navy and retired as a Commander from the Naval Surface Force in 1988. After the war, two daughters arrived, Robin Lindsey in 1946 and Rebecca Susan in 1949. He was equally proud of them for their character and accomplishments. What gave him special joy over the years was the fact that his children actually LIKE each other! and look forward to spending time together as adults.

Upon separation from the service in 1946, Roy returned home to Conneaut, Ohio to help raise his growing family. He owned and ran a successful dry cleaning business. He was a member of the Air Force Reserves for a number of years during which he transitioned from propellers to jets, learning to fly the T33. He was an active member and past Commander of the American Legion Cowle Post #151 and continued to fly recreational aircraft for many years. Eight members of Cowle Post #151 comprised the Honor Guard at Roy's funeral on November 28, 2011 as he was laid to rest. It was a profoundly moving and well-deserved tribute.

We regret that this communication does not capture the full measure of the man we knew as father, husband, grandfather and great-grandfather and his long life lived after completing official service to his country. His life, as he lived it, was a credit to his family, his community and his country. He will be sorely missed.