

John Bonura was born the middle son of three boys in New Orleans, Louisiana on March 13, 1921 to Anna Bahle and Joseph Henry Bonura. He enlisted on January 13, 1942 in New Orleans, Louisiana on Camp Street.

He was assigned to Headquarters of the 416 Bomb Group (L) in Lake Charles, Louisiana in August 1943. "In anticipation of departure for Europe, we were confined to Laurel Air Force Base around Christmas of 1943. We then went by troop train from Laurel to New York. "We stayed in New York a few days waiting for the ship. Around the beginning of January, 1944, the ship departed for Glasgow, Scotland."

Mr. Bonura traveled to Europe on a luxury liner, SS Columbe, converted into a troop ship from a converted French passenger liner. "The story was that the government had commandeered the ship and it was the ship's first trip abroad." Lt Bonura remembers walking up the plank to board the ship. At sea, the ships were dispersed so that they would not be an easy target for the Nazis. SS Columbe was one of 150 ships in the convoy. It traveled on the outside rear of the convoy. Mr. Bonura recalls being able to see four or so other ships maybe a half mile or so away. He also remembers someone mentioning that the Queen Mary had passed their ship during the night. On the ship there were two officers to a room. Lt Bonura shared his cabin on ship, with 2nd Lieutenant Harold Suttner from Pittsburgh, a theology student. Enlisted men were in crowded quarters and slept in bunks 3 or 4 high. Some enlisted men were in the ship's bow and got sea sick in rough seas. Mr. Bonura remembers the officers having two meals a day in a beautiful dining room with waiters in uniform serving their meal. The enlisted men had chow lines. "We had daily gunnery practice. We were aboard the ship approximately eleven days and landed on Jan. 29th."

All of the officers had a revolver in a holster assigned to them. Paperwork shows that it was an automatic pistol, 45 caliber with mag. assy. with leather holster.

The 416BG CO was Colonel Harold Mace who later became a Brigadier General and transferred to the 97th Wing. Either Lieutenant Colonel Ford or Lieutenant Colonel Aylesworth succeeded Mace as CO.

Mr. Bonura lived in nissen huts in Wethersfield (right outside of Braintree, England). They crossed the channel to France where they moved often and had to have an airfield. They usually had a village nearby where they would find a room. Almost at the end of the war, they lived in Chateau de Cormier-en-vexin north west of Paris, France and just to the south of the point where the rue Guynemer and the rue Jean-Jaures converge, near the air strip used by the 416th BG. They used the building as their headquarters and as living quarters for the officers. Glider pilots prepared for the invasion into Germany at the air base near Chateau de Cormier-en-vexin.

His roommates were Francis Cachat/Cachet, the photographic officer assigned to headquarters with Bill Moffett, Doc Laufer, Harry Suttner, William Castle, and Clayton Zesiger.

Mr. Bonura's primary duty was Statistical Control where he was responsible for submitting all reports. In addition, he was responsible for other duties as delegated by the commanding officer, some of which were assistant trial judge advocate for special court martial. A man would have only been given death for a very serious crime, such as murder. At one air base in France a GI in the 416th was accused of selling tires to the French. Individuals were sentenced on a case by case basis. Such cases are posted on the service record and would impact future promotions.

As Payroll Officer, Mr. Bonura tells us that the GI's were always paid in cash. The money came from the finance department of the military. Each squadron and each group took care of the distribution of monthly salaries. Family allotments from the monthly salary were determined by the individual and a government check was sent directly to the family. The men always signed their name after receiving their pay. When moving to a different country, if the GI's had money left over from the previous country, the military exchanged the money for the current notes.

Another of Mr. Bonura's jobs was PX (post exchange) officer. Ration booklets were used by civilians in the United States. Soldiers were given rations (necessities such as soap, toothpaste, etc.) and used cash to pay for the theatre, restaurant, beer parlor, etc. Enlisted men were supplied with uniforms and shoes. Officers were provided with a one-time stipend to purchase their uniform.

Each squadron had mail call and headquarters had their own distribution center.

After the war, the 416th BG returned to the United States from Marseilles, France. on the Blue Island Victory in November, 1945. Mr. Bonura remembers passing a huge rock and was told it was the Rock of Gibraltar. Mr. Bonura shared his cabin coming home with Captain Dr Laufer, a dentist from New Orleans.

Mr Bonura owned and operated a wholesale and retail meat market in the Lebreton Public Market on Bayou Road and Dourgenois Street in New Orleans, Louisiana.



John Melvin Bonura

March 13, 1921 - August 9, 2014

Obituary

John Melvin Bonura, Sr. passed away on Saturday, August 9, 2014, at the age of 93.

John is survived by his children Gail B. King (Bruce) and Joanne B. Domilise (Kenny); eleven grandchildren: Al, Shelley, Nicole, Natasha, Corey, Kenneth, Jamie, John III, JoJo, Lisa and Carla; twenty-one great-grandchildren; seven great-great grandchildren; brother Joseph Henry Bonura, Jr.; sister-in-law Pamela R. Bonura, as well as many nieces and nephews.

John is preceded in death by his wife of 62 years Dolly Bernissant Bonura; son John Bonura, Jr.; parents Anna Barbara Bahle Bonura and Joseph Henry Bonura, Sr.; brother Henry Felix Bonura.

John graduated from St. Aloysius in 1937. He served in the Army Air Corp during WWII as a Captain. John was a longtime parishioner of St. Pius X and currently a parishioner of St. Catherine of Siena. He was a custom home



builder throughout the New Orleans area. His greatest joy was spending time with his family, specifically his daughters. John was a devoted husband and loving father and will be deeply missed.