

Memories of Joseph Charles Crispino

1Lt Joseph Charles Crispino, O-799946

Joseph Charles was born on Feb. 23, 1920 in the tiny village of Painted Post, NY, west of the city of Corning, the second son to Peter and Mary Faulisi Crispino. Two sisters followed for a total of four children in the Crispino family.



With his high school years behind him, Joseph "Joe" was tested by the Army and was assigned to flight school. After training to fly A-20 Havoc Aircraft, 2Lt Joseph C. Crispino joined the 670 Bomb Squadron as a pilot on September 24, 1943.

Two months later on November 6, 1943, five pilots, one bombardier-navigator, six gunners, one radio operator and one mechanic from the 670 Bomb Squadron left Laurel, Mississippi as part of a group of 18 A-20's to participate in a two-week demonstration tour. The 670 BS participants were Capt Finley MacGillivray, Lt William Greene, Lt Joseph Crispino, Lt John Hillerman, Lt Robert Gruetzemacher, Lt Vernon Powell, SSgt Wilmar Kidd, SSgt Royden Conopask, SSgt Robert Riley, SSgt William Donahue, SSgt Ralph Stobert, Sgt F. P. Glynn, Sgt James Bodiford, and SSgt Robert J. Snyder. The tour covered various Army camps, including Ft Benning, Ft Sill, Ft Riley and Camp Hood.

The crew of Pilot 1Lt Joseph C. Crispino, Gunner SSgt Thomas I. Walsh and Gunner SSgt Royden E. Conopask flew a total of 17 missions together in various A-20s.

Until May 19, 1944, they had managed to avoid flak, thick black gun powder walls around targets and Germany fighter planes. Mission #49 would be their last as a team. It was the 18th mission for Lt. Crispino. The bombing destination was the coastal installations at Benerville, France. The 416th Bomb Group had sent thirty-eight bombers to destroy the defense battery. All bombs were released with fair results. 43-9696 took her place in formation and headed back to the base through a thick overcast. Suddenly Lt Joseph Crispino's ship went into a spin and spun out of control. He could not save the plane and ordered his two gunners, SSgt Thomas I. Walsh and SSgt Royden E. Conopask to bail out.

Then Lt Crispino jumped, his body was thrown against the plane's tail assembly fracturing his leg. He parachuted to earth hoping to land on his uninjured leg. The gunners never got out of the aircraft and were killed when the plane crashed near Biggen Hill, England.

Lt Crispino fell into friendly hands and was taken to a local hospital. To convalesce and allow ample time from his broken leg to heal, he was transferred to an Evacuation Hospital.

The following was taken from the 670 Bomb Squadron record: "Sadness descended upon the organization on May 19th, when after 369 sorties without loss the squadron was deprived of two of its best known and best liked members. SSgt Royden E. Cocopask, of Bristol, Connecticut and SSgt Thomas I. Walsh of Chicago, Illinois, two veteran gunners were killed in action returning from a raid on the Bennerville Costal Defense Batteries. The ship, piloted by Lt. Crispino, went into a spin at 5,000 feet over Biggenhill, England. Lt. Crispino was able to bail out and parachute to safety. He was injured in the decent and hospitalized. However, SSgt Conopask and SSgt Walsh were unable to get out the aircraft and met death with its crash. The loss of these two men was keenly felt by the organization. They had been among the first gunners assigned to the squadron after its activation."

The remains of the two gunners were interred at the Cambridge American Military Cemetery, Cambridge.

After being hospitalized on May 19, 1944, when he bailed out of his aircraft returning from a mission, Lt Crispino was reassigned and welcomed back to the squadron in September 1944, after months of being absent.

On May 25th, 1944 Lt Crispino was awarded the Purple Heart for the injuries sustained on the 19th.

Lieutenant Crispino departed from the squadron on November 25th, 1944. He was transferred to the 63rd Fighter Wing.

He and Mary Beth Cooper, a girl he met while training as a pilot in the state of Oklahoma, had corresponded regularly during his tour of duty in Europe. They were married in Oklahoma City November 29, 1945.

After the service, Mr Crispino graduated from Alfred University with an engineering degree and took employment with the Corning Company. He retired from Corning as a Senior Sales Associate in Scientific Glassware after 43 years of employment in 1980.

Mr Crispino passed away on August 5, 2007, leaving children Cheryl, Peter, Mary Lynne and Anne and several grandchildren and great grandchildren. Mary Beth, his life's co-pilot, would be forced to continue on without him. Thank you Mr. Crispino for your love of country and your service to it.