

*Lt. Dan Eastman Memories (contributed by Marjorie Cortez)*

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Lt Dan Eastman, 671st Pilot

Dan Eastman was born on Christmas Day, 1920. Mr. Eastman is not just an old guy who walks the halls at the rest home, he is a WWII Hero and we honor his contribution to our freedom.

Mr. Eastman grew up in Tooele, Utah. Initially he worked as a purchasing and contracting clerk at the airfield in Wendover. All that came to an end after completing the mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in the fall of 1941.

Shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941 for love of country he enlisted in the military. No one had to explain to him how lucky he was to live in the United States and how important her freedom was.

"I didn't know if I wanted to be in the Army, the Air Force, or the Navy," said Eastman, so he "put in" for all of them.

Lt. Eastman gained entry into the 9th Army as a pilot and was stationed in Wendover and California while he trained to become a pilot in A-20s. He flew both A-20 and A-26 bombers, including missions on D-Day that knocked out bridges, German Torpedo boats and supply lines. After serving in another Bomb Group, he and his crew, Cpl. A.B. Eaton and and Cpl. R.J. Johnson were assigned to the 416th Bomb Group, 671st Squadron in the early part of August, 1944. (671st Bomb Squadron History)

Their first bombing mission on 1944-08-25 in an A-20 43-9956.

Lt. Eastman's last mission combat mission to take out a bridge in France with SSgt Robert J. Johnson as gunner. Six planes from the 671st Bomb Group went out that day. One, his, came back.

"Gunnery were shooting at us," he said. "So I turned, best turn I ever made because my plane, the nose of it, was headed straight into the Seine River crossing."

"You blew up the bridge?"

"I blew up the bridge."

Without a navigator, he was able to find his way back to familiar territory in England, and land his plane.

Calm and cool in the cockpit, he was shaking at the end of the flight. It would be his last combat mission.

His last mission # 229, to Lippe, Germany Landing Grounds was on Sunday March, 3 1945 in an A-26, 43-22419 with SSgt Robert J. Johnson as gunner. Solid cloud cover made it necessary to attack with PPF (Path Finder) equipment. 268, 500 pound demolition bombs were dropped. Capt Stebbins, Lts Calloway and McQuade, B&N, and Capt Rooney, Lts Kerns and Muir, B&N, were box leaders.

"I'm just one of the many who accomplished the things that are almost impossible." Eastman has honored his friends who died on his final bombing run his entire retirement from the Army Air Corps.

Upon honorable discharge he joined the U.S. Air Force Reserve and also the Utah National Guard.

After the service, he married Lavelle Mortensen. They had met when she sold him a movie ticket at the Ritz Theater on Main Street in Tooele. He and Lavelle moved to San Francisco, where he studied mortuary science. The union blessed them with four children, Alan, Julie, Scott and Kelly.

He returned to Utah with designs on attending medical school, but he had to scrub those plans after his son, Alan, contracted polio.

The couple later divorced.

After shelving his medical school plans, Eastman returned to working as a funeral service director. He conducted his last funeral service in 2006, Alan Eastman said. The elder Eastman said although funeral homes are private businesses, he viewed handling people's funeral arrangements as a form of service, too.

"The reason I'm so proud of that part of my life is I went from serving some of the people to serving a lot of people," he said. "The funeral service business is a great gift to our country, not because of me particularly, but all the funeral directors I know spend all of their time helping other people."

He remarried. His second wife died a few years ago.

He has macular degeneration and he is legally blind. His participation in a trial at the University of Utah's Moran Eye Center gave him some hope, but unfortunately it was too late for him," said his son.

For his 90th birthday, his children throw him a nice birthday party. It was only the second birthday party of his entire life.

At 96, Mr. Eastman, a resident of Olympus Ranch Retirement Community, still dances the jitterbug, tells a good joke and maintains a 180 average in a Wii bowling league.

*[Article by Marjorie Cortez, Deseret News Utah](#)*