

*Memories of Michael Zubon*

## Colonel Michael Zubon

*Photos courtesy of Astrid van Erp*

Michael Zubon was born March 21, 1918 to William and Mary Zubon, and was the youngest of six children.

A local Congressman recognized his academic ability and his desire to serve his country and recommended that he be able to attend West Point US Military academy in 1940, after high school graduation.

After 4 years of study he proudly graduated in June of 1943 with his family and his soon-to-be wife in attendance. According to the 1943 West Point year book - "Mike (Congressional, 36th, N.Y.) came to West point without any special interest in military life but with inherent qualities of leadership that have made him outstanding. His wide grin and ready wit have endeared him to everyone. Always a conscientious worker, Mike's departure will be a great gain for his two loves-a little Irish girl and the driver's seat of a Flying Fortress."

Michael married Kathleen Angela shortly after graduation. His next assignment was to the 337 BFTS for pilot training as First Lieutenant in United States Army Air Forces, (Air Corps). When he got his wings, he was assigned to the 416 Bomb Group, 671 Bomb Squadron as Pilot of an A-20 Bomber.

A little over a year after his West Point graduation, Kathleen gave birth on Aug 13, 1944 to her first child Michael John Zubon. Four days later, after his sons birth, on August 17, Lt Zubon was behind the throttle of an A-20, 43-10165 for Mission #128, bombing the Montfort Sur Risle Bridge. He was short on missions and would not get to see his son for six months.

Lt Zubon served his country well and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight while serving with the 671st Bombardment Squadron. "The skillful and zealous manner in which he sought out the enemy and destroyed him, his devotion to duty and courage under all conditions serve as an inspiration to his fellow flyers. His actions on all these occasions reflect the highest credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of the United States."

March 7, 1944, Lt. Zubon, piloting an A-20, 43-9207, of the 670 Bomb Squadron had engine trouble on the way back and landed at Hawkinge on the English coast where necessary repairs were made. The rest of the ships returned to the base without casualties.

He flew a total of 67 missions in the 416th Bomb Group. His regular crew, SSgt William C. Russell and Jean R.L. Tanner flew with him for his first 54 or so missions in various A-20s. When the A-26s were introduced to the base, he piloted for 9 more missions with different single gunners in various ships. He received The Distinguished Flying Cross award in May 1945.

Lt. Zubon took extra mission in different 416th Bomb Squadrons to get back home to Kathleen Angela. He finished his 65th mission tour on Christmas morning in what he termed was "quite a mission". Lt. Zubon escaped the flak, but saw enough of it to keep him satisfied for a long while.

The following is an account from *416th Bomb Group History 1944*:

Taking off early Christmas morning for mission number 176, we continued to tie up the German supply routes to their Ardennes' salient by striking at the road junction and the town of Munstereifel itself. Only one flight of the formation was able to pick up the target, but they achieved superior results, hitting buildings and cutting the roads in the center of the town. Gee equipment failed in one flight, but it went on to bomb the town of Krimm, severely damaging and cutting the marshalling yard and highway. Another flight severely damaged the town of Kronenburgerhutte. Two other flights were unable to identify the target because of the haze and snow. The sixth flight lost its leader to flak going in on the target and did not bomb. Although the primary target was bombed by one flight only, its results and the results achieved on the two casual targets considerably impeded the progress of the counter-offensive.

The flight leader's plane was hit by moderate to intense, heavy accurate flak that followed the formation from the bomblines to the target. The plane, an A-20 Havoc, exploded in mid-air. One chute was seen to emerge and open. The crew consisted of Captain R.V. Miracle, Lt J.J. Burg, Staff Sergeants A.F. Galloway and J.R. Simmonds.

An A-26 Invader was also hit going in to the target. Although the plane was burning, he continued on over the target and dropped his bombs with his flight. It broke way from the formation and went down burning, crashing just across the bomblines. No chutes were seen. Lt K.W. Kehoe was the pilot; Corporal R.F. Graham, the gunner. Both crews are listed as MIA.

The formation was badly hit by flak, with 14 planes suffering category "A" damage, 8 category "AC" damage, and one category "B" damage. This last mentioned plane, piloted by Lt William J. Greene, on his 65th mission, was hit in the right engine on the bomb run. He stayed with the formation, dropping his bombs on the target. By superior flying, despite injuries to his face caused by shattered glass from a broken windshield, he brought the plane back to one of our bases for a successful crash-landing. The plane was washed out. His observer, Lt J.L. Britt, was also wounded in the face by glass.

Lt Col Willetts, Lt Royalty, B-N, and Lt Pair, Lt Corum, B-N, led the boxes.

Having completed his tour of duty, Lt. Zubon got to return to the Zone of the Interior during February to hold his son for the first time.

After a 30 day leave in the States, he returned to the group and was placed on temporary duty with the Headquarters of the United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe. Working with the Director of Intelligence, he dealt with the securing and study of the latest types of German equipment and German documents, which might be useful in our war against Japan.

In 1948 Michael "Mike" Zubon received a Master's Degree from MIT.

When the Korean conflict broke out he again answered the call to service.

Major Zubon began his years of service on the board of Air Force Scientific Advisory in 1953. Lt. General James H. Doolittle, who chaired the board from 1956 to 1959, said about Col. Michael Zubon, "His loyal and intelligent work greatly increased the effectiveness of the Air Force Scientific Advisory Board."

Lt Zubon answered the call to serve in Vietnam, his third war. He served valiantly bringing much pride to his

family.

Always putting his country first, the pilot retired as a Colonel. On April 17, 1976 he let go of the throttle for the last time. He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery. The free children of the world, able to live their lives to the fullest can not repay him for all he did for them. Our thank-yous are not enough. Please know that you are remembered, sir.