



Ashley Atwood

Rachel Bohrer

Period 3&6

Mel McMullen

Airforce

1943-1946

2016

Melvin McMullen

Melvin McMullen was born on June 5, 1925 in Los Angeles, CA. When he was in high school everyone his age signed up for the army it was the thing everyone did. At the age of 17 he made his way down to the recruitment office for the Army Corps and took the entrance exam. The recruitment officer had congratulated him as he told Melvin he had passed, but that he had to wait 6 months until he was 18 to officially join the war effort in 1942. Instead of sending him to college they sent him to an aerial gunnery school for basic training when he finally received notice to report.

While at basic training he was formed into a 10-man crew for heavy bombers. Melvin was given a nickname by his crew, "Moon", because of his smile. In October of 1944 his

crew went to Miami, Florida by troop train in awaiting their overseas assignment which had turned into the China-Burma-India Theater. When he had been sent to China in the 1940's it was still an underdeveloped country. He was a nose turret gunner engineer on a B-24 heavy bomber which his crew named "Dragon Lady". The crew was assigned to General Chennault's "Flying Tiger" 14th in China. When we asked Mel what it felt like to be in the service he said "It was just a thing to do, everyone was at war". He said there would be several minutes of panic while he was in combat. Just being in a completely strange and foreign lands was hard to get used to.

On one of the missions that the "Flying Tigers" were on the target was railroads. As they flew in there was a train so as they started to release their bombs the train had tried to avoid them. The mission was successful since the train had ammunition aboard and they had also bombed the railroad. This had meant that the enemy had lost their ammunition and their transportation for any supplies so the crew knew they were helping the war effort by the successful mission. Another of Mel's jobs as a nose turret gunner was to sit behind the pilot to regulate the gas tanks. One time he could see that their gas was going down and they had to find a place to land. The Chinese were good to them because they saw that they needed to hide and the Chinese moved the crew from village to village in order to get them to safety. If the Japanese had the knowledge and seen that the Chinese were aiding the enemy, they could have been punished or killed. They had risked their lives to help save the lives of Mel and his crew. When the crew was given leave or just free time they played poker and watched movies in the recreation hall or if they were in a big city in India they were able to go out to see a movie. Also, mail call caused excitement for the crew since you would normally get letters a long time after

your family and friends had sent them. Melvin once was sent a letter in June from his mother and had received it in September.

After the war was over Mel went to law school and he realized that he would be a little too old when he was finished so he dropped out. He met his wife Jennifer once he got home since she was renting a room in his house. Mel and his wife have been married for almost 70 years and have three sons. Mel and his family loved to travel, so when he would get a vacation him and his family would go somewhere they haven't been. Mel McMullen is part of a the China- Burma - India association where he was elected its 2002-2003 national commander was formed after the war it had 7,000 members. The Association had meetings monthly in order to keep in touch and share memories. He is now the current president of the Inland Empire chapter of the Distinguished Flying Cross Society.

Melvin learned so much from his time in the war such as discipline and that are good and bad people in this world. His time in the war was a positive experience it was an amazing learning and training experience. He realized during the war “ What we do to them, they can do to us”. As he went through life he had a new view and it had helped him grow. Mel looked at the people in the world around him after the war he saw that everyone has the same dreams no matter where you go. In today's war effort he has seen that we have to depend on a small group of men and women in this world to protect us and our country. We were very honored to be able to meet Mel McMullen. We learned a lot from him and what he did when he was in service. It was a great experience to be able to get to know him and his wife, Jennifer McMullen. We enjoyed hearing about the years he was in service and the stories he told about being in China and India. It certainly was an experience we will always remember.

