

Britney Ruvalcaba

Danielle Sarawassee

Period 4

James Eshelman

Air Force

1944-1945

2017

James Eshelman

James H. Eshelman, a United States veteran, was born on February 27, 1926. During his adolescent years, Eshelman grew up in Chicago, Illinois. At age seventeen, Eshelman embarked on the journey to joining the Air Force. Eshelman's passion for flying and the influence of his father's service, impacted his decision to serve for the U.S. Air Force. Eshelman's position in the Air Force was to gun down enemies on a plane called Rum Dum B17. Eshelman enlisted in 1944 and was involved in WWII for two years. Sergeant James H. Eshelman has received multiple decorations for his service during the military.

Eshelman already had the background of military with his father serving in the Air Corps during WWI. While living in Chicago, Eshelman's passion for flying had him join the U.S. Air Force and wanting to become a pilot. Eshelman had training in Texas for ninety days. During these training days, they were prepared physically, mentally, but mainly focused on the behaviors of each individual. He then took a boat to England, where he would later be stationed.

Eshelman would later meet his crew, who gave him the nickname of “Ishy” which was short for Eshelman.

Eshelman and his crew would fly the RumDum B17, Eshelman was positioned as a tail gunner. He would be in the tail area of the plane and would have to crawl to his position. Not only was reaching his area difficult, but he had a bicycle-like seat. Eshelman and his crew participated in each mission in air warfare and served a total of six missions. These missions usually started around four or five in the morning. Unfortunately, during their second mission, the pilot was killed in a mid air collision. The sixth mission was during the Battle of the Bulge and they were headed for Berlin, Germany. Through this mission, Eshelman lost control of his body and did a loop in the plane. During the loop, he was shot in the back and passed out for a few minutes. The damaged plane was five miles high and the crew had to share an oxygen mask. Later, the B51s came to help, the team bandaged him up and he was off back to England. In England, he was in the hospital for six weeks, but paralyzed from the hip down for two weeks with nerve shock. Afterwards, Eshelman preferred not to leave on a medical discharge, so instead left on honor discharge.

After serving two years in the United States Air Force, Eshelman met his wife, Joan Eshelman, at a Catholic high school dance in Chicago and later married her. Soon after becoming a married man, Eshelman took on the idea of moving to California and attending college in San Bernardino in 1948. While being a college student, Eshelman sold six dollar cleaning mops and profited two dollars for every mop he sold. Meanwhile, Eshelman’s wife worked at a telephone company. As far as college, Eshelman finished college and achieved his Associates degree.

James and Joan Eshelman currently reside in Irvine California and are going on sixty-nine years together. To this day Eshelman is still in contact with the radio operator, Leroy also known as 'Budd', who was on the same plane, Rum Dum B17, as him. As far as achievements, Eshelman received the French Medal of Honor, Purple Heart, Air Medal , President Unite Medal, and three major Battle Stars. Eshelman believes that joining the service to fight for the United States is very beneficial and encourages everyone to do so. Eshelman supposes that joining the military will benefit mostly everyone's future occupations.