

**Charles E. Augustine** interviewed October 15, 2007  
Staff Sergeant, US Air Force, October 1942 – August 1953

Before he entered the military, Charles was driving a coal truck from the coal regions down into Philadelphia. He expected to be drafted and had been talked out of enlisting with his friends after Pearl Harbor by his dad who told him he would get his chance. In September of 1942, he received his draft notice.

Charles was sworn in at Indiantown Gap, PA and sent to basic training in Florida. When they got off the train, they were greeted by big sergeant saying, "You're gonna do this, you're gonna do that," etc. He took the regular army training. They got up in the morning and began marching, training with rifles and crawling under barbed wire. At the end of basic training, they took an aptitude test. Charles wanted to be a mechanic; he had dropped out of school in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade during the depression. He was assigned to AM (Airplane Mechanic) school in Texas at Shepherd Field. Here, he learned about airplane parts and engines. After graduating, he was made a corporal.



A Brand New Plane...

The next assignment was in Inglewood, CA at the factory where B-25's were being made. Charles was assigned to a plane on the production line and had to keep a log of the progress that was being made by the factory on his plane. Charles, the pilot and co-pilot then flew the plane to Kansas City, KS so it could be fitted with a 75 mm gun in the nose so the plane could be used against submarines.

The plane was then sent to Westover Field in Massachusetts. Here, they flew as part of the 5<sup>th</sup> Anti-Sub Group. Charles worked here for a few months, keeping the planes flying on sub patrol. Occasionally, he would join the flight crew as an engineer. If something went wrong with the plane in the air, it would be Charles' duty to fix it. The Navy soon took over sub patrol and Charles' was sent to Mountain Home, ID. There, they became part of the 484<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, 827<sup>th</sup> Squadron.

When the Bomb Group was shipped overseas, the planes went ahead and Charles followed by ship, sailing out of Camp Patrick Henry, VA. Their destination was Italy and as they passed through the Straights of Gibraltar at night, German planes attacked. The Germans dropped flares to light up the convoy and Charles recalls that the Navy gunners did a good job of shooting out the flares. After the war, Charles discovered that his brother-in-law had been part of the same convoy, on a different ship.

They arrived at Torretta Field near Cerignola, Italy which is at the southern end of Italy. They lived six to a tent there and he still keeps in touch with one of his tent-mates. They went into town sometimes, but always had to carry a .45 automatic gun with them. The Italians treated the military men pretty well, but there were a few fights. Charles still has scars on his arms from where he was cut in an attempted mugging.

Time Off...

Charles was able to go to rest camp on the Isle of Capri off the coast of Italy. They were able to have good food that wasn't eaten out of a mess kit, swim and relax for two weeks. Charles thought one of the waitresses looked like Hedy Lamar so he called her "Hedy." When she found out why he called her this, she was very flattered and took extra care of him at meal times.

One time, he was able to take a flight to Marseilles, France while they were breaking in a new engine. To break in the engine, they would fly the plane on three engines while running the new engine at a



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slower speed. The pilot had chosen Marseilles as a destination because he had a girlfriend there. They landed and the pilot told the crew to meet back at the airfield later. Charles said he felt like he believed in re-incarnation then because he was walking through the city with his friends and they were hungry. Charles said they could walk a few more blocks, turn right and find a good restaurant; which they did! It was as if he had been there before.

They were able to write letters home postage free from overseas. The letters were all censored by their officers so

the envelope was left unsealed. In Charles' case, it was the pilot and co-pilot who were to read the letters but, according to Charles, they trusted the men so the letters weren't censored as much as they should have been.

Back on duty, bombing missions were flown to Germany every day from Torretta. Charles would on rare occasions go on missions. Most of the time, however, was spent keeping the plane in flying condition.



**Maintenance Area at Torretta Field, Italy**

The B-24 Charles maintained was called "Miss Snow Job" and had a picture of a woman reeling in a fish with a fishing rod painted on the nose.

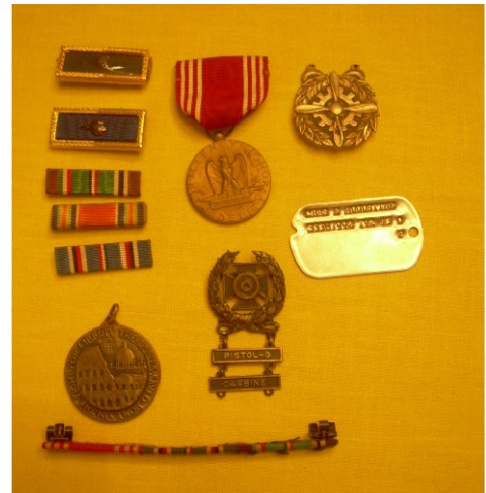
When the war ended, Charles and the crew from his bomber were sent to Dakar, Senegal in Africa in preparation for heading to the Pacific to take part in the invasion of Japan. But the war ended and Charles and his crew were re-assigned to flying troops across Africa in C-47 troop passenger planes. The destination was Casablanca, Morocco where the troops would catch a ship for the United States. Charles had

enough points to be eligible for discharge, but he was kept in the service to help with the shuttling of troops.

Finally, in November of 1945, Charles caught his own ride back on a ship. On November 23<sup>rd</sup>, he was discharged and then immediately enlisted in the reserves. He served with a unit in Reading and in 1948,

he signed up for another term in the reserves. In 1950, the Korean War broke out and Charles was called back to active duty in August of that year.

Charles reported to Langley Field in Virginia where he attended Airplane Mechanic school learning about the new B-26 jet bomber. When school was done, there were less than six months left on his active duty commitment so there wasn't enough time to send him to Korea. Charles spent the rest of his active duty working on planes. In July of 1951, he was promoted to Staff Sergeant although his duties didn't change. In August, 1952, Charles was released from active reserves. He then spent one more year in inactive reserves before receiving his discharge. During Charles' time at Langley, his wife Evelyn had come down to live with him off base. They talked about Charles making the military his career, but eventually decided against it. He had a job at Firestone in Pottstown to return to so he did.



**Medals, service ribbons and dog tag belonging to Charles Augustine**

Charles says that civilian life is very different from military life and took some getting use to. One of his tent-mates from Italy ended up going back into the service for a twenty-plus year career. Charles was able to make the adjustment and is proud of his service to his country.