

A Century of Wisdom: A WWII Veteran

Lt. Col. William Brew, CAP

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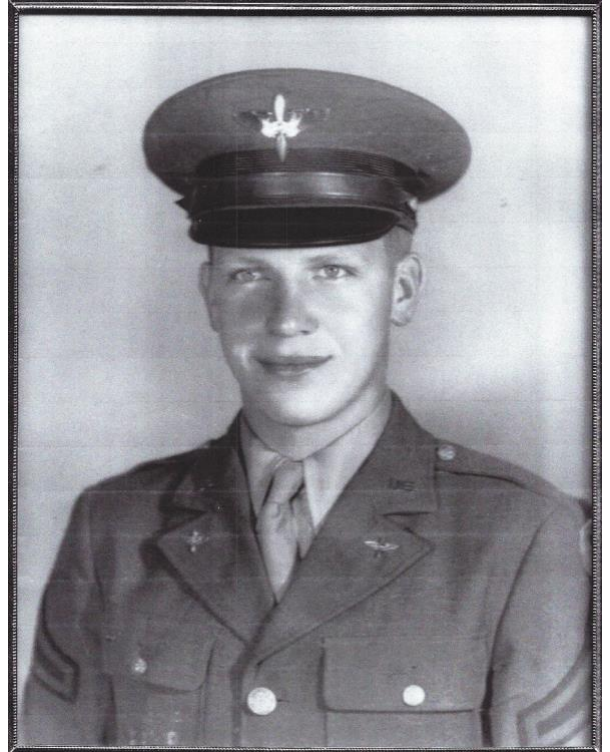
If you have experienced 9/11 or heard people talk about it, they recall what they ate that morning, where they were, or the people they knew in the affected areas. But how many times have you heard personal accounts about the day of the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor? For William (Bill) Brew, he was driving at the time he first heard the famous words of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Yesterday, December 7th, a day that will live in infamy.” Brew, then 19, experienced trepidation and outrage, question what the future held for him. Soon, he voluntarily applied to join the Army Air Corps Cadets.

Just before his acceptance into the Army Air Corps cadet program, Brew was drafted as infantry into the United States Army. After his three months of basic training, in which three fellow infantrymen, who were college mathematics professors, drilled him on mathematics, he was finally able to sit for the Army Air Corps cadet exam. Passing this mathematics-heavy exam allowed him entrance into the cadet program and so more basic training was in order. After his training, Brew spent three months in Syracuse, New York taking a college refreshment course even though he hadn’t attended college before he moved to Nashville, Tennessee to earn

pilot, navigator, and bombardier classifications. However, due to the needs of the Army Air Corps, Brew was

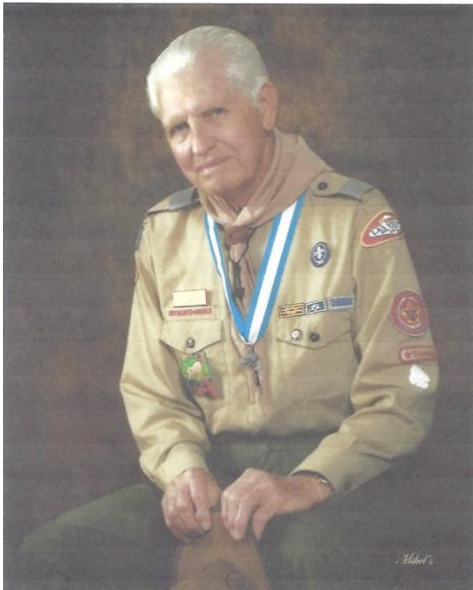
selected as a Bombardier. Next he attended preflight school at Montgomery Field, Alabama, and bombardier school in Carlsbad, New Mexico. Brew was assigned to a B-24 bomber crew that was sent to Langley Field to receive one of the first radar certifications just before Brew was set to leave for his first overseas assignment in the Philippines. This radar certification was quite exciting for the crew as it allowed them to drop bombs through the clouds, a cutting-edge military tactic at the time.

The missions for this B-24 crew consisted of 13.5-hour flights bombing the oil fields in Balikpapan, Borneo, Indo-China, China, and Formosa. After every mission, the plane landed on fumes with at least one flak hole from anti-aircraft weaponry. They then moved over to Okinawa, after it had been taken from the Japanese, to study invasion tactics. Thankfully, an invasion of Japan did not occur, "We were happy with the atomic bomb, of course." Brew stated, "Otherwise, I don't think I would be here." The atomic bombs caused catastrophic damage, but without the bombs, Brew believed that the casualties would have been much higher as southern Japan was heavily fortified. Brew also stated "It's a terrible thing. I hope it never has to be used again."



After the end of WWII, Brew was assigned as a Squadron Commander for the 528th Bombardment Squadron at McKinley Field in the Philippines. His assignment was to disassemble the squadron and gather all records for shipment to the US. "After this assignment was completed, they shipped us back to San Francisco on a WWI hospital ship. Can you believe that, a World War 1 hospital ship? It took us 31 days to get back to San Francisco." No matter the length or the how, Brew was just happy to be home.

Once home, Brew transitioned into the Air Force Reserves where he later retired as a Major. While working for the Western Pacific Railroad Company, he attended the University of Utah earning a degree in accounting and finance in 1950. With this degree, Brew became a traveling auditor before he was appointed as an assistant to general auditor-taxes in 1951. Brew continued his education and earned an MBA at the Golden Gate University in San Francisco. At the end of his tenure with the company, he held more titles than anyone in the company including Director of Taxes, Director of Internal Audits, and Director of Insurance. In 1981, Brew led a conference session on "Retirement vs. Depreciation Accounting and How it Relates to Railroad Taxation." The paper can be read at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42911843>. He retired in 1983 and opened his own business preparing tax returns.



The day after retiring from the Western Pacific Railroad Company, Brew started ground school and his journey to earn his private pilot's license. He also joined the Boy Scouts of America to continue his lifelong goal of service. He eventually found an explorer scout troop that was aviation-focused which

aligned best with his goals. He later found out that Civil Air Patrol (CAP) was sponsoring the scout troop which was the impetus for joining CAP. Brew officially joined CAP in 1986 in California where he actively participated. He flew many search and rescue missions after he earned his mission pilot qualification. He eventually became California's Group II Commander, overseeing 13 squadrons. Due to his accounting and finance background, he also mentored various CAP individuals in those areas.



In 2001, Brew moved to Nevada, joined the Henderson Composite Squadron, and earned the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He has served our squadron in numerous ways to include earning Master Ratings in finance, personnel, professional development, and administration. He completed his Level 5 in 2004, having attended both region and national staff colleges. Currently, at the age of 100, Brew continues to sit on three committees, earn emergency services qualifications, and hold three primary and one assistant duty positions for the squadron.

To this day, Brew continues to prepare income taxes with the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (Vita) to help those who cannot afford to have their taxes done. He is a member of the Air Force Association and the Sun City Anthem Veterans Club as well as actively serving in CAP. Brew states, "That's the secret of longevity. Keep busy!"

Brew was born in Shelley, Idaho in 1923. His father was a World War I veteran working on the railroad. He had two siblings, a brother, who was a World War II veteran as well as an Assistant Staff Specialist for the railroad, and a sister, who worked as a railroad Telegrapher during World War II. He has 5 children (3 girls and 2 boys) with his devoted wife, Alma, who passed away in 2014. He has 16 grandchildren and 30 great-grandchildren.

Age is not how old you are. Age is the experiences you've had and the wisdom you can provide to help others. This last March, Brew reached a century's worth of wisdom. As a World War II veteran, avid volunteer, pilot, and mentor, Brew has led a life we should be honored to learn from.

Brew left a piece of advice for us, "Live a good life. Get a good education. Give back. Get back to traditional Living. Have a family and be happy."