



FRED MASON

Frederick Mactulewicz (he changed his name to Mason in 1949) was only 18 years old when he was drafted into the military in May of 1943. In early 1944, he was sent overseas with the 780th Bomber Squadron of the 465th Bomber Group and by May, 1944, he was stationed at the Panatella Air Base in Italy. As part of the 15th Air Force, his squadron had as its primary objectives destroying the Luftwaffe in the air and its aircraft production facilities on the ground including fighter aircraft plants, ball bearing and rubber manufacturing facilities, oil refineries and munitions factories.

One of our recent displays at Mamaroneck High School dealt with the infamous Ploesti Raid of August 1, 1943. Although the oil refineries were partially demolished at an enormous cost of life to Allied flight crews, the mission was considered because Germans had the refineries up and running again within months. But the Ploesti refineries still needed to be put out of commission. After Fred's squadron arrived in Italy, the 780th flew three missions to Ploesti before the refineries were finally destroyed for good.

In all, Frederick flew 11 sorties and one time, upon returning to base, the maintenance crew drew everyone's attention to the fact that the Martin Upper Gunner's seat (Fred's seat) had a bullet hole in it. Fred was a very lucky young man! According to his wife, Eileen, on his trips to Vienna "he was concerned about the civilian population because they sometimes flew low enough for them to be recognizable and he hoped he wasn't going to have to use the machine gun on them. Apparently, it never happened that he had to."

Fred returned to the United States in 1945 and became a successful lawyer and literary agent. Sadly, Fred passed away on March 27, 2007, at the age of 81. Eileen has made available to the Kemper Memorial Park Preservation Fund, photos, films and drawings from Fred's wartime experience. They are fascinating. To everyone's delight, one member of Fred's crew drew portraits of each member of the crew. Please click on the links below to see the drawings, photos, a 780th Bomber Squadron newsletter and a biography of Fred Mason.