

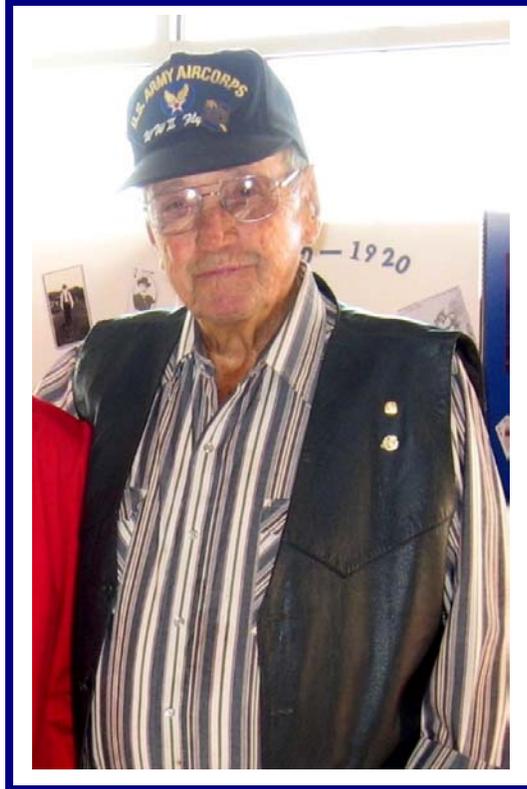
Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution
Proudly “Spotlights” our April 2011
Patriot of the Month



Eldon Warren

Sponsored by:

Matilda Polk
Campbell Chapter
Bolivar, Missouri



In December 1942, Eldon Warren was Polk County Missouri’s first teenager to get a letter of “Greetings” from the President of the United States, informing him that he had been selected for military service.

His first stop was Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, where he learned he had been assigned to the Army Air Force. From there he went to basic training on the Boardwalk in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Next he was shipped to Squaw Valley, California for six weeks of hand-to-hand combat training.

His unit was set to be shipped to North Africa. As they were preparing to ship out, Eldon said the sergeant announced, “Twenty of you guys got lucky,” and proceeded to call out the names of those selected for special duty. Eldon’s name was the last one called. Though he never knew what might have qualified him for it, he was sent to San Francisco for communications training. He learned Morse code, typing, radio operations, teletype, and in North Hollywood he learned crypto graphics.

Eldon was among a select few draftees picked for Army Airways Communications, an outfit created in 1938 and made an Army Air Force Wing in 1943. Trained for communications with military aircrews, Eldon said, "They were scattered over the whole world". Unlike most servicemen, he never moved with a unit, and never served with anybody twice.

After communications and cryptographic training, Eldon returned to New York City and then went overseas. His group was very small. He was an electronics operator. The nature of Eldon's duty kept him on the move. In Great Brittan, he spent time in Glasgow, London, and in Wales. Across the channel, he was in France, Holland, Belgium and Germany. He said he was never close to anybody. He might be with someone two weeks, maybe two months and never see them again.

Communicating with combat pilots in the air, among other duties, Eldon was involved in top-secret operations, coding and decoding wartime messages. Though not in a combat role, he was still in the middle of the war. If there was trouble and they had to leave in a hurry and if it was not possible to move their equipment with them, it was rigged with explosives so it could be destroyed.

A key part of Eldon's duty was helping get pilots safely home after combat missions. Also, trained to work the tower, he brought crippled aircraft in on temporary runways put down by Army engineers. The towers he worked from had typically been riddled with bullet holes, and he described the ripple of the landing mats rolling ahead of aircraft. This necessitated the planes to alternately come in from opposite directions to keep the runway from moving.

Among soldiers in the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944 and January 1945, his small unit was temporarily cut off from allied forces. On April 13, 1945, Eldon was among ten men in a small convoy that was attacked by Luftwaffe aircraft near Brussels. Though sketchy on details of his injuries, Eldon remembers he was thrown across the hood of a truck. He spent the next six months in the 178th General Hospital in Reims, France.

Injured just days before, Germany's surrender on April 29, 1945, Eldon saw the war come to an end while still in bandages. He was in the hospital when the A-bomb was dropped. He joined the Army Air Force Reserve after his release from active duty at war's end. Eldon said he wouldn't take anything for the experience and knowledge he gained, but he doesn't want to do it again.

Eldon and his wife Virginia have three children.