

Finding your Air Force Records

Air force records and other records of military service are carefully preserved by the government. I know, because my grandfather was a pilot in world war two and we are all very proud of him, but for a while, he was a mystery. My dad was young when his father died, and did not really know how he died or when. His mother was already dead, and so he couldn't ask her, and there were no other older relatives to ask. So we submitted for his air force records and found all kinds of information.

The most interesting part of it was just how highly decorated he was. He had a purple heart as well as some fascinating star shaped pendant that said "for noble service in the cause of liberty". We knew right away that he had done an amazing job, and we figured that perhaps he had died in the service of his country, being shot down over Germany. As we read through his air force records, we found out that this wasn't quite the case and that the truth was far more complicated than that.

In fact, he had been stationed in England, fighting alongside the RAF - the Royal Air Force, in the battle of Britain, one of the most famous air battles of all time. He had flown over 200 missions in just a few short years, and been shot down at least twice, and once landing with shrapnel in his leg, bleeding badly and only just barely able to make it on to the runway before he passed out, but he had survived every mission, and had shot down many enemy planes, defending the allies and freedom. In fact, it seemed like he would survive the war.

He had a charmed life according to air force records. Many times everyone around him would be destroyed, while he would limp back to the base, his plane badly damaged but still flying. In neither of his crashes did he receive so much as a scratch, and he was quickly found by friendly forces and returned home. Yet bad luck did eventually find him, ironically on the eve of VE day, the day when the allied forces triumphed over the Germans.

He was not in the air at all, but drinking with friends, coming back from the canteen in high spirits, knowing that the war would soon be over, and that he was part of the reason why, when, of all things, he stumbled upon an unexploded British munition. His friends were slightly injured, but he was killed almost instantly. To this day, we still honor his memory through air force records.

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About the Author

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