



OBJECT ID	2006.26.5
OBJECT NAME	Photograph
OBJECT COLLECTION	Bess's Collection (is part of)
DATE CREATED	1942 – 1945
MEDIUM	Printed copy
OBJECT ENTITIES	Katsikas, Bess (is related to) Katsikas, John (is related to) Bleom, (created by)
ACCESS POINTS	army bomber photograph pilot portrait soldier U.S. Army WWII

OBJECT DESCRIPTION

Black and white portrait of John Lucas Katsikas. John is dressed in his dress U.S. Army uniform. The portrait is about stomach high, he has his arms crossed and his smiling. The background is blank.

ORIGIN

Donated by Bess Geroulis Katsikas.

John Lucas Katsikas was drafted into the U.S. Army at 18 years old, he chose to join the Army Air Corps and later became a bomber pilot. John went to Jefferson, Missouri for basic training and pre-flight training. He then went to San Antonio, Texas where the men who signed up for Army Air Corps service were separated into different groups including pilots, navigators, bombardiers, gunners, and mechanics. He was then sent to Elmington Air Base in Ina,

Oklahoma for primary flight training. He was then finally assigned to his flight crew and was certified to fly a B-24 "Liberator" bomber.

Once John got his crew they had to start assignments. They started in San Francisco where they picked up their plane. They then flew it to Tennessee, then to Fort Wayne, then to Maine, then over to Newfoundland, and finally to England. Once in England they received orders to fly to the Azores Islands off the coast of North Africa. There they were then attached to the 83rd Air Force which assisted in "Operation Torch", the American invasion of North Africa. For the next few months the 83rd fought against Rommel's Africa Corp and bombed targets like Tripoli and Benghazi. Next their assignment was to attack the Romanian oil fields at Ploiesti. The first attempt on the oil fields, the squadron suffered sixty percent casualties and were ripped to pieces by the German "Focke-Wulf" and anti-aircraft batteries. Once they returned from the raid the remaining forty percent of the bomber crews went on strike against returning to the oil fields again unless they received fighter support. For their actions these remaining crews were separated and reassigned to different areas.

John and his crew were sent to India and were apart of the China, Burma, India theater. John's longest assignment was attacking the Japanese in Indochina from India over a period of 9 months. During the that time John spent a lot of time on the ground and saw the enormous problems millions of civilians who were caught in the war dealt with. After his attack on the Japanese he was then sent to fly supplies over the Himalayas from India to China. John said this was the worst assignment because they lost more planes going over the mountains than they did in combat.

In November of 1945 John and his crew were finally called home and were to report to West Palm Beach, Florida to check in while making several stops on the way. The crew would have to wait three months for an Army transport ship to arrive and pick them up. John (captain at the time) decided that he could not leave his crew behind in India. So he had them remove all the guns and any other non-essential materials from the plane. This gave them enough room to fit the four ground crewmen and their gear. On their trip home he kept one step ahead of the military police and the generals by taking the long way home. He went from Calcutta to Bombay to Khartoum to Dakar, French West Africa, across the Atlantic to Brazil, then to British Guiana, Puerto Rico, and finally to West Palm Beach.

When they were finally the generals were upset and threatened him with court martial and prison time. John got off because military law states that both he and his crew would have to go back to India to be tried. On November 17, 1945 John was discharged from the Army at Fort Sheridan, IL with the demoted rank of Staff Sergeant.

From the article "A Boy Goes to War: A Man Remembers" by Scott Williams.

CITATION

Photograph, 1942 – 1945, Bess's Collection, *National Hellenic Museum*, <https://hellenic.whirlihost.com/Detail/objects/>. Accessed 05/14/24.
