

## Frank Carrier

Born in 1918 Frank Carrier was drafted into the United States Army in 1941 and was assigned to be trained as a combat engineer. While training to become a combat engineer Carrier trained with the use of both pontoon and bailey bridges as well as in basic bridge building and repair in the event that a bridge to cross a river or valley was ever needed. It was during this training that he had sudden realization about the importance of bridges. Carrier deduced that bridges would play an important role in the war and that both the Allies and the Axis would be focusing on protecting their own bridges while destroying those used by the enemy. This led Frank to believe that being a combat engineer building a bridge might be the perfect target for bombing and strafing by enemy planes, and instead decided that if he was going to be around bridges during the war he would be on the giving end of destruction and not the receiving.

Another, more personal reason, behind Carrier's decision of joining the Army Air Corps was for the hope that he would not have to kill another human being. "I did not want to kill other people so I joined the air force, the war is all on you, and I did not want to have the guilt of killing another human being up close and personal,"-Frank Carrier. "I'm very glad to have chosen the Army Air Corps, for I don't even know if I even ever killed anybody, one of the worst things about war is that wonderful decent people who are our enemies are being killed" —Frank Carrier.

In 1942 Carrier and his friends all attempted to transfer to the Army Air Corps by taking the physical and mental exams required for admission. There was no time limit for the mental exam however; Carrier was the first man out of the room after only an hour. Unfortunately the administration mistakenly miss-graded Carrier's test scores requiring him to stay longer than anyone else in order to find out if he passed or not.

After receiving his passing test scores Carrier was given orders to return home on furlough before attending basic training for the Army Air Corps. At the time Frank's family was on vacation in Florida so he decided it was best to hitchhike down there to spend as much time with them before shipping out. The only problem is that after traveling for a few days down to Florida from his home in Pennsylvania he had no idea where his family was staying. Frank first went to the post office for help, however, he was told that it would be illegal for them to tell him where his family was staying, and instead they "suggested" he might try a few houses down the road because his family may or not be staying there. Sure enough they were and Carrier found his family only to discover they were already preparing to return home the following day.

The Santa Ana Army Air Base (SAAAB) was under the jurisdiction of the West Coast Army Air Corps Training Command Center, located on West 8th St in Santa Ana, California. The other two centers were Southeast Army Air Corps Training Center at Maxwell Field, Montgomery,

Alabama and Gulf Coast Army Air Corps Center at Randolph Field, San Antonio, Texas. The latter two centers were activated on July 8, 1940, while SAAAB was activated on February 15, 1942. On June 20, 1941, the Army Air Corps became the Army Air Forces.

All three bases were classification centers, where aspiring cadets were tested for aptitudes and classified as pilots, navigators or bombardiers - however the SAAAB, as the largest of the three bases, was the only base to provide pre-flight training for all three classifications. Combat personnel who trained at the three bases contributed greatly in the battles of World War

II. Numerous SAAAB cadets returned to the Costa Mesa area after the war and became a major factor in the growth of Orange County. (Costa Mesa) Carrier achieved high test scores on his aptitude test for bombardier school and was placed there as a result.

Upon completing basic and bombardier training Carrier was assigned to active duty in a B-26 Bomber in the 397th Bomber Wing of the 598th Bomber Squadron of the 9th Army Air Corps located in England. Established on September 11th 1941 as 5th Air Support Command at Bowman Field, Kentucky, it was re-designated as the Ninth Air Force on April 8th, 1942. The Ninth Air Force was a United States Army Air Forces combat air force deployed to the European Theater during World War II, engaging in operations initially in the Western Desert Campaign in North Africa. Reassigned to England in 1943, the Ninth Air Force engaged in operations in the Northern Europe, carrying out tactical bombing of enemy targets in France and Germany in support of Allied ground forces and engaging in air to air fighter combat against enemy aircraft until the German capitulation in May 1945.

Carrier flew in a B-26 Marauder Bombing from medium altitudes of 10,000 to 15,000 feet (3,000 to 4,600 m) and with appropriate fighter escort, the Marauder proved far more successful, striking against a variety of targets, including bridges and V-1 launching sites in the build-up to D-Day, and moving to bases in France as they became available. The Marauder operating from medium altitude proved to be a highly accurate bomber, with the 9th Air Force rating it the most accurate bomber available in the final month of the war in Europe. Loss rates were far lower than in the early, low-level bombing days, with the B-26 stated by the 9th Air Force as having the lowest loss rate in the European Theatre of Operations at less than 0.5 %.

The B-26 flew its last combat missions against the German garrison at the Ile d'Oleron on 1 May 1945, with the last units disbanding in early 1946. Over the course of his tour in Europe Frank Carrier flew a total of sixty-three combat missions, and nearly every mission a bridge was the target. The Allied objective in the weeks prior to the invasion of France was to bomb and destroy key German held bridges in order to render the German army immobile and unable to respond quickly to an invasion of France. The bridges that were targeted caused France to be divided into three distinct land masses rendered almost unreachable to one another by land.

Of all sixty-three missions flown by Frank Carrier the one he remembers with the most vivid detail took place on September 22<sup>nd</sup> 1943. The target was a small bridge outside of Paris

however, the bridge was very important to the Germans as it was the only river crossing in the area for several hundred miles. Before ever leaving the ground Carrier had an awful feeling about the mission to come. It started with four one hour delays to the mission as ordered from a British officer who claimed that bad weather patterns could threaten the mission. After finally taking off from England the situation only worsened as a German woman, better known as Axis Sally, came on the radio and began to recite the names and ranks of every airman on all thirty-six planes taking part in the mission. To make matters worse the Germans had amassed a large number of anti-aircraft installations around the bridge targeted for bombing.

The thirty-six bombers flew in three waves of twelve planes each. Of the thirty-six planes twelve were shot down in action, and on top of that the woman over the radio began to call out the names of every officer whose planes was shot down and called out a warning to the officers whose planes were next in line.

Frank Carrier continued to fly bombing missions over France, Belgium, and Germany until the end of the war in Europe. He had flown a total of sixty-three combat sorties, the number of missions required to receive a discharge from the Army Air Corps was sixty-five.

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PS Dad loved the Lord Jesus Christ and brought up his family to believe in Him. He taught Sunday School his entire adult life and lived a good and righteous life. He will be missed by all those who knew him.

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