



Frank Pascal Davidson

June 28, 1924 - June 30, 2022

Frank P. Davidson, 98, of Salem, IL, passed away June 30, 2022 at SSM Health Saint Louis University Hospital, surrounded by family, as a result of injuries sustained in an earlier car accident.

He was born on Hopkins Farm outside Salem, June 28, 1924, the youngest of five children of Anna and Otis Davidson.

Living on Hopkins Farm provided Frank's father the opportunity to learn ways to increase his crop yield from the landowner Dr. Hopkins, a University of Illinois professor, before moving the family to their own farm in 1930.

Once on their own farm, Frank and his older brother, Carl, were responsible for milking the cows morning and night, as there was much to be done when growing wheat, corn, raising pigs, lamb, chicken and cattle.

As a child, Frank attended country schools. He had pressured his parents to let him start school when he was only 4, because Carl, two years older, was going. They finally relinquished and Frank started early, at age 5.

Each day the boys and their sister, Pauline, would walk 1¼ miles to Fairview School, a one room schoolhouse; but later, after Pauline's Fairview graduation, Carl and Frank moved to Woodard School. It was further away, so Frank and Carl would cut through orchards and fields when walking, but they really preferred traveling to school riding double on a pony, along the road.

Following his graduation from Salem High School in 1941 at age 16, Frank worked at McNamar and Crawley Boiler & Tank Co. as a bookkeeper.

But when the United States entered World War II, Frank again wanted to

follow his older brother Carl, so he enlisted in the military, where he became a member of the 453rd bombardment group of the 8th Air Force.

He was sworn in April 23, 1943 in Chicago, sent to basic training at Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis, Mo., then moved to nearby Jefferson College, which had repurposed automobile housing structures into barracks.

Next came San Antonio Aviation Cadet Center, where Frank decided to specialize in radio training, partly because it meant a transfer to Scott Field, in Belleville, just 55 miles from home.

Salem was close enough he sometimes caught a Sunday train or hitched a ride with travelers wanting to help out a man in uniform.

Scott Field's primary wartime mission was to train skilled radio aircraft operators.

Graduates were labeled "the best damned radio operators in the world".

Completion of radio school brought changes, one being new winter uniforms instead of regular khakis.

But the new uniforms brought out a rash on Frank that sent him to the infirmary.

In reality, the new uniform wasn't the cause. Frank had scarlet fever. An ambulance took him off to the hospital for an 8-week quarantine.

He did fine, mainly listening to music on the radio with doctors and nurses passing by.

Then it was on to gunnery school in July in sweltering Yuma, AZ; stints in Lincoln, NB and Boise, ID, where they put his crew together.

As time for shipping out got closer, it meant the upcoming 3- day leave back home was extra special. His mother refused to call it a goodbye dinner, insisting it be referred to as 'an early Thanksgiving'.

Then it was trains across the US and Canada from Chicago to Boston before boarding a troop transport ship for a 7-day ride to an unknown destination, with mosquito nets as their only clue to where they were headed.

When the transport ship finally came to a halt, it was off the coast of Liverpool, England. They were completely surrounded by darkness, fog, and sunken

ships. The darkness provided cover as they moved past German subs before loading onto a train to Old Buckenham Airbase, southwest of Norwich, England.

'Old Buck' would be Frank's home base until the war ended.

Frank flew 21 missions over Germany with the 453rd bomb group, all aboard B-24 Liberator bombers, 4 motor twin tailed planes.

His 22nd mission over Czechoslovakia was labeled incomplete as they were called back and dropped their bombs in the ocean before landing.

Frank slept fully dressed every night, flight boots beside his bed, because their barracks were so cold. Free time was often spent back in bed, trying to stay warm, as it was one of the coldest winters on record.

They received a bit of Coke one day a week, to enjoy while cooking up a packet of dried noodle soup.

Following their 4:30 a.m. wake up, fresh, fried eggs were served on days they were to fly a mission.

Then from behind the briefing room drapes, out came the flight map, weather for the trip and intelligence on the possibility of encountering German fighters. They made sure to never fly at the same altitude, always varying it somewhere between 19,000-21,000 feet.

The Operations officer for Frank's bomb group was 38-year-old Hollywood actor Jimmy Stewart, who would stand in the back of the room during briefings while others under his command led the sessions. In the evening, Stewart would play ragtime on the piano.

None of Frank's crew was ever injured, which he credited to the expertise of his pilot Doug Leavenworth.

On Frank's 17th mission they were struck by German flak; bursting shells that exploded and released fragments. Flak was thick. As the plane was dropping, the pilot was still able to nurse their flight back to safety within the Belgium border. Frank quickly tapped out a message stating Leavenworth crew ok, avoiding MIA status, just as they touched down.

When the war ended Frank flew from England to the Azores, where they kicked back with chocolate milkshakes, far away from the forbidden unpasteurized milk of the UK.

He was honorably discharged Oct. 23, 1945.

Then it was back home, where he went back to work for McNamarr and Crawley. He later worked as a manager for Building and Loan, before being employed for many years as a salesman with Jiffy Manufacturing up until his retirement.

Frank took work seriously, but he truly treasured the people in his life; friends, family, co-workers, doctors, neighbors and even a good hunting dog, especially Pepper, his German short-haired pointer.

He loved a juicy Harry and David pear, going out for pizza, sharing newspaper articles or a good book. Evenings you might find him watching an old movie or something on PBS. He was a fan of the St. Louis Cardinals and always cheered for the University of Illinois football and basketball teams. He was a regular at family weddings and birthdays.

He traveled to Kenya, China, Russia and especially enjoyed France, where he connected with relatives on Belle Ile, the island his grandfather left in the 1850s when he came to America.

He developed a great love of photography and often shared slides of his adventures with area groups and received local and regional awards for his photos.

He enjoyed entertaining, and was known for hosting local Lions Club members for an annual Christmas luncheon, complete with Christmas china, red tablecloths, standing roasts and incredible desserts. He even traveled to Fairview Heights to purchase special ingredients.

Family members would join him the next day for amazing leftovers.

He was a member of Salem's Elks Club, Lions Club, the Presbyterian Church and was a big supporter of Mitchell Museum in Mount Vernon.

Frank was preceded in death by his parents Anna and Otis of Salem; sisters,

Clarabelle Mercer and husband Floyd; Genevieve Tilley and husband Garvin; Pauline Boxell and husband James V. and nephew James D. Boxell.

He is survived by his brother, Carl Davidson and wife Mary Lou, Cave Creek, AZ; nieces and nephews, Bill Mercer, Salem; Joan Tiernon; Fort Wayne, IN; Suzanne Fink, San Luis Obispo, CA; Beverly Herman, husband Ray, Mahomet, IL; Carol Campbell, husband Bruce, Lander, WY; Mary Gallivan, husband Lyle, Lakewood, CO, Terry Davidson, wife Kathy, Phoenix, AZ; Frankie Pokluda, Albuquerque, NM; Debbie Krogh, husband Greg, Cave Creek, AZ; Dave Davidson, wife Kelly, Gilbert, AZ.

and many friends and family.

Visitation will be from 5-7 p.m. Friday, July 8, 2022 at Sutherland-Rankin Funeral Home, 310 N. Broadway, Salem. A Celebration of Life Service will be at 11:30 a.m. on Saturday, July 9, 2022 at Sutherland Rankin Funeral Home in Salem. Burial will be private.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Salem Presbyterian Church, 201 E. McMackin St., Salem, IL 62881 or Shriners Hospitals for Children, Attn: Office of Development, 2900 Rocky Point Drive, Tampa, FL 33607 and will be accepted at the Sutherland-Rankin Funeral Home at 310 North Broadway/ P.O. Box 97 Salem, Illinois 62881, (618)548-1234, who is entrusted with the Davidson Family's Care. Online condolences may be made to the family by visiting ww.sutherlandfuneralhome.com.

Previous Events

Wake

JUL 8. 4:30 AM (CT)

Sutherland-Rankin Funeral Home and Cremation Services
310 North Broadway
Salem, IL 62801

Visitation

JUL 8. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Sutherland-Rankin Funeral Home and Cremation Services
310 North Broadway
Salem, IL 62801

Celebration of Life Service

JUL 9. 11:30 AM.

Sutherland Rankin Funeral Home

Tribute Wall



“ *Sutherland Funeral Homes, Cemetery and Cremation Services created a Tribute Video in memory of Frank Pascal Davidson*



Sutherland Funeral Homes, Cemetery and Cremation Services - July 08, 2022 at 11:43 AM

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“ *Frank was such an interesting gentleman. Anytime he made an appointment at my office I always scheduled extra time because I enjoyed visiting with him after our business was completed. He seemed to never age and I was amazed when he took a trip to Europe and in his early nineties. When I retired he was certainly among one of those people that I dearly missed. It was my pleasure knowing Frank Davidson. ~ Mary Jane Hardy*

M.J.Hardy - July 07, 2022 at 01:47 PM