

Clayton A. Mink

Clayton A. Mink was born October 8, 1920 to Charles and Lottie (Dewitt) Mink in Hudson, NY. Growing up in Mellenville, Clayton attended school at Hudson Central School. He enlisted in the United States Army on January 24, 1941 in Albany, NY; and after his initial basic training, he attended AAF aerial gunnery school in 1943.

Staff Sergeant Clayton A. Mink was assigned to the European Theater of Occupation with the 8th Air Force, 34th Bomb Group, 7th Bomb Squadron on April 21, 1944. Flying from Mendlesham Air Base, England, he logged 21 combat missions on a B-24 called "The Nearsighted Robin". After additional training, he was assigned to a mission over Kassel, Germany as a ball turret gunner on a B-17 called "The Wrangler".

Several hours into the flight The Wrangler developed a malfunction and loss of visibility. Another B-17 then collided with The Wrangler and SSG Clayton Mink and five of his 10 flight crew managed to successfully exit the crippled airplane.

Captured by German guards, he was incarcerated (Paderborn), interrogated (Frankfurt) and then transported by train (40x8 Box Car) to Stalag-Luft IV near Grossstchow, Germany. For the next seven months as a POW, SSG Clayton A. Mink endured harsh treatment at the hands of his captors. Besides the rigorous interrogations, cramped, inhuman transportation in cattle cars, prodded by bayonet and snarling police dogs; he lived with thousands of POWs in harsh living conditions (sleeping on straw-strewn barracks, eating meager rations).

SSG Clayton A. Mink was liberated on April 26, 1945 at Bitterfeld, Germany, and returned to the United States, where he was discharged at Ft. Dix, NJ on September 28, 1945. He was awarded the: Air Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters, American Service Medal, European Middle Eastern Service Medal and the Good Conduct Medal.

Clayton met and married Helen (Ward) on October 20, 1945 and they had two children: Sharon and Pamela. He worked for the Columbia County Highway Department and retired in 1983 after 25 years. He was the Past President of the Columbia County Civil Service Association, Past Commander of the American Legion Post, the Past President of the Administrative Board and Men's Club of the Germantown United Methodist Church, as well as Chairman of the Pastor's Relations Committee and Recording church secretary.

Clayton died on May 12, 2010 and was buried at the Valley View Cemetery, Germantown, NY. He left behind 2 daughters and 2 grandchildren. He was 89 years old.