

"High Flight"

By John Gillespie Magee, Jr.

"Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth,
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;

Sunward I've climbed and joined the tumbling mirth of sun-split clouds -
and done a hundred things You have not dreamed of -
wheeled and soared and swung high in the sunlit silence.

Hovering there I've chased the shouting wind along
and flung my eager craft through footless halls of air.

"Up, up the long delirious burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace,
where never lark, or even eagle, flew;
and, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
the high untrespassed sanctity of space,
put out my hand and touched the face of God."



Lt. Ralph Lynn
October 26, 1919 ~ March 16, 2018

NOTES FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By Kim Kovesci

Ralph came to MAPS after his wife, Mary Ellen, passed. He told me, "This place saved me. I was lost but coming to MAPS gave my life purpose and a reason to get up every morning. MAPS became my family."

I was concerned that the MAPS Seal on the floor of the main entrance was getting damaged from the foot traffic. We used blue stanchions to reroute the traffic and get people to notice the beautiful seal. Ralph approached me and said, "I like the idea of the stanchions but they just wouldn't do, they need to be nicer. Go buy some really nice ones and I will pay for them." I said, "Are you sure?" He gave me his smile and said in his soft voice, "Kim!" My response was, "Yes Sir."

Ralph was instrumental in creating the MAPS Speaker's Bureau. I was very fortunate to travel with Ralph because he thought it was important to go out into the community and tell them about the good things that we do here at MAPS. At first, Ralph would drive himself to these events and amaze people at his abilities as a speaker especially when they found out that he was in his early 90's. He became very popular and he started scheduling more speeches. I was concerned about him driving so I volunteered to be his "duty driver" and accompanied him on his speaking engagements. He jumped at the offer because we really enjoyed each other's company. I would get up and talk a little about MAPS then Ralph would do his thing.

At one event, our host began to introduce us by saying, we are fortunate to have two gentlemen from MAPS who are going to say a few words. First, Mr. Lynn will talk about his experiences as a pilot, then Mr. Kovesci is going to tell us about MAPS Air Museum. I interrupted our host with an immediate correction while he was in mid-sentence. I said, "I am sorry but you have the order wrong. You see, I don't follow Ralph and you'll know why in a few minutes." Everyone laughed and I stood up to talk about MAPS. Ralph was at the top of his game that night and treated the audience to many of his wonderful stories. His speeches usually included some stories about his WWII flying experiences.

He flew 32 missions over occupied France and Germany, 2 during D-Day but he only received credit for one because he sat in for another pilot. He usually talked about the history of flight or the connection with MAPS, but he would always end his speeches with a story about a young American Pilot flying for the Royal Canadian Air Force in WWII. John Gillespie Magee Jr. wrote a sonnet on a training flight in England. To quote Ralph, "This sonnet contains the most beautiful words ever written about flying." I can honestly say that each time I heard Ralph recite "High Flight" from memory, I felt that I was in the presence of a pilot who truly understood the love of flight.

I remember one speech that he gave at the Canton Women's Club. I spoke first and then sat back for the show. You see, Ralph was very dapper, quoted poetry and he had a special talent of charming women. When Ralph finished reciting "High Flight," there was a stampede of 80+ year old women trying to get to him. I was pushed out of the way and thought I was going to be trampled to death. On the way home we talked about it, he simply smiled and said, "Yah, that was kinda funny."

One day we had a bunch of 7 year old brownies that came for a tour. They were eating lunch in the hangar and were just about finished when they started to get a little rowdy. I asked Ralph to talk to them for a while. He told them that he was a pilot in WWII and flew a big bomber. When he was done with a couple other stories, he asked if there were any questions. One little girl raised her hand, she asked, "Are there any bathrooms on the bomber?" Ralph hesitantly said, "No." Immediately her hand went up again, "Then what did you do if you have to go to the bathroom." Ralph thought and said to himself, you can't lie to a little kid, so he told the truth. "I took a fuse can with me and if I needed to go, I just used that." Ralph's answer seemed to satisfy the little girl and he told me later that he was relieved. Another little girl raised her hand and asked, "When you were done with it, did you dump it on the Germans?" Ralph just laughed and shook his head. He was so patient with everyone but his soft spoken voice was especially effective with the little ones.

I was blessed to have spent so much one on one time with Lt. Ralph Lynn. He was the gentleman of all gentlemen, a role model for all time and I think of him often. Ralph lived a wonderful life, I learned so much from our time together and I was lucky to call him my friend. May you Rest in Peace.



Ralph Lynn - One of the Greatest Generation

NAME: LYNN, RALPH JR.

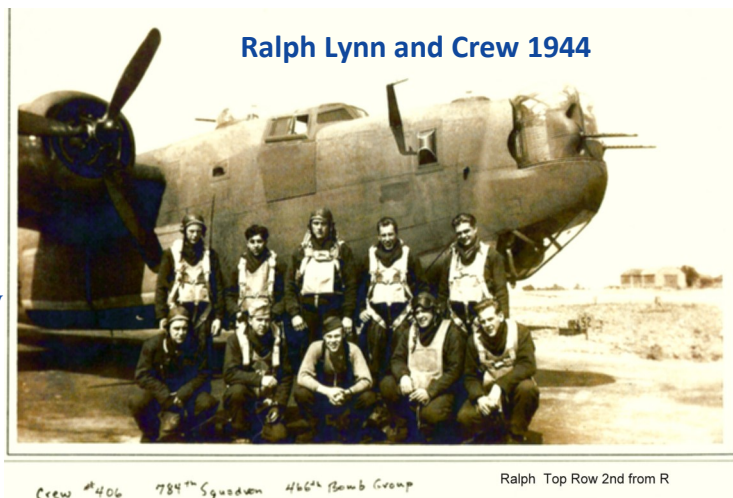
RANK: 2ND LT.

ARMY SERVICE NUMBER: 0-693293

OPERATIONAL MISSIONS

<u>NO.</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TARGET</u>
1	5 April 1944	Pas de Calais, France
2	11 April 1944	Oschersleben, Germany
3	13 April 1944	Lechfeld, Germany
4	19 April 1944	Paderborn, Germany
5	22 April 1944	Hamm, Germany
6	26 April 1944	Paderborn, Germany
7	27 April 1944	Blainville, France
8	29 April 1944	Berlin, Germany
9	1 May 1944	Pas de Calais, France
10	1 May 1944	Liege, Belgium
11	7 May 1944	Osnabruck, Germany
12	8 May 1944	Brunswick, Germany
13	9 May 1944	St. Trond, Belgium
14	12 May 1944	Bohlem, Germany
15	21 May 1944	Pas de Calais, Germany
16	23 May 1944	Borges, France
17	24 May 1944	Melun, France
18	28 May 1944	Zeitz, Germany
19	30 May 1944	Zwischenahn, Germany
20	6 June 1944	Pas de Calais, France (Note*)
21	11 June 1944	Blois, France
22	14 June 1944	Pas de Calais, France
23	15 June 1944	Guyancourt A/D, France
24	20 June 1944	Ostermoor, Germany
25	21 June 1944	Berlin, Germany
26	23 June 1944	Pas de Calais, France
27	24 June 1944	Coubronne, France
28	28 June 1944	Saarbrucken, Germany
29	2 July 1944	Crepy, France
30	16 July 1944	Saarbrucken, Germany
31	17 July 1944	Wadicourt, France
32	18 July 1944	Troarn, France

*Note: Ralph flew two missions on 6 June 1944. He was a substitute co-pilot on the second mission and was not recorded on the flight crew manifest.



May Ralph rest in peace

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES *By Bob Schwartz*

After Ralph joined MAPS, he volunteered as a tour guide and one of the days he came to MAPS was a Thursday, the same day that I also tour guiding. We became fast friends and I got to know Ralph quite well. In addition to MAPS, he was active in his Church, the Central Presbyterian Church on 2nd St. in Massillon, the Massillon Genealogical Society and a photo club. Ralph was one of our most respected and loved members. He has and will be sorely missed.

My daughter moved just south of Charlotte, SC about 3 years ago and Ralph moved to his daughter's around the same time in Laurens, SC - about 2 hours away. We visited with Ralph about four times. Even though he was getting a little weaker each time, he always had a smile and was full of questions about our volunteers. Our last visit with Ralph was on February 28th just two weeks before his passing. His mind was just as sharp as ever and his smile just as big.

Ralph was born on October 26, 1919 and was 98 years old. He joined MAPS in June of 2007 and was very active until January of 2015 when he started having health issues. Ralph was an excellent tour guide; he would often receive a thank you letter or card from one of the people that he met on a tour; they might have forgotten his name but from their description, we knew it was Ralph. Many times a returning visitor would ask for Ralph by name.

Ralph also volunteered as a speaker and he was an excellent orator. You didn't let Ralph speak first because he was better than any of us. Ralph recited the sonnet "High Flight" many times and he did it from memory, including an introduction about the author and again at the end. Ralph said that before a presentation he would practice by reciting the sonnet 3 or 4 times.

Ralph was born on his grandparent's farm near Canfield in Mahoning County and his parents were school teachers. The farm was located at the corner of Shields and South Raccoon Rd. and if you look on a Mahoning County map, you will see the geographical location marked as Lynn's Corner. My wife and I also lived in Mahoning County in Springfield Twp. - about 10 miles away.



Ralph enlisted in the Army Air Force in about 1943 and went into flight training and eventually flew the B-24 Liberator, a 4-engine bomber. Ralph had actually learned to fly before going into the military but he did not tell them he had already learned to fly. Ralph was assigned to the 466th Bomb Group, 8th Air Force located in northern England. One year, when the Collings Foundation visited MAPS, Ralph got to fly in the copilot's seat of a B-24 and I was also on that flight. It was really an honor to be on that flight with Ralph.

Chairman's notes continued on next page

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES *Continued*

Ralph was born in 1919 and the huge zeppelins, the Akron and Macon, were manufactured in Akron at the huge airdock in the late 1920's. I asked Ralph one day if he had ever seen one flying over and he replied that he sure had. Just to know someone who experienced this is exciting.

Ralph loved to take pictures and he kept up with all the latest technology. He shot many pictures at MAPS and occasionally he would surprise me with a framed, matted picture he took at MAPS. I was showing some personal pictures on a PC one time and he liked a sunset that I had taken and asked if I would send him the electronic version. About a week later, he had a copy all framed and he gave it to me. He also gave me a large picture of the WWII memorial with the Washington Monument in the back ground as a thank you for being his "guardian" on his Honor Flight to the WWII Memorial. Ralph didn't really need a "guardian" but I was able to be part of the flight. Ralph honored me with a few more pictures and they are all hanging in our "computer" room. I told Ralph we were renaming the room the Ralph Lynn Room.

Ralph had a way with the ladies and he attracted all ages. One time I was standing in the hangar between the gift shop and the Hall of Heroes and I happened to look towards the gift shop just as two young ladies glanced "my way" with big smiles. I sucked my tummy in and popped my chest out a bit, then they started walking towards me! Wait a minute! They are walking past me. I looked back and there was Ralph, Bob Withee and Don Block. He had a couple hospital stays back in 2015 and all his nurses loved him. He would remember their names, ask a little about them and when they came in to MAPS he always greeted them with a smile and by name and maybe ask them a friendly question.

About 6 or 7 years ago I was looking at my smart phone, checking weather or emails. Ralph came up and wanted to know all about my phone. I gave Ralph a detailed run down and he said, "I'm really intrigued." About three weeks later he saw me and said, "look at my new phone." Ralph was 91 or 92 at the time and he learned a new way of using a smartphone!

I received these two messages from friends of mine who knew Ralph through different organizations.

"Ralph was an **Honorable Patriot, devout Christian and a true gentleman** in every sense of the word."

"Ralph became a warm friend through our Massillon genealogy group; he was missed! And I know MAPS does, also. My condolences to you and all members of your group of supportive members."

Excerpts from an interview with Ralph Lynn at the 8th Air Force Historical Society reunion in St. Louis, Missouri October 2011.



**Ralph was a member of the 466th Bomb Group,
784th Squadron**

Ralph related the story of sailing on the Queen Mary over to Attlebridge, England to meet up with other members of the 466th Bomb Group. There were 15,000 soldiers on the ship - plus the crew. Since there were not enough bunks for everyone, half of the soldiers had to sleep on the deck while the other half slept below in bunks. The next night they would reverse the sleeping arrangements. Because they sailed in February of 1944, Ralph developed pneumonia during the voyage but he recuperated quickly.

Ralph spoke of his bombing run to Oschersleben, Germany where they were to bomb an aircraft factory. The Germans were not happy and Ralph's plane was hit hard by German fighters. Two 20mm shells came through the windshield, another 20mm hit the #4 engine. A 50-caliber hit the #1 engine and did significant damage. An unknown "something" hit the tail and when they landed, a good portion of it was missing.

The plane was in serious jeopardy of being pursued further by German fighters so they spun the B-24 from bombing altitude to 10 thousand feet so the Germans would think they were going down. Ralph said it took all of their strength to pull the plane out of the spin but they were successful and "limped" back to England.

Memories of Ralph Lynn

"It was a privilege and honor to have known Ralph and worked with him as a tour guide. He epitomized what MAPS stands for. I learned so much from him during the tours. He was a goldmine of information and knowledge. Yet there was a humility there and a quiet reserve that made him something very special.

When I interviewed him for an article for the Suburbanite that profiled his wartime service as a B-24 pilot it was one of the most enjoyable interviews I ever conducted. Listening to Ralph describe his wartime experiences was so interesting, yet he never came across as bragging about what he had done. If anything he gave you the impression that he had done nothing out of the ordinary. That was the type of individual Ralph was, no bravado, no bluster, just a down to earth guy who took everything in stride with a smile and a wonderful, happy-go-lucky spirit that affected everyone around him. He was truly "one of the greatest of the greatest generation!"

Anyone who ever heard Ralph recite the epic World War Two poem, "High Flight" by John Magee, came away with a lump in their throat and perhaps a tear in their eye. No matter how many times you heard him recite it, it was always a special treat. Now, Ralph "has put out his hand and touched the face of God." Thank you for so many wonderful memories. May God bless you and may you rest in eternal peace, Ralph."

Jim Mesco

"We have lost another of the Greatest Generation--it seems just as the world needs them again. But Ralph Lynn was one of our own. When the time comes for us to take up his call, courage and inspiration we will find in the remembered image of Ralph, straight and steady, reciting from memory "Oh I have slipped the surly bonds of earth and danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings..."

Bob Barnett

"Ralph Lynn was an individual that once you meet him, you will never forget him. I met Ralph when I was MAPS Tour Guide Coordinator. When Ralph became a member, he asked to volunteer as a Tour Guide. This was how I got to know Ralph. Ralph was a great Tour Guide in the way he presented an interesting and informative tour. Ralph was a natural and enlightening speaker that seemed to be able to retain the attention of those he spoke to. I was blessed and lucky in knowing and working with Ralph.

May his memories live on forever here at MAPS."

Dick Stahl



"I did not know Ralph very well, or for very long. But in the time I came to know him at MAPS, I believe I can give him what I think is the best complement one person can give another. He was a decent human being. I will miss him. Many will miss him. However, he will never really be gone from MAPS as he and his stories will live on every time a Tour Guide tells a guest about our World War II volunteer who flew B-24s."

Doug Perry



Memories of Ralph Lynn

“Five years ago, after retiring from the Federal Government, I became a MAPS member and wanted to volunteer. Initially I had no interest in becoming a tour guide because I had no military experience. However, I was encouraged to do so due a need in that area and was turned over to Ralph Lynn as a mentor. Ralph immediately impressed me with his passion, knowledge and personal experiences. But more importantly, he was gentleman and a true hero of his generation. Those of us who were blessed to get to know him are certainly very lucky.”

Steve Gyalai

“It is an honor to have known Ralph, only at MAPS can we rub elbows with the great generation. It is sad to see them go. Leona has all the photos he would take of her at Halloween, he was a pro with the camera. I always felt so lucky to talk to him. Where else could I hear firsthand the experiences of a WW2 pilot. I know they can't be with us forever but it was indeed a great honor to have known him. God Bless Him!”

Don and Leona Neidert



Ralph celebrating his 94th birthday in 2013



“Ralph Lynn was one of the first people to welcome my husband and me to MAPS so many years ago. I always looked forward to his huge and infectious smile, bear-hugs, and gentle voice—like the favorite uncle who lived nearby. Ralph taught me a lot about aviation & WWII. He was a true gentle gentleman, and to me a Super Man.

Ralph, thank you for your service to help preserve humanity.”

Faith Barnett

“Of the many conversations I had with Ralph, one stands out for me. His Squadron flew 3 missions that day over Omaha Beach. He flew 2 of them at the same time my Dad and Uncle George were landing on it.”

John Disko



Memories of Ralph Lynn

“All one has to do is say “Ralph” and you get a big smile. Folks have nothing but kind words to say about him. Dapper, sweet, loving, kind and always willing to help. Once in a while you might catch him in the lobby catching a few winks between tours. What a sweet gentleman. He will be missed. Thanks Ralph for being the special person you were and giving us so many memories.”

*Jim & MaryAnn (I'll miss the hugs)
Cameron*

“There are times that words fail to convey what you really want to say. The world has lost a piece of history and we at MAPS have lost a friend. An officer and a gentleman, he gained the respect of all by his knowledge, quiet demeanor and easy smile. Ralph Lynn was an example of what we all wanted to be when (and if) we grew up. He lived the history that we can only talk about and told of his experiences with an ability and grace that few of us will ever match. He could make history come alive for all ages with just a few words. Listening to his stories never grew old. Tours with high school students was always one of Ralph's favorite times. By the end of the session, you could find him surrounded by students asking questions and posing for photos with him. He was always ready with a smile and a wink.”

Reed Kimball



*Ralph Lynn -
Always the teacher*

Memories of Ralph Lynn

"Ralph told this story to me some years ago.

There was a special event going on at the museum. Ralph said it had been a long day and he was getting a little tired. He decided to drop into the Gallery of Heroes for a few minutes and take a break. There was an empty chair by his WWII flight suit that was on display, so he sat down and closed his eyes for a few minutes. He remembered hearing two women softly talking and he sensed that they were very close to him. He heard one of them say, "That mannequin almost looks real." Ralph said, that did it. He opened his eyes and said, "I am real." That caused quite a scream from both of them. After they recovered, everyone had a good laugh. Ralph said he apologized to them for scaring them so badly.

I heard Ralph tell that story many times. I think it was one of his favorites."

Dick Johnson



Ralph in 2011

"I will always remember that awesome smile that man had, especially after he rode the Collings B-24."

Linda Lippert

"I was really impressed that he could recite HIGH FLIGHT from memory at his age. I've tried to memorize it and have not been successful yet."

Ken Ramsay



Honor Flight 2009



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In Memory of Ralph Lynn 1919-2018

