

William K. Haines, Sr.



William K. Haines, Sr. was born in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio on December 29, 1920. He earned his pilot's license at the age of 16 and proudly served in the United States Army Air Corps during World War II. He enlisted as an Aviation Cadet in September of 1942 and graduated from the single-engine advanced program in April of 1944. Although Haines trained as a fighter pilot, he served as a bomber pilot in the four-engine B-24 Liberator, flying fifty-one missions (the first 27 as the aircraft co-pilot) in the European Theater of Operations (ETO) between September of 1944 and April of 1945. Haines served in the 720th Bomb Squadron, 450th Bomb Group of the 15th Air Force, stationed at Manduria Airfield in Southern Italy.

His unit was awarded two Presidential Unit Citations (for raids on Methenschmidt and Polesti). He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with two Oak Leaf Clusters, three Air Medals, and the European Campaign Medal. He also received a pin and membership in the exclusive "Caterpillar Club" open only to airmen who had to use a parachute to exit a stricken aircraft.



William K. Haines, Sr.
1920 - 2011

On February 9, 1945, on a bombing mission to bomb German railroad marshalling yards near Vienna, Austria, very heavy and accurate anti-aircraft fire damaged his plane's right wing and landing gear. The plane had no flaps, no breaks, one gear down and was running low on fuel. Haines decided to head for his home base. As they were approaching the base, the #1 engine quit. He ordered the crew to bail out. His co-pilot stayed with the plane to help set the autopilot to fly the plane out into the Mediterranean Sea and crash into the water. Haines ordered the co-pilot to jump and soon followed himself. He pulled the ripcord on his parachute and nothing happened! He tried again and still nothing! With the ground coming up very fast, he tried one last time and the chute opened seconds before he hit the ground. Haines looked up to see his pilotless aircraft circle overhead three times. Then it headed out to sea finally crashing in the water. He said later "It was like that plane was watching to see that the whole crew got down safe. He and his crew were soon picked up by base personnel and driven back to Manduria.

After World War II, Haines taught military flight for two years at Bartow, Florida. He then served in the Air National Guard, Retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel.

William Haines retired from Haines & Company (his printing and publishing company located in North Canton) in 2001 where he has served as President and CEO. He also served in the Executive Committee and Advisory Board at the MAPS Air Museum where he was instrumental in obtaining funding in the early days of the museum. He also served in the National Advisory Board of the National First Ladies Library and was an avid collector of historical memorabilia.

William Kendall Haines Sr. passed away on Sunday, December 11, 2011 at the age of 90.

Saturday August 11, 2012 the Haines Display located in the Gallery of Heroes and the W.K. Haines Sr. Memorial Garden were dedicated to the memory of Bill Haines.