

Pilot Recalls Trusty Bomber

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By TERRY JOYCE

World War II pilot recalls trusty bomber depicted in stamp

I'm indebted to Hanahan stamp collector and history buff Dwight Stuckey for alerting me to the South Carolina connection to the U.S. postage stamp shown here.

The stamp is from the U.S. Postal Service's "Classic American Aircraft" series, issued in 1997. It was taken from a photo shot by a TimeLife photographer on a training mission over England during World War II. It shows a B-17 Flying Fortress, the mainstay of the U.S. Army Air Forces' strategic bomber force in the war over Europe.



With a lot of help from Stuckey, I was able to speak with retired Air Force Maj. Everett E. Worrell Jr. Worrell, now of Virginia, is a former resident of Myrtle Beach and Surfside Beach.

On Aug. 5, 1944, he was the pilot in command of the plane depicted on the stamp.

Worrell remembers both the photo mission and the plane, nicknamed "Patches."

"We staged a six-ship echelon formation for the photographer," he said last week. "I know we sort of `posed' the aircraft in the sky over England instead of Germany, but still it was an unusual picture because it was taken in color."

Most photos in 1944 were black and white.

Worrell also remembers the combat missions he flew. The first in Patches occurred the following day, Aug. 6.

The last was on Oct 14, 1944, over Cologne.

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Patches went to the Air Force depot after that, Worrell said, while he and his crew flew another plane. He flew his 35th and last combat mission on Jan. 2, 1945.

Worrell left the Air Force after World War II but was recalled during the Korean War. He stayed on, specializing in electronics and communications until he retired in 1970. Several moves followed, including Myrtle Beach and, later, Surfside Beach.

Back in England, Patches got a new skin and a new name - Flack Magnet. Patches-aka Flack Magnet-made it through the war with more than 130 missions to its credit.

"I never really liked that name, "Flack Magnet," Worrell said, "but the B-17 was a great airplane. It could take a lot of punishment. It could even take off on two engines, something no other (four-engined) bomber could do.

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