



Lt. John Travers Baum, U.S. Army Air Corps

John Travers Baum was born October 3, 1920 in San Francisco, CA. His parents were Bertha Travers Baum and Charles Adrian Baum. In 1939 he was living in Los Angeles, CA. In 1935, he attended Pt. Loma High School in San Diego, CA. He attended Chaffey College, Ontario, CA and St. John's Military Academy, Los Angeles. His father, Charles "Spider" Baum, was a hall of fame pitcher in the Pacific Coast League. Following his playing days, Spider Baum served as Secretary-Treasurer for the Salt Lake City Bees, the Hollywood Stars and the San Diego Padres, retiring in 1939 as President of the Padres baseball team. Spider Baum was working at Rohr Aircraft when he was notified that his son was killed. John Baum also worked at Rohr Aircraft before he joined the U.S. Army Air Corps in April of 1942. Lt. Baum received his designation as a pilot in 1943. At that time the family lived at 639 D Street in Chula Vista, CA.

Following flight training John Baum was assigned to the 550th Bomber Squadron, 385th Bomber Group, 8th Air Force. This group flew 297 combat missions over France and Germany between June 11, 1943 and May 2, 1945. The group flew from Great Ashfield Airdrome located in Suffolk, England. The squadron flew the B-17. Each crew consisted of four officers and six enlisted men.

On September 16, 1943 131 of 147 B-17's were dispatched to hit two targets in Nantes France: 79 hit Nantes Harbor at 1502-1512 hours and 52 hit Nantes/Chateau-Bougon Airfield at 1509-1512. During this raid they claimed 22 Luftwaffe aircraft shot down. Seven B-17's were lost, one was damaged beyond repair and 47 others were damaged but repairable. Casualties were nine wounded and 60 missing in action. This mission was escorted by 79 P-47's. The P-47's suffered no losses or casualties and claimed two downed Luftwaffe aircraft. That same day, 93 B-17's hit La Pallice Harbor at 1755-1758 hours and Conac/Chateaubernard Airfield at 1731 hours. They also claimed 22 Luftwaffe aircraft downed. Four B-17's were lost, five damaged beyond repair and 17 others were damaged. Casualties were 44 killed in action, 9 wounded in action and 30 missing in action.

John T. Baum was killed on September 16, 1943 as the result of a midair collision between his aircraft "Mary Ellen II" and another B-17 from the 95th Bomber Group at Rickinghall, England. The collision occurred in reduced visibility operations. The bureau number of his aircraft was 42-30601. Great Ashfield was the home of the 385th B-17 Heavy Bomb Group. Today the airfield is gone as the area is almost all farm land.

Lt. Baum is buried in Mt. Calvary Cemetery, Portland Oregon. He was survived by his parents and his wife the former Martha Jane Dowling of Van Nuys, CA. His family and wife lived in Chula Vista at the time of his death. Baum Street is named in his honor. Baum Street is located in the Otay Ranch area of Chula Vista, CA. It is the northern boundary of Mulberry Park in the Santa Barbara subdivision.



385th Bomber Group Patch 550th Bomber Squadron Patch Great Ashfield Airdrome

Photos of Lt. Baum, B-17 "Mary Ellen II", and patches courtesy of the Morris Family Archives

(www.spiderbaum.com)