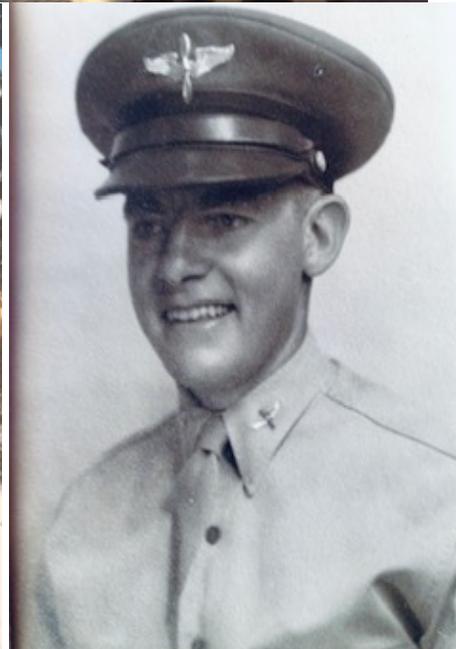


William W Worthen  
1922-2020



Our Dad, a member of the Greatest Generation, climbed one more time into the cockpit of a B-17 and departed the surly bonds of earth for his final mission Thursday, February 27, 2020. Daughter Gail, son Bradford and son-in-law Chris were there to see him on his way.... off to the heavens.

At the young age of 20, Bill enlisted in the Army Air Force . With the rank of 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant, 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force he earned the right to the co-pilot seat in a new B-17 Flying Fortress headed to Europe to assist the Allies in defeating Adolf Hitler.

Stationed in Knettishall, England Dad's initial commitment was to fly 25 bombing missions. He volunteered for 10 additional missions. Returning from his 35<sup>th</sup> and final bombing run on Christmas Eve 1944, Dad's B-17 was badly damaged by enemy flack injuring his Captain, the pilot. 3 of the aircraft's 4 engines had been hit and failed. Dad took control of the plane, crash landing in a field in Belgium. All were rescued by Allied Forces. All survived.

Bill and his wife Rae traveled annually to the Mighty 388<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group reunions held around the United States and England to reminisce and rejoice with lifelong B-17 veterans and their families.

Perhaps one of Dad's most famous missions was not a bombing run at all but a highly top secret flight. His crew was selected to escort Joseph P Kennedy Jr on what was an ill-fated attempt to deliver a lethal blow to the enemy. Dad's crew was to provide escort coverage for Kennedy. Positioned 500 feet off the right wing of Kennedy's plane when it blew up, Dad's B-17 became inverted due the violent explosion. He and his pilot had all they could do to control their Flying Fortress.

Soon after the war Dad was in Hyannis, Massachusetts for a weekend getaway. John and Bobby Kennedy heard Dad was nearby and met up with him on the beach near the Kennedy Compound thanking Dad for his bravery and to learn more of the fate of their oldest brother.

William W Worthen was born in Springfield, Massachusetts December 20, 1922 the son of Ernest N and Emma L (Merrill) Worthen. His mother nicknamed him Birdie as he was always happily singing and whistling. A quality he shared throughout his life.

Bill spent his younger years traveling to the family farm in Worthington MA as well as summers on Chebeague Island, Maine. The family cottage on Chebeague was one of his favorite places to be....Dad was a highly proficient gardener growing an amazing variety of vegetables and could dig a bushel of clams as fast as any native islander.

Dad was always comfortable in the kitchen cooking and baking. A confidence inherited by Gail and Brad.

Bill was a natural outdoorsman. He spent summers in his formative years exploring wildlife on the family farm and traveled by train to the Rangeley Lake Region of Maine for boys camp. He attended Williston Academy and graduated in 1950 from the UVM College of Agriculture. Dad enjoyed immensely his life-long friendship with his Delta Psi Fraternity brother, hunting buddy and best man John Kubin and his wife Sally.

Dad was a graceful fly fisherman casting the headwaters of the Lamoille River. He canoed regularly on the Winooski River and Waterbury Reservoir often during hunting season looking for the unsuspecting buck stopping by waters edge.

At UVM Dad was a member of the Varsity Nordic Ski Team, specializing in ski jumping. Dad continued to ski his entire life. Whether it was skinning up Camels Hump mid winter or tele skiing Stowe's Front Four, Dad always enjoyed the Vermont winters. He took his final runs at the age of 90.

Bill is survived by his daughter Gail Worthen and her partner Rick Hale, his granddaughters Emma Rae Todd and Addie F Todd, his son Bradford J Worthen and son-in-law Christopher Copley. He leaves behind nephews Willie, Stevie, Scott and Billy; nieces Susan, Mary Ellen, Nancy, Mary Beth and Helen Rae and great niece Christiane. He also leaves behind family friends Linda Doane, Andrew Todd, Trudy Stanley, and Christopher LaCroix.

Bill was predeceased by his loving and devoted wife of 65 years Rae M Worthen, his parents Ernest and Emma and his siblings Merrill, Katherine, Judith and niece Judith Maud.

Dad resided the past 2 ½ years at Gazebo North Assisted Living in South Burlington. His apartment looked back at Elsom Parkway where he and Rae lived for 63 years. Gail and Bradford praise the incredible team at the Gazebo. They all loved Dad and he loved them too. The care he received was beyond expectations...right to Dad's final moments. In addition he had excellent care and guidance provided by Doctors Jennifer Gilwee and Zail Berry as well as the Visiting Nurse Association. Thank you all from the bottom of our hearts.

A celebration of Bill's life will be held Saturday, May 16, 2020 11:00 AM at the Riverview Cemetery, Richmond VT. Arrangements by Gifford Funeral Services, Richmond VT with condolences at [www.GiffordFuneralHome.com](http://www.GiffordFuneralHome.com)