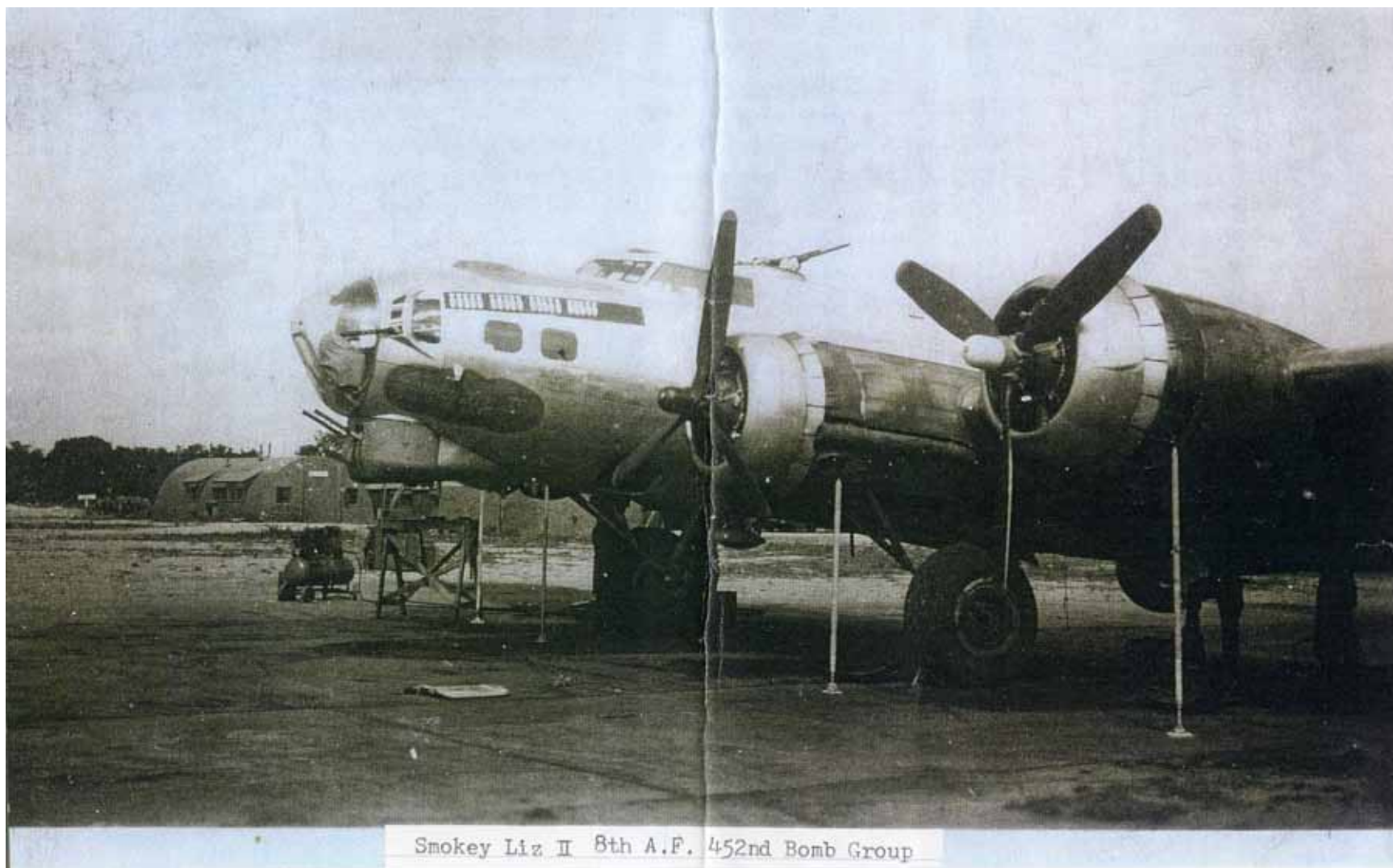


KEEP 'EM FLYING



Wilbur J. Derr

Army Air Corps • 452nd Bomb Group



The Smokey Liz II, B-17 Aircraft that Wilbur Derr flew on.

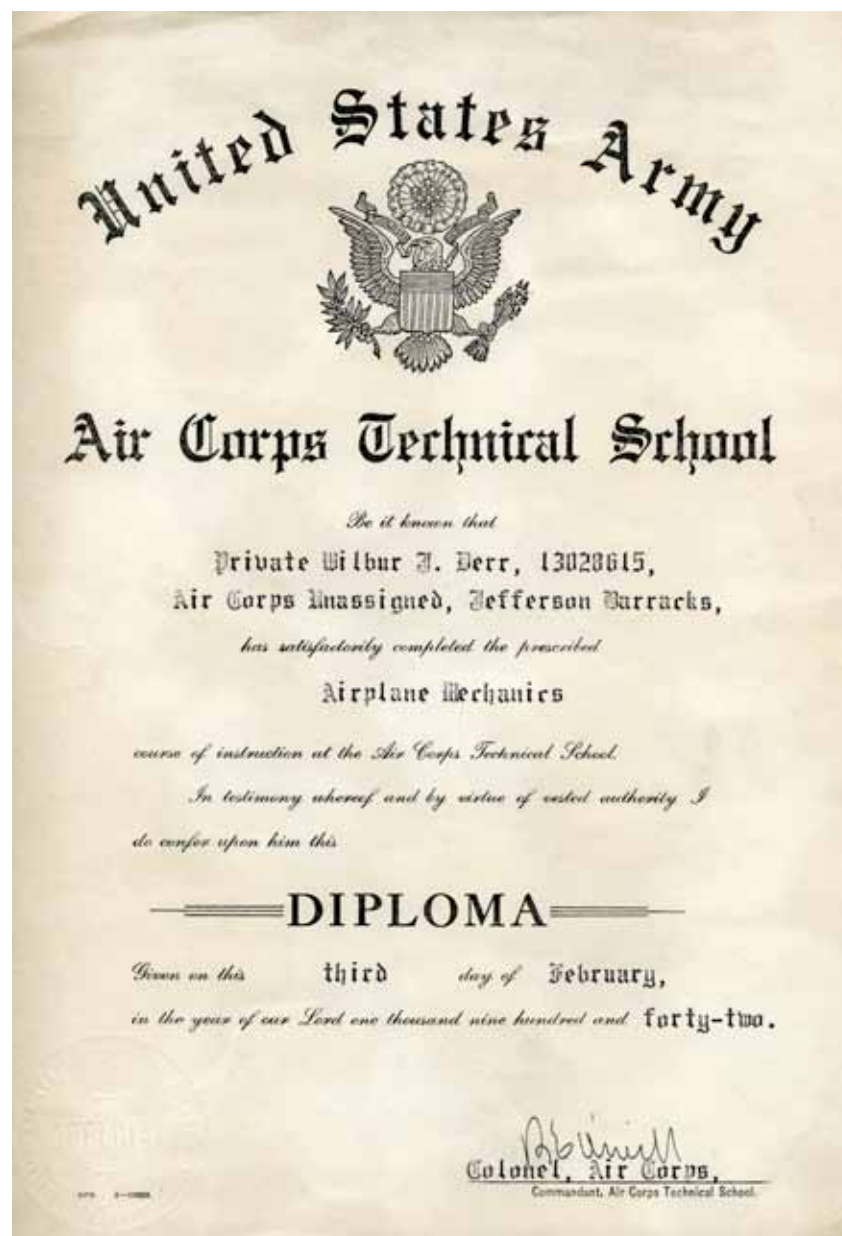
Wilbur Jacob Derr was born to Jacob and Mary Derr in Tamaqua, Pennsylvania on July 9, 1921. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps on August 4, 1941 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. By August 21, 1943, then S/Sgt Derr was assigned to the 730th Bomb Squadron as an airplane Crew Chief and training at Camp Rapid, Rapid City, South Dakota.



Wilbur J. Derr, 1941



The Derr Brothers in the military: Wilbur, Frederick and Lester



Article in the Tamaqua local newspaper of Sgt Derr on leave

Wilbur Derr attended basic training in Camp Meade, which is now Fort Meade, in Maryland. He graduated Army Air Corps Technical School in airplane mechanics, February 1942 at Chanute Field in Ill. He was then assigned to Randolph Field Texas.

Men Become Anchors to Hold Down Planes at Randolph During Height of Hurricane



MEN WERE USED AS EMERGENCY ANCHORS WHEN SEVERAL PLANE MOORINGS PARTED
at the height of the hurricane here Sunday. Damage to basic training planes at Randolph Field during the blow was comparatively minor, due to quick action of officers, aviation cadets and enlisted men. All planes were checked for possible strains or damage and will be back at flight training Tuesday.



8th Air Force



452 Bomb Group



730th Bomb Squadron

Patches from the groups Derr was assigned to at Camp Rapid, Rapid City, South Dakota.

As of August 21, 1943, Wilbur J. Derr was assigned as an original member of the 730th Bombardment Squadron. The documentation below is the Personnel Roster for the 730th Bombardment Squadron, 452nd Bombardment Group at Camp Rapid, Rapid City, South Dakota.

730TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H)
452ND BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)
Camp Rapid, Rapid City, South Dakota

As of midnight 21 August 1943

ROSTER OF OFFICERS

MAJOR

Rosen, Edward A.

Sq. Ex. Officer

1st LTS.

Hayes, Ralph S. Jr.
 Edmundson, W.F.
 Hall, Thomas
 Wirt, Dain

Sq. Commander
 Fl. Surgeon
 Sq. Comm. Officer
 Sq. Operations Officer

2nd LTS.

Bird, Donald D.
 Brackbill, Robert M.
 Canoe, Ulysses B.
 Houston, Frank L.
 Pyles, Harmon
 Jarembinsky, John Jr.
 Valle, Jimmie H.
 Carlson, Carl G.

Sq. Navigator
 Sq. Engineer
 Sq. Bombardier
 Sq. Co-Pilot
 Ass't Engineering Officer
 Sq. Armament Officer
 Pilot Commander "A" Flight
 Sq. Intelligence Officer

ROSTER OF EM

1

1st Sergeant

Gotton, Edgar E.

1st Sergeant

MASTER SERGEANT

Moravec, Charles

Airplane Line Chief

TECHNICAL SERGEANTS

Kirner, Joseph E.
 Rivera, Manuel

Airplane Crew Chief
 Bombight Mechanic

STAFF SERGEANTS

ADAMS, IRA R.
 Banks, William D.
 Chochrek, Walter S.
 Derr, Wilbur J.
 Dixon, Ivan G.
 Fountain, L. H.
 Gafford, Lee E.
 Gents, Herbert J.

Photo Lab Chief
 Airplane Mech-Gunner
 Parachute Rigger/Repair
 Airplane Crew Chief
 Airplane Armorer Gunner
 Airplane Crew Chief
 Airplane Crew Chief
 Power Turret & Gunsight



The main gate of the Deopham Green Air Base in England

During World War II, Wilbur Derr was stationed at Deopham Green airfield in England. He, with the 452nd Bomb Group were assigned there in January of 1944.

Deopham Green was built in 1943 for the USAAF. It served as a base for the US 8th Army Airforce's strategic bombing campaign in Europe. Deopham Green is located approximately 5.5 miles south west of Wymondham, between Hingham and Great Ellingham, England. Fully equipped with B-17 Fortresses, the airfield was constructed for heavy bomber use and was occupied by the 452nd Bomb Group. Combat operations began in February of 1944. In addition to strategic missions, the 452nd also flew missions in support of ground forces. This included aiding in the preparation for the invasion of Normandy by bombing airfields, V-weapon sites, bridges, and other objectives in France. The group flew a total of 250 missions from Deopham Green during the war and lost 110 bombers in this time. The base has since been reverted to agricultural use, however a memorial and dedication plaque remains.



The control tower at Deopham Green Airfield



B-17 flying over Deopham Green Airfield



Deopham Green Air Field, 1946



Plaque at Deopham Green dedicated to the 452nd Bomb Group



During his time in service, Wilbur maintained a romance with his sweetheart, Mildred Yanicheck. They met in Pennsylvania before he enlisted with the Air Corps. Above are a couple of the photos Wilbur sent back to her during their time apart.



Another photo Wilbur Derr sent to Mildred of him in his flight jacket.

Sgt. Derr "Keeps 'Em Flying"



Technical Sergeant Wilbur J. Derr, 22, son of Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Derr, 22 East Elm street, is shown working on an engine of one of the many huge Flying Fortresses at an Eighth Air Force Bomber Station in England. As a crew chief, it is Sgt. Derr's duty to keep the planes in his care in perfect mechanical condition in order to efficiently bomb the industrial targets in Nazi Europe. Sgt. Derr enlisted at Philadelphia on August 4, 1941 and received basic training at Camp Meade, Md. Prior to his enlistment he was a truck driver for the Tamaqua Produce Company. He is engaged to Miss Mildred Yanichuk, 245 East Ridge street, Lansford.

(Official U. S. Army Photo)

News article of Wilbur Derr Tamaqua local newspaper – Sgt. Derr keeps them flying



Sgt. Wilbur J. Derr Is Ground Crew Chief

An Eighth AAF Bomber Station, England—As ground crew chief, Technical Sergeant Wilbur J. Derr, 22, of Tamaqua, Pa., is making an important contribution to the success of Eighth AAF bombing attacks on Nazi targets.

The continuing and mounting assaults by Eighth AAF Flying Fortresses on Hitler's occupied Europe could never be carried out if it were not for the skill of the ground crew mechanics in restoring the battle damaged Fortresses to operational status and maintaining them in tip-top condition.

As ground crew chief, Sgt. Derr has charge of all the repair and maintenance work on his Fortress. He sees to it that the gas tanks are filled, that the oxygen system works properly and the engines are running perfectly. He assigns other ground crewmen to repair any damage that the Fort might have received in gun-and-cannon duels with Luftwaffe fighters five miles in the sky above military and industrial targets in Germany and the occupied countries of Europe.

When the ships are about due to return from their mission, the crew chief and his men go out on the line and start "sweating out" the return of their Fort. As soon as the ship lands the sergeant makes a thorough inspection and starts the long round all over again.

Son of Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Derr, of 22 East Elm street, Tamaqua, Penn., Sgt. Derr prior to his entry into the AAF in August 1941, worked for the Tamaqua Produce Company in Tamaqua.

News article of Wilbur Derr, ground crew chief



Wilbur Derr (bottom , right) together with other ground crew members

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION
452nd BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION (WW II)

(Print or type)

<u>DERR</u>	<u>WILBUR</u>	<u>JACOB</u>	<u>13028615</u>
Last Name	First	Middle	War-time Serial #
<u>1503 OAK ST., COATESVILLE, PENNA. OR</u>			
<u>5 PENNA. STATE POLICE, COATESVILLE, PENNA.</u>			
Current Mailing address			

WORLD WAR II STATUS			
Unit to which assigned (Group, Sqdn., Det) _____			
<u>452, Bb. Gp., 730 Bn. Sq. From the very first day at Rapid City, xxxx S.C. until</u>			
<u>end of the War.</u>			
Missions completed? <u>5 missions.</u>			
Were you MIA? <u>no</u> Wounded? <u>no</u> POW? <u>no</u> Interned & where? _____			
Details of the above mission to include the mission date, location, circumstances, escape, internment, or neutral nation in which you were _____			
the five missions were one over Berlin, then the trip(second one) from England to Russia, Russia to Italy and return to England. and the other one I do not remember.			
I was one of the first to arrive in England with the Group, as I flew across as the Crew Chief of my B-17. While there in England I took care of three planes at one time. One was the lead ship, which I believe the first pilot was Lt. J. H. Vallee., also a lead ship, which he later took over and one with raider in.			
CURRENT STATUS			
Check the following that apply: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Active Member <input type="checkbox"/> Reserve. Rank at Retire is <u>W/Sgt.</u> which I received			
Inactive Member <input type="checkbox"/> Retired <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Current Rank or civilian			
in March of 1943. Present Occupation.			
Occupation <u>Penna. State Police.</u> Current military			
assignment address and current serial number _____			

Please list the names and addresses of others you know that could receive questionnaires and would be interested in attending reunions.			

Wilbur's application to the 452nd Bomb group association after the war but this tells in his words what missions he flew on.



Wilbur (left, top row) with the crew of the E-Rat-icator

E-Rat-Icator: Since the goal of this crew, and the Allies in general, was to eradicate Hitler and his Nazi regime, they chose the name and nose art which depicted a showering bomb aimed at Hitler depicted as a rat. This was the only original 452nd Bomb Group plane to never be taken out of service due to enemy action and return home after the War. The original pilot was Jack Mitsch. Plane #42-39970.



Wilbur Derr (right) with a crew member by the B-17 Punched Fowl



B-17 with its crew, unknown names



B-17 in flight



The Punched Fowl and unknown crew members

On the September 11, 1944 , Wilbur Derr flew on a mission to bomb oil refineries in Chemnitz. They continue on to land in the USSR. Because of this mission, he was awarded a medal from the Russian government.

Below are from documents of the combat missions Derr flew on with the 730th Bomb Squadron and 452nd Bomb Group.

Crew 378 A/C 43-37878
#5 Lead Sq 452nd "C" Group

P CONNEX, DONALD H.	2ND LT. 0-615082
CP BALDWIN, MERTON E.	2ND LT 0-822589
N HOERIG, ROGER	2ND LT 0-723616
B BAILEY, LYNN N.	2ND LT 0-769087
TT MILLER, LEN J.	T/SGT. 18226841
RO KEGEL, FRANK	T/SGT. 32035278
BT DORAN, WILLIAM J.	S/SGT. 36636108
WG SPEKKER, VERN G.	S/SGT. 39457734
TG TOMAC, PETER J.	S/SGT. 37537604
X DERR, WILBUR J.	M/SGT. 13026615

September 11, 1944 flight to Chemnitz



Mission March 15 1945, Wilbur Derr flew on Smokey Liz II, B-17 (pictured above) to Oranienburg.

~~#2 High Sq A/C 542~~

P Caldwell, William	2nd Lt
CP Miller, Walter	2nd Lt
N Rosen, Marvin	2nd Lt
TG Anderson, John	T/SGT
TT Carsons, Fernand	T/SGT
RC Howard, Charles	T/SGT
BT Midian, Frederic	S/SGT
RO Spillman, David	S/SGT
TG John Kuhn	S/SGT
X Derr, Wilbur	M/SGT

March 15, 1945 flight to Oranienburg.



SEPARATION QUALIFICATION RECORD

SAVE THIS FORM. IT WILL NOT BE REPLACED IF LOST

This record of job assignments and special training received in the Army is furnished to the soldier when he leaves the service. In its preparation, information is taken from available Army records and supplemented by personal interview. The information about civilian education and work experience is based on the individual's own statements. The content may present this document to former employers, prospective employers, representatives of schools or colleges, or use it in any other way that may prove beneficial to him.

1. LAST NAME—FIRST NAME—MIDDLE INITIAL			MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS		
DERR, WILBUR J.			10. MONTHS	11. GRADE	12. MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY
2. ARMY SERIAL NO.	3. GRADE	4. SOCIAL SECURITY NO.	7	Sgt	Airplane Mechanic (747)
13 OAR 615	W/Sgt.	Unknown	36	W/Sgt.	Airplane Maintenance Technician (750)
5. PERMANENT RESIDENCE ADDRESS (Street, City, County, State)					
2 Elm St. Schuylkill County Pottsville, Penna.					
6. DATE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE	7. DATE OF SEPARATION	8. DATE OF BIRTH			
4 Aug 41	3 Oct. 45	9 July 21			
9. PLACE OF SEPARATION					
AAF Separation Center Sioux City, Iowa					

SUMMARY OF MILITARY OCCUPATIONS

13. TITLE—DESCRIPTION—RELATED CIVILIAN OCCUPATION
AIRPLANE MAINTENANCE TECHNICIAN: Supervised the inspection, maintenance, adjustment and minor repair of aircraft and aircraft equipment. Performed prescribed inspections of aircraft to determine necessary servicing, adjustments, or parts replacements. Determined priority of jobs, and assigned work to insure proper condition of aircraft. Instructed subordinates in interpretation of technical orders and maintenance methods. Analyzed and trouble shot unusual malfunctioning of aircraft. Supervised maintenance of shop records, airplane and engine maintenance forms, and requisition and care of tools, equipment, parts and supplies. Considerable knowledge and experience in inspection and maintenance of aircraft.

CONVERSION: Airplane crew chief, Flight chief, Inspector, Line chief, Airplane mechanic, Maintenance & operations instructor.

WD AGO FORM 100
1 JUL 1945

This form supersedes WD AGO Form 100, 11 July 1945, which will not be used.

MILITARY EDUCATION

14. NAME OR TYPE OF SCHOOL—COURSE OR CURRICULUM—DURATION—DESCRIPTION

AAPTS, GRANITE STEEL, ILL: Airplane & Engine Mechanics, 20 weeks. Instruction included both theory & practical training in operation & repair of in-line & radial engines, use and installation of engine accessories (turbo superchargers, carburetors, generators, fuel pumps, etc.) Included also reading of blueprints, use of mechanics tools, and engine storage.

CIVILIAN EDUCATION

15. HIGHEST GRADE COMPLETED	16. DEGREE OR DIPLOMA	17. YEAR LEFT SCHOOL	18. OTHER TRAINING OR SCHOOLING	
12th Grade	Diploma	1939	19. COURSE—NAME AND ADDRESS OF SCHOOL—DATE	20. DURATION
14. NAME AND ADDRESS OF LAST SCHOOL ATTENDED			None	
Tamaqua High School Tamaqua, Penn.				
19. MAJOR COURSES OF STUDY				
Commercial				

CIVILIAN OCCUPATIONS

21. TITLE—NAME AND ADDRESS OF EMPLOYER—INCLUSIVE DATES—DESCRIPTION
TRUCK DRIVER: Was employed by the Tamaqua Produce Co. of Tamaqua, Pennsylvania for 1 1/2 years. Drove a ten panel truck delivering produce from warehouse. Also drove all lighter trucks. Made minor road repairs on trucks.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

22. REMARKS		
23. SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING SEPARATED	24. SIGNATURE OF SEPARATION CLASSIFICATION OFFICER	25. NAME OF OFFICER (Typed or Stamp)
Wilbur J. Derr	James H. Williams	JAMES H. WILLIAMS, Capt., A.C.

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE—12-57571

Wilbur Derr's separation papers

ENLISTED RECORD AND REPORT OF SEPARATION									
HONORABLE DISCHARGE									
1. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL Deir Wilbur J			3. LAST SERIAL NO. 13 028 615		4. GRADE M Sgt		5. AER OF SERVICE AC		6. COMPONENT RA
8. ORGANIZATION 24th AAF Base Unit			9. DATE OF DISCHARGE 3 Oct 45		10. PLACE OF DISCHARGE Center AAB Sioux City Iowa				
11. POSTWARD ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES 22 Elm St Ypsauke Pa			12. DATE OF BIRTH 9 Jul 21		13. PLACE OF BIRTH Ypsauke Pa				
14. ADDRESS FROM WHICH DISCHARGE WILL BE ISSUED See 9			15. COLOR 1720 24. COLOR 24. 16. HEIGHT Brown Brown 5' 9"		17. WEIGHT 135 lbs		18. NO. OF DEPENDENTS None		
19. TYPE OF DISCHARGE See 9			20. MARITAL STATUS Single		21. U.S. CITIZENSHIP Yes		22. SPECIAL DISCHARGE OR NO. Truck Driver (Heavy) 7-36,250		
MILITARY HISTORY									
23. DATE OF INDUCTION 4 Aug 41		24. DATE OF EXPIRATION 4 Aug 41		25. PLACE OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE Philadelphia Pa					
26. SERVICE NUMBER See 9		27. SERVICE NUMBER See 9		28. SERVICE NUMBER See 9					
29. SERVICE NUMBER See 9		30. SERVICE NUMBER See 9		31. SERVICE NUMBER See 9					
32. SERVICE NUMBER See 9									
33. SERVICE NUMBER See 9									
34. SERVICE NUMBER See 9									
35. SERVICE NUMBER See 9									
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97. SERVICE NUMBER See 9									
98. SERVICE NUMBER See 9									
99. SERVICE NUMBER See 9									
100. SERVICE NUMBER See 9									

Wilbur Derr's separation papers

47-1015

Army of the United States

Honorable Discharge

This is to certify that

WILSON J JEFF 13 028 615 Master Sergeant
242d AAF Base Unit

Army of the United States

*is hereby Honorably Discharged from the military
service of the United States of America.*

*This certificate is awarded as a testimonial of Honest
and Faithful Service to this country.*

Given at ARMY AIR FORCES SEPARATION CENTER
ARMY AIR BASE
STOUC CITY IOWA

Date 3 October 1945

STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA,
COUNTY OF SCHUYLKILL,

Recorded in the Office for the Recording of Deeds, &c., in and
said County, in U.S. Service Book 10 Page 227

Witness my hand and Official Seal at Pottsville this
11th day of October 1945

W. Harry Watson Recorder

James M. Miller
JAMES M MILLER
Major Air Corps

Wilbur Derr's honorable discharge from active duty

Honorable Discharge



from the Armed Forces of the United States of America

This is to certify that

M SGT WILBUR J DERR AF 13 028 615 USAFR

was Honorably Discharged from the

Army of the United States

on the 2nd *day of* October 1948 *This certificate is awarded*
as a testimonial of Honest and Faithful Service

ROBERT HERBISON Lt Col USAF
2237th AF Reserve Training Center
Reading, Pennsylvania

Wilbur Derr's discharge from reserves



A little over two years after his honorable discharged from active duty, Wilbur Derr and Mildred Yanicheck were married on January 17, 1948. They settled in Coatesville, PA where they raised three children, Virginia, Robert and Thomas. Wilbur and Mildred celebrated 54 years of marriage together.



Wilbur Derr in Air Force Reserves as Air Police



After his discharge from the Army Air Corps, Wilbur Derr became a Trooper in the Pennsylvania State Police until his retirement in 1973.

He also continued to serve in the Air Force Reserves Air Police until 1961.



Wilbur Derr with Josh Newcomer (nephew in foreground) and Charles Newcomer (climbing) into B-17 nine O nine

Wilbur J. Derr of Coatesville

Wilbur J. Derr, 80, of Coatesville, died Wednesday, May 15, 2002, at Brandywine Hospital.

He was the husband of Mildred M. Yanicheck Derr, with whom he shared 54 years of marriage.

He was born in Tamaqua, the son of the late Jacob and Mary Derr.

He served in the U.S. Army Air Forces as a flight engineer on a B-17 during World War II.

He retired as a corporal in the Pennsylvania State Police in 1973.

He was the director of transportation for the Chester County Intermediate Unit and retired in 1985.

He was a member of Our Lady of the Rosary Church. He was a grand knight for Knights of Columbus Council 3286 and a member of the fourth degree. He was an active volunteer for the Boy Scouts of America for many

years.

In addition to his wife, he is survived by two sons, Robert E. Derr of Myrtle Beach, S.C., and Thoms F. Derr of New Hope; a daughter, Virginia D. Newcomer of Lancaster; two sisters, Elizabeth Nyberg of Harrisburg, Ill., and Jane Gouldner of Tamaqua; a brother, Lester Derr of Lewisburg; and seven grandchildren.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be 10:30 a.m. Monday, May 20, at Our Lady of the Rosary Church, 80 S. 17th St., Coatesville. Calling hours will be 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. Monday at the Harris-Mountain Funeral Home, 1030 East Lincoln Highway, Coatesville.

Burial will be in Philadelphia Memorial Park, Frazer.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Coatesville Catholic School Campaign, 605 East Lincoln Highway, Coatesville PA 19320.

