

**COMMANDING GENERAL
315th Bombardment Wing (VH)**



**Frank A. Armstrong, Jr.
Brigadier General, USAAF**

Biography

Lieutenant General Frank A. Armstrong, Jr.

Frank Alton Armstrong, Jr., was born at Hamilton, North Carolina on 24 May 1902. He was graduated from Wake Forest College in 1923 with an LLB. Two years later he received a BS degree from Wake Forest.

He began military service in February 1928, when he enlisted as a flying cadet at Nashville, North Carolina. He received primary training at Brooks Field, Texas, and advanced training at Kelly Field, Texas. He received his pilot's wings in March 1929, and during his career achieved command pilot status and accumulated around 11,000 flying hours. He flew the B-47 Stratojet in addition to many types of conventional aircraft..

Lieutenant Armstrong's first assignment after Kelly Field was with the Second Bombardment Group at Langley Field, Virginia. The Lieutenant returned to Kelly Field in 1930 to attend the Flying Instructors' School, and he then went to March Field, California, as a flying instructor. In 1931 he transferred to Randolph Field, Texas, where he continued his flying instruction duties.

In 1934, Lieutenant Armstrong received special navigation and instrument flying training at Rockwell Field, California, before he became a chief pilot with the Air Corps mail operations at Salt Lake City, Utah.

His first overseas tour was with the 78th Pursuit Squadron at Albrook Field, Canal Zone. Other pre-World War II assignments were: commander of the 13th Bombardment Squadron at Barksdale Field, Louisiana; a student at the Air Corps Tactical School at Maxwell Field, Alabama; a military observer in England; with the 90th Bombardment Squadron at Savannah, Georgia, Air Base; and duty at Air Force Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Early in 1942, Lieutenant Colonel Armstrong went to England to become the Operations Officer for the Eighth bomber Command. After promotion to Colonel during the same year, he became a Bombardment Group Commander and a Wing Commander.

Colonel Armstrong led the first daylight raid ever made by the USAAF over Axis territory. The raid over Rouen-Sotteville, France, blasted the target without loss of life or aircraft. For this operation, Colonel Armstrong received the Silver Star and an Oak Leaf Cluster to the Distinguished Flying Cross. (He had received the DFC in 1936 for the landing of a twin-engine amphibian after one engine had exploded.) He was also awarded the British Flying Cross for the Rouen-Sotteville raid, the first United States officer to be so honored.

Early in 1943, Brigadier General Armstrong led the group over Wilhelmshaven in the first heavy bomber raid over Germany proper. The B-17 experiences during this time became the basis of Bierne Lay Jr. and Sy Bartlett's book and movie, TWELVE O'CLOCK HIGH.

He returned to the United States in August 1943 and commanded Bombardment Training Wings at Dalhart, Texas, and Colorado Springs, Colorado. He then headed the 315th Bomb Wing at Peterson Field, Colorado.

Brigadier General Armstrong's stay in the United States was of short duration. By mid-year 1945 he went to the Pacific where he took command of the same Bomb Wing which he had trained at Peterson Field.

During the summer of 1945, he flew numerous missions over oil targets in Japan. In August he flew from Guam to Honshu, the longest and last very heavy bombing raid in the war, without bomb bay tanks and with an extremely heavy bomb load. In November 1945, he led the first non-stop flight from Hokkaido, Japan, to Washington, D.C., in a Boeing B-29 bomber. He was awarded an Oak Leaf Cluster to the Distinguished Flying Cross for each of the above achievements.

When World War II ended, Brigadier General Armstrong could look back on the many significant achievements he had made during this world-wide conflict. He had served in both theaters. He personally led the first and last heavy bombing raids of World War II.

Early in 1946, he became the Pacific Air Command Chief of Staff for Operations, and later that year he returned to the United States to become Senior Air Instructor at the Armed Forces Staff College at Norfolk, Virginia.

Early in 1949, Brigadier General Armstrong began the first of two tours in Alaska, where he headed the Alaskan Air Command. In addition to increasing the combat capabilities of the Air Force in Alaska, he pioneered (with other members of the Alaskan Air Command) an air route non-stop from Alaska to Norway, and from Norway to New York. Following the flight to Norway, he received the Gold Medal of the Aero Club of Norway, the highest civil award of that country.

Early in 1950, Armstrong was promoted to Major General and a year later returned to the United States to command Sampson Air Force Base, New York. He was commended for the harmonious relationship established between the base and surrounding civil communities in the trying period of base activation.

Later in 1951, Major General Armstrong became CG of the Sixth Air Division at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, where he trained and equipped the Air Force's first B-47 Stratojet wing.

The General, in late 1953, commanded SAC's Second Air Force at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana. He held this position for almost four years.

In July 1956, Major General Armstrong returned to Alaska to again head the Alaskan Air Command. Two months later, he became Commander in Chief, Alaska, was promoted to Lieutenant General, and headed the unified Alaskan Command with headquarters at Elmendorf Air Force Base. He retired in July 1961, and moved to Tampa, Florida. General Armstrong died on August 20, 1969, and was buried in the Arlington National Cemetery on August 25, 1969.