

S/Sgt Arthur Edmund Nelson

Born 1/27/1913

Died:1970 Plainfield
IL

Service # AF 16131654

Period of Service: WW II
B10 F2a.Monument, Am
Legion scrapbook – box 17,
niece Kathy Schultz through
Carol O'Neill

Entered service 10/7/1942, probably enlisting as he was 28 years when the war started.
Discharged 11/5/1948 Chanute Field Air Base, IL, the primary separation point for USAAF personnel.
Chanute was also the headquarters for training mechanics, communications and armament personnel.

340th Airdrome Squadron, 2nd Group LAAF Lakeland,Fl.

Sailed from Wilmington, CA 11/10/1944 on *SS Gen John Pope*, arriving Bombay 12/11/1944 at Camp Kalakovda. From Karachi, India in November, 1945 on *SS C.A. Morton* arriving 12/17/1945 NY.

Son of Olga Ottosen and Nels Nelson. They lived on Town Line across from Velkommen. Before service he and his father farmed on their property. Art married Lois Smith in Zion, IL on 6/20/1946, and later they adopted two children: Leonard Earl Nelson (born 6/24/45; died 11/7/2012 South Bend) and Mary Ann Nelson McCrimmon Thayer). He was an excellent mechanic, and invented an ice cutter several years before he was drafted. His brother Norman was one of six players on the basketball team that went through the ice in 1936.

Arthur served as staff sergeant in the 10th Army Air Corps. He was a mechanic in the China-Burma-India Theater, working on planes that carried materiel from India to China over the Himalayas. The conditions were very poor and he described living in tents on platforms over mud, so wet boots and clothing mildewed within days. Personnel survived on C-rations drinking only iodinated water. Even so they were suffering from malaria, plague, and all manner of insect and vermin borne illnesses. Work on the planes had to be done at night under makeshift covers for protection from the monsoon rains.

One day a plane came limping back from 'flying the hump' and when Art climbed the ladder to help the pilot, the pilot gasped, "My God, I thought I was going home when who do I see but Art Nelson." It was apparently another local boy, possibly Meredith, the old air mail pilot. Art did get a chance to see the Taj Mahal and was very impressed. He sent home small gifts to his mother, including a lovely beaded handbag still treasured by the family.

Art took leave from the service (possibly a break between enlistments as he served for several years after the war), and worked for the REA installing electricity on Washington Island. He later made a career at Commonwealth Edison in Plainfield, IL where he is buried.

Art died in Plainfield, IL, from one of the diseases contracted during the China-Burma campaign. Various accounts suggest that this may have been some sort of hemorrhagic fever contracted at the time. Although Art seemed to recover it apparently led his organs to slowly deteriorate over time, resulting in his death 25 years later. His records were destroyed in the military archives fire in St Louis in 1973.