



David Gaston Alford
1917-2002

David Gaston Alford

May 29, 1917 - May 20, 2002

AAFA #0503

Former Sheppard commander dies

Col. (ret.) David Gaston Alford, 84, of San Antonio, a former Sheppard Air Force Base commander in the 1960s, died May 20 in San Antonio.

His final Air Force assignment was as Sheppard's commander until his retirement in December 1965 and remained in Wichita Falls for another 14 years where he worked with the city of Wichita Falls and Nortex Regional Planning Commission.

Alford and his wife Dorothy lived at Air Force Village II in San Antonio for the past 13 years. He died from complications from bone cancer

He was the recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross.

He became an Army Corps Flying Cadet in 1939 and graduated from

flying school as part of Class 40E at Kelly AFB in August 1940.

Alford began his military flying career as part of an Atlantic patrol to search for German vessels. He is best known for his heroism while serving as Group Operations Officer for the 91st Bomb Group when his plane was shot down while leading a raid on Frankfurt, Germany, in February 1944. While under heavy flak attack, his B-17 bomber caught fire, and after bailing out his crew he discovered that his parachute was on the floor of the plane. Still he managed to safely land it in a cow pasture near Groenlo, Holland.

Thanks to the kindness of Dutch families and with the help of the Dutch Underground, he was hidden by patriots who risked their lives to

hide and feed him for more than seven months. With their help he evaded the enemy by traveling as a deaf and dumb typewriter repairman, and was picked up south of Liege, Belgium, by the U.S. Army as they overran the area in October 1944.

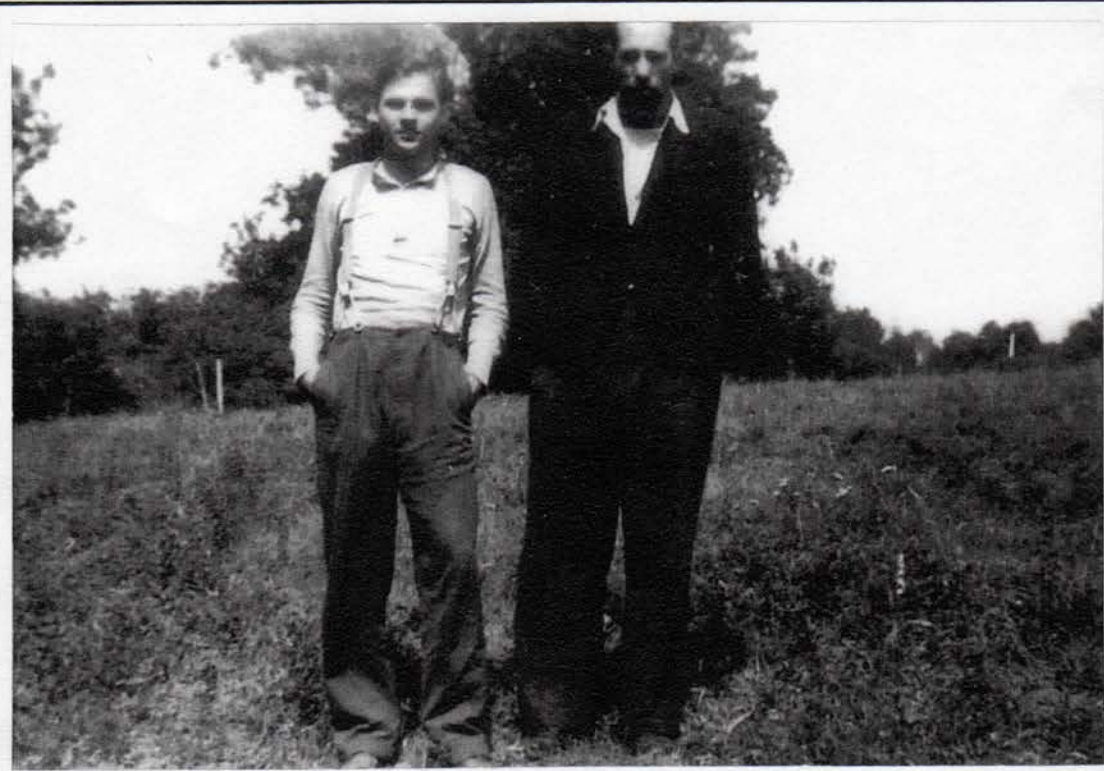
A memorial service will be held at the High Flight Chapel in the facilities of Air Force Village II at 10:30 a.m. today.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to the Texas Scottish Rite Home for Children, 2222 Welborn, Dallas, TX 75219 or the Air Force Village II Health Care Center, 5100 John D. Ryan Blvd., San Antonio, TX 78245.

ALFORD

A Loving Tribute to Col. David Gaston Alford. A Distinguished Flying Cross recipient and a veteran of World War II and the Korean War, Colonel David Gaston Alford (USAF Ret.) died on Monday, May 20, 2002 of complications related to his recent struggle with bone cancer at the Health Care Center at Air Force Village II, where he had resided for the past 13 years. He was born in Rising Star, TX on May 29, 1917, attending Daniel Baker College in Brownwood, TX where he earned a B.S. in education, and East Texas State College in Commerce, TX where he received an M.B.A. in accounting. He became an Army Corps Flying Cadet in 1939 and graduated from flying school as part of Class 40E at Kelly AFB in August 1940. Col. Alford began his military flying career as part of an Atlantic patrol to search for German vessels. Col. Alford is best known for his heroism while serving as Group Operations Officer for the 91st Bomb Group when his plane was shot down while leading a raid on Frankfurt, Germany in February, 1944. While under heavy flak attack, his B-17 bomber caught fire, and, after bailing out his crew, he discovered that his parachute was on the floor of the plane; however, he managed to safely land it in a cow pasture near Groenlo Holland. Thanks to the kindness of Dutch families whom he has never forgot, and with the help of the Dutch Underground, he was hidden by patriots who risked their lives to hide and feed him for more than seven months. With their help he evaded the enemy, traveling, as he frequently recalled with much delight, as a deaf and dumb typewriter repairman and was picked up south of Liege, Belgium by the U.S. Army as they overran the area in battle in October 1944. On returning to the States, he was part of a B17 training organization in Tampa, FL, which was followed by duty as an Air Force liaison officer to the Army at Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, TX. Col. Alford returned to action with the

outbreak of the Korean War where he flew 35 missions in a B-29 bomber. One of Col. Alford's fondest military memories was his 3-year tour in Greece as Base Commander with his family. It was in Greece where he became active in the Masonic Lodge, rising to a 32nd degree Mason and Shriner. Col. Alford's final base command was at Sheppard AFB, Wichita, Falls, TX where he retired from military service in December, 1965. For almost 14 more years, he worked in the public sector with the Wichita Falls city government and finally with the area planning commission. His final retirement brought adequate time to devote to his passion for golf and his fondness for traveling with his beloved wife, Dorothy. His last 13 years he lived at Air Force Village II in San Antonio, TX with his wife. Though his health took a turn for the worse just several weeks prior to his death, his memory was still sharp, said his family, and he could recount a story with remarkable detail. In spite of his illness, Col. Alford managed to keep his sense of humor as he smiled, laughed, and he recounted his stories. In addition to his wife of almost 30 years, Dorothy Jean Burkett Alford, Col. Alford is survived by his son, Michael Alford and his wife Bernadette of Framingham, MA; his daughter, Patricia Lanier and her husband Jerry of Shawnee, OK. three grandchildren, Chad Lanier and his wife Melissa, of Kaufman, TX, Lea Alford of Framingham, MA and Lori Lanier of Shawnee, OK; a great-grandson, Jacob Alford Lanier of Kaufman, TX and a stepdaughter, Dorothy Dee Phillips of Stuart, FL. A Memorial Service will be held at the High Flight Chapel in the facilities of Air Force Village II on Wednesday, May 29, 2002 at 10:30 A.M. to fittingly celebrate the life of Col. David Gaston Alford on this, the 85th anniversary of his birth. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to the Texas Scottish Rite Home for Children, 2222 Welborn, Dallas, TX 75219 or the Air Force Village 11 Health Care Center, 5100 John D. Ryan Blvd., San Antonio, TX 78245.



Gaston and his companion, Floyd Stegall, in their "travelling clothes"This snapshot was taken by one of his helpers in Belgium.

The clothes weren't an exact fit but adequate....if the Germans had captured them, they would have been shot (out of uniform) therefore spie



Passport picture made by the Dutch Underground to be used for a passport to be made to help move Gaston from Maastricht.

This was in Dr. von der Ley's effects and given to him by his widow, Nikki von der Ley in Maastricht.

Alford hid from Nazis after bomber was hit

Also served in Korea

By **CARMINA Danini**

EXPRESS NEWS STAFF WRITER

Retired Air Force Col. David Gaston Alford, 84, who survived the harrowing crash of his plane in World War II and spent eight months in occupied Holland hiding from the Nazis died Monday of bone cancer

Serving as group operations officer for the 91st Bomb Group the 26-year-old Alford was on his 19th bombing mission when his B-17 bomber was struck by enemy fire over Germany's Ruhr Valley.

After the rest of the crew bailed out, Alford discovered his parachute had unsnapped and there was no time to replace it. He raced back to the cockpit and, though all the engines were on fire, managed to land the plane in a cow pasture inside Holland.

The date was Feb. 4, 1944.

For the next eight months, he hid in rural areas and in Amsterdam with the help of members of the Dutch underground. On the occasions when he was moved from one place to another, he escaped detection by impersonating a hearing and speech-impaired typewriter Repairman.

"He was apprehensive most of the time because he did not speak Dutch and most of the people he met did not

speak English, but they risked everything to help him," said Alford's wife, Dorothy Jean. "He was very lucky. He always said the only injury he suffered during the war was a broken fingernail."

The Belgian underground also helped Alford, and in October, he was picked up by U.S. Army troops near Liege, Belgium.

Alford also served in the Korean War, flying 35 missions in a B 29 bomber.

He later served as base commander in Greece and at Sheppard AFB in Wichita Falls before retiring from the military in 1965.

Alford's decorations included the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Born in Rising Star, in Eastland County, Alford earned a master's in business administration from East Texas State College in Commerce and a bachelor's in education from Daniel Baker College in Brownwood.

He joined the Army Air Corps in 1939 and graduated with Class 40E from Kelly AFB in August 1940.

Originally with the 92nd Bomb Group, he was later assigned to the 91st.

Other survivors include his son, Michael Alford of Framingham, Mass.; a daughter, Patricia Lanier of Kaufman; stepdaughter Dorothy Dee Phillips of Stuart Fla.; three grandchildren and a great-grandson.

Alford donated his body to the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio.

A memorial service will be held at the High Flight Chapel at Air Force Village II on May 29, on what would have been his 85th birthday

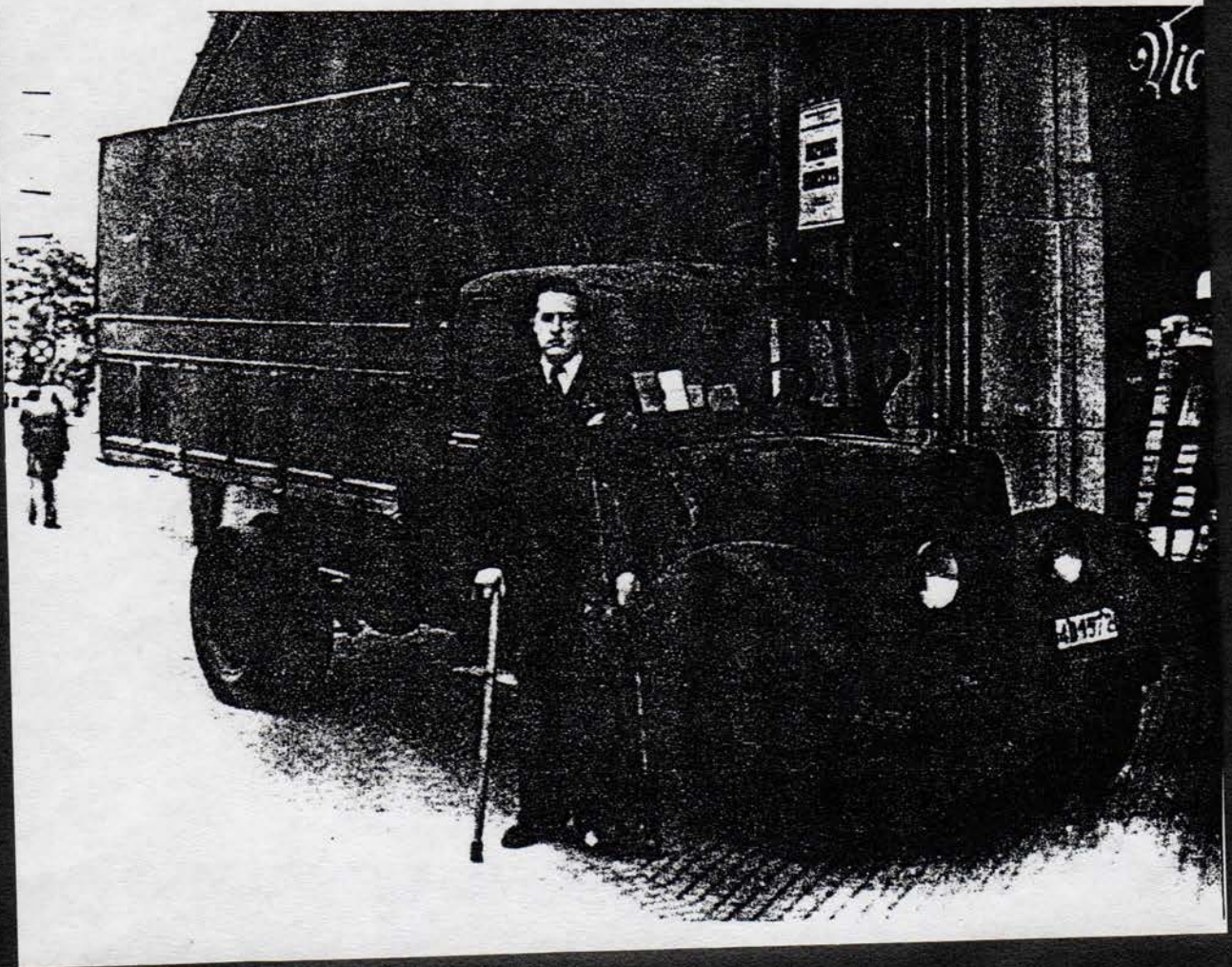
cdanini@express-news.net



David G. Alford -- passport picture used on false passport issued by Dutch Underground for train travel from Amsterdam to Maastricht -- he was a "deaf and dumb" typewriter repairman...

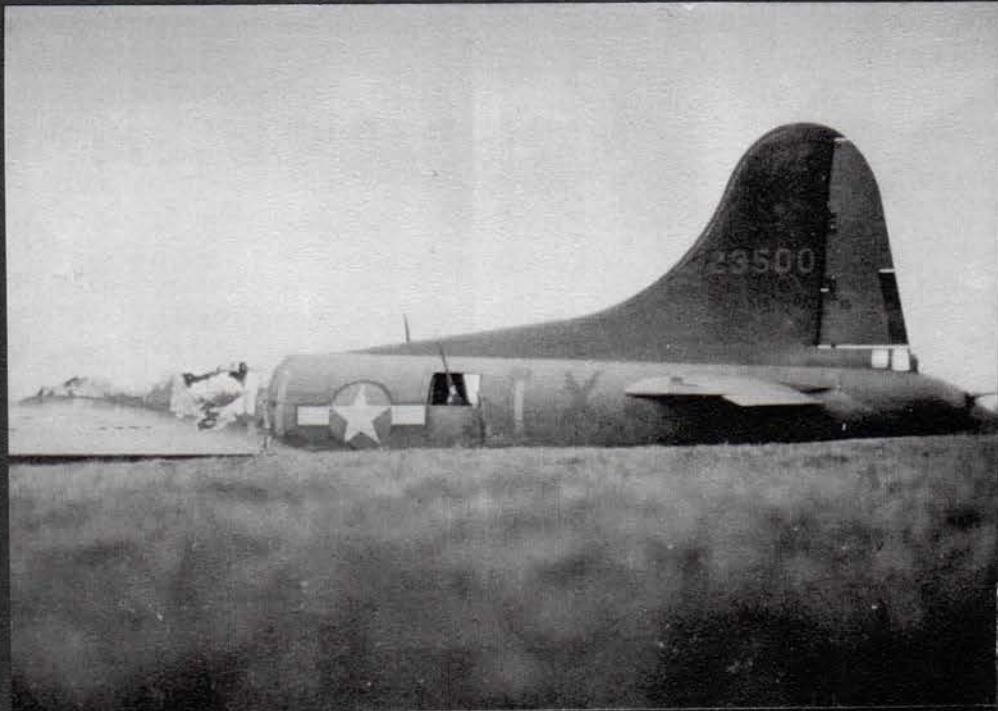
Crossed Holland-Belgium
border in this truck owned
by: DU MOULIN FERNAND
Rue Maghim 10
Liege, Belgium

June 16, 1944





Major Gaston Alford and Capt. Bruce "Sam" Bass of the 92nd Bomb Group in England (1943) Alconbury Air Base.



This photograph was taken some weeks after 4 Feb. 1944 when the Germans already had demolished the biggest part of the plane and when it was not too dangerous any more to come more closely to the plane



David G. Alford Boy Scout Troop of Vorden, Holland. The organization was formed shortly after the war by one of Gaston's helpers - Mr. Wm. Spanhaak - who was an assistant gamekeeper in the forest where the Vorden Underground kept Gaston in a hunting hut. Wm. was also "underground"; he was relocated from his home in Zwolle to Vorden to escape capture by the Germans. He had stolen 6 handguns from the Police Station where he was employed. We found Wm. And his family after Boy Scout Leader Spanhaak asked the US Embassy in Den Haag to find "David"..which they did...and the following year we returned to Europe where Mr. Spanhaak and his family had a huge celebration welcoming him...including our being hosted by the family on whose farm he landed the B-17, the family who gave him food, overcoat and shelter, and the young man who directed him to Amsterdam (then 19, at this time 50) + the many people of Vorden who aided, fed and protected him. It was a **GRAND** celebration. We are still visiting and in communication with this loyal and brave group...and their children and grandchildren.



Gaston and his daughter, Patti, as he escorted her down the aisle of the church in 1971 in his formal military dress.

Gaston and me after our wedding in 1972 at the reception given by friends.





Flying Cadet
DAVID GASTON ALFORD
In 1940 – Class of 40 E
Army Air Corps



Dorothy Alford

August 1, 2002

Dear Gil:

The only thing left for the obit for Gaston is that he was married in 1939 to Zona Miller and she is the mother of his children.

They were divorced in 1971 and she died in 1989. I can't tell you a lot about his service in the Air Force because he had retired 7 years before our wedding.

If some of the information is fuzzy....or you would like some other "stuff" let me know. This should be enough to fill your files forever.....

5100 John D. Ryan Blvd. #242
San Antonio, TX 78245
tel: 210-677-8864
e-mail: galford@satx.rr.com

Regards.

Dorothy