Empire Ford of New Bedford’s “Veteran of the Month”: Lt. Richard Tasker, killed during mid-air crash

“The 54th Lights for Peace flag to fly at the Fort Taber – Fort Rodman Military Museum honors the memory LT Richard Frost Tasker, of New Bedford, who was killed in action at the age of 24, during a mid-air crash while piloting a B-17 Bomber in WWII.

Tasker was born in New Bedford on October 31, 1920. He enlisted in the United States Army Air Force (USAAF) on December 15, 1942 and was commissioned to 2nd Lieutenant on March 12, 1944 in Stuttgart, AK. On October 26, 1944 he departed Dow Field in Bangor, ME aboard a B-17, bound for the European Theatre of Operations (ETO) in England.

Tasker trained to become a pilot, eventually flying the B-17 Flying Fortress, assigned to the 359th Bomb Squadron, 303 Bomb Group, based in Molesworth, England during WWII.



Lt. Richard Frost Tasker, of New Bedford.

LT Tasker flew his first mission abroad on November 23, 1944 and continued to fly 18 successful missions. On January 21, 1945, Tasker and his crew took off on a mission to bomb the Marshalling Yards in Aschaffenburg, Germany. This was to be his 19th mission and was supposed to be a “milk run,” meaning

that no serious German opposition was expected. However, Mission #305 was reported to have a mid-air collision between two B-17 Bombers.

The two aircraft crashed near the German city of Lossburg. It was reported that the left wing of the Squadron lead aircraft, piloted by LT Richard Duffel, caught the wing of another B-17 piloted by LT Richard Tasker, the lead aircraft of the 2nd flight. The wing of Tasker's aircraft came off and the aircraft rolled over on its back and went down. The first aircraft lost it's wing and went down as well. No parachutes were spotted by other 303rd Bomber Group crews. The aircraft crashed near Rottweil, Germany. A total of 18 airmen died that day, all of which were buried in a common grave, until years later when they were identified and buried according to their family's wishes.

LT Richard F. Tasker was 24 years of age when he was killed in action. He was unmarried at his time of death. His father died before the war so is mother, Estella was notified of his death. He is buried at the Oak Grove Cemetery in New Bedford. Robert Bromley, Chairman of the New Bedford Veteran's Advisory Board, places a flag at Tasker's grave every Memorial Day to honor his great sacrifice to our country.



"Lt Tasker and crew of the 359th Bomb Squadron, 303rd Bomb Group based in England, pose in front of a Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress. 4 December 1944." Rear L-R: 2Lt Richard F Tasker, F/O Clyde Meadows, 2Lt John Joseph McDonnell, 2Lt Angelito Francis Front L-R: Sgt Charles S Van Ornum Jr, Sgt Enrique M. Reider, Sgt Glenn A Minnix, Sgt Arthur H Driver, Sgt William D Toon."-AmericanAirMuseum.com photo.

The 303 Bombardment Group was known as the "Hell's Angels" with the motto "Might in Flight." A total of 9,000 men served in the 303rd BG, which was an Eighth Air Force B-17 Bomber Group stationed at Molesworth, England from 1942 to 1945, according to 303rdbg.com. Their place in history and the legacy they left behind will live forever.

Linda Ferreira, of Empire Ford, researches the life histories of area residents. American flags are provided by Empire Ford. Flags are raised by the staff at Fort Taber – Fort Rodman Military Museum. Those who would like to honor a local veteran

in the future can contact Ferreira at lferreira@empirefordinc.com.”