



### RAYNHAM FALLEN HERO

#### **FIRST LIEUTENANT CHESTER A. BEARSE, JR, US ARMY AIR CORPS**

Chester A. Bearse, Jr was born in Raynham, Massachusetts on August 18, 1919. Chet completed two years of college. He was not married.

Chet enlisted for the duration of the war in the United States Army Air Corps in Providence, RI on March 17, 1942 at the age of 22 and was assigned serial number O-728504.

Chet volunteered for flight training during World War II typically started with Pre-Flight School in Santa Ana, CA, followed by Primary flight training at Thunderbird Field in Phoenix, AZ, where they would learn to fly the "Stearman", a single engine double wing by-plane trainer. Then on to Basic flight training at the Marana Army Air Force Base near Tucson, AZ, where they transitioned to the BT-13's, otherwise known as the "Vultee Vibrators". These trainers were two seat single engine airplanes that looked like the typical World War II fighter aircraft. From there, flight students attended Advanced flight training at Douglas Army Air Force Base in Douglas, AZ where they mastered the UC-78 "Bamboo Bomber", a small two engine bomber. At this point, the flight students graduated from flight school and were awarded their silver Army Air Force aviator wings.

The new pilots that were being assigned to fly bombers were transferred to Roswell Army Air Force Base in New Mexico for B-17 Bomber training. After nine weeks of training, junior pilots became qualified to fly the B-17 "Flying Fortress". The B-17 was a four engine heavy bomber with a crew of nine.

Shortly after completion of flight training in the B-17 "Flying Fortress", Lieutenant Bearse joined the 772<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Squadron, 463rd Bomb Group. Late in December, 1943, the Bomb Group was moved to Lakeland Army Air Field in Florida where they went through heavy training to prepare for overseas duty. The ground crews then departed for Italy on Liberty ships and the air crews flew from Morrison Field in West Palm Beach, Florida to Italy by way of Africa.