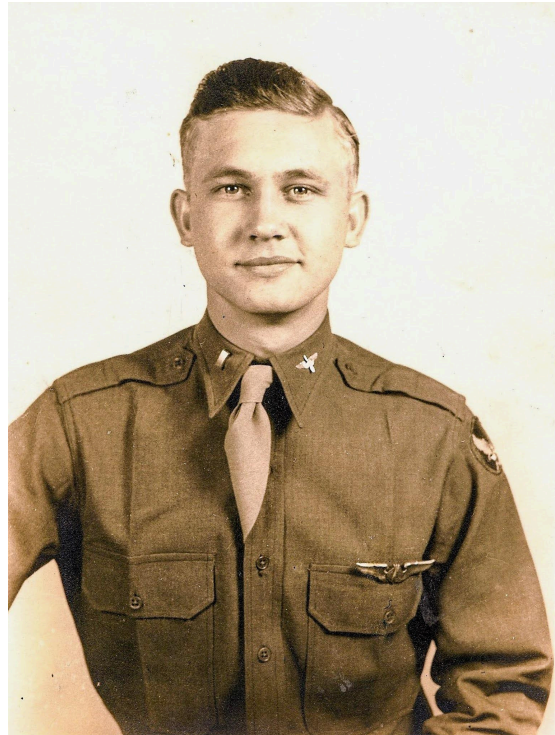


Biography of Lieutenant Colonel George C Carruthers

1923 - 2025

George was born in Dallas on October 19, 1923 and raised along with his three older sisters in Tyler, Texas during the Great Depression. He graduated from John Tyler High school in 1941 and began his college studies at Tyler Junior College that fall. Shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor he enlisted in the US Army Air Corps, completed training as a Bombardier and was assigned to the 8th Air Force, 305th Bomb Group, 422 Bomb Squadron commanded by Col. Curtis LeMay in [RAF Chelveston](#) England in the spring of 1943. As a 19 year old Second Lieutenant he and his crew of the Boeing B-17F Flying Fortress [Windy City Challenger](#) flew missions over France in preparation for the D-Day invasion that would come the following year. On Bastille Day, July 14, 1943, after completing a successful bombing mission to the Nazi-occupied [Villacoublay Air Base](#) (7 miles southwest of Paris) where they destroyed approximately 70 Focke-Wulf Fw-190 aircraft and hangers housing repair facilities, his plane was attacked at 12 o'clock level by two German fighters near [Lieusaint France](#) (30 miles southeast of Paris). A brief video illustrating the events of that day is [available here](#)

The plane caught fire, fell out of formation, then exploded mid-air, violently ejecting several crew members into free-fall. Four regained consciousness and were able to deploy their damaged parachutes. Seven crew members lost their lives that day. Four are buried at the [Epinal American Cemetery](#)



overlooking the Mosel River in northeastern France and the others were repatriated home to their families. The injured survivors were immediately captured, interrogated for 2 weeks and sent to the [Stalag Luft III](#) Prisoner of War camp. This was the camp where the [Great Escape](#) occurred on the night of March 24/25, 1944. Over the course of six months the prisoners dug several tunnels. One was over 300 feet long and allowed 76 prisoners to escape that night. The story was later documented in a [feature-length movie](#) by the same name which was nominated for both an Academy Award and a Golden Globe Award. Of those escapees recaptured, [50 were murdered](#) under orders from Hitler. In late January 1945, with the Soviet Red Army nearing the camp, the Germans ordered the evacuation of Stalag Luft III. Nearly 10,000 POWs were given 30 minutes notice to pack up. Around midnight they began a forced-march west in the bitter cold and snow to Muskau and then Spremberg, a distance of 54 miles. In [Spremberg](#) they were loaded and locked into boxcars designed for cattle, up to 50 per car. The ordeal lasted 5 days and ended in [Moosburg](#) where the

POWs were transferred to [Stalag VII A](#). Originally built to hold 10,000 prisoners, by April 1945 there were more than 130,000 interned in the camp. On the morning of April 29, 1945, elements of Patton's 3rd Army attacked the SS troops guarding and liberated the POWs.

On May 8, 2010, the 65th anniversary of Victory in Europe, Lieusaint Mayor Michel Bisson and the City of Lieusaint, France dedicated a memorial to the crew of the Windy City Challenger. George was the last living survivor member of the crew. His son Rob and his wife Sandra were recently guests of the City of Lieusaint and the *Memoire et Patrimoine Militaire*, a French

military historical society and had the privilege of visiting the memorial in Lieusaint and laying a wreath in honor of the crew. They were humbled by the enthusiastic appreciation shown by the citizens and city leaders of Lieusaint for the United States. Additional photos of the event can be [viewed here](#).

After the war George married Marylou Faye Bailes, the ceremony being held at the First Baptist Church of San Marcos. He was then assigned to the Strategic Air Command, headed by [General Curtis LeMay](#) (the same commanding officer from the 305th Bomb Group in England). Assigned to the 43rd Bomb Wing at Davis Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson, Arizona, from 1948-1960, flying B-29, B-50, and B-47 bombers. In 1960 he was assigned to the 9th Bomb Wing, Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho on B-47 bombers. In 1966, transferred to Military Airlift Command in Charleston, South Carolina and then to Vietnam for a one year tour, where he flew 101 combat missions in the 361st Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron. In 1967 he transferred to Travis Air Force Base, California flying C-141 Starlifters for the 60th Military Airlift Wing.



LtCol Carruthers retired from the United States Air Force on November 1, 1972 after 30 years of service and moved back to San Marcos with his wife Faye and son Rob. In 1984 his wife Faye Carruthers, a native of San Marcos, passed away.

During his military career he was awarded the following medals and ribbons:

- Distinguished Flying Cross
- Air Medal with 5 Oak Leaf Clusters
- Purple Heart Medal
- Prisoner of War Medal
- American Campaign Medal
- European-African-Middle Eastern Medal
- World War II Victory Medal
- Air Force Commendation Medal with 2 Oak Leafs
- Air Force Outstanding Unit Award
- National Defense Service Medal with 1 Silver Star
- Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal
- Vietnam Service Medal with 2 Bronze Stars
- Air Force Longevity Service Award Ribbon with 5 Oak Leaf Clusters
- Armed Forces Reserve Medal
- Small Arms Expert Marksmanship Ribbon
- Republic of Vietnam Campaign Ribbon



In 1986 he married Marilyn Gaddis PhD, a professor of education at Texas State University. The couple were active in the San Marcos and Central Texas community, volunteering and supporting a number of non-profit and educational organizations. They established endowed scholarships at both Texas State University and Texas A&M University and were active benefactors of the College of Education, & College of Fine Arts, both of Texas State University along with other organizations including the Austin Symphony Orchestra, Austin Opera, Round Top Festival Institute and the Paramount Theater.



In 2021 he served as Grand Marshall of the San Marcos Veterans Day Parade.

In 2023 he received the [French Legion of Honor](#) (Ordre national de la Légion d'honneur), the highest order of merit awarded by the French Republic for his service to their nation during WWII. The award was presented by the French Counsel General on behalf of President Emmanuel Macron at a San Marcos City Council meeting. He was also recognized by Texas State University President Kelly Damphouse during a Bobcat football game, the Hays County Commissioners, and a host of community leaders that same year.

After being part of the San Marcos community for 53 years George passed away on March 14, 2025. At his funeral he was honored by the United States Air Force with a flyover of F-16 Fighting Falcons from the 182d Fighter Squadron from Lackland AFB and kind remarks by Air Force [General Mike Minihan](#), former Commanding General of the [Air Force Air Mobility Command](#) and a relative of [1st Lt John Perkins](#), the Pilot of George's B-17 crew, the Windy City Challenger.

