

Ralph Kling Biography

May 22, 2016

Ralph Kling grew up with four brothers on a small farm of cows and chickens in central California.

After high school graduation in 1942 he and his twin brother joined the Army Air Corps. Ralph graduated as a 2nd Lt December 1943. Ralph did his RTU in a P47 and went to England April 8; (his brother went to Italy).

He joined the 388th Fighter Squadron May 1st and flew two missions before D Day and sixty six afterwards and had one victory (shot down a German ace). Most of his missions were in support of General George S. Patton.

Ralph's plane was hit and he bailed out of his flaming P47 Thunderbolt on September 21st, 1944 over Luxemburg. He suffered terrible burns on his legs and head. He was captured as quickly as he hid his parachute.

He then spent three weeks in a German hospital for "displaced" people working in the German war industry. He was transferred to Stalag Luft III (of Great Escape fame) for three months. The prisoners left Stalag Luft III and spent a week walking in snow and riding in box cars and starved nearly to death. Finally, he was held in Mooseborg's Wehrmacht (Army) Camp for two and a half months. Ralph was liberated April 29, 1945,

After the war, he went to San Jose State University, taught and coached high school for fifteen years and was an administrator for fifteen more as Principal of a large high school in northern California.

Serving as Vice Commander of the San Diego POW chapter, Ralph assumed the responsibility of Statue chairman and with the help of many, built the EX_POW Monument called the "LIBERATION" at the Miramar National Cemetery.