

Arden E. French

U.S. Army Air Corps



Arden Earl French
Captain, U.S. Army Air Corps

Arden Earl French grew up and was educated in the area of Stewardson, Illinois. Earl completed two years of college at Eastern Illinois State Teachers College and started teaching school around Stewardson. With the U.S. involvement in WWII looming, Earl enlisted in the U.S. Army Infantry on June 20, 1941, in Chicago, Illinois. On February 14, 1942, he became an aviation cadet in the U.S. Army Air Corps. On August 15, 1942, Earl was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the Air Corps, Air Transport Command, and 643 South Atlantic Ferrying Wing as a navigator.

Earl was first sent to Natal, Brazil, December 3, 1942, from where he flew repeated missions to North Africa and the Middle East as far as Iran. On April 7, 1943, Earl was made 1st Lieutenant and December 2, 1943 he was made Captain. In August

1944, on a mission to Paraguay, Earl was awarded the Legion of Merit, Officer Class, by the Paraguayan government.

In December 1944, Earl's overseas duty was to have been over. Upon returning to the U.S. and expecting continued U.S. service, Earl married Louann

Engel, also of Stewardson, on December 28, 1944. However, in early April 1945, Earl was sent back to Natal and a few weeks later he learned that



Louann was pregnant with their first child. On June 9, 1945, after repeated delays of a mission to England due to mechanical problems with his plane, Earl's B-24 crashed on take-off from Natal, killing all five on board. On November 1, 1945, Earl's son was born.

Submitted by:
Charles French