

WILLIAM RAYMOND MAXSON, 1941

Maxson was born in Chestnut Hill, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Philadelphia, on 4 February, 1920. In 1926 he moved with his family to Ambler, Pennsylvania where he attended Matthias Sheeleigh grammar school in Upper Dublin Township through the eighth grade. He graduated from Ambler High School on June 13, 1937.

Maxson had always wanted to be an airplane pilot and the best route to that goal was through the Army Air Corps. In those days it was necessary to have minimum of two years of college in order to qualify for the program.. Parental research (and a Mother from Virginia) indicated that the Virginia Military Institute would provide the best background for admission into the Aviation Cadet Program. Thus, on September 13, 1937 he entered VMI with the class of 1941.

Maxson stood 6' 4" tall and, with his selection of Cavalry as his ROTC choice, he was assigned to "A" Company where his height made him the tallest man in the front rank. He was not involved in any sport. He was somewhat better than average in his academic endeavors, graduating from his Civil Engineering course 14th out of 36.

He had had some limited experience in typing from High School and in his Second Class year became the clerk for "A" Company. In his First Class year he was the Commandant's Clerk under Colonel Henry B .Holmes. He wrote two columns for "The Cadet", one of which was called "Platter Chatter". This column extolled the virtues of the newly released 78 and 33 1/3 recordings of the day.

Graduating from VMI on June 11, 1941 as a Second Lieutenant, U.S. Cavalry Reserve he transferred to the Army Air Corps to pursue his dream. On July 13, 1941 he began his Aviation Cadet Training at Hatbox Field in Muskogee, Oklahoma, run by Spartan Air College. His commission was placed on hold while the Army tried to decide how to handle commissioned officers in the Aviation Cadet program. He took his Basic flight training at Randolph Field near San Antonio, Texas. While at Randolph the Army Air Corps returned those Aviation Cadets having previous commissions to their correct rank. Maxson was at Randolph when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Shortly thereafter he was transferred to Ellington Field near Houston, Texas for his Advanced Twin Engine Training. Due to a shortage of twin engine aircraft his entire twin engine training took place in the venerable single engine North American AT-6. He graduated from Ellington in February, 1942 in Class 42-B and was awarded his silver wings.

Following his graduation Maxson was assigned as an instructor pilot to the Lubbock (Texas) Army Air Base where he arrived on February 24, 1942. Although Lubbock was designated as an Advanced twin-engine school there were only single-engine AT-6's available in the early days of the war and student training was conducted in them. However, in April, 1942 the twin-engine AT-9's began to arrive at the station and Maxson

checked out in these advanced trainers and began instructing students. In March 1943 he was transferred to Altus, Oklahoma for a brief period where he continued instruction in the AT-9. In April 1943 he applied for and was assigned as an instructor pilot to Laughlin Field, Del Rio Texas where he began instructing in the much maligned Martin B-26 Marauder. In December 1943 he attended the Instrument Training School at Bryan, Texas. He returned to Del Rio where he remained until Laughlin Field closed in August 1945.

His next assignment took him back to Bryan where he flight tested AT-6 aircraft prior to their being transferred to other bases. His final assignment as a pilot instructor took him to Enid, Oklahoma where he taught Advanced flying in the B-25's and A-26's.

Further assignments were:

February 1946 - 575th AAF Base, Military Airways Control Center in Coraopolis , near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

May 1946 - Wright-Patterson 4000 Base Unit, Headquarters Air Material Command.

June 1946 - Seventh Air Force, stationed at Wheeler Field, Territory of Hawaii.

February 1947 Received Honorable Discharge from Service at Westover Air Base, Massachusetts.

Maxson married Ruth Swartley Gellert on March 1, 1947. She had been his Ring Figure Date at VMI. They have five children: Wayne 1949, Peter 1951, Holly 1952, Glen 1954 and Craig 1957. Craig graduated from VMI in the Class of 1979.

October 1947 - Squadron Commander, 117th Bomb Squadron of the Pennsylvania Air National Guard stationed in Philadelphia, flying the A-26.

April 1951 - Recalled to active duty for the Korean War. Was assigned to Headquarters Northeast Air Command (NEAC), based at Fort Pepperrell, Newfoundland. His duties involved reconstruction of the air bases in Newfoundland, Labrador and Greenland.

March 1953 - Received Honorable Discharge from Service at Fort Dix, New Jersey. Highest rank attained: Lt. Col. Serial Number AO-412766.

Types of aircraft flown: AT-6, AT-7, AT-9, AT-10, AT-11, AT-17 (UC-78), AT-23, BC-1A, BT-13, BT-14, PT-17, PT-19A, L-5, A-26, B-25, B-26, C-45, C-46, C-47.

Maxson wrote an article that was published in "Friends Journal", a magazine that is published quarterly by the Air Force Museum Foundation, Inc., Wright-Patterson AFB. The article is in Volume 20, No. 1 Spring 1997 titled "The Trials and Tribulations of a Pilot Instructor".

Another article he wrote was published in "Tales of the Marauders", volume II, by Jack D. Stovall, Jr. This article is titled "Memories of Laughlin Field, Del Rio, Texas"

He is also listed in "The History of Aviation Cadet Class 42-B", edited by Trent H. Wells, Jr.

After World War II Maxson was employed by the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania where he worked 35 years, retiring in 1982. For nearly 51 years he has resided in Hartsville, Bucks County, Pennsylvania, where he devoted himself to various volunteer duties at Doylestown Hospital and the Bucks County Historical Society Museum. He was a Township Supervisor in Warwick Township for over 14 years and acted as a project coordinator for a new two and a half million dollar Municipal building. He was also on the Planning Commission, the Capital Improvements Committee and served many years as the Township Building Official. He was honored on December 14, 1997 by having the Community Room in the Warwick Township Municipal Building named for him. A bronze plaque is placed in the room in his name.

His Service Records can be found at the B-26 Marauder Historical Society, currently located in the Bierce Library of the University of Akron, Ohio.

His collection of Military shoulder patches is located in the Virginia Military Institute Museum along with his Class of 1941 miniature ring

Other records can be found with the Aviation Cadet Class 42-B files located with Trent H. Wells, Jr., 9658 Wagner Road, Coulterville, California 95311 .

His Winter flying gear and A6B calculator are in the Air and Space Museum of the Smithsonian Institution.