

Lt. Col. Melvin A. McKenzie, USAF, Retired, 91, died Sunday, Feb. 25, 2007, in Tallahassee, Fla., after deteriorating from a heart attack suffered in June 2006. Melvin was born on Feb. 3, 1916, in Monmouth, Maine, the only child of William D. McKenzie and Florence B. Winslow. Raised in St. Johnsbury, Vt., where his parents operated a restaurant and boarding house on Eastern Avenue, Melvin graduated from St. Johnsbury Academy in 1933 and was the first Eagle Scout in the state of Vermont. After admission to the University of Maine, Melvin joined Army ROTC, became a member of the Theta Chi fraternity, and majored in mechanical engineering before graduating in June 1939. Commissioned a second lieutenant, Melvin reported to the Army Air Corps Flying Cadet training program at Randolph Field, Texas, in May 1940. After earning his wings, Melvin was assigned as a B-17 pilot and navigator in the 19th Bombardment Group at March Field, Calif. He participated in the first ever trans-oceanic mass flight of heavy bombers in May 1941 from California to Hawaii for which he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. In October to November 1941, he deployed to Clark Field in the Philippines just prior to the Japanese attack in December. Two-thirds of his unit were killed or captured during a year of combat, but he escaped the Philippines and flew 25 combat missions across the southwest Pacific, earning two Silver Stars, a Bronze Star, and two Air Medals before his return home. Stationed in Nagoya, Japan, during the Korean War, he flew transport missions in support of UN forces. Other military assignments included Eglin Field, Fla., the Pentagon, and Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. For his last tour, he worked on the X-20 Dyna-Soar Project, a two-man space plane that provided early data for the space shuttle. Melvin retired from the USAF in

1962 and worked for Martin Aerospace on the Gemini space program before completing a civil service career in 1988 at Wright-Patterson AFB where he worked on a variety of avionics systems including components of the B-2 stealth bomber. Melvin resided in Shalimar, Fla., from 1988 to 2003 when he moved to Tallahassee, Fla., with his wife of over 59 years, H. Bernice Hays Tatum, who died of a stroke on Aug 20, 2003. Melvin is survived by two sons, Lt. Col. Mark A. McKenzie, USAF, Retired of Lynchburg, Va., and Lt. Col. Matthew A. McKenzie, USAF of Langley AFB, Va.; three daughters, Frances A. McKenzie of Burnesville, Minn., Catherine M. Benton and Cynthia M. Alison of Tallahassee, Fla.; 10 grandchildren; and one great-grandchild. An infant daughter, Sandra F. McKenzie, predeceased Melvin in 1944. He will be interred at Barrancas National Cemetery on Naval Air Station Pensacola, Fla.