



TEXAS GENERAL LAND OFFICE
COMMISSIONER DAWN BUCKINGHAM, M.D.

1700 N. Congress Ave. • Austin, TX 78701-1495 • 512-463-5339 • FAX: 512-475-1415

PRESS RELEASE

Voices of Veterans: Lt. Eldon Bielss Shares His Story of Service in the U.S. Army, Air Corps During WWII

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Contact: Kimberly Hubbard
(512) 936-9582
media@glo.texas.gov

AUSTIN — Today, Texas Land Commissioner and Veterans Land Board (VLB) Chairwoman Dawn Buckingham, M.D., is proud to introduce the next installment of the series highlighting the VLB's Voices of Veterans oral history program. This week, we highlight the service of Lt. Eldon Bielss who served in United States Army during WWII.

Born in Weatherford, Texas in 1919, Bielss said he grew up on a farm where his family had settled on 160 acres following his grandparents arrival from Germany years earlier. His Dad, who was in politics, lost his job in Texas and they ended up moving to California, graduating from high school there in 1939 before enlisting in the service.



VOICES OF VETERANS

name Bielss, Eldon		
military branch Army Air Corps	rank LT-Army	conflict WWII
date interviewed 8/2/2017		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> interview available on voicesofveterans.org

Eldon Bielss joined the Army 5th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division in 1940 where he patrolled the Mexican border as a machine gunner. In the spring of 1941 he transferred to the U.S. Army Air Force. He received his commission in 1943 and was sent to B-17 transitional school where he learned to fly the big four bombers. During World War II Mr. Bielss was assigned to the 97th Bomb Group where he flew 51 combat missions.



"I was 19 or so, and I wasn't much of a farmer and they published this deal about the military they were paying \$21 dollars a month," Bielss said, acknowledging it was a lot more money than he was making at the time.

Bielss said he joined the United States Army in 1940 and said following his induction, he was assigned as a machine gunner on the Rio Grande River on the Mexico border.



VOICES OF VETERANS

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Bielss would eventually voluntarily transfer to March Field in California and join the U.S. Army Air Force in the spring of 1941 where his flight training began in earnest.

"I learned to fly an old bi-plane, two wings, PT-17, I remember that, so I flew that and graduated out of that school and went to basic training plane, which is a BT-13," Bielss explained, referring to it as a [Vultee fighter](#).

After receiving his commission in 1943, he was sent to B-17 transitional school where he learned to fly the big four bombers. Bielss said when he joined the war, he was

assigned to the [97th Bomb Group](#) where he flew 51 combat missions, calling those memories always at the forefront of his mind.

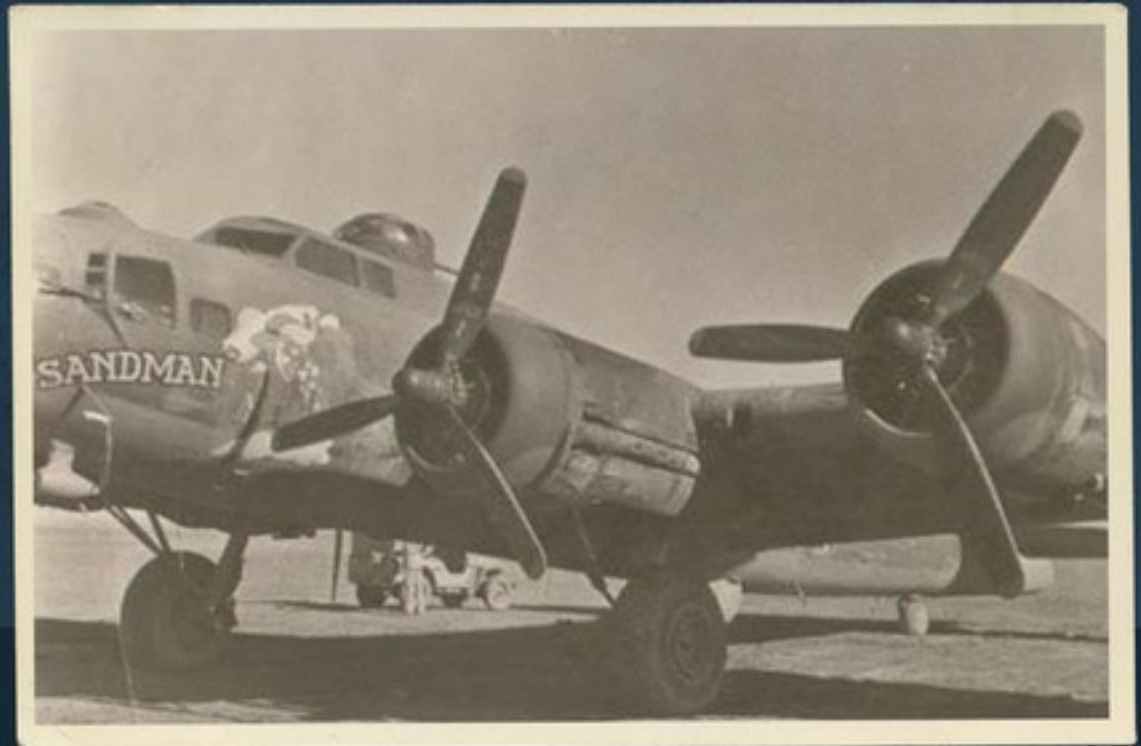


VOICES OF VETERANS

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"You never forget them and some of the missions, every mission I flew in combat you were flying around between 22 to 24-thousand feet, four or five miles up, and they were shooting at you all the time," he recalled. "They never did shoot me enough to knock me down but 13 crews went overseas, only two crews came back."

Bielss said he flew in countless countries during those 51 combat missions, including France, Czechoslovakia and Poland. When asked to talk about his time flying and what that was like, Bielss said the plans were made but the enemy always seemed to be a step ahead at times.



VOICES OF VETERANS

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"You line it, and come to the initial turning point and you have it all planned out exactly where you're going to turn on approach, and where you'd bomb," Bielss explained about

getting into position. "They seemed like they knew exactly where we were, so they set up on us on those approaches and they'd fire their guns."

To listen to Lt. Eldon Bielss tell his story, click the button below:

[Lt. Eldon Bielss Story](#)

Veterans can email VoicesofVeterans@glo.texas.gov to tell their stories. Please note that the Veteran must be a resident of Texas at the time of their interview.

Voices of Veterans is a state agency's first Veteran oral history program. It records the stories of Texas Veterans through their time in service and after returning home from combat.

The VLB records interviews with veterans over the phone or in person. Their interviews are then permanently archived in the Office of Veterans Records at the GLO, where they join the historical documents of other Texas heroes such as Sam Houston, Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, and William Barret Travis.

Veterans' interviews are also available to researchers, historians, genealogists, and the public. These precious records inspire future generations and remind us of our Veterans' sacrifices.

To listen to the over 500 archived stories of Veterans documented through the GLO's Voices of Veterans oral history program, click the button below:

[Voices of Veterans](#)