

Neal Siebenbruner was born on March 11, 1925 in Mankato, MN. While he would later ensure his children and grandchildren did otherwise, Neal left high school early to enlist in the United States Army Air Corps in 1943 and served as a Ball Turret Gunner during WWII. His plane, Sky's Delight, flew 40 successful missions with the 11<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group (H) over the Pacific Ocean. Neal and the entire crew came to rely on a fuzzy stuffed bear, Roger, that fellow crewmember, Clint Rutherford, picked up in California during training. Roger became a constant companion and good luck charm as they bombed islands in the Pacific Theater. Roger accompanied the crew on every mission and at one point, Sky's Delight returned to camp when the crew realized Roger was not on board. Staff Sergeant Neal Siebenbruner was discharged in 1945 and returned home to Mankato with Roger in tow. During his time with the United States Army Air Corps, Neal was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal with Six Oak Leaf Clusters, the Asiatic – Pacific Campaign Medal with Three Battle Stars, the Victory Medal and Good Conduct Medal. He completed school shortly after returning home and went on to marry his high school sweetheart, Joyce Meeks on June 21, 1947. Two boys, Larry and Richard, soon followed and completed the family. In 1965, Neal joined the 11<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group (H) Association and became heavily involved in attending and planning the group's reunions over the years. He served as president of the Association in 1972 and 2010. Neal took great pride in sharing and preserving the historical archives of the 11<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group (H) Association's story as well as that of Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam in Hawaii. He knew how important it would be for future generations to have access to not only his group's story but an accurate account of events that took place during the war and the attack on Hickam Field and Pearl Harbor. Neal lived his life with enthusiasm, curiosity and an eagerness to accomplish goals. He believed in hard work, commitment and dedication to family. Neal wasn't one to just sit around! He loved to spend his Friday nights big band ballroom dancing with Joyce, swim daily and was an avid traveler. In October of 2016, he was inducted into the Mankato Area USBC Bowling Association Hall of Fame after bowling from 1950 through 2015. Neal's most honorable moments include sitting next to President Clinton on the USS Carl Vinson during lunch and laying a wreath at The Tomb of The Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery.

For Roger's full story, including his recent adoption by the 26<sup>th</sup> Space Aggressor Squadron at Schriever Air Force Base in Colorado, please see the link on the 11<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group (H) homepage.

