

Broadhurst, Edwin Borden ^[1]

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by Beth Crabtree, 1979

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Edwin Borden Broadhurst, Air Corps general, was born in Smithfield, the son of Jack Johnson and Mabel Borden Broadhurst. Among his forebears were early American patriots Richard Warren, signer of the Mayflower Compact of 1620; Richard Borden, treasurer of the Rhode Island colony in 1655; and Colonel Needham Bryan, member of first provincial congress ^[2] of North Carolina in 1776 and colonel of the Johnston County Field Officers of Minutemen. Broadhurst was graduated from Smithfield High School as an honor roll student and an Eagle Scout. He attended The Citadel in Charleston, S.C., one year before receiving an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy in 1933. Broadhurst's scholastic record at The Citadel entitled him to enter West Point ^[3] without the usual entrance examination.

After graduation from the academy in 1937 with a commission as second lieutenant in the field artillery, Broadhurst was assigned to Fort Sill, Okla. The following year he transferred to the Army Air Force, training as a pilot at Kelly Field, Tex. He was a classmate of World War II hero Colin P. Kelly, Jr., and the two men were assigned to March Field, Calif., on receiving their pilot's wings in February 1939.

Broadhurst was assigned to the Nineteenth Bombardment Group in the Pacific in 1941. He was at Clark Field on 7 Dec. 1941 when the Japanese attacked, destroying on the ground practically all the planes of the bombardment group. With a shortage of men and planes, the pilots flew as many as six missions a day. Broadhurst received the Silver Star for gallantry at Davao, Philippines, in January 1942. His Flying Fortress scored a direct hit on a battleship in the harbor at Davao, returning to the air base in an equatorial storm. The following March he and nine other American pilots escaped from Java in the last B-17 Flying Fortresses leaving before the Japanese took over the island from the Dutch. As the planes left the field, the Dutch set off mines placed under the runways for such an eventuality. During the fiercest fighting of the early days of World War II, the Nineteenth Bombardment Group became the most decorated and most honored unit of the American Air Corps. In the first year of combat the group received three Distinguished Unit citations. The Nineteenth evacuated General Douglas MacArthur to Australia, where he set up headquarters; later Philippine President Manuel Quezon was evacuated by the group.

Broadhurst flew twenty combat missions in the Philippines, Java, Australia, and New Guinea. He served as plans officer at Allied Headquarters in the southwest Pacific and received the Legion of Merit for his work. When the battleworn Nineteenth Bombardment Group was returned to the United States late in 1942, as a replacement training unit, Broadhurst was assigned to the Second Air Force at Colorado Springs.

On promotion to full colonel in July 1943, Broadhurst was assigned to the office of the assistant secretary of war, U.S. Air Force, in Washington. From 1947 to 1950 he headed the U.S. Military Mission to Chile. The Chilean government awarded him posthumously the Medale Militaire. Returning to the United States in 1950, he was assigned as chief of plans to the Strategic Air Command at Omaha, Nebr., and he spent most of his peacetime service with SAC. In September 1953, a year after a transfer from commanding officer of the Fifth Reconnaissance Wing at Travis Air Force Base, Broadhurst was promoted to brigadier general. The next year he was assigned to Fairchild AFB in Washington State as commander of the Fifty-seventh Air Division. In September 1955 he returned to SAC headquarters as inspector general, and two years later he became chief of staff with promotion to major general in March 1958. Broadhurst was sent to England in August 1961 to command the Seventh Air Division stationed at High Wycombe. A little over a year later he returned to Washington, D.C., as assistant deputy chief of staff for Operation Headquarters, USAF. Upon his promotion to lieutenant general in 1963, he was the youngest of his rank in the air force and the highest ranking North Carolinian on active duty. The last command he held was chief of staff, United Nations Command, with the U.S. forces in Korea. He died of a heart attack in Seoul, Korea. His body was returned with all military honors and interred at Riverside Cemetery in Smithfield.

Broadhurst was eulogized as a "modest and unassuming man of superior intellect and capacity." Described as "worldly and sophisticated," he was also recognized as "a man of great humility and kindness, and one who never lost the common touch." His awards included the Silver Star, the Legion of Merit with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Air Medal, the Distinguished Flying Cross, and the Purple Heart. The posthumous award citation of the Distinguished Service Medal stated: "His dynamic leadership, tireless devotion to duty and outstanding tact and diplomacy in working with the United States and foreign embassies, local United Nations agencies, United States Operation Mission in Korea, United States Information Service and high level officials of the Republic of Korea Government and its Armed Forces furthered to a marked degree the accomplishment of the objectives of the United Nations Command United States Forces in Korea."

General Broadhurst was married to Viola Seubert, daughter of Herman Joseph and Regina Seubert, in Washington, D.C., 11 Mar. 1944. They had three children, Edwin Borden, May Ann, and Barbara Ellen.

References:

San Antonio (Tex.) Express, 1 Feb. 1939.

Smithfield Herald, 6 Dec. 1957, 8 July 1961.

"Tribute to Lt. General Edwin Borden Broadhurst, USAF, before the United States Senate, Tuesday, April 6, 1965, by Senator Sam Ervin, Jr."

Additional Resources:

"LIEUTENANT GENERAL EDWIN B. BROADHURST." U.S. Air Force.

<http://www.af.mil/AboutUs/Biographies/Display/tabid/225/Article/107573/lieutenant-general-edwin-b-broadhurst.aspx> [4]

"Edwin Borden Broadhurst." *Assembly* [Association of Graduates, United States Military Academy] 25, no. 3 (Fall 1966). 95. <http://digital-library.usma.edu/cdm/ref/collection/assembly/id/11773> [5] (accessed December 5, 2013).

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