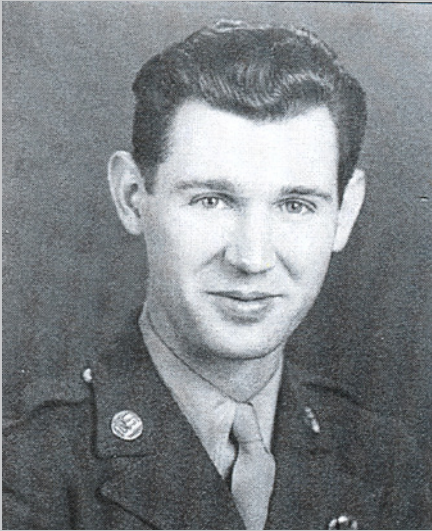


# DISTINGUISHED MEMBER OF THE SPECIAL FORCES REGIMENT



**MASTER SERGEANT  
WILLIAM T. THOMPSON**

Inducted June 2005



William T. "Bill" Thompson was born August 27, 1921 in Cleveland Heights, Ohio. By the time he reached high school he had developed an interest in radios which he retained throughout his life. He was also an accomplished marksman, winning, as a member of his high school's rifle team, the championship for the State of Ohio.

When the war started, he enlisted in the United States Army Signal Corps, but after training, Thompson answered a nebulous call for volunteers desirous of service overseas. Passing numerous interviews and screenings where his radio background and fluency in French and German placed him in good stead, he reported to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), assigned to "Operation Jedburgh." He completed initial training in Maryland before being sent to Ringway, England for airborne and advanced training. LT Aaron Bank (US) recruited him as radio operator for team Hermit; however, after the French officer on Bank's team took issue with Thompson's French, Thompson, transferred shortly to team Novocaine, led by LT Gennerich,. Inserted into Southern France via Algeria, on the night of August 6-7, 1944, Novocaine immediately linked up with the Maquis operating in and around the old fortified Alpine town of Briancon, France. Not only did SGT Thompson serve as radio operator during the two month Novocaine mission, but he also participated in training the Maquis and executing several sabotage and combat operations against the German forces. During this time, SGT Thompson was reunited with recently promoted CPT Aaron Bank. Hermit and Novocaine often participated in joint missions and Bank and Thompson would join for patrols. After conventional Allied forces liberated Briancon, newly promoted MSG Thompson and team Novocaine returned to England. Thompson, after enjoying a 30 day furlough back in the US, reported to OSS Detachment 202 in the Far East.

Thompson joined team Alpaca commanded by CPT Morris A. "Mo" Pastor. Their mission was to link up with indigenous Chinese forces deep behind Japanese lines. CPT Pastor, Thompson, and a Chinese interpreter traveled by foot, sampan and train several hundred miles, through Japanese occupied territory to make contact with the Chinese forces. After setting up a drop zone to receive the remaining members of Alpaca and necessary supplies parachuted into China near the town of Hwongtsaishih on May 17, 1945, Alpaca immediately began implementing training. After feeling secure enough to engage the enemy, the unit began actively and successfully hitting the enemy. In one engagement, lasting several days, the joint Alpaca and Chinese guerrilla units found themselves surrounded by a numerically superior Japanese force. Fighting from a strong defensive position, they successfully withstood the attack. At one point during the battle, MSG Thompson remained at his radio for 36 hours transmitting message after message requesting air strikes and providing critical intelligence to OSS Headquarters

After the war, despite strong encouragement to remain in the military, he returned to civilian life, attending Kent State University and receiving his degree in Music Education. He also met his future wife Myrtle Wirth at this time. He took a job, following graduation, as Band Director in the Michigan public secondary school system, but changed career paths in 1950, when he was hired as manager for a Texas town Chamber of Commerce. Over the next 21 years, he would hold this position in several towns in Texas until he was ultimately recruited as Director of the Leavenworth, Kansas Chamber of Commerce. His last professional employment was as Director of the Leavenworth, Kansas, Chapter of the American Red Cross. After Myrtle died in 1991 he married Bonnie Lee Mays, with whom he enjoyed several years until she died in 2004.

He has maintained active involvement in the local community, serving as President of Rotary Club; Chairman of the Leavenworth Public Library board and on the Leavenworth Board of Planning and Zoning; and as an Elder in the First Christian Church of Leavenworth.

His military awards include two Bronze Stars (OLC); the Airborne Qualification Badge with one combat star; the French Croix de Guerre with Silver Star; twice "Mentioned in Dispatches" (British); the OSS SF Wing; and the Chinese Breast Order of Yun Hui.