

Col. Moller Chosen Ninth AOG Honorary Member

Col. (USAF, Retired) Joseph A. Moller earned AOG honorary membership by a unanimous vote of the AOG Board of Directors on May 6, 1989. His selection makes him only the ninth individual so honored by the association. His honorary membership was presented by AOG vice-chairman of the board, Col. William E. Richardson, on Oct. 12, 1989.



Colonel Moller, at left, accepts his AOG honorary membership plaque from Col. William E. Richardson, AOG vice-chairman of the board. At right is Lt. Gen. Charles R. Hamm, Academy superintendent.

The occasion for the membership presentation was a reunion banquet in Colorado Springs attended by members (and families) of the 390th Bomb Group, a B-17, 8th Air Force unit led by Colonel Moller during World War II. It was fitting and proper that so many of the comrades-in-arms of the AOG honoree were present to share in this recognition of their combat leader.

Colonel Moller's contributions to the evolution of airpower in the United States span a lifetime of service as an engineer, World War II combat leader, commander, Air Force Reservist and philanthropist. He began his career as a flying cadet in the JN-4 Jenny and served in the U.S. Army Air Service until demobilization. He then barnstormed for a period before entering Cornell University where he earned a degree in mechanical engineering. Employment with Pure Oil Company followed, where Colonel Moller assisted in establishing a laboratory which eventually produced sufficient 100-octane fuel for flight testing at Wright Field. The healthy appetite of the B-17, then in the prototype stage, and scores of other new combat aircraft soon would put the results of his efforts to good use.

Continuing his quest to fly and fight, Joe Moller was commissioned in the Army Air Force in early 1942. Initially assigned to troop carrier duties, then-Major Moller managed to shortly achieve reassignment to A-26 medium bombers and, in 1943, to B-17s, the "heavies" of 8th Air Force. Beginning in the 95th Bomb Group and later the 390th, he flew and led over 50 combat missions during more than two consecutive combat tours. He led some of the famous shuttle missions from England to Russia and return and also took some 3,000 8th Air Force aircraft against Berlin in the single largest air assault of the war. Following V.E. Day, Colonel Moller was alerted for movement to the Pacific as part of the B-29 buildup. The Japanese surrender, however, intervened, and he left active duty soon after war's end.

Moving to Arizona, Colonel Moller served in the Air Force Reserves, commanding a B-47 unit at Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz. Coincidentally, the 390th Strategic Missile Wing, carrying the proud colors of his former command, was eventually located at Davis-Monthan. When this wing was deactivated, Colonel Moller was instrumental in preserving one launch complex that could be opened to the public.

Over the years Colonel Moller and his wife, Dorothy, have helped to fund museums in the United States and England to preserve the

heritage of the thousands of airmen who fought and died in the skies over Europe. In the 1980s, Colonel and Mrs. Moller assumed annual sponsorship of an award honoring the outstanding wing commander in Strategic Air Command. They also developed a deep and abiding interest in the Air Force Academy and, through a private foundation, will contribute to the education and training of many generations of future Air Force leaders. The Association of Graduates is indeed proud to include Col. Joseph A. Moller in the good company of its honorary members, past and present:

James I. Conboy
Sen. Barry Goldwater
Gail McComas (Deceased)
Col. Joseph A. Moller
Joseph Reich, Sr. (Deceased)
Maj. Gen. Robert J. Smith (Deceased)
Russell T. Tutt
William Thayer Tutt (Deceased)
Freida Weber



General Hamm, Academy superintendent, and Colonel Moller pose after the colonel was awarded the AOG's ninth honorary membership.

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