

**DEDICATED TO 97th BG 414th BS
B-17 ENGINEER
SFC DOUG (JENKINSON) LAURENCE**



15th AF



97th BG



414th BS

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[Biography of Doug \(Jenkinson\) Laurence](#)



Doug (Jenkinson) Laurence 1943 (left) 1944 (right)



Jenkinson Promoted To Staff Sergeant

Douglas W. Jenkinson, 23, of 4 Totowa avenue, has been promoted to the non-commissioned officer grade of Staff Sergeant. Sergeant Jenkinson is an engineer gunner on a Fifteenth Air Force Flying Fortress operated by a heavy bombardment squadron based in Italy. A student at Washington State College, he enlisted in the air forces on Aug. 24, 1942. He attended the AAF Aircraft Mechanics School at Amarillo, Texas, after which he completed the specialized course on maintenance of the B-17 Flying Fortress given by the Boeing Aircraft Company in Seattle, Washington. He was then accepted for flying service and won his gunner's wings at Las Vegas Army Air Field, Nevada in April, 1943. Upon leaving the United States for overseas flying duty, he was assigned to the oldest heavy bombardment group in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations. This unit has flown over 350 combat missions against enemy installations in almost every country of Axis-dominated Europe from bases in England, North Africa, Russia and Italy.



Totowa Avenue Sergeant Saves Lieutenant In Bombing Raid

Fifteenth AAF In Italy—First Lieut. Edward C. Steck, 22, pilot, 309 W. 15th street, Pueblo, Colo., has his life due only to the resourcefulness and quick thinking of his engineer, Technical Sergt. Douglas W. Jenkinson, 23, of 4 Totowa avenue, Paterson. They were flying as part of a formation of AAF Flying Fortresses in the Fifteenth Air Force on Nov. 5, when the Forts were attacking an oil refinery outside of Vienna, Austria.

Lt. Steck became sick to the stomach just six minutes before "bombs away" and three minutes before the bomb bay doors were to be opened. He made a dash for the bomb bay, picking up a "walk around" oxygen bottle from his engineer on the way.

Fast Thinking

After he had been in the bomb bay for a minute or so, Sgt. Jenkinson decided to take a look and see if there was anything he could do. After taking a squint at the skies for any lurking fighters, he made a football dive in time to catch the lieutenant as he fell into the bomb bay—the doors of which were to open in less than two minutes.

Since Lt. Steck's oxygen mask had been knocked off and both the inter-phenes wires and oxygen wires were disconnected from Sgt. Jenkinson's equipment when he tackled the pilot, he had to leave the lieutenant long enough to run to the co-pilot's seat and get the emergency oxygen tubes, pry open the emergency release and notify the co-pilot of what had happened.

When he returned to where he had left the lieutenant, the latter was gone. Jumping through the opening on to the bomb-bay catwalk and leaning over, he hooked his leg on the bomb rack and tucking between and around some 500 lb. bombs he again lifted the oxygen-starved pilot back from the pit. Backing up into the turret, the sergeant "draped" Lt. Steck over the bomb bay catwalk like a

Jenkinson of the Totowa Ave. address, entered the Army Air Forces on Sept. 6, 1942, training at Florida, Washington State College, Texas, Louisiana and other camps throughout the country before go-

Two Motors Gone, Local Boy Helps Land Fortress Safely

Through the efforts of Engineer Sergt. Douglas W. Jenkinson, son of Mrs. Jean Jenkinson of 4 Totowa avenue, and the pilots of a B-17 Flying Fortress, the impossible was accomplished. The three men brought their flying home back to its base in Italy safely in spite of the fact that two and a half engines were knocked out.

Under these circumstances it is supposed to be impossible to fly a Fortress. Two engines—both on the same side—had been conked out during a raid on the Maribor rail yards in Yugoslavia.

The pilot warned his crew to be quiet and hold on. Then, 100 miles from home, the third engine began to lose power. The strain also began to tell on the fourth motor. The exhaust-stack snapped and the flames of the exhaust glowed against the cowling—but the ship was finally brought back to the 15th Air Force base safely.

One of the men in the crew related that the most impressive incident of the whole trip came on the way home, while two of the engines were dead and the third spitting. He saw one of the crew members sitting at his position and quietly reading. Glancing back out of curiosity, the crew member saw that he was reading

completed more than 20 combat missions. A graduate of

15th Air Force in Italy

T. Sgt. Doug (Jenkinson) Laurence saves B-17 pilot 1st Lt. Edward C. Steck and helps bring home a B-17 with 2 engines out and the other two damaged.



**97th Bomb Group Station During Doug's Service: Foggia, Italy
Sergeant First Class Doug (Jenkinson) Laurence
shown here after receiving the Distinguished Flying Cross for the events noted above.
Doug flew B-17s on 50 missions, was shot down, taken prisoner and escaped.**



Crew photo with names found on reverse:

Front Row

Pilot - Ed Steck

Co pilot - Charles Erickson

Bombardier - Fred Long

Navigator - Don Ralston

Back Row

Engineer - Doug (Jenkinson) Laurence (cousin of Tom Summers)

Radio - Joe Gallagher

L Waist - Bruce Brunner

Ball - Ken Gray

R Waist - Randall Byrd

Tail - Bob Fourquest



B-17 "RUBY F" CREW ITALY 1944
Engineer - Doug (Jenkinson) Laurence (cousin of Tom Summers) Front row right.



Belly shot of 414th BS B-17 in high altitude formation (note contrails) from Doug's collection.

BIOGRAPHY of DOUG (Jenkinson) LAURENCE

Born on December 16, 1918 in the little town of Totowa Boro, NJ, Doug Laurence (née Douglas W. Jenkinson), loved Pop music, often skipping High School to haunt the famous Meadowbrook in New Jersey or the Paramount Theater in New York City. A fan of the big bands, by age sixteen he was already singing at local venues and had toured with the Tommy Dorsey Band as a "roadie" and Mr. Dorsey's personal driver. Except for a year as an office boy at an international company in New York and his years of military service during WWII, Doug never pursued any other career but entertainment.

A frequent non-paying patron of the Paramount Theater, he slipped in the performer's entrance, sometimes

getting caught and thrown out by the manager, Robert Weitman. Twenty years later, Weitman was head of MGM Studios, Doug was a film producer there, and they became friends.

As a kid, Doug was a fine athlete with ambitions to be the shortstop for the New York Giants. However, his dream of becoming a major leaguer died the day another player collided with and tackled him, resulting in a broken shoulder and knee injury for Doug.

Playing the bass violin and singing with his uncle's band got him through the initial time of heartbreak. At nineteen he moved to New York and began singing with bands at the Hotel Lincoln. He did some dates with the Will Hudson and Jan Savitt orchestras, and on several morning radio shows.

He was saved from a life of aimlessness and mediocrity when drafted into the U.S. Army Air Corps. Sent to Foggia in southern Italy after training, he flew B-17s as an engineer-gunner on 50 missions, was shot down, taken prisoner and escaped. He was awarded the Air Medal three times, the Purple Heart, and the Distinguished Flying Cross for his brave actions that saved the life of his pilot.

Like many returning veterans, he had no plans for a world at peace. While recovering from the emotional repercussions of war and weighing only 128 pounds, he fell in love, married, and headed for California. Soon after their arrival, Doug and his bride Frances legally changed their name to "Laurence", the name which Doug had adopted pre-war as a professional singer.

The aptitude tests he took, offered by the GI Bill, confirmed his ability for executive and creative posts in the field of entertainment. So informed, they set out to build a new life together.

After a series of odd jobs, Doug got his first big break when he joined a company that made transcriptions (shows on 16-inch records) which they leased to hundreds of small radio stations across the country. His first job was to produce a western show that starred "The Riders of the Purple Sage", the group featured in Roy Rogers movies. He produced 400 of these transcribed shows, which were scripted by wife Frances, and won a National Award for Best US Transcribed Show of the Year.

Over the next dozen or so years, Doug worked in various facets of entertainment — from producing the entertainment for industrial and trade shows, to personal management, to record albums — as well as forays into Las Vegas and Television. He managed singing groups such as the Wilder Brothers, The Continentals, and the comedy team of Rowan & Martin. As Director of Entertainment at the Flamingo Hotel in Las Vegas, he worked with luminary stars such as Judy Garland, Jack Benny, Pearl Bailey, Frankie Lane, and Sammy Davis, Jr. As a record producer, he produced singles and albums for The Wilder Brothers, Dick Stabile's Orchestra, and "Miss Show Business" featuring Judy Garland, for Capital Records.

In 1960, Doug became a motion picture producer at MGM Studios, producing a number of movies over the next ten years, including three which starred Elvis Presley: *Speedway*, *Stay Away, Joe*, and *Live a Little, Love a Little*.

Since leaving MGM, Doug has taught and lectured from time to time at universities such as UCLA, USC, and NYU on the subject of movies, and has acted in an advisory capacity and sat on various panels, such as the Blue Ribbon Producers Panel at the Cannes Film Festival. He is a lifetime member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Doug and his wife Fran, a published writer and book author, have recently celebrated 65 years of marriage at their home in San Rafael, California. They have three grown children, three grown grandchildren, and one great-grandson.



Doug's Bio refers to his joining his Uncle's band. The Uncle was my father, Tom Summers Sr. This picture is from 1938 showing my Dad and Doug on the bass fiddle. The venue is the Ball Room of the Packanack Lake country Club in NJ.



Official MGM Portrait 1964



Doug Laurence with director Delbert Mann & actor Robert Morse on set of *'Quick Before It Melts'*.



Doug Laurence with Elvis Presley & Nancy Sinatra in a PR still for *'Speedway'*.

[INDEX](#)

