

Charles Evans Gray

Charles left his home in the Green Pond community in Laurens county in 1942. He was 24 years old and would not return until November 1945.

He became a part of the 5th Army Air Corps and a member of the Night Fighters Squadron serving in the Pacific war against Japan. The Army Air Corps supported General MacArthur's "Island Hopping Plan" which enabled the United States troops to reach Tokyo faster with fewer American casualties.

Charles was at New Guinea, the liberation of the Philippines and then Okinawa and Japan itself. He achieved the rank of Staff Sergeant. While in Okinawa, a major storm hit which swept away everything they had and Charles was left with his t-shirt, dog tag and his boxer shorts. His unit had to live off the land and sleep in Japanese catacombs for several weeks until they resupplied. The Battle for Okinawa was one of the most horrific of the war with Japanese kamikaze suicide bombers crashing into our ships and airfields and the mass suicide of mothers and children jumping off the cliffs into the sea.

Then the battle was won and on to Japan, but first two atomic bombs were dropped on the cities of Hiroshima and then Nagasaki and then Japanese unconditional surrender in August 1945. Joining other American troops, the Night Fighters came to the Japanese Main Island and were part of the occupation forces until November 1945 when they were sent home. Each was asked to take home a Japanese weapon of war and my dad brought home a rifle and a sword here on display here at the museum.

After arriving on the US West Coast, Charles and his unit were put on a train headed for Atlanta and Fort Macpherson to be discharged. The train wrecked in between the West Coast and Atlanta and Charles had to break out windows in an overturned car to get out and pull others out to safety.

He decided to just take a bus home from Atlanta and arrived on Main Street, Fountain Inn at the Triangle Drug Store. He stepped off the Trailways bus into peace.

Charles Evans Gray, Jr.