Jasper Newton "Jap" Bailey Jr.
b. 18 June 1923, Sparta, TN – d. 24 January 2013, Cookeville, Putnam Co., TN, md on the 10th of July 1948, Cookeville, Putnam Co., TN to **Mary Frances (Rhea) Bailey**. Jasper Newton "Jap" Bailey Jr., s/o **Jasper Newton Bailey Sr.** (1897-1985) & md **Zula Mae Barlow** (1901-1987). Jasper Newton "Jap" Bailey Jr. is buried in Crest Lawn Cemetery, Putnam Co., TN.

COOKEVILLE — Jasper Newton Bailey of Cookeville fought for his country during World War II, and now his words will offer strength and hope to those who shared his fight and to those fighting still, even though he has passed away. His poem, titled, "Home to Stay" has been named the "Tennessee State Veterans Poem" by the House of Representatives. The poem reads:

"O, Tennessee, my Tennessee, the fairest land of all.

Throughout the years I've journeyed far but ever heard your call,

To come back to the place I love and never more to roam,

And settle in that promised land, the state I call my home.

So now I'm back and here to stay with no more wars to fight.

These peaceful hills will usher in a season of delight.

For God has blessed me, this I know, but why I cannot say.

Unless his grace has kept me safe to celebrate this day.

And he will call me sometime soon to place me where I'll be.

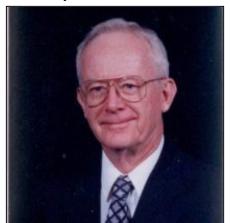I hope it's like the fair, fair land in sunny Tennessee."

"To have someone from Cookeville have their poem named as the national veterans' poem is a real honor," said archivist Glenn Jones when he met with Bailey's wife, Mary, to have the resolution framed and hung at the Putnam County Archives.

"This is a big deal."

Bailey served in the Army as a radio gunner with the 99th Bomb Group, and saw his fair share of danger in the 50 bombing missions he flew over Europe and the additional 25 missions he volunteered for in the China-Burma-India theatre.

While some veterans choose to keep quiet about their time in the wars, Bailey wrote about or was interviewed for his experiences in multiple publications, such as "The Christian Herald," "American Legion Magazine" and "Over 50."

He fondly described his comrades in a piece he titled "Where Did We Get Such Men?"

He mentions E.E. "Mike" McClow, who he remembers started shouting about incoming planes while they were on a mission, flying over Vienna. "Everyone strained their eyes to this position to be at the ready," Bailey wrote. "'Here they come,' Mike said, 'there are three of them!' All the crew looked and looked, but failed to see a thing. Was Mike's face red when later we examined his plexiglass turret and found dirt specks on it!"

Bailey also writes of a comrade who got his mustache stuck in the ammo feeds, and one comrade who got the plane completely turned in the wrong direction while trying to practice his navigation.

He also mentions the cook on his base who became a stowaway on a mission, and when the plane started seeing some action, the cook grabbed for a parachute and accidentally pulled the rip cord.

"The funniest sight of the war was the cook coming from the returned plane, dragging his parachute on the ground behind him — probably not so funny to the cook," Bailey wrote.

But his service was not just filled with laughter. He went through some scary situations as well, such as the time when his plane started to ice up while transporting supplies to China. When the plane started to lose altitude, the men were told to put on their parachutes. As the plane plummeted, Bailey struggled to get buckled in and to get to the hatch to jump.

"The sight of the reeling ship terrified me," he wrote. "I pulled up, trying to get loose from the plane, fighting the forces inside that kept holding me back. I pulled again and again, but I could not free myself. I panicked when the realization hit me that I would surely die in the crash."

But another crew member got to him and shoved him out the door. The act of heroism that saved Bailey ultimately killed his savior, J.W. Tharp.

The plane crashed and killed Tharp and another crew member, William J. Montgomery.

After the crash, Bailey was missing in action in Burma for two weeks.

During that time, he came across a native who brought him to his village and cared for him. Luckily, the natives were working for the Allies, and Bailey was safe.

He later met up with the only other survivor of the crash, Albert Arline, and they both were able to get home.

Bailey graduated from Cookeville High School and from Tennessee Tech, receiving a B.S. in electrical engineering.

His photo now hangs in the Putnam County Veterans Hall with the other men and women who served their country, serving as an inspiration to those left behind.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 11 November 2014

*Read more about the people of Putnam Co., TN & surrounding areas at:
http://www.ajlambert.com