

## Lewis Guernsey

Lowe Veterans Appreciation Video – November 11, 2020

My name is Terry Guernsey. I'm here on behalf of my father Lewis Guernsey. He passed away March 29th this year [2020] and we were unable to have a memorial. We did have a small burial for him. But I'm here to tell his story of his service during World War II.

He was drafted on June 1st, 1943. That was his induction date. Originally, he entered the Army Air Force as a B-17 flight crew leader and unfortunately, well, fortunately, fortunately for him, he got appendicitis. And so, after he was in the service, so he was put in the hospital for six months because you have to be 100% fit for whatever duty you're assigned when you're released from the hospital. He actually attributes this to saving his life because he then became a B-26 tail gunner and armer. And he actually did enjoy shooting the gun he said. However, the B-17s, which he was originally going to be attached to - many, many were shot down during World War II because they flew so much slower than the B-26s.

My father, Lewis, did fly 32 missions over Germany, bombing missions, and on that 32<sup>nd</sup> mission German flack actually shot their plane up and the plane was shot down after bombing the town of Haltern in Germany on March 22nd, 1945. There's originally six crew members in the plane and only three made it out. My dad said he heard the pilots say bailout men. He had to get out of the tail gunner's space, which was actually quite cramped, because he was six one, and he had to put on his parachute and he jumped into the waiting arms of the German Army.

He was taken prisoner of war and taken to Stalag Luft Number One. I think it's in Barth, Germany, number 8126, where he spent, I believe about six months before the lib- the Russians liberated the prisoners.

Because he did parachute while having his life save, after being shot down, he became a member of the caterpillar club and that's in honor of the caterpillar, or the silk worm that makes the silk for the material of the parachutes.

He did live a full life and he died at the age of 95 years old and he was a contributing member of society. He worked a job at the prison in Ionia for over 32 years and had numerous jobs after that.

This is in memory of my father, Lewis Guernsey.