

Elwood Eustis Fritz was the son of Harold and Harriett Mae Fritz. He was born July 27, 1920, in East St. Louis, Ill. He graduated from High School in May, 1938, at the age of seventeen. He enlisted in World War II on Sept. 2, 1942, but he was not called into training until March 15, 1943. He began "preflight" training in aviation at Randolph-Kelly Field, San Antonio, Texas. He took his "primary" training at Stockton, Texas, and his "basic" at

San Angelo, Texas. The "advanced" course was given at Lubbock, Texas, where he received his wings after a nine months course instead of the regular thirteen months required.

He was in the W. C. A. F., which is an advanced pilot training school, taking a 200 hour course in 65 hours. He then had three months overseas training at Alexandria, Louisiana. He left for overseas on May 1st, 1944, from Kerney, Neb. He went immediately into actual combat. He was connected with the Eighth Air Force in England, and stationed at one of the finest bases on the other side of the Atlantic. He was flying a B-17 in a sortie which was returning from bombing Dusseldorf, Germany, when seventy-five German Fighter planes attacked over Haideburg Forest, near Dessau, Germany. His plane was badly shot up, but he kept it under control until all of the men had bailed out, but too late for him as the plane exploded, crashed and he was killed, on Nov 2, 1944.

Elwood Fritz had completed all missions, but two, when he was shot down. If he had been spared to complete the two remaining missions, it was expected that he would have been assigned to the South Pacific, with all first ratings as a Captain on a B-29. He received the following awards: The President's Citation, Air Medal, Distinguished Flying Cross, Purple Heart and Oak Leaf Cluster. He was a First Lieutenant with the 322nd Bombing Squadron and 91st Bomb Group.

As a High School student, Elwood made top grades in his studies and also excelled in several sports. He took first in hurdles and in wrestling. He was an all-round athlete, participating in swimming and diving and in basketball and football. He was President of the Senior Class, was a member of the Boy's Chorus and took part in the annual operetta. When he finished High School he went to work to earn enough to put himself through college. He anticipated entering college in the fall of 1942, but World War II prevented him.

Elwood Fritz married Dorothy Reid on April 17, 1944, just two weeks before he was sent overseas. His ambition, courage and fidelity was not unlike that of several of his forbears. He was in line of descent from William Swain IV, whose connection with the expedition to Louisburg, Nova Scotia, on April 30, 1745, is recorded in this book. He is also a descendant of Edward Swain, Sr., who enlisted in the Revolutionary War in 1775. He is likewise a descendant of Phineas Stevens who defended Old Fort No. 4, (Charlestown, N. H.) in 1747. He, with 30 men, held the Fort against 400 to 700 French and Indians. His exploits are also related in this book. Elwood Fritz is the only one of the large number of Swains and relations, who were enlisted in some phase of the war known as World War II, who lost his life in the defense of his country.

The following letter to Mrs. Fritz from Major Ferree is typical of many received by her:

Sioux Falls, South Dakota
5 March, 1945.

Mrs. Harriett Fritz,
Chenoa, Illinois.

My Dear Mrs. Fritz:

I want to extend to you my deep sympathy in your bereavement.

Elwood was one of the finest young men I have ever had the pleasure of working with. I had him on my athletic teams and his academic work in school. I knew when he was in school that he was the type of young man that would make good in whatever type of work he went into. He had a personality that was magnetic, and drew people to him. I am sure the boys in his combat team must have loved him.

I followed his progress in the army with interest because I knew he was the type who would work up to the head of the class.

I want to apologize to you for not writing sooner. I am kept pretty busy here as I have about 900 boys in our squadron to look after.

If there is ever anything you want, or anything that I can do for you, I sincerely hope that you won't hesitate to call on me regardless of how small it may seem.

Sincerely yours,
GEORGE B. FERREE,
Major, Air Corps
Squadron Commander.