



Personal info

Full name

DOWNEY, John Joseph III

Date of birth

3 April 1923

Age

21

Place of birth

Jersey City, Hudson County, New Jersey

Hometown

Jersey City, New Jersey

Military service

Service number

12193464

Rank

Staff Sergeant

Unit

**506th Bombardment Squadron,
44th Bombardment Group, Heavy**

Awards

**Purple Heart,
Air Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters**

Death & Grave

Status

Killed in Action

Date of death

30 October 1944

Cemetery

American War Cemetery Ardennes

Plot	Row	Grave
B	37	14

Immediate family

Members

John Downey (father)
Caroline Downey (mother)
Eleanor Downey (sister)
Eileen Downey (sister)
Robert Downey (sister)

Plane data

Serial number

44-10523

Data

Type: B-24J
Destination: Hamburg, Germany
Mission: Bombing of the oil refinery
MACR: 10139

More information

"Immediately after bombing, at 1318 hours, in vicinity of Hamburg, this aircraft went into a very steep bank. Heavy flak was encountered at this time. Aircraft came out of the 90-degree bank and was last observed flying apparently under control on 180-degree heading. Poor visibility, due to high clouds, made further sightings impossible. No chutes were seen." (Wrong aircraft?) Lester Griffin, engineer, said that three men survived: Fuller, Capps, and himself. "We were a radar crew and flew only in bad weather. We were on our 23rd mission. The plane exploded, knocking or blowing me out, and I came down by parachute after regaining consciousness. I am writing this letter from the V.A. Hospital in Gainesville." Further information was not possible as Sgt Griffin died in 1983. Sgt Clint Fuller sent other brief statements, "Bentcliff, Gempel, Fiskum, Barefoot, Celentano, Maschmeyer, Downey and a man of Mexican descent (Garza), went down with the plane. Ralph W. Capps and I bailed out over Hamburg, but I don't know how Lester Griffin managed to get out." We flew into a heavy front while leading the high, right squadron. Soup was so thick that we had to fly on instruments. Someone crossed over in front of us, with the prop wash flipping us over, and the plane spun into the ground from approximately 28,000 feet." On the contrary, our plane did not explode – it hit the deck. Neither was it a radar ship. The radio operator, Maschmeyer, froze, apparently from shock, and would not bail out. I had to climb over him in order to get to the catwalk in the bomb bay. On this mission, I was riding the top turret and that is why I had to fight my way past the radio operator. Both Barefoot and Garza were new to our crew. Barefoot was riding the nose turret in order to complete the final mission of his tour. He was killed.

He was first buried at the Hamburg-Ohlsdorf cemetery, Germany

Photos



Source of information: Terry Hirsch, Roger Fenton VP/Historian 44th BGVA, Terry Hirsch, WWII Draft Card, 1930 US Census
Photo source: Jac Engels, Jersey Journal 6 September 1944