



Personal info

Full name

LE VEQUE, Eugene Wallace

Date of birth

6 November 1921

Age

22

Place of birth

Casper, Natrona County, Wyoming

Hometown

Monterey, Monterey County, California

Military service

Service number

39135725

Rank

Staff Sergeant

Unit

**368th Bombardment Squadron,
306th Bombardment Group, Heavy**

Awards

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

Death & Grave

Status

Killed in Action

Date of death

26 August 1944

Cemetery

American War Cemetery Ardennes

| Plot | Row | Grave |
|------|-----|-------|
| D | 26 | 11 |

Immediate family

Members

Edward Le Veque (father)

Martha A. Le Veque (mother)

Marold Le Veque (brother)

Plane data

Serial number

42-97946

Data

Type: B-17G

Nickname: Hard To Get

Destination: Gelsenkirchen, Germany

Mission: Bombing of oil refineries

MACR: 8464

More information

S/Sgt Eugene W. Le Veque attended college and was an airplane mechanic.

He enlisted in San Francisco, California on 22 June 1943.

There was a barrage and tracking flak for seven minutes in the target area, most accurate when the bombers turn off from the target. After the airplane was hit, a wing tip blew off and it went into a tight spin and large pieces began to break off.

Three crew members were taken prisoner. Three were killed. Four were killed in the crash. Three, Richard C. Huebotter, Charles H. Evans Jr. and Harvey J. Purkey Jr. tried to flee.

Extract from a letter from a surviving crew member, Richard C. Huebotter, to Lt Col John J. Smith:

"It was August 26, 1944. Our target was Gelsenkirchen, Germany. We had no trouble on the route in. We reached the I.P. at scheduled time and were on the bomb run when we were hit by flak. The first burst hit our left wing and knocked off most of the outer section. The second burst struck the bomb bay and started a fire. The third burst hit in the waist and a fire was started there also. I went for the small foamite extinguisher. Looking over my head I saw all of the control wires in a jumbled condition. The fourth burst hit the right wing and knocked out numbers three and four engines. This all happened rapidly. The pilot gave the order to bail out. The co-pilot was at the controls. From the statements of the crew members in the forward part of the ship I believe they left in the following manner; navigator, bombardier, engineer, pilot. As I left the ship I could feel it falling off on its left wing. The crew of the ship whose wing we were flying on that day were shot down about a month later and we met them in prison camp. They said they watched our ship after it was hit. They saw several chutes and then they said the ship seemed to fall apart but it did not look like there was an explosion. The report turned in back at the base was that four chutes were seen. I landed in the Rhine river and was picked up by a German in a row boat. He towed me ashore and I was taken into custody by a German soldier. He took me to a small shack which was some sort of a headquarters for a flak gun crew. Here I met Lt Evans. He had on his officers greens under his heated suit and G.I. shoes under his leather flying boots. He gave me his flying suit and boots and I took off my wet clothes. We remained there until about 1730 hours. A German officer then came with two soldiers in a truck. This truck was used to go around to various spots and pick up parts of our ship. Our first stop was in a field and a car came up pulling a trailer carrying a casket. The soldiers went into the field behind some trees and came back carrying some clothes. I recognized Lt Vlahos bunny type heated flying suit. We then went over to where the nose of the ship had landed in a back yard. They ordered Lt Evans out of the truck to go with them, but told me to stay as I was injured and unable to walk. When they returned Lt Evans said they had made him help them remove Lt Rapps' body from the flight deck. They also brought the G' box, the servo unit of the auto-pilot all badly smashed and several rounds of fifty caliber ammunition. We then went on

further and picked up the life raft, the dinghy radio, some radio tuning units, the spare chute from the waist, a jacket I recognized as Sgt Newsbigles and the black flying shoes of the ball turret gunner, Sgt LeVeque. There were also two more caskets. From there we went to a headquarters building where we picked up Lt Allen. He said he had been with Sgt Purkey and Carey until they had brought him there for treatment for his ankle. We then drove to an airfield where we saw Sgt Purkey and Carey. We spent the night here in jail, one man to a cell. The following day three guards came after us. We had to walk into town. Lt Evans and Sgt Purkey assisted me. We went to the station and were waiting for a train when the air raid sirens blew. They took us into a bomb shelter. We could hear the ships overhead and bombs dropping. After the raid we went back to the station and boarded the train. This was just after midday. We rode this train to Cologne. Here we went into a Wehrmacht canteen and ate our supper. We boarded another train and rode to Wiesbaden. There we were delayed about two hours waiting for another train. It was about 2:00 AM when we left there. This is when Lt Evans and Sgt Purkey decided to escape. At a small station we stopped and as the train started rolling again they opened the door and escaped. The guards were asleep, but when the door slammed shut they woke up. The train was rolling and they could do nothing. We stopped at the next station and they telephoned the situation. We got the next train back. When we got there the infantry was out with shovels and clubs to beat the bushes. We waited there for some time, but it was getting late so we got the next train for Frankfurt."

Charles Evans' mother noticed an article that had appeared in the Pittsburg paper stating that: "Two allied fliers were beaten to death by the chief of police and another man in a small town near Frankfurt-on-Main, on 29 August 1944 and had been convicted and hung. The only identity of the fliers was one had an American shield and the name Dick written or painted on the left brest of the pocket of his leather Jacket."

Lt. Evans and T/Sgt Purkey were captured and sent to Frankfurt am Main by train from Cologne

On 27 August 1944 at about 02.00hrs the train stopped at a small station, south off Wiesbaden and as the German guards were sleeping the two Americans escaped. On 29 August 1944 they were arrested again in that area and beaten to death at Gross-Gerau by the chief of the police and another man. Both Germans were convicted in 1945, tried and hung for this war crime. Both airmen were initially buried in the community cemetery of Gross-Gerau.

S/Sgt Le Veque was initially buried at the community cemetery of Budberg on 29 August 1944.

Photos

