

# Norbert Westhues

**Dates of service:** 1943-1945

**Rank & role:**

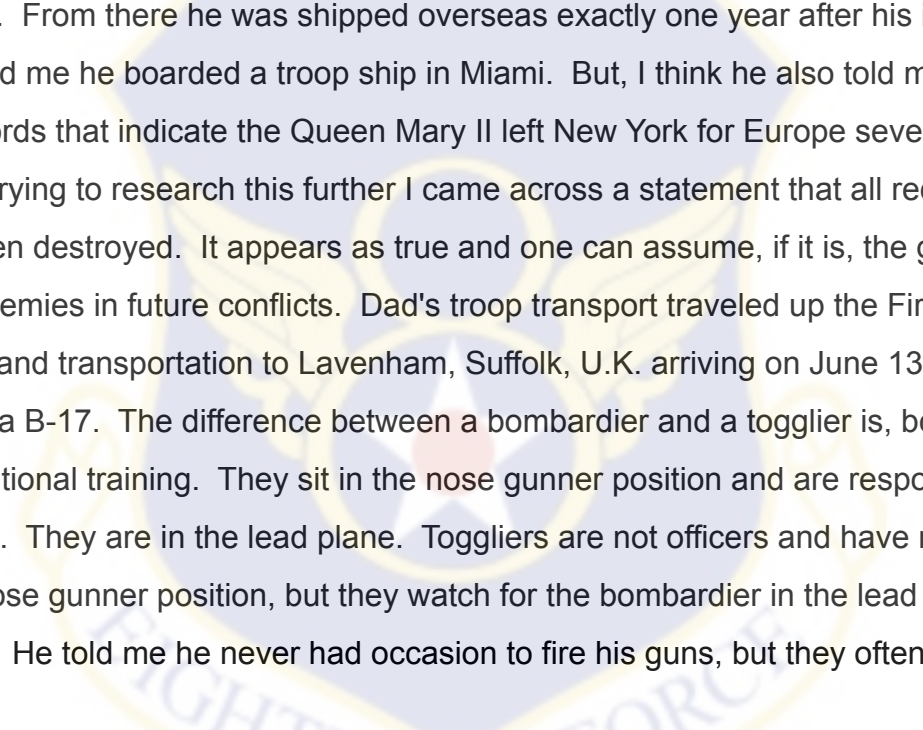
**Unit[s]:** 487th Bomb Group (H) 836 Squadron, 8th Airforce. His plane was called "the Sweatbox".

**Medals received:** Air Medal (a military decoration the U.S. armed forces. It was created in 1942 and is awarded for a single act of heroism or meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight.). He also received four bronze stars one for each theater he participated in (Southern France, Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland).

**Familial link to William & Theresa:** 3rd generation through Theodore Westhues

## **Notable actions/deployments/stories:**

Norbert, Uncle Ray, and Herb Monnig spent 5 weeks in Kansas City, Mo. at a sheet metal and diesel power school in 1941. The three of them then went to work for Curtis Wright in St. Louis building airplanes. It's unclear how long they worked there, but dad was drafted into the army on June 2, 1943 at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas. Raymond returned to the farm, as I remember it, they referred to it as a farm deferment.

A large, semi-transparent watermark of the Fiftieth Air Force logo is centered in the background. The logo features a blue shield with a white star in the center, surrounded by yellow wings. The words "FIFTIETH AIR FORCE" are written in a circular path around the shield.

After dad's basic training he spent 9 weeks in armament school Lowry Field, Colorado, 6 weeks of Aerial Gunnery school at Tyndall Field, Florida. From there he was shipped overseas exactly one year after his induction on June 2, 1944. As I remember it dad told me he boarded a troop ship in Miami. But, I think he also told me he traveled on the Queen Mary II. There are records that indicate the Queen Mary II left New York for Europe several days before his June 2 departure date. In trying to research this further I came across a statement that all records of troop movement during that time period had been destroyed. It appears as true and one can assume, if it is, the government did not want these records used by enemies in future conflicts. Dad's troop transport traveled up the Firth of Clyde to Glasgow, Scotland where they boarded land transportation to Lavenham, Suffolk, U.K. arriving on June 13, 1944. Norbert was a nose gunner and a togglier on a B-17. The difference between a bombardier and a togglier is, bombardiers are officers who have gone through navigational training. They sit in the nose gunner position and are responsible for selecting the target and dropping the bombs. They are in the lead plane. Toggliers are not officers and have not had additional training. They also sit in the nose gunner position, but they watch for the bombardier in the lead to drop his bombs and then they release their bombs. He told me he never had occasion to fire his guns, but they often ran into flak from anti aircraft guns.

His unit left England on December 17, 1944 and arrived in the U.S.A. on December 28, 1944. After taking a leave he took an instructor course at Laredo Army Airfield, Laredo, Texas from February 26 to April 7, 1945. He then taught gunnery school in Las Vegas, Nevada until his separation from the military on October 11, 1945.