

# Edwin Neil Brissey

U.S. Army, Captain

1919 - 1945

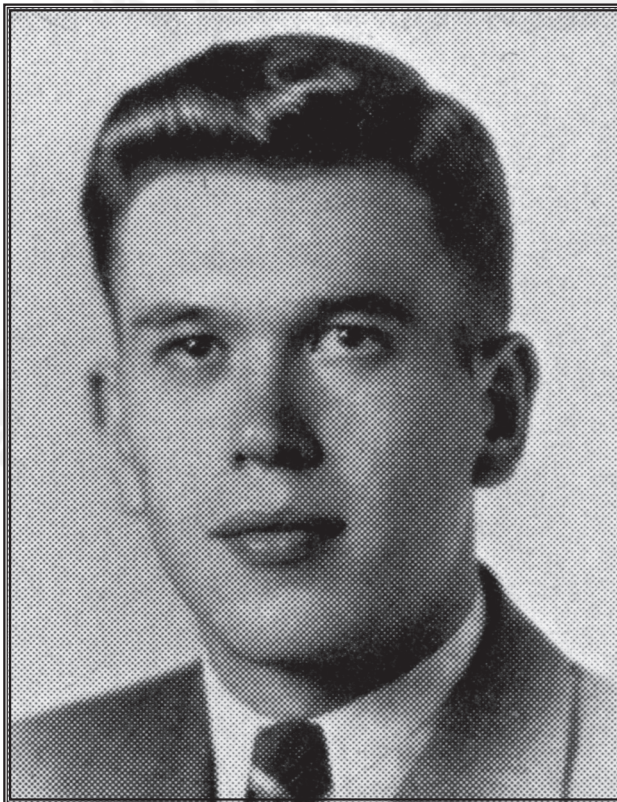
Written by Olivia Bolliger and Paige Shamblin

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Edwin Neil Brissey was born on November 8, 1919, in Harrisville, Ritchie County, West Virginia, to parents Allen Grandburry Thurman and Goldie Murle Brissey. Edwin Neil was the oldest of his two siblings Howell Eugene and Richard Davis. From 1919 to 1940, the family frequently moved around the state as their father sought work, sometimes as a public school teacher. From Harrisville on the border with Ohio, the family found itself in Union, near West Virginia's southeastern border with Virginia, then moved north again to Tenmile, Harrison County

Harrison County seemed to stick. After graduating high school, Edwin moved to Salem, near the county seat of Clarksburg, where he attended four years at Salem College. While there, Brissey worked as a supervisor at the Hazel Atlas Glass Company, headquartered in Clarksburg itself. This

work was interrupted by the onset of war when Japanese forces attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. A month later, the twenty-two year-old Brissey joined the U.S. Army Air Force (USAAF) on January 6, 1942.



**Edwin Brissey's portrait from his final year at Salem College, from which he graduated with a degree in chemistry. *West Virginia Archives & History***

Enlistment didn't sever his ties to home completely. Life in Salem had introduced Brissey to Lynette Irene Vaughn, a professional assistant from Parkersburg. They married on December 21, 1942. Together, they had a daughter named Lynette Marie Brissey, who was born on October 19, 1944. The newborn was destined to have very little time with her father.

Training in the USAAF, Brissey proved a natural pilot. He rose to the rank of captain and was put in command of a cargo plane. Soon, he found himself in a difficult and dangerous theater of the war: southeast Asia.

As American forces struggled in early 1942 to defend against rapid Japanese advances in the Pacific theater, it seemed prudent to Allied

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commanders to keep Chinese forces in the fight. The Republic of China had been battling a Japanese invasion since 1937, and preventing the total subjugation and occupation of China might keep the Japanese from invading India and Australia, both strategically important parts of the United Kingdom. The Allies began to airlift in supplies and ammunition—since Japanese forces controlled most of the land routes between India and China.



**A U.S. Army Air Force Douglas C-54 Skymaster transport plane in 1943. The C-54 played an important role during and after the war, even serving as the mainstay of the Berlin Airlift in 1948. *Wikimedia***

American airmen began arriving in India in April 1942 and the India-China Division of the Air Transport Command was established. From India, U.S. aircrews flew sorties loaded with fuel, ammunition, and weapons “over the hump” of the Himalayan Mountains to Kunming, China. Bad weather, poor visibility, and enemy aircraft made almost every trip a hazardous one.

As part of the 1345th Army Air Force Base Unit, Captain Brissey’s Douglas C-54 Skymaster was one of the planes tackling this dangerous assignment. On July 4, 1945, Brissey and his crew—Hugh Ferris, Lewis Magin, Elmer Sharpe, and James Stooksbury—took off from Barrackpore, India (today the airfield is in Bangladesh) on a mission to Kunming. After one initial radio transmission with the Allied radio base in Yunnan, China, all contact with the plane was lost.

The plane may have crashed into the mountains on the border of China and Burma. Brissey’s plane and the bodies of his crew were never recovered. All crew members were declared missing in action on July 5, 1946, a year and a day after their disappearance. Today, Brissey and his crew members are listed on the Wall of the Missing at the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial, and Edwin has a marker dedicated to him in the West Virginia National Cemetery in Pruntytown. For his courage and sacrifice, he was awarded the Air Medal and a Purple Heart, and he remains in the hearts of a grateful nation.





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## Resting Place

West Virginia National Cemetery  
42 Veterans Memorial Lane, Grafton, WV 26354  
(304) 265-2044

Section MA  
Site 73  
Date of interment: October 8, 1998

## About the West Virginia National Cemeteries Project

The West Virginia National Cemeteries Project is a program of the West Virginia Humanities Council, funded in part by the Veterans Legacy Program of the Department of Veteran Affairs and initiated in 2021. All biographies produced as part of this program are composed by West Virginia high school students, who conduct original research on veterans interred at the Grafton National Cemetery or the West Virginia National Cemetery, both of which are located in or near Grafton, Taylor County, West Virginia.

As home to one of the nation's earliest National Cemeteries, the community of Grafton has longstanding traditions of honoring America's veterans, including the longest continuously celebrated Memorial Day parade in the United States. The Grafton National Cemetery, located in the heart of the city and founded in 1867, is typically the endpoint of each year's parade. When the Grafton National Cemetery began to run short of space during the 1960s, the West Virginia National Cemetery was dedicated in 1987, just a few miles outside of Grafton in the community of Pruntytown. The same National Cemetery Administration staff cares for both facilities.

The West Virginia Humanities Council is proud to thank the following organizations for their participation in the West Virginia National Cemeteries Project: West Virginia Archives and History, the West Virginia University history department, Taylor County Historical and Genealogical Society, Taylor County Public Library, and Grafton High School.

**Please refer comments or questions to the West Virginia Humanities Council**  
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