



**William
Guarnere**

Army

William Guarnere

Apr 28, 1923 - Mar 8, 2014

BIRTHPLACE: Philadelphia, PA

SOLDIER DETAILS

HIGHEST RANK: Staff Sergeant

**DIVISION: Army, Easy Company, 2nd Battalion,
506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, in the 101st
Airborne Division**

THEATER OF OPERATION: European

SERVED: Aug 31, 1942 - 1945

**BATTLE: Battle of Normandy Garden Market Battle
of the Bulge**

**MILITARY HONORS: Silver Star with 2 oak leaves
Bronze Star Purple Heart with 1 oak leaf**

HONORED BY: The Eisenhower Foundation

BIOGRAPHY

William "Wild Bill" Guarnere was born in South Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on April 28, 1923. He was the youngest of 10 children born to Joseph and Augusta Guarnere, who were of Italian origin. On 31 August 1942, Guarnere enlisted in the military and started training at Camp Toccoa, Georgia. Guarnere was assigned to Easy Company, 2nd Battalion, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division. He made his first combat jump on D-Day as part of the Allied invasion of France. Guarnere earned the nickname "Wild Bill" because of his reckless attitude towards the enemy. He displayed strong hatred for the Germans as his older brother Henry Guarnere had been killed fighting in the Italian campaign at Monte Cassino. In the early hours of June 6, Guarnere joined lieutenant Richard Winters and a few others trying to secure the small village of Sainte-Marie-du-Mont and the exit of causeway number 2 leading from the beach. As they headed south, they heard a German platoon coming to bring supplies and took up ambush positions. Winters told the men to wait for his order to fire, but Guarnere, claiming he thought Winters might be hesitant to kill, opened fire immediately with his Thompson submachine gun, killing most of the unit. Later that morning, Guarnere also joined Winters in assaulting a group of four 105mm howitzers at Brécourt Manor. Winters named Guarnere as 2nd platoon's sergeant as the 13 paratroopers came up against about 50 German soldiers. The attack was later used as an example of how a small squad could attack a vastly larger force in a defensive position. Guarnere was wounded in mid-October 1944, while Easy Company was

securing the line on "The Island" on the south side of the Rhine River. He had to go up and down the line to check on and encourage his men, who were spread out over a distance of about a mile. He stole a motorcycle from a Dutch farmer and rode it across an open field, where he was shot in the right leg by a sniper. The impact knocked him off the motorcycle, fractured his right tibia, and lodged some shrapnel in his right buttock. He was sent back to England on October 17, 1944. According to "Brothers in Battle, Best of Friends: Two WWII Paratroopers from the Original Band of Brothers Tell Their Story", the biography co-authored by William J. "Wild Bill" Guarnere and Edward "Babe" Heffron: "In December of 1944 Wild Bill was hospitalized for a broken leg. Nothing was holding this hero back as he subsequently broke out of the hospital, covered his cast with black shoe polish and returned to the front lines with his brothers. This was a risk he was willing to take. Guarnere had a unique grudge against the Germans because they had killed his brother. During the Battle of the Bulge, Wild Bill's friend, Joe Toye, suffered the loss of a leg and was calling for help. Despite the ongoing attack, Bill left his foxhole to save his friend, and took shrapnel to his knee. Bill later had to have his leg amputated above the knee." "Bill's courageous efforts and how he lost his leg was not known to his family until the release of Band of Brothers. Bill was not the kind of man to discuss much about his service although he remained proud of the fact that Easy Company trained so long together that they became like brothers who risked their lives for each other on the frontlines." After the war Bill returned to Philadelphia. In 1945 he married Frances "Frannie" Peca and the couple had two sons. Bill Guarnere passed away on March 8, 2014 at the age of 90. He lies in rest at the Saints Peter and Paul Cemetery in Springfield Pennsylvania. Lest We Forget. "Wild Bill" Guarnere was portrayed in the HBO miniseries Band of Brothers by Frank John Hughes. Courtesy of WW2uncovered.