



**Emil  
Kirwin**

*Army Air Corps*

## **Emil Kirwin**

**Aug 29, 1922 - Apr 17, 2018**

**BIRTHPLACE: Mobile, Alabama**

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### **SOLDIER DETAILS**

**HIGHEST RANK: Sr. Master Seageant**

**DIVISION: Army Air Corps, 8th Air Force, B-17  
Flying Fortress**

**THEATER OF OPERATION: European**

**MILITARY HONORS: Distinguished Flying Cross  
Distinguished Unit Badge Good Conduct American  
Defense Medal WW II Victory Medal EAME Theater  
Medal**

**HONORED BY: The Eisenhower Foundation**

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### **BIOGRAPHY**

Emily Kirwin was born in Mobile, Alabama in 1922. At 17 years old he left home to join the National Guard but at 20 years old he transferred to the US Army Air Corps. While stationed at Forbes Air Force Base, in Topeka , KS, Kirwin met his future wife Mary Lou. After a short courtship they eloped to Lawrence KS, telling their parents after they could not stop them. Mary Lou was 17 years old when they married and finishing High School when Emil was deployed to Europe. He served with the 8th Air Force as a gunner. Because of his small stature he was moved to tail gunner. Kirwin sat on a bicycle seat facing away from the front of the plane, near the back of the the B-17 called the Woolaroc, his gun a 50-caliber. Kirwin was stationed in England and flew 25 missions. On one mission a German plane flew up behind them. He shot out the German plane's engine. Kirwin saw a gunner climb out on the wing as the plane failing and destine to crash. The German looked at Kirwin and Kirwin looked back. Then the man waved, so Kirwin waved back, Then the German jumped off the wing. Kirwin thought that he could of shoot the gunner but he figured he had a family at home just like himself. On October 14, 1943, Kirwin witnessed a great tragedy. Sixty American B-17s were shot down on a single mission. Six hindred men died that day. It is commonly known as "Black Thursday". His own plane crash landed on a mission, another crew came to fix their plane. From Europe, Kirwin served in Alaska before coming home to Mary Lou. After three years, Kirwin returned to the Military and served for 30 years. They made their home in Kansas and raised three children. Courstey of World War II Stories from Dwight D Eisenhower's Home Town, Abilene, Ks - The Writers: Present -Stories from the Heartland:Workd War II Remembered.