



**James
Hill**

Army Air Corps

James Hill

Sep 17, 1924 -

BIRTHPLACE: Dexter, MO

SOLDIER DETAILS

HIGHEST RANK: Captain

DIVISION: Army Air Corps, P-38 Pilot

THEATER OF OPERATION: European

BATTLE: Italy

HONORED BY: Son, Jim Hill

BIOGRAPHY

James E Hill was born in Dexter, MO. His service in World War II took him to Italy where he was a pilot of the P-38. While in Italy he flew photo reconnaissance. Sometime in the late summer or early fall of 1943, Hill was stationed on Mt. Vesuvius and on one particular mission, Hill was the third pilot to attempt to obtain photo intelligence for a special request. It had been two days, since the request and the first two pilots did not return. Hill managed to get the requested information, plus more. Their squadron had a tradition of buzzing the airfield after a successful mission, to alert the crew that analyzed the photos of their success. They would expedite getting the photos developed, as they were often time-sensitive. Returning to base, Hill saw the CO's staff car and decided to "strafe" the CO, who was Tom Barfoot, Hill's commander at the time. The staff car immediately drove into a ditch alongside the road. Hill was surprised by the response from the CO to not "hold his ground" after a routine flight, Hill landed and saw the staff car nearby. After debriefing he was told to report to the CO. Upon entering the CO's office, Hill was immediately confronted by Gen. Eisenhower. "Is this the pilot that chased us into the ditch?" Ike inquired. "Why did you do such a dangerous maneuver?" Hill replied, explaining it was a routine maneuver to notify the staff he had timely information. "What could be that important?" was Ike's response. The Co replied that it was film footage that Eisenhower had personally requested. Ike's response was something to the fact, "That type of flying should not go without punishment." Eisenhower then recommended, what action should be taken for Hill's maneuver. He recommended Hill be sent for a two-week period to the Isle of Capri (the best R & R center in the Mediterranean). Grinning widely, Ike stood up and shook Hill's hand, telling the pilot job well done. Hill went to Capri and spend the next two weeks flying the Andrew Sister's around to USO shows. He remained friends with the sisters long after the war. While stationed at Mt. Vesuvius, it erupted with lava flow moving down the street of some village. The base however was on the north side and remained safe. Capt. Hill saw Gen. Eisenhower several times, spoke to him a couple of times but only had the one face-to face encounter. Story courtesy of Jim Hill , son of Capt. James E. Hill.