

Master Sergeant Dempsey D. Bankus

Retired Air Force Master Sergeant Dempsey D. "Jack" Bankus passed away at Cornerstone Rehabilitation Center in Shreveport, Louisiana of natural causes on November 20, 2014. Sergeant Bankus was born near Milan, Missouri on March 13, 1923 to John A. and Blanche (Hays) Bankus.

His first marriage to Margie (Sayre) Bankus produced two wonderful sons, Kent Bankus and Bobby Bankus. He was preceded in death by his wife, Florence (Allen)

Bankus, with whom he had two beautiful daughters, Jaci (Bankus) Diebner and Jeri (Bankus) Hollowell. He was also preceded in death by his wife, Marion (Charest) Bankus; his parents John and Blanche Bankus; his brothers, Roscoe and Kenneth Bankus; and his grandsons, John Bankus and Benjamin Slater. He is survived by his sister Geraldine (Bankus) Ogle; four children, Kent Bankus, Bobby Bankus, Jaci (Bankus) Diebner, and Jeri (Bankus) Hollowell; and by nine grandchildren and 19 great grandchildren.

Sergeant Bankus joined the Army Air Corps in December, 1943 and during WWII flew 17 missions as a belly gunner in B-24 Liberators in the South Pacific. He was shot down in 1945 and, after two days in the ocean, was rescued by a PBY Catalina. He mustered out of the Air Corps in November 1945 and farmed for a while near Sorrell, Missouri. He reenlisted in the Air Force in October 1947, and was an engineer-gunner in the 13th Bomb Squadron on B-26 Invader aircraft in Japan at the start of the Korean war. Wounded three days after the war started, he is believed to be the first US airman wounded in that war. He was later shot down again. After his B-26 crashed on the top of a hill, Sgt Bankus turned on the aircraft battery switches was able to operate the guns in the top turret. He successfully repelled a North Korean force attacking an Army unit on the hill. He totaled 92 combat missions in WWII and Korea. Among his many decorations and ribbons, Master Sergeant Bankus is entitled to wear the Distinguished Flying Cross; the Air Medal with nine Oak Leaf Clusters; and the Purple Heart. After retiring from the Air Force, Sergeant Bankus was employed at the Louisiana Army Ordnance Plant, and later by the Gym Dandy Company in Shreveport, Louisiana.

Master Sergeant Bankus' two sons were both career military. His oldest son, retired Air Force Colonel Gerald K. Bankus, was shot down in 1966 in Vietnam while flying an F-100 Super Saber. His younger son, retired Army Sergeant Major Bobby J. Bankus, served in the Armored Cavalry throughout his career.

Services for Master Sergeant Bankus were held at the Hill Crest Funeral Home, with a military graveside ceremony, in Haughton, Louisiana on November 25, 2014. Pallbearers were members of the Barksdale Air Force Base Honor Guard. The Honor Guard from VFW Post 5951 also rendered military honors during the ceremony.

