

## John Daniel Speakman – WW2

John (known to his family as “Jack”) was the second child born to Mary and Walter Speakman in Delaware in the United States in 1924. He was a great grand child of Michael Carrucan and Mary Droney.

When he came of age, he enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps and was assigned to the 701<sup>st</sup> Bomb Squadron, 445<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division and assigned the position of tail gunner as part of a B-24 bomber crew.



This photo, taken October 1943, shows Jack Speakman, front row, second from right.

Sourced from <http://www.dj1953.com/1944/sidney's%20story.htm>

He and his crew flew a number of bombing missions over German occupied Europe from late 1943 until 24<sup>th</sup> February 1944 when their target was the Messerschmidt aircraft plant at Gotha, Germany. Jack's plane was one of a number of B-24s shot down that day. The pilot, Sidney Swanson, managed to keep the plane steady until all possible members could parachute to safety. Of the 10 crew members, 5 survived the crash and were immediately captured and became POW's. The five, including Jack, survived the internment camp and, when released by the Allies, returned to the USA.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1950, Jack wrote a letter to the mother of the pilot, explaining that if it wasn't for her son's actions, he would not be alive. This letter has been captured for posterity in a website honouring the pilot Sidney Swanson – see <http://www.dj1953.com/1944/sidney's%20story.htm>.

Jack's experiences in World War II had a huge impact on him.

After returning home, he started working for Amalgamated Leather Company as the overseas sales manager. In November 1946, he married Betty Lee Millman. Between 1947 and 1965, they had a family of 9 children, raising them all in the Catholic faith.

After the leather company folded, Jack went into several different enterprises to support his rapidly growing family. He operated Speakman Realty for a few years before working for Household Finance in their collection department, a position he held for over 20 years. After working all day at Household Finance, he worked at the Holiday Inn as the Night Auditor. This left his wife Betty with the job of raising the children.

But his work was not all consuming and he still found time for other activities. He was a Scoutmaster for Troop 68 at Corpus Christi Catholic Church for many years. He also supported and was a member of the Holy Name Society, the Church Council and many other church related endeavors.

Jack was well-known for his wit and sense of humor. He always had a joke to tell and card tricks for the young at heart.

After raising the children, Betty went to work for the Law firm of Young Conaway Stargatt and Taylor for many years.

Jack had the pleasure to see all of his grandchildren born but he passed away on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1992, just short of seeing the first of his great grandchildren.