

## Fallen Hero Profile: Captain Charles Dunbar Lancaster Hewes

**Name:** Charles Dunbar Lancaster Hewes  
**Born:** March 10, 1921  
**Died:** February 13, 1945  
**Hometown:** Biloxi, Mississippi  
**Entered the Military:** October 1939  
**Branch of Service:** U.S. Army Air Forces  
**Org Unit:** 335th Fighter Squadron, 4th Fighter Group  
**Rank:** Captain  
**Award(s):** Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, Purple Heart



### Before the War

Charles Dunbar "Dunny" Lancaster Hewes was born to Charles and Mabel Hewes in Biloxi, Mississippi on March 10, 1921. Hewes graduated from Biloxi High School on May 31, 1939. After graduation, he worked at the local F.W. Woolworth store.

### Military Experience

#### Pilot Training

Hewes enlisted October 1939 in the Army Air Corps and studied meteorology. Even though he did not have the required two years minimum of college, he was allowed to sit for the flying cadet exam. Hewes' initial ten-week flying training program took place at Rankin Field in January 1942. In order to join flight training, Hewes had to start over and elected to be reduced to the rank of private, but soon rose through the ranks to become Aviation Cadet First Sergeant of Company B. He graduated on March 26, 1942.

Next, Hewes moved to the Merced Army Flying School in California and then completed advanced training in Phoenix, Arizona. He was commissioned at Luke Field, Arizona on July 26, 1942. Stationed in Sarasota, Florida, he flew a P-39 Airacobra.

Hewes' sister, Lela, was a First Lieutenant in the Army Nursing Corps. According to a news clipping from the family scrapbook, it is believed that Dunny and Lela were the only brother-sister commissioned officers from Biloxi.

#### Pacific Theater

Hewes was transferred to New Guinea and served with the 13th Bomber Command, known as the Devil's Own Grim Reapers. Here he fought in the Battle of the Bismarck Sea, where Allied Air Forces sent wave after wave of Allied planes to bomb the Japanese. After three days, the Japanese had lost eight transports, four destroyers, and 20 aircraft. Allied losses totaled four aircraft.

In April 1943, Hewes switched from flying a pursuit plane to piloting a "Jimmy Doolittle" B-25 Bomber.

On September 12, 1943, Hewes' bomber dropped a 500 pound bomb sinking a 350 ton freighter in Muschu Harbor, in Papua New Guinea. On December 21, 1943, Lieutenant General George Kenny presented Hewes with the Air Medal. The citation read, "The bombing run was particularly difficult and dangerous because the vessel was anchored close to a larger vessel which was being attacked at the same time by another aircraft."

### **Battle of Rabaul**

In the fall of 1943, as part of Operation Cartwheel, the U.S. Fifth Air Force began a bombing campaign on New Britain, a key port that the Japanese held in New Guinea. Hewes took part in the bombing raid where he was credited with destroying a Japanese Zero.

### **Back Home**

In April 1944, Hewes returned from 17 months in the Pacific Theater, having completed 65 combat missions as a B-25 and A-20 pilot and assistant operations officer. He was assigned to be an instructor pilot in Florence, South Carolina.

### **On to Europe**

In August 1944, Hewes volunteered for foreign duty and was assigned to the European Theater operating out of England. He joined the 335th Fighter Squadron, 4th Fighter Group. Throughout November and December 1944, Hewes flew a series of missions and was promoted to Captain.

### **Battle of the Bulge**

The Battle of the Bulge was a major German offensive campaign launched through the densely forested Ardennes region in Belgium, France, and Luxembourg on the Western Front. Adolf Hitler guaranteed his ground commanders strong air support. During the first three days of the offensive, the Allied air forces and the Luftwaffe met in the skies over the cloud-covered battlefield as the Luftwaffe attempted to get under the low ceilings to support its ground offensives.

In late December 1944, Mabel Hewes received a letter from her son, informing her that his squadron was going to be engaged "on a big push." Hewes would be part of that "big push" when he flew his last mission on December 18, 1944.

Captain McKennon led 17 pilots that day to the Kassel-Frankfurt area. Hewes and the other pilots ran into difficulties due to heavy cloud layers and enemy aircraft. When the squadron returned that evening, Hewes was not with them. According to the Army Air Forces' records, "He did not call in or report any trouble. He was last seen at 4000 feet at or near Giessen at approx. 1430 hours."

According to Missing Air Crew Report 11312, "His Mustang was seen to spiral out of formation while climbing through a cloud bank. Crashed in a moor in Tinholt, Germany suffering a fractured spine. Captured and sent to a hospital." His P-51D Mustang was forced down over Germany, and Hewes had to bail.

The principal doctor at the hospital in Lingen, Germany, reported that Hewes had a "compression-fracture of his vertebral column with following palsy of his bladder and cystis."

Hewes was reported missing in action on December 18, 1944. Short-wave radio listeners had relayed messages to his mother, Mabel Hewes Elder, that Hewes had been taken prisoner.