



European-African Middle Eastern Campaign Medal



World War II Victory Medal



Army Occupation Medal



**Walter Gordon Knappenberger**  
**Sergeant U.S. Army Air Force**  
**10 January 1945 – 8 October 1946**



316th Bombardment Wing



Walter was born on 8 March 1916 in Allentown, Pennsylvania, while his parents were living at 614 North Fountain Street. In 1930 he and the family moved to Northampton, Pennsylvania, where he lived until 1935. He attended Washington Elementary School in Allentown and attended Northampton High School in Northampton for three years. He left high school in 1934 and worked as a truck driver for M.S. Perlman & Company in Allentown, a cotton cutter company. Walter married his first wife **Ruth Carlson** (10 September 1923 – 13 October 1995) in 1939 and moved to Allentown. They had a daughter **Gloria Jean Knappenberger** prior to Walter entering the Service. He entered the Army Air Corps as a Private at Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, on 19 January 1945. He underwent basic training as a Private at Camp Blanding, Florida, for about five months in preparation for deployment to the European Theater. When Walter was ready to ship out for Europe, his orders were changed for assignment to the Asiatic-Pacific Theater. On 17 June 1945 he left the States and, after spending some time on Saipan serving with the 8th Air Force as a Truck Driver/Mechanic, he accompanied his unit to Iwo Jima where they were responsible for clearing Japanese stragglers out of caves. Walter left Iwo Jima for Okinawa in the Ryukyu Island Chain, where his unit again was responsible for clearing the Japanese stragglers out of caves in the northern sector. One of his collateral duties, highly important to the soldiers as Walter put it, was driving a tractor-trailer truck to the various camps on Okinawa to deliver beer to them. Walter was assigned to the 559th Air Service Group on Okinawa, a new unit formed under the 994th Air Material Squadron, 8th Air Force, and underwent training as an Automotive Mechanic Instructor. He served on Okinawa until 15 August 1946, when he left for the States. He was discharged on 8 October 1946 at Fort Meade, Maryland. Walter returned to his home in Allentown and returned to work as a truck driver delivering produce for Paul Miller. Walter and Ruth were divorced in 1947, the year Walter moved to Maxatawny, Pennsylvania. While living there, in May 1950, a Justice of the Peace in Catasauqua, Pennsylvania, married Walter and his second wife, **Jennie Carlson** (27 August 1925 – 24 March 1997), Ruth's sister. Walter and Jennie had a daughter **Karen**. The family moved to various locations, including to New Castle, Delaware, in 1954. They lived there for 9 years, and in 1963 they relocated for a few months back to Northampton before buying a home in Emmaus, Pennsylvania, where they lived until Jennie died in 1997. Walter then went to live with his daughter, Karen, in Fleetwood, Pennsylvania, for five years until, at age 86, he married **May Warmkessel** (born 2 May 1929), the widow of a friend of his, **Harold Warmkessel** (6 June 1929 – 21 May 2001) with whom he worked at Laidlaw Bus Company, a company he joined while in his late 70s. They were married in Bowers, Pennsylvania, on 27 July 2002. Walter and she established residence at her house in the village of Weilersville, Pennsylvania, just outside Alburtis in Lower Macungie Township. Walter's parents were **George Henry Knappenberger** (8 July 1893 – 23 July 1977) and **Mary Ann Deppe** (8 October 1892 – 1961). Walter's brother, **Ralph J. Knappenberger**, was a U.S. Marine Corps veteran of World War II, who served in the South Pacific with the 4th Marine Division.