

# Edwin Cottrell

U.S. Army Air Corps/U.S. Air Force  
Lieutenant Colonel



Pilot Wings

Air Medal	Good Conduct Medal	American Campaign Medal
European-Africa-Middle Eastern Campaign	WWII Victory Medal	Armed Forces Reserve Medal



*France Honors  
WWII American Veterans*

The National Order of the Legion of Honor, France's highest decoration, was established by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802. It recognizes eminent services to the French Republic and is divided into five categories: Chevalier (Knight), Officier (Officer), Commandeur (Commander), Grand Officier (Grand Officer), and Grand-Croix (Grand Cross).

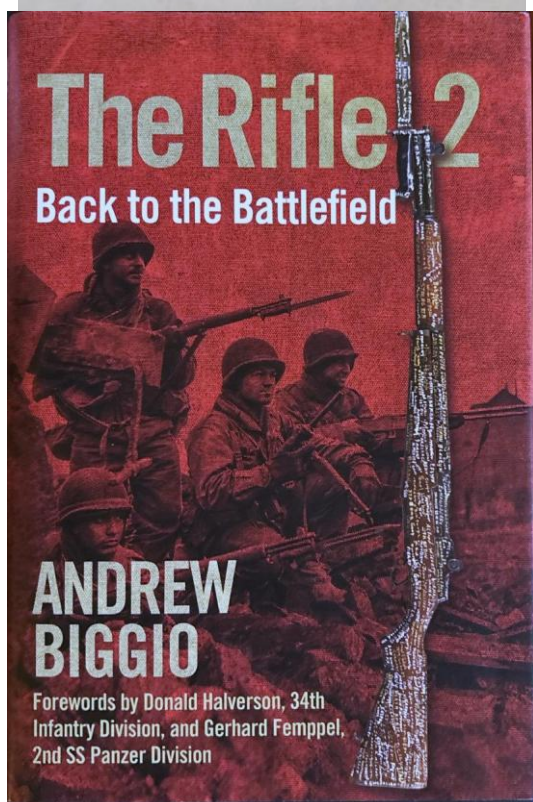
Foreign nationals who have served France or the ideals it upholds may receive distinction from the Legion of Honor. American veterans who fought on French territory during World War II qualify to be decorated as Knights of the Legion of Honor.

The President of the French Republic designates the recipients of the Legion of Honor.


American recipients include General Dwight D. Eisenhower and Douglas MacArthur, Admiral Michael Mullen, and, as an institution, the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.



**EDWIN COTTRELL**  
**48TH FIGHTER GROUP**  
**493RD FIGHTER SQUADRON**  
**ARDENNES, RHINELAND**  
**CENTRAL EUROPE**



*LT Col Ed Cottrell*



Edwin Cottrell, born in Oklahoma City, OK, served in the Army Air Corps from August 1942 through 1945, enlisted in the Air Force Reserves in 1950 and completed 28 years. A pilot in the 48th Fighter Group, 493rd Fighter Squadron, Cottrell flew 65 missions, including the Battle of the Bulge. His service in Europe began at Cambrai Airfield, just outside Paris.

In September 1944, his unit moved to St. Trond, Belgium. On a mission in Jullich, Germany, they skip-bombed the Germans and pushed them back.

On a mission to locate tiger tanks and bomb bridges on December 17, they ran into a group of Me 109 German Luftwaffe planes. A 20mm cannon hit Cottrell's plane. Limping along with eight of its 18 cylinders of the Pratt & Whitney engine shot out, Cottrell made it back to an airfield in Belgium and made a dead stick landing. Two German Me 109 pilots had flown up beside him but, miraculously, escorted him back and let him live rather than shooting him down.

Mid-January 1945, the 9th Army started pushing the Germans back. In May, Cottrell flew his last of 65 missions out of Nuremberg. Then the war was over.

Cottrell said, "Looking back, if Hitler had been successful, he wouldn't have stopped at anything. Thank the Lord we stopped him."

Ed Cottrell honors his father, Dr. Elmer Cottrell, who served in the U.S. Army in World War I along with his father-in-law, Dr. Paul Weed, who was wounded and received two Purple Hearts.

Cottrell flew combat missions during the Battle of the Bulge in a P-47. On one mission, his plane had been damaged with oil covering his windshield, making it hard for him to see. Suddenly, two German Messerschmidts came up along side him but instead of shooting him down, they escorted him back to his base. A chapter in the book, "The Rifle 2" by Andrew Biggio is about Cottrell's experience in WWII. The painting below shows Cottrell and the two German planes flying along side him. Cottrell lived to be 103, dying in April 2025.

