


## John Lenna Swenson

*War hero, retired U.S.P.S. supervisor*

 John Lenna Swenson of Newton Centre died Thursday, Nov. 28, 2002, at his home. He was 80.

Born in Somerville, he was the son of the late Herbert Leroy Swenson and Sadie Lenna Swenson. He attended St. John's High School and was active in the CYO.

Mr. Swenson was a Newton resident for more than 40 years.

He resigned from the Massachusetts State Guard in November 1942 to enlist in the U.S. Army Air Corps. After training, he flew with the 100th Bomb Group of the Eighth Air Force out of England in B-17s, the Flying Fortresses. Shot down over France on his fifth mission, he was concealed by the Free French Underground who eventually helped him escape over the Pyrenees Mountains into Spain and safety. During that escape, he exhibited courage in helping his wounded comrades. He later received the Soldier's Medal for heroism and the Purple Heart for being wounded in action.

Following the war, Mr. Swenson spent two years in an Honor Guard returning the World War II war-dead from foreign soil to their families, and an additional tour of duty returning stranded military aircraft to the United States. In 1950, while attending Boston University, he responded to the call to active duty in the Korean conflict, spending two years there. He received a direct commission as a lieutenant during that tour of duty. He also served during the Cuba Missile Crisis, and was on active duty for one year, attached to Hanscom Air Force Base in Bedford. In all, Mr. Swenson spent 30 years in active service with the U.S. Air Force, retiring with the rank of lieutenant colonel, and receiving many Air Force medals, citations and commendations.

During periods of civilian life, Mr. Swenson worked for the John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Co. and later retired as a supervisor for the U.S. Postal Service. He received his bachelor of science degree from Northeastern University and his master of arts degree from Anna Maria College. He was an active member of the 100th Bomb Group Association, the Escape and Evasion Society, and the Retired Officers Association.

He leaves his wife, Norma Meras Swenson; his daughter, Sarah Lucille Swenson of Long Beach, Calif.; and many cousins in New England.

A funeral Mass was celebrated Monday, Dec. 2, at St. Anthony Church, Somerville.

Burial was in Mount Auburn Cemetery.

Memorial donations may be made to the Animal Rescue League of Boston, P.O. Box 265, Boston, MA 02117; or to a charity of the donor's choice.

Arrangements were made by Commonwealth Funeral Service, Brighton.



**Lt. Col. John Lenna Swenson**