



## **Eli Bontrager**

**Jul 1, 1924 -**

**BIRTHPLACE:** Springer, NM

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### **SOLDIER DETAILS**

**HIGHEST RANK:** Gunner

**DIVISION:** Navy, Sinclair Tanker

**THEATER OF OPERATION:** Pacific

**SERVED:** Dec 2, 1942 -

**HONORED BY:** The Eisenhower Foundation

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### **BIOGRAPHY**

Eli Bontrager was born in Springer, NM in 1924. His family moved to Kansas and he spent his early years around Reno County Kansas. He was drafted into the service, joining the Navy and becoming a gunner on a tanker. Twenty men severed on the tanker which fueled ships in the Pacific. Bontrager crossed the equator around 20 times to deliver fuel. At one point he had not been on land for around one year. Upon returning back to New York he found it difficult to walk after all the time at sea. He and his friend decided to walk about New York City and encountered some girls. The men were in awe and a little shy after the long hiatus without seeing females. Bontrager served at the same time as his three brothers. His brother, David Bontrager, speaks of Eli's service briefly at the end of his own interview. Eli and all of his brothers returned home safely.