Raymond H. Bourgeois (1923-1944)

He served in the military between Oct 16, 1942 and May 31, 1944 in Italy as a S/Sgt in the 764th Bomber Squadron, 461st Bomber Group.

Army serial number: 18150432; enlisted at New Orleans on Oct. 16, 1942 as a Private in the Air Corps. He was a high school graduate and was a "rigger" in civilian life. His physical appearance is listed as Height: 65", and Weight as 136 lbs. His records can be found at the National Archives in box 0285, film 3.7.

He died on May 31, 1944 in Adriatic Sea, off the coast of Yugoslavia.
Date: 5/31/44, Air Craft S/N: 42-78103, Unit: 461st Group, 764 Squadron, Ship No: 17, Type: B-24, Ship Name: Red Ryder, Pilot: Lt. George N Ryder, Jr., Disposition: Flack Damage, Ditched in Adriatic

From AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION

Raymond H. Bourgeois
Staff Sergeant, U.S. Army Air Forces
Service Number: 18150432
764th Bomber Squadron, 461st Bomber Group, Heavy
Entered the Service from: Louisiana
Died: May 31, 1944
Missing in Action or Buried at Sea
Tablets of the Missing at Florence American Cemetery Florence, Italy
Awards: Air Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, Purple Heart

15th AF - 49th Bomb Wing
461st Bomb Group
(764th, 765th, 766th, 767th Bomb Squadrons)
Torretta, Italy
The Liberaiders - "Al Ataque"

The 461st Heavy Bombardment Group, with Squadrons Number 764, 765, 766 and 767, was ordered activated at the Army Air Base, Wendover Field, Utah as of July 1, 1943. Authority for the constitution and activation of this Group can be found in General Orders No. 7S issued by Headquarters of the Second Air Force dated May 29, 1943. A letter from the Second Air Force under date of July 29, 1943 moved the Group, without personnel or equipment, from the place of its activation to Army Air Base, Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho.

At Wendover Field, the 461st Group found itself comparatively well situated. Everywhere there
was hustle and bustle as the various sections of the Group began to set up operations at the new station. An optimistic feeling of confidence and hope would be sensed among the personnel of the Group. The Group's mission during the month of October [1943] was to be that of filling up and training the Ground Echelon and the receiving and training in Second Phase the twenty (20) flight leader crews, the arrival of whom was hourly expected.

Upon leaving Wendover, the 461st Bomb Group also left the 2nd Air Force. When it arrived at Hammer Field it became an organization of the 4th Air Force. In doing this, it became one of the first heavy bomb groups in many months to come under the command of the 4th Air Force for training purposes. The original and primary mission of the Group was that of providing training in 2nd Phase for members of combat crews and the ground echelon. To this was added the necessity of receiving and processing many officers and men who were assigned to the Group after its arrival at Hammer Field, and the need for devising plans to nullify the effects of the ever threatening morning fogs of Hammer Field. In addition, the month proved to be one in which many changes were made among the key pilots who held administrative positions.

The mission of the 461st Bombardment Group during the month of December, 1943, fell distinctly into three parts as follows:

a. Third Phase flying training of the Flight Echelon.
b. Frequent inspection of all types by representatives of higher echelons.
c. Final preparation for overseas movement by both the Air and the Ground Echelons.

The missions of the Group during the months of January and February were two in number:

a. That of moving the personnel, equipment, and planes of the Group across the United States, the Atlantic Ocean, the Mediterranean Sea, Africa, and Italy to the Army Air Base at Torretta, Italy.
b. That of establishing a camp at that Base in Italy.

Mission No. 36, 31 May 1944 Concordia Vega Oil Refinery Ploesti, Roumania

On the last day of the month the Group made its second trip of the month to Ploesti. In defense of the target, the enemy added smoke screens to his aggressive fighter resistance and flak concentration. Despite this resistance Captain Leffler got a score of 27 per cent for the mission.

2nd Lt. Samuel N. Norris got his damaged plane back to the Island of Brac, where he and his crew were forced to bail out. 2nd Lt. George N. Ryder Jr. attempted to bail his crew out on the Island of Vis, but they missed the Island. The crew members landed in the water and all of them are believed to be lost. (Note: Lt. Easton W. Duval's body was recovered, and returned to the United States after the war. He is buried in Austin, Texas)
The crew:

2nd Lt. George N. Ryder Jr. Denver, Colo. 31/5/44 Ploesti
2nd Lt. Wayne A. Kretchmar Venturia, N.D. 31/5/44 Ploesti
2nd Lt. Easton W. Duval Jr. Austin, Texas 31/5/44 Ploesti
2nd Lt. Billy K. Isbell Charleston, Ill. 31/5/44 Ploesti
S/Sgt. Raymond H. Bourgeois Gramercy, La. 31/5/44 Ploesti
S/Sgt. James H. Williams Kingsland, Ark. 31/5/44 Ploesti
S/Sgt. Robert D. McIntire St. Louis Park, Minn. 31/5/44 Ploesti
S/Sgt. Charles F. Doane San Diego, Cal. 31/5/44 Ploesti
S/Sgt. Bud W. Armstrong Shattuck, Okla. 31/5/44 Ploesti

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