

Staff Sergeant William W. Burgess entered the Army on 31 January 1942. After the usual period of training he was graduated at Lakeland, Florida as a rear gunner. On 3 August 1942, Staff Sergeant Burgess departed the Continental United States for participation in the European Theater of Operations. He was assigned to the 343rd Squadron, 98th Bombardment Group, Ninth United States Air Force and was stationed at St. Jean, Palestine, and Kabrit, Egypt. The 98th Bombardment Group, known as The Pyramidiers, with B-24 Liberator Bombers, flew aerial bombardment against the Germans from bases in Palestine, Egypt, and North Africa. Combat missions included aerial attacks on Tobruk and Benghazi Harbors, strikes over Crete and Greece; attacks over Navarino Bay; strikes deep into Axis Territory; and attacks over Tripoli. After the successful landings in North Africa, the 98th Bombardment Group also operated over Tunisia, striking Sousse and Tunis. Staff Sergeant Burgess also participated in strikes over Lete, Libya in April 1943. He completed 300 hours of operational flights against the enemy. Staff Sergeant Burgess returned to the Continental United States on 14 May 1943 and was assigned to the 460th Bomb Squad, 330th Group, Biggs Air Field, El Paso, Texas where he was a gunner instructor. Staff Sergeant Burgess's combat missions were performed as a gunner in the B24D Bomber Aircraft, "The Squaw". The Squaw had made 87 missions at the end of Staff Sergeant Burgess's time and was then transferred to another crew. It was 66 feet 4 inches long, 110 feet wide, carried 3800 gallons of gas, 20 tons of bombs, 10,000 rounds of ammunition, 9 - 50 caliber machine guns, had a maximum speed of 303 mph, range of 2,300 miles, ceiling of 32,000 feet, 4 engines, and 9 crew members. In recognition of meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flights against the enemy in the European Theater of Operations, Staff Sergeant Burgess was awarded the: Air Medal with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters; Distinguished Flying Cross; Good Conduct Medal; and European, African, and Middle Eastern Theater Ribbon. Staff Sergeant Burgess received an Honorable Discharge on 30 June 1945.