

1Lt Robert W. York #O-750758
416th BG - 671BS pilot

Robert York was born August 21, 1919 to Mr. and Mrs. Walter A. York in Huntington, West Virginia.

At age 22, Mr. York enlisted in the Army Air Corps on Jan 7, 1941.

During May of 1944, Robert W. York transferred into the 416th Bomb Group as pilot. His first mission was on the early morning of May 13, 1944. SSgt Harley James Wilds and SSgt Lewis A. Ashton were assigned his gunners and regular crew.

May 20, 1944 Lt. Wipperman and Lt. Robert W. York landed at nearby airfields due to flak damage to their gas tanks. With both boxes dropping their bombs on dispersal areas and buildings, the 416th rained havoc on the air field at Corneille Eu Vex late in the afternoon. Major Campbell and Captain Clark led the formation. Flak was mild. Results were classified as excellent, and all the ships returned.

The crew flew on D-Day with good bombing results.

September 29th, 1944

Missions 148 and 149 were flown the 29th of September 1944, a disastrous day for the 416th and the 671st Bomb Squadrons. Moderate to intense accurate heavy flak was met on both morning and afternoon attacks on marshalling yards inside Germany. In the morning sortie Lt. Boukamp of the 669th Squadron and Lt. Nordstrom of the 670th Squadron were shot down over the target area. While attacking a target near Julich, Germany that afternoon, an intense heavy flak barrage accounted for three aircraft. Lt. Robert W. York lifted into the sky in the A-20, #43-10165, with his regular crew of SSgt Lewis A. Ashton and SSgt Harley James Wilds as gunners. Lt. DeMand's ship, leading the third flight of the second box received a direct hit in the gas tank and exploded in mid-air. As a result of the same barrage the ships flown by Lt. Robert W. York and Lt. Morehouse were seen going down in the target area. Other men missing were 2Lt Alwin C. Burns (B/N), SSgt R. J. Troyer, SSgt C. W. Middleton, SSgt Harley James Wilds, SSgt Lewis A. Ashton, SSgt A. J. Burgess and SSgt L. A. Zygiel.

In the afternoon, the 671st caught the wrath the Germans flung up. Lt. Francis W. DeMand, Lt. Robert W. York and Lt. Ray C. Morehouse and their crews were knocked out of the air by a flak barrage that tore their flight apart just over the target. Lt. DeMand's ship, which was leading the third flight in the second box, received a direct hit on the gas tank, and the plane exploded in mid-air. The other two planes were seen going down over the target.

1st Lt. York and his gunners, SSgt Harlay J. Wilds and SSgt Lewis A. Ashton came to the 416th as replacements in the early part of May and had turned into combat veterans. They were an integral part of the 671st. Lt. Robert W. York racked up 42 missions, SSgt Wilds had 37 sorties and SSgt Ashton had 42.

SSgt Harley J. Wilds and SSgt Ashton had been able to hit the silk and were taken POW. Lt. Robert York went down with the plane and perished on September 29th.

After serving the 416th with 62 missions, 43-10165 was lost forever.

Lt. York was laid to rest in an American grave overseas, before his body was reinterred on July 22, 1949, in the soil he died for. His flat granite grave marker, delivered by freight train, lies at the head of his grave with his body in Antigo, Wisconsin. Thank you 1st Lt. Robert W. York, great American hero, for your sacrifice and duty to country.

671 History by Gordon Russell