



### Personal info

Full name

**BURKETT, William R**

Date of birth

**18 February 1916**

Age

**28**

Place of birth

**Grand Junction, Greene County, Iowa**

Hometown

**Greene County, Iowa**

### Military service

Service number

**O-728570**

Rank

**First Lieutenant**

Unit

**351st Fighter Squadron,  
353rd Fighter Group**

Awards

**Distinguished Flying Cross,  
Air Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters**

### Death & Grave

Status

**Killed in Action**

Date of death

**4 March 1944**

Cemetery

**American War Cemetery Ardennes**

Plot	Row	Grave
D	5	10

## Immediate family

### Members

**James L. Burkett (father)**  
**Anna P. (Schipper) Burkett (mother)**  
**Roy M. Burkett (brother)**  
**Leslie G. Burkett (brother)**  
**Clifford F. Burkett (brother)**  
**Clarence L. Burkett (brother)**  
**Lione Burkett (sister)**

## Plane data

### Serial number

**42-75850**

### Data

**Type: P-47**  
**Nickname: Lonesome Polecat II**  
**Mission: Bomber escort**  
**MACR: 2793**

## More information

William Burkett was a carpenter.

He volunteered for the Air Corps of the Army of the United States at Fort Des Moines, Iowa.

Statement from 2nd Lt William J. Weaver, who participated in the mission: "I was flying on the left wing of Lt Burkett in number three position when my oxygen regulator became inoperative. I called Lt Burkett and told him I had to go home and had to go down to a level where I did not need oxygen. He called back saying he was coming with me. I made a left turn out of formation and he did likewise. He called me to make a right turn and get on his wing, which I did.

We flew in close formation skimming over the top of the clouds at 24,000 feet. Twice he called me while flying like this, asking if I was alright. Both times I replied saying I was alright so far but had to get down right away as I had full emergency oxygen on and still was getting very little oxygen. We then started to descend through the clouds together flying a course of around 300 degrees, which was roughly the course home.

We descended about 4,000 feet together in close formation. Then Lt Burkett started a turn to the right with me on the inside of the turn. The turn began getting steeper and steeper until my airplane was shuddering almost to the stalling point. I called Burkett to make a left turn and I received no answer. I called him the second time to make a left turn, and again I received no answer. Suddenly my plane did a high speed stall from the sharp angle of bank and I made a stall recovery. Just as I made the recovery Lt. Burkett faded away from me in the clouds. This was somewhere in the Liege Area.

I then pulled up into a steep climb and my air speed fell off sharply. I immediately put the nose down and went into a steep dive with both wing tanks on. The air speed hit 600 miles per hour and with the altimeter reading 8,000 feet I tried the controls which were frozen solid. I then gave two rolls of trim tab and pulled back on the stick with both hands. I broke out of the clouds at about 3,000 feet, and at the same time the plane pulled out of the dive pulling right back up into the clouds. I then flew instruments all the way to Dunkerque, where I broke out of a wall of clouds.

When I last saw Lt Burkett he was in a steep right bank with his left wing tank on and his right one off. My R/T was very noisy but about ten minutes after I left him I could faintly hear the call sign Roughman 45 on D Channel. Roughman 45 was Burkett's call sign. I stayed off D Channel until I no longer heard it in use. I then continued to call Parker for homings.

## Photos



Source of information: Peter Schouteten, Raf Dyckmans, [www.wwiimemorial.com](http://www.wwiimemorial.com), [www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov), [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com), [www.fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com), [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com), SPC

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