UCF Veterans Legacy Program

Ned Lamar Bostic (1921-1943)

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Ned Lamar Bostic was born in Atlanta, GA on November 28, 1921. His parents also hailed from Georgia. His father and grandfather both worked as farmers who resettled in Lake Mary during Florida's 1920s "land boom." By 1930, Bostic's father worked as an iceman in Lake Mary, FL. Before refrigerators, the ice industry supplied blocks of ice for homes and businesses iceboxes. When the Great Depression hit, his father again switched jobs to become a mechanic.

During Bostic's childhood, he was involved in his community. He joined the Boy Scouts, attended community events such as fish fries, and participated in his school's play. He attended Seminole High School in Sanford, FL but did not complete his senior year. By 1942, the family again relocated to Jacksonville, FL, where Bostic continued to live with his family and worked as a clerk.

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the US entered World War II. At twenty one years old, Bostic registered for the draft, along with his father who participated in the "Old Man's Draft." Ned enlisted in the US Army Air Forces at Camp Blanding, FL in July of 1942. Bostic likely trained in both Mississippi and Washington state to prepare to operate and maintain B-17 bombers. These planes were also known as Flying Fortresses and had crews of up to ten men. Next, he attended flexible gunnery school in Las Vegas, NV to train for combat. There, he prepared for difficult and dangerous flying conditions including freezing temperatures and low visibility. The Army Air Forces trained through midair target practice and made them get used to wearing oxygen masks to be ready for the high altitude.

In August of 1943, Bostic joined the 423rd Bombardment Squadron and was deployed (sent overseas) to Thurleigh, England. After some initial transitions, he was assigned to fly in the *Queen Jeannie*, a B-17 that held ten airmen. Bostic was the left waist gunner for his crew, which meant that he defended them against enemies in the air. Bostic's squadron flew in missions over Europe, bombing locations with the goal of destroying Germany's weapons production. This meant munitions factories, airfields, and submarines were all targets. Some missions proved successful, while others were not. The men had to worry about the German Luftwaffe as well, which had a strong defense system that detected aircraft and attacked them with weapons called "flak" from the ground.

Bostic flew in approximately twelve of these dangerous missions, including one on October 14, 1943 when his squadron flew in a raid of Schweinfurt, in the center of

Germany. They targeted a factory that made parts for German weapons. They hoped that destroying this factory would significantly weaken the German war machine. Because the journey was so far, the fighter planes escorting the bombers for protection could only fly with them halfway to their destination, leaving them much less protected for the second half of the journey. As soon as the B-17s were alone, the Germans attacked, forcing the bombers to break their formation and become even more vulnerable.

Of the 291 bombers on the mission, twenty-eight were already lost by the time the formation reached Schweinfurt. One of those planes that was hit was the *Queen Jeannie* with Bostic and the crew aboard. Someone gave the order for the men to bail, or eject, from the bomber. Sadly, Bostic, for any number of reasons, did not jump. He died when the plan hit the ground in Belgium and broke into two. Four others from the crew also perished.

Bostic was originally reported as missing in action, but in January of 1944, the Army confirmed that he had been killed in action (KIA). He was buried temporarily in a cemetery in Belgium, and later in 1949, his body was returned to the US and reinterred (buried) at the Saint Augustine National Cemetery, Section C, Site 131. Bostic's mother died in 1955 but his father lived until the age of eighty-one.

A plaque in the Memorial Park of the National Museum of the United States Air Force in Riverside, OH recognizes Bostic and the others flying on October 14, 1943, known as "Black Thursday," when the US lost sixty planes and over 600 airmen. While Bostic and his crew's last mission ended in tragedy, the mission did have some success in reducing German munition production and the Army also learned it had to better protect large bombing missions. Ned Bostic is remembered for his great bravery and dedication to defeating the Germans in World War II.

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