

303rd BG(H) Combat Mission No. 12

27 January 1943

Target: Wilhelmshaven Naval Base, Germany

Crews Dispatched: 11

Length of Mission: 5 1/2 hours

Bomb Load: 4 x 1000 lbs H.E. Demolition bombs

Bombing Altitude: 23,000 ft

Ammo Fired: 14,142 rounds

Enemy Aircraft Claims: 1 Destroyed, 1 Damaged

Germany, for the first time, was bombed with U.S. bombs, from U.S. airplanes, with U.S. crews. Maj. **Green** and Lt. **Von Schmidt** conducted the briefing at 0545 hours.

Only eleven aircraft were available for the mission and they took off at 0930 hours led by Lt. Col. **Marion** flying as co-pilot for Capt. **Lyle**. Three aircraft aborted:

#41-24541, *Spook*, 358BS-G, piloted by Lt. **Oxridor**, had a harrowing experience in keeping with the aircraft's name. A life raft, released by the vibration from the firing of the top turret by T/Sgt. Frederick B. **Ziemer**, struck the left waist gunner, Sgt. Wilmer G. **Raesley**. The left waist gun went wild, shooting holes in the side of the aircraft and wounding the tail gunner, S/Sgt. James K. **Sadler**. Sgt. **Sadler** received two bullet holes (not serious) in his right buttock and was hospitalized. These events caused Lt. **Oxridor** to return home when ten miles over the English Channel.

Both waist guns and the ball turret fuse went out on #41-24558, *Hunga Dunga*, 358BS-F, piloted by Lt. **McDonald**.

#41-24605, *Knockout Dropper*, 359BS-R, piloted by Lt. **Roller**, turned back when the interphone system stopped working.

The eight remaining 303rd BG(H) B-17s and 45 others from the 91st, 305th, and 306th Bomb Groups, bombed the secondary target at Wilhelmshaven. The primary target, a power house at Vegesack, Germany, was obscured by clouds. The 2BW B-24s failed to bomb when they were unable to locate the target because of cloud cover and poor navigation.

Moderate, heavy and inaccurate anti-aircraft fire was observed in the target area while dropping 1,000-lb. bombs from 25,000 feet. Ten to fifteen ME-109s were observed by the crews and about 30 encounters ensued. There were many claims for aircraft destroyed, and gunners were credited with one destroyed that crashed into the sea and one damaged. All aircraft returned safely with only a few battle scars. Gunners declared that most of the German pilots were "Greenhorns" and made constant tactical mistakes, many of which would not be made again. Two crewmen suffered from frostbite.

Correspondents, press photographers, and newsreel cameramen from leading U.S. and U.K. newspapers, magazines, and newsreels were at Molesworth when the crews returned. They were covering this history-making event for the free world. Everyone at Molesworth was highly elated over this successful mission, although the crews on the abortive airplanes and on the B-17s that were out of commission were disappointed in not being in on the show.

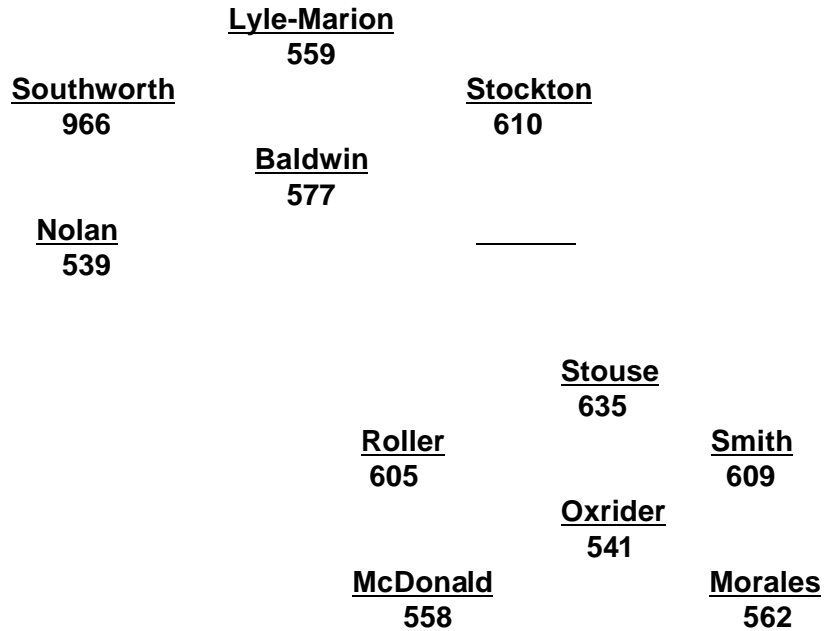
1Lt. Jesse H. **Elliott**, navigator, was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for destroying a ME-109 German fighter.

NOTE: Due to heavy cloud cover, the lead 306th BG(H) formation, led by B/Gen. Frank A. **Armstrong**, Jr., was unable to bomb the primary target at Vegesack, Germany. The fifty-five B-17s of the 91st, 303rd, 305th and 306th BGs were ordered to head for the last resort target at Wilhelmshaven. 303rd BG(H) bombs were dropped at 11:11 hours. The VIII Bomber Command mission report indicates that the 306th BG(H) dropped their bombs at 11:10, making them the first 8th AF bomb group to bomb Germany. Controversy exists, however, over the accuracy of the 306th BG(H) reported bombing time and which group and aircraft held the honor of being the first to bomb German soil.



Ooold Soljer #41-24559 (360BS) PU-C
102nd PBCW #2 (360BS) - Pilot Capt L.E. Lyle / CoPilot LtCol C.E. Marion

Aircraft Formation at Assembly Point



Three (3) aircraft aborted this mission:

Lt. McDonald in 558

Lt. Oxridner in 541

Lt. Roller in 605

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

<u>CREW POSITIONS</u> CMP - Command Pilot P - Pilot CP - Co-Pilot NAV - Navigator ANV - Ass't. Navigator MNV - Mickey Navigator ENG - Engineer BOM - Bombardier RO - Radio Operator	TOG - Togglier BT - Ball Turret Operator TT - Top Turret Operator TG - Tail Gunner NG - Nose Gunner RG - Radio Gunner WG - Waist Gunner LWG - Left Waist Gunner RWG - Right Waist Gunner GUN - Gunner	VI - Voice Interpreter OBS - Observer PAS - Passenger PHO - Photographer <u>RESULTS OF MISSION</u> KIA - Killed in action WIA - Wounded in action MIA - Missing in action POW - Prisoner of war	DOW - Died of wounds EVD - Evaded the enemy INT - Interned in neu cntry REP - Repatriated RES - Rescued ESC - Escaped BO - Bailed out DCH - Ditched CR-L - Crashed on land CR-S - Crashed at sea
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358th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

B-17F #41-24539 *Jersey Bounce*

P	Nolan, Robert J., 1Lt
CP	Kruse, Richard L., 2Lt
NAV	Anderson, William J., 2Lt
BOM	Hopper, Richard R., 2Lt
ENG	Hively, Roy J., T/Sgt
BT	Kinney, Jesse R., Sgt
RO	Hamill, Milton, Sgt
RWG	Koenig, Bernard H., T/Sgt
LWG	Isham, Lawrence W., Sgt
TG	Bitter, Emile V., Jr., Sgt

B-17F #41-24562 *Sky Wolf*

P	Morales, Carl H., 1Lt
CP	Swaffer, Calvin A., 2Lt
NAV	Miller, Hubert E., 1Lt
BOM	Zasadil, Frank E., 2Lt
ENG	Hinds, Francis G., T/Sgt
BT	Carroll, Albert V., Sgt
RO	Burns, Francis J., S/Sgt
RWG	Hill, John E., Sgt
TG	Blake, Robert C., Sgt
LWG	Westfall, Max M., Sgt

B-17F #41-24577 *Hell's Angels*

P	Baldwin, Irl E., Capt
CP	Joy, Ripley W., 2Lt
NAV	Madsen, Parley W., 1Lt
BOM	Bone, Donald R., 1Lt
ENG	Rodriguez, James E., Jr., T/Sgt
RWG	Meddaugh, Allerton F., Sgt
RO	Warren, Russell M., Sgt
BT	Brody, Harry J., Sgt
LWG	Weiskopf, Dennis, Sgt
TG	Godwin, Harold E., Sgt
PAS	Schwartz, David, 2Lt
PHO	Whitney, Leroy F., S/Sgt

B-17F #41-24541 *Spook*

P	Oxridner, George J., 1Lt
CP	Hurlburt, Donald W., 2Lt
NAV	Grant, Donald L., 2Lt
BOM	Thomas, Thomas R., 2Lt
ENG	Zierner, Frederick B., T/Sgt
TG	Sadler, James K., Sgt
RO	Dasher, Everett A., S/Sgt
LWG	Raesley, Wilmer G., Sgt
BT	Kuffel, Mathias A., S/Sgt
RWG	Heaps, Theodore C., Sgt
	(Abortive)

B-17F #41-24558 *Hunga Dunga*

P	McDonald, James M., 1Lt
CP	Rogan, Dave L., 2Lt
NAV	Clement, Richard W., 1Lt
BOM	Schieble, Robert O., 1Lt
ENG	Fanning, David D., T/Sgt
RWG	Bridges, Alvin A., Sgt
RO	Carpenter, Glenn S., S/Sgt
BT	Bruskotter, James E., S/Sgt
TG	Sterling, Robert W., S/Sgt
LWG	Martin, James C., Sgt
	(Abortive)

359th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

B-17F #41-24635 *The '8' Ball MK II*

P	Stouse, Harold L., 1Lt
CP	O'Connor, Squire T., 2Lt
NAV	Elliott, Jesse H., 2Lt
BOM	Mathis, Jack W., 2Lt
ENG	Audiss, Eldon W., T/Sgt
RO	Richardson, Donald R., T/Sgt
LWG	Tupper, Theron S., S/Sgt
BT	Garriott, John A., S/Sgt
TG	Owen, Calvin H., S/Sgt
RWG	Brown, Houston B., Jr., Sgt
PHO	Trojan, Joseph E., Lt

B-17F #41-24605 *Knockout Dropper*

P	Roller, Jack, 1Lt
CP	Cline, William J., 2Lt
NAV	Henson, Walter C., 2Lt
BOM	Shoup, John R., Jr., 2Lt
ENG	Marcelonis, Joseph G., T/Sgt
BT	Ketron, Frank M., S/Sgt
RO	Terry, Charles R., T/Sgt
RWG	Beringer, John L., Jr., S/Sgt
TG	Murphy, Murel A., S/Sgt
LWG	Nicosia, Eugene A., Sgt
	(Abortive)

B-17F #41-24609 *Holy Mackerel*

P	Smith, Sanford T., 1Lt
CP	Dooley, Walter E., 2Lt
NAV	Summers, Thomas E., 1Lt
BOM	Dwyer, Robert P., 1Lt
ENG	Perkins, Homer W., S/Sgt
BT	Hardaway, Sidney T., S/Sgt
RO	York, Robert F., S/Sgt
LWG	Adams, Ralph B., S/Sgt
TG	Winter, Raymond K., Jr., T/Sgt
RWG	Locke, Paul L., Sgt
GUN	Snell, Jack D., S/Sgt

360th Bombardment Squadron Crew List

B-17F # 41-24559 *Ooold Soljer*

P	Lyle, Lewis E., Capt
CP	Marion, Charles E., LtCol
NAV	Anderson, Samuel H., Lt
BOM	Saiz, Reinaldo J., Lt
OBS	Bartlett, Keith O., 1Lt
ENG	Smith, Gene K., T/Sgt
RO	Balcombe, Clayton S., S/Sgt
BT	Sangster, Robert A., S/Sgt
TG	Smith, Woodrow W., S/Sgt
RWG	Bradford, Edward A., Sgt
LWG	Herbert, Joseph M., T/Sgt

427th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

B-17F #42-2966 (No Name)		B-17F #41-24610 Joe Btfsplk	
P	Southworth, Billy B., Jr., Capt	P	Stockton, Donald E., 1Lt
CP	Dillinger, John L., 2Lt	CP	Lipe, Fort W., Wlt
NAV	Schueler, Jon R., 2Lt	NAV	Grant, Lawrence H., 2Lt
BOM	Conver, Milton K., 2Lt	BOM	Shirley, Lloyd A., 2Lt
ENG	Means, Lucian W., Jr., T/Sgt	ENG	Smith, Roy Q., S/Sgt
RO	Doughty, Edward J., S/Sgt	RO	Amos, Lee H., S/Sgt
RWG	Brandt, Waldo B., Sgt	BT	Jenkins, Robert R., Sgt
BT	Belk, Jack, S/Sgt	TG	Henderson, George W., S/Sgt
RWG	Fleming, William W., Sgt	RWG	Harmon, Edward Z., Sgt
TG	Kirkpatrick, Ward M., Sgt	LWG	Bryant, Carson, S/Sgt
PHO	O'Cain, James H., 2Lt **		

** 2Lt James Howard O'Cain (S-2 Photo Officer) is believed to have flown with this crew as a photograhper, though his name was not included on the Loading List. See the newspaper article below, published in the Arkansas "Pine Bluff Commercial" in March 1943.

Lieutenant James H. O'Cain Writes Letter From England Praising Captain L. E. Lyle

Captain Lewis Elton Lyle, United States Army Air Forces, son of Mr. and Mrs. L. E. Lyle, 1400 West Seventeenth, was praised highly by a fellow flier, Lieutenant James H. O'Cain of Pine Bluff, in a letter to W. F. Hawley, former circulation manager of The Commercial.

Captain Lyle is a commanding officer of a squadron in England, and Lieut. O'Cain, son of Mr. and Mrs. M. F. O'Cain, 302 West Eighteenth, is a photographic officer in the air forces in England.

The letter, dated Feb. 16, follows:

"Perhaps this will be a surprise to you, hearing from me, but I had a letter from mother the other day and she told me that you asked about me. I appreciate your interest in me very much. I'm very well and expect to stay that way.

"By the way, since you know that one of Pine Bluff's own was the pilot of first American plane to drop bombs on Germany, I might be able to give you a clear picture of just what kind of a boy Captain L. Elton Lyle is. It so happened that I was permitted to go along on that famous first trip over Germany as photographic officer of this group. Capt. Lyle is in the same group as I, except in a different squadron. On this trip he was pilot of the lead ship and was, therefore, the first over the target. We were afforded an escort of fighter pursuit planes across the channel, but once over the channel, we were on our own. That is always where the real test comes, for the first ship the enemy tries to shoot down is the lead ship, therefore hoping to cause the rest of the formation to be without a leader. This being the case, Capt.

Lyle was in the "hot spot" all the way. We didn't encounter many fighter planes and the flak was not so thick and heavy, so Capt. Lyle's plane was the first over the target. However, that trip was only a picture of the way Capt. Lyle has always flown on every mission yet. He's one of the coolest flyers in the business and one of the best. He's among the most respected pilots and officers in the whole group. He's always calm under pressure and never loses his head. That's why he has come all the way from an air cadet to captain and commanding officer of a squadron that's going great guns in less than a year. His ship, which is called by the crew, 'Oold Soljer,' has led other planes that have made the headlines many times, such as the 'Eight Ball,' 'Mister Completely,' 'Yardbird,' 'Shak-Hak,' 'Alley Oop,' and last but not least, 'F.D.R.' and the 'Potato Peeler Kids.'

"So, all in all, Pine Bluff can well be proud of their favorite son, Captain Lewis Elton Lyle, for its men like him who are fast drawing this war to a hasty conclusion. I wish you could be here to see the position that we've got Hitler in now. Honestly, I don't see how he can last through the rest of this year. Just you folks back home keep on buying War Bonds and stamps so that we can finish this job in a hurry and get back home.

"I'm well and happy, but it's really a rough old go over here. Extend my best regards to all the folks there in Pine Bluff."

Bees sting only when annoyed, according to an entomologist in the U. S. Bureau of Entomology.