

303rd BG(H) Combat Mission No. 16

16 February 1943

Target: Port Area, St. Nazaire, France

Crews Dispatched: 14

Crews Lost: Two - Lt. Dunnica & Capt. Breed

Length of Mission: 5 1/4 to 5 1/2 hours

Bomb Load: 500 & 1000 lbs Demolition bombs

Bombing Altitude: 25,000 to 26,500 ft

Ammo Fired: 30,119 rounds

Enemy Aircraft Claims: 4 Destroyed, 1 Probable, 1 Damaged

P rimary and secondary targets were St. Nazaire and last resort target was Keroman. Breakfast was at 0445, briefing at 0545, crews were at station at 0745, and take-offs began at 0846. The formation was scheduled to be led by Lt. Col. **Robinson** and Capt. Lew **Lyle** in #41-24559, *Ooold Soljer*, 360BS(H). The ball turret gunner's heated suit failed and all radio and interphone equipment malfunctioned. Lt. Col. **Robinson** was forced to turn back. Capt. **Fredericks** took over the lead. Lt. **Roller**, #41-24635, *The '8' Ball MK II*, 359BS aborted. The #2 supercharger lagged at high altitude.

Thirteen Group B-17s bombed the primary target from 25,000 feet with 31 3/4 tons of 500 and 1,000 lb. bombs. Many bomb bursts were observed in the target area, which was covered with smoke and fires. Some bursts were observed in the water. Moderate black and red flak was encountered. Twenty to fifty enemy aircraft were seen, and there were 100-137 attacks. Gunners claimed fifteen aircraft and were credited with four destroyed, one probable, and one damaged.

Two 303rd BG(H) aircraft were missing: #42-2967, *Shak Hak*, piloted by Capt. W.H. **Breed**, was shot down by enemy fighters and ditched on the Brest peninsula; #41-24541, *Spook*, piloted by Capt. L.G. **Dunnica**, ditched northeast of Brest. All of the crew of *Shak Hak* were lost. They are listed on the Wall of Missing at the Brittany American Cemetery in France, except for T/Sgt. Stanley **Putala**, who is listed on the Wall of Missing at the Cambridge, England American Cemetery. All of the crew of *Spook* were lost, except 2Lt. Orson E. **Pacey**, 1Lt. Robert O. **Schieble**, T/Sgt. Harry W. **Tucker** and S/Sgt. Philip T. **Cascio**, who were captured and taken prisoner. The lost crew members are also listed on the Wall of Missing at Brittany.

The following is the recollection of the ball turret gunner, S/Sgt. Philip **Cascio**, on the ill-fated mission of the *Spook*:

This is an account of events of the last mission of a B-17 bomber named Spook. Our Group, the 303rd's 358th Squadron, was leaving on the Group's 16th mission. We were briefed to depart at 0745 and to return at 1330 - an approximate five hour mission. Most February days in England were foggy, dark, damp, cold, and lonely.

On returning after dropping bombs on our target, the St. Nazaire submarine pens, we were nearing the English Channel. Over the interphone, Pilot **Dunnica** called to our attention a B-17 about 15,000

feet below being attacked by ME-109 fighters. He asked if we wanted to go to their aid. We all agreed. Later, as a POW, I met the members of that bomber. They were from the 306th Group.

We left our formation at approximately 25,000 feet, descended, and circled the crippled bomber at approximately 10,000 feet. From a pack of 5 ME-109s, 15 ME-109s accumulated in seconds.

Some of the members of the crippled bomber bailed out, leaving us to face the worst that was to come. Being close to the French coast and the English Channel, we tried to make it back to the base at Molesworth. We were eventually shot down and crashed twenty miles from the English coast in the English Channel. During that part of the air war, we had no fighter escort whatsoever.

On crashing in the water, our plane broke into parts. Tail Gunner **Taylor** went down in the tail section. I feel he was shot and killed before we crashed. Waist Gunner **Dew** was last seen floating in the high waves of the English Channel. I (**Cascio**) was able to get out of the ball turret and crawl to the radio compartment. **Holland** was shot and had blood all over his flight suit. **Tucker**, upper turret, Co-pilot **Pacey**, and **Cascio** escaped through the radio hatch. Of the two dinghies attached to the bomber, only one inflated. We were lucky we grabbed the inflated one. The last I saw of Pilot **Dunnica**, he was trying to get out of the pilot window. He was pulled down with the front part of the plane.

The three survivors in the rubber dinghies were strafed at least three times. We floated in the bitter cold high waves of the English Channel for approximately fourteen hours. We flipped over many times, pulling each other back to the dinghy by a cord tied to our wrists. We eventually drifted to the coast of Brest, France, in the early dark morning. We crawled to a small hut on the shoreline. Being exhausted, tired, and cold, we slept a short time under leaves and paper to keep warm.

Waking about 0600, we saw a French house in the distance. The French family gave us coffee, bread, and an exchange of clothing--a splendid exchange for them. They made us leave because they were afraid of the German soldiers in the vicinity.

We were captured a few hours later and taken to the Bastille in Paris. All track of time was lost in the tall, dark cell. A few days later, we were taken to Frankfurt, Germany, to an interrogation camp. We then were transferred in a box car to Stalags 3B, 7A, and, eventually, 17B. Twenty-eight months later came the long-awaited end of the war.

Funny, isn't it, how one page can cover two-and-one-half years of a prison life?

Seven men from six crews suffered frostbite and burns from defective electric clothing. 1Lt. Donald **Stockton**, pilot of #41-24610, Joe Btfsplk, 427BS(H), brought his ship back with a hole in the tail assembly "as big as a household door."

The 91BG(H) observed two FW-190s dive on a B-17 formation and drop time-fused fragmentation bombs. This was one of the first experiments of this type of Luftwaffe fighter attack.



LAWRENCE G. DUNNICA CREW - 358th BS

B-17F Spook #41-24541 (VK-B)

(original crew assigned 358BS: 15 Sep 1942 - photo: 13 Oct 1942)

(Back L-R) 1Lt Lawrence G. Dunnica (P-KIA), 2Lt Orson E. Pacey (CP-POW),
2Lt Leonard E. Thornton (N-KIA), 2Lt James H. Montgomery (B)

(Front L-R) T/Sgt Harry W. Tucker (E-POW), Sgt Phillip T. Cascio (BT-POW),
Sgt Bertis W. Holland (R-KIA), S/Sgt Robert L. Dew (RWG-KIA), Sgt Claude F. Taylor (TG-KIA)

Not in Photo: S/Sgt **Wayne E. Hatcher** (LWG-KIA) was a 10th crewman addition after the photo was taken.

1Lt **Robert O. Schieble** (B-POW) was a substitute Bombardier for 2Lt **James B. Montgomery**.

Lt Montgomery was killed in action on 22 June 43 mission #43 to Huls, Germany with the Lt. Ray W. Jess Crew.

After dropping bombs on the target, **Spook** left the Group formation to go to the aid of a 306th BG(H) B-17 being attached by a few ME-109s. While circling the damaged B-17 at about 10,000 feet, fifteen ME-109s suddenly appeared. Some members of the 306th BG(H) B-17 then bailed out. Lt **Dunnica** then started flying a course back to England. **Spook** was shot down in the English Channel about 20 miles from the English coast. Upon crashing in the cold icy water the B-17 broke into parts. Tail Gunner, Sgt **Taylor**, went down in the tail section. Waist Gunner, S/Sgt **Dew**, was last seen floating in high waves. Pilot, Lt **Dunnica**, failed to get out the Pilot's window and went down with his B-17. Radio Operator, T/Sgt **Holland**, had been shot and couldn't exit the B-17. Lt **Pacey**, T/Sgt **Tucker** and S/Sgt **Cascio** escaped through the radio hatch and reached an inflated rubber dinghy. They spent about fourteen hours in the dinghy, were strafed three times, flipped over many times in the high waves, and eventually reached the French coast near Brest in the early dark morning. They found a small shoreline hut and slept a short time. About 0600 they saw a distant French House. The French family gave them coffee, bread and a change of clothing and then asked the crewmen to leave since German soldiers were in the area. They were captured a few hours later and transported to a jail in Paris, then to Frankfurt, Germany and POW camps.



**WILLIAM H. BREED CREW - 360th BS
B-17F Shak Hak #42-2967 (PU-G)**

(original crew assigned 360BS: 15 July 1942 - photo: 14 Oct 1942)
(Flew from USA to England in Oct 1942 in Shak Hak)

(Back L-R) 1Lt William H. Breed (P-KIA), 2Lt Harry T. Sample, Jr (CP-KIA),
2Lt Homer R. Allen (N-KIA), 2Lt Homer N. Santerre (B-KIA)

(Front - not in order) T/Sgt Stanley Putala (E-KIA), T/Sgt Joseph M. Herbert (R-KIA),
S/Sgt Samuel D. Easter (AE/RWG), S/Sgt James H. Lentz (AR/BT-KIA),
S/Sgt Mathias A. Kuffel (TG-KIA)

Sgt Michael J. Halpin (RWG-KIA) was a substitute for Sgt Samuel D. Easter.
Sgt Roy C. Loken (LWG-KIA) was a crew addition.

Aircraft Formation at Assembly Point

Robinson
559

Farrar Stouse
260 561

Fredericks
973

Roller Breed
635 967

Johnson
177

Baldwin
577

Nolan Morales
539 562

Dunnica
541

Austin Stockton
558 610

Broussard
619

Two (2) aircraft aborted this mission:

Lt. Col. Robinson in 559

Lt. Roller in 635

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

<p><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</p>	<p>TOG - Toggler 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</p>	<p>VI - Voice Interpreter OBS - Observer PAS - Passenger PHO - Photographer</p> <p><u>RESULTS OF MISSION</u> KIA - Killed in action WIA - Wounded in action MIA - Missing in action POW - Prisoner of war</p>	<p>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</p>
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358th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

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

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

B-17F #41-24541 *Spook - DCH*

P	Dunnica, Lawrence G., 1Lt	KIA
CP	Pacey, Orson E., 2Lt	POW
NAV	Thornton, Leonard E., 1Lt	KIA
BOM	Schieble, Robert O., 1Lt	POW
ENG	Tucker, Harry W., T/Sgt	POW
RWG	Dew, Robert L., S/Sgt	KIA
RO	Holland, Bertis W., T/Sgt	KIA
BT	Cascio, Philip T., S/Sgt	POW
TG	Taylor, Claude P., S/Sgt	KIA
LWG	Harker, Wayne E., Sgt	KIA

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

P	Nolan, Robert J., 1Lt
CP	McDonald, James M., 1Lt
NAV	Anderson, William J., 2Lt
BOM	Hopper, Richard R., 2Lt
ENG	Hively, Roy J., T/Sgt
BT	Koenig, Bernard H., T/Sgt
RO	Hamill, Milton, Sgt
TG	DeMuth, Edward L., Sgt
BT	Bruskotter, James E., S/Sgt
LWG	Goff, James P., Sgt

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

P	Austin, Charles N., 1Lt
CP	Feldman, Norbert B., 1Lt
NAV	White, Richard G., Jr., 1Lt
BOM	Coltrane, Robert A., 1Lt
ENG	Snipes, Samuel O., S/Sgt
BT	Mikkelson, Delbert, Sgt
RO	Davis, Charles B., S/Sgt
RWG	LeBlanc, Alex, Sgt
TG	Deal, Fred O., Sgt
LWG	Eckard, Eugene W., Sgt

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

P	Morales, Carl H., 1Lt
CP	Rogan, Dave L., 2Lt
NAV	Miller, Hubert E., 1Lt
BOM	Zasadil, Frank E., 2Lt
ENG	Hinds, Francis G., T/Sgt
BT	Nicosia, Eugene A., Sgt
RO	Burns, Francis J., S/Sgt
TG	Hill, John E., Sgt
LWG	Blake, Robert C., Sgt
RWG	McElwain, Richard E., 2Lt

359th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

B-17F #41-24561 *The Duchess*

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 Stringer, James L., Sgt
TG Richardson, Donald R., T/Sgt
LWG Tupper, Theron S., S/Sgt
BT Garriott, John A., S/Sgt
RWG Brown, Houston B., Jr., Sgt

B-17F #42-5177 *Fast Worker MK II*

P Johnson, Hans C., 1Lt
CP Gibson, Charles E., 1Lt
NAV McNeeley, Robert T., 1Lt
BOM Owen, Jedediah G., 1Lt
ENG Dickinson, Paul A., S/Sgt
RWG Broyles, Harold D., S/Sgt
RO Himes, Albert A., Sgt
BT Chandler, U.M., Sgt
LWG McKagan, Azzon C., S/Sgt
TG Treon, John E., Sgt

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

P Roller, Jack, 1Lt
CP Cline, William J., 2Lt
NAV Kelley, James F. 2Lt
BOM Shoup, John R., Jr., 2Lt
ENG Marcelonis, Joseph G., T/Sgt
TT Ketron, Frank M., S/Sgt
RO Williams, Lemuel R., T/Sgt
BT Beringer, John L., Jr., S/Sgt
TG Howard, Earl R., S/Sgt
LWG Gonsalves, John D., S/Sgt
(Abortive)

360th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

B-17F #42-2967 *Shak Hak - DCH*

P	Breed, William H., Capt	KIA
CP	Sample, Harry T., Jr., 2Lt	KIA
NAV	Allen, Homer R., 2Lt	KIA
BOM	Santerre, Homer N., 2Lt	KIA
ENG	Putala, Stanley, T/Sgt	KIA
LWG	Loken, Roy C., S/Sgt	KIA
RO	Herbert, Joseph M., T/Sgt	KIA
TG	Lentz, James H., S/Sgt	KIA
BT	Kuffel, Mathias A., S/Sgt	KIA
RWG	Halpin, Michael J., Sgt	KIA

B-17F #42-2973 *Iza Vailable*

P	Fredericks, Jacob W., Capt
CP	Way, Arthur C., Lt
NAV	Hoyt, Otis A., Lt
BOM	Stamper, William B., T/Sgt
ENG	Hlastala, Michael S., T/Sgt
LWG	Schneiderman, Henry G., S/Sgt
RO	Smith, Richard J., T/Sgt
BT	Nardine, Howard H., S/Sgt
TG	Murray, Gilbert A., Jr., S/Sgt
RWG	Collins, Harvie L., Sgt
OBS	Tippet, Paul S., Lt

B-17F #42-5260 *Yardbird II*

P	Farrar, John W., 1Lt
CP	Schulstad, Louis M., Lt
NAV	Auman, Rictor H., 2Lt
BOM	Stewart, Jack W., 2Lt
ENG	Hassler, Kenneth C., T/Sgt
RWG	Stevenson, Robert L., Sgt
RO	Lindewall, Erick K., T/Sgt
BT	Sunderlin, Joseph R., S/Sgt
TG	Bartlett, Frank W., Sgt
LWG	O'Connell, Lincoln T., S/Sgt

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

P	Robinson, George L., LtCol
CP	Lyle, Lewis E., Capt
NAV	Moore, Paul G., Capt
BOM	Saiz, Reinaldo J., Lt
NAV	Anderson, Samuel H., Lt
ENG	Smith, Gene K., T/Sgt
LWG	Edwards, Samuel L., S/Sgt
RO	Balcombe, Clayton S., S/Sgt
BT	Smith, Woodrow W., S/Sgt
TG	McGiffin, Tom, Sgt
RWG	Bradford, Edward A., Sgt (Abortive)

427th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

B-17F #41-24610 *Joe Btfspk*

P	Stockton, Donald E., 1Lt
CP	Lipe, Fort W., 1Lt
NAV	Grant, Lawrence H., 2Lt
BOM	Shirley, Lloyd A., 2Lt
ENG	Smith, Roy Q., S/Sgt
RO	Amos, Lee H., S/Sgt
LWG	Bryant, Carson, S/Sgt
TG	Koch, Vernon E., S/Sgt
RWG	Brandt, Waldo B., S/Sgt
BT	Jenkins, Robert R., Sgt

B-17F #41-24619 *S for Sugar*

P	Broussard, Edward J., Jr., Lt
CP	Le Fevre, William G., Lt
NAV	Schueler, Jon R., Lt
BOM	Sherwood, Lyle D., Lt
ENG	Smock, Edmund L., T/Sgt
RO	Karanson, William A., Jr., T/Sgt
BT	Choice, Hudson, S/Sgt
RWG	Bridges, Alvin A., Sgt
LWG	Storer, Charles R., S/Sgt
TG	Jurosek, Bernard, Sgt