

# 303rd BG(H) Combat Mission No. 17

26 February 1943

Target: U-Boat Yards - Wilhelmshaven, Germany (Secondary)

Crews Dispatched: 19

Length of Mission: 5 hours, 20 minutes

Bomb Load: 10 x 500 lbs H.E. M43 bombs

Bombing Altitude: 24,000 ft

Ammo Fired: 20,500 rounds

**A** formation of nineteen B-17s, led by Maj. **Romig**, took off to attack the primary target at Bremen, Germany. Seven aircraft aborted the mission:

#41-24558, *Hunga Dunga*, 358BS(H) (Lt. **Austin**). The bombardier, Lt. **Coltrane**, became sick at altitude.

#41-24609, *Holy Mackerel*, 359BS(H) (Lt. **Johnson**). Three guns were out of commission and the gas line to the No. 4 engine broke and all the gas drained out.

#42-2973, *Iza Vailable*, 360BS(H) (Lt. **Bilek**). The ball turret electrical heating system malfunctioned.

#42-5723, (*No Name*), 360BS(H) (Lt. **Griffin**). The radio operator, T/Sgt V.E. **Schwartz**, fainted at altitude when the canvas bag came off his mask.

#41-24587, *Bad Check*, 427BS(H) (Lt. **Stockton**). The No. 1 engine was rough after 14 minutes of flight.

#42-5341, *Vicious Virgin*, 427BS(H) (Lt. **Broussard**). The propeller governor of the No. 3 engine ran away after 17 minutes of flight.

#41-24612, *The Devil Himself*, 427BS(H) (Lt. **Hayes**). The electrical cord to the waist gunner's flying suit cut off by fouling in the ball turret mechanism.

The twelve remaining B-17s were unable to locate the primary target due to heavy cloud cover. The secondary target at Wilhelmshaven was bombed from 24,000 feet with 30 tons of 500-lb. M43 bombs. The target had 6/10th cover with 5-6 miles visibility. The broken clouds, plus industrial haze, precluded observation of bursts. The bomb run was short, but the heading was good, and most of the bombardiers felt that effective hits were scored on the port establishments.

Flak over the target was not intense and did not bother the Group much. Light heavy flak was reported at the German coast en route home. It was accurate for the height, but some distance from the formation. FW-190 and ME-109 fighters were observed before reaching the German coast and until a few minutes after leaving this coast. About 25 attacks were encountered on the formation, but they were not vicious. Twin-engine fighters were seen, but there were no attacks. The bulk of the attacks were aimed at other Groups (91, 305, and 306 B-17s and 33 and 93 B-24s), and especially at laggards or cripples as Groups left German territory. Some enemy aircraft were seen as destroyed by the 303rd BG(H), but an exact enumeration of encounters and claims was not available. All aircraft returned to Molesworth safely. There were no casualties or injured airmen.

**Walter Cronkite**, of *United Press*, flew in a 427th BS B-17. He reported being "escorted" by FW-190s and ME-109s and, in the most unpopular phrase of the day, "the flak was so thick you could walk on it." He said that he was "too excited to be afraid." Capt. **Glenn E. Hagenbuch** was the pilot of *S for Sugar* in which **Walter Cronkite** flew. **Homer Bigart** of the *New York Herald Tribune*, flew in 360BS Fortress *Ooold Soljer*, piloted by Capt. **Lewis E. Lyle**.



*Putting on flying clothes are reporters (L-R): Gladwin Hill, William Wade, Robert Post, Walter Cronkite, Homer Bigart and Paul Manning. Cronkite and Bigart flew with the 303rd BG(H).*

**Walter Cronkite (*United Press*) wrote on 27 February 1943:**

"American Flying Fortresses have just come back from an assignment to hell; a hell 26,000 feet above the earth, a hell of burning tracer bullets and bursting gunfire, of crippled Fortresses and burning German fighter planes, of parachuting men and others not so lucky. I have just returned with a Flying Fortress crew from Wilhelmshaven.

". . . Actually the first impression of a daylight bombing mission is a hodge-podge of disconnected scenes. Things like bombs falling past you from the formation above, a crippled bomber with smoke pouring from one engine thousands of feet below. A Focke-Wulf peeling off somewhere above and plummeting down shooting its way through the formation."

**Homer Bigart (*New York Herald Tribune*) wrote:**

"A mission to Germany is a nasty experience. Apart from the very real danger to life and limb, there is the acute discomfort of enduring sub-zero temperatures for hours at a stretch and taking air through an oxygen mask. The altitude can affect your sinews, your kidneys, even the fillings of your teeth. You are very tired when you return. If you are a delayed-reaction type, you are likely to feel slightly under par for a couple of days. I must be crazy, but I should like to go again."

## Aircraft Formation at Assembly Point

		<u>Romig</u> 635		
		<u>Johnson</u> 609		<u>Bales</u> 243
			<u>Stouse</u> 561	
		<u>Nolan</u> 539		<u>Smith</u> 605
	<u>Hagenbuch</u> 619			<u>Lyle</u> 559
<u>Broussard</u> 341		<u>Hayes</u> 612		<u>Bilek</u> 973
	<u>Morales</u> 562			<u>Griffin</u> 723
			<u>Farrar</u> 260	
<u>Oxridner</u> 264		<u>Austin</u> 558		<u>Plocher</u> 262
			<u>McDonald</u> 577	
				<u>Stockton</u> 587

Seven (7) aircraft aborted this mission:

Lt. Austin in 558	Lt. Johnson in 609
Lt. Bilek in 973	Lt. Griffin in 723
Lt. Hayes in 612	Lt. Stockton in 587
Lt. Broussard in 341	

### KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

<b>CREW POSITIONS</b> 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 - 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	VI - Voice Interpreter OBS - Observer PAS - Passenger PHO - Photographer  <b>RESULTS OF MISSION</b> 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***

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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 Hardaway, Sidney T., Sgt  
RO Hamill, Milton, Sgt  
RWG Isham, Lawrence W., S/Sgt  
TG DeMuth, Edward L., S/Sgt  
LWG Goff, James P., Sgt

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

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P McDonald, James M., 1Lt  
CP Mitchell, Kirk R., Capt  
NAV McElwain, Richard E., 2Lt  
BOM Montgomery, James H., Jr., 2Lt  
ENG Fanning, David D., T/Sgt  
RWG Weiskopf, Dennis, Sgt  
RO Carpenter, Glenn S., T/Sgt  
BT Bruskotter, James E., S/Sgt  
TG Sterling, Robert W., S/Sgt  
LWG Martin, James C., S/Sgt

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

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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., S/Sgt  
RO Burns, Francis J., T/Sgt  
RWG Hill, John E., S/Sgt  
TG Blake, Robert C., S/Sgt  
LWG Westfall, Max M., Sgt

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

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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  
LWG Mikkelson, Delbert, Sgt  
RO Gergash, Bernard A., Sgt  
BT LeBlanc, Alex, Sgt  
TG Deal, Fred O., Sgt  
RWG Eckard, Eugene W., Sgt  
(Abortive)

### **B-17F #42-5264 *Yankee Doodle Dandy***

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P Oxrider, George J., 1Lt  
CP Hurlburt, Donald W., 2Lt  
NAV Grant, Donald L., 2Lt  
BOM Steele, Earl A., 2Lt  
ENG Ziemer, Frederick B., T/Sgt  
BT Smith, Robert H., S/Sgt  
RO Dasher, Everett A., S/Sgt  
RWG Maxwell, Samuel P., S/Sgt  
TG Bitter, Emile V., Jr., Sgt  
LWG Heaps, Theodore C., Sgt

## 359th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

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

P Romig, Eugene A., Maj  
 CP Calhoun, William R., Jr., Capt  
 NAV Strickland, Joseph M., 2Lt  
 NAV Moore, Paul G., Capt  
 BOM Yonkman, Robert J., 1Lt  
 ENG Zaorski, Roman R., T/Sgt  
 LWG O'Reilly, Francis W., Sgt  
 RO Terry, Charles R., T/Sgt  
 BT Mulgrew, William C., S/Sgt  
 TG Stephen, Willard W., S/Sgt  
 RWG Murphy, Murel A., Sgt

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

P Smith, Sanford T., 1Lt  
 CP Cline, William J., 2Lt  
 NAV Kelly, James F., 2Lt  
 BOM Shoup, John R., Jr., 2Lt  
 ENG Marcelonis, Joseph G., T/Sgt  
 TT Ketron, Frank M., S/Sgt  
 RO McCoy, Gordon K., Sgt  
 BT Beringer, John L., Jr., S/Sgt  
 LWG Burnham, Arthur L., S/Sgt  
 TG Gonsalves, John D., S/Sgt

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

P Johnson, Hans C., 1Lt  
 CP Gibson, Charles E., 1Lt  
 NAV McNeely, Robert T., 1Lt  
 BOM Owen, Jedediah G., 1Lt  
 ENG Dickinson, Paul A., S/Sgt  
 RWG Ryan, Francis J., Sgt  
 RO Thornton, Edmund R., Sgt  
 BT Chandler, U.M., Sgt  
 LWG McKagan, Azzon C., S/Sgt  
 TG Treon, John E., S/Sgt  
 NG Davis, Marcus K., S/Sgt  
 (Abortive)

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

P Stouse, Harold L., 1Lt  
 CP Woodman, George C., 2Lt  
 NAV Elliott, Jesse H., 2Lt  
 BOM Dwyer, Robert P., 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., S/Sgt

### **B-17F #42-5243 *FDR's Potato Peeler Kids***

P Bales, Ross C., 1Lt  
 CP Dooley, Walter E., 1Lt  
 NAV Browning, Richard C., 2Lt  
 BOM Thomas, Paul M., 2Lt  
 ENG Winter, Raymond K., Jr., T/Sgt  
 TT Perkins, Homer T., S/Sgt  
 BT Zsampar, Joseph G., Sgt  
 RO Kilgore, Raymond H., T/Sgt  
 TG Snell, Jack D., S/Sgt  
 RG Van Ravenstein, Edward A., Sgt

## 360th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

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

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P Lyle, Lewis E., Capt  
CP Fredericks, Jacob W., Capt  
NAV Hoyt, Otis A., Lt  
BOM Saiz, Reinaldo J., Lt  
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  
PAS Bigart, Homer,  
(News Correspondent)

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

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P Bilek, A.F., Lt  
CP Fitzsimmons, Kent M., Lt  
NAV Bowers, W.R., Lt  
BOM White, Raymond R., Lt  
ENG Sage, L.G., T/Sgt  
RWG Savickas, J.J., Sgt  
RO Fogarty, J.J., S/Sgt  
LWG Slayton, C.E., S/Sgt  
TG Brannan, H.P., Sgt  
BT Glaspell, T.D., Sgt  
(Abortive)

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

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P Farrar, John W., 1Lt  
CP Trojan, Joseph E., Lt  
NAV Auman, Rictor H., 2Lt  
BOM Stewart, Jack W., 2Lt  
ENG Hassler, Kenneth C., T/Sgt  
RWG Prescott, Paul H., S/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  
OBS Tippet, Paul S., Lt

### **B-17F #42-5723 (No Name)**

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P Griffin, Loyd D., Lt  
CP Swanson, Walter C., Lt  
NAV Preston, William M., Lt  
BOM Taylor, Robert L., Lt  
ENG Eason, William M., T/Sgt  
BT Rheaume, Louis W., S/Sgt  
RO Schwartz, Vernon E., T/Sgt  
TG Wiegand, Lynwood D., S/Sgt  
RWG Henderson, Paul E., Sgt  
LWG Hamilton, Claude A., S/Sgt  
(Abortive)

### **B-17F #42-5262 (No Name)**

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P Plocher, Martin E., Lt  
CP Tyler, Clair A., Lt  
NAV Corwin, Elieria J., Lt  
BOM Kahlden, William F., Jr., Lt  
RWG Legge, Henry R., T/Sgt  
TT Matheson, Edwin L., S/Sgt  
RO Friese, Everett E., T/Sgt  
BT Swanson, Theodore G., S/Sgt  
LWG Stevenson, Robert L., Sgt  
TG Tornow, August E., S/Sgt

## 427th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

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

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P Hagenbuch, Glenn E., Capt  
CP Barker, John C., Lt  
NAV Soha, Walter M., Lt  
BOM Dieffenbach, Albert W., Lt  
ENG Zipfel, Charles E., T/Sgt  
RO Coomes, Clarence S., S/Sgt  
LWG Hinds, Durward L., S/Sgt  
RWG Henderson, George W., S/Sgt  
BT Belk, Jack, S/Sgt  
TG Harmon, Edward Z., Sgt  
PAS Cronkite, Walter L.,  
(News Correspondent)

### **B-17F #41-24612 *The Devil Himself***

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P Hayes, Ralph S., Jr., Lt  
CP Rolfson, Jack G., Lt  
NAV Illgen, Frederick J., Lt  
BOM Butt, Byron K., Lt  
ENG Good, James K., T/Sgt  
TG Bednarchuk, Antonio, S/Sgt  
RO Jessee, Jesse J., S/Sgt  
BT Bourdon, Louis F., S/Sgt  
LWG Barron, Dante G., S/Sgt  
RWG Arnold, Robert W., S/Sgt  
(Abortive)

### **B-17F #41-24587 *Bad Check***

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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  
RWG Bryant, Carson, S/Sgt  
TG Koch, Vernon E., S/Sgt  
LWG Brown, Howard T., S/Sgt  
BT Jenkins, Robert R., Sgt  
PHO Stringer, James L., Sgt  
(Abortive)

### **B-17F #42-5341 *Vicious Virgin***

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P Broussard, Edward J., Jr., Lt  
CP Le Fevre, William G., Lt  
NAV Noblin, J.D., 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 Brandt, Waldo B., S/Sgt  
TG Jurosek, Bernard, Sgt  
(Abortive)