

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

CREW POSITIONS 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 RESULTS OF MISSION 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 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*

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*

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*

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*

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 Kelley, 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*

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*

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*

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)*

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)*

P Plocher, Martin E., Lt
CP Tyler, Clair A., Lt
NAV Corwin, Ellera 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*

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*

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*

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*

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)