

303rd BG (H) Combat Mission No. 90

20 December 1943

Target: City area, Bremen, Germany

Crews Dispatched: 21 plus 2 spares

Crews Lost: 2 crews; 2Lt. A. Alex, 1 KIA, 6 POW, 3 REP
and 2Lt. F. Leve, 8 KIA, 2 POW

Crew Members Wounded: 5 Wounded, 6 Injured on

2Lt. J.F. Henderson crew, ditched in North Sea

Length of Mission: 6 hours, 40 minutes

Bomb Load: 42 x M47A1 Incendiaries

Bombing Altitude: 26,200 ft

Ammo Fired: 17,120 rounds

Enemy Aircraft Claims: 5 Destroyed, 1 Probable, 2 Damaged

After several relatively easy missions to Bremen, this one proved to be difficult and costly. Two aircraft aborted the mission:
#41-24561 *The Duchess* 359BS (1Lt. **Hanselman**) returned over Ratcliffe, England when Bombardier 2Lt. **Livermore's** ears plugged and caused great pain at 5,000 feet.
#42-3131 *Flak Wolf* 427BS (2Lt. **McGarry**) had a run-away prop on the No. 2 engine that could not be feathered. He turned back about 150 miles from Molesworth.

Intense and accurate flak was experienced in the target area. From 100 to 125 enemy fighters were reported by crews. Attacks were persistent from all sides. Persistent contrails above 15,000 feet made formation flying difficult. Enemy fighters used the contrails as a cover to press home their attacks. Gunners claimed five aircraft destroyed, one probable and two damaged. Thirteen Group aircraft sustained damage by flak, three aircraft received damage from fighter attacks, three were damaged by friendly fire and seven aircraft received major damage. Two boxes of leaflets were dropped. There was a solid overcast above the English Channel that thinned to scattered clouds before reaching the target area. Good visibility at the target permitted visual bombing. A smoke screen at the target prevented observation of the bombing results. Twenty-four tons of 65-lb. incendiary bombs were released from 26,000 feet.

Two Group B-17G aircraft were reported missing in action. #42-39764 *Santa Ana* 360BS (with 427BS crew), was piloted by 2Lt. Alexander **Alex**. Anti-aircraft knocked out one engine and a subsequent fighter attack resulted in the crew bailing out and the plane crashing near Bremen, Germany. Co-Pilot, 2Lt. Lon E., **Jackman**, Jr., on his sixth mission, was killed and is buried in Netherlands American Cemetery at Martgratten, Netherlands. Lt. **Alex**, 2Lt. Nicholas J. **Goldschmidt**, Jr. on his second mission, 2Lt. Albert L. **Farrah**, S/Sgt. Joseph **Adamczyk**, S/Sgt. William R. **McCarren**, Sgt. Harold P. **Micheles**, Sgt. Robert J. **Newcomb**, Sgt. Harold A. **Brown** and Sgt. Stewart G. **Hall** were captured and taken prisoner. Sgts. **Newcomb**, **Brown** and **Hall** were badly wounded and were repatriated after their capture. Except for Lts. **Jackman** and **Goldschmidt**, the crew was on their first combat mission.



ALEXANDER ALEX CREW - 427th BS

(crew assigned 427BS: 16 Nov 1943 - photo: taken by B-24 "Liberator" in USA)

2Lt Alexander Alex (P-POW), 2Lt Lon E. Jackman, Jr.(CP-KIA),
 2Lt Nicholas J. Goldschmidt (N-POW), 2Lt Albert L. Farrah (B-POW)
 S/Sgt Joseph Adamczyk (E-POW), S/Sgt W.R. McCarren (R-POW),
 Sgt Harold Micheles (BT-POW), Sgt Robert J. Newcomb (LWG-POW/REP),
 Sgt H.A. Brown (RWG-POW/REP), Sgt Stewart G. Hall (TG-POW/REP)

(crewmen are not in order - some may not be in photo)

#42-31233, (No Name) 427BS, was piloted by 2Lt. Franklin **Leve**. This crew was on their sixth mission, except for Lt. **Libbee** who was on his fifth. Lt. **Leve** was having trouble staying in formation in the target area. An ME-110 came in on the tail of Lt. **Barker's** B-17 *Flying Bitch* firing rockets and 20mm cannon shells. Lt. **Barker** was flying parallel to Lt. **Leve's** B-17. The ME-110 turned right 90E and came within 50 feet of Lt. **Leve** and fired two rockets which entered the aircraft between the ball turret and the tail. Ball Turret Gunner S/Sgt. E.W. **Drees** fired bursts and hit the left wing of the ME-110, breaking it off and sending it down. Bursts from another enemy aircraft entered the ball turret causing two bright flashes. The Nos. 2 and 3 engines were smoking heavily. S/Sgt. **Drees** still fired after the burst, but no flame was seen. Lt. **Leve** peeled off to the right, fell about 6,000 feet in a straight dive, then leveled off before hitting cloud cover. No parachutes were seen. The B-17 crashed near Bremen, Germany. Lt. **Leve**, 2Lt. Dick L. **Libbee**, 2Lt. Richard D. **Morehead**, 2Lt. Dennis J. **Murphy**, S/Sgt. Percy D. **Craig**, S/Sgt. Edward W. **Drees**, S/Sgt. Oliver L. **Keefer** and S/Sgt. Frank L. **Midkiff** were killed. Lt. **Libbee**, S/Sgt. **Craig**, S/Sgt. **Drees**, and S/Sgt. **Midkiff** are buried in Netherlands American Cemetery at Martgratten, Netherlands. T/Sgt. James C. **Spross** and S/Sgt. Armond O. **Van Landingham** were captured and taken prisoner.

Medal of Honor Awarded to T/Sgt Forrest L. Vosler

Another badly damaged B-17, #42-29664 *Jersey Bounce, Jr.* 358BS piloted by 2Lt. John **Henderson**, with Instructor Pilot Capt. Merle **Hungerford** as co-pilot, was forced to ditch in the North Sea within sight of land near Great Yarmouth. The exploits of this crew will be cherished as one of the greatest heroic events of the 303rd BG(H) history. The following report was issued by the 303rd BG(H) after the mission:

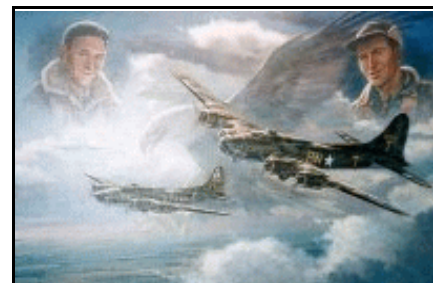


T/Sgt Forrest T. Vosler
by J.G. Keck

As the ship approached the target, flak knocked out the No. 1 engine. Minutes later, just after the bombardier had called out "bombs away," a burst of flak killed the No. 4 engine, leaving it windmilling out of control. On two engines, *Jersey Bounce, Jr.* dropped out of formation and became the target of an assortment of enemy fighters who lined up 10 deep to get a shot at the crippled ship. Cannon shells and bullets tore into the fuselage, seriously wounding the tail gunner and radio operator and cutting several of the control cables. The waist and turret gunners poured 50-caliber shells back at the attackers, knocking down four for certain and damaging many more. The ship, rapidly losing altitude, became a clay pigeon for every flak emplacement on the German coast. As the pilot and co-pilot fought to keep the crippled ship in the air,

the Radio Operator, S/Sgt. **Forrest L. Vosler**, although seriously wounded, worked frantically to send out an SOS. Too weak to stand, he sat in his chair between calls and helped drive off the persistent fighters. Out of gas, the plane ditched just off the English coast and the crew was immediately picked up by a passing vessel. Sgt. **Moody** claimed two enemy fighters destroyed while Sgt. **Simpkins** and Sgt. **Burkart** each claimed one kill.

The 303rd BG(H) mission report failed to mention that S/Sgt. **Vosler** had been wounded in his feet and hands when a 20mm shell exploded near his legs. He noticed that the Tail Gunner, Sgt. **Buske**, had been badly wounded and that the fighters were concentrating on the tail. He staggered back to man his guns and was hit in the chest and face by another 20mm shell. Pieces of metal lodged in both eyes, impairing his vision so that he could only distinguish blurred shapes. He declined first-aid treatment and continued firing. During the air battle, his radio was damaged. With blood running out of his eyes and unable to see, he repaired his radio by touch. He was able to send out distress signals despite several lapses of unconsciousness. After the B-17 had ditched, S/Sgt. **Vosler** crawled out to the wing unaided and held the wounded Tail Gunner Sgt. **Buske**.



Courage of Eagles
by Ronald Wong (1996)

303rd BG(H) Medal of Honor awardees and their B-17s: T/Sgt Forrest L. Vosler, 358th BS Radio Operator, and *Jersey Bounce, Jr.* B-17F #42-29664 (358BS) VK-C on 20 December 1943 to Bremen, Germany and 1Lt Jack Mathis, 359th BS Bombardier, and *The Duchess* B-17F #41-24561 (359BS) BN-T on 18 March 1943 to Vegesack, Germany.

Sgt. **Buske** started slipping into the water and S/Sgt. **Vosler** grabbed him around the waist with one arm and hand and held on to the radio antenna wire with the other hand. Other crew members then rescued them both and assisted them into the dinghies.

The crew was rescued by a Norwegian coaster which later transferred them to a PT boat. The PT boat took them on a rough trip to Great Yarmouth, where the crew was hospitalized for the night. All crew members returned to Molesworth the next day except for S/Sgt. **Vosler**, who was sent to a North Hampton hospital. He later returned to the U.S. for a long hospitalization at Valley Forge Hospital in Phoenixville, PA. One of his eyes was removed and the other required extensive surgery before his sight was restored.

Upon recommendation of his crew, the Group, and the 8th Air Force, T/Sgt. **Vosler**, having been promoted from S/Sgt., was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for "Conspicuous gallantry in action against the enemy above and beyond the call of duty." The presentation was made by President Franklin D. **Roosevelt** in a White House ceremony. T/Sgt. **Vosler** became the second 303rd BG(H) crew member to be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. "Woody" **Vosler** died of a heart attack in February, 1992, at the age of sixty-eight at his home in Titusville, FL.

Crew members made the following comments after interrogation: Capt. **Gamble** in the lead B-17 said, "We were doing fine until we started the bomb run. The formation was perfect. As soon as we got over the target, they smashed hell out of us. That flak was pretty accurate and there was lots of it. Our escort tried to keep the fighters out, but they sneaked through the contrails where we couldn't see them. It was plenty rough all right, but the crew said our bombs landed right on target." Maj. **Shumake**, the co-pilot, added, "It was rough, but we made them know it. The fight didn't last long, but it was a beaut while it lasted."

Another pilot, 1Lt. John C. **Barker** completing his 25th mission in *Flying Bitch* stated, "I have been on lots of rough ones, but that was as rough as any of them. They couldn't stop us, though. I didn't see the bombing results, but the boys say we let them have it." Sgt. Leon N. **Faner**, ball turret gunner on *Lonesome Polecat* #42-31177 359BS said, "We had a swell fighter cover almost to the target. I saw a P-38 dive on an ME-110 that was flying below us and shoot him down in flames." S/Sgt. Henry **Swan**, also completing his 25th mission in 359BS *Knockout Dropper* said, "The Germans tried to lay a smoke screen over the target, but it wasn't any good and our bombs caused plenty of fires."

2Lt. Lester **Rhoads**, navigator in *Nero* 359BS, narrowly escaped serious injury when a piece of flak came through the nose of the ship and scratched his nose. "That's just about as close as I want to see it come," Lt. **Rhoads** remarked. "I thought that a sledge hammer had come through the side of the ship." Sgt. Herb **Daniel**, waist gunner in #42-31239, a new 358BS B-17G, claimed one enemy fighter. "I'm pretty sure I got him," he said. "He came in plenty eager, but I let him have it at close range and he disappeared into the clouds on fire."

1Lt. Edwin M. **Woddrop**, brought his Fortress, #42-3124 *Spirit of Wanette* 427BS, home safely after a wing tip was shot away and an engine shot out. Although the tail gunner and two waist gunners were unconscious and the chin turret and ball turret inoperative, T/Sgt. William A. **Watts**, top turret gunner, knocked down two enemy fighters. Further complications arose when co-pilot Lt. G.C. **Henderson's** electric flying suit caught on fire twice and T/Sgt. W.A. **Watts**, the engineer, had to use a fire extinguisher to douse it. Tail Gunner T/Sgt. Charles C. **Baggs**, Top Turret Gunner T/Sgt. W.A. **Watts**, Left Waist Gunner S/Sgt. William **Valis**, Radio Operator S/Sgt. W.S. **O'Connor** and Right Waist Gunner S/Sgt. Henry **Hoff** were injured and hospitalized. S/Sgt. **O'Connor** was recommended for an award for assisting the unconscious crewmen.

Crew Reports of Enemy Aircraft Destroyed or Damaged

Sgt. Ralph F. Burkart (664) ME-210 Destroyed

ME-210 came in at 5 o'clock level. Right Waist Gunner Burkart opened fire at 6-700 yards. At 400 yards, right wing of enemy aircraft came off and it went down in flames.

S/Sgt. William H. Simpkins (664) FW-190 Destroyed

FW-190 came in to attack about 10 o'clock, a little above and then it went in at the waist side. Enemy aircraft came in to 150 yards and waist gunner opened fire with long burst at 150 yards. Enemy aircraft caught fire, smoke came out and it went down in a tumbling spin, flames all around it..

Sgt. Stanley E. Moody (664) ME-110 Probable

ME-110 flew parallel at 9 o'clock, about 800 yards out. Top turret gunner opened fire with long burst. Black smoke came out and enemy aircraft went down, end over end out of control.

Sgt. Stanley E. Moody (664) ME-109 Destroyed

ME-109 came in about 8 o'clock level, dropped down under the wing, came up at 7 o'clock and came in. Top turret gunner opened fire first at 600 yards, again at 400 yards. Enemy aircraft nosed over and went down. Chute seen to come out.

Sgt. Richard McGee (807) ME-210 No Claim

Enemy aircraft came in starting from above at 5 o'clock then went low under us and approached from slightly below at 8:30 o'clock on parallel course. Gunner engaged enemy aircraft at 500 yards and after a few bursts enemy aircraft started to smoke, fell off into a spiral and went out of sight about 150 yards away and below still smoking and in a spiral. No chutes were seen.

2Lt. Edward J. Troy (239) ME-109 No Claim

ME-109 came in from 1 o'clock high and continued down 300 yards from the nose passing under our aircraft. Bombardier opened fire at 250 yards, and fired three good bursts from the chin turret guns. Smoke burst from plane as it passed from view below. Not seen again, plane was attacking low element below our aircraft.

Sgt. Walter O. Fugate (239) FW-190 No Claim

FW-190 came past aircraft from 11 o'clock straight back toward tail. Tail gunner opened fire at 200 yards as plane moved away. Two bursts were fired and plane fell into a dive smoking heavily and disappeared into clouds at approximately 20,000 feet.

T/Sgt. William A. Watts (241) ME-210 Damaged

ME-210 attacking directly from 1:30 o'clock. Turret swung around and bursts fired at 600 yards, enemy aircraft firing 20mm cannons. Enemy aircraft went below and Lt. Brown and Lt. Matthews saw pilot bail out of enemy aircraft and chute open.

Sgt. Herbert A. Daniel (239)

ME-109

Probable

ME-109 approached high at 1 o'clock and flew below and parallel to aircraft, passed from view in cloud below. Abrupt drop and was burning fiercely when it disappeared. Own aircraft opened fire at 400 yards and fired three good bursts of 15 rounds each. Second burst seen to hit plane by radio operator and top turret gunner.

S/Sgt. Harry J. Rothrock (213)

FW-190

Destroyed

Enemy aircraft came in from 6 o'clock and then swung around to 9 o'clock. Commenced firing at about 300 yards. Started to spin and was going wing over and finally was seen to hit ground. Fired about 100 rounds.

T/Sgt. Donald Bumgarner (213)

FW-190

Damaged

Enemy aircraft came in from 1 o'clock when my sight registered 275 yards, little high when I fired 75 to 100 rounds from both guns. Enemy aircraft went off smoking to 5 o'clock and waist gunner saw him burst into flames.

Sgt. Raymond M. Gilstrap (448)

ME-210

Destroyed

Enemy aircraft came in at about six o'clock from a little above. Made direct attack. Hit him when 400 yards away. Hit #1 engine and he peeled off to the right in flames. Blew up in mid air and his wing flew off.

T/Sgt. William A. Watts (241)

ME-110

Probable

ME-110 came into vapor trails at 7:30 high. No trails to side. Sights keep on trails and enemy aircraft burst out about 150 yards away. Burst fired into enemy aircraft cockpit. Enemy aircraft did complete loop backwards, then into a spin and then a pinwheel. Canopy came off. It did not seem possible that he could come out of a spin. Pilot was definitely out.

Sgt. William E. Atkinson (807)

ME-210

Damaged

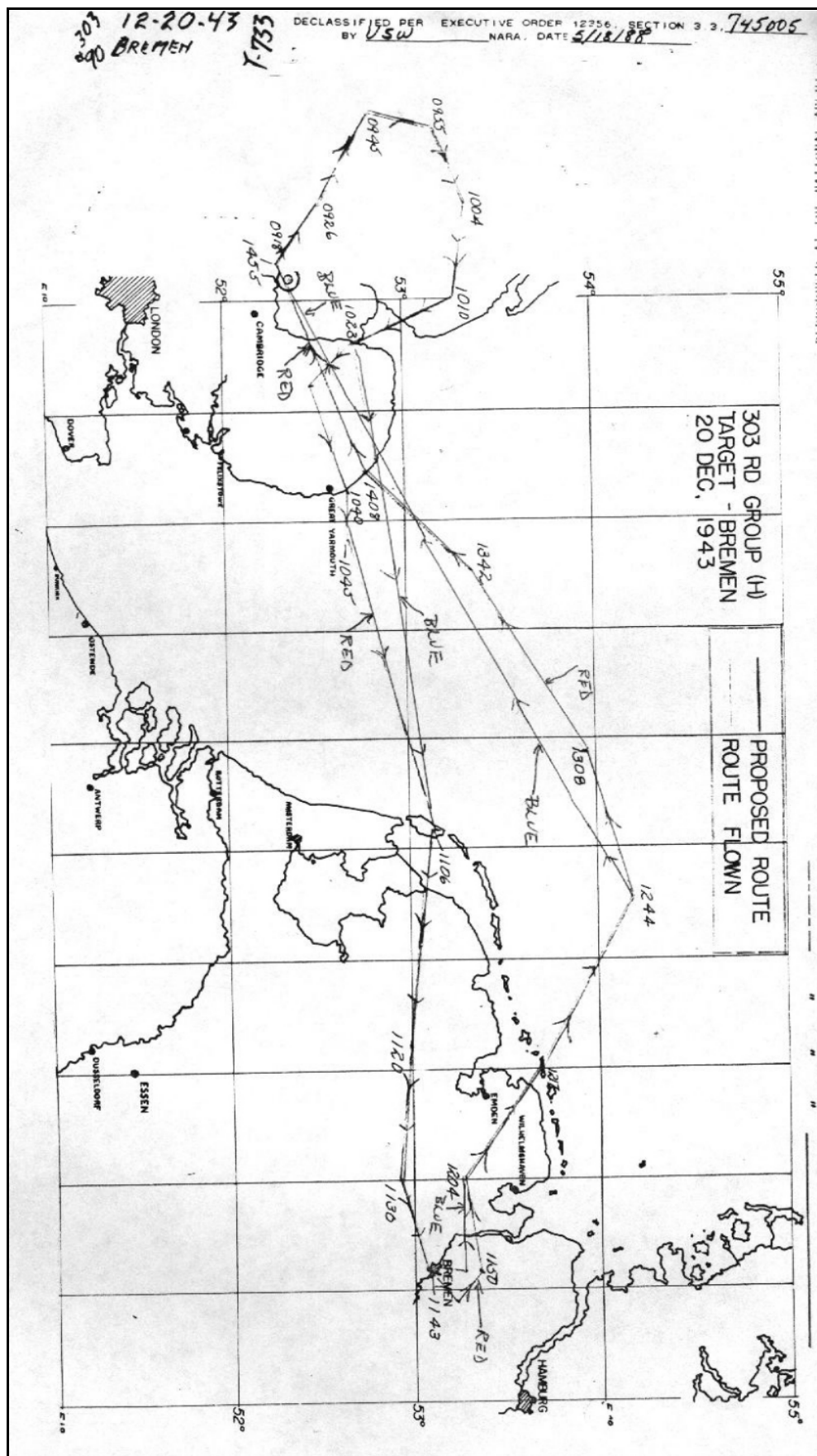
Four ME-210s came in from 6 o'clock level firing rockets and second one to approach was hit about 300 yards out and pieces broke off his left wing. Enemy aircraft started diving straight down, then leveled off then kept going down in a glide. Our aircraft alone and out of formation as a result of evasive action.



Sky Wolf #41-24562 (358BS) VK-A

303rd BG Lead - Pilot Capt D. Gamble / CoPilot Maj G.F. Shumake

Capt D. Gamble (P), Maj G.F. Shumake (CP), 1Lt W.D. McSween (N), 1Lt W.T. Sweet (B), 2Lt J.R. Burns (TG-O)
T/Sgt G.E. Wagner (E), S/Sgt N. Vaughn (WG), T/Sgt R.J. McGuere (R), S/Sgt R.G. Scharch (BT), S/Sgt C.S. Schmeltzer (WG)
(crewmen are not in order)



Route Map

Mission 090 - 7

Aircraft Formation at Assembly Point

<u>Shumake-Gamble</u> 562			
<u>Schwaebe</u> 360		<u>Smith</u> 239	
<u>Henderson</u> 664			
<u>Watson</u> 785		<u>Stuermer</u> 810	
<u>Mackin</u> 605		<u>Woddrop</u> 241	
<u>Daub</u> 894	<u>Newell</u> 807	<u>Carothers</u> 875	<u>Alex</u> 764
<u>Quinn</u> 029		<u>McClellan</u> 587	
<u>Hanselman</u> 561	<u>Purcell</u> 177	<u>Barker</u> 795	<u>McGarry</u> 131
<u>Goolsby</u> 213		<u>Leve</u> 233	
<u>Eich</u> 448 - Spare			
		<u>DaShiell</u> 787 - Spare	<u>Troppman</u> 927 - Spare

Two (2) aircraft aborted this mission:

Lt. Hanselman in 561

Lt. McGarry in 131

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 Aircraft Crew Lists

B-17G #42-31239 (No Name)

P	Smith, Marshall L., 2Lt
CP	Palecek, Francis J., 2Lt
NAV	Neuwirth, Edward, 2Lt
BOM	Troy, Edward J., 2Lt
ENG	Dick, Andrew, S/Sgt
LWG	Schor, John, Sgt
RO	Frolick, Edwin J., S/Sgt
BT	Clink, Robert L., Sgt
TG	Fugate, Walter O., Sgt
RWG	Daniel, Herbert A., Sgt

B-17G #42-39785 Thru Hel'en Hiwater

P	Watson, Jack W., 2Lt
CP	David, Clayton C., 2Lt
NAV	Abernathy, Milton B., 2Lt
BOM	Colvin, Vance R., 2Lt
ENG	Rowland, Samuel L., S/Sgt
LWG	Stewart, Eugene R., Sgt
RO	Romaniec, Harry, S/Sgt
RWG	Fussner, William H., Sgt
TG	Kosinski, Roman P., Sgt
BT	Booth, Fred H., Sgt

B-17G #42-39810 Big A Bird

P	Stuermer, John W., 2Lt
CP	Reynolds, Charles E., 2Lt
NAV	Tielman, William A., 2Lt
BOM	Newman, Clyde D., 2Lt
ENG	Harris, David W., S/Sgt
RWG	Burch, Lee E., Sgt
RO	Murray, Edward F., S/Sgt
BT	Stark, Joseph, Sgt
TG	Collins, Marvin B., Sgt
LWG	Carroll, Marvin A., Sgt

B-17G #42-37927 (No Name)

P	Troppman, Walter W., 2Lt
CP	Elder, Damon C., 2Lt
NAV	Minkowitz, Samuel, 2Lt
BOM	Armstrong, Charles C., 2Lt
ENG	Wilson, David L., S/Sgt
LWG	Hoy, James F., S/Sgt
RO	Gilmore, Daniel F., S/Sgt
BT	Mirenda, Frank J., Sgt
TG	Swank, Verden D., Sgt
RWG	Garcia, Mario D., Sgt
(Abortive - Spare)	

B-17F #42-5360 Old Faithful

P	Schwaebe, Harry A., 2Lt
CP	Dumse, Harold F., 2Lt
NAV	Degnan, Paul T., 2Lt
BOM	Wiley, Wilburn W., 2Lt
ENG	Foreman, Roy, S/Sgt
RWG	McArthur, Robert G., Sgt
RO	Smalley, Gordon W., S/Sgt
BT	Harvey, Benjamin F., Sgt
TG	Iott, George F., Sgt
LWG	Malcolm, James F., Sgt

B-17F #41-24562 Sky Wolf

P	Gamble, Donald, 1Lt
CP	Shumake, Glynn F., Maj
NAV	McSween, William D., 2Lt
BOM	Sweet, William T., 1Lt
ENG	Wagner, Clyde E., T/Sgt
LWG	Vaughn, Norville, S/Sgt
RO	McGuire, Robert J., T/Sgt
BT	Scharch, Richard G., S/Sgt
TG	Burns, James R., 2Lt
RWG	Schmeltzer, Charles S., S/Sgt

B-17F #42-29664 Jersey Bounce, Jr. DCH

P	Henderson, John F., 2Lt	
CP	Hungerford, Merle R., Capt	
NAV	Wiggins, Warren S., 2Lt	
BOM	Monkres, Woodrow W., 2Lt	
ENG	Simpkins, William H., S/Sgt	
LWG	Burkart, Ralph F., Sgt	
RO	Vosler, Forrest L., S/Sgt	WIA
BT	Ruppel, Edward, Sgt	
RWG	Moody, Stanley E., Sgt	
TG	Buske, George W., Sgt	WIA

B-17G #42-39787 Wanton Woman

P	DaShiell, William C., 2Lt
CP	Mabie, Hilton C., 2Lt
NAV	Ratay, Joseph B., 2Lt
BOM	DeLaura, Don J., 2Lt
ENG	Stevenson, Robert L., S/Sgt
BT	Robinson, Authur H., Sgt
RO	Radebaugh, Bernard J., S/Sgt
RWG	Owen, Robert J., Sgt
LWG	Parker, Robert A., Sgt
TG	McKinney, Clifford M., Sgt
(Abortive - Spare)	

359th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

B-17F #42-3448 (No Name)

P	Eich, Henry J., Jr. 2Lt
CP	Woodside, William E., 2Lt
NAV	Carroll, James E., 2Lt
BOM	Stein, William G., 2Lt
ENG	Lenson, H., Sgt
BT	Celoni, J.P., Sgt
RO	Harvey, D.S., S/Sgt
RWG	Erdmann, D.C., Sgt
TG	Maggia, Edmond A., S/Sgt
LWG	Gilstrap, R.M., Sgt

B-17F #42-29894 Baltimore Bounce

P	Daub, Leroy E., 2Lt
CP	Stoulil, Donald W., 2Lt
NAV	Palmer, Gerald M., 2Lt
BOM	Marlatt, Ray G., 2Lt
ENG	Haman, Ray T., Sgt
RO	Kelly, Victor S., S/Sgt
TT	McConaghy, Leo R., S/Sgt
LWG	Carter, Edward K., Sgt
BT	Gilmore, Charles E., Sgt
TG	Considine, Louis W., S/Sgt

B-17G #42-31213 Pistol Packin' Mama

P	Goolsby, Billy M., 2Lt
CP	Young, Elmer W., 2Lt
NAV	Towberman, P.E., 2Lt
BOM	Bowen, Richard R., 2Lt
ENG	Bumgarner, Donald, T/Sgt
LWG	Rothrock, Harry J., Sgt
RO	Greenhalgh, Chester W., S/Sgt
BT	Chraniuk, William, S/Sgt
TG	Strobel, William A., Sgt
RWG	Cueto, Frank Z., Sgt

B-17F #41-24561 The Duchess

P	Hanselman, Charles F., 2Lt
CP	Litherland, James, 2Lt
NAV	Ramsey, Elijah W., Jr., 2Lt
BOM	Livermore, William D., 2Lt
ENG	Fouss, Howard E., T/Sgt
RWG	Armstrong, Keith N., S/Sgt
RO	Zitzler, George A., T/Sgt
LWG	Hull, Kenneth W., S/Sgt
BT	Williams, Walter S., S/Sgt
TG	Tybuszewski, Mitchel J., S/Sgt
PHO	Mahaffey, William D., S/Sgt
	(Abortive)

B-17G #42-31177 Lonesome Polecat

P	Purcell, William A., 2Lt
CP	Krohn, Francis D., 2Lt
NAV	Mussett, Marvin H., 2Lt
BOM	Kyne, Joseph B., 2Lt
ENG	Castriciano, P.C., S/Sgt
RO	Beeny, J.C., S/Sgt
LWG	Nye, K.W., Sgt
RWG	Eastburn, H.R., Sgt
BT	Faner, Leon N., Sgt
TG	Swanson, J.W., Sgt

B-17F #42-3029 Wallaroo

P	Quinn, Thomas J., 2Lt
CP	Eisenhart, William E., 2Lt
NAV	Howlett, Oscar D., 2Lt
BOM	Van Zandt, Roland, 2Lt
ENG	Holper, Ralph M., T/Sgt
RWG	Kalafut, Joe J., S/Sgt
RO	Vieira, Joseph, T/Sgt
BT	Bergman, Harvey F., S/Sgt
LWG	Reynolds, James B., S/Sgt
TG	Pelkey, Elwood R., S/Sgt
PHO	Hunter, Robert G., S/Sgt

B-17G #42-39807 Nero

P	Newell, Noel N., 2Lt
CP	Donalson, Douglas C., 2Lt
NAV	Rhoads, Lester A., 2Lt
BOM	Hoover, William L., 2Lt
ENG	Freinwald, Earl C., S/Sgt
LWG	McGee, Richard, Sgt
RO	Weepie, Robert F., S/Sgt
TG	Atkinson, William E., Sgt
BT	Hart, Edgar B., Jr., Sgt
RWG	Mendel, Myron R., Sgt

B-17F #41-24605 Knockout Dropper

P	Mackin, George T., Capt
CP	Bolsover, Harold S., 2Lt
NAV	Clark, Byron F., 2Lt
BOM	Vermillion, Earl E., 1Lt
ENG	Herod, Henry W., T/Sgt
LWG	Robb, Charles W., Sgt
RO	Mouser, Lloyd C., S/Sgt
BT	McCauley, Patrick N., S/Sgt
TG	Swan, Henry, S/Sgt
RWG	Hermann, Kurt J., II, T/Sgt
	(Abortive Sortie)

427th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

B-17G #42-31241 *Spirit of Wanette*

P	Woddrop, Edward M., Lt	
CP	Henderson, Grover C., Lt	
NAV	Brown, Elmer L., Lt	
BOM	Matthews, E.P., Lt	
ENG	Watts, William A., S/Sgt	WIA
BT	Plante, Royal F., S/Sgt	
RO	O'Connor, William S., S/Sgt	WIA
TG	Baggs, Charles C., S/Sgt	WIA
RWG	Valis, William, S/Sgt	WIA
LWG	Hoff, Henry, S/Sgt	WIA

B-17F #42-29795 *Flying Bitch*

P	Barker, John C., Lt
CP	Cotham, Willie C., Lt
NAV	Eccleston, Edward F., Lt
BOM	Meagher, Robert W., Lt
ENG	Walsh, Charles E., T/Sgt
BT	Knight, Frederick B., S/Sgt
RO	Ratliff, Leonard E., T/Sgt
TG	Vateckas, Coster R., S/Sgt
LWG	Musashe, Michael, S/Sgt
RWG	McGrew, Robert H., S/Sgt

B-17G #42-39764 *Santa Ana* CR-L

P	Alex, Alexander, 2Lt	POW
CP	Jackman, Lon E., Jr., 2Lt	KIA
NAV	Goldschmidt, Nicholas J., 2Lt	POW
BOM	Farrah, Albert L., 2Lt	POW
ENG	Adamczyk, Joseph, S/Sgt	POW
RO	McCarren, W.R., S/Sgt	POW
BT	Micheles, Harold P., Sgt	POW
LWG	Newcomb, Robert J., Sgt	POW/REP
RWG	Brown, Harold A., Sgt	POW/REP
TG	Hall, Stewart G., Sgt	POW/REP

B-17F #42-3131 *Flak Wolf*

P	McGarry, John J., Jr., Lt
CP	Jenkins, Elton L., Lt
NAV	Halligan, Robert W., Lt
BOM	Foe, Kenneth D., Lt
ENG	Grace, Henry J., S/Sgt
BT	Friedman, Ira, Sgt
RO	Wilson, Elmer A., S/Sgt
TG	Kowalonek, Walter A., Sgt
LWG	Brown, Edgar S., Sgt
RWG	Hilborn, Ervin, Sgt
(Abortive)	

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

P	McClellan, George S., Jr., Lt
CP	Harrison, Emmittes S., Jr., Lt
NAV	Kaliher, John C., Lt
BOM	Cornish, Merlin L., Lt
ENG	Tempesta, David, T/Sgt
RWG	Chiles, Alfred B., Jr., S/Sgt
RO	Callihan, George A., T/Sgt
BT	Yarian, Robert G., S/Sgt
TG	Dugan, Charles E., S/Sgt
LWG	Heaton, Barnell S., S/Sgt

B-17G #42-37875 *Empress of D Street*

P	Carothers, John W., Lt
CP	Greenwood, Ernest G., Lt
NAV	Barriscale, Howard W., Lt
BOM	Linnehan, Arthur, Lt
ENG	Scott, Harvey E., S/Sgt
BT	Peavy, Robert T., Sgt
RO	Rajcula, George S., S/Sgt
TG	Ziegler, Roland R., Sgt
LWG	Morneau, Francis J., Sgt
RWG	Rogers, Wiley A., T/Sgt

B-17G #42-31233 *(No Name)* CR-L

P	Leve, Franklin, Lt	KIA
CP	Libbee, Dick L., Lt	KIA
NAV	Morehead, Richard D., Lt	KIA
BOM	Murphy, Dennis J., Lt	KIA
ENG	Spross, James C., Sgt	POW
BT	Drees, Edward W., Sgt	KIA
RO	Craig, Percy D., S/Sgt	KIA
TG	Van Landingham, Armond O., S/Sgt	POW
LWG	Midkiff, Frank L., Sgt	KIA
RWG	Keefer, Oliver L., Sgt	KIA

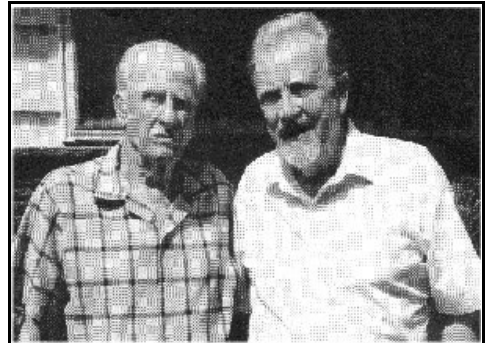
Saving Sergeant Buske

An account of Remarkable Valor and Amazing Survival from the Records of the
65th General Hospital, a Duke University Army Reserve Unit of World War II
by **Ivan W. Brown, Jr. MD**

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Dr. Brown is a former James B. Duke Professor of Surgery at Duke University, Durham. A retired cardiovascular surgeon, he lives in Lakeland, FL, and writes medical history. During World War II, he was captain on the surgical service of the 65th General Hospital, a Duke Army Reserve Unit. The Unit was called to active duty in July 1942, and in the fall of 1943 was sent to England where Dr. Brown and his colleagues served as the principal medical personnel for casualties of the 8th Air Force as well as thousands of Army casualties from the war.

In the hours before dawn on December 20, 1943, it was bitter cold at the US 8th Air Force base at Molesworth, England. The crew of a B-17 bomber named Jersey Bounce hardly needed the 4 a.m. wake-up call of the Charge of Quarters. Like most bomber crews anticipating the next day's mission over enemy territory, their sleep was easily interrupted. The sound of the CO's Jeep pulling up to their tar-papered hut had already awakened them.



George Buske and Dr. Ivan Brown

Twenty-two year old Sgt. George W. Buske, a tailgunner from Rochester, NY, had perhaps more reason to be apprehensive than the others. Just five months earlier, a 20mm exploding shell fired by an attacking German fighter plane had caused deep wounds to his left hip. For that mission he had been awarded his first Purple Heart, another Oak Leaf Cluster for his Air Medal, and the Silver Star for conspicuous bravery. After 45 days in the hospital, he had finally returned to full duty.

Now, after a breakfast of fresh eggs at the mess hut - a treat compared to the powdered variety served on non-mission days - he and his crewmates, including radio operator T/Sgt. Forrest L. Vosler from Livonia, NY, went to the pre-mission briefing. Their day's mission was to be a return bombing raid on Bremen, Germany. They had flown to Bremen twice earlier that week. On those raids, their 303rd Bomb Group had encountered only moderate anti-aircraft fire, a few German fighter planes, and lost no bombers. Little did they realize how different the forthcoming mission would be.

Just after dawn, the Jersey Bounce, with Capt. Merle R. Hungerford, Jr., from El Paso, TX, at the controls, took off with its heavy bomb load. Their group's slow circling climb to altitude and rendezvous with other bomb groups took nearly two hours. It was after 10 a.m. when the stream of more than 500 bombers left British air space for Germany. Approaching the Dutch coast, they encountered the first of their unexpected problems: a strong head wind, which caused some planes to reach the target off course and a half-hour late. At 26,000 feet, the assigned bombing altitude, the air temperature was below -50 F. Heavy condensation trails left by the bomber engines spread like white clouds in which large numbers of German fighter planes could hide to launch their attacks unseen. And unlike their last Bremen visit, there was intense and accurate anti-aircraft fire as they approached the target.

Suddenly, an anti-aircraft shell burst knocked out the Jersey Bounce's No. 1 engine. Moments later, just after the bombardier called out "bombs away," another shell knocked out the No. 4 engine, leaving its propeller, which could not be feathered, windmilling out of control. On only two engines and losing altitude and speed, the crippled Jersey Bounce fell out of formation. It was a sitting duck and German fighters lined up to shoot it down.

Capt. Hungerford and his copilot struggled to maintain altitude and keep the plane on course for home. The waist, turret, and tailgunners kept up defensive fire to ward off the fighter attacks. Their 50-caliber guns knocked down four German fighters, but others followed them out over the North Sea with relentless attacks, firing machine gun bullets and exploding 20mm shells into the stricken plane. One shell sent fragments into the legs and feet of T/Sgt. Vosler. Then a machine gun bullet passed completely through the upper abdomen of Sgt. Buske. Almost simultaneously, a 20mm shell exploding inches in front of his waist, blew his chest and abdomen open and propelled him backward from his tailgunner's seat into the fuselage.

The fighters continued to attack. The wounded Vosler, attempting to take over the now unmanned tailgun, was struck in the chest, face, and both eyes by fragments from another 20mm shell. With blood streaming from his eyes and able to see only blurred shapes, Vosler and the other gunners kept firing until the German fighters, convinced their prey was about to crash into the sea, broke off and turned back toward Germany.

By this time, the Jersey Bounce was just above the waves and fast running out of fuel. Vosler, though unable to see, repaired the damaged radio by touch and began sending out distress messages. Other crew members, attempting to keep the plane airborne, threw out everything they could to lighten the load. The wounded Vosler, barely conscious and feeling he was of no further use, begged to be thrown out himself to further reduce weight.

Out of gas but within sight of the East Anglian coast the Jersey Bounce finally crashed into the frigid North Sea. Vosler managed to crawl out unassisted onto a wing. Other crew members dragged out the severely wounded and unconscious Buske. Then Vosler, holding onto the plane's antenna with one hand and Buske with the other, kept the two of them from slipping underwater until they could be pulled into inflated dinghies.

Fortunately, their crash had been spotted by a Norwegian coaster, which picked them up and transferred them to a fast E-boat of the British Sea Rescue Command. Within an hour, they were inside Great Yarmouth harbor. From there, Vosler was sent to a Northampton hospital and later to the States for a long hospitalization. One of his eyes had to be removed, and the other required extensive surgery but partial sight was restored. Sgt. Buske, barely alive and in profound shock from blood loss and exposure, was rushed to the local Great Yarmouth Hospital. After several blood transfusions and treatment for shock and hypothermia, he underwent emergency surgery.

There was a large, sucking wound of his right anterior chest, which exposed his right lung and continued through a disrupted diaphragm as a single gaping wound into the right upper abdomen. There were bleeding tears in his partially fractured liver, a laceration of the duodenum, and contused intestine. A second diagonal wound across the left anterior

chest exposed a number of ribs. X-rays showed a number of shell fragments in his right thigh, abdominal wall, and both lungs. There were one or two fragments close to the heart. The machine gun bullet that had passed through his upper abdomen was lodged deep in the muscles of his back. Because of his extremely critical condition, the British surgeons could only control the bleeding from his torn liver, reattach the disrupted diaphragm, and close the sucking wound of the right chest. The left chest wound was dusted with sulfanilamide and packed open. The large abdominal wound was packed with gauze and also left open.

With further transfusions and intensive nursing care during the next few days, his condition, though still critical, stabilized enough to permit transfer to the nearest US Army hospital; the 231st Station hospital at Botesdale, Suffolk. In the operating room there, the abdominal wound was found to be grossly infected and to contain considerable dead tissue. It was draining a foul, bile-stained fluid containing digestive juices and bubbles of intestinal gas. The wound was debrided and an area of pus over the dome of the liver was drained. An empyema of his right chest cavity was drained of a large amount of infected, bloody fluid. A few days later, an empyema of his left chest was drained as well.

He was unable to take fluids or food by mouth because of the total drainage of upper intestinal contents, which were slowly digesting and enlarging the abdominal wound. He was sustained entirely on intravenous fluids containing glucose. In those World War II years, there were no amino acids or complete nutrient fluids available for intravenous feeding. The only antibiotics were two early sulfa drugs and the newly discovered penicillin. These were wonder drugs against many wartime infections, but not against the types of bacteria causing Buske's infections.



Sgt Buske (lower), Dr. Brown (right)

The Long Road Home

When the US Army's 65th General Hospital -affiliated with Duke University- replaced the 231st station hospital at Botesdale in February 1944, Buske was on a downhill course because of malnutrition and the repeated complications of his formidable injuries. He developed a large abscess in his back, posterior to the abdominal cavity, and abscesses of his right thigh, abdominal wall, and left chest, all from the multiple shell fragments. All required surgical drainage. By mid-February 1944, he was largely unresponsive and his condition appeared terminal. There were long periods of Cheyne-Stokes respiration. Yet, his resilience and stamina in those critical days were remarkable. Often, as a nurse changed his position, he would arouse from his semicomatose state and exclaim "Damn it, can't anybody get any sleep around here?" then lapse back into coma.

His weight fell to 88 pounds. In an attempt to improve his nutrition, and to provide a source of protein, daily units of reconstituted dried human plasma were added to his intravenous fluids. This proved successful in stemming his increasing emaciation, and improved the healing of his wounds. We later found that many of these wartime dried plasma units contained the hepatitis B virus, which caused a delayed, serious, and sometimes fatal hepatitis. Fortunately, in spite of receiving over 100 units, Buske escaped this complication.

Finally in March, three months after he was wounded, the gradually decreasing drainage from his large abdominal fistula allowed him to retain some fluids and nutrients taken by mouth. His nutrition was further improved by eggnog made with fresh eggs -a rare commodity in wartime Britain- brought to him by the vicar of the local Anglican church. His abdominal and lower chest wounds gradually healed. In May, he underwent further operations to close his wounds, including skin grafts to cover the still unhealed wounds of his right thigh.

By mid-June 1944, he was strong enough to be evacuated by plane back to the states for further treatment. The 65th General Hospital surgeons who treated him marveled at his recovery up to that point, but we feared that his multiple severe injuries would lead to future medical problems, even limit his lifespan. He arrived in the US on June 24, 1944, and was immediately admitted to the Army's Halloran General Hospital on Staten Island. He stayed there for four months of further convalescence and rehabilitation. Then, after a three-week furlough home in November 1944, he requested, and amazingly enough, was returned to active duty at Langley Field, Virginia. He was not discharged from the Air Force until September 3, 1945.

History Retold

For his gallantry and valor above and beyond the call of duty on their fateful mission to Bremen, T/Sgt. Forrest L. Vosler was given America's highest award, the Congressional Medal of Honor. President Franklin D. Roosevelt presented the medal to him at the White House. He was one of only three enlisted men of the 8th Air Force during World War II to receive this honor. Vosler died of a heart attack in 1992, at age 69, in Titusville, FL.

For 30 years after his discharge from the Air Force, Buske was employed as a yard foreman at a lumber company. He retired in 1978. Since the war, he has had two physical reminders of his near-fatal 1943 wounds. In 1952, he developed abdominal pain and fever that led to the surgical removal of shell fragments and the machine gun bullet. In 1988, he underwent successful coronary artery bypass surgery. Afterward, his cardiac surgeon presented him with a souvenir of the operation: an encrusted shell fragment the surgeon had found near his heart.

George W. Buske, and Eleanor, his wife of 45 years, still live happily in Rochester, NY. They take great pleasure in their family, including their four grandchildren. In spite of all the past odds against his recovery and survival, this remarkable, twice wounded, and highly decorated Air Force veteran, now 78, continues to enjoy good health.