

# 303rd BG (H) Combat Mission No. 94

31 December 1943

Target: Blockade Runner Ship "Orsono," at Bordeaux, France

Crews Dispatched: 20 plus 2 spares

Length of Mission: 8 hours, 10 minutes

Bomb Load: B-17Fs, 6 x 500 lb G.P.; B-17Gs 12 x 500 lb G.P. bombs

Bombing Altitude: 15,000 ft

Ammo Fired: 330 rounds

**L**ieutenant Colonel **Lewis E. Lyle**, Deputy Commanding Officer of the 303rd BG(H), flew in the 359BS High Squadron lead ship #42-31060 *Poque Ma Hone* 427BS, with Lt. **Bolsover's** crew. One aircraft aborted: #42-39786 *G.I. Sheets* 427BS (**Shoup**). The No. 2 prop governor was inoperative and the No. 2 engine was slinging oil.

The 41 CBW target was the blockade runner "Osorno." The ship was aground and was discharging its crude rubber cargo by lighter. The ship, 465 ft. long and 60 ft. wide, was a 7,000-tonner that was attacked by the coastal command on 24 December, inflicting one hit and one near miss. Other wings were assigned airfield targets in France.

Anti-aircraft fire was meager and inaccurate. Enemy fighter opposition was negligible. Two or three JU-88s were seen in the primary target area and some crews reported six or less ME-109s in the Brest peninsula area. No attacks were made.

No bombs were dropped on the "Osorno" primary target, obscured by 10/10 clouds at the 15,000 ft. bombing altitude. A run was made on the Lannion Airdrome, but it too became obscured by clouds and no bombs were dropped on it. One B-17 dropped its load of 6,500-lb. bombs into the Bay of Biscay. All other aircraft returned with their bombs. One pilot, Lt. **Dahleen**, in #42-3448 stated that he thought that the formation should have gone below the overcast and dropped their bombs.

## DECEMBER 1943-NEW TYPE OXYGEN MASKS INTRODUCED

During December 1943, the new type **A-14 demand oxygen mask** was introduced and issued to 8th Air Force airmen. Oxygen was supplied to these masks only when the air crewmen inhaled. The slight suction created on each inhalation operated the demand regulator, causing it to open and deliver oxygen to the mask. When the wearer exhaled, the demand regulator automatically shut off, and the exhaled gases passed out of the mask through the flutter valve. Modifications with "weep holes" allowed moisture to drain out and virtually eliminated freezing and fatal anoxia incidents in 1944 and 1945. The new type A-14 oxygen masks replaced the old type A-8B continuous flow oxygen masks. The A-8B mask was plagued with freezing and anoxia problems.



**From the Journal of Vern L. Moncur, 359th BS Pilot**

**MISSION #3**

Date: December 31, 1943

Target: German Ship, Gironde Bay, France

Altitude: 16,000 feet

Plane: U-131 "Flak Wolf"

Position: "Tail-end Charlie," High Squadron

This was one of the longest raids which was sent from this base. We were in the air about 8 hours. We were sent to bomb a ship in Gironde Bay, near Bordeaux, France, which was supposed to be loaded with a cargo of raw rubber. This ship was grounded in shallow water and the Germans were attempting to unload it with small tugs and little boats. (This information was given to us by the Intelligence Office.) What we found was a little different.

Upon reaching the target area, we found it was impossible to bomb because of complete cloud coverage. Therefore, we had to abandon our primary target. We had been assigned to three alternate targets, so we proceeded to fly to our first alternate. This target, too, proved to be completely covered with clouds, though we did receive a little attention in the form of flak. We then continued our aerial tour of France by going to our second alternate target - and we had the same luck as before. Complete cloud coverage stopped us from bombing, though a few bursts of flak told us that we were still unwelcome. The third target was no different - it apparently just wasn't our day. Therefore, it was necessary to return to our base and land with a load of bombs. We were carrying 12 five-hundred pound demolition bombs. So much for our "Cook's tour" of France, but during this time we were having a few mechanical troubles of our own.

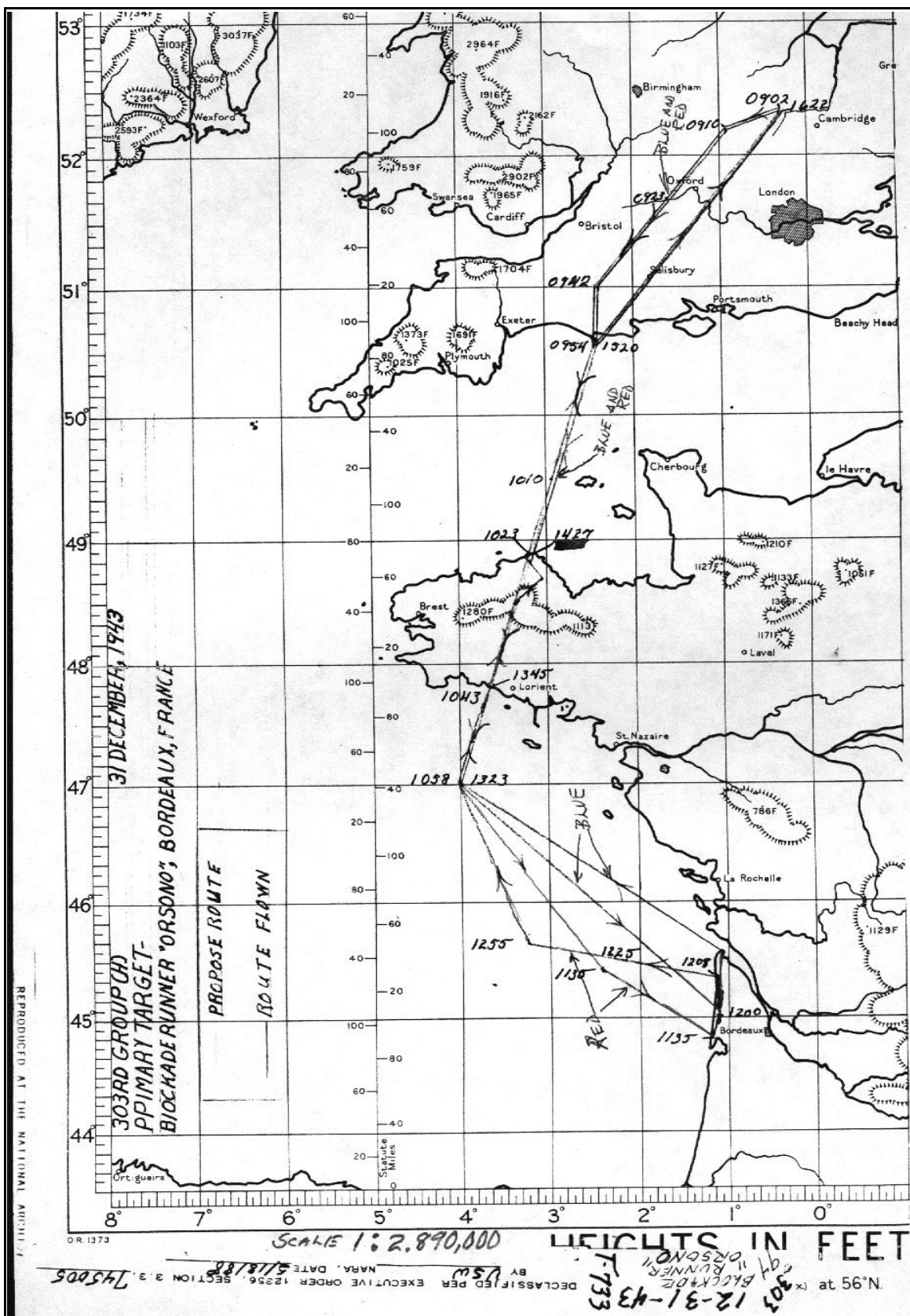
The No. 2 propeller "ran away" soon after reaching our primary target, but we were finally able to get it to settle down after babying it along for quite a while. We then left the inboard throttles set and made adjustments in power settings with the outboard throttles only. Whenever No. 2 throttle was touched, the prop would really "wind up." We were able to get back without having to feather the prop - luckily for us.

On our way into the target, we ran into light flak while crossing the Brest Peninsula, but none of it hit very close to our plane. We had a bunch of JU-88s with us for awhile, but they were pretty wary about coming in too close to our guns, which none of us regretted very much. P-47s gave us excellent cover on the withdrawal from the target and across the Brest Peninsula.

Upon reaching England, we ran into the kind of weather pilots dread. We found very adverse weather all the way in from the English coast. All of our flight back over England, we flew at about 500 feet above the ground and were unable to even see the other ships in the formation. With several hundred bombers doing the same thing, it became a rather ticklish business. We gradually dropped out of formation and struck out on our own, figuring it was much safer than flying formation on instruments. We got a "QDM" from Sabbo. (In other words, we received a bearing by radio from our plane to our base. We also used several English radio stations - called "Darky" stations.)

Upon reaching the field, it was next to impossible to see a runway. We buzzed the field at about 100 feet and finally felt our way through the rain and fog until we found out where the runway was. Nineteen planes were landed in this fog and rain in a little over 12 minutes, a record in fast landings even under perfect conditions.

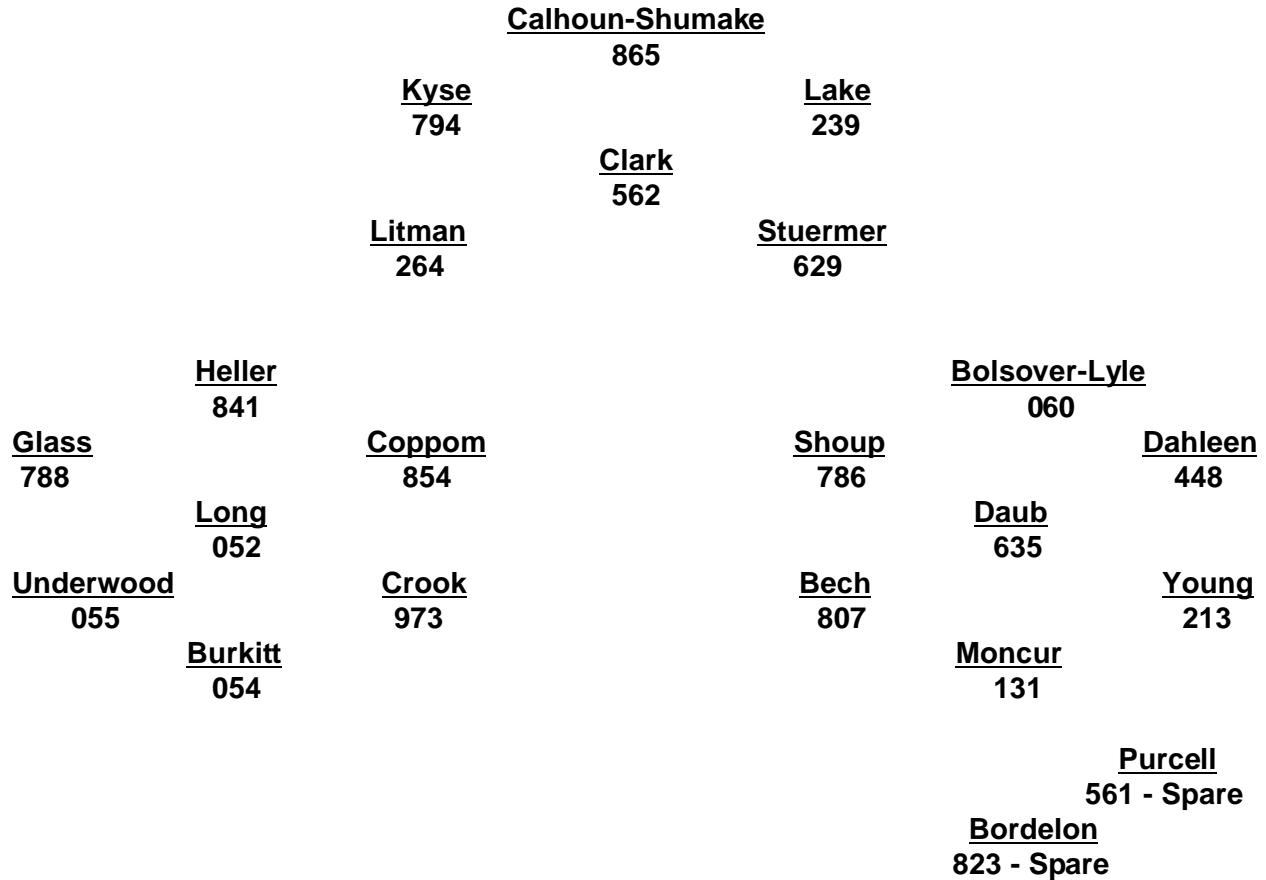
Slight battle damage to plane from flak, but no injury to any of the crew. This was the way we ended the year 1943.



Route Map

Mission 094 - 3

# Aircraft Formation at Assembly Point



One (1) aircraft aborted this mission:  
Lt. Shoup in 786

## KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

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

## 358th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

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

P	Lake, Lester A., Jr., 1Lt
CP	Cook, John H., 2Lt
NAV	Leverton, John G., 2Lt
BOM	Morrison, James P., 2Lt
ENG	Haggerty, Jerome J., S/Sgt
LWG	Delaney, Jessie L., Sgt
RO	Rumpf, Charles W., S/Sgt
RWG	Balzano, Christopher, Sgt
TG	Hunt, John L., Sgt
BT	Chadick, Neal T., Sgt
(Abortive Sortie)	

### **B-17F #42-29629 Connecticut Yankee**

P	Stuermer, John W., 2Lt
CP	Ames, Walter J., 2Lt
NAV	Tielman, William A., 2Lt
BOM	Newman, Clyde D., 2Lt
ENG	Harris, David W., S/Sgt
LWG	Rogers, Thomas A., Sgt
RO	Murray, Edward F., S/Sgt
BT	Stark, Joseph, Sgt
TG	Collins, Marvin B., Sgt
RWG	Carroll, Marvin A., Sgt
(Abortive Sortie)	

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

P	Clark, Martin L., 2Lt
CP	Wright, George E., 1Lt
NAV	Abernathy, Milton B., 2Lt
BOM	Zientar, Matthew S., 2Lt
ENG	Quevedo, Alfonso, S/Sgt
RWG	Grsetic, John P., Sgt
RO	Hensley, James C., S/Sgt
LWG	Canale, Michael J., Sgt
TG	McLawhorn, Jerry C., S/Sgt
BT	Brown, Harold J., Sgt
(Abortive Sortie)	

### **B-17G #42-39794 (No Name)**

P	Kyse, Walter R., 2Lt
CP	Taylor, James B., 2Lt
NAV	Halliburton, J.B. Lewis, 1Lt
BOM	Mack, Austin J., 2Lt
ENG	Jones, Douglas L., S/Sgt
BT	Kennard, Royal G., Sgt
RO	Dulin, Woodroe G., S/Sgt
RWG	Schweinebraten, Leslie H., Sgt
TG	Cox, James B., S/Sgt
LWG	Hitt, William T., S/Sgt
(Abortive Sortie)	

### **B-17G #42-30865 (No Name)**

P	Calhoun, William R., Jr., Maj
CP	Shumake, Glynn F., Maj
NAV	Jacobson, Norman H., Capt
NAV	Wiggins, Warren S., 2Lt
BOM	Fawcett, Jack B., Capt
ENG	Mullins, Grover C., T/Sgt
RWG	Pleasant, James H., S/Sgt
RO	Supple, James C., T/Sgt
BT	Zeitner, Howard H., S/Sgt
LWG	Viezneki, John G., S/Sgt
TG	Davey, Kenneth W., Capt
PHO	Nilson, Arthur C., Sgt
(Abortive Sortie)	

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

P	Litman, Arnold S., 2Lt
CP	Gorman, Quentin J., 2Lt
NAV	Merthan, Lawrence C., 2Lt
BOM	Stravinsky, Albert W., 2Lt
ENG	Smith, George A., S/Sgt
RWG	Lawson, Tracy W., Sgt
RO	Ebbighausen, Francis R., T/Sgt
BT	Gibbs, Paul M., Sgt
TG	Castillo, Buenaventura L., Sgt
LWG	Miller, Victor R., Sgt
PHO	Dockendorf, Cyril J., Sgt
(Abortive Sortie)	

## 359th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

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

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P	Daub, Leroy E., 2Lt
CP	McLean, Ralph C., 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

(Abortive Sortie)

### **B-17G #42-31060 *Poque Ma Hone***

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P	Lyle, Lewis E., LtCol
CP	Bolsover, Harold S., 2Lt
NAV	Lunde, Frithjof M., 2Lt
BOM	McCormick, James E., 1Lt
ENG	Mayhugh, John C., Jr., Sgt
TG	Robb, Charles W., Sgt
RO	Mouser, Lloyd C., S/Sgt
BT	Munson, James E., Sgt
LWG	Hayes, John J., S/Sgt
RWG	Hermann, Kurt J., II, T/Sgt

(Abortive Sortie)

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

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P	Young, Elmer W., 2Lt
CP	Sassone, Joseph C., 2Lt
NAV	Schoner, George R., 2Lt
BOM	Yelsky, Fred B., 2Lt
ENG	Steele, John C., S/Sgt
RO	Dulick, Steve, S/Sgt
BT	Lebeck, Richard H., Sgt
RWG	Rohaly, Andrew, Jr., Sgt
LWG	Withrow, John W., Sgt
TG	Stapelton, Bill, Sgt

(Abortive Sortie)

### **B-17G #42-39786 *G.I. Sheets***

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P	Shoup, Noel E., 2Lt
CP	Litherland, James, 2Lt
NAV	Clark, Byron F., 2Lt
BOM	Ulbricht, Walter E., 2Lt
ENG	Bragg, Ben W., S/Sgt
RWG	Gribble, Robert F., Sgt
RO	Harrison, Donald B., Sgt
LWG	Asvestos, Nick, S/Sgt
BT	Hostetter, William L., Jr., Sgt
TG	Ross, Harry C., Sgt

(Abortive)

### **B-17G #42-39807 *Nero***

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P	Bech, G. Neil, Jr., 2Lt
CP	Hall, Franklin M., 2Lt
NAV	Cotter, Edward R., 2Lt
BOM	Corbin, Frederick A., F/O
ENG	Sanelli, Floyd L., S/Sgt
RWG	Boatwright, Edward C., Sgt
RO	Dennis, Julian E., S/Sgt
BT	Johnson, Lawrence G., Sgt
LWG	Cundiff, Robert W., Sgt
TG	Cox, Elbert S., Jr., Sgt
PHO	Green, William H., Jr., T/Sgt

(Abortive Sortie)

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

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P	Dahleen, Howard D., 2Lt
CP	Austin, John T., 2Lt
NAV	Klingensmith, Russell S., 2Lt
BOM	Gauthier, Raymond W., 2Lt
ENG	Malcolm, Orrick H., S/Sgt
RO	Swanson, Clifford E., S/Sgt
RWG	Smith, Harding W., Sgt
LWG	Titworth, William E., Sgt
BT	Mace, LeRoy L., S/Sgt
TG	Covington, Charles G., Sgt
PAS	Hight, J.L., 1Lt

(Abortive Sortie)

## 359th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists - Cont'd.

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

P	Moncur, Vern L., 2Lt
CP	Cunningham, Billy A., 2Lt
NAV	Brooks, James, 2Lt
BOM	Chang, David K.S., 2Lt
ENG	Rosier, Robert L., S/Sgt
RO	Andrus, James S., S/Sgt
BT	Hein, Walter E., Sgt
RWG	Baer, Richard K., Sgt
LWG	Dickman, Thomas J., Sgt
TG	Wike, Leonard L., Sgt
(Abortive Sortie)	

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

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
(Abortive - Spare)	

## 360th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

### **B-17G #42-31052 *(No Name)***

P	Long, John A., Lt
CP	Earhart, Amon E., Lt
NAV	Carroll, George M., Lt
BOM	Cascio, Guiseppe, Lt
ENG	Wilson, Clarence G., T/Sgt
LWG	Ledley, Albert J., S/Sgt
RO	Jennings, Ralph T., T/Sgt
RWG	Henson, Mace, S/Sgt
TG	Orlando, Anthony T., S/Sgt
BT	Ayres, Arthur B., S/Sgt
(Abortive Sortie)	

### **B-17G #42-31055 *Aloha***

P	Underwood, George E., Lt
CP	Doering, Creighton G., Lt
NAV	Parker, Duane C., Lt
BOM	Riley, Milton S., Lt
ENG	Daniels, Mack E., S/Sgt
RWG	Rike, Thomas L., Jr., Sgt
RO	Phipps, Charles F., S/Sgt
BT	Dinneen, Thomas E., S/Sgt
LWG	Casselman, Glen L., Sgt
TG	Meyer, Gregory C., Sgt
(Abortive Sortie)	

### **B-17F #42-5054 *Belle of Joaquin***

P	Burkitt, Benajah G., Lt
CP	Kuhn, Harold J., Lt
NAV	Foote, Herbert A., Jr., Lt
BOM	Reith, Fred J., Lt
ENG	Gatewood, P.H., S/Sgt
TG	Rush, Cleve C., Sgt
RO	Cantrell, A.D., S/Sgt
BT	Berntzen, Arthur O., Sgt
RWG	Brown, Lee C., Sgt
LWG	Stoffregen, W.E., Sgt
(Abortive Sortie)	

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

P	Crook, Charles D., Lt
CP	Evans, Ernest N., Lt
NAV	Davis, Roscoe, Lt
BOM	DeLuca, Joseph, F/O
ENG	Breitenbach, Louis H., S/Sgt
RWG	Chavez, Salvador, Sgt
RO	Hannan, Robert J., S/Sgt
LWG	Williams, Norris R., Sgt
BT	Cheek, Roy A., Sgt
TG	Hensley, James H., Sgt
(Abortive Sortie)	

## 360th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists - Cont'd.

### **B-17F #42-5788 *A.O.G. Not in Stock***

P	Glass, Henry F., Lt
CP	McMahan, Eugene A. Lt
NAV	Pepe, Nicholas A., Lt
BOM	Robrock, Paul A., Lt
ENG	Patrone, Frank, S/Sgt
LWG	Stellato, Francis A., Sgt
RO	Miller, Gordon R., S/Sgt
RWG	Carbillano, Dominick J., Sgt
BT	Michael, David O., Sgt
TG	Roberts, James E., Sgt
(Abortive Sortie)	

### **B-17F #42-29823 *(No Name)***

P	Bordelon, Berton A., Lt
CP	Coons, Charles L., Lt
NAV	Cromwell, Frederick P., Lt
BOM	Cottrell, John W., Lt
ENG	Barker, Forrest, S/Sgt
RWG	Adams, Donald K., Sgt
RO	Fontana, Joseph L., S/Sgt
LWG	Patterson, Harry L., Sgt
BT	Harrington, Joseph F., Sgt
TG	Couch, Ted, Sgt
(Abortive - Spare)	

### **B-17G #42-37841 *Banshee***

P	Heller, William C., Lt
CP	Chapman, John M., Lt
NAV	Zwayer, James P., Lt
BOM	Saiz, Reinaldo J., Capt
ENG	Huston, William J., T/Sgt
RWG	Payne, George S., S/Sgt
RO	Spoerri, Felix, T/Sgt
LWG	Lanier, Leo, Jr., S/Sgt
BT	Schultz, Melvin E., S/Sgt
TG	Laurinitis, Anthony, S/Sgt
OBS	Whitehead, Robert B., Lt
(Abortive Sortie)	

### **B-17F #42-5854 *Alley Oop***

P	Coppom, John F., Lt
CP	DeWall, Hershel R., Lt
NAV	Limon, Gerald N., Lt
BOM	Hubenschmidt, John W., F/O
ENG	Beben, Henry M., S/Sgt
LWG	Moore, C.E., Sgt
RO	Hutchins, Dalton R., S/Sgt
RWG	Hays, Henry G., Sgt
BT	Robinson, Robert B., Sgt
TG	Chatoian, Carl H., Sgt
OBS	Gentry, Raymond L., Lt

## END OF DECEMBER AIRCRAFT AND CREW STATUS

B-17F	Assigned: 11	On Hand: 9	Operational: 4
B-17G	Assigned: 37	On Hand: 37	Operational: 27
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>Assigned: 48</b>	<b>On Hand: 46</b>	<b>Operational: 31</b>

Crews Combat Ready: 48 (An increase of 20 since 30 November)  
 Non-Operational Aircraft: B-17E, B-17F, DB-7B, L-48, Oxford

## ENEMY AIRCRAFT CONFIRMED GUNNER CLAIMS

Destroyed:	313
Probably Destroyed:	88
Damaged:	141
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>532</b>



## 31 DECEMBER 1943 - 303RD BOMBARDMENT GROUP COMMENDATION

HEADQUARTERS VIII Bomber Command  
Office of the Commanding General  
APO 634

Colonel Kermit D. Stevens, 0-350379  
Commanding Officer  
303rd Bombardment Group  
AAF Station 107.

Dear Colonel Stevens:

The VIII Bomber Command during 1943 has successfully accomplished that phase of the major directive issued by the Combined Chiefs of Staffs at Casablanca which required the forcing of Germany to concentrate her fighter strength on the Western Front to such a degree that Allied air superiority would be assured for the Russian and Mediterranean Fronts.

By hard work, unswerving perseverance and the resourceful and intelligent employment of technical skill and professional qualifications, the personnel of this Command - ground forces, maintenance men, combat crews and staff officers alike - have written a new chapter in the history of aerial bombardment. The crews of our bombers have, in broad daylight, fought their way through the strongest defense which the enemy could bring against them and have ranged over the length and breadth of Germany, striking with deadly accuracy many of the most important hostile industrial installations and ports.

To you, as Commanding officer of the 303rd Group, goes a large share of the credit for this remarkable achievement. Your superior tactical leadership and keen understanding of administrative problems have obviously been an inspiration to your officers and men. The 303rd Group, which has now completed 94 combat missions, is one of the oldest veteran groups of this Command. On 17 November 1942 the 303rd Group became operational in this theater. Since that date the 303rd Group has repeatedly distinguished itself in combat, including such outstanding accomplishments as leading this Command's highly successful attacks on Vegesack and Huls on 18 March and 22 June 1943 respectively. The solid foundation of esprit de corps and the high tradition prevailing in the 303rd Group is one of the most prized and elusive distinctions that any military organization can achieve.

I hope that you will convey to all your officers and men my unbounded admiration and appreciation for the manner in which they have executed their difficult assignments during the past year. Their courage, skill and resourcefulness have been of such character as to win credit and commendation for Americans in general and for the Air Force in particular.

I firmly believe that the VIII Bomber Command has now reached a state of indoctrination which, with the required quantity of equipment and qualified personnel now arriving, will enable it to destroy Germany's capacity to wage war or maintain an effective defense against invasion.

F.L. Anderson  
Major General, U.S. Army  
Commanding

## **GETTING READY--BACK IN THE STATES**

**From the book "25 Milk Runs"**

**by Richard R. "Dick" Johnson**

**Editor's note:** While combat was taking place out of Molesworth, there were new crews getting ready to come to England to replace those that had completed their missions--or had been unfortunate enough to have been shot down. This is the story of 2Lt Theodore R. Beiser's crew, as told by CoPilot Dick Johnson. It seemed proper that you might be interested in what was happening during a happier, non-combat period in the lives of the B-17 bomber crews.

I arrived at the B-17 transition school in Avon Park, Florida, four days after Christmas, 1943 and had my first B-17 ride on New Year's Day, 1944, just three days after arriving. The complex systems of the B-17 required a great deal of learning before even starting the transition process. In just a few days the pilot was expected to do a blindfold test of the cockpit. This meant that any component or gauge, or switch had to be physically touched by the blindfolded trainee when called off by the instructor. There were thirty nine items on the list, but it is surprising how quickly most of us were able to accomplish this bit of training, since all we had done for the past nine months was eat, sleep and talk airplanes. I had accumulated a little over two hundred seventy hours in the training planes before arriving at Avon Park, which is more than enough time to qualify as a commercial pilot in civilian life.

The B-17 that we used for training was an F model, the major difference being the addition of a chin turret on the later "G" models that we would be flying in combat. It had been determined earlier that I, and my buddy, Horace W. Peppard would become co-pilots for some of the older and more experienced pilots. Peppard and I were both among the youngest in the graduating class, and both barely made second Lieutenant despite only having a high school education.

I was assigned to fly co-pilot for 2Lt. Aubrey A. Alexander on crew number 15 and Peppard was assigned to crew 16 which was piloted by 2Lt. Theodore R. Beiser. As soon as we saw the listings, Peppard said, "Hey, I know Alexander. Would you mind switching crews?" "I don't know either one of them, so it doesn't matter to me." I replied.

At this point we went to the operations section and asked the officer in charge how we could exchange crews. "What crew are you assigned to?" he asked Peppard. "Sixteen." Peppard replied. "What crew are you on?" he asked me. "Fifteen." I replied. With that he merely slid our names out of the crew roster and switched them. "It's that simple." he said. This simple action may have saved my life, but cost Peppard his. Such are the whims of fate.

We met our crews later that day to get acquainted. The pilot of crew 16, Theodore R. "Bud" Beiser was an easy going type who soon let the other officers on the crew know that we were to call him "Bud" when we were not around others. In front of others we called him Lieutenant Beiser, as did the enlisted men at all times.

I soon discovered why Lt. Beiser's nick-name was Bud. I have several pictures of him with a bottle of "Bud" in his hand. He was from Fairhope, Alabama which is on the lower part of Mobile Bay. He loved fishing and golfing, and still does to this day. He doesn't like to leave the area, saying, "Why should I leave Utopia?"

Our bombardier, Edward G. Cooper, was a second lieutenant from Portland, Oregon. He was a happy-go-lucky type, always quick with a quip or a joke. His ancestors came from Germany, and he said that he was looking forward to "Visiting Uncle Max," although he reasoned that "Uncle Max" wouldn't be too happy about the visit. Later, on some of our bombing missions to his ancestor's area of Germany, he would take a piece of chalk and write "Uncle Max" on one of the bombs, and "Aunt Sophie" on another. Our navigator was 2nd. Lt. Isadore Gepner from the Birmingham area of Alabama. He had no middle name or initial. Lt. Gepner was all business when it came to navigating, and was very good at it. When he got excited he often spoke in Yiddish, which none of the rest of us understood. He may have saved us later, on our overseas trip, with some first class navigation.

Our flight engineer, Lenny J. Buchanan was about ten years older than most of the rest of us, so naturally, we called him "Pappy." He was from the Poplar Bluff, Missouri area. "Pappy" was a very good engineer, and worked with the ground crews in all phases of maintenance and repair. In the air, he was the chief repairman. Buchanan's job was in the top turret as long as the airplane didn't need attention.

Benny J. Gorchesky was one of the best radio operators in the business. He also manned one of the waist guns when the need arose. Benny, from Johnstown, Pennsylvania, was also one of the youngest in the crew. He kept the radios in order and made emergency calls if necessary. He also tested our "Gibson Girl" radio before each flight. This was the radio carried in the inflatable life raft. It had an hourglass shape for holding between the knees while cranking its generator. The hour glass shape is what gave it the name "Gibson Girl."

James W. Haines, from the Dayton, Ohio area was the assistant engineer and was the other waist gunner. He and Buchanan nearly always helped Lt. Cooper and the armament crew with bomb loading. Also he assisted "Pappy" with maintenance on the B-17 during flight.

Charles W. Latta was too big for the ball turret position. Or, so everybody thought. He was young and agile, and proved that he could not only get into the ball turret, he showed that he could fire it quite easily. Charlie was from the Durham, North Carolina area, and was one of the youngest on the crew, next to Gorchesky. I was third youngest on the crew, being 21 years old at the time.

Carroll H. Brackey from Lake Mills, Iowa was one of the older men on the crew, next to "Pappy" Buchanan. His job was to slither back past the ball turret and the tail wheel box, to his position in the tail. He had his own little world, back there, with his twin fifty caliber machine guns and his own jettisonable escape hatch. We usually didn't see him, or any of the other gunners for that matter during a flight, but we kept in constant touch with each other on the inter-com.

After ten days at Avon Park, eight crews went to MacDill Field, just outside Tampa, Florida where we were to train for combat in the B-17. After flying some fifty hours in ten days at Avon Park, we first flew from MacDill Field on January 11, 1944. During the rest of the month we flew a little over forty six hours, which included four and a half hours of pilot in command for me. I did four day landings and three night landings in that time. On January 11 we did 16 landings in 5 hours. The next day we did 17 landings in five and a quarter hours.

We did a take-off on January 13th and did no landings that day. If this seems strange, it is because we took off at 10:20 PM and landed after midnight. By the end of January, we stopped practicing landings and concentrated on air work.

In February we flew nearly sixty three hours, twenty four of which were night flights. We practiced night formation, gunnery, navigation and emergency procedures. Part of the emergency procedures was for feathering a prop, that is, to turn it knife edge into the wind, thus stopping the engine. On all my later combat flights I never had to use this procedure and was always grateful to the Wright engine designers who made this one of the most dependable engines of Second World War aircraft.

On March 25, 1944, we flew our last training mission from MacDill Field. By this time I had over 153 hours of B-17 flight time. We then boarded a bus to Savannah, Georgia and reported to Hunter Field. On April 5th we flew our first B-17G. It had a shiny, aluminum finish with its new chin turret. We made a two hour flight that day to check out the newest thing in combat aircraft. Its tail (serial) number, was 42-102392. This was the aircraft that we would ferry to the British Isles.

At this time we received our secret destination orders which we were not to open until we were airborne. We were not supposed to know quite where we were headed or by what route in case a careless remark might find its way to the enemy.