

303rd BG (H) Combat Mission No. 109

20 February 1944

Target: A Group - Junker Aircraft Works, Leipzig, Germany

B Group - Industrial Plants, Hettstedt, Germany

Crews Dispatched: 38

Crew Members Lost or Wounded: 2 minor wounds, 1 crash landing

Length of Mission: 9 hours, 10 minutes

Bomb Load: 12 x 500 lb G.P. & 42 x M-47 Incendiary bombs,
plus 3000 lbs of nickels

Bombing Altitude: A Group - 19,000 ft; B Group - 16,000 ft

Ammo Fired: 9,740 rounds

The largest force of bombers (1,003) and fighters (835) yet dispatched by the 8th Air Force attacked production plants in the heart of Germany. Twelve locations plus targets of opportunity were attacked. Operation ARGUMENT was inaugurated.

The 303rd BG(H) had 38 aircraft airborne: 34 were dispatched and 32 attacked targets in two Group formation. Six aircraft were abortive: #42-5788 *Pluto's Avenger* (aka A.O.G. *Not in Stock*), 360BS-H (**Parrott**), engine failure. #42-5054 *Belle of San Joaquin*, 360BS-I (**Hoeg**), flak hit the No. 2 and 3 engines. #42-5341 *Vicious Virgin*, 427BS-Q (**Hullar**), fuel pump line. #42-5257 *Miss Bea Haven*, 359BS-S (**Eisenhart**), took off late. #42-31432 *Old Glory*, 360BS-N (**DeWall**), leak drained oxygen. #42-31340 *Miss Liberty*, 360BS-D (**Wilson**), No. 2 and 3 engines ran rough.

The "A" Group bombed its primary target with 500-lb bombs from 19,000 feet. One "B" Group B-17, piloted by Lt. **Snyder** (#42-31224), flew with the "A" Group. One aircraft carried 60 bundles of leaflets and no bombs. Moderate flak was encountered in the target area and meager and inaccurate flak was seen at eight other locations. Twenty-five to thirty enemy aircraft were reported, but attacks were scattered and not pressed home. Three to four rockets were observed coming up from the target area.



Crash of #42-5859 (No Name)

Some planes just could not keep out of trouble. One was #42-5859 (*No Name*). It was assigned as an early replacement to the 379th Bomb Group and crash landed at Little Staughton on return from that Group's first mission. It was then out for repairs until it joined the 303rd Bomb Group on 02 October 1943. Two months later it was back with the Air Force Service Command for repair after being badly damaged and landing

at Bungay. It returned to the 303rd on 01 February 1944. Piloted by Lt. J.R. **Morrin**, it flew its final mission this date, crash landing at Bozeat (near Paddington) and ending up across a road. Two engines were out and the other two were going out. It was badly damaged, but none of the crew were injured.

The 303rd BG(H) "B" Group dropped 65-lb. M47A1 incendiary bombs from 16,000 feet on a target of opportunity. Neither the primary target at Bernburg, Junker's Assembly Plant, nor the secondary target at Gotha, Gothaer Waggenfabrik Plant could be located. Bombs were dropped at Hettstedt, between Bernburg and Eisleben. One Group aircraft dropped on an unidentified target with B-24s of the 446BG(H) and one Group B-17 dropped with the 305BG, 40th CBW on the Erla plant at Leipzig/Heiterblick. Accurate, meager flak was reported at several locations and four aircraft sustained minor damage. Enemy air opposition was weak. Fifteen to twenty enemy aircraft were reported, but there were no attacks on the Group. Friendly fighter support was intermittent and was not regarded as good. All "B" Group aircraft returned safely to Molesworth.

Major **Cole**, who led the "A" Group, commented, "We had about five attacks from 20 enemy aircraft, but they didn't bother us. There was lots of smoke and fire on the target, but it didn't stop us from hitting it on the button." Group Bombardier Lt. Charles J. **McClain** was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for extraordinary achievement.

Four aircraft in "A" Group sustained flak battle damage, one major. Ten aircraft in "B" Group sustained flak battle damage, two major. This was the first mission of "Big Week," 20-25 February.

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

MISSION #12

Date; February 20, 1944

Target: Leipzig, Germany

Altitude: 20,000 feet

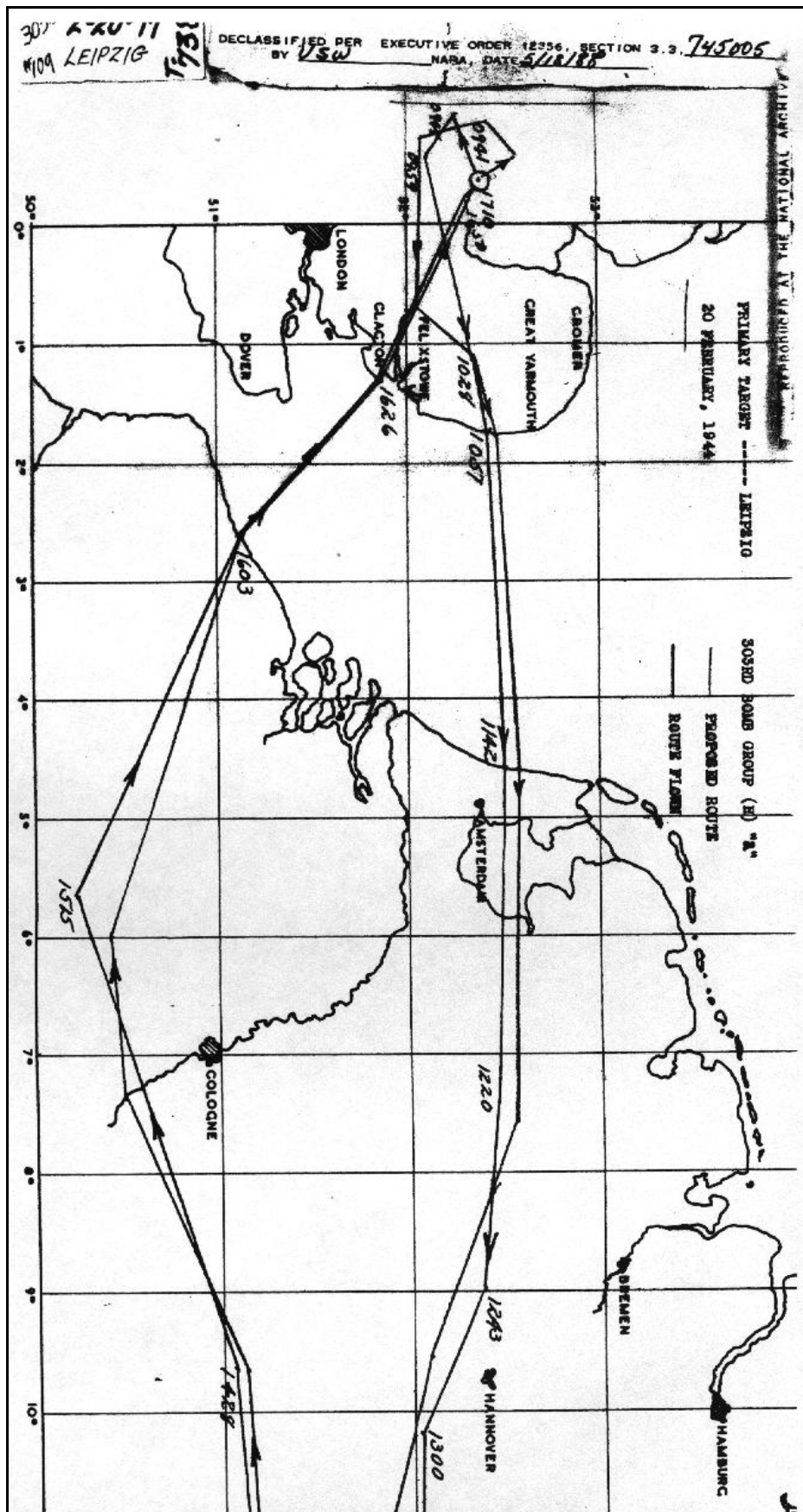
Plane: U-050 "Thunderbird"

Position: No. 5, Lead Squadron, Low Group

This was the longest trip to date. We were in the air nearly nine hours and were really tired when we finally got home. This trip could have been a very rough one, but we had excellent fighter cover - and so the few passes the Krauts made at us didn't hurt us too much.

We had one pass made at us from the tail, and a 20mm shell exploded right near the top turret. This explosion knocked the plexiglass out of one side of the top turret dome. T/Sgt. Rosier, top turret gunner, wasn't injured. We also picked up our usual number of holes in the wings. One piece of flak just grazed the edge of one of the Tokyo (wing tip) tanks in the right wing.

On our trip to the target, we had a headwind of nearly seventy-five mph. It seemed like we would never reach the target. But on our return trip, we came much faster. We still had a few Krauts sneaking up behind us, just out of range of our .50 caliber machine guns. We ran into some heavy accurate flak at the target. Luckily, we received only minor damage to the plane and no injury to the crew. This trip turned out to be an easier one than expected and that made us all happy. Our bomb load was 12 five-hundred pound high explosive bombs.



Route Map

Aircraft Formation at Assembly Point - Group A

		<u>Cole-Quinn</u> 574		
	<u>McManus</u> 405		<u>Dahleen</u> 183	
		<u>Stoulil</u> 483		
	<u>Newell</u> 386		<u>Moncur</u> 050	
	<u>Barnes</u> 241		<u>Wilson</u> 340	
<u>Harrison</u> 616	<u>McGarry</u> 200		<u>Morrin</u> 859	<u>DeWall</u> 432
	<u>Watson</u> 669		<u>Underwood</u> 471	
<u>Smith</u> 239	<u>Gorman</u> 739		<u>Coppom</u> 399	<u>Bordelon</u> 841
			<u>Glass</u> 423	
				<u>Snyder</u> 224

Six (6) aircraft aborted this mission:

Lt. Parrott in 788	Lt. Hoeg in 054
Lt. Hullar in 341	Lt. Eisenhart in 257
Lt. DeWall in 432	Lt. Wilson in 340

In post mission interrogation, Lt **Moncur** crew mission in *Thunderbird* commented that "Chaff should be broken up before being thrown out." Two other crews made similar comments. Chaff (strips of aluminum foil) was packaged in a paper binder. If the paper binder wasn't removed the chaff package could hit aircraft below and cause damage. Two crews stated that that didn't want jelly sandwiches anymore and prefer meat sandwiches. Two other crews demanded more coal or coke for their barrack stoves or and explanation of why not.

Crew Reports of Enemy Aircraft Destroyed or Damaged

Gunner Claims:	Destroyed 0, Damaged 1, Probable 2, Total 3
Confirmed Claims:	Destroyed 2, Damaged 0, Probable 0, Total 2, No Claim 1
	<u>Claim</u> <u>Confirmed</u>
S/Sgt. William Atkinson (386)	ME-109 Damaged No Claim
Sgt. Robert G. McArthur (669)	ME-109 Probable Destroyed
Sgt. Robert G. McArthur (669)	ME-109 Probable Destroyed

Aircraft Formation at Assembly Point - Group B

		<u>Hullar-Dubell</u> 341		
		<u>Sullivan</u> 158		<u>Headlee</u> 7875
			<u>G. Henderson</u> 052	
		<u>Klint</u> 795		_____
	<u>Lawlor</u> 854			<u>Litman</u> 583
<u>Parrott</u> 788		<u>Thomas</u> 973		<u>Worthley</u> 561
	<u>Goolsby</u> 306			<u>Stuermer</u> 041
<u>Bech</u> 605		_____		<u>Taylor</u> 893
				<u>Hoeg</u> 054
	_____			_____

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

<u>CREW POSITIONS</u>			
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	<u>RESULTS OF MISSION</u>	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 #42-31583 *Clover Leaf*

P	Litman, Arnold S., 1Lt
CP	Ferguson, Wendell Z., 2Lt
NAV	Merthan, Lawrence C., 2Lt
BOM	Mack, Austin J., 2Lt
ENG	Smith, George A., S/Sgt
RWG	Matthews, David R., Sgt
RO	Ebbighausen, Francis R., T/Sgt
BT	Witherwax, Leon J., Sgt
TG	Castillo, Buenaventura L., S/Sgt
LWG	Miller, Victor R., S/Sgt

B-17G #42-37893 *Bam Bam*

P	Taylor, James B., 2Lt
CP	Hall, Charles M., 2Lt
NAV	Levy, Herbert E., 2Lt
BOM	Schmid, Ralph D., 2Lt
ENG	Jones, Douglas J., 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	Loveland, William H., Sgt

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

P	Worthley, Joe R., 1Lt
CP	Moffat, James, 2Lt
NAV	Dearborn, Gayle, W., 2Lt
BOM	Mazey, Paul L., 2Lt
ENG	Rowan, Richard E., S/Sgt
LWG	Sanders, Wilber R., Sgt
RO	Odell, Enos H., Sgt
BT	Loeffel, Vincent O., Sgt
TG	Fizzani, Nickolas J., Sgt
RWG	Slagle, Jack A., Sgt

B-17G #42-31669 *Shoo Shoo Baby*

P	Watson, Jack W., 2Lt
CP	Burns, James R., 2Lt
NAV	Connors, Edward B., 2Lt
BOM	Feinman, Milton, 2Lt
ENG	Hoffman, Robert W., S/Sgt
LWG	Hickey, Thomas P., Sgt
RO	Kistulentz, Paul, Sgt
BT	Gibbs, Paul M., Sgt
TG	McArthur, Robert G., Sgt
RWG	Daniel, Herbert A., Sgt

B-17G #42-38041 *Hell's Angels II*

P	Stuermer, John W., 1Lt
CP	Reynolds, Charles E., 2Lt
NAV	Tielman, William A., 2Lt
BOM	Newman, Clyde D., 2Lt
ENG	Harris, David W., S/Sgt
LWG	Smithson, clyde E., Sgt
RO	Murray, Edward F., S/Sgt
BT	Stark, Joseph, Sgt
TG	Collins, Marvin B., Sgt
RWG	Carroll, Marvin A., Sgt

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

P	Smith, Marshall L., 1Lt
CP	Palecek, Francis J., 2Lt
NAV	Neuwirth, Edward, 2Lt
BOM	Troy, Edward J., 2Lt
ENG	Dick, Andrew, T/Sgt
LWG	Schor, John, S/Sgt
RO	Frolick, Edwin J., S/Sgt
BT	Simon, Gustof J., S/Sgt
TG	Fugate, Walter O., S/Sgt
RWG	Stauter, Herman L., Sgt

358th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists - Cont'd.

B-17G #42-31224 *Hell in the Heavens*

P	Snyder, Robert W., 2Lt
CP	Cook, John H., 2Lt
NAV	Williams, Jack N., 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

B-17G #42-31739 *Pugnacious Peter*

P	Gorman, Quentin J., 2Lt
CP	Hofmann, Raymond, 2Lt
NAV	Binder, Carroll, 2Lt
BOM	Israelson, Elmer P., 2Lt
ENG	Blakeney, William R., Jr., S/Sgt
BT	Crenshaw, Ollie G., Sgt
RO	Berman, Seymour, S/Sgt
LWG	Galloway, John B., Sgt
TG	Maxwell, Verle J., Sgt
RWG	Jensen, Bob, Sgt.

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

P	Henderson, John F., 1Lt
CP	Maxey, Frank, 2Lt
NAV	Monkres, Woodrow W., 2Lt
BOM	Wiggins, Warren S., 1Lt
ENG	Simpkins, William H., T/Sgt
RWG	Gonsalves, John D., S/Sgt
RO	Bland, Hugh N., T/Sgt
BT	Miller, Richard C., S/Sgt
TG	Millif, Mike C., Sgt
LWG	Shuhart, Norman L., Sgt
PHO	Barteau, Edward L., S/Sgt

(Scheduled to fly with the "B" Group formation (High 358th BS leader of flight #2), but flew with the 305th BG(H) and dropped bombs on their Leipzig target.)

359th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

B-17G #42-31183 *Bad Penny*

P	Dahleen, Howard D., 1Lt
CP	Rice, Charles M., 2Lt
NAV	Klingensmith, Russell S., 2Lt
BOM	Gauthier, Raymond W., 2Lt
ENG	Murphy, Carl B., Sgt
RO	Mongtomery, Robert E., S/Sgt
RWG	Smith, Harding W., S/Sgt
TT	Newman, John F., S/Sgt
BT	McCauley, Patrick N., S/Sgt
TG	Manchester, Robert E., S/Sgt

B-17G #42-38050 *Thunderbird*

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., S/Sgt
RWG	Baer, Richard K., S/Sgt
LWG	Dickman, Thomas J., S/Sgt
TG	Wike, Leonard L., S/Sgt

B-17F #41-24605 *Knock-Out Dropper*

P	Bech, G. Neil, Jr., 1Lt
CP	Hall, Franklin M., 2Lt
NAV	Cotter, Edward R., 2Lt
BOM	Corbin, Frederick A., F/O
ENG	Sanelli, Floyd L., T/Sgt
RWG	Boatwright, Edward C., S/Sgt
RO	Dennis, Julian E., T/Sgt
BT	Johnson, Lawrence G., S/Sgt
LWG	Cundiff, Robert W., Sgt
TG	Cox, Elbert S., Jr., S/Sgt

B-17G #42-31386 *Sky Duster*

P	Newell, Noel N., 1Lt
CP	Donalson, Douglas C., 2Lt
NAV	Ramsey, Elijah W., 1Lt
BOM	Hoover, William L., 2Lt
ENG	Freinwald, Earl C., T/Sgt
LWG	McGee, Richard, S/Sgt
RO	Weepie, Robert F., T/Sgt
TG	Atkinson, William E., S/Sgt
BT	Hart, Edgar B., Jr., S/Sgt
RWG	Mendel, Myron R., S/Sgt

B-17G #42-31405 *Wallaroo MK II*

P	McManus, Henry, F/O
CP	Bishop, Robert F., 2Lt
NAV	Carroll, Charles P., 2Lt
BOM	Cecot, Chester R., 2Lt
ENG	Row, Robert A., T/Sgt
RO	Colburn, Robert R., T/Sgt
RWG	Doezema, Albert, S/Sgt
LWG	Jewett, William B., S/Sgt
BT	Davies, John W., S/Sgt
TG	Cowles, Clifton G., S/Sgt

B-17F #42-5306 *(No Name)*

P	Goolsby, Billy M., 1Lt
CP	Savage, John N., 2Lt
NAV	Towberman, P.E., 2Lt
BOM	Marlatt, Ray G., 2Lt
ENG	Bumgarner, Donald, T/Sgt
RWG	Rothrock, Harry J., S/Sgt
RO	Greenhalgh, Chester W., T/Sgt
BT	Chraniuk, William, S/Sgt
TG	Strobel, William A., S/Sgt
LWG	Cueto, Frank Z., S/Sgt
PHO	Mahaffey, William D., S/Sgt

359th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists - Cont'd.

B-17G #42-31483 *Bonnie B*

P	Stoulil, Donald W., 2Lt
CP	Callahan, Edward F., 2Lt
NAV	Susskind, Harold A., 2Lt
BOM	Trawicki, George J., 2Lt
ENG	Romer, Eugene A., S/Sgt
LWG	Brown, William F., Jr., S/Sgt
RO	Owen, James C., S/Sgt
BT	Mace, LeRoy L., S/Sgt
RWG	Greene, George P., Jr., S/Sgt
TG	Turkington, Calvin G., S/Sgt

B-17G #42-31574 *Ole George*

P	Cole, Richard H., Maj
CP	Quinn, Thomas J., 1Lt
NAV	Clark, Byron F., 2Lt
BOM	McClain, Charles J., 2Lt
ENG	Kalafut, Joseph J., S/Sgt
RO	Vieira, Joseph, T/Sgt
RWG	Pelkey, Elwood R., S/Sgt
BT	Bergman, Harvey F., S/Sgt
LWG	Reynolds, James B., S/Sgt
TG	Halpin, Robert H., 2Lt
PHO	Green, William H., Jr., T/Sgt

B-17F #42-5257 *Miss Bea Haven*

P	Eisenhart, William E., 2Lt
CP	Sassone, Joseph C., 2Lt
NAV	Carey, William D., 2Lt
BOM	Robinson, John M., 1Lt
ENG	Mayhugh, John C., Jr., S/Sgt
RO	Mouser, Lloyd C., T/Sgt
BT	Franceschini, James V., Sgt
TG	Robb, Charles W., S/Sgt
RWG	Robichaud, Joseph E., S/Sgt
LWG	Hermann, Kurt J., II, T/Sgt

(Abortive)



Ole George #42-31574 (358BS) VK-G

41st CBW-A Low (359BS) - Pilot Maj R.H. Cole / CoPilot 1Lt T.J. Quinn

(Back L-R) 1Lt C.J. McClain (B), 2Lt B.F. Clark (N), 1Lt T.J. Quinn (CP), Maj R.H. Cole (P), Robert H. Halpin (TG)
 (Front) T/Sgt J.J. Kalafut (E), S/Sgt E.R. Pelkey (WG), S/Sgt J.B. Reynolds (WG),
 S/Sgt H.F. Bergman (BT), T/Sgt J. Vieira (R), T/Sgt W.H. Green (PHO - not in photo)

360th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

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

P	Thomas, Earl N., Lt
CP	Bradley, Clyde W., 2Lt
NAV	Walenta, Clarence V., Lt
BOM	Scott, Harold L., Lt
ENG	Mason, John W., S/Sgt
TG	Harvey, Roy D., Sgt
RO	Francis, Walter G., S/Sgt
RWG	Flenniken, William, Sgt
BT	Johnston, Harold A., Sgt
LWG	Books, Carl O., Sgt

B-17G #42-31399 *(No Name)*

P	Coppom, John F., Lt
CP	Stevens, Joseph E., Lt
NAV	Fleming, Samuel P., Lt
BOM	Peterson, Elmer L., S/Sgt
ENG	Brewster, John L., S/Sgt
RWG	Cole, Edgar W., Sgt
RO	Geisman, Gaylord W., S/Sgt
LWG	Bacon, Charlie M., Sgt
BT	Deffinger, John P., S/Sgt
TG	Edwards, Marvin R., Sgt

B-17G #42-31432 *Old Glory*

P	DeWall, Hershel R., 2Lt
CP	Chapman, John M., 2Lt
NAV	Becker, Sylvester J., 1Lt
BOM	Pierson, Lawrence C., S/Sgt
ENG	Serwa, Alphonse B., T/Sgt
RWG	Hosso, Harry V., S/Sgt
RO	Bonn, Charles J., Sgt
BT	Ayres, Arthur B., S/Sgt
LWG	Friedman, Szymon A., Sgt
TG	Davis, Paul J., S/Sgt
(Abortive)	

B-17G #42-31423 *Jigger Rooche*

P	Glass, Henry F., 1Lt
CP	McMahan, Eugene A. 2Lt
NAV	Pepe, Nicholas A., 2Lt
BOM	Robrock, Paul A., 2Lt
ENG	Carbillano, Dominick J., Sgt
LWG	Stellato, Francis A., S/Sgt
RO	Miller, Gordon R., T/Sgt
RWG	Patrone, Frank, S/Sgt
BT	Michael, David O., S/Sgt
TG	Roberts, James E., S/Sgt

B-17G #42-37841 *Banshee*

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., S/Sgt
RO	Fontana, Joseph L., S/Sgt
LWG	Patterson, Harry L., S/Sgt
BT	Harrington, Joseph F., S/Sgt
TG	Couch, Ted, Sgt

B-17G #42-31340 *Miss Liberty*

P	Wilson, Fred F., Lt
CP	Bowen, James W., Lt
NAV	Przybyszewski, Henry S., Lt
BOM	Fahlbusch, Joseph F., Lt
ENG	Hubley, Warren G., Sgt
RWG	Goland, Harry, T/Sgt
RO	Mirkin, Herman H., T/Sgt
LWG	Petree, Wendell R., S/Sgt
BT	Hemmings, Norman A., S/Sgt
TG	Roads, Dwight W., Jr., S/Sgt
(Abortive)	

360th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists - Cont'd.

B-17G #42-31471 *Doolittle's Destroyer*

P	Underwood, George E., 1Lt
CP	Massimiliano, Joseph, 2Lt
NAV	Parker, Duane C., 2Lt
BOM	O'Donnell, John J., 2Lt
ENG	Daniels, Mack E., T/Sgt
RWG	Rike, Thomas L., Jr., S/Sgt
RO	Phipps, Charles F., T/Sgt
BT	Dinneen, Thomas E., S/Sgt
LWG	Casselman, Glen L., S/Sgt
TG	Meyer, Gregory C., S/Sgt

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

P	Parrott, John H., 1Lt
CP	McGrath, Leo B., 2Lt
NAV	Volk, Anthony D., 2Lt
BOM	Walter, George M., 2Lt
ENG	Levin, Meyer, T/Sgt
LWG	Oxendine, Simeon, S/Sgt
RO	DeWitte, Victor W., S/Sgt
BT	Mayfield, James E., Sgt
RWG	Huddleston, D.O., S/Sgt
TG	Laible, Gilbert N., Sgt

(Abortive)

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

P	Lawlor, John C., Jr., 1Lt
CP	Clark, William A., 2Lt
NAV	Munroe, Linton S., Jr., 2Lt
BOM	Barker, Havelock W., 2Lt
ENG	Tower, Jack W., T/Sgt
RWG	Baker, Nelson, S/Sgt
RO	Esposito, Frank B., T/Sgt
LWG	Krenek, Joe W., S/Sgt
BT	Kuntashian, Warren V., S/Sgt
TG	Butler, Raymond K., S/Sgt

B-17F #42-5859 *(No Name)*

P	Morrin, John R., 1Lt
CP	Sheehan, Richard X., 2Lt
NAV	Gill, Edward J., 2Lt
BOM	Howard, Homer M., 2Lt
ENG	Beck, John A., S/Sgt
LWG	DiStasi, Robert A., Sgt
RO	Cataldi, Frederick J., T/Sgt
RWG	Kannapel, Eugene H., Sgt
BT	Houser, Donald R., Sgt
TG	Dodge, Charles G., Jr., Sgt
PHO	Lovett, William F., Sgt

427th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

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

P	Barnes, Deane L., Lt
CP	Raistrick, Albert G., Lt
NAV	Randall, Everett Z., Lt
BOM	Roode, William A.T., Lt
ENG	Sparks, Willie T., T/Sgt
BT	Chancellor, John R., S/Sgt
RO	Kuehl, Fred T., T/Sgt
TG	Underwood, Clifford B., S/Sgt
LWG	Winters, Craig W., S/Sgt
RWG	Price, John B., S/Sgt

B-17G #42-31200 *Old Crow*

P	McGarry, John J., Jr., Lt
CP	Cotham, Willie C., Lt
NAV	Halligan, Robert W., Lt
BOM	Foe, Kenneth D., Lt
ENG	Grace, Henry J., S/Sgt
BT	Plante, Royal F., S/Sgt
RO	Wilson, Elmer A., S/Sgt
TG	Serpa, Joseph E., S/Sgt
LWG	Brown, Edgar S., Sgt
RWG	Hilborn, Ervin, Sgt
PHO	Gervais, Joseph R., Sgt
(Abortive)	

B-17F #42-5052 *Mizpah*

P	Henderson, Grover C., Lt
CP	Sayers, Darwin D., Lt
NAV	Arvanites, George L., Lt
BOM	Umphress, F.E., Jr., Lt
ENG	Weed, L.A., Jr., S/Sgt
BT	Teno, James R., S/Sgt
RO	Cohen, Leo, T/Sgt
TG	LaFrenier, James E., S/Sgt
RWG	Wright, Edgar A., S/Sgt
LWG	Kotel, Tofil P., Sgt

B-17F #42-3158 *Max*

P	Sullivan, Francis X., Lt
CP	Brangwin, Kenneth R., Lt
NAV	Clark, James G., Jr., Lt
BOM	Bawol, Walter S., Lt
ENG	Frey, James L., S/Sgt
BT	Latta, Thomas B., T/Sgt
RO	Sullivan, James J., T /Sgt
TG	Stone, Vernon W., S/Sgt
RWG	Ford, Thomas P., Sgt
LWG	Keely, Eugene F., S/Sgt

B-17G #42-31616 *Spirit of Flak Wolf*

P	Harrison, Emmittes S., Jr., Lt
CP	Basteau, Stephen B., Lt
NAV	Kurnik, Walter F., Lt
BOM	Biedanski, Edmund J., Lt
ENG	Rombach, Joseph H., S/Sgt
BT	Dye, James W., S/Sgt
RO	Volmer, Lawrence O., T/Sgt
TG	Vateckas, Coster R., S/Sgt
LWG	Campbell, Kenneth H., S/Sgt
RWG	Hawk, Kenneth L., S/Sgt

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

P	Headlee, Dale C., Lt
CP	Fogerson, Joseph E., F/O
NAV	Schweitzer, Jerome D., Lt
BOM	Handley, Donald J., Lt
ENG	Klunk, James A., S/Sgt
BT	Almanzor, Berton F., Sgt
RO	Moberg, Chester H., S/Sgt
TG	Bell, Alton R., Sgt
LWG	Kyle, Clarence C.E., Sgt
RWG	Fontaine, Clifford F., Sgt

427th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists - Cont'd.

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

P	Hullar, Robert J., Lt
CP	Dubell, Richard P., Capt
NAV	Brown, Elmer L., Lt
NAV	Culpin, John J., Jr., Lt
BOM	McCormick, James E., Lt
ENG	Rice, Dale W., T/Sgt
RO	Hoyt, George F., S/Sgt
BT	Sampson, Norman A., S/Sgt
TG	Miller, Merlin D., S/Sgt
RWG	Fuller, Charles, S/Sgt
LWG	Greenwood, Ernest G., Lt
PHO	Mulberry, Harold F., Sgt
(Abortive Sortie)	

B-17F #42-5081 *Luscious Lady*

P	Melton, James H., Lt
CP	Belknap, Robert W., Lt
NAV	Frechter, Harry G., Lt
BOM	Clapp, Keith W., Lt
ENG	Rusinak, John C., S/Sgt
BT	Moore, John J., Jr., Sgt
RO	Stoberl, Donald L., S/Sgt
TG	Anderson, Ralph R., Sgt
LWG	Miller, Norman L., S/Sgt
RWG	LaPlant, Willard R., Sgt
(Scheduled to fly with the "B" Group formation (Lead 427th BS flight #2 right wingman of Lt Grover Henderson) but missed forming with the "B" Group and flew with the B-24s of the 389th BG)	

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

P	Hoeg, Kenneth A., Lt
CP	O'Hare, Phil W., Lt
NAV	Olsen, Kenneth L., Lt
BOM	Cronin, Ernest L., Lt
ENG	Relyea, Ralph R., T/Sgt
BT	Dunlap, Charles W., Jr., S/Sgt
RO	Benevento, Andrew G., S/Sgt
RWG	Hadley, Owen W., S/Sgt
LWG	Vargas, Michael A., S/Sgt
TG	McLaughlin, Jesse W., S/Sgt
(Abortive Sortie)	

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

P	Klint, Wilbur, Lt
CP	Jenkins, Elton L., 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	Smith, Nyle F., S/Sgt
LWG	McGrew, Robert H., S/Sgt
RWG	Marson, Charles H., S/Sgt

**303rd BG(H) COMMENDATIONS FOR PERFORMANCE
ON 20 FEBRUARY 1944 LEIPZIG MISSION**

COMMENDATION:

The following TWX 1ED F-975-G, 23 Feb, 44 13 is quoted for the information all personnel:

"FOLLOWING MSG RECEIVED FROM EIGHTH AIR FORCE QUOTE "RESTRICTED 8AF F1984G DESIRE FOLLOWING MESSAGE FROM LT GENERAL SPAATZ. TO BE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF ALL MEMBERS OF YOUR COMD. QUOTE SUNDAYS GREAT AIR BATTLE WAS MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TOWARD OUR ULTIMATE VICTORY. THE PERFORMANCE OF YOUR BOMBERS AND FIGHTERS WAS MAGNIFICENT. TO ALL COMBAT PERSONNEL PARTICIPATING IN THIS SPLENDID EFFORT AND TO ALL THE GROUND PERSONNEL WHOSE HELP MADE THIS GREAT FIGHT POSSIBLE, I SEND MY HEARTY CONGRATULATIONS AND MY DEEP APPRECIATION. FOR THE BRILLIANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF HIS PLAN FOR ACCOMPLISHING THIS OPERATION. I DESIRE TO COMMEND, PARTICULARLY, BRIGADIER GENERAL ORVILLE A. ANDERSON. SIGNED SPAATZ. UNQUOTE. I DESIRE TO ADD MY OWN GENUINE APPRECIATION FOR A MAGNIFICENT JOB WELL DONE.

SIGNED DOOLITTLE. UNQUOTE"

COMMENDATION:

1. The following TWX 26 Feb 44, is quoted for the information of all personnel: "RESTRICTED 1BD F-1162-G

FOLLOWING TELETYPE RECEIVED FROM EIGHTH AIR FORCE QUOTE RESTRICTED 8AF F2315A HQ USSTAF HAS FORWARDED FOLLOWING MSG FROM THE CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF FOR THE ROYAL AIR FORCE. QUOTE FOR THEIR MAGNIFICENT PERFORMANCE DURING THE PAST FEW DAYS, PLEASE CONVEY MY HEARTY CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE EIGHTH AIR FORCE. UNQUOTE. BRING THIS MSG TO THE ATTENTION OF ALL MEMBERS OF YOUR COMB. DOOLITTLE. UNQUOTE WILLIAMS END".

2. The following TWX 24 Feb 44, is quoted for the information of all personnel: "RESTRICTED 1BD F-1013-G

FOLLOWING MSG RECEIVED FROM EIGHTH AIR FORCE. QUOTE. RESTRICTED 8AF 2016G IN RECOGNITION OF THE CONTRIBUTION MADE BY RAF BOMBER COMMAND TOWARD THE SUCCESS OF OUR OPERATION OF 20 FEBRUARY. THE COMMANDING GENERAL USSTAF DISPATCHED A MESSAGE OF APPRECIATION TO AIR CHIEF MARSHAL HARRIS. IN RESPONSE THERETO HE REPLIED AS FOLLOWS: QUOTE I MUCH APPRECIATE YOUR WELCOME MESSAGE AND CONGRATULATE YOU IN TURN ON YOUR HEAVY AND MOST SUCCESSFUL ATTACK THANKS LARGELY TO OUR COMBINED EFFORTS ON THE PRECIOUS DAY AND NIGHT. THE ENEMY FIGHTER FORCE FAILED TO ACHIEVE ANY SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE OF STUTTGART WHICH WE HOPE HAS NOW BEEN HEAVILY HIT AT A SMALL COST. BY MUTUAL HELP SUCH AS THIS WE CAN IMPOSE A STRAIN ON THE GERMAN FIGHTERS WHICH WILL BREAK THEM DOWN. IF WE THUS SHARE, THE LOAD WE HAVE THE POWER TO REDUCE TO IMPOTENCE THE GREATEST OBSTACLE TO COMPLETE AND FINAL VICTORY. I SHALL BE MOST GRATEFUL IF YOU WILL COMMUNICATE YOUR MESSAGE AND THIS REPLY TO YOUR COMMAND. UNQUOTE. IT IS DESIRED THAT ALL CREW MEMBERS BE INFORMED. DOOLITTLE, UNQUOTE."

COMMENDATION

**Received from Brigadier General Williams,
on March, 1944**

1. A studied interpretation of Strike Attack Photographs taken on the attack against military installations at Leipzig, Germany, 20 February 1944, clearly indicates that your organization distinguished itself by excellent precision bombing.

2. Although a deep penetration of Germany under adverse conditions was involved, the bombing run was conducted at proper interval and an excellent sighting operation, on assigned M.P.I. was accomplished. An analysis of the bombing results indicates that fifty-nine (59) percent, an exceptionally high percentage of the bombs dropped, struck within five hundred (500) feet of the M.P.I. and that one hundred (100) percent were placed within one thousand (1000) feet of the M.P.I. These results are directly attributable to good formation flying and proper release of bombs from every aircraft in the Group.

3. I am especially pleased with the remarkable success achieved on this operation, which is due, in large measure, to the untiring devotion to duty exemplified and contributed by all combat personnel of the 303rd Bombardment Group (H). In particular the following personnel, 359th Bombardment Squadron (H); lead aircraft, group formation, are to be commended for the outstanding teamwork which they displayed in assuring the success of this attack:

-The following TWX 1 BD dated 21 Feb 44 is quoted for the information of all personnel:

"FEBRUARY 20 WILL BE MARKED AS PROBABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT DATE IN THE AIR WAR OF GERMANY. YOU AND YOUR CREWS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MOST CRUSHING DEFEAT YET ADMINISTERED TO THE GERMAN AIR FORCE. I CAN ASSURE YOU THE RESULTS OF THIS MISSION WILL BE FELT IN FUTURE OPERATIONS.

I FURTHER WISH TO COMMEND YOU AND YOUR CREWS ON THE EXCELLENT AIR DISCIPLINE DEMONSTRATED ON THIS MISSION. THIS WAS EVIDENCED BY AN ASSEMBLY UNDER DIFFICULT CONDITIONS AND BY ORDERLY, WELL FLOWN FORMATIONS ON RETURN TO ENGLAND.

MY HEARTIEST CONGRATULATIONS ON A DIFFICULT MISSION WELL DONE. I AM PROUD TO BE A PART OF THIS COMMAND. WILLIAMS

ENDORSEMENT TO COMMENDATION

Received from Colonel Kermit D. Stevens

1. The bombing attack carried out against Leipzig is a superior example of perfect precision bombing, and is a gratifying reward for long hours of diligent training and untiring devotion to duty.

2. It is indeed a pleasure to forward the above commendation for an outstanding performance. My hearty congratulations to all personnel of the 359th Bombardment Squadron (H), both ground and air, who made such an outstanding operation possible.

KERMIT D. STEVENS,
Colonel, AC, COMMANDING



FREDERICK L. ROWAN CREW - 359th BS
 (crew assigned 359BS: 17 Mar 1944 - photo: late March 1944)

(Back L-R) 2Lt Loren F. Rawlins (B), 2Lt Frederick L. Rowan (P),
 2Lt Robert L. Bates (N), 2Lt William G. Moyer (CP)
 (Front L-R) Sgt Lyman E. Ela (E), Sgt Robert W. Hanson (R), Sgt Earl D. Salmon (BT),
 Sgt John L. Arendt (WG), Sgt Theodore "Ted" G. Miller (TG), Sgt Vachel Roughley (WG)

20 FEBRUARY 1944 - NEW 303RD CREW CRASHES IN IRELAND EN ROUTE FROM THE UNITED STATES in B-17G #42-97533

The **Frederick L. Rowan** crew crash landed their new B-17G-20-VE after crossing the Atlantic Ocean in appalling weather. While en route they ran into severe electrical storms and their aircraft was hit by lightning. The radio operator had difficulty getting signals and the winds created navigational problems. Knowing that they might have a problem in reaching land the pilot ordered the crew to throw out all excess weight. The aircraft was ditched within sight of land and the crew could observe fires that had been built on shore by some Irishmen. The crew had only one life raft and five men climbed aboard and the other five hung on to the sides. Reaching land they were provided hospitality and warmth in a large summer home (Hotel) believed to have been owned by a Doctor O'Bern. The actual ditching was on a sandbar near the beach at Fintragh Strand, Killybegs, Donegal, Ireland at 1810 hours. After a pleasant recuperation the crew "escaped" from the Irish Republic and reported to the 359BS on 17 March 1944. US Army engineers blew up the B-17 that was left stranded on the sandbar. The crew went on to complete their combat tours except for **Rowan**, who was returned to the USA with a brain abscess resulting from the ditching. T/Sgt John L. **Arendt** completed his tour as gunner and then went on an extended tour as togglier and completed 42 missions.

THAT FIRST MISSION

from the Diary of Lt. Carroll 'Ted' Binder

***Hell's Angels Newsletter*, December 1990, Harold A. Susskind, editor**

[Editor's note: some liberties were taken by including the full names of all of the crewmen and other places where an addition or clarification would make the article more understandable. Binder was KIA on his 28th Mission, 3 months later on 24 May 1944.]

There was a loud knock on our door and it was opened noisily. A moment later the lights were snapped on and four sleepy combat men were blinking at a harassed looking corporal in the doorway.

We knew what his mission was -- I, at least, had been lying awake for over an hour, worrying about the day ahead as I used to do before an exam at Harvard -- and so it was no surprise to us when he read off: Lt. Hofmann; Lt. Binder; Lt. Israelson. Flying with Lt. Gorman in ship 739--Pugnacious Peter. Breakfast at 0330. Briefing at 0430. (This crew was from the 358th Bomb Squadron, and Lt. Gorman flew in the second element of the low squadron.)

We had known, too, that Jim Gorman, a veteran of fourteen missions, would be our pilot on our first expedition. It was squadron policy to break in new crews with experienced pilots, so we had already had a week with Jim in the pilot's seat and Lt. Ray Hofmann, our regular pilot, in Lt. Calvin S. Brothers' regular spot on the right hand side of the cockpit.

The room was cold as we rolled out of our warm, comfortable beds, so cold that our chattering teeth throttled any inclination to talk we might have had. But uncomfortable as it was, I could think only of the things I knew I mustn't forget. Dog tags? Yes, I must have put them on when I first got up. I could feel that cold metal against my chest. Wallet? Yes, I'd remembered to take that out of my pocket and hide it in my bureau drawer. Money? The intelligence officer had said that English pounds could perform miracles in occupied Europe. I felt in my flying pocket suit to make sure that the five pounds I had put there were still in place. Papers? Yes, my pockets had been properly purged of everything that might interest the Hun. As far as I knew, I had thought of everything.

At breakfast it was interesting to note the different expressions on men's faces as they ate. Lt. Jack W. Watson, (of Yankee Stadium fame) who had lost two engines and bailed his crew out in Holland, then brought the ship back by himself, had so completely recovered that he was wisecracking all through the meal. Lt. John F. Henderson, who had to ditch twice in the North Sea and now went on every mission knowing that he was going to die that day (he was shot down three days afterwards), looked grim even when he asked for the marmalade. Lt. J. W. Stuermer, who had completed twelve missions successfully, looked and talked as if he had nothing more ahead of him than a practice flight to Hereford and back (two days later as we were leaving on pass, we heard a loud explosion south of the field. One waist gunner was the only survivor of Stuermer's collision with another Fort). And me, Lt. Binder, who had no idea what was coming, tried to look nonchalant and laughed nervously but loudly when ever anyone said anything.

Another cold truck ride brought us to the main briefing building where crews from all the squadrons were given all the information that could be of value to them that day. Pilots and co-pilots, navigators, bombardiers, and radio operators, each had their own private briefings, with the other gunners lumped together in one large room. After collecting my set of maps, I walked into the navigator's room where the colossal map of western Europe had already been covered with the transparent material on which our mission route was marked. Up to now I had felt the usual first mission jitters, but when I saw the target I felt a strange sense of exhilaration. Berlin was still the Great Untouchable for the Eighth Air Force, but it could not have had more interest to me than Leipzig, which I knew to be one of Germany's greatest manufacturing cities and one of the least attacked of her major war centers. I had expected a short run to a French air field, and I had been afraid. But when I found that it (Leipzig) was to be one of the longest runs yet attacked, my satisfied ambition made me forget my fears and I knew that I wouldn't be battle shy on my first mission. From then on I positively glowed inside.

Navigator's briefing began with the reading off of a flight plan for all of us to copy. Every course, distance, drift and ETA from departure to return had been worked out by the Group navigator, and if metro (meteorology department) winds proved correct, there would be no work at all to be done on the mission.

Next on the platform was an Intelligence officer who had the latest information on hazards. Every flak town on our route was pointed out to us, along with those airfields which the Germans thought worth defending. At the target, we were told, there were umpty-eight guns, only umpty-six of which could bear on us if we stayed on course. As for German fighters, there were -- hundred-twenty single engines, --hundred-sixty twin engine fighters within range of our course. I wondered how intelligence could say that it was sixty-six and not sixty-seven. It seemed doubtful that the best spy network in the world could cut it that close.

A more pleasant subject was the fighter support. We were given the exact points at which we were to be met by our Thunderbirds (P-47s); Lightnings (P-38s); Mustangs (P-51s) and the English Spitfires, so that we would not be expecting the various kinds at the wrong times and consequently make the fatal and often-made mistake of calling an FW-190, a P-47 or a Me-109, a Mustang.

The weather man was next to be given an audience. In spite of the abuse to which he had been subjected for recent mistakes, he spoke confidently of the 3/10 alto-cumulus clouds to be expected at the target, of the eighty knot wind that would complicate our navigation, of the unlimited visibility in central Germany that day. Each of us was given a weather report to be made out at a specific time to aid in the weather forecasting that night.

I was beginning to think that there was nothing else we could be briefed on when another intelligence officer took over and spent ten minutes describing how to identify the target and how to orient oneself on the bomb run. We were to follow a railway all the way down the run, so it looked like a hard one to miss. The Junkers Aircraft Works factory was certainly distinctive enough to stand out.

Navigator's briefing always lasted at least half an hour longer than anyone else's so we had little time in which to dress. Electric suits, flying suits, life vests (called Mae Wests by both RAF and AAF), and parachute harnesses were on in a matter of seconds. Equipment bags were checked to see that we had the electric shoes, gloves, oxygen masks and helmets necessary for a long flight at high altitude. Then back on the trucks and out to our planes.

We were flying a brand new ship which, for want of a name was known by its call-letter, P for Peter. (It later took on the name Pugnacious Peter.) By the time I arrived on the scene, Ray Hofmann and Jim Gorman had gone over every detail with the crew chief, making sure that all four engines were in perfect shape, that radio equipment was functioning properly, and that oxygen and gas load would be adequate for the long journey ahead of us. Gunners had done their pre-flight work, putting in their guns -- the fifty-calibers they had cleaned the night before, then hand-charging them to make sure they were ready for action. Only Shorty, the ball turret operator (Sgt Ollie G. Crenshaw), was still at work on his guns. The rest had joined the officers around the coal stove in the ground crew's tent.

Noticing that forty minutes remained until engines were ready to be started, I quickly checked my own guns, laid out my equipment, and then made for the tent and broke into the circle around the fire. It was a good feeling being together for a few minutes before going to our separate, almost lonely stations in the plane. I must have sounded like a football coach giving a last-minute pep talk, but I think the others knew I meant it when I said we were lucky to get in on so important a raid, and when I pointed out that with our fighter cover we would not have too hard a time. I don't think I was the only one who left our huddle in the best of spirits.

Outside, daylight had broken and unfriendly-looking clouds were hanging low over the base at Molesworth. We climbed into our ship, and in a moment, one after another of our engines was sputtering, and then catching and throwing out a stream of flame and black smoke.

Before long our plane was on its way down the runway, gaining speed until the airspeed meter reading 125 M.P.H., Jim Gorman pulled gently back on the wheel and the ship nosed into the air. Around the field once at eight hundred feet, then out on a heading of 310 degrees and up through the clouds at four hundred feet per minute. Every man on the crew was at his station, straining his eyes into the mist to make out the forms of approaching planes. In eight minutes the first traces of blue appeared above us. In ten we had broken through and were skipping along the tops of the higher strata-cumulus clouds. And a minute later we were high enough to see a plane ahead of us turning back toward the field, where we were to assemble around the radio beacon. All we had to do was follow him, for his markings identified him as the leader of our own squadron.

Take-off had been at 0730. By 0835 the six ships of each squadron had taken their positions in neat three-plane Vs and the three squadrons had occupied their respective lead, high and low spots in the group.

"Navigator to pilot." "Go ahead." "Leaving base on course, two minutes behind schedule." "Roger." A moment later, Iz (Lt. Elmer P. Israelson) was on interphone to tell the crew that we were now at 10,000 feet and would have to put on our oxygen masks. In quick succession everyone checked in -- tail gunner, left waist, right waist, ball turret, radio and top turret. To make sure that no one succumbed to anoxia, either Iz or I ran an oxygen check every five minutes from then on, a precaution that had already saved several lives in our squadron.

Just as our squadron had joined others to form a Group, our group now took up its position with others to form the Wing, and by the time we reached the coast, the wings, too, had taken their assigned posts in the Air Division. It must have warmed the heart of much-bombed Great Yarmouth to see us in the bright sunlight, streaming eastward to avenge the wounds of the free world and to make it possible for a new and better society to rise. But if it didn't impress Great Yarmouth to see formation after formation head out across the water, it certainly impressed me.

Half-way across the North Sea I went on interphone to tell the crew it was time to test-fire guns. "For Christ sakes watch out for planes when you shoot, and those of you who can, fire into the water." Everyone checked in to let me know the message was understood, and a moment later I could hear and feel -- short bursts fired from all parts of the ship. My own guns barked satisfyingly.

It was now time to put on flak suits if we were to be prepared for the enemy coastal batteries, now only twenty miles off. It was time, also, to be looking out for our Thunderbolt escort aircraft, and for enemy fighters from fields that dotted the Dutch coast.

Iz and I helped each other wiggle into the awkward flak suits. They hadn't seemed heavy on the ground, but even at 19,000 feet, a moderate enough altitude, the eighteen pounds of protective armor had become a formidable burden. When I had finally managed to clip mine on properly, I surveyed myself a little ruefully. Holy smoke! The Luftwaffe would be the least of my worries. Flak too for that matter. My real problem would be just to move amid the tangle of wires and tubes that were necessary to keep me going -- the thick, awkward oxygen hose, the wire to my throat mike, the wire to the earphones sewed into my helmet, the plug attachment for my heated suit. Yes, it would be a battle to get through today even if I never saw a German plane or a flak burst.

"Flak at twelve o'clock low," I called nervously on interphone. An equally nervous "Roger" came from the cockpit. It didn't look like much to worry about -- not much of it and too low to hurt us. So I forgot my initial fear and pressed my face against a window to get a good look -- that thrilling first look -- at enemy territory. Just off our right wing was Haarlem, where our pilgrims first experimented in living abroad and where they made their history-making decision to sail for the new world. On the coast near Haarlem was IJmuiden, where a year before a dozen Marauders (B-26s) had attacked and a dozen had been shot down. And off in the distance at two o'clock, bordered by rivers, canals, and the Zuider Zee, now nearly four years the capital of a nation in chains, was Amsterdam. Knowing that the crew always like to know where we were, I got busy on interphone with the latest bulletin. "Navigator to crew. We're on course just north of Amsterdam. That's the

Zuider Zee ahead of us. "Let's all check in." Everyone was really on the ball now. I don't think it took three seconds for the six gunners to answer. It was a good sign.

I was just beginning to wonder where our fighter escort was when I heard Jim Gorman's husky voice on interphone. "Contrails at nine o'clock high." And sure enough, there they were. Too far out for the planes themselves to be visible -- I could make out three groups of vapor trails, thin wisps of white against the deep-blue February sky. The wisps seemed to be extending themselves parallel to our course.

I had hardly focused my eyes on the fighters to the north of us when our right waist sang out: "Contrails at three o'clock high." I could see these, too, and they were close enough for me to make out four wisps in each flight of planes, a little black speck at the head of each wisp.

Let's keep our eye on these babies, " called our battle-wise pilot. At Oschersleben the Germans had flown along parallel until our Fort gunners, thinking they were friendly, began to relax. Then they had come in closer and closer, finally committing themselves and attacking when it was too late to stop them. The January 11th communique had reported: "From these operations, sixty of our bombers are missing."

So long as the sky remained cloudless and visibility unlimited, I knew that I had no need to worry about navigation, so I put my maps aside and strained my eyes out into the distance, looking for a speck that might prove a fighter. Occasionally my glance would wander to the ground, or rather to the water of the Zuider Zee. It was now possible to make out a convoy of small ships making their way up the stream shore.

The country of the Zuider Zee was flat, honeycombed with canals, and covered with light snow not quite deep enough to reflect the bright sunlight. There were brilliant flashes now and then, though. They came from the guns at Zwolle.

We had left the Zuider Zee fifteen minutes behind us when I called the crew to report we were now in Germany, four minutes behind schedule. I had worked out a hasty ETA for the initial point and target, now told the crew how much longer we would be carrying our bomb load.

"In another hour and forty minutes, we'll be getting the lead out of our pants," I said, and for a reason I cannot now comprehend, I felt quite witty and proud of myself.

Moving across to the other side of the nose, my eye fell on my log and I noticed that I hadn't had an entry in fifteen minutes. Pacing off roughly forty-five miles with my glove-covered fingers, I looked for a landmark that would pin-point me quickly. There was a good one about fifty miles from my last check point, a big forest with a railway along its eastern edge. I looked out my left window, and there it was off our wing. We were going faster than I had calculated.

"We're now over the Teutoburger forest," I called on interphone. "A Hun named Herman kicked the ---- out of the Romans here."

"What is this, a Cook's Tour?" moaned the bombardier. "O.K., I'll shut up. Just wanted to let everyone know we're in fighter alley now. Let's all stay right on our toes because for the next two hours we'll be in range of the Berlin fighter defenses. The chips are down, so let's give 'em hell."

A minute later the bombardier spotted two fighters at eleven o'clock low. By the time I had picked them up, they had attacked the group ahead of us, peeling off and diving just before they reached the lead plane. They were a mile below us, well out of range, before we reached the scene of battle. Iz fired a couple of hopeful bursts their way, but I confined my activity to entering two silver Focke-Wulfs in my log. We were now crossing the Weser river, so I took advantage of the lull to work out a good ground speed and a new ETA to the target. Just a — secretary, I thought to myself.

Then an exciting thing happened. Three Mustangs that had been circling high above us dived on the planes on our left. The odds were even numerically, but the Jerries high-tailed it for home, two of them dodging away from their faster pursuers. The third exploded with a bright yellow flash, leaving a cloud of black oil smoke where he had been. So thorough had been the explosion that not a fragment of the plane was visible and I knew that little pieces of Hans would be floating

down river to Bremen for days. It was two minutes after twelve when I entered Hans' demise in my log. Fifty minutes to the target.

Fighters were all around us now, most of them attacking other formations but still near enough to shoot at us if they veered toward us for ten seconds. How I cursed the flak suit that weighed me down as I followed planes from side to side.

The group ahead of us really seemed to be getting it now. One Fort dropped out of formation with a wing on fire. Seven chutes came out of it before a blinding explosion finished off the plane and crew. Another "Seventeen" which must have had a hit in the gas tank exploded while still in formation. Fighters, too, were going down; a few from Fortress guns but mainly from combat with other fighters. Our Mustangs seemed to have the upper hand, pursuing FWs and Messerschmitts right down to the ground and then climbing up for more action. There weren't enough of them to keep all the vultures off us, but they could break up any attempt at a mass attack. That was what really mattered. So long as the Jerries couldn't sit out of range and fire rockets into us, or queue up and come in simultaneously from several directions, we were fairly safe (especially when they were concentrating on someone else). It was strange how detached from the whole battle I felt. I experienced no more emotion when I saw a Fort with ten men in it blow up than I used to experience when such a scene was enacted in the movies. I just couldn't feel I was part of the drama going on in the arena around me.

I had seen Magdeburg as we passed it – I'd even remembered that it was the laws of Magdeburg that German settlers carried to eastern Europe centuries ago and retain to this day. I'd seen Berlin off in the distance to our left, and wondered when we would be going there. (It would be exactly sixteen days later.) But it was only when we had turned south toward Torgau that I realized how quickly the time had passed.

Hastily I called the bombardier and pilot to tell them we were now ready to turn on the "initial point," then I made sure that the waist gunners were ready to throw out the chaff because I'd been told by old combat men that it did wonderful things to the Jerries below, hampering the aiming their flak guns.

The lead group, a little ahead and to the right of us, was turning. A moment later we were swinging sharp right to keep pace and regain our position. There were no enemy fighters to harass us now, so it was easier for the pilots to concentrate on getting into bombing position. A lot depended on concentration of the formation during the bombing pattern.

From the minute we turned at Torgau it was possible to see Leipzig off in the distance. Smoke had risen from the city to well over 15,000 feet, a black cloud foreboding future evil as well as recording previous disaster. Fresh streams of smoke poured from every part of south Leipzig, good evidence that the fires started in the night's R.A.F. raid were still blazing. I found myself hoping that we could do as well.

Bomb doors on the lead ship were swinging open now, followed moments later by the doors of all the other planes.

"Five minutes to the target," I called on interphone. "Let's start throwing that chaff out now." Waist-gunners came back with quick "Rogers."

I had hardly spoken when I realized that it was well I hadn't put off the signal any longer. Not far ahead of us, at the bend of the railway line we were following on our bomb run, I could see distinctly the outlines of our target, streamlined looking factories in a group just north of the city. And directly above the target hung a seemingly impenetrable wall of flak, an almost solid cloud of little black bursts. My flak suit didn't feel so heavy after all.

Everyone was tense now. The lead ship, which had been doing mild evasive action, now settled down to a straight and level course, making only one perceptible correction as the bombardier picked up the target in his bombsight. We were sitting ducks for the flak gunners and we knew it. I don't believe I'll ever live a day that seems as long as those last two minutes before bombs away at Leipzig. The bulk of the flak had lowered, forming a kind of floor of black puffs below us, but our chaff had not had its effect on several batteries, which continued to pump

quantities of lead into our formation. "Easiest thing is not to look at it," I thought to myself, so with unaccustomed zeal I proceeded to record heading, altitude, and air speed. I didn't envy Iz, who had to sit up front with his eyes glued to the lead ship lest he miss the moment of bombs away. But then my curiosity got the better of me, and I leaned over Izzy's shoulder to get a good look at the target. Yes, it certainly looked as if we were heading right for it. But of course it was impossible to tell at this altitude.

Just then came the long-awaited moment. A swarm of bombs streamed out of the lead ship, and almost before they had cleared the plane, Iz had flicked his toggle switch and our own bombs were on the way. His relieved voice called triumphantly "Bombs away" on interphone, and a minute later Berman (S/Sgt Seymour Berman, Radio Operator) called to report that the bomb doors were closing.

Meanwhile the group leader, who had almost run into four flak bursts as the bombs were released, had swerved off to the right and led us through evasive actions so violent that it was all Jim could do to keep us near our squadron. In less than three minutes we had drawn out of range of the last 88 millimeter guns and were all heaving a sigh of relief, so heartfelt that even Pugnacious Peter must have sighed with us. It was only a matter of seconds before we had tightened up our formation and turned our course for home. The temptation to feel that the danger was over was almost irresistible even though I had a flight plan in front of me that told me we still had two hours and a half over enemy territory.

For half an hour after the target we plowed south and west toward the Rhine river without encountering a single fighter, friend or foe. Then, just as the undercast was beginning to break a little, Blakeney (S/Sgt William R. Blakeney Engineer and Top-turret operator) spotted four, then eight black specks in the distance. We watched them carefully as they approached, climbing to get well above us. According to my gun-sight they were just over a mile away when they flipped over on their sides to give us a good look at them. They could hardly have been mistaken. They were our own lovely P-38s.

It was only now that I dared relax enough to check in the crew on oxygen, something I hadn't done since the target. All seemed to be well. Then I noticed two things almost simultaneously. One was that I had to screw up my face in a funny position in order to breathe – had, in fact, been doing it every since Magdeburg. The other was that I felt terribly tired. Checking my oxygen mask, I found that all I had been breathing for the past hour had been the thin air at 19,000 feet – my facial contortions had not let me breathe through my mask, but around it. The mask itself had frozen solid and not a pinhole was left for air to come through.

The realization that I should now be in a state of collapse made me twice as weak as I had been before I'd thought about it (like people who faint an hour after donating blood). I suddenly found that my flak suit was more than I could carry, so I sat down. Knowing that the air at that altitude was not enough to keep me going, I made vain attempts to break the ice out of the sponge pores in my mask and to suck air through them. And knowing that I must now be in a state of collapse, I looked at my fingernails and found them blue.

By now I was just sitting still, breathing hard but thinking little. But I finally got the bright idea of tapping Iz on the shoulder and showing him my predicament. As on every other occasion in the air Iz knew what to do. We had an extra mask, and he tried that. It turned out to be a high pressure type mask, did no good with our low pressure oxygen system. So Iz reached for the outlet hose, held it to my mouth, and turned on the emergency handle. The pure oxygen that poured into me was so effective that within a minute I was transformed from a useless grinning idiot into a navigator reasonably able to keep up with his job – as able, at least, as he had been at the beginning of the mission.

It had taken much "wind" to describe all this, but it was only a matter of six minutes from the time we saw the first P-38s to the time I was back on my feet again. The rest of the mission I was as good as ever, gulping pure oxygen for a minute or two and then breathing thin air until I felt too weak to work.

It had seemed like much more than that, but according to my watch it was just an hour and half after bombs away that we had another brief visit from fighters. We were crossing the Rhine, just north of Koblenz when we saw half a dozen ME-109s queue up just out of range. A flight of P-38 Lightnings saw them too, and they were on them in a matter of seconds. One Jerry dived for the ground, two 38s on his tail. We saw him explode less than a mile below us. Two others also dived, then flipped over as the German pilots bailed out. The planes spun to the ground, and were out of sight before they crashed. Meanwhile, the remaining three ripped through our formation, under fire of both our Fortress and Lightning guns, and while they may have been hit, they showed no sign of it as they disappeared to the south.

The rest of the trip seemed terribly dull after what had gone before. Just inside Belgium we were met by swarms of Thunderbolts, and from then on we were always in sight of at least a dozen of them. Occasionally, too, we caught a glimpse of Spitfires which, three miles below us, were keeping a constant patrol around German fighter fields.

A layer of strata-cumulus clouds lay on the ground, so we got only an occasional look at Belgium. Only at the coast did we get a good view of the ground, and what we saw was a fitting climax to an exciting day. Below, and a little to the left of us, were the beaches of Dunkirk, spotlighted by the afternoon sun shining down between the clouds. I looked carefully and I could almost visualize armies of half-dead men hiding behind the pathetic little sand dunes as they waited for the next boat –or the next bomb. Occasionally I could see the flash of a flak gun, but it only served to emphasize the contrast between the hammer blows Germany was striking at our side in 1940 and the puny little pot shot she could take at us now.

There's no question that the German flak guns were ineffective that afternoon, but nevertheless I felt mightily relieved when, Dunkirk safely behind us, I was able to call the crew and announce that flak suits could now safely be discarded.

"Hallelujah," said the tail gunner. "Amen," said the left waist. And the others echoed similar sentiments. I myself felt as I used to feel after putting down my canoe at the end of a long portage, so light my feet hardly seemed to touch the ground.

Across the channel to Clacton, our point of entry back in England, we kept a constant lookout for planes, but we knew that the fighting was over. The day when Hun intruders could wait for tired Fort crews over England had long since passed. A Spitfire or a Mustang was now safer than a Focke Wulf over Brussels, let alone London. So we joked on interphone all the way across the water, stopping only occasionally to call off Thunderbolts or Spitfires. By the time we reached England we had dropped to 7,000 feet, so oxygen too was no longer necessary. The mission was all over but the shouting and we munched sandwiches the rest of the way home.

We were back over the base at 1715, on the ground ten minutes later. We piled out of our planes like a football team leaving the field after a great victory – very tired but very happy. A moment later a truck was whisking us away to interrogation in the main briefing room, where our yen to tell the world about our mission was satisfied by an intelligence officer with a lot of questions to ask. Sipping coffee or tomato juice, or gulping the shot of Scotch issued "for medicinal purposes only," we chattered like high school girls, telling all we knew and more, about flak, fighters, enemy installations, and bomb damage. Shorty, (Sgt Ollie G. Crenshaw) who had never spoken an intelligible word from his ball turret, now had some astounding information to reveal. He had seen the bombs hit "right on target," no small feat when the target was covered by clouds when our bombs hit; he had seen rocket-firing JU-88s, unobserved by anyone else; and he had counted a hundred enemy planes, while others had been so blind to see only twenty or thirty.

Interrogation finished, we piled back on our truck for the rough ride back to the plane. It was only now that we got a chance to look over Pugnacious Peter. With extreme pride we counted those nine flak holes! Yes, we'd really been in combat. And with what astonishment we surveyed the fifty-caliber hole in our horizontal stabilizer! But it was when we found out what had made the hole that we really got excited.

It appeared that when we were experiencing fighter attacks in the Magdeburg area, a Focke-Wulf fighter had come in on us from about four-thirty low—out of range for the tail gunner but a perfect shot for the ball turret and a fairly good one for the right waist. However, the ball turret guns were not operating and when Sgt. Jensen found that he was the only one firing, he kept “peppering” until the attacker peeled off a hundred yards out, and in tracking, Jensen failed to notice that our tail surface was dangerously close to his line of fire.

What disgusted us was not Jensen's understandable over-enthusiasm, but Shorty's unforgivable failure. We knew that, barring cold conditions not even approaching that day, guns would operate if properly cared for, and we were furious to find that Shorty had never succeeded in firing a single round from either gun, even more furious to see that, far from apologizing, he was now strutting like a peacock, telling the ground crew what it was like to be fighting the war. Under normal conditions, at least one of us would have taken a crack at Shorty's too-active jaw, but we were so tired that we let it go at a warning that a similar incident had better not take place again. Shorty said something about our always picking on him and sulked off to remove his guns.

In ten minutes everyone had taken his equipment out of the aircraft, piled it on our truck and climbed in himself. After a brief stop to deposit our guns at the armament shop, we took another and final truck jaunt to the equipment room. It didn't take us long to change clothes. We were in too much of a hurry to get to our first meal in fifteen hours (unless two ounces of chocolate and a jelly sandwich can be called a meal.)

It was only a matter of minutes before we were in the chow line pleading with the K.P.s to give us good pieces of chicken. But regular Sunday dinner had been held an hour before and all that was left for combat men was necks and backs. We made all kinds of profane remarks about paddle feet, but they did no good. So we had to be satisfied with a good dinner of vegetables.

It was 2015 when we finished our meal, and for pilots and co-pilots that was the end of the day. But Iz and I, like all other gunners, still had guns to clean. We found the armament shop too crowded to do them immediately but within a half an hour our guns were stripped and we were busy with brush and gasoline. By 2200 hours we were back in our room undressing.

I was more exhausted than I had ever been in my life when I finally climbed into bed. But I was happier than I had ever been, too. I knew that at last I was part of a war I had wanted to fight every since the International Brigade first stopped the Fascists at Madrid, Spain. And, almost equally important to me, I had a feeling that I was not a coward.