

303rd BG (H) Combat Mission No. 154

15 May 1944

Target: V-Weapon Site at Mimoyocques, France

Crews Dispatched: 20

Length of Mission: 4 hours, 10 minutes

Bomb Load: 6 x 1000 lb M-44 G.P. bombs

Bombing Altitude: 24,800 ft

Ammo Fired: 230 rounds

Twenty-two 303rd BG(H) B-17s took off to bomb a "No-ball" V-weapon site at Mimoyocques, France. The two spares returned as ordered. No other aircraft returned early.

Nineteen aircraft dropped 114 1,000-lb. G.P. M44 bombs from 24,800 feet. Bombing was by the "Gee-H" technique and results were unobserved. "Gee" was the code name for devices installed in select aircraft. This equipment allowed precise position fixing through signals beamed from two Gee-H responder stations in England. Gee-H transmitters and scopes were installed in the three 41 CBW B-17 Groups in May. Navigators using this equipment coordinated their fixes with their bombardier and could, theoretically, have their locations pinpointed by the ground stations within a few feet. While never as accurate as visual bombing, the Gee-H was superior to PFF against small targets. Gee-H range was 170 miles at 20,000 feet and 200 miles at 25,000 feet. V-weapon sites were almost the sole targets up to the time of the June invasion of France.

One aircraft returned with its six 1,000-lb. bombs due to a bomb release malfunction. The target was obscured by 7/10 low clouds.

Meager and inaccurate flak was encountered just before "bombs away." Chaff may have had some effect. No enemy aircraft were seen. Three B-17s suffered flak damage and one was damaged from friendly fire, evidently from crews test firing their guns. All aircraft returned to Molesworth. There were no casualties.

Captain George T. **Mackin** said, "There was no excitement at all today. We saw two bursts of flak off in the distance, but aside from that, the place seemed dead."

INTO COMBAT AT LAST

from the book "25 Milk Runs" by Richard R. "Dick" Johnson

At last we were ready to get into combat flying after many weeks of training. The crew was really ready to get started.

After we got settled in, and after hearing "You'll be sorry" a few times, we did the latest schooling. We learned that we had a forty percent chance of finishing our tour of duty without being show down or wounded, and if shot down there was a fifty percent chance of survival from that, giving us an eighty percent chance of surviving the war. We didn't relish the thought of being part of the twenty percent who would be killed.

On May 5th, after the day's mission had left, we did two short flights to familiarize us with the area. The first flight was for thirty minutes and the second was for an hour and forty-five minutes. The next day we did another flight for an hour and a half. We didn't fly on May 7th, and on the 8th we did an hour of Link Trainer. This was about my zillionth hour in that hated black box. Actually it was about my hundredth hour in it. On May 9th we flew another hour and a half for area familiarization.

On May 10th we did a flight to simulate a mission, getting into formation and flying to The Wash (practice range). We dropped several bombs on separate bomb runs to the satisfaction of the instructor. This flight was four and a half hours in duration.

We stood down for the next three days, during which on May twelve, the Eighth Air Force made its first raid against German oil production. On the fourteenth of May we flew a practice flight of two hours and twenty-five minutes.

Tomorrow, May 15th, 1944, we were to start earning our keep, and to learn why we had been trained so hard all these months. Tomorrow was to be our first mission, and I was to fly co-pilot for Lt. Phillip W. O'Hare in A/C number 42-97391. He was almost finished with his tour and was to train me in all aspects of combat flying. My pilot, Lt. Beiser and the rest of our crew was to fly with an experienced pilot, Steven Bastean, who would finish his tour in mid-June. All crews were thus flown on their first mission.

Little did I know at that time, that on my last eight missions I would be flying seven or eight new crews on their first mission, using their pilot as my co-pilot just as Lt. Bastean and Lt. O'Hare were doing today. O'Hare died in 1985, but Bastean is living in Treasure Island, Florida.

The time was May 15, 1944, and this was the count down to D-Day which we knew was coming very shortly. Most readers of WWII history are aware of the V-1 "Buzz Bomb," and the V-2 sub-orbital rocket. What most people don't realize is that in 1944 Hitler was busy building a V-3. This was the so-called "London Gun" being installed in western France, near the coast at Minoyecques, which is near Calais. It was to consist of two batteries of twenty-five guns each. The barrels of these guns were each 416 feet long. Installed along a steep incline, they would be capable of firing a 55 pound shell into the city of London. If the Allies had allowed this weapon to be completed, it would have eclipsed the damage done by the V-1 and V-2. The range and direction would have been altered by the explosive propellant so that the entire city of London could be targeted.

Unfortunately for the Germans, the earth removal scars caught the attention of Allied reconnaissance planes, and the site was periodically bombed. My first combat mission on May 15, 1944 was to finish off that German project.

I had been assigned to the 303rd Bomb Group, known as the "Hell's Angels." All new crews are taken on their first mission by an experienced co-pilot,-turned instructor. This policy of flying experienced pilots with new crews was necessary in order to teach the "green" crews how to get into formation. After this first mission, the new crew was reunited for subsequent missions.

Our bombardier had the job of arming the six 1,000 pound bombs after we were in the air. Each bomb had an eight inch vane, or propeller on the nose fuse, which was prevented from turning by a cotter pin through a hole. Each cotter pin had a bomb tag with warnings. As the pin was removed, a wire attached to the bomb bay was inserted through the cotter pin hole. When the bombs were dropped, they slid off the arming wire which allowed the propeller vane to turn in the wind. After falling about five hundred feet, the propeller wound itself off the fuse which was then armed, and this would explode the bomb upon impact.

After he removed the bomb tags from the nose fuse, the bombardier walked to the front of the airplane and gave each officer a tag to keep as a souvenir. Our ball-turret gunner did the same with the tail fuses for the rest of the crew. I kept my mission diary on mine. On this first mission each B-17 carried seventeen hundred gallons of gas, and six 1,000 pound bombs. The bombs were fused at one tenth second at the nose, and one fortieth second at the tail. One fortieth second would allow the bomb to penetrate a roof before exploding, and the one tenth second fuse would assure that the bomb would explode before deep penetration if the first fuse failed.

This day's mission started with a 4:00 A.M. wake-up call. Breakfast and briefing followed quickly, and we were in our plane with the engines running by 6:00 A.M. The lead plane took off at 6:15 and all twenty B-17s were over the field and in formation at twenty thousand feet at 7:40. Our squadron, the 427th, was assigned the high position, behind and to the right of the lead squadron, the 358th. The 359th squadron was low-left. The 360th squadron did not fly in this formation. Each squadron furnished seven B-17s to the group formation, except the lead, which had six. Our squadron also furnished two spares that were to take up any position that might be left empty by an abort. They were to return to base before reaching enemy territory, and if there was an abort later, the other B-17s moved into the empty slots, leaving the tail position empty. On this day, there were no aborts, and the spares returned to base. Lt. O'Hare's position in the squadron was number seven, -"Tail End Charlie."

"Tail End Charlie" is one of the most vulnerable positions in the formation. "Purple Heart Corner" is the next plane on the outside of the formation. There was an undercast at the target so we had to bomb by radar. The lead plane borrowed from the 306th Bomb Group was equipped with this system, and all following planes dropped at first appearance of bombs from that plane.

Just after "Bombs away" from about five thousand feet, we encountered some flak, however, it was light and inaccurate, the nearest burst being at least a quarter mile away. The German gunners may not have had their radar working, and so were shooting at the noise of our engines. None of our aircraft sustained damage and all planes returned to base and landed before 10:30 A.M. Total flight time was just over 4 hours. We were over enemy territory barely seven minutes.

My first combat mission was truly a "Milk Run," so called because it was no more dangerous than delivering milk.

Aircraft Formation at Assembly Point

Mackin-Taylor
9787

Way 085 Maxey 002

Hall
7787

Howell 622 Determan 298

Goolsby 272 Harrison 096

Thompson 050 Van Weelden 206 Allen 200 Basteau 027

Marsh 213 Estes 311

Roth 177 Assenheimer 483 Mitchell 099 Oranges 569

Tulloss 386 O'Hare 391

Benham
Spare - 006
Knight-Baker
Spare - 893

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

<p>CREW POSITIONS</p> <p>CMP - Command Pilot P - Pilot CP - Co-Pilot NAV - Navigator ANV - Ass't. Navigator MNV - Mickey Navigator ENG - Engineer BOM - Bombardier RO - Radio Operator</p>	<p>TOG - Toggler BT - Ball Turret Operator TT - Top Turret Operator TG - Tail Gunner NG - Nose Gunner RG - Radio Gunner WG - Waist Gunner LWG - Left Waist Gunner RWG - Right Waist Gunner GUN - Gunner</p>	<p>VI - Voice Interpreter OBS - Observer PAS - Passenger PHO - Photographer</p> <p>RESULTS OF MISSION</p> <p>KIA - Killed in action WIA - Wounded in action MIA - Missing in action POW - Prisoner of war</p>	<p>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</p>
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358th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

B-17G #42-97787 (No Name)

P	Hall, Charles M., 1Lt
CP	Davis, William C., 2Lt
NAV	Garrett, Robert M., 2Lt
BOM	Alderson, Raleigh L., 2Lt
ENG	Johnson, Walter K., S/Sgt
RWG	Roseland, Ralph A., Sgt
RO	Sandler, David L., S/Sgt
TG	Hiland, Robert L., Sgt
BT	Clarke, Kenneth, Sgt
LWG	Rogers, Joseph S., Sgt

B-17G #42-97085 (No Name)

P	Way, Henry G., 2Lt
CP	Raese, Warren G., 2Lt
NAV	Sigurdson, Elden A., 2Lt
BOM	Bell, Julian P., 2Lt
ENG	Lynam, Stanley A., S/Sgt
TT	Paolino, Vincent C., Sgt
RO	May, James G., S/Sgt
BT	LaFleur, Paul L., Sgt
TG	Parks, Robert E., Sgt
RWG	Manning, Robert L., Sgt

B-17G #44-6006 (No Name)

P	Benham, Philip O., 2Lt
CP	Lojewski, Telesphor, 2Lt
NAV	Hamm, Williard A., 2Lt
BOM	McCamy, James A., 2Lt
ENG	Van Drunen, Cornelius, S/Sgt
RWG	Garcia, Robert L., Sgt
RO	Downs, Reginald, S/Sgt
BT	Hill, Reginald L., Sgt
TG	Dellinger, Lenoir E., Sgt
LWG	Bonenberger, Robert E., Sgt

(Spare - Returned)

B-17G #42-107002 Mairzy Doats

P	Maxey, Frank, 2Lt
CP	Neely, Glenn H., 2Lt
NAV	Shamban, Marcus F., 2Lt
BOM	Spatt, Arnold I., 2Lt
ENG	Gonsalves, John D., S/Sgt
LWG	Johnston, Wendell B., Sgt
RO	Rabun, Clifford G., Sgt
BT	Swain, Norman F., Pvt
TG	Angelo, George L., S/Sgt
RWG	Hodgins, Robert A., Sgt

B-17G #42-97298 The Floose

P	Determan, Alvin G., 2Lt
CP	Pfahler, Ervin J., 2Lt
NAV	Palmer, Jackson, Jr., 2Lt
BOM	Ledbetter, Lamar E., 2Lt
ENG	Hendrickson, Milton C., S/Sgt
RWG	Barteau, Edward L., S/Sgt
RO	Asman, Robert H., S/Sgt
TG	Cope, Wayne E., Sgt
LWG	Carroccia, Albert R., Sgt
BT	Vasquez, Manuel, Sgt

B-17G #42-97622 Paper Dollie

P	Howell, Ernest F., 2Lt
CP	Miller, Campbell, 2Lt
NAV	Williams, Grover C., 2Lt
BOM	Campbell, William D., 2Lt
ENG	West, Jerome H., Sgt
RWG	Stafford, Sheldon A., Sgt
RO	Lesser, Edward R., Sgt
BT	Vodicka, Leonard R., Sgt
TG	McGarland, Kendell H., S/Sgt
LWG	Stone, Robert L., Jr., Sgt

B-17G #42-37893 Bam Bam

P	Knight, R.A., 2Lt
CP	Baker, John M., 2Lt
NAV	Claeys, Ronald, 2Lt
BOM	Belles, Frank G., 2Lt
ENG	Kishbaugh, Warren L., S/Sgt
TT	Reichman, Fred P., Sgt
RO	Judd, Fred H., S/Sgt
BT	Bertasso, Joseph S., Sgt
TG	Peters, Archie D., Sgt
LWG	Parker, Stanton A., Sgt

(Spare - Returned)

B-17G #42-39787 Wanton Woman

P	Mackin, George T., Capt
CP	Taylor, James B., Capt
NAV	Iverson, Ingvald M., Capt
NAV	Mikulich, Louis F., 1Lt
BOM	Wilson, Claud, Jr., 1Lt
ENG	Jones, Douglas L., T/Sgt
RWG	Splawn, Elzie B., Sgt
RO	Dulin, woodroe G., T/Sgt
BT	Czeczotka, Theodore R., S/Sgt
TG	Stender, Francis H., T/Sgt
LWG	Cox, James B., S/Sgt

359th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

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

P Tulloss, John W., 2Lt
 CP London, Walter H., Jr., 2Lt
 NAV Hollingsworth, William, 2Lt
 BOM Yelsky, Fred B., 1Lt
 ENG Robinson, Charles R., T/Sgt
 RO Montgomery, Robert E., T/Sgt
 BT Jenkins, Crawford W., S/Sgt
 TG O'Connor, Julian J., Sgt
 RWG Richard, John, Sgt.
 LWG Kolenda, Frank M., Sgt

B-17G #42-31177 *Lonesome Packet*

P Roth, Ernest L., 2Lt
 CP Gibbons, Donald L., 2Lt
 NAV Beys, George J., 2Lt
 BOM O'Neill, Owen H., 2Lt
 ENG Dexter, Fred E., S/Sgt
 RO Buckingham, Earl W., Sgt
 BT Streicher, Ralph E., Sgt
 TG Gardner, Henry A., Sgt
 LWG Titsworth, William E., S/Sgt
 RWG Kurzawski, John W., Sgt

B-17G #42-38050 *Thunderbird*

P Thompson, Lawrence C., Capt
 CP Johnson, Richard O., 2Lt
 NAV Young, Warren I., F/O
 BOM Champ, William J., 2Lt
 ENG Hammons, Charles G., S/Sgt
 RO Hamann, Delos, H., S/Sgt
 BT Stephan, Kenneth R., Sgt
 TG Held, Armin C., Sgt
 LWG Rohaly, Andy, S/Sgt
 RWG Christensen, Lars, Sgt

B-17G #42-97272 *Duchess' Daughter*

P Goolsby, Billy M., 1Lt
 CP Paton, Wallace L., 2Lt
 NAV Counts, George H., F/O
 BOM Ulbricht, Walter E., 1Lt
 ENG Bumgarner, Donald, T/Sgt
 RO Greenhalgh, Chester, T/Sgt
 BT Chraniuk, William, S/Sgt
 TG Strobel, Walter A., S/Sgt
 RWG Cueto, Frank Z., S/Sgt
 LWG Rothrock, Harry J., S/Sgt

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

P Assenheimer, Edwin H., 1Lt
 CP Cunningham, Robert L., 2Lt
 NAV Corbin, Frederick O., 2Lt
 TOG Meier, Wayne G., Sgt
 ENG Mayhugh, John C., S/Sgt
 RO Swanson, Clifford E., T/Sgt
 RWG Rettinhouse, Robert A., S/Sgt
 TG Robichaud, Joseph E., S/Sgt
 BT Gilcrease, Roland L., S/Sgt
 LWG Savela, Wilho A., S/Sgt

B-17G #42-107206 *Old Black Magic*

P Van Weelden, Douglas C., 2Lt
 CP Sysel, William A., 2Lt
 NAV Saumsiegle, Robert W., 2Lt
 BOM Vincent, Ronald J., F/O
 ENG Olander, Phillip A., S/Sgt
 RO Ledogar, Ralph E., S/Sgt
 BT Raterman, Urban L., Sgt
 TG Barry, John K., Sgt
 LWG Forsythe, William K., S/Sgt
 RWG Welch, John R., Sgt
 (Abortive)

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

P Marsh, Richard K., 1Lt
 CP Daum, Maurice C., 2Lt
 NAV Forve, Frank F., 2Lt
 TOG Merrow, Robert K., S/Sgt
 E Murphy, Carl B., S/Sgt
 RO Minks, George A., S/Sgt
 BT Hart, Edgar B., S/Sgt
 TG Moessner, Raymond J., S/Sgt
 RWG Rogers, Warren G., Sgt
 LWG Dean, Raymond N., Sgt

427th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

B-17G #42-97311 *Shoo Shoo Baby*

P Estes, Shirley W., 1Lt
 CP Byers, Ballard T., 2Lt
 NAV Shemwell, John T., 1Lt
 BOM Minter, Thomas W., 2Lt
 TT Price, Jack J., S/Sgt
 BT Wiley, Nathan H., S/Sgt
 RO Wagner, Wayne, S/Sgt
 TG Ross, Samuel C., S/Sgt
 RWG Silrum, Orvis K., Sgt
 LWG Ford, Thomas P., Sgt

B-17G #42-107099 *Old 99*

P Mitchell, Fred E., 2Lt
 CP Ferguson, Gilbert L., 2Lt
 NAV Shupe, John W., 2Lt
 BOM Isaac, Kenneth W., 2Lt
 TT Cavagnol, Joseph J., S/Sgt
 BT Landa, Hyman J., Sgt
 RO Parr, Joe A., S/Sgt
 RWG LaPlante, Willard R., S/Sgt
 LWG Byers, William R., Sgt
 TG Carpenter, Robert R., Sgt

B-17G #42-97391 (No Name)

P O'Hare, Phil W., 1Lt
 CP Johnson, Richard R., 2Lt
 NAV Cronin, Ernest L., 1Lt
 BOM Biedanski, Edmund J., 2Lt
 TT Souder, Lee F., Jr., T/Sgt
 RO DuBray, Ernest D., S/Sgt
 BT McMahan, Bonnar P., S/Sgt
 RWG Doyle, Edward J., S/Sgt
 TG Sullens, Tom C., S/Sgt
 LWG Sutton, Marvin A., Sgt

B-17G #42-102569 *Miss Lace*

P Oranges, Chester N., 2Lt
 CP Lawrenson, George C., 2Lt
 NAV Whitman, John H., 2Lt
 BOM Harper, Kenneth L., 2Lt
 TT Eisenhower, James A., Sgt
 BT Gentry, Richard A., Sgt
 RO Sorese, Leonard V., S/Sgt
 TG Franklin, Robert E., Sgt
 RWG Korpi, Walfred J., S/Sgt
 LWG Ward, Homer J., Jr., Sgt

B-17G #42-97096 (No Name)

P Harrison, Emmittes S., Jr., 1Lt
 CP McCall, Robert S., 2Lt
 NAV Skarsten, Albert B., 1Lt
 BOM Kennedy, William J., 2Lt
 ENG Rombach, Joseph H., T/Sgt
 BT Dye, James W., S/Sgt
 RO Volmer, Lawrence O., T/Sgt
 TG Brown, Edgar S., S/Sgt
 LWG Campbell, Kenneth H., S/Sgt
 RWG Hawk, Kenneth L., S/Sgt

B-17G #42-32027 *Betty Jane*

P Bastean, Stephen B., 2Lt
 CP Beiser, Theodore R., 2Lt
 NAV Gepner, Isadore, 2Lt
 BOM Cooper, Edward G., 2Lt
 TT Buchanan, Lonnie J., T/Sgt
 BT Latta, Charles W., Sgt
 RO Gorchesky, Benny J., S/Sgt
 TG Brackey, Carroll H., Sgt
 LWG Haines, James W., Sgt
 RWG Glass, David, Sgt

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

P Allen, Charles R., 1Lt
 CP Parham, James S., 2Lt
 NAV Thurmon, John A., 2Lt
 BOM Bourgeault, Louis H., 2Lt
 TT Weed, Lowrey A., Jr., T/Sgt
 BT Knedler, Lee F., Sgt
 RO Reed, John H., S/Sgt
 TG Stansbury, Edward P., Sgt
 LWG Foerster, LeRoy H.M., Sgt
 RWG Bohenstiel, Robert L., Sgt