

303rd BG (H) Combat Mission No. 162

28 May 1944

Target: Eifeltor marshalling yards at Cologne, Germany

Crews Dispatched: 19

Length of Mission: 5 hours, 33 minutes

Bomb Load: 2,000 lb Glide bombs

Bombing Altitude: 19,000 ft

General Robert F. **Travis** led this first 8th Air Force mission dropping XM-108 Glide Bombs. A previous Glide Bomb "Grapefruit" mission was attempted on 26 April 1944, but was recalled because of bad weather. Each aircraft carried two 2,000-lb. bombs containing wooden wings with a twelve-foot span.



Gen Robert F. Travis

The intent of Glide Bombs, tested and first flown by 41st CBW crews, was to avoid the ever-increasing heavy flak. After initial, inconclusive test results and less flak being encountered, Glide Bomb use was discontinued. When flak again became a critical problem, new tests were made, and this mission was planned and flown.

There were no clouds over the target and visibility was unlimited. No enemy aircraft were seen. Meager and inaccurate flak was encountered at the target and at Snidhoven. Scattered fire was observed elsewhere. Friendly fighter support was excellent.

The 41st CBW dropped 109 of the 2,000-lb. Glide Bombs. The 303rd BG(H) dropped 38 of them. Bombing started at 1308 hours from 19,500 feet at an indicated airspeed of 140 mph. The aircraft were put in a 1,000 to 1,500-foot-per-minute dive for 90 to 120 seconds, losing 1,900 feet and building up airspeed to 191 mph at the time the Glide Bombs were released. The dive airspeed goal was 200 mph. After bombing, a left turn was made and the Combat Wing reassembled at 19,000 feet. No aircraft returned early and all returned safely to Molesworth with no casualties.

Glide Bomb accuracy proved inadequate for even large targets. Some bombs did glide into the target, but most exploded miles away. A number of the bombs failed to glide. The employment of Glide Bombs received mixed reviews. Some leaders described the mission as successful, but others deemed it ineffective. It was recommended that the use of the Glide Bomb be discontinued and no new Glide Bombs be ordered.



GLIDE BOMBS—WHAT ARE THEY?

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

Today, May 28, 1944, the Eighth Air Force would lose 32 Bombers and 14 fighters to the German defenders, including one from our group. The weather over Europe was predicted to be mostly clear, and targets would include fuel and transportation systems. Our crew was assigned a special mission this day, and would not participate in the regular effort to destroy Nazi war materials.

When our crew arrived at the 303rd Bomb Group in early May, a strange sight greeted us. The barracks for the 427th squadron to which we were assigned, were on the airdrome, and all along the armament roads, were stacked row upon row of some strange flying machines. They consisted of wings and a double-boom tail mounted on a two thousand pound bomb. This strange device was supposed to be mounted in pairs under the belly of a B-17, and dropped on the enemy from a distance, thus sparing the air crews from the intense flak that was encountered over many targets. The idea had merit, but there were many problems.

The visibility at the target had to be fifty miles which is rare in Europe, and this caused a couple of other attempts to be scrubbed in the past. The bombs depended on inertial guidance for directional control after release. This consisted of a series of gyroscopes driven by a battery.

This was a special project that Eighth Air Force commanding general, Hap Arnold, had adopted, so it had to be tried. One couldn't guess how many millions of dollars this project cost. This day the predicted fifty mile visibility arrived over Europe, and the mission was on. We were part of the 41st Combat Wing, along with two other groups. In the night, the armorers attached two of these bombs to the belly of each bomber, using special bomb shackles. The bombs were side by side, with their wing tips only four inches apart. They had a twelve foot wing span and were almost twelve feet long.

Our group, as well as the other two groups in the 41st Combat Wing were expected to put two battle formations in the air that day. The 303rd put 19 planes in the glide bomb formation, which left the base an hour earlier than the second element going to oil targets. Our take off-time was about 09:30, so that we could be out of the way of the next element.

We crossed the French coast two miles south of Nieuport at 19,500 feet and proceeded to Cologne. We were to bomb by groups and our squadron, the 427th went in first. Starting at 140 miles per hour, we started a shallow dive until we reached 208 mph. At this point, we leveled off for a few seconds and released the bombs nearly 18 miles from the target while flying at 195 MPH. Unfortunately, our bombs, as well as those of the other two groups following, mostly spun in and exploded in fields 15 miles from the target.

Of the 59 B-17s of the 41st Combat wing, 113 glide bombs were released at the target, the Eifeltor Marshalling yard in Cologne. Not one bomb came within a mile of that target, however 42 hits were scattered throughout Cologne, killing 82 people, and injuring over 1500 others. Many of the bombs fell into sections of the city already bombed out by night missions of the RAF. Unfortunately for the Germans, the bombs arrived before their air raid sirens had sounded.

Upon our return to base, one engine on our "Betty Jane" had to be replaced due to flak damage on the way to the target.

Later that evening on German radio, which we always listened to, William Joyce, or "Lord Haw-Haw," as we called him, reported that Cologne had been bombed by allied bombers from an altitude of 40,000 feet. We had quite a laugh about that, since the B-17 wasn't designed to fly quite that high. Three nights later they had figured what really happened, and Lord Haw-Haw said that any airman shot down during such a mission, would be executed the same day. He said that it was a terrorist raid, which, indeed it turned out to be, but this was not our intent. This was not the reason that the attempt was never repeated, however. The failure of the system was evident from the results.

The eleven second delay in the fuse meant that this two thousand pound bomb would possibly skip through town for eleven seconds before exploding. The glide ratio of these bombs was an amazing five to one, which meant that if we dropped them from four miles high, they would travel twenty miles before striking the ground.

An interesting aside on this mission concerns the batteries that ran the gyroscopes in the guidance system of these "Grapefruit" bombs. The stacks of bombs sat on the ground for so long that many of the batteries failed to hold charge, and so the Wing ordered a hundred new ones from the States. The Exide battery company said that they no longer made this type of battery, and that they would have to set up a complete assembly line, and therefore could produce no less than several thousand batteries. After all the hassle back and forth, the batteries arrived at Molesworth after the mission was over. After it was decided to not fly any more glide bomb missions, the mechanics of the 427th Squadron used these batteries in an innovative lighting system for the barracks. Also, the wooden crates that the bombs were shipped in were of gun-stock grade black walnut lumber. The ground personnel, led by Sgt. Nathan Smith of our intelligence section, made a magnificent bar at the site 5 joint Enlisted/Officer's recreation room from this lumber. The bar was over 2 feet wide and 24 feet long.

Several references to this glide bomb mission have placed it on the wrong day. The date was May 28, 1944, not the 25th as Martin Caidin reports in his book, "The Forts." This same mistake appears in Polmer and Allen's encyclopedia, "World War II, America at War, 1941-1945." Despite this small error, both of these books are a must for World War II buffs. The other mission of May 28th, to oil and transportation targets throughout Germany, was met by fierce resistance. Upwards of 300 German fighters flew up to intercept the bombers, and in some cases our own fighters were out of range. The results of those raids were generally excellent, but in the course of the day, 32 of our bombers and 14 fighters were lost. From our group, Lt Determan and his crew was shot down. This day's operation is detailed in an upcoming book by Dutch author Ivo M. DeJong. The title of this book is "May 28, 1944: A day to be remembered."

GRAPEFRUIT TO COLOGNE

Unusual Experiences of Gordon E. Bale

This was the day we delivered "Grapefruit" to Cologne, Germany. This was classified as a high secret mission. I remember it well.

We were called to briefing about 0800. This was later than the usual briefing. They were usually around 0300 or 0400. We were going to carry "Grapefruit" to Cologne. No, not the round yellow juicy ones, but large 2,000 pounders with wings attached. A single wing about 20 feet long was attached to the top of the bomb. Two 4" by 4" beams ran along the side of the bomb for about 4 feet to the rear, ending in a tail assembly. Control rods ran from the tail to a gyroscope control unit placed a bit forwards.

It looked like a large glider. That is what it was. Two of these glider bombs were placed in the wing racks on each B-17. One bomb was slung under each wing.

Three 8th Air Force Bomb Groups were participating in this experimental "grapefruit" mission. Weather was predicted to be perfect. We had been turned back several times after take off because of a slight change in the wind. We did not want a recall today. We really wanted to get rid of these "grapefruit."

We were three Bomb Groups, about 25 planes in a group. With only about 75 forts in the air, instead of the usual three to four hundred, the sky seemed empty. At the North Sea our fighter escort met us. It would have been difficult for any bandits to have challenged us this day. Fighter escort was below us and above us. Everywhere you would look, there was fighter escort, P-47s, P-51s and P-38s. It was apparent that General Doolittle didn't want the Germans to get a good look at our "gifts." We crossed France struggling for altitude.

Our target was Cologne, Germany, the heart of the "Ruhr"— the industrial center of the enemy. About 20 miles from the city was a road running north and south. This was to be our dropping point. Spotting the road in a distance, we started a shallow dive. Air speed built up quickly. The old lady began vibrating. Noise increased as George eased her up to the speed required for releasing the "grapefruit." My ball turret was whistling. Hank, our bombardier called bombs away. Away they went.

They dropped about 300 to 400 feet straight down, straightened up and began gliding in a zig-zag course. Some of the bombs must have gotten their gyros dumped. Some went into tight nose down spins. Some went into flat spins and some did acrobatics. It was quite a show, a show reserved for some seventy-five ball turret gunners. We made a turn to the right and headed back to England.

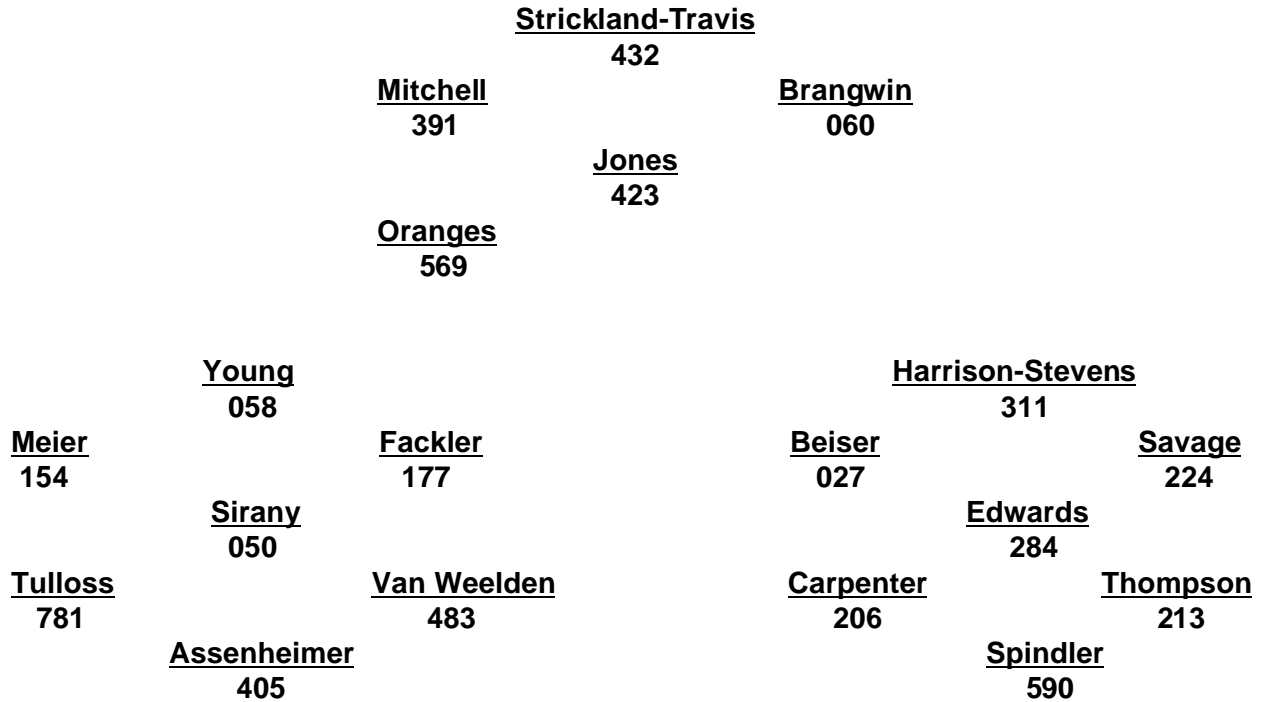
Bursts of flak were beginning to appear over Cologne. I do not know why. They had seen us coming and had seen us turn back. They could not have thought that those few bursts of flak had scared us off. They kept putting it up. The recon P-38s were swooping in, taking all kinds of pictures of the "grapefruit." It was great, get within 20 miles of your target, drop your bombs, turn around and head for home. Not a burst of flak within miles.

From the ball turret, I kept my eyes on the city of Cologne. We had been headed homeward for almost five minutes when I saw the first explosion. A giant burst of flame and smoke leaped skyward from one section of the city. A geyser of water leaped from the river running through the city. It must have been a half mile high to have been seen from such a distance at such clarity. We probably killed a few fish with that one.

Explosions were seen in many sections of the city. I counted eighteen explosions before the city passed from view. Later, hearsay was that approximately 35 bombs (of the 150 carried) had glided into the city. One of the "grapefruit" had clipped the great Cologne Cathedral. We heard that the Cathedral damage wasn't too extensive.

The "grapefruit" were put away and not used again, to my knowledge. They were not accurate enough for these "pin-point" experts of the Eighth Air Force. I was a new, and most unusual experience for me.

Aircraft Formation at Assembly Point



KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

<p>CREW POSITIONS CMP - Command Pilot P - Pilot CP - Co-Pilot NAV - Navigator ANV - Ass't. Navigator MNV - Mickey Navigator ENG - Engineer BOM - Bombardier RO - Radio Operator</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 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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359th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

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

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
WG	Forsythe, William K., S/Sgt

B-17G #42-38050 *Thunderbird*

P	Sirany, George R., 2Lt
CP	Batton, James H., 2Lt
NAV	Ehrke, Warren D., 2Lt
BOM	Prussman, Henry G., 2Lt
ENG	Stephenson, Thomas O., S/Sgt
RO	Van Horn, Everett E., S/Sgt
BT	Bale, Gordon E., Sgt
TG	McPherson, Frank V., S/Sgt
WG	Matthews, Fred T., S/Sgt

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

P	Carpenter, Arthur G., 2Lt
CP	Whitaker, Joseph C., 2Lt
NAV	Reid, George E., F/O
BOM	Day, Dean K., 2Lt
ENG	Pordham, Jack F., S/Sgt
RO	Bortolotti, Barney J., S/Sgt
BT	Dean, Raymond N., S/Sgt
TG	Nichols, Dalbee, Sgt
WG	Vanlandingham, John C., Sgt

B-17G #42-38154 (*No Name*)

P	Meier, Russell W., 1Lt
CP	Reed, John W., 2Lt
NAV	Prince, Alan M., 2Lt
TOG	Kolling, Arthur J., S/Sgt
ENG	Danford, Emmett J., S/Sgt
RO	Connors, Joseph Q., S/Sgt
RWG	Titsworth, William E., S/Sgt
BT	Richard, Vernon, Sgt
TG	Butler, Ashley A., Sgt

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

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
WG	Lemley, Jack A., Sgt

B-17G #42-97781 *The '8' Ball MK III*

P	Tulloss, John W., 1Lt
CP	London, Walter H., Jr., 2Lt
NAV	Hollingsworth, William, 2Lt
BOM	Grove, Terril M., 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
WG	Richard, John, Sgt.

359th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists - Cont'd.

B-17G #42-97058 *Scorchy II*

P	Young, Elmer W., Capt
CP	Cunningham, Robert L., 2Lt
NAV	Counts, George H., F/O
BOM	Ulbricht, Walter E., 1Lt
ENG	Steele, John C., T/Sgt
RO	Dulick, Steve, T/Sgt
BT	Cueto, Frank Z., S/Sgt
TG	Stapleton, Bill, S/Sgt
LWG	Withrow, John W., S/Sgt
RWG	Rohaly, Andy, S/Sgt

B-17G #42-97284 *Ain't Misbehavin*

P	Edwards, Kenneth C., 1Lt
CP	Peterson, Edwin V., 2Lt
NAV	Bates, Robert L., 2Lt
BOM	Rawlings, Loren F., 2Lt
ENG	Johnson, Kenneth V., S/Sgt
RO	Kennedy, Herbert W., S/Sgt
BT	Guzman, Abel G., S/Sgt
TG	Kowalk, Francis H., S/Sgt
WG	Taylor, Burt W., S/Sgt
PHO	Gamble, George E., S/Sgt

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

P	Assenheimer, Edwin H., 1Lt
CP	Arnold, William J., 2Lt
NAV	Trawicki, George J., 1Lt
TOG	Meier, Wayne G., Sgt
ENG	Mayhugh, John C., T/Sgt
RO	Rose, William A., Pvt
WG	Murphy, Carl B., S/Sgt
TG	Haman, Ray T., S/Sgt
BT	Hirn, Edward M., Pvt

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

P	Fackler, David E., 1Lt
CP	Paton, Wallace L., 2Lt
NAV	Hogan, Paul G., 2Lt
BOM	Nance, George H., 2Lt
ENG	Schlottman, Jerome D., S/Sgt
RO	McLaughlin, William C., S/Sgt
BT	McIntyre, Harold W., S/Sgt
TG	Pohlman, Wilbert F., S/Sgt
LWG	Brewer, Ray, S/Sgt

427th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

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	Eisenhauer, 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 #42-32027 *Betty Jane*

P	Beiser, Theodore R., 2Lt
CP	Johnson, Richard 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 #42-31224 *Hell in the Heavens*

P	Savage, Gilbert T., 2Lt
CP	Schwolow, John C., 2Lt
NAV	Bawol, Walter S., 1Lt
BOM	Parker, Joseph B., 2Lt
LWG	Kelly, J.D., S/Sgt
BT	Holt, Richard R., Sgt
RO	Paul, Samuel D., S/Sgt
TG	Stover, Edward J., Sgt
RWG	Layton, Wilber A., Sgt
TT	Jefferson, Arthur G., S/Sgt

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

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

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

P	Brangwin, Kenneth R., 2Lt
CP	Parham, James S., 2Lt
NAV	Thurmon, John A., 2Lt
BOM	Bourgeault, Louis H., 2Lt
TT	Neuner, Francis X., T/Sgt
BT	Knedler, Lee F., Sgt
RO	Reed, John H., S/Sgt
TG	Stansbury, Edward P., Sgt
RWG	Foerster, LeRoy H.M., S/Sgt
LWG	Bohenstiel, Robert L., Sgt

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

P	Jones, Wilbur H., 1Lt
CP	Wallace, Walstein W., 2Lt
NAV	Coffey, John B., 2Lt
BOM	Kennedy, William J., 1Lt
TT	Duerr, William P., S/Sgt
BT	Calnon, Frederick N., S/Sgt
RO	Kosher, Albert J., Sgt
TG	Ross, Samuel C., S/Sgt
RWG	Thompson, Frederick A., Sgt
LWG	Dimowitz, Morris, Sgt
PHO	Lynnck, E.C.

427th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists - Cont'd.

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

P Harrison, Emmittes S., Jr., Capt
CP Stevens, Kermit D., Col
NAV Shupe, John W., 2Lt
BOM Wallen, George A., 1Lt
TT 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 #42-97590 *Virgin Mary (360BS)*

P Spindler, Benjamin L., 1Lt
CP Doughty, Gordon R., 2Lt
NAV Caffrey, James J., F/O
BOM Proud, Rexford I., 2Lt
ENG Pfeffer, William W., S/Sgt
RO Uhl, Willard H., S/Sgt
BT McKinnon, Neil W., S/Sgt
TG Petrie, Joe D., S/Sgt
WG Fambry, Lewis F., S/Sgt

B-17G #42-102432 *Tiny Angel*

P Strickland, Alexander C., Jr., Maj
CP Travis, Robert F., BGen
NAV Skarsten, Albert B., 1Lt
NAV Steely, Hobert H., Capt
BOM Orvis, George T., Jr., Capt
TT Sparks, Willie T., T/Sgt
BT Chancellor, John R., S/Sgt
RO Kuehl, Fred T., T/Sgt
TG McCall, Robert S., 2Lt
RWG Underwood, Clifford B., S/Sgt
LWG Winters, Craig W., S/Sgt