

303rd BG (H) Combat Mission No. 272

11 November 1944

Target: Buer Synthetic Oil Plant at Gelsenkirchen, Germany

Crews Dispatched: 39

Crews Lost: Lt. Stephan, 7 KIA

Length of Mission: 6 hours, 5 minutes

Bomb Load: 18 x 250 lb H.E. M57 bombs

Bombing Altitudes: 27,600, 26,800 & 28,900

Ammo Fired: 8,260 rounds

The war was not over for the 303rd BG(H) airmen on this Armistice Day. The primary target was the synthetic oil plant at Gelsenkirchen, the secondary target was the Heime marshalling yards and the last resort was the Guterslch Airfield – all in Germany. One B-17 returned early with mechanical difficulties, #42-102945 *Sweet Pea*, (Lt. **McKinley**).

All bombs were dropped on the primary target by GEE-H. In the target area were 9/10 to 10/10 low clouds with no middle or high clouds. There were dense, persistent contrails above 25,000 feet. Thirty-seven aircraft dropped 638 250-lb. H.E. M57 bombs from 27,600, 26,800 and 28,900 feet. Results were unobserved, but believed to be good. GEE-H signals in the low Squadron were weak.

Anti-aircraft gunfire in the target area was moderate and inaccurate with a few accurate bursts on the high Squadron. One high Squadron B-17 had minor damage. No enemy fighters appeared and 52 P-51s provided very good support.



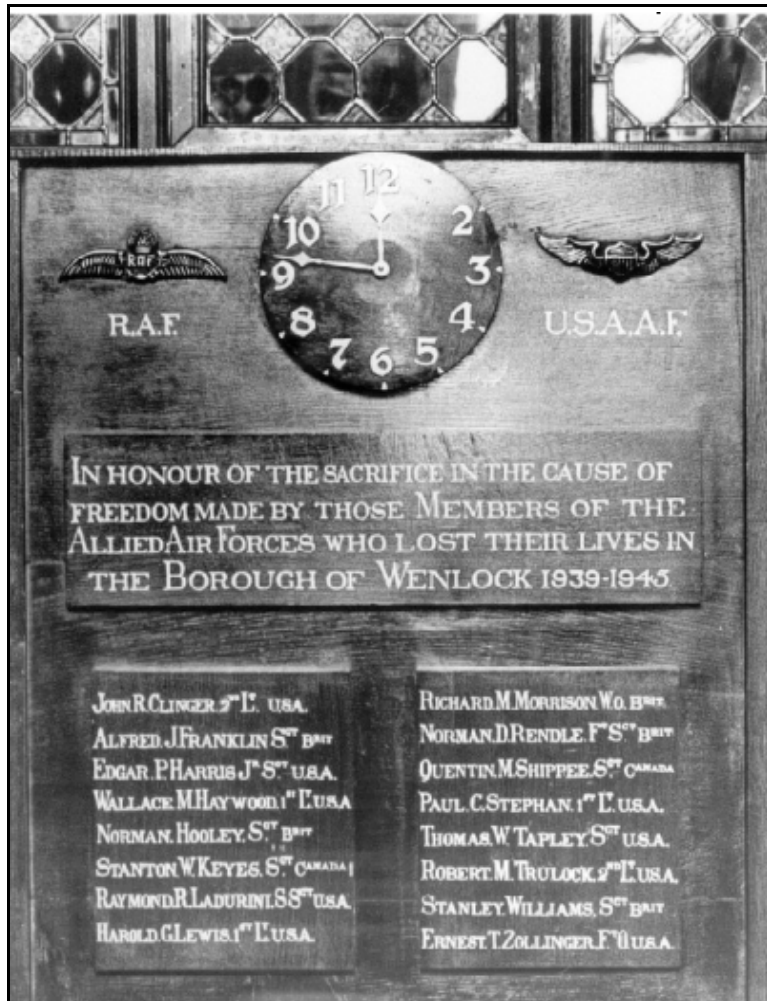
PAUL C. STEPHAN CREW - 360th BS

(crew assigned 360BS: 02 Oct 1944)

(Back L-R) Sgt Dwight A. Phillips, Jr. (E), 2Lt Paul C. Stephan (P), 2Lt John R. Clingler (CP), F/O Harold G. Lewis (N) - (Front) T/Sgt Raymond R. Ladurini (R), S/Sgt Edgar P. Harris, Jr. (WG), Sgt Thomas W. Tapley (TOG), S/Sgt Robert J. Sorenson (TG), T/Sgt Stanton W. Keyes (BT)

Fortress #44-8422 *Duffy's Tavern*, 358BS, piloted by 2Lt. Paul C. **Stephan**, 360BS, blew up after take-off and crashed near Atchon over Much Wenlock. The aircraft flew on instruments after take-off, expecting to break clear at about 18,000 feet. The pilot told Sgt. Robert J. **Sorensen**, the waist gunner, to pull the bomb safety pins while still over England at about 14,000 feet altitude. When the pulling of the pins was confirmed, the order to put on oxygen masks was heard. About 10 minutes later, at 17,000 feet, flame was seen coming from the No. 1 engine. The B-17 flipped over, went into a spin and exploded. Sgt. **Sorensen** was blown head-first out of the aircraft before he could reach and attach his parachute. Then the unbelievable happened — while falling without a 'chute, a parachute

pack fell into his arms out of the falling debris. He was able to snap the chest pack onto his harness, but nothing happened when he pulled the rip cord. He clawed at the pack, finally getting it partially opened. He landed in a large tree, badly injured. Sgt. Dwight A. **Phillips**, Jr., the engineer, managed to parachute free of the Fortress and landed with a broken back. He reported that the crash was caused by the B-17 getting caught in the slipstream of another climbing B-17 that flipped his aircraft and sent it into a spin. The Fortress crashed on a road between the villages of Much Wenlock and Bourton, with wreckage strewn over a four-mile area. Lt. **Stephan**, 2Lt John R. **Clinger**, F/O Harold G. **Lewis**, Sgt. Thomas W. **Tapley**, T/Sgt. Raymond R. **Ladurini**, T/Sgt. Stanton W. **Keyes** and S/Sgt. Edgar P. **Harris**, Jr. were all killed in the crash.



Memorial Plaque and Clock at Guild Hall, Borough of Much Wenlock, Shropshire, England

On 11 November 1948, the town of Much Wenlock established a memorial clock mounted on an old oak panel and affixed it to the wall of the town guildhall. It bears RAF and USAAF wings with the inscription: "In honor of the sacrifices in the cause of freedom made by those members of the Allied Air forces who lost their lives in the Borough of Wenlock. 1939-1945." Below this inscription are the names of the seven Sorensen crew members who died, as well as three other American airmen and six British airmen who lost their lives in that area.

Aircraft Formation at Assembly Point - Group A

<u>Bergeron-Fielder</u> 691 - PFF				
	<u>Holm</u> 554		<u>Twomey</u> 574	
	<u>Goering</u> 191		<u>Grisham</u> 590	
<u>Jameson</u> 972		<u>Woodson</u> 006		<u>White</u> 875
	<u>McKinley</u> 945		<u>Gmernicki</u> 427	<u>Snider</u> 238
<u>Heckendorf</u> 689		<u>Freeman</u> 298		



(No Name) #42-97691 PFF (427BS) GN-Y
41st CBW-C Lead (358BS) - Pilot Capt W.H. Bergeron / CoPilot 1Lt G.H. Fielder
 (Back L-R) 1Lt Jackson H. Hunt (N), 1Lt Michael L. Zarelli (GH-Nav),
 Capt Willard H. Bergeron (P), 1Lt Warren B. Morris (B),
 1Lt George H. Fielder (CP), 1Lt Earl R. Beyeler (PFF-N)
 (Front L-R) T/Sgt James E. Cavagnaro (E), T/Sgt Clarence K. Wilson (R),
 S/Sgt William D. Foster (WG), 1Lt Earl B. Douglass (TG-Obs)

Aircraft Formation at Assembly Point - Group B

<u>O'Beirne-Stouse</u>				
038 - PFF				
	<u>Juns-St. Julien</u>		<u>Duffield</u>	
	546		532	
	<u>McCutchan</u>		<u>Gravrock</u>	
	318		055	
<u>Geiger</u>		<u>Arwood</u>		<u>Fink</u>
197		860		517
	<u>Kallet</u>		<u>Hatch</u>	
	451		523	
<u>Hardin</u>		<u>Middlemas</u>	_____	_____
861		516		
	_____		_____	

Aircraft Formation at Assembly Point - Group C

<u>Sirany-Bach</u>				
256 - PFF				
		<u>Frazier</u>		<u>Mickle</u>
		885		484
	<u>Carney</u>			<u>Lorentz</u>
	258			289
<u>Gates</u>		<u>Green</u>		<u>Bixby</u>
608		609		411
	<u>Lutz</u>			<u>Embrey</u>
	309			099
<u>McDavid</u>		<u>Proffitt</u>	_____	_____
206		878		
	_____		_____	

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

<u>CREW POSITIONS</u> CMP - Command Pilot P - Pilot CP - Co-Pilot NAV - Navigator ANV - Ass't. Navigator MNV - Mickey Navigator ENG - Engineer BOM - Bombardier RO - Radio Operator	TOG - Toggler BT - Ball Turret Operator TT - Top Turret Operator TG - Tail Gunner WG - Waist Gunner LWG - Left Waist Gunner RWG - Right Waist Gunner GUN - Gunner VI - Voice Interpreter OBS - Observer	PAS - Passenger PHO - Photographer Y - Y-Operators (YRO,YO) RCM - Radio Cntr Measures SJ - Spot Jammer <u>RESULTS OF MISSION</u> KIA - Killed in action WIA - Wounded in action MIA - Missing in action	POW - Prisoner of war DOW - Died of wounds EVD - Evaded the enemy REP - Repatriated RES - Rescued ESC - Escaped BO - Bailed out DCH - Ditched CR-L - Crashed on land CR-S - Crashed at sea
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358th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

B-17G #42-39875 *Buzz Blonde* (427BS)

P White, Franklin F., 1Lt
 CP Hopkins, Harry E., 2Lt
 NAV Ross, Robert M., 2Lt
 TOG Gibson, James, Sgt
 ENG Adams, William J., T/Sgt
 WG Hein, Monroe C., S/Sgt
 RO Vesely, Henry L., S/Sgt
 BT Gilman, Frederick S., S/Sgt
 TG Campbell, James R., S/Sgt

B-17G #43-38689 (No Name) (427BS)

P Heckendorf, Marvin H., 2Lt
 CP Erickson, Robert L., 2Lt
 NAV Carnahan, Kenneth R., 2Lt
 TOG Weaver, Robert J., Sgt
 ENG Gallman, Hubert W., Sgt
 WG Barris, Robert L., Sgt
 RO Windle, Bill, Sgt
 TG Koerner, David M., Sgt
 BT Lary, Raymond W., Sgt

B-17G #42-97972 (No Name)

P Jameson, Chet H., Jr., 1Lt
 CP Blazey, Robert N., 2Lt
 NAV Ford, Wilson, 2Lt
 TOG Stevenson, John L., Sgt
 ENG Hall, Glenn W., T/Sgt
 WG Haevers, Ferdinand P., T/Sgt
 RO Hole, Howard D., S/Sgt
 BT Bender, Rollin J., Sgt
 TG Pizzolato, Gasper, Jr., S/Sgt

B-17G #42-97298 *The Floose*

P Freeman, Clyde E., 1Lt
 CP Canning, Glenn R., 2Lt
 NAV Goldstein, Sheldon, 2Lt
 BOM Kedzierski, Edward P., Sgt
 ENG Fleck, Peter J., S/Sgt
 TG Caporusso, Frank J., Sgt
 RO VanLier, Donald E., S/Sgt
 WG Cooper, Ray R., Sgt
 BT Chesney, Alan D., Sgt

B-17G #43-37590 *Neva-The Silver Lady*

P Grisham, Rufus W., Jr., 2Lt
 CP Cox, William H., 2Lt
 NAV Simons, Robert A., 1Lt
 TOG Casey, Lawrence, T/Sgt
 ENG Scheuermann, Edwin P., S/Sgt
 BT Loessin, Gerhard W., Jr., Sgt
 RO Post, Harry R., Sgt
 WG Buie, Ben M., Sgt
 TG Willis, Arnold, Sgt

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

P Woodson, William H., 2Lt
 CP Lanigan, Harold A., F/O
 NAV Foltz, Leon P., F/O
 BOM Finn, Russell C., F/O
 ENG Brown, Richard A., Sgt
 WG Riley, Lloyd S., Sgt
 RO Gramiak, Victor J., Sgt
 BT Burnette, R.L., Sgt
 TG Farrell, Peter J., Sgt

B-17G #43-38554 *Bouncing Betty III*

P Holm, Maurice M., 1Lt
 CP Fletcher, Harold D., F/O
 NAV Howard, Paul A., 2Lt
 TOG Rowe, Thomas M., S/Sgt
 ENG Compton, M.C., Sgt
 WG Huck, Robert L., Sgt
 RO Dale, John A., Sgt
 BT Ebert, Preston P., Sgt
 TG Dyszel, Bernard J., S/Sgt

B-17G #44-8427 *Henn's Revenge*

P Gmernicki, Richard H., 2Lt
 CP Judd, Chester G., 2Lt
 NAV Jones, William M., 2Lt
 BOM Guerrieri, Joseph C., F/O
 ENG Griffith, Elwood A., Sgt
 WG McClymont, John W., S/Sgt
 RO Calenberg, Raymond N., Sgt
 BT Greenberg, Bernard, Sgt
 TG Henn, Thomas A., Sgt

358th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists - Cont'd.

B-17G #43-38238 (No Name)

P	Snider, Harley D., 2Lt
CP	Kunkel, Joe T., 2Lt
NAV	McCorkle, Robert W., F/O
BOM	Feezel, Ralph S., 2Lt
ENG	Work, John R., S/Sgt
BT	Kudder, Edward P., Sgt
RO	Ludington, Robert S., Sgt
WG	Wade, Murray W., Sgt
TG	Cox, Lyle H., Sgt

B-17G #42-31574 Ole George

P	Twomey, John M., 1Lt
CP	Ross, James E., 2Lt
NAV	Kaiser, James M., Capt
BOM	McDade, Maurie S., 2Lt
ENG	Shaw, Vergil A., Sgt
RO	Bzik, Paul J., S/Sgt
TG	Hammond, Walter E., Sgt
WG	Martin, Jack E., S/Sgt
BT	Johnson, Marvin T., Sgt

B-17G #42-102945 Sweet Pea

P	McKinley, Ralph C., 1Lt
CP	Harwick, James A., 2Lt
NAV	Long, Donald C., Jr., 2Lt
TOG	Brown, James L., Sgt
ENG	Jones, Burlen, T/Sgt
WG	Devaney, Thomas J., Sgt
RO	Moll, Richard S., Sgt
BT	Clark, Woodrow E., Sgt
TG	Soule, Evan R., Sgt

(Abortive)

B-17G #43-38191 Shasta

P	Goering, Werner G., 1Lt
CP	Rencher, Jack P., 2Lt
NAV	Markt, Rex H., F/O
BOM	Birkenseer, Donald L., 2Lt
ENG	Gustafson, Orall R., S/Sgt
RO	Brodzinski, Chester, S/Sgt
BT	Putney, Norman W., S/Sgt
WG	Houseman, Clarence W., Sgt
TG	Mahan, Weldon T., Sgt

B-17G #42-97691 (No Name) - PFF (427BS)

P	Bergeron, Willard H., Capt
CP	Fielder, George H., 1Lt
NAV	Hunt, Jackson H., 1Lt
NAV	Zarelli, Michael L., 1Lt
NAV	Beyeler, Earl R., 1Lt
BOM	Morris, Warren B., 1Lt
ENG	Cavagnaro, James E., S/Sgt
WG	Foster, William D., Sgt
RO	Wilson, Clarence K., T/Sgt
TG	Douglass, Earl B., 1Lt

359th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

B-17G #42-107099 *Old 99* (427BS)

P Embrey, Henry C., 2Lt
 CP Sharp, Bryant M., 2Lt
 NAV Hewitt, Leroy A., 2Lt
 TOG Connor, Joseph C., Sgt
 ENG Miller, Harry C., S/Sgt
 RO Zellar, Donald W., Sgt
 BT Boyle, Francis M., S/Sgt
 TG Gavin, William E., Sgt
 WG Peters, Arthur R., Sgt

B-17G #43-38609 (*No Name*)

P Green, James F., 2Lt
 CP Fravel, Harold L., 2Lt
 NAV Gennaro, Louis T., 2Lt
 TOG Roberts, James P., Sgt
 ENG Belcher, Rubin W., Sgt
 RO Hinnershots, Bruce H., Sgt
 BT Schilling, Lawrence E., Sgt
 TG Foster, Delbert E., Sgt
 WG Schoonover, Howard D., Sgt

B-17G #43-38763 (*No Name*) (427BS)

P Haynes, Charles D., 2Lt
 CP McClurg, Galt L., 2Lt
 NAV Malone, Roy P., F/O
 BOM Dando, Charles A., 2Lt
 ENG Sherrill, Elliotte W., Sgt
 RO Deen, Oscar A., Sgt
 BT Freese, Paul D., Sgt
 WG Hrych, Robert C., Sgt
 TG Ipsen, Allen L., S/SgtSgt

B-17G #44-6309 *Duchess' Granddaughter*

P Lutz, John R., 2Lt
 CP Deck, Edward R., 2Lt
 NAV Carriere, Lawrence C., F/O
 TOG Goudy, William F., Sgt
 ENG Candito, Christopher A., Sgt
 RO Lovelock, Edward N., Sgt
 BT Kapczynski, Paul B., Sgt
 TG Bailey, John R., Sgt
 WG Bates, Roger K., Sgt

B-17G #43-38878 (*No Name*)

P Proffitt, John S., 2Lt
 CP Ogborn, Maurice E., 2Lt
 NAV Malerich, Earl J., Jr., 2Lt
 BOM Finke, John C., 2Lt
 ENG Young, James W., Sgt
 RO Norris, Cornie, Jr., Sgt
 BT Bechtold, Robert E., Sgt
 TG O'Neal, Howard F., Sgt
 WG Rose, G.L., Sgt

B-17G #43-38289 *Sweet LaRhonda*

P Lorentz, Arthur, 1Lt
 CP Scott, Robert H., 2Lt
 NAV Scheer, Harold, 2Lt
 BOM Barlow, Richard D., 2Lt
 ENG Kreager, Jon B., S/Sgt
 RO Hanson, Robert W., T/Sgt
 BT Ingalls, Earl F., Sgt
 TG Greenwald, Paul L., Sgt
 WG Gonser, Dwight W., Sgt

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

P McDavid, Philip H., 1Lt
 CP Knolle, Joseph C., 2Lt
 NAV King, Robert L., 2Lt
 TOG Dittman, Robert J., Sgt
 ENG Hall, Thomas M., S/Sgt
 RO Sikkema, Wilfred J., Sgt
 BT Johnson, Ralph R., Sgt
 TG Martin, Anthony B., Sgt
 WG Linville, Warren M., Sgt

B-17G #42-39885 *Sweet Rose O'Grady*

P Frazier, Eugene C., 1Lt
 CP Campbell, Laurie H., 2Lt
 NAV Goettman, Andrew T., 2Lt
 TOG Zielinski, William J., Sgt
 ENG Borges, Gilbert C., S/Sgt
 RO Trainor, Donald W., Sgt
 BT Charron, Raymond H., Sgt
 TG McCullough, Luther, Jr., Sgt
 WG Anderson, Eston R., Sgt
 (#42-39885 from 427BS)

359th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists - Cont'd.

B-17G #42-102411 *Miss Lace* (427BS)

P	Bixby, Kenneth E., 2Lt
CP	Burns, James S., 2Lt
NAV	Jones, Clayton C., F/O
BOM	Moss, Henry G., 2Lt
ENG	Robichaux, John B., S/Sgt
RO	Krumwiede, Leland J., Sgt
BT	Cottrell, Bert, S/Sgt
TG	Peters, John W., Sgt
WG	Allerton, Jack R., Sgt

B-17G #43-38258 *Forget Me Not Oilly*

P	Carney, Walter J., 1Lt
CP	Hickey, James A., 2Lt
NAV	Taylor, Albert R., 2Lt
BOM	Cooney, Thomas E., 2Lt
ENG	Turner, Harold L., T/Sgt
RO	Foster, Albert A., T/Sgt
BT	Kayrallah, Emil, S/Sgt
TG	Howe, Clarence H., S/Sgt
WG	Encinas, William S/Sgt

B-17G #43-38608 *Lucille*

P	Gates, Cecil J., 2Lt
CP	Zapora, Theodore T., 2Lt
NAV	Quinlan, Thomas E., Jr., 2Lt
BOM	Elliott, Harold F., 2Lt
ENG	Wysocki, Walter, Sgt
RO	Maurer, Charles E., Sgt
BT	Berrett, Charles R., Sgt
TG	Bowman, John H., Sgt
WG	Wallis, Elton E., Sgt

B-17G #42-102484 *Heller's Angel*

P	Mickle, James D., 1Lt
CP	Clarke, Loren M., F/O
NAV	O'Dell, Benjamin L., 2Lt
BOM	Mitchell, Robert C., 2Lt
ENG	Humphrey, William B., Sgt
RO	Eagon, Dennis G., Sgt
BT	Garcia, Leonard A., Sgt
TG	Van Zile, Raymond J., Sgt
WG	Wentz, Robert D., Sgt

B-17G #44-8256 *Yankee Girl* - PFF

P	Sirany, George R., Capt
CP	Bach, Harold J., 2Lt
NAV	Koran, William C., 1Lt
NAV	Forve, Frank F., 1Lt
NAV	Weil, Frank P., 2Lt
BOM	Schulze, William A., 2Lt
ENG	Popovich, William G., T/Sgt
RO	Pomicter, Stanley, T/Sgt
TG	Schopplein, Orin H., 2Lt
WG	Harwat, Edward D., S/Sgt

360th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

B-17G #43-38197 (No Name) (427BS)

P	Geiger, James E., 2Lt
CP	Telford, Donald R., F/O
NAV	Thomas, Edward H., 2Lt
BOM	Emery, Roy F., 2Lt
ENG	Stockman, Leonard G., Sgt
RO	Licht, Wilfred L., Sgt
BT	Wentz, Roland L., Sgt
TG	Germanine, Joseph R., Sgt
WG	Doctor, Gordon C., Sgt

B-17G #44-6516 My Darling

P	Middlemas, Arthur B., 2Lt
CP	Schultz, John W., 2Lt
NAV	Fetzko, John, 2Lt
BOM	Cooley, Royal D., 2Lt
ENG	Marshall, Leroy H., Sgt
RO	Avenia, James J., Sgt
BT	Parrish, George K., Sgt
TG	Cranshaw, John A., Sgt
WG	Maurer, John L., Sgt

B-17G #43-38532 (No Name)

P	Duffield, Richard B., 1Lt
CP	Beasley, Roland C., 2Lt
NAV	Harding, Warren G., 2Lt
BOM	Duros, Constantine J., 1Lt
ENG	Girard, Louis P., T/Sgt
RO	Wimer, Maurice H., T/Sgt
BT	Oberly, Eldridge C., S/Sgt
TG	Englis, Hiram E., S/Sgt
WG	Branin, James J., S/Sgt

B-17G #43-38451 (No Name)

P	Kallet, Sidney, 2Lt
CP	Muth, Clifford F., 2Lt
NAV	McCarty, Mike D., 2Lt
BOM	Harrison, Lewis S., 2Lt
ENG	Lewis, William J., Sgt
RO	Clarke, Frank W., Sgt
BT	Macy, Edward J., Sgt
TG	Terreri, Joseph, Sgt
WG	Killelea, Raymond J., Sgt

B-17G #42-97860 (No Name)

P	Arwood, Joe B., 1Lt
CP	Johnson, Walter E., 2Lt
NAV	Fowler, William C., 2Lt
BOM	Odegaard, Duane J., Sgt
ENG	Power, Thomas B., Sgt
RO	Curry, Paul A., Sgt
BT	Crawford, Frank J., S/Sgt
TG	Sanchez, Crespín E., Sgt
WG	Linn, James B., Sgt

B-17G #44-8422 Duffy's Tavern CR-L

P	Stephan, Paul C., 2Lt	KIA
CP	Clingler, John R., 2Lt	KIA
NAV	Lewis, Harold G., F/O	KIA
BOM	Tapley, Thomas W., Sgt	KIA
ENG	Phillips, Dwight A., Sgt	BO / WIA
RO	Ladurini, Raymond R., Sgt	KIA
BT	Keyes, Stanton W., Sgt	KIA
TG	Harris, Edgar P., Jr., Sgt	KIA
WG	Sorensen, Robert J., Sgt	BO / WIA

B-17G #42-31055 Aloha

P	Gravrock, Howard C., 1Lt
CP	Losiewicz, Benjamin, 2Lt
NAV	Klanian, Charles S., 2Lt
BOM	Downey, Francis G., 2Lt
ENG	Levine, Raymond, T/Sgt
RO	Engleman, George B., T/Sgt
BT	Relford, Robert R., Sgt
TG	Hensel, Phillip W., Sgt
WG	Elliott, John C., S/Sgt

B-17G #44-6517 Old Cock

P	Fink, Marvin P., 2Lt
CP	Reeves, Howard E., 2Lt
NAV	Subkowsky, Harry, 2Lt
BOM	Hand, Robert A., 2Lt
ENG	Holder, Jack E., Sgt
RO	Dahl, Robert F., Sgt
BT	Albright, Richard M., Sgt
TG	Garcia, Cyprian M., Sgt
WG	Peter, Robert C., Sgt

360th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists - Cont'd.

B-17G #44-6523 (No Name)

P	Hatch, Logan B., 2Lt
CP	Holtorf, Ernest H., 2Lt
NAV	Divine, Fred H., 2Lt
BOM	Friedlander, Henry, F/O
ENG	Fuczka, Peter, Sgt
RO	Broughton, Averell M., Jr., Sgt
BT	Buchanan, Paul A., Sgt
TG	Patterson, Charles A., Sgt
WG	Free, Ennis B., Jr., Sgt

B-17G #44-8318 (No Name)

P	McCutchan, Eugene R., 1Lt
CP	Romstad, Alfred N., 2Lt
NAV	Conard, Willard G., 2Lt
BOM	Bays, Gordon C., 2Lt
ENG	Kress, Richard H., S/Sgt
RO	Frey, Alan E., Sgt
BT	Scott, Howard E., Sgt
TG	Wherry, Robert E., Sgt
WG	Pearson, George D., S/Sgt

B-17G #42-97861 Iza Vailable III

P	Hardin, Thomas H., Jr., 1Lt
CP	Brown, William W., 2Lt
NAV	Hiebeler, George E., 2Lt
BOM	Driver, Henderson M., Jr., Sgt
ENG	Mikulich, Stanley, S/Sgt
RO	Kasper, Raymond H., Sgt
BT	Whitney, Daniel F., S/Sgt
TG	Rohrer, Elbert R., Sgt
WG	Sersland, Paul V., Sgt
RY	Yates, William C., S/Sgt

B-17G #42-97546 Idaliza

P	Juns, Frank, 1Lt
CP	St. Julien, John D., 2Lt
NAV	Kiehlkopf, George, 2Lt
BOM	Carney, Felix A., 2Lt
ENG	Mitchell, William E., Sgt
RO	Flanigan, John J., Sgt
BT	Farthing, Richard M., Sgt
TG	Evans, Marlin D., Sgt
WG	McLellan, Raymond L., Sgt

B-17G #44-8038 (No Name) - PFF (427BS)

P	O'Beirne, Nelson B., Capt
CP	Stouse, Harold L., Capt
NAV	Klein, Norman M., 1Lt
NAV	Edwards, Frank A., 1Lt
NAV	Wilson, Thomas E., 2Lt
BOM	Rape, Sylvester H., 2Lt
ENG	Evans, Harry D., T/Sgt
RO	Barton, Forrest E., T/Sgt
WG	Alexander, John P., S/Sgt
BT	Boone, Everett D., S/Sgt
TG	Lovold, Ole, 1Lt
PAS	Skinner, Donald E., Sgt

WHY WAS I A SURVIVOR?

The Story of Robert J. Sorenson
published in the Hell's Angels Newsletter November, 1984
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November 11, 1944, Armistice Day . . . but, for us it was just another fighting day to get the blasted war over so we could all go home. We were stationed at Molesworth, England, part of the famous 303rd, "Hell's Angels," B-17 Bomb Group. I was the Waist Gunner on the crew of Lt. Paul Stephan. Other crew members were: Lt. John Clingler, Co-pilot; Lt Harold Lewis, Navigator; Sgt. Tom Tapley, Togglier; Sgt. Dwight Phillips, Engineer; Sgt. Ray Ladurini, Radio; Sgt. Ed Harris, Tail and Sgt. Stan Keyes, Ball.

The whistle blew at 3:30 AM. "Breakfast at 4, briefing at 4:30." It was a typical English morning. The fog was so thick, our clothes were damp by the time we reached the mess hall. We talked as we ate: "I'll bet we hit Berlin today, better eat all we can." "I hope it's a milk run." "With this fog, we'll be back in the sack by 6 AM."

In the briefing room we were told this was to be a quickie; a short run to the Ruhr Valley. That was good news. If we did get off, we'd be back by noon. It was the eleventh mission for our crew; another reason for optimism. It seemed that if a crew got past 10 missions, they were riding a lucky star and had a good chance of finishing their tour.

We picked up our flying equipment and piled into the truck which hauled us to the hardstand where the ground crew was getting our plane, Duffy's Tavern, ready to go. By 5 AM we were loaded with four tons of bombs, the crew had checked all of their equipment and we were just waiting for the signal to start engines and taxi into take-off position. The fog hung on, so we sat and sweated it out. Waiting like that, it seemed that time almost stopped. Finally, at 5:30, we got the green flare. The fog had lifted enough for us to take off. The mission was "Go."

As our turn came and the pilot gunned Duffy's Tavern down the runway, the visibility didn't seem to be that great. As we left the ground and, almost before the wheels were retracted, we were into the "soup." Shortly, Lt. Stephan told us we would be on instruments until we cleared 18,000 ft. That made everyone a bit jittery. We chatted over the intercom to ease the tension.

About 45 minutes later, the pilot announced we were at 14,000 ft. and told me to arm the bombs. I usually did that when we were over the Channel, but today, we would be on oxygen before we cleared the overcast so I pulled the "safety pins" early.

"Pilot to Waist: Are all pins pulled?" "Waist to Pilot: Yes, Sir." "Pilot to crew: We are at 14,700 feet. Put on oxygen masks." Those were the last words I heard over the intercom. About 10 minutes later, we must have been at about 17,000 ft., I noticed a bright red glow out the left waist window. Thinking we were breaking through the clouds and the glow was the sun, I stood up to look out. That was no sun! There was a ten-foot tail of flame coming from the No. 1 engine!

I started to holler over the intercom: "No. 1 engine on fire!" but I don't think the pilot ever heard me because, almost at the same instant, the plane flipped over, went into a spin and then exploded.

Sgt. Keyes had been sitting in the waist area near me. His parachute pack lay beside him. Mine was by the rear exit door. I started for it as I gave the alarm over the intercom, but I never reached it.

As the plane flipped, I was thrown against the floor with such force that I couldn't move a muscle. It probably was only a split second, but it seemed like a long time. Then came the terrible explosion which blew me out through the fuselage head first. I remember my hips getting caught between some of the heavier steel ribs of the plane and I had to twist my body before going through.

Once in the air, everything seemed to be floating and there was a terrific ball of fire. All at once, out of the debris, came a parachute pack. It fell right into my arms. I was conscious at the time and snapped the chest pack onto my harness.

I had no fear of dying, I wasn't scared and knew I must keep my head. I may have blacked out for a few seconds for the next thing I knew, I was floating free. There was no debris around me and the fireball was gone.

I remembered our instruction to count to ten before pulling the ripcord. I counted fast and pulled the ring. Nothing happened. I looked at my hand. I was holding the ring, but there was no cord attached to it. I shook my hand and thought I threw the ring away, then started clawing at the pack. There was no sensation of falling, but I knew I had to get that chute open.

I passed out. My complete life went through my mind; every good thing and every bad thing, I even saw my grandparents. It was almost like meeting them in a new world. They had been dead for 15 years, but they seemed as real as they were when I was a kid on their farm.

When I regained consciousness, I started tearing at the pack again. Finally it opened partially, but I was tangled in the cords. As I struggled, I noticed that part of the chute was burned and hung above me like a tattered rag.

I prayed all the way down. I must have passed out three or four times. It seemed like I'd never get to the ground. The last thing I remembered was seeing a large tree coming at me very fast.

The Fortress crashed in flames on the road between the villages of Much Wenlock and Bourton, but wreckage was strewn over a four-mile area. Part of the cockpit and a wing section landed in front of the Much Wenlock post office. Miraculously, no one on the ground was injured.

The nearest residence was that of Mr. Tom Craig of Westwood Farm. He recalls that fateful morning: "It was so wet and foggy, I decided to stay in and put up the wages (make out the payroll), before going to have a look at the cattle, else I might have been in the direct path of the failing bomber. Hearing the roaring of engines and several explosions, I rushed from the house in the direction of the crash. There was wreckage everywhere. What was left of the fuselage was an inferno with ammo and bombs exploding. It was useless to get close to the site so I ran back to the house and rang up the police and fire brigade."

Sorenson didn't learn many of the details of that morning until 15 years later when he was able to establish contact with the two men who found him and probably were responsible for saving his life. They were neighbors and members of the Wenlock Home Guard.

One of those men, Mr. Edward Townsend, told this story: "Harry Murdoch and I rushed to the crash site to try to lend a hand. When we got out of town, Burt Luscott, another of the Home Guard, was stopping traffic from Much Wenlock since the road ahead was blocked by flaming wreckage. Murdoch and I set off across the marshy fields to search for any survivors. It was misty and we couldn't see too far, but in the second field from the road, we thought we heard a faint 'Help.' We set off in the direction indicated and shortly came upon an airman leaning over some

wooden rails in the hedgerow. He looked in a very bad state and was only half conscious. He apparently had walked or crawled 60 or 70 yards from a large oak tree where we later found the burnt and torn remains of a parachute. He was still holding the metal grip of the parachute ripcord. Two more local men came up and together, we placed the injured airman on an iron hurdle (gate) from the hedge and carried him to the road. Shortly an ambulance arrived and took him off to the hospital. I often wondered about him and didn't know he had survived until he contacted me in 1959."

Sorenson picks up the story: The next thing I was aware of was two days later when I woke up in the hospital. They told me I had a concussion, was missing a few teeth, my spine was crushed, my neck broken in two places and I had a blood clot in my left eye.

I was pleased to find that Sgt. Phillips, our engineer was in the next bed. They had found him eleven miles from where I landed. His back was broken in several places. He told me that we were the only survivors.

No one will ever know just what happened or why. Much Wenlock was about 200 miles off the course we should have taken that morning. Many theories have been advanced but no definite conclusions were ever reached.

On November 11, 1948, the town of Much Wenlock unveiled a memorial clock mounted on an old oak panel and affixed to the wall of the town Guildhall. It bears the wings of the USAAF and the RAF along with this inscription: "In honour of the sacrifices in the cause of freedom made by those members of the Allied Air Forces who lost their lives in the Borough of Wenlock, 1939-1945." Below that are the names of seven of Sorenson's crew mates, three other American and six British airmen who lost their lives in that area.

In concluding the story of his experiences, Sorenson shakes his head in bewilderment. "On this ill-fated mission, two out of nine survived. Why? The Lord, alone, knows the answer."

REMNANT OF CRASH MORE THAN A DOOR

Johnson City, Tennessee Press Chronicle

November 25, 1984 - by Sandy Hodson

It's just a 2-by-2 foot old piece of metal, but for a former Unicoi, Tennessee resident, it means a lot more. Forty years ago, on 11 November 1944, Dwight Phillips, Jr. was a sergeant with the US Air Force stationed at Molesworth, England. He and eight other men had just started for Germany on their 11th bombing mission. The pilot flew to 9,000 feet to get over the fog. Phillips said, when another plane was spotted. The plane got caught in an airstream caused by the other plane.

The force of the slipstream flipped the plane and sent it into a tailspin. As the pilot tried to pull the plane out of the spin, Phillips said, the American B-17 bomber broke in two. Phillips, the top turret gunner, tried to open the latch on the escape door, but it was jammed. He had to remove the hinge pins from the bottom.

Phillips, Sgt. Robert Sorenson and another crewman managed to get out of the plane. Phillips and Sorenson made it to the ground, but the third man had forgotten to fasten the leg straps of his parachute and was killed in the fall, Phillips said.

The plane and men hit ground near Wenlock, England. The fire department and townspeople came out to assist in the rescue and put out the fire in the broken plane, Phillips said. The fire was caused by two of the 18 bombs exploding. Suffering from a compression fracture of his back, Phillips was taken to a local hospital.