

303rd BG (H) Combat Mission No. 279

29 November 1944

Target: Synthetic Oil Refinery at Merseburg, Germany

Crews Dispatched: 39

Length of Mission: 7 hours, 25 minutes

Bomb Load: 12 x 500 lb G.P. M43 bombs

Bombing Altitudes: 25,000, 23,600 & 25,500 ft

Ammo Fired: 6,540

The Merseburg, Germany Synthetic Oil Refinery was visited for the ninth time in 1944 by Allied bombers, most successfully on 20 June and 12 September. It was the first trip for the 303rd BG(H). The target was attacked by 391 B-17s, who rained down 1,152 tons of 500-lb. G.P. M43 bombs. The widespread damage reduced monthly capacity from an estimated 25,000 metric tons to 15,000 tons. One 303rd BG(H) aircraft returned early with a faulty oxygen system: #43-38621 *50 Ragged*, 427BS (Capt. **Fletcher**).

Target weather was 10/10 undercast with tops at 14,000 to 16,000 feet. Bombing was by PFF and 303rd BG(H) results were unobserved. The 38 Group aircraft dropped 441 500-lb. G.P. bombs and ten units of T225 leaflets from 25,000, 23,600 and 25,500 feet.



MARVIN H. HECKENDORF CREW - 358th BS

(crew assigned 358BS: 04 Oct 1944 - photo: 01 Dec 1944)

(Back L-R) 2Lt Marvin H. Heckendorf (P), 2Lt Robert L. Erickson (CP),

2Lt Kenneth R. Carnahan (N), Cpl Robert J. Weaver (TOG)

(Front L-R) Cpl Robert L. Barris (BT), Cpl Hubert W. Gallman (E)

Cpl Bill Windle (R), Cpl Raymond W. Lary (WG), Cpl David M. Koemer (TG)

The expected enemy aircraft failed to appear, thanks to the 419 P-51s that escorted the 1st BD. Another 558 fighters escorted the 2nd BD and 3rd BD. This was the second largest fighter force ever sent into German skies to escort our bombers.

Chaff proved to be effective and was credited with limiting the flak to meager, moderate and inaccurate fire. The 303rd experienced no battle damage and no casualties. All the aircraft returned to Molesworth.

Aircraft Formation at Assembly Point - Group A

		<u>Tulloss-Packard</u> 557 - PFF			
		<u>Holmes</u> 619		<u>Mickle</u> 137 - PFF	
			<u>Proffitt</u> 608		
		<u>Arwood</u> 860		<u>Rybaltowski</u> 944	
	<u>Underdown</u> 682			<u>Haynes</u> 609	
<u>Gates</u> 563		<u>Frazier</u> 206		<u>Tasker</u> 645	<u>Embrey</u> 289
				<u>Fink</u> 517	



Mercy's Madhouse #42-97557 (358BS) PFF VK-X
41st CBW-B Lead (359BS) - Pilot Capt J.W. Tulloss / CoPilot Maj P.L.M. Packard
 (Back L-R) 1Lt Robert M. Garrett (N), 1Lt Thomas N. Kelly (N),
 Maj Peter L.M. Packard (CP), Capt John W. Tulloss (P),
 1Lt Ralph L. Smith (B), 2Lt Orin H. Schopplein (TG-O)
 (Front L-R) T/Sgt William G. Popovich (E), T/Sgt Walter E. Ringen, Jr. (R),
 S/Sgt Robert J. Dittman (WG), F/O Lawrence C. Carriere (N)

Aircraft Formation at Assembly Point - Group B

		<u>Fletcher-Newton</u> 621		
		<u>Petersen</u> 544		<u>Drewry</u> 311
			<u>Rose</u> 197	
		<u>Aagesen</u> 734		<u>McGinnis</u> 764
	<u>Roberts</u> 763			<u>Callahan</u> 689
<u>Gano</u> 597		<u>Ackerman</u> 099		<u>Hewitt</u> 248
				<u>St. Julien</u> 569
				<u>Schlecht</u> 411

Aircraft Formation at Assembly Point - Group C

		<u>Miller-Fielder</u> 44-8238 - PFF		
		<u>Freeman</u> 298		<u>McGilvray</u> 945
			<u>Heckendorf</u> 316	
		<u>McKinley</u> 590		<u>Gmernicki</u> 427
	<u>Goering</u> 462			<u>Grisham</u> 065
<u>McCutcheon</u> 949		<u>Snider</u> 38238		<u>Gobrecht</u> 554
				<u>Goodberlet</u> 530
				<u>Woodson</u> 006

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 WG - Waist Gunner LWG - Left Waist Gunner RWG - Right Waist Gunner GUN - Gunner VI - Voice Interpreter OBS - Observer</p>	<p>PAS - Passenger PHO - Photographer Y - Y-Operators (YRO,YO) RCM - Radio Cntr Measures SJ - Spot Jammer</p> <p>RESULTS OF MISSION KIA - Killed in action WIA - Wounded in action MIA - Missing in action</p>	<p>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</p>
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358th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

B-17G #42-97949 (No Name)

P	McCutcheon, George E., 1Lt
CP	Hower, Frederick C., 2Lt
NAV	Starr, Ben, 2Lt
BOM	Day, Keith E., Sgt
ENG	Burcham, Johnnie O., T/Sgt
WG	Foulk, Donald H., S/Sgt
RO	Alexander, John C., S/Sgt
BT	Aberdeen, James E., S/Sgt
TG	Kinsman, George R., S/Sgt

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

P	McKinley, Ralph C., 1Lt
CP	Harwick, James A., 2Lt
NAV	Long, Donald C., Jr., 2Lt
TOG	Rowe, Thomas M., S/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

B-17G #43-38065 Princess Pat 2

P	Grisham, Rufus W., Jr., 1Lt
CP	Cox, William H., 2Lt
NAV	Hartel, Gale E., 2Lt
BOM	Finn, Russell C., F/O
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 #44-6316 (No Name)

P	Heckendorf, Marvin H., 2Lt
CP	Erickson, Robert L., 2Lt
NAV	Fearn, Charles L., 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 #44-8427 Henn's Revenge

P	Gmernicki, Richard H., 1Lt
CP	Judd, Chester G., 2Lt
NAV	Jones, William M., 2Lt
TOG	Denning, Glenn J., Sgt
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

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

P	Woodson, William H., 2Lt
CP	Lanigan, Harold A., F/O
NAV	Boland, Anthony J., 2Lt
TOG	Stevenson, John L., Sgt
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 #43-38462 Teddy's Rough Riders

P	Goering, Werner G., 1Lt
CP	Rencher, Jack P., 2Lt
NAV	Markt, Rex H., F/O
BOM	Guerrieri, Joseph C., F/O
ENG	Gustafson, Orall R., S/Sgt
RO	Brodzinski, Chester, S/Sgt
BT	Blinebury, Joseph A., S/Sgt
WG	Houseman, Clarence W., Sgt
TG	Mahan, Weldon T., Sgt

B-17G #42-102945 Sweet Pea

P	McGilvray, Richard L., 1Lt
CP	Thompson, John A., 2Lt
NAV	Kaufman, Seymour, F/O
TOG	Conder, Bill W., 2Lt
ENG	Eckert, Raymond C., Sgt
WG	Putney, Norman W., S/Sgt
RO	Johnson, Paul B., Sgt
BT	Garza, David, Sgt
TG	Smith, Gardner B., Sgt

358th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists - Cont'd.

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

P	Gobrecht, Harry D., 2Lt
CP	Eby, Joe M., 2Lt
NAV	McDonald, Walter H., 2Lt
TOG	Miller, Robert J., Sgt
ENG	Benefield, Lenville H., Sgt
WG	Mays, Thomas G., Sgt
RO	Quick, Edgar H., Sgt
BT	McGrory, William P., S/Sgt
TG	Buske, Phillip R., Sgt

B-17G #43-38530 (No Name)

P	Goodberlet, Clarence J., 2Lt
CP	Magid, Malcolm J., 2Lt
NAV	Mylonas, Peter E., F/O
BOM	Mott, Charles A., 2Lt
ENG	Cotter, William J., Sgt
WG	Karash, Matthew J., Sgt
RO	Baloga, Stephen M., Sgt
BT	Walling, James M., Sgt
TG	Schultz, Frederick W., Sgt

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

P	Freeman, Clyde E., 1Lt
CP	Canning, Glenn R., 2Lt
NAV	Goldstein, Sheldon, 2Lt
BOM	Birkenseer, Donald L., 2Lt
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 #43-38238 (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	Gibson, James, Sgt

B-17G #44-8238 (No Name) - PFF

P	Miller, Campbell, 1Lt
CP	Fielder, George H., 1Lt
NAV	Kaiser, James M., Capt
NAV	Weinstein, Irving, 2Lt
BOM	Ford, Wilson, 2Lt
ENG	Cavagnaro, James E., T/Sgt
WG	Cox, Lyle H., Sgt
RO	Buie, Neil C., T/Sgt
TG	Ross, James E., 2Lt

359th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

B-17G #44-8137 (No Name) - PFF

P	Mickle, James D., 1Lt
CP	Clarke, Loren M., F/O
NAV	O'Dell, Benjamin L., 2Lt
NAV	Weil, Frank P., 2Lt
BOM	Scheibman, Herman B., 1Lt
ENG	Humphrey, William B., Sgt
RO	Eagon, Dennis G., Sgt
TG	Van Zile, Raymond J., Sgt
WG	Wentz, Robert D., Sgt

B-17G #43-38608 Lucille

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 #42-97944 Daddy's Delight

P	Rybaltowski, Vincent, 2Lt
CP	Olson, John A., 2Lt
NAV	Moon, Richard Y., 2Lt
BOM	McLeod, Harry A., 2Lt
ENG	Perlowitz, Murray A., Sgt
RO	Capps, Douglas M., Sgt
BT	Hollingsworth, Donald M., Sgt
TG	Reseigh, John R., Sgt
WG	Vitiritto, Joseph A., Sgt

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

P	Haynes, Charles D., 1Lt
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/Sgt

B-17G #43-38619 (No Name)

P	Holmes, Alfred M., 2Lt
CP	Haynes, Eugene, 2Lt
NAV	Albertson, Edward, F/O
BOM	Donovan, Thomas A., 2Lt
ENG	Sprague, Wendell P., Jr., Sgt
RO	Prehatny, Joseph R., S/Sgt
BT	Vowels, Donovan E., Sgt
TG	Bartkowski, Edward L., Sgt
WG	Hejna, Dennis R., S/Sgt

B-17G #43-38563 Jackie

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	Schilling, Lawrence E., Sgt
TG	Erdody, Joseph, S/Sgt
WG	Wallis, Elton E., Sgt

B-17G #43-38645 (No Name)

P	Tasker, Richard E., 2Lt
CP	Francis, Angelito, 2Lt
NAV	Meadows, Clyde, F/O
BOM	McDonnell, John J., 2Lt
ENG	Toon, William D., Sgt
RO	Minnix, Glenn A., Sgt
BT	Reider, Enrique M., Sgt
TG	Driver, Arthur H., Sgt
WG	Van Ornum, Charles S., Sgt

B-17G #43-38682 (No Name)

P	Underdown, Sidney L., 1Lt
CP	Knolle, William C., 2Lt
NAV	Kenny, John P., 2Lt
BOM	Tyree, Joseph C., 2Lt
ENG	Kuwik, John J., S/Sgt
RO	Carman, Nolan W., S/Sgt
BT	Guptill, Walter R., S/Sgt
TG	Stevens, Richard G., Sgt
WG	Botton, Pius L., Sgt

359th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists - Cont'd.

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

P Frazier, Eugene C., 1Lt
 CP Campbell, Laurie H., 2Lt
 NAV Goettman, Andrew T., 2Lt
 BOM Barlow, Richard B., 2Lt
 ENG Borges, Gilbert C., T/Sgt
 RO Trainor, Donald W., S/Sgt
 BT Charron, Raymond H., Sgt
 TG McCullough, Luther, Jr., Sgt
 WG Anderson, Eston R., Sgt

B-17G #42-97557 *Mercy's Madhouse* - PFF

P Tulloss, John W., Capt
 CP Packard, Peter L.M., Maj
 NAV Kelly, Thomas N., 1Lt
 NAV Carriere, Lawrence C., F/O
 NAV Garrett, Robert M., 1Lt
 BOM Smith, Ralph L., 1Lt
 ENG Popovich, William G., T/Sgt
 RO Ringen, Walter E., T/Sgt
 TG Schopplein, Orin H., 2Lt
 WG Dittman, Robert J., S/Sgt

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

P Embrey, Henry C., 2Lt
 CP Sharp, Bryant M., 2Lt
 NAV Jones, Clayton C., F/O
 TOG Connor, Joseph C., Sgt
 ENG Miller, Harry C., T/Sgt
 RO Zellar, Donald W., S/Sgt
 BT Boyle, Francis L., Jr., S/Sgt
 TG Gavin, William E., Sgt
 WG Peters, Arthur R., S/Sgt

360th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

B-17G #44-6517 *Old Cock*

P Fink, Marvin P., 1Lt
 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

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

P Arwood, Joe B., 1Lt
 CP Johnson, Walter E., 2Lt
 NAV Fowler, William C., 2Lt
 BOM Gerstel, Charles L., S/Sgt
 ENG Power, Thomas B., S/Sgt
 RO Curry, Paul A., S/Sgt
 BT Hulterstrum, Joseph P., Sgt
 TG Sanchez, Crespian E., Sgt
 WG Linn, James B., Sgt

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

P St. Julien, John D., 2Lt
 CP Newell, Richard M., 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

427th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

B-17G #43-38763 (No Name)

P	Roberts, Ingersall J., 1Lt
CP	Bluethenthal, Arthur, 2Lt
NAV	Morrison, Martin, 2Lt
BOM	Ralph, William L., S/Sgt
WG	Carlson, Harold A., Sgt
TT	Riveland, Alf, Sgt
RO	Renzi, Frank, Sgt
TG	Barber, Albert P., Sgt
BT	Campbell, Gerald R., Sgt

B-17G #42-107099 Old 99

P	Ackerman, Stewart S., Jr., 1Lt
CP	Waggoner, Richard C., 2Lt
NAV	Oswald, Alois G., Jr., 2Lt
BOM	Proper, George M., S/Sgt
TT	Creaghan, Robert E., S/Sgt
BT	Highfill, Thomas W., S/Sgt
RO	Ribesky, John V., Jr., S/Sgt
TG	Wiencek, Edward J., Sgt
WG	Schulz, Paul H., S/Sgt

B-17G #42-102411 Miss Lace

P	Schlecht, Walter J., 2Lt
CP	Ferrari, William J., 2Lt
NAV	Tanner, Merlin A., 2Lt
BOM	Hansen, Harley L., 2Lt
TT	Hedison, Ara H., Sgt
BT	Hocknell, Raymond A., Sgt
RO	Hradiskey, Joseph R., Sgt
TG	Herod, William J., Sgt
WG	Warburton, Arlis F., Sgt

B-17G #43-38734 Cheshire Cat

P	Aagesen, Donald C., 2Lt
CP	McKeon, Preston W., 2Lt
NAV	Minnis, Karl, 2Lt
TOG	Gray, Paul A., Sgt
TT	Ellis, Paul R., Sgt
BT	Calderon, Reuben J., Sgt
RO	Bledsoe, Clinton A., Sgt
TG	Lindeman, Henry E., Sgt
WG	Vuksinich, Louis F., Sgt

B-17G #43-37597 Earthquake McGoon

P	Gano, Frederick, 1Lt
CP	Flanders, Wesley J., 2Lt
NAV	Maniscalco, John B., F/O
BOM	Ganson, Howard H., Sgt
TT	Anthony, George E., S/Sgt
BT	Coyle, Arthur J., S/Sgt
RO	Elling, Myron A., Sgt
TG	Nelson, Edward F., Sgt
WG	Sears, William A., Sgt

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

P	Callahan, Charles A., Capt
CP	Eisenhart, Oliver T., 2Lt
NAV	Jenkins, John I., 2Lt
BOM	Blessing, Gerald D., 2Lt
TT	Erdmann, Robert A., Sgt
BT	Johnson, Gene W., Sgt
RO	Kamen, Roland K., Sgt
TG	Dorner, Alvin W., Sgt
WG	Robins, James B., Sgt

B-17G #43-38248 Jigger Rooche II

P	Hewitt, Donald I., 2Lt
CP	Wilson, Jack G., 2Lt
NAV	McMahon, William F., 2Lt
BOM	Leas, Harry D., Sgt
TT	Sabo, Stephen R., Sgt
BT	Kohlmayer, Garth G., Sgt
RO	Schmidt, Elmer J., Sgt
TG	Agrifoglio, Benjamin M., Sgt
WG	Mussi, James L., Sgt

B-17G #42-102544 Sack Time

P	Petersen, William H., 2Lt
CP	Candido, Anthony N., 2Lt
NAV	Nazarian, John K., 2Lt
TOG	Grove, John W., S/Sgt
TT	Zarella, Anthony A., Sgt
BT	Millin, Louis, Sgt
RO	Whitely, Cull W., Jr., Sgt
TG	Coleman, Loyd, Sgt
WG	Tanner, Loyd H., Sgt

427th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists - Cont'd.

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

P Drewry, James A., 1Lt
CP Schneider, Richard H., 2Lt
NAV Mayo, Archie W., 2Lt
BOM Long, Lloyd I., 2Lt
TT Dorrah, Walter R., T/Sgt
BT Morin, Donald P., S/Sgt
RO Nash, Leslie G., T/Sgt
TG Hester, Lloyd D., Sgt
WG Koch, Edwin H., S/Sgt
Y Brenner, Seymour, Sgt

B-17G #43-38764 (No Name)

P McGinnis, Martin S., Capt
CP Doscher, Frederick C., 2Lt
NAV Neubert, Marshall A., Capt
BOM Burket, Wallace A., 1Lt
TT Lyons, Robert J., S/Sgt
BT Beal, Donald L., Sgt
RO Muir, Keith R., T/Sgt
TG Stevenson, Lowell F., Sgt
WG Hamilton, Lois R., S/Sgt

B-17G #43-38621 *50 Ragged*

P Fletcher, John E., Capt
CP Newton, George C., 1Lt
NAV Katz, Edwin Harold, 1Lt
BOM Smoleroff, Theodore L., 1Lt
TT Schneider, Joseph R., Sgt
RO Corn, Byron D., S/Sgt
WG Karr, Leslie E., Sgt
WG Simon, Lawrence E., Sgt
BT Hartog, Samuel S., Sgt
TG Barrios, Alfred R., 2Lt

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

P Rose, Jack W., 2Lt
CP Cornyn, T. John, 2Lt
NAV Russo, William D., 2Lt
BOM Garrett, Joe W., T/Sgt
TT Dyson, Flake S., Sgt
BT Brinkley, Lynn M., Sgt
RO Scaglione, Joseph, T/Sgt
TG Means, Henry H., Jr., Sgt
WG Cottle, Clyde J., Jr., Sgt

THE COAL PILE CAPER
of the Winter of 1944 by William H. Cox

If anyone has ever spent any time in the Midlands of England during a winter, they understand the need for keeping out of the damp chill which quickly invades the body. It was during the winter of 1944, the chill seemed even colder than ever, especially living in a Quonset hut (fondly referred to as "Rambler's Roost") which had only one coal stove for furnishing heat. To make matters worse, rationing limited the supply of coal to one shovelful per person per week.

The nine other officers of the 358 BS and I soon discovered that it was necessary to add to our meager supply of coal in order to avoid the constant misery of the cold. Since it was our job to be familiar with the military style of executing an air operation, it was only natural for us to devise a military style of executing a ground operation for successfully obtaining the badly needed coal. The source of our needs was a huge, well secured coal pile, located on our airbase at Molesworth. Using our combat experience, we determined that there were four main steps for our mission: the reconnaissance phase, the planning phase, the briefing phase, and the execution.

The reconnaissance phase consisted of sending out two officers on their bicycles during the day to survey the large coal pile. Their assignment was to bring back the fact about its location, roads and paths nearby, the number and location of security guards in the area, and the places in the fence where coal might already be spilling out at the bottom. They accomplished their task in an outstanding manner. Our two spies located a weak spot in the fence where coal was flowing out from underneath, far from the guard's post. They also reported that the one guard spent the majority of his time at his post, both day and night. Armed with this knowledge, our target and aiming point were located for the upcoming mission.

The next phase was to have our best planners draw up the plan of attack, now they had all the necessary required information. The planning phase was critical, for the success or failure of a military mission rests on a good sound plan. After several hours the planners had all the requirements written out and in the proper format. A "fighter force" of three men would "fly cover" for our main raiding force. The main raiding force consisted of six men. The fighter force's task was not to attack the enemy, but to quickly warn the main force in the event it became necessary for a fast 180 degree turn and quick withdrawal. The main force was to use three wheelbarrows, left each evening by English workmen, who were working on a construction project next to our Quonset hut. A pilot was assigned to "fly" each wheelbarrow, in single trail formation, at five minute intervals into the target area. Each wheelbarrow would also have a copilot armed with a shovel for use only on the target.

The plan further called for a night attack, since the English wartime blackout was already an excellent cover. A half moonlit night was selected to give a small amount of light which seemed necessary for the task at hand. A ground recovery group was also required. It would be their job, once the main force returned to home base, to assist in quickly dumping the captive coal into many small boxes located under our beds. The fighter force was to double as the ground recovery force, for they would return on the withdrawal well ahead of the main task force. The route both in and out of the target area was carefully selected after studying the available roads and paths to our living quarters and the coal pile. The shortest and most direct route was chosen for the least amount of exposure time to "flak."

To avoid any tip-offs of the operation, there were no dry runs scheduled. The plan was designed for our side to offer no opposition if once discovered. The recall phrase was, "Run like hell if about to be caught."

Once the plan was finished, it was necessary to conduct a briefing. To ensure no mistakes during the operation, a formal briefing was conducted in the Quonset hut – the complete plan was briefed in detail. A specialized briefing followed and each member went into great detail on their particular part of the effort. Detailed timing was covered, abort procedures in the event the mission might be recalled, and of course, a time back was given. Even procedures in event of capture were briefed. Each crew member was reminded to give only his name, rank, and serial number.

After the briefings, the implementation order was given and the operational phase, began on time. All sorties made good their briefed takeoff time. The mission went extremely well. There was no "flak" from the enemy en route, nor any in the target area. All sorties reached the target at the briefed time and the target was hit as briefed. By lifting the bottom of the fence near the ground, the coal poured fourth and the teams quickly shoveled it into the wheelbarrows. Each crew made a silent withdrawal and the enemy security guard never knew what had happened. The route home was flown as briefed and no problems were encountered. After the loads of coal arrived safely back at home base, they were unloaded as briefed. A strike report was prepared to be sent on to higher headquarters. However, it was never sent. Success is one thing, but to let our higher officers know about this caper would have been going a little too far.

A de-briefing was conducted shortly after all the forces had unloaded and secured their wheelbarrows back in their normal parking stubs. The de-briefing consisted of bringing out bottles of Scotch whiskey and each man telling his personal story of the attack. It soon turned into a victory celebration, which I remember as lasting well into the late hours. It was a good feeling to know that our prefabricated shelter of corrugated metal which we called home, would again be warm and livable for some time to come.

A few of the featured officers who flew in the "Coal Pile Capers"

Lt. Rufus W. Grisham, Jr.

Lt. Gale Hartel

Lt. Nick J. Celich

Lt. Jack P. Rencher

Lt. Ben Starr

Lt. William H. Cox