

303rd BG (H) Combat Mission No. 288

19 December 1944

Target: Tactical Troop Support at Blankenheim, Germany

Crews Dispatched: 39

Length of Mission: 6 hours, 30 minutes

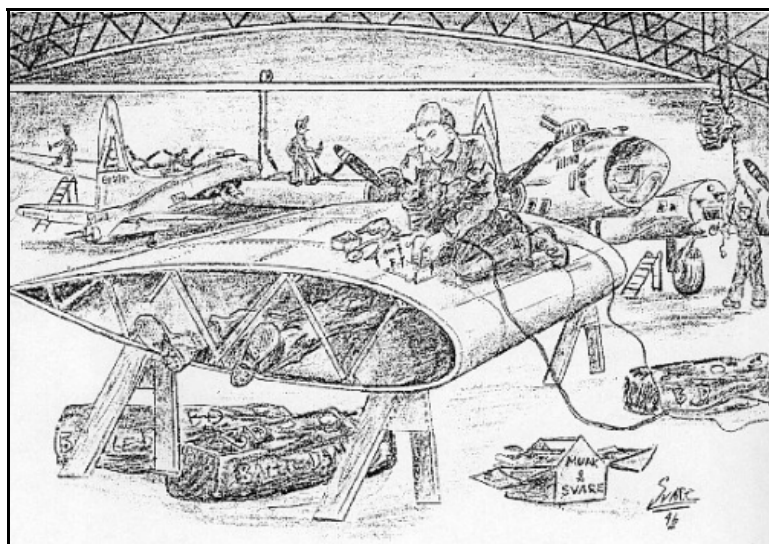
Bomb Load: 12 x 500 lb H.E. M43 bombs; 12 x 500 lb G.P. bombs

Bombing Altitudes; 21,550 & 22,400 ft

Ammo Fired: 1,080 rounds

The 8th Air Force attacked tactical targets in the Luxembourg, Ehrang and Koblenz areas to impede the German counter-offensive launched in the Ardennes on 16 December. Bad weather made it impossible for the 3rd BD B-17s to take off.

The 303rd BG(H) B-17s took off in poor weather and experienced a 10/10 cloud undercast in the target area and along most of the route. The primary target was to support troops at Blankenheim, Germany and the secondary, to be attacked visually or by PFF, was the Koblenz marshalling yard.



Sketch of Molesworth by Neil J. Svare

Tinbenders working on the outer wing panel.

Damaged wing tanks from the wing panel littered around.

Twenty-five aircraft in the high and low Squadrons dropped 299 500-lb. H.E. M43 bombs on the primary target by GEE-H with unobserved results. Thirteen aircraft of the lead Squadron dropped 155 500-lb. G.P.s with the 359BS formation from Polebrook, on what was believed to be Kall, Germany. All results were unobserved. The high Squadron, led by Lt. Roger **Kuykendall**, took over the Group lead from Capt. Robert J. **Lynch** when **Lynch's** GEE-H equipment temporarily failed.

No enemy aircraft or anti-aircraft fire was seen. There was no battle damage or casualties. Friendly fighter support by 37 P-51s was fair to poor. Chaff was discharged, but it was impossible to gauge its effectiveness.

Low clouds and poor visibility made it impossible for the Group to land at Molesworth. Aircraft were diverted to west England and an RAF airfield at Lyneham. Several aircraft that were flying practice flights and slow time also were diverted to other airfields. The aircraft were unable to return to Molesworth until 27 December.

Aircraft Formation at Assembly Point - Group A

Lynch-Johnson
495 - PFF

Goodberlet McGilvray
999 191

Gobrecht
427

Greenbaum Poole
530 949

Goering Aagesen
462 734

McKinley Snider Petersen Smith
006 238 569 689

Mayer
554



RICHARD D. GREENBAUM CREW - 358th BS
(crew assigned 358BS: 25 Nov 1944 - photo: 08 Dec 1944)
(Back L-R) 1Lt Richard D. Greenbaum (P), 2Lt Robert E. Balkcom (CP),
F/O John J. Nicastro (N), 1Lt John W. McCall (B), Sgt Kenneth D. Hawes (TG)
(Front L-R) T/Sgt Denver Dalton (R), T/Sgt Leonard F. Bruce (E),
S/Sgt Henry L. Armstrong II (WG), S/Sgt Partick C. Dooley (BT)

Aircraft Formation at Assembly Point - Group B

Kuykendall-Connelly
256 - PFF

	<u>Butler</u> 318	<u>Losiewicz</u> 544	
		<u>Duffield</u> 451	
	<u>Arwood</u> 532		<u>Hardin</u> 516
<u>McCutchan</u> 563			<u>Schlecht</u> 875
<u>Norris</u> 523	<u>App</u> 842	<u>Barrat</u> 060	<u>Richter</u> 885

Aircraft Formation at Assembly Point - Group C

Mickle-Clarke
537 - PFF

	<u>Bailey</u> 764	<u>Underdown</u> 137 - PFF	
		<u>Knutzen</u> 767	
	<u>Knudson</u> 309		<u>Harding</u> 944
<u>Proffitt</u> 608			<u>Hewitt</u> 763
<u>Rybaltowski</u> 609	<u>Bixby</u> 502	<u>McGinnis</u> 099	<u>Turinsky</u> 597
			<u>Embrey</u> 289

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 #43-38191 *Shasta*

P	McGilvray, Richard L., 1Lt
CP	Thompson, John A., 2Lt
NAV	Markt, Rex H., 2Lt
BOM	Davis, Edward A., 2Lt
ENG	Eckert, Raymond C., Sgt
WG	Frazier, Victor L., Sgt
RO	Johnson, Paul B., T/Sgt
BT	Garza, David, Sgt
TG	Smith, Gardner B., S/Sgt

B-17G #43-38999 *Emma*

P	Goodberlet, Clarence J., 2Lt
CP	Magid, Malcolm J., 2Lt
NAV	Boland, Anthony J., 2Lt
TOG	Miller, Robert J., Sgt
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 #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., T/Sgt
WG	Wade, Murray W., S/Sgt
TG	unknown

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

P	Gobrecht, Harry D., 2Lt
CP	Eby, Joe M., 2Lt
NAV	McDonald, Walter H., 2Lt
BOM	Mott, Charles A., 2Lt
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 #44-6006 (No Name)

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

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

P	Mayer, Walter J., 1Lt
CP	Hower, Frederick C., 2Lt
NAV	unknown
TOG	Brown, James L., Sgt
ENG	McGreevy, James, Sgt
WG	unknown
RO	LaPerch, William J., T/Sgt
TG	Withers, Frederick J., S/Sgt
BT	Gendron, Ernest J., S/Sgt

358th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists - Cont'd.

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

P	Poole, Lawrence E., 2Lt
CP	Cannon, Harley E., 2Lt
NAV	Smith, Harold S., F/O
TOG	Smith, Donald P., Sgt
ENG	Pullen, Rayford E., Sgt
WG	Kinsland, Harry D., Sgt
RO	Hoke, Marvin L., Sgt
BT	Morrill, Charles K., Sgt
TG	Kindred, Beryl E., Sgt

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

P	Greenbaum, Richard D., 2Lt
CP	Rencher, Jack P., 1Lt
NAV	Nicastro, John J., F/O
BOM	McCall, John W., 1Lt
ENG	Bruce, Leonard F., Sgt
TG	Hawes, Kenneth D., Sgt
RO	Dalton, Denver, Sgt
BT	Dooley, Patrick, Sgt
WG	Armstrong, Henry L., Sgt

B-17G #44-8495 (No Name) - PFF

P	Lynch, Robert J., Capt
CP	Johnson, Hugh B., 1Lt
NAV	Hunt, Jackson H., 1Lt
NAV	Zarelli, Michael L., 1Lt
NAV	Garrett, Robert M., 1Lt
BOM	Sachau, William D., 1Lt
ENG	Edwards, Eugene F., T/Sgt
WG	Blinebury, Joseph A., S/Sgt
RO	Carter, Robert D., T/Sgt
TG	Hopkins, Harry F., 2Lt

B-17G #43-38462 *Teddy's Rough Riders*

P	Goering, Werner G., 1Lt
CP	Balkcom, Robert E., 2Lt
NAV	Birkenseer, Donald L., 1Lt
TOG	unknown
ENG	Gustafson, Orall R., T/Sgt
RO	Brodzinski, Chester, S/Sgt
BT	unknown
WG	Houseman, Clarence W., S/Sgt
TG	unknown

359th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

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

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 #43-38767 (No Name)

P	Knutzen, Owen A., 2Lt
CP	Bitler, Hower E., Jr., 2Lt
NAV	Christenson, Leroy P., 2Lt
BOM	Christensen, LeRoy P., 2Lt
ENG	Klym, Michael, Sgt
RO	Jobe, Andrew K., Jr., Sgt
BT	Kennedy, Jack B., Sgt
TG	Hartmann, Alexander, T/Sgt
WG	Tarnava, Christopher, Jr., Sgt

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

P	Underdown, Sidney L., 1Lt
CP	Marsh, John F., 2Lt
NAV	O'Dell, Benjamin L., 2Lt
NAV	Weil, Frank P., 2Lt
BOM	Dando, Charles A., 2Lt
ENG	Kuwik, John J., T/Sgt
RO	Carman, Nolan W., T/Sgt
BT	Guptill, Walter R., S/Sgt
TG	Stevens, Richard G., Sgt

B-17G #44-6502 (No Name)

P	Bixby, Kenneth E., 2Lt
CP	Burns, James S., 2Lt
NAV	Anstrom, Ronald A., 2Lt
BOM	Moss, Henry G., 2Lt
ENG	Robichaux, John B., S/Sgt
RO	Krumwiede, Leland J., Sgt
BT	Reese, Dale G., Sgt
TG	Peters, John W., Sgt
WG	Van Ornum, Charles S., Sgt

B-17G #43-38289 Sweet LaRhonda

P	Embrey, Henry C., 1Lt
CP	Sharp, Bryant M., 2Lt
NAV	Malone, Roy P., 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

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

P	Bailey, Jack W., 2Lt
CP	Hall, Merwin G., 2Lt
NAV	Swenson, Glen R., 2Lt
BOM	Johnson, David E., 2Lt
ENG	Muller, Carl A., Sgt
RO	Darden, Elwyn J., Sgt
BT	Reider, Enrique M., Sgt
TG	Eckert, Merle W., Sgt
WG	McGuire, William E., Sgt

359th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists - Cont'd.

B-17G #43-37537 *Queen of Hearts* - PFF

P Mickle, James D., 1Lt
CP Clarke, Loren M., F/O
NAV Forve, Frank F., 1Lt
NAV Malerich, Earl J., Jr., 2Lt
BOM Schulze, William A., 1Lt
ENG Humphrey, William B., S/Sgt
RO Eagon, Dennis G., S/Sgt
BT Garcia, Leonard A., Sgt
TG Francis, Angelito, 2Lt
WG Wentz, Robert D., S/Sgt

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

P Knudson, Darwin D., 2Lt
CP Heitman, David E., 2Lt
NAV Davis, Daryl W., 2Lt
TOG Wilson, Johnnie R., Sgt
ENG Hurdle, Robert E., Sgt
RO Jones, Walter N., Jr., Sgt
BT Meichtry, Leo R., Sgt
TG McDonald, Billy L., Sgt
WG Palm, Kenneth A., Sgt

B-17G #43-38608 *Lucille*

P Proffitt, John S., 2Lt
CP Ogborn, Maurice E., 2Lt
NAV Finke, John C., 2Lt
TOG Goudy, William F., S/Sgt
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
(Abortive)

B-17G #42-97944 *Daddy's Delight*

P Harding, Lawrence T., 2Lt
CP Force, James G., 2Lt
NAV Garvey, Richard J., 2Lt
TOG Otto, Kenneth, Jr., Sgt
ENG O'Brien, William J., Sgt
RO Cornelius, Russell B., Sgt
BT Lammers, Roger G., Sgt
TG Johnson, Robert O., Sgt
WG Holden, Robert R., Sgt

360th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

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

P	Duffield, Richard B., 1Lt
CP	Armfield, John M., 2Lt
NAV	Stewart, James L., 2Lt
BOM	Mishtal, Theodore W., 2Lt
ENG	Lemon, James M., Jr., Sgt
RO	Haynes, Donald L., Sgt
BT	Elliott, Richard D., Sgt
TG	Davis, Jesse W., Sgt
WG	Goggin, Edward F., Sgt

B-17G #42-102544 Sack Time

P	Losiewicz, Benjamin, 2Lt
CP	Stiver, Merrill M., 2Lt
NAV	Beasley, Leon O., 2Lt
BOM	Hight, Basil D., 2Lt
ENG	Auer, Kenneth R., Sgt
RO	Godley, Walter M., Sgt
BT	Pilgrim, Robert W., Sgt
TG	Gilbert, Robert A., Sgt
WG	Wilson, Robert T.C., Sgt

B-17G #44-6517 Old Cock

P	Fink, Marvin P., 1Lt
CP	Reeves, Howard E., 2Lt
NAV	Hand, Robert A., 2Lt
BOM	Prince, James R., 1Lt
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 #43-38532 (No Name)

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

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

P	Butler, Milton C., 1Lt
CP	Lovell, Brook H., 2Lt
NAV	Klanian, Charles S., 2Lt
BOM	Hackler, Maurice G., 2Lt
ENG	Bird, Harry G., T/Sgt
RO	Christ, Donald R., T/Sgt
BT	Miller, Donald E., S/Sgt
TG	Johnson, David T., S/Sgt
WG	Peterson, Robert E., Sgt

B-17G #43-38563 Jackie

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

360th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists - Cont'd.

B-17G #44-6516 *My Darling*

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

B-17G #43-38842 (No Name)

P	App, Robert G., 1Lt
CP	Moody, William S., 2Lt
NAV	Dennis, Walter F., 2Lt
BOM	Dee, Martin R., F/O
ENG	Leach, Norman L., S/Sgt
RO	Matlock, Austin M., S/Sgt
BT	Brady, Gene F., Sgt
TG	Price, Kirkland T., S/Sgt
WG	Polaski, Duane L., Sgt

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

P	Kuykendall, Roger L., 1Lt
CP	Connelly, Ben L., 1Lt
NAV	Klein, Norman M., 1Lt
NAV	Dimick, Donald L., 2Lt
NAV	Gibson, Cater M., 2Lt
BOM	Rape, Sylvester H., 1Lt
ENG	Evans, Harry D., T/Sgt
RO	Barton, Forrest E., T/Sgt
BT	Boone, Everett D., S/Sgt
WG	Dubin, Martin M., S/Sgt
TG	Lovold, Ole, 1Lt

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

P	Norris, Loy R., 2Lt
CP	Jones, William E., Capt
NAV	Thomas, Edward H., 1Lt
BOM	Valdes, George J., Sgt
ENG	Brackett, Clarence H., Sgt
RO	Birkenholz, Irving, T/Sgt
BT	McNeel, Morgan L., Sgt
TG	Ciezado, Eugene F., Sgt
WG	Marchionda, Guido P., Sgt

427th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

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

P	McGinnis, Martin S., Capt
CP	Doscher, Frederick C., 2Lt
NAV	Natoli, Sam J., 2Lt
BOM	Simone, S.P., Sgt
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 #42-102569 *Miss Lace*

P	Petersen, William H., 2Lt
CP	Candido, Anthony N., 2Lt
NAV	Bason, William A., 2Lt
BOM	Warner, Vester W., S/Sgt
TT	Zarella, Anthony A., Sgt
BT	Grove, John W., S/Sgt
RO	Whitely, Cull W., Jr., Sgt
TG	Coleman, Loyd, Sgt
WG	Tanner, Loyd H., Sgt

B-17G #43-38734 *Cheshire Cat*

P	Aagesen, Donald C., 2Lt
CP	McKeon, Preston W., 2Lt
NAV	Minnis, Karl, 2Lt
BOM	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 #43-38689 (*No Name*)

P	Smith, Grafton N., 1Lt
CP	Reed, Louis E., 2Lt
NAV	Gardner, Edward W., Jr., 2Lt
BOM	Dohm, William F., F/O
TT	Hardin, Joe A., Sgt
BT	Miller, Raymond M., Sgt
RO	Howell, Melvin, Sgt
TG	Parker, George F., Sgt
WG	Dussliere, Albert L., Sgt

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

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 #42-39885 *Sweet Rose O'Grady*

P	Richter, George K., 2Lt
CP	McMullen, Robert A., 2Lt
NAV	Thompson, John M., 2Lt
BOM	Ralph, William L., S/Sgt
TT	Bates, Grover P., T/Sgt
BT	Smith, Donald S., Sgt
RO	Kemmerer, Alfred G., Sgt
TG	Chisholm, Robert E., Sgt
WG	Vernon, James D., Sgt

427th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists - Cont'd.

B-17G #42-39875 *Buzz Blonde*

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 #42-31060 *Poque Ma Hone*

P Barrat, Robert J., 2Lt
CP Harvey, Dean, 2Lt
NAV Best, Shirl P., F/O
BOM Karp, William T., Sgt
TT Reiss, Raymond F., Sgt
BT Linhart, Louis N., Sgt
RO Lazarowicz, Matthew, Sgt
TG Wiencek, Edward J., S/Sgt
WG Link, Herbert D., Sgt

B-17G #43-37597 *Earthquake McGoon*

P Turinsky, George, 2Lt
CP Shaughnessy, William J., F/O
NAV Witchey, Francis M., F/O
BOM Renaud, Robert K., Sgt
TT Wismer, Donald E., Sgt
BT Newman, Harold E., Sgt
RO Breedlove, Edwin N., T/Sgt
TG Witcher, Marvin E., Sgt
WG Ray, Paul, Sgt

TALES OF A CREW CHIEF

by James C. Hicks

Crew Chief of #43-37537 *Queen of Hearts* PFF 359BS (BN-Q)

The writer of this story notes that of the many World War II Army Air Corps stories that have been written, most all have been about the men that flew the planes. While this story is not meant to take away from them, it is dedicated to all those who worked on the ground, and how accomplished the seemingly unending, and at times uncolorful but most necessary, tasks. This is a true story from memory as it happened.

Fate, many times, it seems, causes great and/or big decisions to be made. This one may not be great, but it loomed big on the morning that it happened.

Sometime near half way through the War, I was given the crew chiefs job on a new B-17. This wasn't a position that I had pursued, but I wasn't surprised to get it. I had attended two air tech schools including a special B-17 school that Boeing Aircraft Company had set up in Seattle, Washington.



B-17G #43-37537 Queen of Hearts 359BS PFF (BN-Q) Ground Crew

*(L-R) Sgt Charles G. Beck, Sgt James B. Warren,
T/Sgt James C. Hicks (Crew Chief), Sgt Homer C. Dillon*

I had received further training under M/Sgts. Fletcher Helton, Leonard Gray and Clyde DeWald, all top Crew Chiefs. Gray was also an outstanding diplomat and DeWald was a master manager. These men went a long way in preparing me for what was to come.

So, with a new ground crew and a new air crew, we took off on putting this B-17, named "Queen of Hearts," on as many missions as was possible. We got along well with the pilot and his crew. There were

problems but none that we couldn't solve. This was a good aircraft. Then one day after 20 to 25 missions, I was called in and told to get my plane ready to fly out to a depot for a few days, because it was going to be converted to a radar pathfinder aircraft.

This was the beginnings of things I had never dreamed of. It called for a mission lead or standby lead crew, most every mission. If it didn't fly, it was used for one or two practice missions that day, and had to be ready again the next day, at our base or any one of the bases in our 41st Combat Wing.

The usual procedure for the lead aircraft was, if the lead crew was from our base, it left from the plane's usual parking hard stand. Sometimes a lead crew would be flown or jeeped in from another Group and would leave from our parking pad.

But by far the more usual was that we, the plane's armorer and the crew chief, be flown by a skeleton flight crew with the plane to the base from which the crew would lead. With these flights we helped as engineer and when there was only a pilot, we helped with the co-pilot chores. After mission take-off, we were either flown or jeeped back to our base, or we remained to come back with the plane after the mission.

To get along with the story, as this night progressed, the armorer carried out the loading of the bombs and the armament chores, and I cared for the needs of the ship. Then at pre-flight time the armorer helped with the props and run up. It was at such a time as this that the problem came about.

We had accomplished everything including gas tank top off after run up. Joe, the armorer, was resting. Night was fading and I, as I guess all crew chiefs before a mission, was not at complete ease by any means. Not that the ship wasn't in good condition. I thought it was. In fact I knew it was. But would the crew this day, a different crew with a Colonel, or very possibly a General, would be assigned as the pilot. They would be new to me, as compared to a regular crew. However, I hastily say that lead crews were easy to get along with and certainly not nit-pickers.

Daylight had arrived. I walked around the ship just looking it over and thinking, then I heard it—suddenly, on the other side of the plane. It sounded like a stream of water splattering on the concrete, but it wasn't water. It was a full stream of gasoline coming out of the main tank overflow. I immediately was thinking fast and talking out loud to myself, asking a most pressing question, "What am I gonna do?"

I knew the crew arrival was imminent and as thought encompassed my mind, I immediately surmised the cause. Some 7 or 8 missions back, we had a "Tokyo Tank" control valve line shot out. To repair the line was simple with a line splice. However, Boeing must have thought there would never be any problem with this as there was no provision made to replenish the fluid that was lost, while the line was out of commission.

The control for this valve was a metal bellows with a close and release handle. Compressing the bellows closed the valve via the fluid (kerosene) in the line. To replenish the fluid, one of our flight chiefs made a bracket that stretched the bellows. We then drilled a hole in the top and by awkwardness and messiness, the bellows was filled and then the hole had to be soldered up.

But solder doesn't always do too well in the presence of kerosene. So this then was the problem—a solder seep, just enough to crack the "Tokyo valve" and allow the main tank to be slowly overfilled. I knew that as soon as the engines were started that the gas would stop the vent overflow, but what pilot and crew were going to take an aircraft in this shape. No way.

The solution. I had a fairly sharp pocket knife, but wood in England was as scarce as hens' teeth. However, I was fortunate in finding a piece of sufficient size to whittle a plug. Yep! I plugged the vent with a wooden peg. I was confident of the decision. I felt good about it, and I didn't sweat the mission any more than others. The aircraft made the mission, no problem, and at the first good chance, I pulled the peg, put it in my pocket and after many months, I disposed of it. Today's regret is that I didn't bring it home from the war.

Needless to say, the first chore upon arriving back at the home base, was to re-repair the seeping bellows. This, then was the day that the "Queen of Hearts" —a radar lead aircraft was put over the target by a "wooden peg."