

303rd BG (H) Combat Mission No. 300

10 January 1945

Targets: Airfield at Bonn/Hangelar, Germany,
Euskirchen, Brilon and Cologne, Germany

Crews Dispatched: 39

Crews Lost: Lt. Gates, 2 KIA, 3 POW, 5 RTD;
Lt. Smith, 2 POW, 7 RTD; Lt. Statton, 1 KIA, 8 RTD

Length of Mission: 6 hours, 40 minutes

Bomb Load: 38 x 100 lb M30 G.P. bombs

Bombing Altitudes: 27,500, 24,500 & 18,000 ft

Ammo Fired: 0 rounds

The considerable excitement at the briefing reflected the men's enthusiasm over the 303rd BG(H)'s 300th combat mission — the first Bomb Group to reach this historical mark. The mission itself was unsuccessful due to an unusual high number of foul-ups. Bad weather, snow and winds caused considerable take-off trouble.

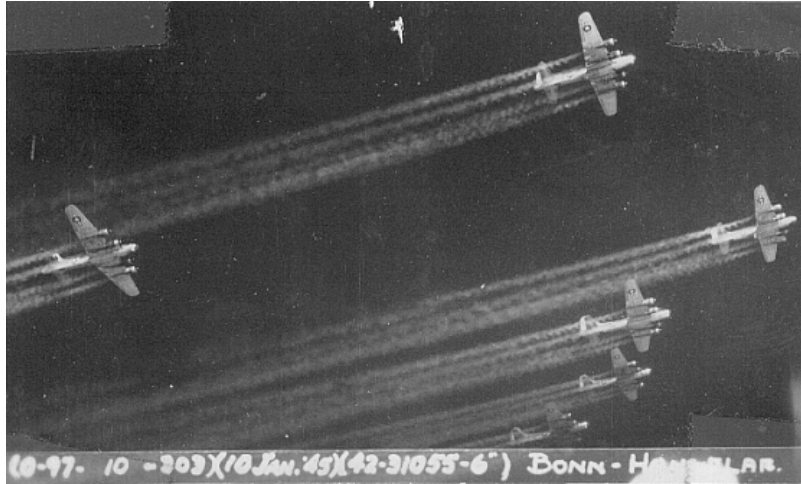
Thirty-nine B-17s were dispatched to attack the Bonn/Hangelar landing ground in Germany. The secondary target was a marshalling yard in Cologne and the last resort, an airfield at Limburg. In the target areas, there were 2/10 to 3/10 middle clouds with tops at 16,000 feet, 8/10 to 10/10 thin cirrus clouds with tops at 26,000 feet, and dense, persistent contrails. These conditions made formation flying and bombing difficult.

Fortress #42-107206 *Old Black Magic*, 359BS, (2Lt **Tarvid**), returned early because of a sheared prop shaft. He landed at Kimbolton. #42-102411 *Miss Lace*, 427BS, piloted by F/O Julius C. **Demian**, landed at Field A-69, Laon/Athies, France. The crew returned to Molesworth one week later.

A scouting aircraft, #42-31055 *Aloha*, 360BS, piloted by LtCol William S. **Raper**, flew the mission alongside the 41st CBW-A formation of the 379BG. 303rd BG(H) Targets were as follows:

City	# of Bombs	No. of Aircraft				Results
		Lead	Low	High	Total	
1. Bonn/Hangelar	466	—	—	13	13	Fair
2. Cologne	152	—	4	—	4	Poor
3. Euskirchen	225*	1	6	—	7	Unobserved
4. Brilon	266	8	—	—	8	Poor
5. Unknown	48	—	1	—	1	Unobserved
6. Jettisoned	226	4	1	—	5	Unobserved
Bombs returned	4	—	—	—	—	
Abort mission		—	1	—	1	
Total	1371	13	13	13	39	
*Also ten nickle containers (leaflets)						

There were no enemy aircraft opposition and friendly fighter support was provided by the 137 P-51s and 54 P-47s scheduled for the 1st AD on a free-lance basis. Flak was intense and accurate at Bonn, moderate and accurate at Cologne, and moderate and fairly accurate at Euskirchen. Thirteen aircraft received battle damage — six minor and three major, category E.



B-17 # 44-6502, 359BS, piloted by 1Lt. Cecil J. **Gates**, was hit by flak at the target and was losing altitude. The #1 engine was out and feathered, #2 was burning, and #3 was windmilling. Interphone communication was inoperable. The only working compass was the pilot's magnetic compass. Lt. **Gates** was almost standing on the left rudder with the control yoke nearly to his chest attempting

to maintain control. At the urging of Lt. Benjamin L. **O'Dell**, Lt. **Gates** turned west in an attempt to make it past Allied lines. There was a 100% overcast below, the Battle of the Bulge was raging, and the battle lines, per briefing, were fluid. It was also apparent that a safe descent could not be made through the overcast with the flight instruments out. Lt. **Gates** sent Lt. **O'Dell** back to the waist to bail out the six enlisted men. They were briefed on the direction to walk, to take cover and try to evade capture. The German speaking Y-operator, Sgt. Paul H. **Hassler**, realized that he would probably be executed if captured and was reluctant to jump. He bailed out with the other EMs when it was explained that he had no choice. After reporting that the EMs were out, Lt. **O'Dell** and the other three officers parachuted from the aircraft somewhere between Neufchateau and Florenville, Belgium.

The EMs landed behind enemy lines. S/Sgts. Walter **Wysocki** and Emil **Kayrallah** were captured and killed by Germans. Sgt. **Hassler**, the counter intelligence Y-operator, landed several miles southeast of St. Vith. He spent several days and nights in the Ardennes Forest and was rescued by advancing Allied tanks after being overlooked by the retreating Germans. The other three EMs, S/Sgt. Charles E. **Maurer**, Sgt. Richard D. **Duerr** and S/Sgt. Christopher **Tarnava**, were captured by German soldiers and made POWs.

Three officers landed in Allied territory. Lt. **O'Dell**, with the help of French speaking Belgians, members of the F.F.I., was reunited with American troops. Lt. **O'Dell** was greeted by a very nervous Lieutenant with a Thompson machine gun who stated, "Don't move or I'll cut you in two." He was afraid that Lt. **O'Dell** was one of the English speaking Germans that had parachuted into the Ardennes and that it might be a trap. After following the now famous method of identification — baseball, football, movies, geography, state capitals, cities, etc., he was transported to a command post. While awaiting transport back to England he managed to spend two days with his brother near St. Nazaire, visited Paris and

returned to Molesworth on 19 January. His nine day ordeal and 30th and last required mission was over. Lt. **Gates**, 2Lt. Theodore T. **Zapora** and 2Lt. Harold F. **Elliott** managed to return to base.

Sgt. **Duerr** recalled that after parachuting he landed near Florenville, Belgium and was free for about three hours before being captured. He was a member of the Lt. Henry C. **Embrey** crew flying as a substitute with the Lt. **Gates** crew on his 15th mission. His bail-out landing was in a wooded area. His feet hit some tree branches, upending him and causing him to hit the ground head first. He was knocked unconscious and came to with a terrific headache and numerous cuts and bruises. A short time later he met up with the waist gunner, S/Sgt. **Tarnava**. They were walking on a snow covered road along a wooded hillside when they were spotted by a retreating German column and captured. A young German soldier told them that he had spent the day placing mines in the area that they would have walked through and would have been blown to pieces if they hadn't been captured. Fate is indeed strange in war. Sgt. **Duerr** was placed in a German hospital with a fractured skull. The supplies in the German field hospital were so slim that they were using paper for bandages and had very few drugs. Amputations were being performed because of a lack of medicine to patch up the wounded. There was no food and no beds. He then entered the POW stream and was liberated about four months later by Patton's 3rd Army.



GRAFTON N. SMITH CREW - 427th BS

(crew assigned 427BS: 01 Dec 1944 - photo: Sioux City, Iowa AAB, Oct 1944)
 (Back L-R) Sgt Joe A. Hardin (E), 1Lt Grafton N. Smith (P), 2Lt William F. Dohm (B),
 2Lt Melvin Alderman (CP) - (2nd Row L-R) 2Lt Edward W. Gardner, Jr. (N),
 S/Sgt George F. Parker (R), Sgt Albert L. Dussliere (WG), Sgt Raymond M. Miller (BT)
 (Front) Sgt Melvin Howell (TG)

#42-39875 *Buzz Blonde*, 427BS, piloted by 1Lt. Grafton N. **Smith**, collided with #42-97861 just after "bombs away" at the Hangelar Airfield. There were dense contrails and Lt. Melvin **Alderman** applied full power to stay in formation. He suddenly spotted *Iza Vailable III* with its tail down and nose up and collided. The B-17 was tossed about violently for about two minutes. Bombardier 2Lt Edward W. **Gardner**, Jr., and navigator, F/O William F. **Dohm**, bailed out due to damage in the nose and their belief that the B-17 was out of control. Their oxygen system, interphones and

heating equipment were out at 27,000 feet. With the temperature at -60 degrees, Lt. **Alderman** brought his aircraft under control and made a wheels up landing at Field A-97 in Sandweiler, Luxembourg. Lt. **Gardner** and F/O **Dohm** were captured and became POWs.



ROY F. STATTON CREW - 360th BS

B-17G Idaliza #42-97546 PU-E

(crew assigned 360BS: 22 Dec 1944 - photo 03 Jan 1945)

(Back L-R) Sgt William H. Rhodes (E), 2Lt Thomas R. Donahue (N), 2Lt David A. Schroll (CP),
1Lt Roy F. Statton (P) - (Front L-R) T/Sgt Charles D. Knowles (R), Sgt Robert W. Koci (BT),
Sgt Gordon H. Maxson (WG), Sgt Marion M. Mooney (TG), Sgt Heiber J. Woods (TOG)

#42-97861, *Iza Vailable III*, 360BS, piloted by 2Lt. Roy F. **Statton**, was at 26,700 feet when its nose suddenly went up. Lt. **Statton** and co-pilot, Lt. David A. **Schroll**, jointly exerted control pressure to bring the nose down. They believed that they had been hit by flak. The autopilot was used to control the aircraft which had dropped to 25,000 feet. The waist gunner reported that the tail gun position had been knocked off and that Tail Gunner, Sgt. Marion M. **Mooney**, was missing. He was wearing his parachute at the time. The accident and poor weather conditions forced Lt. **Statton** to drop behind the formation and make an emergency landing at airfield B-53 at Merville, France. An examination of the tail indicated that it had been hit by another aircraft. Lts. **Statton** and **Schroll** were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for their skill in controlling and landing their damaged B-17. Sgt. **Mooney** is buried in Ardennes American Cemetery near Liege, Belgium.

Pilot Roy F. **Statton** later wrote of the incident:

My copilot, Lt. David Schroll, and I literally had to put our feet up on the control column to force the nose down and prevent stalling out. We fell out of formation far below our bombing altitude of 27,000 feet. My navigator, Lt Thomas Donahue, crawled back into the bomb bay to check the damage. I can still hear him saying, "Mooney is gone and part

of our tail section is missing!" As we made a left turn away from the target, the B-17 above and to my right accidentally cut into my tail section severing the tail gunner's compartment. Most of the damage was to the vertical stabilizer.

Naturally we headed west toward France. It began to snow and visibility kept getting worse. Then my radio operator, S/Sgt Charlie Knowles, saved the day by picking up a call signal from an emergency air field at Merville, France. I'll always remember that the call sign for this radio was "Martini." We headed for this signal.

I was slowly losing altitude. We weren't sure how much fuel we had remaining. We were directly over the radio signal, but I couldn't see any runways. It was blanketed by snow. We began to circle and I spotted a fire. They had started a fire in a gasoline drum at the end of the runway. I made my approach but wondered if we were too high to land safely. My co-pilot, Dave, said "the hell we are!", and promptly cut the throttles! We bumped down and slid off the runway into mud and snow, but we stopped safely.

The following letter was sent to all Group personnel by Commanding Officer, Lt. Col. William S. **Raper**:

1. "Hell's Angels" has now completed its 300th mission. We are the first heavy bombardment group having completed this number of missions from American bases in England. The importance of this figure is that it represents our share in the total war effort of the United States Armed Forces and those of our allies.

2. We had our beginning with that small force of American heavy bombers that proved to the world that daylight, high altitude, precision bombing would play a major role in the destruction of the German war machine. During the period this group has been stationed in England, its Flying Fortresses have dropped hundreds of thousands of bombs—a total weight of over 20,000 tons—on the enemy. We know the damage and devastation of our bombing has been tremendous. The 372 enemy aircraft that our gunners have destroyed, the 101 probably destroyed, and the 180 damaged, have proven that we have been ready to defend ourselves at all costs and at all times. There is another notable fact to remember. Regardless of the number of planes with which the enemy has attacked our formation, or the type of attack they have used, they have never stopped us from bombing the target. They have never made us retreat.

3. You have every reason to be very proud of our fine record and of our war effort to date. You have all worked very hard, putting in long hours under trying and adverse conditions. Your teamwork has been magnificent, and without it our accomplishments would never have been possible. However, this war is not over, and we must all continue to do everything in our power to keep this excellent record intact, and to improve it when and where we can. Our goal is a common one—total defeat of the enemy, so that we may again return to our families, our homes, and our normal way of living.

William S. Raper
Lt. Colonel, AC, Commanding

**HEADQUARTERS
303RD BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)
APO 557, U.S. ARMY**

17 January, 1945

SUBJECT: Recapitulation of the Trials and Tribulations Encountered on Mission #300
Flown 10 January 1945

TO: All Concerned

1. On 10 January, 1945 we flew our 300th mission in our efforts to impress upon the HUN that war is HELL, and if possible to dissuade him from continuously beating his hard head against our impregnable wall of steel, explosives and guts. In our first 299 missions we have struck some very telling blows in our campaign of hunting the HUN in field, village and industrial area. During this same period of time we have accumulated a back log of experience and lore under practically all the adverse weather conditions that the freakish climate over here could concoct, plus some savvy on how to carry out a mission from the start to successful conclusion.

2. On mission #300 "we had it." Yes, it was tough for everyone. That so and so, known as weather, put on one of his better shows the night before to give us a rough time throughout the entire mission. It started off with a snowfall necessitating men being up all night to clear the runways and taxiways. To add to that problem, the wind decided to sweep out of the North-North-West at 15 MPH and necessitate takeoff from south to north. Under favorable weather conditions, taking off on the N-S runway is complicated and requires prompt compliance with and execution of instructions; under adverse weather conditions anything less than clockwork precision produces falling hair and a condition best described as "FUBAR" [Fouled Up Beyond All Recognition]. Numerous things happened at takeoff time to complicate our mouse maze, such as changing aircraft, running off the perimeter track, taxiing at the wrong time, not having all necessary equipment in the A/C, cracking up on take off, finding A/C not loaded, etc. We tried to run the gauntlet on our 300th mission and about the only thing we missed was cracking up on take off. The right wheel on one A/C would not roll so that it slid around as if it were on skates — this was one of the Squadron Lead A/C and as a result it took off late. Also we had one A/C run off the perimeter track due to a loss of hydraulic pressure in the brake lines. Needless to say there have been lectures, written poop, ad infinitum, about turning on Numbers 1 and 4 generators while taxiing to maintain power to run the hydraulic motor to keep up the pressure in the hydraulic system but the generators were not turned on so the brakes were not working when needed. This delayed the take off of 7 A/C for an hour. In addition we had an epidemic of taxiing at the wrong time on the part of A/C loaned out which were taking off from here as well as our own scheduled A/C. The Lead Squadron, the High Squadron (minus its leader) and 5 A/C of the Low Squadron assembled as briefed. The A/C taking off late assembled over the field and were to intercept the remainder of the formation over Clacton. The intended rendezvous was not made due to lack of information as to the time of the Group's departure from the coast, resulting from poor VHF contact. These 7 A/C had to tack on as a Low Low Squadron of another Group and bomb on them. Fortunately all the A/C got back to base, although their formation broke up on the return route due to clouds plus poor VHF contact. The breaking up of a formation is dangerous because of the loss of defensive power and due to the relatively

poor fighter support there were a lot of clay pigeons in the air for the LUFTWAFFE to practice on. We don't want them to get too much gunnery practice as it has a tendency to be fatal at the time and also the practice might give them the necessary training to become aerial sharpshooters. Crews have been known to be lost from that condition.

3. The main portion of our effort stayed together until the I.P. was reached. From the I.P. to the target we again ran the gauntlet of all the things that shouldn't happen to our worst enemy. Even the good Lord is confused as to just what went on. The A/C turned on to the bomb run in formation in good order. The Leader of the Low Squadron (small size) lost an engine and had to fall out of formation, the Deputy Lead took over. The Group Leader was having trouble with his GH signals as they were a bit on the puny side. A break in the clouds came to their rescue for a possible visual run. That was fine, except that the snow on the ground very thoroughly camouflaged the landmarks, check points, etc., and the Bombardier found himself on the wrong target. Corrections were made in an attempt to get on the right target. The corrections resulted in causing the High and Low Squadron (small size) to lose the Lead Squadron.

4. The Lead Squadron intended to make a 360 degree turn and make a visual run on the proper target. During the process of turning, half the bombs in the Deputy Lead went away. "We'd had it again." About half the A/C in the formation dropped on him. This fact was reported to the Group Leader, but unfortunately it was over-emphasized and magnified. This put him between a rock and a hard place. There was no point in leading the entire squadron through a hell hole of flak so that one A/C could drop its bombs, so he did the next best thing which was to pick out a target of opportunity. Imagine his amazement when it was reported that 8 other A/C dropped their bombs with him. It is necessary that when crew members give information to the pilot it be accurate and if there is a question in your mind as to the accuracy of the information, you should so state so that he can take the necessary steps to secure more accurate information. Under the weather conditions that existed, namely "con" trails plus high clouds with tops at 26,000 feet, the problem of accurate observation was difficult, if not close to impossible. Conclusions or general statements without qualifications made on such a basis to a person who has to make a decision is worse than handing him a "T.S. TICKET."

5. The High Squadron and Low Squadron (junior type) made individual 360 degree turns and attacked the primary target visually. To top it all, when the A/C returned to Base the A/C that had the accidental release did not report it and the information had to be secured from another source. When you get back from a mission you want to forget about it and go to eat or shower or some such thing and you have earned it, but unfortunately, Group Headquarters has to live with it for a while afterwards, and answer some very potent and pertinent "Whys and How Come." It is easier on all concerned to give thorough and accurate information at the start.

6. We did get a nice write up in the "STARS AND STRIPES" for the mission, didn't we?

s/s Edgar E. Snyder, Jr.
Lt. Col., AC
Deputy Commanding Officer

Aircraft Formation at Assembly Point - Group A

	<u>Mackin-Johnson</u> 44-8238 - PFF	
<u>Gmernicki</u> 462	<u>Goodberlet</u> 554	<u>Snider</u> 439 - PFF
<u>McLeod</u> 006		<u>Freeman</u> 191
<u>Heckendorf</u> 065		<u>Aagesen</u> 621
<u>Walter</u> 949	<u>Garrett</u> 530	<u>Reed</u> 248
		<u>Poole</u> 38238
		<u>Ayers</u> 060



(No Name) #44-8238 (358BS) VK-Y
41st CBW-C Lead (358BS) - Pilot Maj G.T. Mackin / CoPilot Capt H.B. Johnson

Aircraft Formation at Assembly Point - Group B

Haynes-Embrey
137 - PFF

Fravel Gates
258 502

Tasker
645

Harding Rybaltowski
944 609

Holmes Petersen
619 734

Proffitt Tarvid McGinnis Eisenhart
608 206 099 763

_____ Stocks
 682

Aircraft Formation at Assembly Point - Group C

Mosel-Schuchard
484 - PFF

Connelly Muth
842 546

Kallet
451

Fink Statton
517 861

Hardin Wertz
647 311

Brown Armfield Smith Demian
544 532 875 411

_____ Weaver
 860

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 #42-97949 (No Name)

P	Walter, Donald R., 2Lt
CP	Thornton, Everett H., 2Lt
NAV	Wynam, Asa H., F/O
BOM	Leonhirth, Junius, F/O
ENG	Schroeder, Karl T., Sgt
TG	Hudler, Billie E., Sgt
RO	Kasik, Robert F., Sgt
BT	Sexton, Norman R., Sgt
WG	Meade, Joseph J., Sgt

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

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 #43-38238 (No Name)

P	Poole, Lawrence E., 2Lt
CP	Cannon, Harley E., 2Lt
NAV	Guerrieri, Joe C., F/O
TOG	Kedzierski, Edward P., S/Sgt
ENG	Pullen, Rayford E., Sgt
WG	Kinsland, Harry D., Sgt
RO	Hoke, Marvin L., Sgt
BT	Garza, David, S/Sgt
TG	Kindred, Beryl E., Sgt

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

P	Gmernicki, Richard H., 1Lt
CP	Judd, Chester G., 2Lt
NAV	Jones, William M., 2Lt
BOM	Denning, Glenn J., S/Sgt
WG	McClymont, John W., S/Sgt
ENG	Griffith, Elwood A., T/Sgt
RO	Calenberg, Raymond N., Sgt
BT	Greenberg, Bernard, Sgt
TG	Henn, Thomas A., Sgt

B-17G #43-38065 *Princess Pat 2*

P	Heckendorf, Marvin H., 1Lt
CP	Erickson, Robert L., 2Lt
NAV	McCorkle, Robert W., F/O
TOG	Weaver, Robert J., S/Sgt
ENG	Gallman, Hubert W., T/Sgt
WG	Barris, Robert L., Sgt
RO	Windle, Bill, T/Sgt
TG	Koerner, David M., Sgt
BT	Lary, Raymond W., Sgt

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

P	McLeod, William S., 2Lt
CP	Elkins, Richard A., 2Lt
NAV	Hopkins, William B., 2Lt
BOM	O'Donnell, Robert E., F/O
ENG	DeWillers, Edgar, Sgt
WG	Johnson, Vernon W., Sgt
RO	Guenin, Wayne E., T/Sgt
BT	Nichols, William A., Jr., Sgt
TG	James, Frank M., Sgt

358th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists - Cont'd.

B-17G #44-8439 (No Name) - PFF

P	Snider, Harley D., 2Lt
CP	Thompson, John A., 2Lt
NAV	Fearn, Charles A., 2Lt
NAV	Koran, William C., 1Lt
NAV	Foltz, Leon P., 2Lt
BOM	Kruckemeyer, Thomas J., 2Lt
ENG	Work, John R., T/Sgt
WG	Kudder, Edward P., Sgt
RO	Ludington, Robert S., T/Sgt
TG	Wade, Murray W., S/Sgt
PAS	Sullivan, Allen F., Col

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

P	Garrett, Charles E., 2Lt
CP	Castillo, Joseph L.A., 2Lt
NAV	Magner, John H., Jr., F/O
BOM	Cox, Lyle M., S/Sgt
ENG	Hohstadt, Hollis H., Sgt
WG	Prudhoe, Charles E., Sgt
RO	Henson, Jessey B., Sgt
BT	Walczak, John, Sgt
TG	Van Cleave, Joseph A., Sgt
	(Abortive Sortie)

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

P	Mackin, George T., Maj
CP	Johnson, Hugh B., Capt
NAV	Hunt, Jackson H., 1Lt
NAV	Garrett, Robert M., 1Lt
NAV	Zarelli, Michael L., 1Lt
BOM	Sachau, William D., 1Lt
ENG	Edwards, Eugene F., T/Sgt
RO	Carter, Robert D., T/Sgt
TG	Kunkel, Joe T., 2Lt
WG	Beck, Harold P., S/Sgt
PAS	Connors, Paul V., Correspondent

B-17G #43-38191 Shasta

P	Freeman, Clyde E., 1Lt
CP	Sims, Allen R., 2Lt
NAV	Feezel, Ralph S., 2Lt
BOM	Cooper, Ray A., S/Sgt
ENG	Fleck, Peter J., S/Sgt
TG	Caporusso, Frank J., Sgt
RO	VanLier, Donald E., S/Sgt
WG	Middleton, James C., Sgt
BT	Chesney, Alan D., Sgt
PAS	Conrad, Joseph, S/Sgt

359th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

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., S/Sgt
TG	Bartkowski, Edward L., Sgt
WG	Hrych, Robert C., S/Sgt

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

P	Rybaltowski, Vincent, 2Lt
CP	Olson, John A., 2Lt
NAV	Swenson, Glen R., 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 #43-38608 Lucille

P	Proffitt, John S., 1Lt
CP	McDowell, James B., 2Lt
NAV	Finke, John C., 2Lt
TOG	Connor, Joseph C., 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

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	Schilling, Lawrence C., Sgt
TG	Driver, Arthur H., Sgt
WG	Van Ornum, Charles S., Sgt

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

P	Stocks, Jack E., 2Lt
CP	Marsh, John F., 2Lt
NAV	Anstrom, Ronald A., 2Lt
TOG	Goudy, William F., S/Sgt
ENG	Copp, Edmond D., Sgt
RO	Fiore, John, Sgt
BT	Hamilton, John W., Sgt
TG	Daniel, Nauphet F., Sgt
WG	Schoonover, Howard D., Sgt

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

359th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists - Cont'd.

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

P	Fravel, Harold L., 2Lt
CP	Tilsen, Cyril, 2Lt
NAV	Bielski, Casimir, Jr., 2Lt
BOM	Barger, Donald T., 2Lt
ENG	Driggers, Sherod R., Jr., S/Sgt
RO	Mawdsley, Arnold, Cpl
BT	Hendon, William G., Pvt
TG	Proctor, Isaac H., Cpl
WG	Cassino, Julian R, Cpl

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

P	Tarvid, Arthur J., 2Lt
CP	Grandwilliams, Louis C., F/O
NAV	Hudson, Glenn V., 2Lt
BOM	Webber, Gale M., 2Lt
ENG	Jenkins, Maurice L., Sgt
RO	Root, Carmen W., Sgt
BT	Muchmore, Gale F., Sgt
TG	Dimick, Richard D., Sgt
WG	Carlson, Dale H., Sgt
(Abortive)	

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

P	Haynes, Charles D., 1Lt
CP	Embrey, Henry C., 1Lt
NAV	Moon, Richard Y., 2Lt
MN	Estes, Keith E., 1Lt
BOM	Mitchell, Robert C., 2Lt
ENG	Humphrey, William B., T/Sgt
RO	Eagon, Dennis G., T/Sgt
WG	Ogborn, Maurice E., 2Lt
WG	Gavin, William R., Sgt

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

P	Gates, Cecil J., 2Lt	BO/RTD
CP	Zapora, Theodore T., 2Lt	BO/RTD
NAV	O'Dell, Benjamin L., 1Lt	BO/RTD
BOM	Elliott, Harold F., 2Lt	BO/RTD
ENG	Wysocki, Walter, S/Sgt	BO/POW/KIA
RO	Maurer, Charles E., S/Sgt	BO/POW
BT	Duerr, Richard D., Sgt	BO/POW
TG	Kayrallah, Emil, S/Sgt	BO/POW/KIA
WG	Tarnava, Christopher, Sgt	BO/POW
VI	Hassler, Paul H., S/Sgt	BO/RTD

360th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

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

P	Armfield, John M., 2Lt
CP	Marten, Dudley V., 2Lt
NAV	Stewart, James L., 2Lt
BOM	Mishtal, Theodore W., 2Lt
ENG	Lemon, James M., Jr., Sgt
RO	Haynes, Donald L., Sgt
BT	Relford, Robert, S/Sgt
TG	Davis, Jesse W., Sgt
WG	Goggin, Edward F., Sgt

B-17G #44-8647 (No Name)

P	Hardin, Thomas H., Jr., 1Lt
CP	Kacus, Alexander, F/O
NAV	Hiebeler, George E., 2Lt
BOM	Driver, Henderson M., Jr., S/Sgt
ENG	Mikulich, Stanley, T/Sgt
RO	Kasper, Raymond H., S/Sgt
BT	Crawford, Frank J., S/Sgt
TG	Bialobrzieski, Joseph C., S/Sgt
WG	Sersland, Paul V., Sgt

B-17G #42-102544 Sack Time

P	Brown, William W., 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	Johnson, David T., S/sgt
WG	Miller, Donald E., Sgt

B-17G #44-6517 Old Cock

P	Fink, Marvin P., 1Lt
CP	Reeves, Howard E., 2Lt
NAV	Hand, Robert A., 2Lt
BOM	Friedlander, Henry, 1Lt
ENG	Holder, Jack E., Sgt
RO	Dahl, Robert F., Sgt
BT	Albright, Richard M., S/Sgt
TG	Garcia, Cyprian M., Sgt
WG	Peter, Robert C., Sgt

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

P	Kallet, Sidney, 1Lt
CP	Bristol, Clarence D., 2Lt
NAV	Divine, Fred H., 2Lt
BOM	Harrison, Lewis S., 2Lt
ENG	Lewis, William J., S/Sgt
RO	Clarke, Frank W., S/Sgt
BT	Macy, Edward J., Sgt
TG	Terreri, Joseph, Sgt
WG	Killelea, Raymond J., Sgt

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

P	Weaver, Jack W., 1Lt
CP	Chalmers, John D., F/O
NAV	Polkabila, William J., 2Lt
BOM	Giancola, James V., S/Sgt
ENG	Murphy, Jason, S/Sgt
RO	Cole, Robert L., S/Sgt
BT	Lardie, Thomas D., Sgt
TG	Yepes, William J., Sgt
WG	Bailey, Arthur L., Sgt

360th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists - Cont'd.

B-17G #42-97546 *Idaliza*

P	Muth, Clifford F., 2Lt
CP	Edmunds, Robert E., 2Lt
NAV	Lofquist, Gordon B., 2Lt
BOM	Perry, Franklin W., 2Lt
ENG	Hammel, Norman D., Sgt
RO	Polo, Matthew N., Sgt
BT	Farnham, Gordon W., Sgt
TG	Rumberger, Frank C., Sgt
WG	King, Raymond H., Sgt

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

P	Connelly, Ben L., 1Lt
CP	White, Raymond E., 2Lt
NAV	Levin, Albert, 1Lt
BOM	Shelley, David R., 1Lt
ENG	Kress, Richard R., T/Sgt
RO	Barton, Forrest E., T/Sgt
TG	Bur, Robert D., Sgt
BT	Hulterstrum, Joseph P., S/Sgt
WG	Koppes, Carl A., S/Sgt

Scout A/C

B-17G #42-31055 *Aloha*

P	Raper, William S., LtCol (Hdqs)
CP	Duffield, Richard B., 1Lt
NAV	Hitt, Kenneth S., F/O (427th)
NAV	Jacobsen, N.N., Capt (Hdqs)
ENG	Bostick, George F., T/Sgt
RO	Lillis, Joseph D., T/Sgt
TG	Carter, James O., Sgt
WG	Wotanis, Lee F., Sgt

B-17G #42-97861 *Iza Vailable III*

P	Statton, Roy F., 2Lt
CP	Schroll, David A., 2Lt
NAV	Donahue, Thomas R., 2Lt
BOM	Bays, Gordon C., 2Lt
ENG	Rhodes, William H., Sgt
RO	Knowles, Charles D., Sgt
BT	Koci, Robert W., Sgt
TG	Mooney, Marion M., Sgt
WG	Maxson, Gordon H., Sgt

KIA

B-17G #44-8484 (*No Name*) - PFF

P	Mosel, Arnold, 1Lt
CP	Schuchard, Virgil R., 2Lt
NAV	Mundell, William K., 2Lt
NAV	Wilson, Thomas E., 1Lt
BOM	Rudolph, Gabriel, 1Lt
ENG	Conley, Donald H., T/Sgt
RO	Schneider, Dale E., T/Sgt
BT	Evans, Ralph V., S/Sgt
WG	Peterson, Robert E., S/Sgt
TG	Moody, William S., 2Lt

427th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

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

P	Smith, Grafton N., 1Lt
CP	Alderman, Melvin, 2Lt
NAV	Gardner, Edward W., Jr., 2Lt BO/POW
BOM	Dohm, William F., F/O BO/POW
TT	Massingill, D.L., Sgt
BT	Miller, Raymond M., Sgt
RO	Howell, Melvin, Sgt
TG	Parker, George F., Sgt
WG	Dussliere, Albert L., Sgt

B-17G #42-102411 *Miss Lace*

P	Demian, Julius C., F/O
CP	McKeon, Preston W., 2Lt
NAV	Tractman, Bernard L., F/O
BOM	Rubins, William R., F/O
TT	Leach, Harry L., Sgt
BT	Wilson, Alfred D., Sgt
RO	Lombardi, Donato J., Sgt
TG	Buford, Thomas A., Sgt
WG	Ross, Joseph M., Jr., Sgt

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

P	Wertz, Robert M., 1Lt
CP	Durst, Melvin A., 2Lt
NAV	Emick, Richard M., 2Lt
TOG	Tambe, Angelo J., T/Sgt
TT	Warne, Ralph W., Sgt
BT	Jensen, Kenneth E., Sgt
RO	Giering, Edward J., Sgt
TG	Bennett, Kenneth A., Sgt
WG	Campbell, Walter C., Sgt

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

P	McGinnis, Martin S., Capt
CP	Doscher, Frederick C., 2Lt
NAV	Blessing, Gerald, 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 #42-31060 *Poque Ma Hone*

P	Ayers, Roger D, 2Lt
CP	Danna, Joseph, 2Lt
NAV	Wagner, Charles D., 2Lt
BOM	Cohen, Leonard, F/O
TT	Rys, Valentine J., Sgt
BT	Bailey, George E., Sgt
RO	Morris, Allen L., Sgt
TG	Turkovich, Charles J., Sgt
WG	Clarkson, Robert T., Sgt

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

P	Eisenhart, Oliver T., 2Lt
CP	McCullough, Henry W., 2Lt
NAV	Herrick, Maurice R., 2Lt
BOM	Joyce, Herring, Jr., F/O
TT	Hindman, Samuel M., Sgt
BT	Kimber, William V., Sgt
RO	Kaufman, Bernard S., S/Sgt
TG	Conaway, Therman F., Sgt
WG	Thompson, Jack, Jr., Sgt

427th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists - Cont'd.

B-17G #43-38621 50 Ragged

P	Aagesen, Donald C., 2Lt
CP	Ayling, Peter D., 2Lt
NAV	Minnis, Karl, 2Lt
TOG	Gray, Paul A., S/Sgt
TT	Ellis, Paul R., Sgt
BT	Calderon, Reuben J., Sgt
RO	Bledsoe, Clinton A., S/Sgt
TG	Lindeman, Henry E., Sgt
WG	Ribesky, John V., Jr., T/Sgt
(Abortive Sortie)	

B-17G #43-38248 Jigger Rooche II

P	Reed, Louis E., 2Lt
CP	Turinsky, George, 2Lt
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
(Abortive Sortie)	

B-17G #43-38734 Cheshire Cat

P	Petersen, William H., 2Lt
CP	Candido, Anthony N., 2Lt
NAV	Bason, William A., 2Lt
TOG	Ganson, Howard H., S/Sgt
TT	Zarella, Anthony A., S/Sgt
BT	Graves, John M., Sgt
RO	Whitely, Cull W., Jr., S/Sgt
TG	Wakefield, Richard E., Sgt
WG	Tanner, Loyd H., Sgt



Crash Landing of B-17G #44-8495 (No Name) PFF 427BS (GN-Y) - 10 January 1945
 Mission with 381st BG Crew crashed at Ghent, Belgium. General Patton had recaptured this
 German airfield two days prior to the crash landing during the Battle of the Bulge.

WE REMEMBER BONN

In Memory of Melvin Alderman — Lt. Grafton N. Smith Crew

by Al Dussliere

published in the Hell's Angels Newsletter July, 1991 - Hal Susskind, Editor

December 18, 1944, during the Battle of the Bulge, we began our tour of duty with a mission to Koblenz, Germany. From the beginning up to January 10, 1945 we flew eleven more missions. Our next mission would be #13.

From the diary of Al Dussliere:

We hit a very rough one, Bonn, Germany - #13

27,000 ft., minus 50 to minus 68 degrees, Length?

Another ship collided with us - Flak and collision made a wreck of "Buzz Blonde." We lost the nose - the right wing was wrecked - horizontal stabilizer a mess. Because they had no other choice Ed and Bill bailed out - Instruments fairly well gone ...We lost altitude and headed west using the sun for navigation. Crossed front lines at 6,000. Flak was intense and accurate. Smitty and Alderman are doing a wonderful job. Finally sighted a landing strip. Smitty and Alderman gave us a choice of bailing out or sticking with them. We stuck. Together they made the most beautiful, wheels up, landing possible. After realizing we were safe we realized we had lost two of our buddies. I know they are OK. We landed in Luxembourg, 10 to 15 miles from the front lines. Town shelled every night. Spent 4 nights and days in Luxembourg. Flew to Paris and spent 5 days there and arrived back at the base Sat.

MISSION NUMBER 13

About four or five o'clock in the early morning hours of January 10, 1945 we were awakened with the cheery message, "You're flying today." The normal routines of wash, shave and breakfast followed. After breakfast we went to briefing, where we learned the primary target for the day was an airfield at Bonn/Hangelar, Germany. After briefing, some of us made our way to the Chaplain of our choice, before we gathered up our gear and caught a ride to our plane. Most of the time we had flown A/C 42-39875, Buzz Blonde, and that was our plane assignment that day. We loved that plane and more so the ground crew who kept her in great condition all the time. We were a little more nervous than usual about this mission because it was #13.

The takeoff was uneventful in spite of the snow on the field. Assembly into the formation was routine, if assembly can be considered a routine matter. The mission was uneventful until we reached the IP. Here and in the target area there were 2-3/10ths middle clouds, tops 16,000 feet, and 8-10/10ths thin cirrus clouds with dense persistent contrails. The conditions made formation flying and bombing difficult. The first run over the target accomplished nothing because the lead ship could not get its bomb bay doors open. We came around again for a second pass, but a B-24 formation came across underneath us. They were on time and on course; we were not, therefore we went around again. On the third pass, the flak guns zeroed in on the squadron quite well. We took some minor hits.

We were the left wing aircraft in the high element so the pilot G.N. Smith was flying right seat. At the IP he moved us down and in the trail of our element lead. Our high element lead was supposed to "tuck in" to the right wing aircraft of the squadron lead. This would put us close to the right of the right wing aircraft of the second element. It seems as if we made a 360 to the right followed by a short bomb run. The pilot was concentrating on his element lead aircraft. Very shortly after "bombs away" the squadron started a strong left turn, which turned us into a blinding low angle sun. At full power and almost in the contrails of our element lead we began moving to our left and up to our left wing position on the high element lead.

After "Bombs Away", the bombardier, Bill Dohm, leaned over to look out the glass nose to see the bombs hit, but lo and behold, what he saw was not what he expected to see. Instead of bombs falling there was the cockpit of another B-17 directly below the glass nose. It was so close to the Buzz Blonde he thought he could have reached down and shook hands with the engineer in the upper local turret. At this time he grabbed the "mike" button and called out on the intercom, "Pull up, pull up." Knowing this B-17 would be coming through our nose very shortly he jumped up and started a rapid exit to the catwalk. He yelled to Ed Gardner, the navigator, "Get out of here, get out of here." By this time he was beside the navigator.

The next thing that he recalled, he was on his back (head toward the tail) looking up into the cockpit. There were some ammo belts on his legs, the navigator down around his feet and a terrific blast coming from the front which was so strong he could hardly move. His helmet and oxygen mask were gone as well as his right glove. He guessed he left the glove stuck to the "mike" button. (Having volunteered several times in the pressure chamber during flight training to remove his oxygen mask to demonstrate the reaction of someone passing out from lack of oxygen, he was aware of what would happen to him and the navigator very soon if they were without oxygen very long.) He attempted to get the attention of someone in the cockpit for a "walk around" bottle of



*B-17G #42-39875 Buzz Blonde 427BS (GN-S) Ground Crew.
Crew Chief Cecil J. Whitney, 2nd from left.*

oxygen. He guessed they were too busy attempting to get control of the aircraft because they didn't get the oxygen. He and the navigator were right next to the escape hatch. He yelled at the navigator to release the hatch door and bail out. He released the door but did not bail out. He yelled again but he still hesitated. He thought he must have pushed the navigator out so he would be able to bail out. He couldn't move so he stuck, as much of his upper body out of the hatch hoping the windblast would suck him out. This must have worked because he did not remember leaving the aircraft.

The navigator saw the bombardier jump from his place in the nose, tear off all his connections and dive through the opening in the catwalk. The navigator looked to the nose and saw a black shadow, which was the vertical tail of a B-17. He got out of his seat as a collision occurred which smashed the entire nose section away to within four or five inches of the #1 bulkhead. He was spread-eagled against it, thinking he would be crushed. But at that moment we broke away and he backed into the catwalk aided by the terrible force of the bitterly cold wind.

Somehow the navigator had disconnected his heated suit, intercom, oxygen and lost his helmet and gloves. He raised himself into the flight deck and beat on the engineer's legs. He didn't respond in any way. Back in the catwalk the bombardier made motions to release the hatch door and bail out. It was then that the navigator realized that his chute was still in the nose (he hoped). Reaching into the right hand corner by the bulkhead he found the chute still there. He hooked it on the left side of the harness but could not attach the right side. Once more he tried to attract the engineer, but to no avail. He could see the pilot and co-pilot (Melvin Alderman) intently trying to fly old Buzz Blonde and slid back into the catwalk and released the hatch door. The bombardier

motioned once more to bail out, and he agreed, because he was beginning to black out. He moved toward the escape hatch as everything went black.

Ray Miller, the ball turret gunner, called out over the intercom. "Someone just bailed out, someone else bailed out. What the hell's going on up there?" He was told to get out of the ball and in record time he did. Reacting spontaneously, the pilot pulled back on the wheel, which pitched us up at a strong angle. The collision must have banked us to the left because we were banking into the aircraft of our low element. Pulling back again on the wheel we went over them into the clear beyond. When we tried to bank back right to stay with our squadron we found the ailerons were jammed in fixed position, luckily neutral. It was necessary to use the rudder for turning. It was effective but slow. We were to the left of the squadron but going in the same direction.

The crewmembers behind the bomb bay felt a tremendous jolt and heard an extremely loud noise. Most thought we had been hit by a direct burst of flak. In the waist area anything that was loose flew about. Al Dussliere, the waist gunner, was thrown forward but able to maintain his balance. He returned to his gun at the right waist window. Looking out he could not see any of the other planes in the formation and he could feel that we were pulling away to the left. He looked forward inside the plane and could see the radio operator, George Parker, who appeared to be OK. Then he looked to the rear of the plane and saw Mel Howell, the tail gunner, who also appeared to be alert and manning his guns. The wing was battered and bent and the horizontal stabilizer was a tangled mess but we were still flying and apparently in some semblance of control.

The pilot at some time during the action looked down between the pilot and co-pilot seats and saw the bombardier lying on his back without helmet or oxygen mask. They had been ripped off because of the collision. There was nothing anyone on the flight deck could do to help him. A little later he was gone. About this time the pilot realized a flap of fuselage was bent back and lying against the lower half of the windshield. At the same time he realized Number 3 engine was shaking like hell, so he feathered the prop. Looking to the right he noticed the right wing was bent in two pieces, drooping down like a wounded bird. This was the reason for the aileron jamming. About three inches were gone from the tips of Number 3 prop.

The engineer, D.L. Massengill, flying with us as a replacement, found some GI blankets and gave them to the pilot and co-pilot to wrap around their legs to shield them against the minus 68 degree wind rushing in through the open nose. The engineer was sent back to the waist to get out of the wind and inform the rest of the crew that we were going to descend to a lower altitude where it would be warmer. With three engines we couldn't keep up with the rest of the squadron.

After being pushed out of the plane the navigator said his next conscious memory was of hearing popping sounds. He opened his eyes to a grey quiet world in the clouds. He was somewhere over Germany falling freely. The popping was in his ears.

He tried to hook the chute on the right side of the harness, but with frozen hands it was an impossible job. He debated as to when to pull the ripcord but decided that he must see the ground first. Finally he broke out of the clouds; the earth appeared to be far away. He tried once more to hook the chute - it frustrated him. He touched his ears and found they were frozen crispy hard. He pushed on his right ear and the cartilage cracked.

Then it was time to try pulling the ripcord, which took many attempts because he could not use his hand. At last he hooked the little finger in the ring. The parachute opened well, but he was left dangling by one set of ropes. So far so good. He was over open country and thought possibly he could evade capture. Suddenly he heard the sound of bullets zinging by, then heard the sound

of gunfire. He looked around and saw a group of men beyond some trees; they were the source of the fire. He oscillated the parachute wildly as he came down into a snowdrift on a hillside. When he dug out of the snow there were many irate German citizens with rifles pointed at him, who were being exhorted by a Major of the SS to shoot the "terroflieger", "luftgangster", "Amerikanischer"!!

It was not to be, for several Luftwaffe personnel drove up in a German version of a jeep, ran over to him, helped him carry his chute and assisted him into the jeep. They drove away while the Major excoriated his rescuers.

The navigator was now a POW. He wondered what had happened to the bombardier, to the rest of the crew and to Buzz Blonde. For the navigator it would be many months later, after the war was over, before most of the questions would be answered.

When the bombardier regained consciousness he didn't know where he was or what was happening because he was falling with his back facing the ground and he was looking up into the sky. He looked over his shoulder and returned to reality when he saw the ground coming up and he knew where he was. He thought he was below 18,000 feet, the oxygen level, but how far he didn't know. He estimated he was at about 10,000 feet. At this time he thought it time to start opening his chute. It was a good thing because when he tried to grasp the ripcord he could not bend his fingers. His right hand was frozen as hard as a rock because of the missing glove. He

guessed it must have remained on the "mike" button when he called out, "Pull up, pull up." With his right hand out of commission, he grabbed the ripcord with his left hand and pulled like "hell". The "Man" upstairs must have helped because the chute opened and down he floated.



Crash site of #42-39875 Buzz Blonde - Photo taken in April 1945

It wasn't long before he hit the top of a barn and rolled off. His "welcome committee" was right there to welcome him to his new life in Germany.

Without a navigator or maps it was decided that we should head south toward France, stay on top of the clouds until jumped by fighters, then drop into clouds to frustrate them. The tail gunner assisted in keeping the plane on course by reporting the position of the sun. About the time we got down to the tops of the clouds there were no more clouds, also no fighters. At about 6,000 feet we were given the opportunity to bail out. The pilot and co-pilot were going to stick with the plane so the rest of the crew chose to do the same. During this period the co-pilot saw a C-47, "Gooney Bird", taking off from an airstrip, which we assumed, was on friendly acres. We had no radio reception at all from the time of the collision. Even with the condition of the plane it was decided to attempt a landing.

When we turned downwind to the strip and extended the landing gear the pilot heard a clear voice in headset say, "17, if you're going to land here, pull up your gear; this is a fighter strip. Land alongside the strip. We need to keep it going". The gear was retracted and the voice said, "Good Luck".

Using the rudder for directional control, the first approach was not "lined up". A "go-around" by turn needle and mag compass got us headed in the right direction, but just above the trees. The strip was out of sight for almost all of the next approach. After a few fervent prayers to Jesus, there was the strip in beautiful alignment. Reducing power and setting it in the snow on its belly was a strong sense of relief. Letting it toboggan to a slow stop nearly 180 degrees to the left was, by contrast, almost fun. During the landing our plane demolished a number of small light aircraft parked along the side of the runway.

The five gunners were in the radio room in crash positions. As the plane slid down the side of the runway, the snow stormed up inside the plane as if we were in a blizzard. Later we jokingly told the pilot and co-pilot that it was the smoothest landing they had ever made.

As soon as the plane came to a halt the gunners jumped from the plane and realizing there was no fire leaped up on the wings to assist the pilot and co-pilot in exits through their respective windows. Ground personnel met us and informed us we were in Luxembourg.

Buzz Blonde was a mess. Most of the nose was gone, the right wing was wrecked, the horizontal stabilizer a disaster, the ball turret was practically inside the waist of the plane with the support column pushed through the top of the fuselage and the belly smashed in from the landing. If we had known the extent of the damage we might not have had the extreme confidence we had in the ship. Using what equipment he could scrape together, the radio operator got word back to the base that we were down, fortunately in friendly territory.

The realization then hit us that we had lost two of our buddies.

We spent four days in Luxembourg and five days in Paris before returning from "MIA" to the 303rd on January 20.



Tally Board following Mission #300