Twenty-six aircraft were dispatched to bomb the synthetic oil plant at Sterkrade (visual or GEE-H). The secondary target was the Rheims marshalling yard (visual or PFF), with the last resort a landing strip at Lingen, Germany. No aircraft returned early. The 360BS loaned a PFF aircraft to the 351BG.

There were no clouds over the target. In the general area there were 3/10 to 5/10 middle clouds with tops at 8,000 to 10,000 feet, dense, semi-persistent contrails at bombing altitude, and light ground haze. Twenty-four aircraft dropped 20 500-lb. H.E. M43 bombs, ten units of T277 leaflets, and ten units of T274 leaflets from 24,400 and 24,300 feet. Lead Squadron bombing was good. The low Squadron was unable to pick up the MPI due to smoke, their bombs hit 1 1/2 miles NNW of the target. One aircraft jettisoned its bombs before reaching the target.

There was no enemy air opposition. The very good 1st AD fighter support consisted of 36 P-47s and 75 P-51s. Chaff did not curtail the intense and very accurate flak in the target area. Twenty-one aircraft had major battle damage and three, minor damage.

One B-17 was lost over the target: #43-38530 (No Name), 358BS, received a direct hit on the No. 2 engine from anti-aircraft fire. Lt. Harry Gobrecht, pilot of #43-38999 Emma, 358BS, and Lt. Richard H. Gmernicki, pilot of #44-8427 Henn's Revenge, 358BS, reported seeing #43-38530 (No Name), 358BS, piloted by 1Lt. William H. Woodson, hit. The left wing broke off, the aircraft went down with the left side burning — it exploded in the air. Two to three parachutes were reported about the time that the aircraft reportedly exploded, as if some of the crew had been blown out.

Co-pilot, F/O Harold A. Lanigan, later reported that the accurate flak barrage occurred about 1:38 pm, a few minutes before bombs away. Tail gunner, Sgt. Peter J. Farrell, reported that he had been wounded in his leg. He tried, but was unable to stem the flow of blood. Another flak burst hit just aft of the No. 2 engine very close to the fuselage. The fortress went into a 65 degree dive during which the left wing was torn off. T/Sgt. Ray R. Cooper exited through a hole in the nose. F/O Russell C. Finn was mortally wounded and was unable to exit. F/O Lanigan, was able to escape from the spinning aircraft through the nose hatch, despite the centrifugal force caused by the violently spinning B-17. Others weren’t so lucky and crashed with the B-17 at Mulheim, Germany.
F/O Lanigan was taken to a local police station where he was "bullied" by the German in charge. He was given first aid for his injured ankle and foot plus facial cuts. He was shown the dog tags of "Woody," the pilot, and Sgts. Burnette, Gramiak and Riley and was advised that one crewman (Sgt. Farrell) had a leg torn off. Sgt Cooper was taken to a different police station, but later joined F/O Lanigan. The night of January 23 was spent in an air raid shelter during a RAF bombing raid. They were taken to a German fighter field, were further interrogated and managed to escape through a small basement window. Captured again near the Dutch border, they were kept on the move for over a month until reaching a railroad station at Landshut, Germany. Lanigan again escaped accompanied by a P-51 pilot. Three days later they walked into some German Home Guards and were captured. They were placed with a group of Army Officer POWs with whom they stayed until rescued by Patton’s Third Army.

Lt. Woodson, F/O Finn, T/Sgt Richard A. Brown, T/Sgt Victor J. Gramiak, S/Sgt R.L. Burnette, S/Sgt Lloyd S. Riley and Sgt Peter J. Farrell all were killed in the crash. T/Sgt Brown, S/Sgt Burnette and Sgt. Farrell are buried in Netherlands American Cemetery at Margraten, Netherlands.

Two aircraft landed on the Continent after being damaged by flak: #43-38734 Cheshire Cat, 427BS, piloted by 1Lt. Grafton N. Smith, landed at field #B-61 with three wounded men. S/Sgt. Paul G. Gray (TOG) and Sgt. Melvin Howell (TG) were hospitalized in a Ghent, Belgium. Sgt. G.F. Parker (E) was hospitalized with a back injury after returning to England. #44-8576 (No Name), 358BS, piloted by 1Lt. Ingersall J. Roberts (427BS), also landed on the Continent with one man wounded. The B-17 was salvaged.

The remaining twenty-three Fortresses returned to Molesworth with two additional crewmen who had been wounded by anti-aircraft fire. S/Sgt Thomas A. Henn (TG) had wounds on his head and arms, and T/Sgt Elwood A. Griffith (E) suffered a leg wound. The first aid kits were squashed by the flak hits and were of no use. The wounded were treated in the 303rd Station Hospital. The crew later named #44-8427 Henn’s Revenge after the wounded Tail Gunner.
Sterkrade was the primary target for 206 B-17 "Flying Fortresses" of the First Air Division this day. The 303rd Bombardment Group (H) dispatched 26 aircraft and were flying at the end of the bomber stream as the "tail-end charlie" Group. All day the P-51 and P-47 aircraft fighter support kept the German fighters away from the bomber formation.

Anti-aircraft fire (flak), however, was extremely intense and very accurate over the target area. There was a friendly undercast while approaching the target. When about fifty miles from Sterkrade the clouds ended abruptly. The German gunners had a clear view of the attacking B-17s from their fire became more accurate as the bomber stream passed over them. German gunners were successful in shooting down five of the attacking B-17s.

1Lt Harry D. Gobrecht's crew was flying in the third three-plane element in the Group's formation. The B-17 piloted by 1Lt W.W. Woodson, and flying off Gobrecht's right wing, received a direct hit from anti-aircraft fire. The left wing broke off and the B-17 went down with the left side burning. It then exploded in air. Two members of this crew managed to safely parachute from the stricken Fortress, but the other seven crewmen died when their B-17 hit the ground.

Gobrecht was flying in a B-17 named *Emma*. Their regular aircraft, *Neva-The Silver Lady*, was in the repair shops undergoing repair to damage sustained in a prior flight. At the same time that Lt. Woodson's plane was hit and went down, *Emma* also suffered a flak burst, knocking out one engine and destroying the electrical system.

Another anti-aircraft shell hit the bottom of their B-17s nose. The shell went through the Navigator's table and out the top without exploding. It left a mess in the nose compartment. With one engine gone, and no electricity to operate the flight instruments, Gobrecht was unable to keep up with the rest of the formation and it was slowly disappearing in the distance.

*Emma* then became a sitting duck to any German fighter that might have been in the vicinity, but fortunately, they were busy elsewhere. Navigator Lt. Walter H. McDonald was dismayed when the undercast again appeared, since he wasn't sure of their position over Europe. Through a slit in the clouds over Holland, he saw a small piece of land and was able to identify the dam that kept the Atlantic Ocean out of the Dutch countryside. He was then able to establish a compass course leading back to Molesworth.
When they arrived to prepare for a landing, Flight Engineer T/Sgt Lenville Benefield was able to manually crank down the landing gear. Flaps, normally used for landing, could not be used because of the electrical system problems.

Red flares were fired indicating that an emergency landing was about to be made. Gobrecht made a "hot" landing using up the entire length of the runway. Upon landing, the ground crew counted over one hundred holes in *Emma* from enemy ground fire. Miraculously no member of the crew was injured from the intense flak hits.

As a result of his actions, Lt Gobrecht was recommended for the Distinguished Flying Cross for his courage, and extraordinary skill as Pilot of the badly damaged B-17. But before the paper work could be completed and processed, his Squadron Commander was shot down and became a POW. But after 50 years, the recommendation was revived by his Squadron Commander, and Lt. Gobrecht was finally approved for his DFC on 12 February 1999.

The award was made by retired Major General Lewis E. Lyle, former commander of the 303rd Bombardment Group, and by retired Lt. General E.G. "Buck" Shuler, Commander of the Eighth Air Force during Operation Desert Storm.

**DUTCH ZUIDER ZEE GIVES NAVIGATOR HIS BEARINGS**

Memories of Lt Walter H. McDonald

On the 22nd of January 1945 we flew into the Ruhr Valley — one of Germany’s most highly industrialized areas. This area was avoided in much of the war. Some say because it was so heavily defended, but other, more cynical people say the reason was the amount of American capital invested in the region.

I can vouch from experience that it was heavily defended. We came into the Ruhr Valley from the north over a very friendly under cast cloud layer. However, just about fifty miles from the target the clouds ended abruptly, and we were highly visible to the gun crews on the ground.

The radio man did dump out some bales of tin foil to fool the radar on the guns, but we took quite a beating that day.

We came away from the target with one of our four engines gone, no electrical system for our instruments, and over 100 holes in our plane. With one engine gone, we could not keep up with the formation, so we watched as they slowly disappeared into the distance.

To further complicate things we were soon back over the undercast. We had been able to follow the formation long enough to know the general direction we should go, but we were unable to see the ground to know when we should make a left turn and go back to England.

It was lonely out here by ourselves and we were sitting ducks to any German fighter pilots that might have been in the vicinity. We did manage to find a slit break in the clouds and I saw enough of the ground to know where we were — the small piece of land I saw was the dam the little Dutch boy stuck his finger in — the one that keeps the Atlantic Ocean out of the Zuider Zee.

Time for a left turn and head straight for the base. Since the main formation had to take the customary tour of England, the fact we went straight in made it possible for us to beat them to the base. I had now had my fifteen seconds of fame everyone is supposed to have at least, with nine other people in the plane.
A PLATE IN MY SKULL — COURTESY OF GERMAN FLAK
by S/Sgt Thomas Henn, 358th Tail Gunner

On January 22nd, 1945, on our 30th mission over Sterkrade, Germany, I was badly injured. We had flown in intense flak for 20 minutes and during this time, a piece ripped into the tail section of the aircraft. It cut through my metal flak helmet and my leather helmet, knocking away my oxygen mask. I was immediately unconscious and as I slumped forward, the oxygen mask miraculously swung back into place, thus saving my life until crew members could come to my aid.

We made it back to Molesworth and I was immediately taken to the hospital where a leading neurosurgeon performed surgery. A good sized piece of flak had entered my skull just above my right ear, resting precariously close to delicate brain tissue. The surgeon removed the flak and placed a titanium plate over the injured skull.

I experienced severe paralysis of my entire left side as a result of the injury. After several weeks of recovery and therapy in England, my mobility improved. Later I was sent to the DeWit Hospital in Auburn, CA for more rehab, before being discharged in May 1945.

A partial paralysis on my left side remained a factor all my life, leaving me with no sensitivity in my fingers and weakness of arm and leg muscles.

I am grateful to God for sparing my life when my oxygen mask swung back into place and for having such a great crew, where friendship and concern supported me all my days.

A PREMONITION THAT CAME TRUE
by T/Sgt George F. Parker, 427th Bomb Squadron

On January 22nd, 1945 we were sent to Sterkrade, Germany on our 14th mission. We were hit by flak which wounded T/Sgt P.G. Gray, our Togglier, and Tail Gunner, Sgt Mel Howell. It also knocked out our hydraulic system. We lost altitude and started getting rid of everything. We dropped the ball turret over Amsterdam and leveled off and found an airfield near Ghent, Belgium.

We landed wheels down, but no brakes. As we neared the end of the runway one of our tires, which had been hit with flak, blew out. We turned around staying on the runway. As I was getting out of the plane I slipped and fell about 6 feet from the ball turret and landed on my back. We were trying to get Gray and Howell out of the aircraft. I have a permanent disability due to the back injury, and didn't fly anymore.

At the time, Lt Alderman had to fly 3 more missions. He told me he was not going back home when he finished. I told him he "was going to go home" and that I would be with him when he went out to his plane on the final mission. And that I would be waiting for him when he got back.

He flew his 33rd and 34th mission, and we were told that he was grounded because he was too nervous to fly. I went to the Air Surgeons office to check with them. The air surgeon asked who I was and I told him he was my co-pilot and that I would wait for him when he came back from his missions. I told him if he was grounded I would take my 3 day pass, if not I would be waiting for him. He said that he was too nervous and he was grounded and to take my pass.
I went on my pass and visited relatives in England. I had a premonition about him and thought to myself, no he’s grounded and passed it off. When I came back to Molesworth from my pass, Sgt Kamen, a lead radio operator asked me if I had heard about it and I said no. He said my pilot would tell me. Right then I knew — Alderman had it. Lt. Smith said there was a mid-air collision, with no survivors.

We found out in 1989, that Lt. Alderman is buried in Zachary National Cemetery, just outside of Louisville, KY. He went down when two B-17s came together. I visited the grave and there are seven bodies in one grave.

The men on our crew showed a lot of courage on these missions, and I wonder why 1Lt Grafton Smith, our pilot and 2Lt Melvin Alderman, our copilot were never given the Distinguished Flying Cross.
Aircraft Formation at Assembly Point - Group A

Sheets-O’Leary
    351 - PFF
    Petersen
    248
    Roberts
    576 - PFF
    Schlecht
    621
    Richter
    885
    Smith
    734
Goodberlet
    065
    Greenbaum
    318
    Walker
    316
Woodson
    530
    Gmernicki
    427
    Ayers
    060

Aircraft Formation at Assembly Point - Group B

Lutz-Kudson
    439 - PFF
    Fravel
    944
    Holmes
    619
    Rybaltowski
    608
    Tarvid
    206
    Tilsen
    546
Middlemas
    516
    Stiver
    563
    Statton
    517
Hardin
    672
    Edmunds
    860
    St. Julien
    523
    Geiger
    544

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

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
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
RESULTS OF MISSION
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
## 358th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B-17G #43-38530 (No Name) CR-L</th>
<th>B-17G #44-6316 (No Name)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>P</strong> Woodson, William H., 2Lt</td>
<td><strong>P</strong> Walker, Barton F., 2Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CP</strong> Lanigan, Harold A., F/O</td>
<td><strong>CP</strong> Smith, Orville H., F/O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NAV</strong> Finn, Russell C., F/O</td>
<td><strong>NAV</strong> Das, Mitchell C., 2Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOG</strong> Cooper, Ray R., S/Sgt</td>
<td><strong>TOG</strong> Magyar, Frank, Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ENG</strong> Brown, Richard A., T/Sgt</td>
<td><strong>ENG</strong> Wilhelm, Raymond G., Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WG</strong> Riley, Lloyd S., S/Sgt</td>
<td><strong>BT</strong> Diaczynski, Andrew J., Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RO</strong> Gramiak, Victor J., T/Sgt</td>
<td><strong>RO</strong> Jasut, Stanley, Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BT</strong> Burnette, R.L., S/Sgt</td>
<td><strong>WG</strong> Frazier, Victor L., S/Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TG</strong> Farrell, Peter J., Sgt</td>
<td><strong>TG</strong> Massey, Ray N., Sgt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B-17G #44-8318 (No Name)</th>
<th>B-17G #44-8427 Henn’s Revenge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>P</strong> Greenbaum, Richard D., 2Lt</td>
<td><strong>P</strong> Gmernicki, Richard H., 1Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CP</strong> Balkcom, Robert E., 2Lt</td>
<td><strong>CP</strong> Judd, Chester G., 2Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NAV</strong> Nicastro, John J., F/O</td>
<td><strong>NAV</strong> Jones, William M., 2Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOG</strong> Brown, James L., S/Sgt</td>
<td><strong>BOM</strong> Denning, Glenn J., S/Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ENG</strong> Bruce, Leonard F., Sgt</td>
<td><strong>WG</strong> McClymont, John W., S/Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TG</strong> Hawes, Kenneth D., Sgt</td>
<td><strong>ENG</strong> Griffith, Elwood A., T/Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RO</strong> Dalton, Denver, Sgt</td>
<td><strong>RO</strong> Calenberg, Raymond N., Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BT</strong> Dooley, Patrick, Sgt</td>
<td><strong>BT</strong> Greenberg, Bernard, Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WG</strong> Armstrong, Henry L., Sgt</td>
<td><strong>TG</strong> Henn, Thomas A., Sgt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B-17G #43-38999 Emma</th>
<th>B-17G #43-38065 Princess Pat 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>P</strong> Gobrecht, Harry D., 1Lt</td>
<td><strong>P</strong> Goodberlet, Clarence J., 2Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CP</strong> Eby, Joe M., 2Lt</td>
<td><strong>CP</strong> Magid, Malcolm J., 2Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NAV</strong> McDonald, Walter H., 2Lt</td>
<td><strong>NAV</strong> Boland, Anthony J., 2Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BOM</strong> Miller, Robert J., S/Sgt</td>
<td><strong>TOG</strong> Day, Keith E., Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ENG</strong> Benefield, Lenville H., S/Sgt</td>
<td><strong>ENG</strong> Cotter, William J., T/Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WG</strong> Mays, Thomas G., Sgt</td>
<td><strong>WG</strong> Reece, Robert H., T/Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RO</strong> Quick, Edgar H., S/Sgt</td>
<td><strong>RO</strong> LaPerch, William J., T/Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BT</strong> McGrory, William P., S/Sgt</td>
<td><strong>BT</strong> Walling, James M., S/Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TG</strong> Buske, Phillip R., Sgt</td>
<td><strong>TG</strong> Schultz, Frederick W., S/Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>YR</strong> Elkin, Samuel, Sgt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 359th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

#### B-17G #43-38619 (No Name)
- P Holmes, Alfred M., 2Lt
- CP Haynes, Eugene, 2Lt
- NAV Davis, Daryl W., 2Lt
- TOG Dando, Charles A., 1Lt
- ENG Sprague, Wendell P., Jr., Sgt
- RO Prehatny, Joseph R., S/Sgt
- BT Vowels, Donovan E., S/Sgt
- TG Bartkowski, Edward L., Sgt
- WG Wallis, Elton E., S/Sgt

#### B-17G #43-38608 Lucille
- P Rybaltowski, Vincent, 2Lt
- CP Olson, John A., 2Lt
- NAV McLeod, Harry A., 2Lt
- BOM Donovan, Thomas 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 #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

#### B-17G #42-97944 Daddy’s Delight
- P Fravel, Harold L., 2Lt
- CP McClurg, Galt L., 2Lt
- NAV Albertson, Edward, F/O
- TOG Roberts, James P., Sgt
- ENG Belcher, Rubin W., S/Sgt
- RO Jones, Walter N., Jr., S/Sgt
- BT Schilling, Lawrence E., Sgt
- TG McDonald, Billy L., Sgt
- WG Schoonover, Howard D., Sgt

#### B-17G #42-97546 Idaliza
- P Tilsen, Cyril, 2Lt
- CP McDowell, James B., 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 #44-8439 (No Name) - PFF
- P Lutz, John R., 1Lt
- CP Knudson, Darwin D., 1Lt
- NAV Moon, Richard Y., 2Lt
- MN Gennaro, Louis T., 2Lt
- GHN Heiser, Kenneth, 2Lt (358th)
- BOM Mitchell, Robert C., 1Lt
- ENG Candito, Christopher A., S/Sgt
- RO Lovelock, Edward N., S/Sgt
- TG Ogborn, Maurice E., 2Lt
- WG Bailey, John R., S/Sgt
## 360th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Middlemas, Arthur B.</td>
<td>1Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP</td>
<td>Schultz, John W.</td>
<td>2Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAV</td>
<td>Cooley, Royal D.</td>
<td>2Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOM</td>
<td>Valdes, George J.</td>
<td>S/Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENG</td>
<td>Marshall, Leroy H.</td>
<td>Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO</td>
<td>Avenia, James J.</td>
<td>T/Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BT</td>
<td>Parrish, George K.</td>
<td>S/Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TG</td>
<td>Cranshaw, John A.</td>
<td>S/Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WG</td>
<td>Maurer, John L.</td>
<td>S/Sgt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### B-17G #43-38672  *(No Name)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Hardin, Thomas H. Jr.</td>
<td>1Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP</td>
<td>Brown, William W.</td>
<td>2Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAV</td>
<td>Hiebeler, George E.</td>
<td>2Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOM</td>
<td>Driver, Henderson M.</td>
<td>S/Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENG</td>
<td>Mikulich, Stanley</td>
<td>T/Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO</td>
<td>Kasper, Raymond H.</td>
<td>S/Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BT</td>
<td>Kaber, Harvey N.</td>
<td>Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TG</td>
<td>Bur, Robert D.</td>
<td>S/Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WG</td>
<td>Sersland, Paul V.</td>
<td>Sgt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>St. Julien, John D.</td>
<td>1Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP</td>
<td>Newell, Richard M.</td>
<td>2Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAV</td>
<td>Kiehlkopf, George</td>
<td>2Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOM</td>
<td>Giancola, James V.</td>
<td>S/Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENG</td>
<td>Mitchell, William E.</td>
<td>S/Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO</td>
<td>Flanigan, John J.</td>
<td>Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BT</td>
<td>Farthing, Richard M.</td>
<td>Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TG</td>
<td>Evans, Marlin D.</td>
<td>Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WG</td>
<td>McLellan, Raymond L.</td>
<td>Sgt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Statton, Roy F.</td>
<td>2Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP</td>
<td>Schroll, David A.</td>
<td>2Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAV</td>
<td>Donahue, Thomas R.</td>
<td>2Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOM</td>
<td>Woods, Heiber J.</td>
<td>Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENG</td>
<td>Rhodes, William H.</td>
<td>Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO</td>
<td>Knowles, Charles D.</td>
<td>Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BT</td>
<td>Koci, Robert W.</td>
<td>Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TG</td>
<td>Carter, James O.</td>
<td>Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WG</td>
<td>Maxson, Gordon H.</td>
<td>Sgt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### B-17G #42-102544  *Sack Time*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Geiger, James E.</td>
<td>1Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP</td>
<td>Telford, Donald R.</td>
<td>F/O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAV</td>
<td>Carney, Felix A.</td>
<td>2Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOM</td>
<td>Clippinger, Robert E.</td>
<td>T/Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENG</td>
<td>Stockman, Leonard G.</td>
<td>S/Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO</td>
<td>Licht, Wilfred L.</td>
<td>S/Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BT</td>
<td>Wentz, Roland L.</td>
<td>Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TG</td>
<td>Germanine, Joseph R.</td>
<td>Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WG</td>
<td>Doctor, Gordon C.</td>
<td>Sgt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Edmunds, Robert E.</td>
<td>2Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP</td>
<td>Bristol, Clarence D.</td>
<td>2Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAV</td>
<td>Lofquist, Gordon B.</td>
<td>2Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOM</td>
<td>Perry, Franklin W.</td>
<td>2Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENG</td>
<td>Hammel, Norman D.</td>
<td>Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO</td>
<td>Polo, Matthew N.</td>
<td>Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BT</td>
<td>Farnham, Gordon W.</td>
<td>Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TG</td>
<td>Rumberger, Frank C.</td>
<td>Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WG</td>
<td>King, Raymond H.</td>
<td>Sgt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### B-17G #43-38563  *Jackie*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Stiver, Merrill M.</td>
<td>2Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP</td>
<td>Kacus, Alexander</td>
<td>F/O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAV</td>
<td>Beasley, Leon O.</td>
<td>2Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOM</td>
<td>Hight, Basil D.</td>
<td>2Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENG</td>
<td>Auer, Kenneth R.</td>
<td>Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO</td>
<td>Godley, Walter M.</td>
<td>Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BT</td>
<td>Pilgrim, Robert W.</td>
<td>Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TG</td>
<td>Ciezadlo, Eugene F.</td>
<td>S/Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WG</td>
<td>Marchionda, Guido P.</td>
<td>S/Sgt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mission 306 - 10
### 427th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

#### B-17G #43-38248 Jigger Rooche II
- **P**: Petersen, William H., 1Lt
- **CP**: Candido, Anthony N., 2Lt
- **NAV**: Bason, William A., 2Lt
- **BOM**: Price, John B., T/Sgt
- **TT**: Zarrella, Anthony A., S/Sgt
- **BT**: Johnson, Gene W., S/Sgt
- **RO**: Whitely, Cull W., Jr., S/Sgt
- **TG**: Mussi, James L., Sgt
- **WG**: Tanner, Loyd H., 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 #42-39885 Sweet Rose O'Grady
- **P**: Richter, George K., 2Lt
- **CP**: McMullen, Robert A., 2Lt
- **NAV**: Stephens, Walton M., Jr., 2Lt
- **TOG**: Simon, Lawrence E., 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

#### B-17G #43-38734 Cheshire Cat
- **P**: Smith, Grafton N., 1Lt
- **CP**: Alderman, Melvin, 2Lt
- **NAV**: Blessing, Gerald D., 2Lt
- **TOG**: Gray, Paul A., S/Sgt
- **TT**: Warner, Vester W., T/Sgt
- **BT**: Miller, Raymond M., Sgt
- **RO**: Parker, George F., S/Sgt
- **TG**: Howell, Melvin, Sgt
- **WG**: Dussiere, Albert L., Sgt

#### B-17G #44-8576 (No Name) - PFF
- **P**: Roberts, Ingersall J., 1Lt
- **CP**: Bluethenthal, Arthur, 2Lt
- **NAV**: Russo, William D., 1Lt
- **MN**: Foltz, Leon P., Lt (358th)
- **BOM**: Hansen, Harley L., 2Lt
- **WG**: Carlson, Harold A., Sgt
- **TT**: Riveland, Alf, Sgt
- **RO**: Renzi, Frank, Sgt
- **TG**: Barber, Albert P., Sgt
- **BT**: Campbell, Gerald R., Sgt
- **(Abortive Sortie)**

#### B-17G #44-8351 (No Name) - PFF
- **P**: Sheets, Robert W., Maj
- **CP**: O'Leary, James W., 1Lt
- **NAV**: Pandy, Bert J., 1Lt
- **MN**: Caldwell, Walter D., 2Lt
- **GHN**: Clark, Floyd L., 2Lt
- **BOM**: Umphress, F.E., Jr., 1Lt
- **TT**: Kernodle, John T., S/Sgt
- **RO**: Kopriva, Charles P., T/Sgt
- **TG**: McKeon, Preston W., 2Lt
- **WG**: DeCicco, Frank C., Jr., S/Sgt
- **WG**: Carver, Harold R., S/Sgt
- **(Abortive Sortie)**

#### B-17G #43-38621 50 Ragged
- **P**: Schlecht, Walter J., 1Lt
- **CP**: Ferrari, Walter J., 2Lt
- **NAV**: Tanner, Merlin A., 2Lt
- **BOM**: Leas, Harry D., S/Sgt
- **TT**: Hedison, Ara H., S/Sgt
- **BT**: Hocknell, Raymond A., Sgt
- **RO**: Hradiskey, Joseph R., S/Sgt
- **TG**: Herod, William J., S/Sgt
- **WG**: Warburton, Arlis F., S/Sgt
- **Y**: Conrad, Joseph, T/Sgt
- **(Abortive Sortie)**

---

Mission 306 - 11
January 22, 1945 the G. N. Smith Crew was scheduled for a mission. This would be our first mission after spending ten days on the continent in Luxembourg and Paris. January 10, 1945 our plane was involved in a collision with another B-17 over Bonn, Germany. We made a forced belly landing on an airfield in Luxembourg. Our 14th mission was approached with a great deal of apprehension. Less than two weeks before we had lost two of our buddies, Ed Gardner, Navigator and Bill Dohm, Bombardier, when they were forced to bail out over enemy territory. We did not know then if they were still alive. Now we were scheduled to fly again. With 13 missions under our belt and the experience of the last mission we had lost our youthful innocence and faced the stark reality of what our job really entailed.

The target for the day, our 14th mission and number 306 for the Group, was a synthetic oil plant located at Sterkgrade, Germany. The town is located near Essen and Oberhausen. Our plane assignment was #43-38734, "Cheshire Cat". After briefing, I went to our Catholic Chaplain, Father Skoner, received Holy Communion and a blessing. One of my better recollections of Father Skoner was what he said to us on most occasions after the blessing when we were leaving on a mission. He gave us a pat on the cheek and said, "Give 'em hell". It was a somewhat different parting word from a man of the cloth, but we all knew it was in the context of our reason for being where we were, what we were doing and where we were going.

Take-off for the estimated 6-hour mission was between 10:00 and 10:25. The sky was relatively clear and assembling was accomplished with no major problems. Twenty-six aircraft were dispatched from the 303rd Bomb Group. No enemy planes were sighted, possibly because we were very well protected by many of our "little friends" P-47's and P-51's.

As we approached we saw no clouds over the target. This setting was perfect for German anti-aircraft defenses and one, which made it a bit more uncomfortable for us. Flak appeared, and the closer we got to the target the more intense and accurate it became. There was so much flak that the smoke from the bursts partially darkened the sky. We could hear the flak hitting and going through the plane. Never before had we encountered flak like this that we were flying through. Suddenly, Mel Howell, tail gunner, called out; "I'm hit". Within a few seconds we heard the same words from P.G. Gray, togglier. In the waist I thought, first the tail, then the nose. I'll probably get it next. About that time the plane lurched from a very close burst of flak and I pitched forward and down toward the bottom of the waist window. As I pulled myself up to an upright position I stood directly in line with a good-sized hole in the plexi-glass where I had been standing. This was one time being short in height was a great asset. That burst could have wounded me or even taken my life.

The heavy anti-aircraft fire continued throughout the bomb run, the drop of the bombs and as we pulled away from the target. We didn't think it would ever quit. Number 3 and 4 engines were knocked out. With two engines out we could not keep up and fell away from the rest of the formation. For 17 1/2 minutes we were in the intense and accurate enemy fire. Finally, after what seemed like an eternity the flak ceased. We lost altitude steadily. It became mandatory to lighten the load in the plane. The Pilot, G.N. Smith and Co-Pilot, Melvin Alderman ordered Ray Miller, Ball Turret gunner out of his position. He assisted George Parker, Radio Operator and Al Dussliere, Waist Gunner in throwing out everything that wasn't fastened down including guns and ammunition. Still unable to maintain altitude it was necessary to drop the ball turret. This was no simple task and when all the attaching hardware was removed the turret started to move and then lodged in the opening. Someone found something to pry the ball loose and finally it dropped out of the plane.
somewhere over Holland. With that heavy weight gone Smitty and Alderman were able to hold the altitude at near 6,000 feet. In addition to the lost engines the plane had incurred considerable other damage. With two wounded, Howell and Gray on board, unable to maintain altitude and the fuel supply running low it was imperative to find a place to land. Finally we reached Belgium and were able to make it to the City of Ghent.

It was absolutely necessary to prepare the wounded, Howell and Gray, for the landing. The space constrictions in the tail and the narrow opening by the rear wheel well made it necessary for Howell to move toward the waist as best he could by pushing himself along in a sitting position. With a badly damaged leg he made it to the rear wheel well where we were able to assist him into the waist area by lifting and bracing his leg as he propelled himself forward using his hands. We decided that it would be too difficult, with the possibility of doing more damage to the injured leg, to try to get him into the radio room which is the most structurally sound area in that part of the plane. It was becoming more urgent that we land as soon as possible. The landing would be extra precarious because two engines were gone. We prepared a place for him in the waist. I laid next to him bracing his wounded leg against my leg for support and hopefully prevent his moving forward when we landed. The Navigator was taking care of Gray in the nose. D.I. Massengill, Engineer was at his position. As the plane set down and we were traveling down the runway the right tire blew out. Lucky for us we had gone far enough on the runway and slowed down sufficiently that when we ground-looped and swerved off the runway the plane remained upright. Once again the excellent skill and dogged determination of Smitty and Alderman brought us to a safe landing under extremely hazardous conditions.

Emergency personnel at the airfield were at the ship as we came to a stop. Howell and Gray were immediately removed from the plane and taken to a hospital. We all were confident they would be well taken care of. At this time we began assessing the damage to our aircraft. Quoting from the diary I kept while a member of the 303rd, "the Cheshire Cat was a mass of holes". "Gas and oil tanks punctured". Later we determined there were hundreds of holes in the plane. In spite of the damage I think the plane was salvageable.

The wounded were taken to a British hospital. We were able to visit them later and were confident they would be well taken care of. The next time some of us saw them was in an American hospital in England when we received a 3-day pass.

The rest of the crew was taken by truck to small suburb outside of Brussels to await transportation back to England. While on our way to Brussels I told the members of our crew that because of my Belgian heritage I knew a little bit of the language. This, I suggested, should enable us to get along very well. When we had our first encounter with Belgian civilians we immediately discovered the popular language in that area was French not the Flemish I knew. My knowledge of the French language was zero. I don’t think I will ever live that down. Some of the crew used to say, "Stick with Deuce, he’ll take care of us".

We were temporarily quartered in a schoolhouse located near an airfield that was surrounded by a number of small villages. Directly across the airfield from where we were staying was an old church with a tall steeple. After the war I learned that a family friend who had lived with us for a short time when I was a child lived near that church. He and his family had returned to Belgium shortly before the war. Later we learned that this family friend was deeply involved with the Belgian underground and had assisted many allied fliers by shielding them from the Germans and helping some of them return to safety. After the war this family friend visited us. When he learned how close I was to him he broke down and cried. I still recall seeing that tall steeple when we took off later on our return to England.
There were so many things to remember about my short visit in the land of my forefathers and a few still stick out in my mind. I remember the first time we had a meal at the school where we were quartered. As we left the building and went outside to deposit what remained on our trays in containers we saw a number of civilians standing nearby. Before we could clean what scraps remaining they scraped them into containers of their own. I did not realize that people could be so hungry. After that we managed to have leftovers on our trays without being obvious about what we were doing. I don't think we fooled anyone.

Whenever I hear the song, "I'll Be Seeing You", a popular wartime tune, I am reminded of the time we visited a nightclub in Brussels. The female vocalist, a somewhat buxom person, sang that song in her broken English. The music was great but the lyrics, because of her way of articulating them, were somewhat comical. But who am I to criticize someone for the manner in which they spoke or sang my language when I didn't know a word of theirs. I still have drink coasters from that nightclub in my scrapbook.

While we were at the nightclub some young ladies came over to our table. We asked them to join us. They looked as if they were very young even compared to our tender years but it was refreshing to have some of the opposite gender to talk to. They knew enough English to make conversation possible. We soon realized how young they were when we offered to buy them a drink. Instead they requested ice cream. The concoction was not what we considered ice cream but it was cold and sweet.

That nightspot in Brussels provided another incident, which remains with me. One of the other members of the crew and I went to a restroom. We guessed we were going to the correct one until we entered and saw an older lady standing there. Red-faced we immediately turned around and departed. As we were leaving we saw other men entering. When they were leaving we asked them if that was the men's rest room and if so, why was there a lady in there. They laughed and told us having a female valet was an accepted practice. Hesitatingly we re-entered but were very careful accomplishing our tasks privately as we could.

We returned to the 303rd January 29 after an overnight stay in London. We rested on the 30th and 31st. The crew was scheduled for a week at a "Flak Home", but because there were no openings we were given a seven-day furlough. Some of us went to Scotland to get as far away from the war as we could.