

The Lucky Bastards

By ABEL L. DOLIM

Air navigation as practiced in World War II was considered an art and not a science--perhaps it still is. At the AAF school, we were taught that the most important asset of a good navigator was the ability to make a sound judgment based on the best information available to him. I found this to be only too true. As one classmate put it, "Navigation is a deadly game of educated guessing."

In the Eighth Air Force, most navigators did "follow the pilot" navigation, that is, plotting where the aircraft has been rather than where it is going. For this type of navigation we were overtrained--but where lead navigation was concerned, we required additional training in the new instrumentation and techniques. For my part, I hated to put away my sextant as celestial navigation was my favorite method.

Our instruments were very reliable. The radio compass, of course, was subject to the weather or terrain. The "Gee Box" (nothing more than a simple television receiver) was affected by enemy interference which forced the operator to wade through the high "Grass" and "Ghosts" to find the true "Master" and "Slave" signals or "Blips." The trick was to obtain the "Line of Position" reading within the three seconds allotted to the operator by Jerry.

Throughout the years, several impressions of flight and combat remain as strong as ever. The takeoff was always my favorite part of flying--the anticipation of being airborne from "up front"--the rubber streaked concrete runway rushing past faster and faster, the slight bump or two and then the smooth tilting sway of the big metal bird as she strained heavily to gain her element. There was the exhilaration of bursting through the overcast into a bright sunlit sky at 12,000 feet just before going on oxygen. On one mission over Holland, as far as the eye could see there were American bombers, hundreds of them, surrounded by "Little Friends", and I was as awe struck as a youngster at his first parade. I remember, too, the feeling of frustration which overwhelmed me when I strained for the sight of parachutes even though I knew centrifugal force trapped a friend aboard the stricken B-17 as it plunged into an uncontrollable dive...the boredom of inaction caused by the clammy English winter weather which kept us on the ground for what seemed like weeks at a time...the anxiety which later became my constant companion throughout the hours and days...the emptiness that was reflected on my face which is the common expression on the face of every combatant after he has completed his 50th patrol, mission, sortie, raid, or battle and who has long since realized that what "they" call heroism is only the act of a desperate man who has been galvanized into action by his too often re-sharpened instinct for survival.

Most of us believed in some sort of luck or chance. Some of us had talismen, lucky charms, or a fixed routine, like one of our bombardiers who always urinated on the tailwheel before take-off. Some way or other, I was lucky. My only nod to superstition was to stand upright facing sideways to 12 o'clock whenever we went through flak, an old habit from my amateur boxing days, of no practical use whatsoever in this new kind of battle.

What follows comes primarily from my diaries and combat log, and from what recollections they prompt from memory--memories so clear that it seems they happened only yesterday.

After receiving my navigator's wings on 16 October

1943, at the Advanced Navigation School at Mather Field, Sacramento, California, I was assigned to the 396th Bomb Group at Moses Lake, Washington. It was there that crew 16S181 was formed, but our actual phase training in B-17Es had to wait until the 396th was transferred to Drew Field, Tampa, Florida on 31 October 1943. After the 3rd AF decided we were ready for the "Big Leagues" our orders took us to Hunter Field, Georgia, where we arrived on 15 March 1944 and were issued a brand new B-17G. After working around the clock to ready the aircraft for overseas flight, which for me entailed swinging the compass, aligning the driftmeter, calibrating the air speed meter and checking the astro-dome for refraction error, the AAF promptly grounded all B-17Gs for a landing gear modification. Much to our dismay, we were shipped from Hunter Field to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey for an ocean voyage to England via the Queen Elizabeth, arriving at Glasgow, Scotland, on 7 April 1944. We were then sent by rail to Stoke-on-Trent, England, where we were further redistributed to the 94th Bomb Group which was to become my home base for some time.

Tuesday, April 11. Crew 16S181 arrived at AAF Station #468, located at Rougham, near Bury-St. Edmunds, one of 14 replacement crews assigned to the 94th Bomb Group that date. My navigation school classmate, Lt McAllister and I, and our crews, were further assigned to the 332nd Squadron. There we met Lt Bob Giles, another classmate, who told us that other school buddies Lts Linsenmeier, Graham and McComb, were also assigned to our Group.

Wednesday, April 12. Linsenmeier (P.O.W.) and Graham (interned Sweden) failed to return from yesterday's mission. They had just started combat flying. I wonder how long we will last. It seems a tragic waste to be shot down on one's first combat mission.

Thursday, April 13. Group photographers took our pictures for evasion and escape passports today. Later we were issued our flying gear, including heated suits which are not familiar to us. Hundreds of bombers passed over us on the way back to their bases.

Station #468 is a former RAF installation and covers a very large area. Each squadron or complementing facility is effectively dispersed which makes it necessary for all of us to acquire bicycles. Our squadron area is adjacent to the Bury-Norwich highway, just across from "Sir John's woods". Our Nissen hut accommodates eight officers and one pot-belly stove, but in order to shave, we must use the nearby "ablutions" building. The bath house is a mile away near the chapel. Our mess facilities are cafeteria style, furnished with plain wooden benches and tables. The officer's club is quite nice but after checking the bar, I can see that I am going to have to learn to like Scotch whiskey.

Friday, April 14. All the new navigators attended an orientation lecture by Maj. William Sackler, our Group navigator. I like the British maps we've been issued. In many respects they are superior to ours. Patches of wood are exactly plotted in their particular geometric forms, and the colors are sharper. The names of towns, rivers, etc., are in the language of the country or location. My knowledge of the German language is going to be of some use after all. We will be required to fly 30 combat missions.

Saturday, April 15. Flew four hours local orientation in #125 PUDDIN. The English countryside is somewhat cluttered compared to Florida or California. There are so many air stations in the area, one is easily

confused. I noticed each bomber group has its radio DF call letters laid out along one air strip--GA for Great Ashfield, RN for Rattlesden, etc. Our radio DF station code name is "Buncher 12."

Tuesday, April 18. Ten of our crews were lost on today's mission to Berlin. Lt Maurice Pearl, Capt. Lundak's navigator, told me they were caught outside the bomber stream by about 60 FW 190s. Bob Giles (his first mission, POW, Sagan), McComb (KIA) and Sgt Caskey (our former radio operator) are gone. Capt. Lundak brought his B-17 back shot to hell and minus his tail gunner who had bailed out when he dove his aircraft to the deck from 25,000 feet. The crew had used up almost all their ammunition and they could not maintain position with the group. Eighth AF admitted loss of 19 bombers on this mission.

Wednesday, April 19. Ju 88s strafed our station early this morning but their aim was bad. At the evasion and escape lecture today, we were told to hide by day and travel by night if we bail out over enemy territory. The Germans, we were told, are good at spotting Americans by their haircuts, teeth, GI boots, etc. Badly wounded airmen are to be bailed out over enemy territory if their wounds are such that they will die before returning to base. Loss of blood is the determining factor and we are told the Germans have given good medical care to many of our airmen in such straits. The passport photos are for the Underground and the continental money in our escape kits is to be used to pay for the passport. There are also morphine syrettes, halazone tablets and escape maps printed on silk cloth on both sides. Our daily identification codes are printed on rice paper so we can swallow them before bail out or capture by the enemy.

Friday, April 21. Flew 5.5 hours local weather mission in 082 MYAZAM DRAGON. I was checked out on the Gee Box, a radar navigation receiver of British manufacture which I had not seen before. It is simple to operate if one can put up with intermittent jamming. Because of this frequent jamming, it is almost impossible to "home" with this equipment. Two British stations transmit signals which are plotted on a special mercator map with overlaid parabolic "bearing" lines, mathematically graduated for ranging. The two station "fix" is extremely accurate at short range but loses effectiveness when the unit is over 100 miles distant from the transmitters. Lt Hamil, Sgt Kelch and I are alerted for our first combat mission tomorrow. My confidence is shaken. In the last 10 days we have lost about 14 crews. The April 11 arrivals have replaced losses for barely more than a week of operations.

Saturday, April 22. Mission #1. We flew with Lt Scannel and crew. This is typical of first mission assignments, mixing new replacements with seasoned crews. We took off at 1400 in beautiful CAVU weather topped with high cirrus clouds. On VHF, I heard a weird chatter unfamiliar to me. Phrases like "Fireball", "Vampire Violet", "Clambake Yellow", "Hotshot Red", (our group code) and "Rotate" (our squadron code), badgered the radio waves. As we assembled over "Splashers" and "Bunchers", the sky became dotted with colored flares, singles and doubles, while hundreds of aircraft tacked on to flights, squadrons and groups. Finally, after more than an hour of forming, we took our place at the lead of the 4th Combat Wing and the entire Eighth Air Force, proceeded at 150 mph indicated air speed. Our fighter escort of P-47s and P-38s picked us up just north of IJmuiden on the Dutch coast. There were no reports of enemy fighters as we turned at the IP and opened our bomb bay doors for the bomb run. From the initial point onward, there was absolutely no evasive action. We saw the flak before we spotted the target. The 88 mm explosions looked like double black mushrooms as though the shell explodes in the middle and works itself out at both ends vertically. The railroad marshalling yard at Hamm, the chokepoint to "Happy Valley" (the Ruhr) is three and a half miles long, the largest in Germany, so large that

we bombed in combat wing formation--three groups abreast. Flak was not too accurate and we were lucky to be first over the target. Our bombs blanketed the yard, only a few appeared to go astray. As we turned off to the rally point, I looked toward 5 o'clock and saw a sky full of flak with two B-17s in trouble, one in a shallow dive afire, and the other exploding after a short vertical dive. I watched several parachutes descend to German soil, then looked for my chest pack--it was not within reach. I made a note to stack it between my position and the emergency hatch against the bulkhead next to my navigation table. The trip back was uneventful, the 94th suffering no losses. My ears began to ring from the engine noise.

During today's mission, either the extreme cold at minus 40 degrees centigrade, or the tension caused me to pass water frequently. I discovered that no one used the relief tube in the bomb bay for two good reasons. First, the trip with an oxygen bottle is too much and second, if one does use it but does not notify the ball turret gunner to rotate to 6 o'clock, his windscreen is very neatly frosted. We used empty bomb fuse containers with which we were very generously supplied by the armor-er-gunners. The filled cans froze quickly, then they were stacked alongside a bulkhead until they were thrown out during the bomb run.

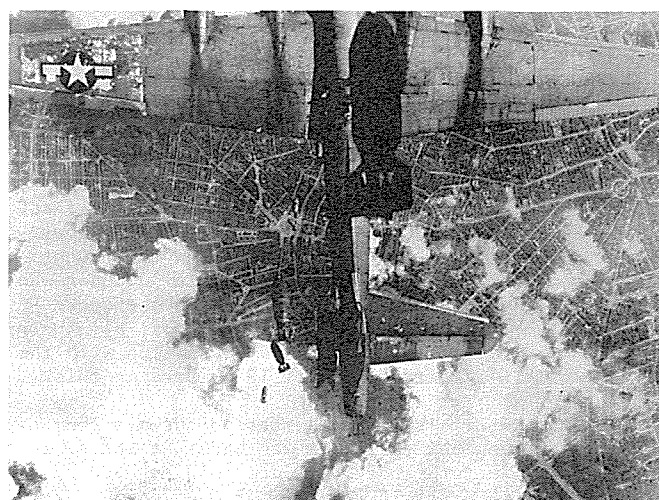
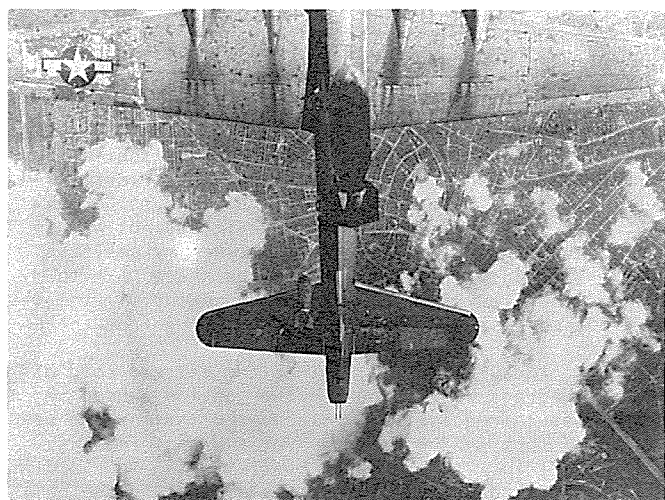
Sunday, April 23. Flew three hours local formation practice. Our right wing aircraft stalled, lazily turned on its back toward the right and dived vertically at high speed into the ground from 6,000 feet altitude, only three crew members bailing out before it crashed. Later, we heard something went wrong with the automatic flight control equipment.

Our chest pack parachute situation is a mess. Some high-ranking congenital idiot in the Air Material Command procurement business has decided we must have two types of chest packs. One has rings on the harness and snaps on the chute and the other type is just the opposite, an embarrassing situation at bail out time if one is not careful.

Thursday, April 27. Mission #3. Today's first group mission was directed toward an airfield near Abbeville. We flew the second one, taking off at 1500. As we approached the French coast, we watched a P-47 flight peel off and dive down to strafe flak barges near Dieppe, one of which was set on fire. The anti-aircraft gunners stationed at these bases are claimed to be the Luftwaffe's best. Flak at Le Culot A/F was heavy and accurate. On the return trip, two flak batteries south of Ostende knocked a B-17 out of the high group of the 4th Combat



Lucky Bastard Club certificate issued to Lt Abel Dolim.



A 94th Bomb Group Flying Fortress, piloted by Lt Reed, is hit by bombs from another B-17 on 19 May 1944 over Berlin.

Wing with their first salvo. I counted eight parachutes, plotted the positions of the flak barges and batteries, and entered the information in my log.

Saturday, April 29, Mission #4. My first Berlin mission. After breaking overcast at 12,000 feet we were unable to locate our squadron or group, so we assembled with the 452nd Group. We flew the direct route through Ijmuiden, Celle and Wittenberg. At the target, the flak barrage was intense and we sustained several minor hits. We were not attacked by enemy fighters although they were reported up in force. (1) Our A/P was the M/Y near Templehof Air Base. The 452nd Group lead navigator wandered somewhat off course on the return trip and we suffered numerous flak barrages all the way from Brandenburg to Amsterdam. A B-17 with 1st Bomb Division markings appeared about 2,000 yards away at 3 o'clock level in the vicinity of Magdeburg and stayed with us until we reached the Dutch coast. We suspected it was an enemy aircraft as the 1st Bomb Division was about one hour ahead of us in the bomber stream and it was very unlikely that one of their aircraft would have been near our position. It made no attempt to join us and we noticed the flak ranging was extremely accurate. No doubt the bastard called the shots. On our return, we discovered the 94th was severely mauled by flak and suffered loss of two aircraft, so it was just as well we did not locate our group. The 1st Bomb Division bore the brunt of Luftwaffe interception. Eight AF HQ admitted loss of 63 bombers today.

Sunday, April 30. Mission #5. At briefing, we were told that according to a British intelligence report, the Luftwaffe was scheduled to graduate a fighter pilot class at Clermont-Ferrand A/F today. We flew IDIOT'S DELIGHT (2) 42-30301, a B-17F with more than 55 missions to its credit. Over the English channel while we test fired our guns, there was a loud explosion in the navigator-bombardier compartment, and a hole the size of a football suddenly appeared in our nose. Lt Maybank stuffed the hole with cushions to cut down the cold blast and succeeded in slowing it up a bit. A single empty cartridge from one of the aircraft ahead had shattered the cold, hard plexiglas. We gave the fighter boys at Clermont-Ferrand a graduation present they could use for a conversation starter for months to come. That evening we learned our escorting fighters downed several training aircraft south of Paris. My ears have finally stopped ringing.

Sunday, May 7. Mission #7. My second Berlin Mission. Lt Chism and crew, who had trained with us at Drew Field, went down over the target today. I would hate to have to bail out over Berlin during one of our bombing attacks. I fear the survival rate for these unfortunates must be slim indeed. I have noted that the

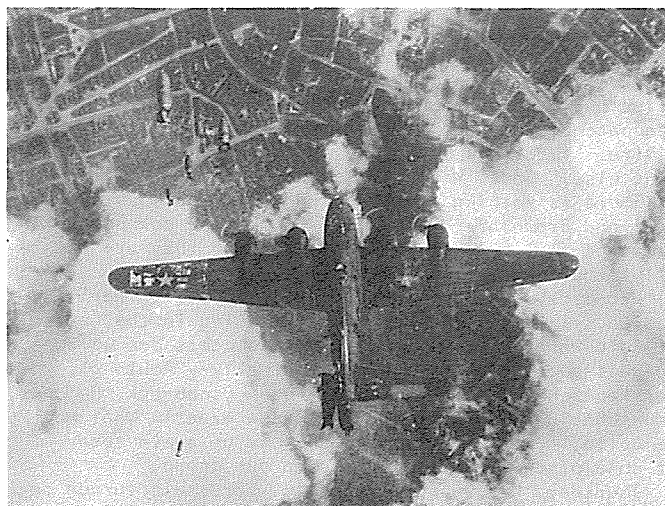
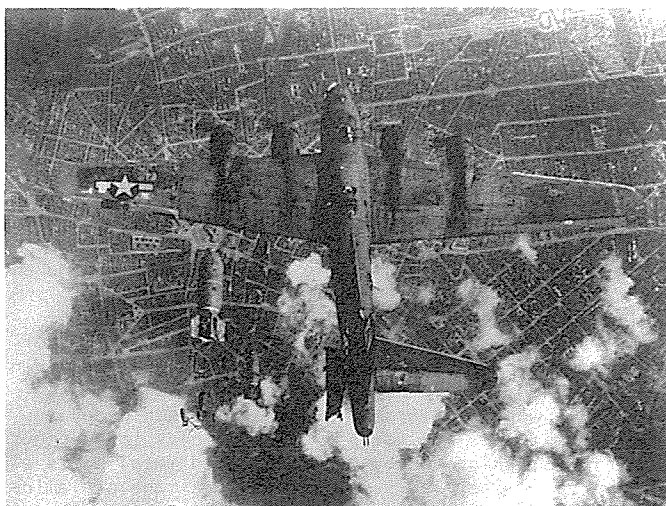
navigator and tail gunner are usually the first to leave a stricken bomber.

Our Group Chaplains are always at combat briefings. Capt. Collins, our Catholic chaplain, holds communion service before we breakfast and report for combat briefings.

Tuesday, May 9. Mission #8. In the middle of testing our .50s over the English channel, Lt Bond and crew of our Squadron left our formation and began a shallow glide toward the French coast. We watched closely but saw no parachutes and soon lost sight of the aircraft. The enemy tried to obscure the target with smoke pots, but it was not good enough. We left Laon A/F a shambles.

(Bond's crew trained with us at Drew Field. His bombardier Lt Walters, who returned to the 94th in November 1944 after a stint with the French Underground in Paris, told me that they were downed by friendly gunfire which damaged their #1 and #2 engines. I met Lt Bellumini, Bond's navigator at Yokota Air Base, Japan in 1952 and he corroborated Walter's claim.)

Friday, May 12. Mission #9. We flew #6 position with our squadron to an aircraft repair plant at Zwickau Germany. The rest of the group bombed an oil refinery at Brux, Czechoslovakia. (3) We took up the low position in a composite group with a 385th Group squadron leading, (4) and a 447th Group squadron in the high position. After crossing the enemy coast at Ostende, we received reports that the Luftwaffe was up in force. Near Coblenz our escort of P-51s departed to chase bogies. Some minutes later, Lt Maybank spotted a small formation of unidentified fighters at 3 o'clock level. I stood up to be close to my .50s and as I squinted out toward 2 o'clock, I was shocked to see about six jet-black FW 190s fly right through the high squadron, attacking from 12 o'clock level. The group closed up--no one seemed to be hurt. About ten minutes later ten more black FWs attacked the lead squadron from 12 o'clock level, some of the enemy fishtailing vertically to rake their targets. Kelch, Long and I fired as they went by at 3 o'clock. One of the FWs rammed the #6 aircraft in the lead squadron and both exploded. Two more B-17s dropped out of formation. One began a shallow trailing dive with all ten men bailing out. The other maintained speed with the group about 500 feet below the lead squadron and dropped its landing gear to communicate air surrender. After some minutes, it retracted its landing gear and rejoined the group which was then about 20 miles southeast of Frankfurt. At our altitude of 19,000 feet there were some stratus layers, ideal for the enemy, and as I scanned at 11 o'clock level, I spotted a large formation of fighters approaching from about 2,000 yards heading for our low squadron. I got on intercom and notified the crew--Messerschmitt 109s, about 30 of them in three flights. We opened fire



With left stabilizer and elevator sheared off, B-17 begins its final plunge. (Photos - USAAF from Boeing 83340-43)

at about 1200 yards, and I picked the far left 109 in the lead flight. Two of the 109s were shot out of formation before they approached 500 yards. A string of cannon shells, so close I heard their sharp cracks, exploded just in front of our nose. I fired about 60 rounds at my 109 until he passed by our #1 engine, forcing me to quit. It was closing fast from about 100 yards when I yelled at Wehrfritz to get him. He poured .50s into the Messerschmitt at point-blank range. Apparently the enemy pilot was not firing at this point or he would have raked us. His aircraft stalled after passing us and our tail gunner saw it go down and crash--the pilot did not bail out. One of the 109s exploded just above our squadron as the rest of the enemy formation passed over us. Breitbach, in the tail, reported the same enemy squadron attacked the group behind us from 12 o'clock level and that about ten B-17s were in trouble. Our combined .50s created a tremendous ear-splitting reverberating racket and the entire bomber seemed to vibrate. The stench of exploded cartridges filled our nose compartment. The 332nd was lucky to be intact, having suffered no losses. The bomb run to the target was a question mark as preceding bombers created fires in the repair plant, forcing our lead bombardier to aim through the billowing smoke. Near Weimar, the low group to our right took a pass from 6 o'clock level by ten 109s with no apparent effect. The floor of our navigator-bombardier compartment was covered with empty .50 caliber casings and in moving about I felt like I had roller skates on my fur-lined boots. After we landed at Bury, we looked for hits on #574 and found none. At interrogation we learned that our main group force lost two aircraft to Me 210s and 410s using air to air rockets and cannon. Sgt Wehrfritz was credited with one 109 destroyed and Sgt Kelch with one FW 190 damaged. Our group claimed 21 Enemy/Aircraft destroyed, eight probables and 9 damaged for the day's mission. E/A credits are not split in bomber command even though two or three gunners share in damage or destruction.

Much unlike the Hollywood version of air combat, I did not hear enemy aircraft engine noise or cannon fire, even though the enemy pressed their attack to within yards of our bomber. It all happened so quickly. I estimated the third firing run at seven seconds duration with a 550 mph rate of closure. Further, all members of the crew violently disagreed as to enemy aircraft coloring and markings.

Lt Victor Bonomo, who was navigator of FORTRESS McHENRY, ahead of us in #3 position, told me that he got so excited he pressed the microphone button on his .50 instead of the trigger button, losing precious split seconds.

Friday, May 19. Mission #11. My fourth Berlin Mis-

sion. Flew with Lt McMakin's crew. The mission route was from Lowestoft to Helgoland, Hamburg, Wittenberg, Target and return via Stettin, Rostock, Kiel and Helgoland. We led the second flight of the lead squadron and so were plagued by heavy contrails which we encountered at 26,000 feet. At bombs away over the target, our group leader began his right turn to the rally point while we were still dropping bombs, and as we lagged in the second flight, the high squadron leader banked into our overhead airspace, and a 1,000 pound bomb clipped the horizontal stabilizer of the aircraft on our left wing. This was Lt Reed's aircraft, and it lost altitude rapidly and began a very steep dive. We watched in vain for blossoming parachutes.

After we turned west at Stettin while approaching the islands in the Fehmarn belt, we were alerted for "Red Bandits." Our fighter escort presently engaged large numbers of enemy fighters. About 10 Messerschmitt 109s made a 12 o'clock level pass through the low group in our combat wing formation. A B-17 immediately dropped out of formation, heading for Sweden and cloud cover in that general direction. I watched a 109 cut out of the enemy squadron and begin his pursuit curve to attack a lone B-17 from 5 o'clock high. The enemy fighter pilot made the mistake of coming inside the range of their .50s before he was ready to shoot. Fire control from the B-17 was perfect--all .50s let go at once. The 109 passed the B-17, dived without pulling out and splashed into the Baltic Sea. The B-17 continued on her way to Malmo. Two 109s approached our aircraft from 12 o'clock level but broke off their attack when Lt Larsen (KIA, August '44) opened fire with his chin turret. Our #1 engine had been hit by flak over the target and it was leaking oil rather badly, so I worked a quick plot to Malmo, just in case. East of Kiel, we saw some of the red colored flak bursts with which the anti-aircraft batteries directed their fighters to our position. The oil pressure on #1 engine was sufficient to get us home without straggling.

Monday, May 22, Mission #12. The 94th Group really fouled up today. At the initial point to the target, Kiel naval base, our lead aircraft had trouble with its bomb bay doors. About five miles from the target, it unloaded and at the same time, most of our group aircraft salvaged their bombs. With considerable disgust, I watched our bombs plow up some damned Kraut farmer's cabbage patch.

Large numbers of enemy fighters appeared in the target area and soon we saw several P-38s and 109s in trouble. One P-38 pilot with a Messerschmitt a bare 50 yards behind, flew under our formation from 12 o'clock but we could not help him. A German fighter pilot dangling from a cream colored parachute passed within range just under our formation at 1 o'clock. It would have

been easy to kill him as he floated past our right wing. Over at 11 o'clock I saw a B-17, straggling and losing altitude, fire sweeping its entire belly while the crew bailed out. An airman left the right waist hatch, his open parachute afire. Minutes later we saw another B-17 on fire. I believe I am more afraid of fire than anything else. God! What a miserable way to die.

There is nothing for the Group to cheer about today. Hamil and Brown are dog tired from horsing our bomber in formation flying. It is a hard job and they are physically exhausted after every mission.

Wednesday, May 24. Mission #13. My fifth Berlin Mission. I am now in the habit of tuning in the German Air Raid Warning Service. Their announcers are women who call out their messages hysterically--"Achtung!, Amerikanischer Grossbomber wegen nach Osnabruck, Hanover, Braunschweig, und Berlin." They know exactly what we are up to. Enemy fighter command was up again today but none of their units approached our group.

Thursday, May 25. Mission #14. Brussels turned out to be a "milk run". At interrogation we were told that several B-17s were shot down off the Dutch coast by enemy fighters. We are cautioned not to remove our guns until after we land. It seems some of the aircraft attacked were unable to return fire because gunners had removed their weapons after leaving enemy territory. We have not been guilty of that sort of foolishness.

Tuesday, May 30. Mission #15. We used armor piercing bombs to clobber some damned strip of concrete just inside the French coast. This is one of the many "No Ball" missions my group has flown. Navigators fly only a very few of these short hauls because of a "shortage" of our specialty in Bomber Command. This target was bombed by squadron formations, the approach being made at an acute angle to the long strip. We missed by only a couple hundred feet but the squadron behind us hit it right on the button. There were about thirty 88 mm guns at this miserable target. It must be important to the enemy but what in the hell is it? (Weeks later we remembered these strips and realized we had bombed V-1 launching sites.)

Wednesday, May 31. Mission #16. We goofed again. This time we bombed the wrong target. Forced to make a second approach to the target, Soest, we wandered off downwind during the "360" and bombed the town of Geseke instead. They are amazingly alike--on the same rail line and with the same kind of moat surrounding the inner town. At any rate, we laid the bombs smack on Geseke's marshalling yard.

Friday, June 2. Mission #17. As we were taxiing in line preparatory to take-off, we pulled out to a nearby hardstand. As usual during this particular period, I had all my maps out and was preparing my log for entries. Suddenly, someone slapped my shoulder and holered, "Get the hell out of here." I looked up from my log to see our #2 engine afire. I stumbled after Brown out the forward hatch and he steadied me as I hit the ground. The #2 propeller, only a couple of feet away, was still doing about 700 RPM's. I felt chilled--Brown probably saved me from being killed by that prop. We all headed out underneath the bomber toward the tail section. Hamil hit the CO 2 and the fire was soon put out. We were picked up and trucked to another hardstand where a 410th Squadron spare aircraft awaited us.

We took off at 0700 and flew the "abortion" element for 4.5 hours. The element comprised three spare aircraft which were required to fly a certain distance with the group to replace target bound aircraft forced to return (abort) for any reason. The element usually turns back at the Channel or the North Sea.

We took off again at 1530 for a mission to Paris/Versailles M/Y but were unable to bomb the target due to cloud cover. We are not allowed to bomb enemy targets in friendly countries except under visual conditions. There were ninety 88 mm guns at Paris and they all gave us merry hell. We left Paris and headed north for Conches A/F along the Seine river. One of our B-17s

was smoking badly while losing altitude and we watched seven of its crew bail out as it continued its gentle glide. There was no flak from the Luftwaffe airbase, but we missed its vital shops and hangars.

Monday, June 5. We flew four hours on a mission to northern France but had to abort over Pas de Calais at 29,500 feet because of severe stomach cramps among several crew members. Gas expansion is always a problem among crews at high altitude where air is thin and stagnant in a bomber. Odors of all sorts permeate the combined air-oxygen supply system and many is the complaint from crew members who have to put up with someone else's gas.

I have learned to shave closely for high altitude flying because facial hairs pressing into my skin under the oxygen mask cause a good deal of irritation. Condensation from moist breath forms a lump of ice on one's neck, so we wear mufflers to catch the moisture and to keep cold air out. We use silk inner gloves to keep our hands from sticking to the extremely cold metal parts of the aircraft. The flak suits we wear are made of laminated metal and weigh about 20 pounds. They are cumbersome and cause one's shoulders to ache, but a buddy of mine has stopped three pieces of flak with his. We also wear flak helmets which are really infantrymen's helmets with the sides cut out to accommodate our earphones.

We are issued one box each of high carbohydrate ration candy, all we have to eat during the missions, some of which are nine to ten hours duration. However, Group always has corned beef sandwiches and coffee or cocoa for us during interrogation.

There have been all sorts of rumors about an imminent invasion of the enemy coast.

Tuesday, June 6. Mission #18. We bombed a highway junction back of the invasion beaches flying at only 14,000 feet and using radar for the drop. There was no flak. Above the solid undercast at 10,000 feet, we saw nothing but bombers and escorting fighters.

Wednesday, June 7. Mission #19. We crossed the invasion coast on the way to bomb a railway bridge over the Loire River at Nantes. The English channel was positively jammed with ships and boats of all descriptions. Several landing craft were burning on the beaches. The fields near the coast were littered with Horsa and CG-4 gliders, all painted with the same black and white invasion striping we carried on our fuselage and wings. We took flak at Tours and then began our bomb run from the south of Nantes. Half-way down the bomb run, it became apparent we were on a collision course with a 2nd Bomb Division B-24 group. The enemy was beginning to pound us with 88s so we elected to do a "360" and came up behind another B-24 group. The second bomb run was good. We hit the target just at the southern approach to the bridge and there was a very large ball of flame in the marshalling yard--gasoline! We took more flak on the way out at Rennes and at Guernsey Island, where we were clobbered at only 11,000 feet. It was quite late in the day (we had taken off at 1645) and there was a solid mass of dark clouds ahead, so we broke formation as we reached Portsmouth. We were on instruments at 8,000 feet altitude south of the London area when Hamil turned to a heading of 150 degrees. I was puzzled as it was not the heading I had earlier given him for Buncher 12. On intercom, he told me that he had the "Buncher" on radio D/F. I tuned in on our frequency and it was the proper signal, but I knew our dead-reckoning position and it was next to impossible to receive Bury radio at that range. Also, with a bearing of 150 degrees, it had to be an enemy transmitter in Belgium who was "meaconing" the Bury beacon. ("Meaconing" is the technique of duplicating a true D/F signal with a similar signal indicating a false bearing designed to confuse enemy airmen.) I gave Joe a new heading after convincing him that he had tuned in on Jerry. North of London we broke out of the pea soup and chose to stay above the clouds in spite of the perfect bomber's moon. Joe received a radio report that enemy intruders were over our base so we were directed to clear the area and fly due west to Ireland

for one half hour and return. As I quickly dead reckoned ahead for a change of course, Maybank suddenly opened fire with his chin turret. Unable to identify the visitor, we dropped into the safety of the clouds near Cambridge and began our turn to the west. The clouds opened up a little some minutes later and we noted several fires on the ground to the north. Much later we approached Buncher 12 on an easterly heading, sweating out our low gas supply. Buncher 12 was on again and I was pleased to see the D/F needle line up very close to zero, which meant my DR course was good. I listened for the null, then watched the needle swing around to 180 degrees as we picked up the Buncher signal again. Joe and I both knew we had just passed over our base. We landed at 0045 8 June with hardly more than fumes in our gas tanks. (5)

Thursday, June 8. Today we learned that the fires we saw last night were caused by several B-24s which were shot down during their landing approaches by Ju 88s. Many of our bombers did not make it back to Bury last night but by afternoon they began to straggle in. Navigators and pilots took a ribbing from their more fortunate squadron mates. As I thought about yesterday's mission, it occurred to me that if we had gone in ahead of the two B-24 groups at target, the enemy intruders would have been working us instead.

The word from Group Headquarters today is that there is no longer any limit to combat missions now that the invasion is on. We have been ordered to wear our .45s in case of enemy parachute troop attack.

Monday, June 12. Mission #20. As usual, we checked our .50 caliber cartridge belts for "short rounds" before takeoff. As soon as we attained altitude, we charged our .50s to keep one round in the chamber in case of icing. On the way to Montdidier A/F, a squadron of 109s passed us at 9 o'clock headed north for the invasion beaches. From now on they will have other fish to fry. Flak was light but extremely accurate and we took a number of hits. Our bombing was as accurate as their flak.

Thursday, June 15. Mission #22. We bombed the Misburg oil refinery near Hanover today. A very heavy but grossly inaccurate barrage of flak met us over the target. Our chaff (Window) really goofed up their radar.

I am intrigued by the German radio broadcasts at night. They call the Mosquito bombers "schneller Kampflugzeuge." When the "Mossies" don't show up, the girls croon, "Über der reichgebiet findet man keine feindischer kampffverband." "There are no enemy combat units over Germany."

Tuesday, June 20. Mission #24. Today's CAVU weather caused the Germans to get busy with the smoke pots. Hamburg-Harburg oil refineries were obscured, as well as Fallersleben and Fassberg. The target was heavily covered by smoke from previous drops, so our poor bombardier had to interpolate again. The A/P was supposed to be the roundhouse at the Königsborn RR M/Y at Magdeburg. On the way back, off the coast near Wesermünde, we passed over a German convoy of merchant ships led by what appeared to be two trawlers or minesweepers. After our return to base, we learned that a formation of Beauforts attacked the convoy and sank several ships.

Wednesday, June 21. Mission #25. My sixth Berlin mission. At briefing we were told that this raid was to be carried out in retaliation for the indiscriminate V-1 bombing of London and that the RAF, previously scheduled to participate, had scratched themselves off the mission list. During takeoff I was alarmed by the drag on our left wing but I checked my strong desire to say anything on intercom for fear of unnecessarily alarming other crew members. The Luftwaffe was airborne and again there were no attacks on our group. Our bomb run was a straight 40 miles long at 90 knots groundspeed due to a stiff headwind instead of a tailwind as briefed. We unloaded our delayed action GP's and incendiaries over the Charlottenburg district while heavy flak from the 900-odd 88 mm cannon around Berlin gave us the most

accurate and sustained fire we have encountered to date. We watched one of our bombers drop out of formation and head for the deck. As we turned away from the target, we saw many brightly blazing pin points of fire in the heavily built up residential area below. (6)

At interrogation I asked Joe what went wrong on take-off. He appeared somewhat surprised, but with his usual deadpan look, told me that we took off with our controls locked and that we were saved from a likely crash by well-positioned trim tabs. Hamil and I were the only members of our crew at interrogation and there were 10 double shots of whiskey lined up on the table. He started on one end and I started on the other. We met in the middle for a draw. Later, we mounted our bicycles and wobbled all the way to the mess hall about a mile from operations.

The demolition bombs used on today's mission were fused to explode from one to 72 hours after impact. These coupled with the incendiaries create the maximum hazardous situation for the enemy firefighting and "UXB" demolition crews. The 500-lb incendiary cannisters are designed to disintegrate after dropping about 1,000 feet and spew out approximately 200 two and one-half pound thermite bombs which literally rain death on the enemy. Some thermite bombs have anti-personnel fragmentation devices to discourage countermeasures. They explode in contact with water and can only be put out by smothering with non-combustible material. Under no circumstances are we allowed to return and land with a load of delayed-action bombs as they are sensitive to shock which may cause them to explode prematurely. These are murderous weapons to use against civilians and there are many among us who are not proud of today's accomplishment.

Thursday, June 22. Mission #26. We hit another V-1 launching site and it was a perfect job. We have some darned good bombardiers in our group. From 21,000 feet these strips of concrete look awfully small. One of our group went down over the target area after hits from heavy accurate flak. As we passed the beachhead area, I counted three airstrips where many P-47s were busily taking off and landing. The little villages of Argentan and Liseux appeared to be severely mauled by shellfire.

I never hear the flak explosions unless they are very close, then they are usually accompanied by the "punctured drum" type sounds that cause me to grit my teeth. My position, in the midst of four engines, rules out most sounds less noisy than our growling engines.

June 23 to June 30. Spent a quiet week at Aylesfield House, Alton (the "Flak House" to the trade) where we slept late and let ourselves be pampered by butlers and the Red Cross ladies. We stopped over in London for the night on the way back to Bury and were promptly greeted by a V-1 at Waterloo station. The next day, July 1st, while we were on our way to Simpson's restaurant, a V-1 flew over at about 400 feet altitude doing around 400 mph. Its noise was nerve-racking (even more so than the London klaxons) reminding me somewhat of a pack of motorcycles racing by. It passed over us, its motor stopped and it began a 180 degree turning dive to the left, exploding a couple of blocks away. My admiration for the British people has increased a good deal since I arrived in Britain. They walk about as though the "Vergeltungswaffen" do not exist.

Friday, July 7. Mission #27. Our primary target was the large oil refinery complex at Merseburg-Leuna, near Leipzig. On the way in, just north of Ijmuiden, I saw two bombers from another group collide in a blinding flash. There were no parachutes--only flaming debris filtering down through the hazy sky. This is a terrible sight to witness. It has a spine-chilling effect on crews but most of all on our pilots who dare not be distracted from the ever-demanding, precise job of close formation flying.

The primary target was heavily obscured by cloud and smoke so we proceeded to the secondary target, Kolleda A/F. Near Leipzig, I spotted three Ju 52s at about 10,000 feet and almost at the same time, a flight of P-51s to our right peeled off and dived. We did a beautiful job

of bombing. The shops area was completely covered by bombs, with very few strays, resulting in a good tight pattern. The next day I read in Stars and Stripes that Ju 52s had been shot down in the Leipzig area.

Saturday, July 8. The group was mauled by flak over Paris today. They were forced down to 20,000 feet during the bomb run due to stratus clouds. At this altitude the 88s are very effective and we lost four aircraft plus two badly damaged in crash landings. Our regular aircraft #574 (XM-N), sank into the English channel after her crew ditched her. RAF Air-Sea Rescue fished two of our crew out of the "drink". Lt McRae was co-pilot of #574 and he returned a couple of days later garbed in a Royal Navy turtle-necked sweater. Mac has had his share of bad luck. Last April he was seriously wounded in the groin by the same piece of flak that killed his navigator.

Tuesday, July 11. A combat tour is now officially 35 missions. Our crew was approached about volunteering for a second combat tour with the group. I elected to take the 30 day rest and recuperation leave and return to fly combat. To refuse means to fly eight more missions and I've had my fill. My home is in Honolulu, Hawaii and I calculate what with slow convoys and Patton on his way to Parris--the war in Europe may be over before I have to return. Joe Hamil and I are to depart for Chorley on the 17th.

Tuesday, October 17. Gambled and lost--the Army Air Force gave me an A-4 air travel priority and Patton slowed down after he got to Paris.

It was good to be back among my comrades. People at home do not comprehend air warfare. There are other returnees--Lt Victor Bonomo, McHenry's navigator (the Don Juan of the squadron), Lt Ed Reed, Scannel's co-pilot and Keith Cearley, a bombardier credited with downing several enemy fighters.

Wednesday, October 24. Went up with Lt. Franklyn Eason for some "slow" time to determine if a newly repaired aircraft was ready for combat operations. He is only 19 years old, the youngest first pilot I have ever flown with. On the deck he likes to horse around but in the "blue" he is all business. I am only 22 years old myself, but somehow I feel much, much older.

Wednesday, November 1. Lt McRae damaged two B-17s while taxiing during his first pilot checkout--more bad luck. Lt Walters, Bond's bombardier, who went down over the French coast last May 9th, has returned to our squadron. He told me we saw no parachutes because they bailed out at very low altitude to escape detection by the enemy.

Sunday, November 5. Mission #29. I flew with Lt Joiner's crew and we were forced to abort the mission near Thionville due to #4 engine failure. Coming back alone was no problem until we had to squeeze through the Ostende-Dunkirk corridor. The Germans are still holding out there and have little to shoot at except passing bombers. We dropped our bombs into the English channel.

My good friend Lt McRae went down off the coast near Hamburg with Lt Hummel and crew yesterday. They were last seen straggling over the North Sea with their #3 and #4 engines feathered. He had been in the group last April when I arrived and I can think of no flyer in our squadron who has had as rough a time as Mac. We feel his loss keenly. He came close to finishing his combat tour but the number of missions climbed from 25 to 30, then to 35 and he never made it. We are told that a second combat tour will be 24 missions.

Friday, November 10. Mission #30. Crew #32 flew for the first time today and I am very glad to be teamed up with Lt Ed Reed and Lt Keith Cearley. "Rosie" Rosbury is our co-pilot. The flak at Wiesbaden seemed to be heavier caliber cannon shell than the usual 88 mm stuff. We missed the airfield and hit the nearby village instead. Our group put up 36 aircraft arranged in a box of four, three flight sections, twice the number of aircraft we were able to put up only a few months ago. Lts

Welch, Collie and Winters were forced to land in Belgium because of flak damage. This is a bonus--before the invasion, such aircraft and crews would have been losses. The ground troops have done us a real service.

Nick, our crew chief, is a solemn fellow of Polish descent who obligingly lets us warm up in his shack before "start engines" time. He uses 100 octane gasoline for his home made drip pan heater. There is a great deal of mutual respect between the ground crews and the combat crews. Their concern for our safety shows in their faces, their attitude and their superb workmanship.

Thursday, November 16. Mission #31. We used fragmentation bombs against German troop positions near Duren today. Buncher 12 was socked in so we landed at RAF station Boscombe-Down and were put up at a nearby British Army training base. At any rate, before we left for Tidworth, the RAF fed us at their fabulous mess. Women waited on table and there were white tablecloths. Later, we watched the RAF men bring down their ensign and noticed they didn't seem to mind that it touched the ground. Then saw one of the new gas turbine powered aircraft taxiing along the flight line--odd to see an aircraft without a propeller. It certainly made a lot of horrible whining sounds. We stopped again to watch some RAF armorers load a 12,000 pound torpedo-shaped bomb on a Lancaster, its lower half protruding from a well in the bomb bay section. One of the RAF airmen said to a Yank gunner, "I suppose it will be a long time before you fellows carry one of these (indicating the 12,000 pounder) up in your Fortresses." The gunner replied, "It will be a damned sight longer before you guys drop one of those babies on Berlin in broad daylight." Returned to Bury on the 18th, badly in need of a shave.

Saturday, November 25. Reed went up on "slow time" last night and did not return on schedule. He had a "green" navigator with him, got lost over England and landed at a former German airfield in the Liege area. I had checked the navigator out on "Gee" only a few days ago but he had insisted that he would not have any trouble homing. He and his crew were shot down several days later on their first combat mission.

I have come to appreciate the value of air crew discipline. More than anything else, I believe the "eyes have it." Constant vigilance and alertness are a prerequisite for survival in air warfare.

Our first pilots are usually presumed to be the aircraft commander, but I have found that with some crews, the bombardier or navigator is actually the crew leader.

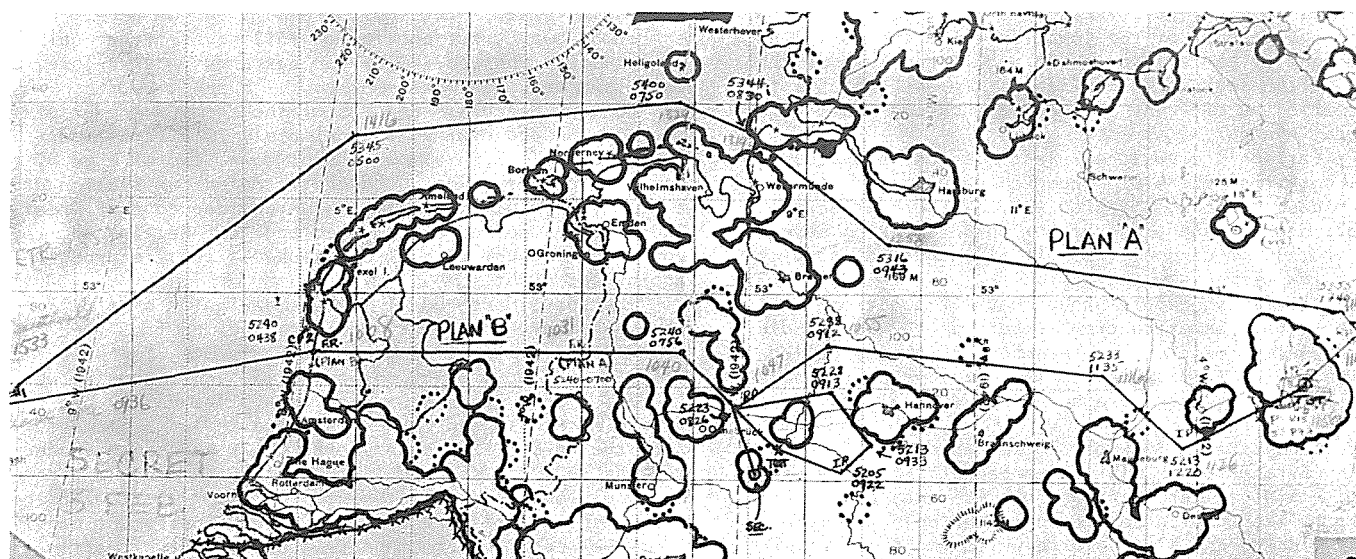
Thursday, November 30. Two of our B-17s collided over the base today while landing after the Lutzendorf mission. Lt Winters and his entire crew except the tail gunner were killed. The TG was seriously hurt and is not expected to live. The other crew crash landed and are in fair shape.

This unfortunate accident justifies my habit of remaining in position during takeoffs and landings. Navigators and bombardiers are advised to remain in the radio room at these times but I've always felt that our pilots need extra eyes up front.

Sunday, December 24. Lt Voss of our squadron returned on two engines from today's mission to Babenhausen A/F. Unable to locate our group, he had tacked onto another unit and was shot up by 109s. Aircraft in distress or with severely wounded crewmen fire red-red flares to obtain priority in landing and to alert ambulance and fire fighting crews. A large number of 91st and 92nd Group aircraft have landed at our base due to poor visibility at their home stations.

We have been very hard pressed for fuel for our Nissen hut stove. Many of us have actually had to buy our own oak wood at a nearby English sawmill or use the paraffin-soaked cardboard bomb rings which cause everything in our hut to smell waxy.

Monday, January 1, 1945. Mission #35. Last night Hamil, Posey, Murray and I went along with a bunch of the boys from our squadron to celebrate the New Year at the officers' club. I was not scheduled to fly today, but



Mission map for the 3 February 1945 attack on Berlin (Plan A) with Initial Point near Magdeburg. Secondary target was Bielefeld (Plan B) with IP to the east. Lt Dolim left Southwold in a/c 662 "Rotate Baker" at 0936 and returned to Southwold at 1533. His times at various points along the route are pencilled in on this map.

after only two hours sleep I was awakened to fly a mission. At bomber position, I immediately went on pure oxygen in an attempt to clear my head. Just after take-off, we saw a bomber crash near Lavenham. Our squadron flew with the 486th Group, and we bombed the target in squadron formations. The 332nd missed the target by two miles, unloading on the railroad track west of the Deutsche Gasoline AG plant at Dollbergen. The other squadrons hit the plant and set it afire. Between the A/P and our drop sat an enemy freight train steaming away but with no useable tracks fore or aft.

Tonight my poor head feels like it will explode any minute.

Saturday, January 13. Mission #39. I saw a V-2 leave Holland and soar to a tremendous height on its way to London. Just recently, I was a quarter of a mile away from one that exploded near Marble Arch in London. In my opinion this is the most sinister weapon yet invented. Today's mission to Mainz was a meteorological mess. We entered the overcast for an instrument let down over Bury and broke through a 200 foot ceiling. We actually had to climb into the base of the overcast in order to clear the chimneys in Bury St. Edmunds. Cearley and I had to talk Lt Reed into position so he could see the end of the runway. These heavy overcasts are a curse to flyers. Only a short time ago, we nearly rammed a returning Lancaster while climbing to altitude in the early morning overcast skies near our base.

Sunday, January 28. A 331st Squadron aircraft crashed on takeoff this morning. The navigator and engineer were killed and the co-pilot badly injured.

Col Bobbie Burns is the new commanding officer of the Fourth Combat Wing, replacing Gen. Frederick Castle who was recently killed in the crash of his B-17 near Liege after attacks by several 109s. Gen. Castle was CO of the 94th Group before he was promoted to Wing HQ. (Castle AFB, California is named in his honor.)

Saturday, February 3. Mission #41. My seventh Berlin Mission. The Germans now have about twelve hundred 88 mm guns around Berlin. The flak seems to be more accurate and the barrages more effective than some months ago.

Today's bomber stream seemed endless and we were literally surrounded by P-51s.

A Lancaster bomber crashed near Bury last night with such a tremendous roar that its entire bomb load must have exploded. Two days ago, a Mosquito bomber crash-landed on the main highway near our station, but the

the pilot and navigator walked away from that one.

Wednesday, February 21. Mission #44. We followed an RAF attack on Nürnberg (Nuremberg) by bombing the south RR M/Y located only one mile north of a huge stalag Luft.

Target flak was heavy and accurate. Two shells exploded between the Group leader and our aircraft in the deputy slot, but the penetrating steel shards did not hit a vital spot in either bomber.

On our return, over Belgium at low altitude, I watched a V-1 scoot by under us and explode on the outskirts of Bruges.

(I met Bob Giles in Miami in August 1945 after his liberation from Nürnberg. He was transferred from Sagan to the Stalag Luft at Nürnberg in time to witness our attack of the 21st. He told me all the "Kriegies"--Kriegsgefangen, the German term for prisoners of war--gathered in the compound and cheered as we passed over in spite of threats from their guards. Bob was wounded by 20 mm fire before he bailed out and had spent over a year as a POW. Even after a long recuperation leave, he still looked pretty rough. At Nürnberg, Giles was joined by Lts Gaudaen, Fulton, Gerrells, Foppiano and Bentley--all navigator classmates of ours. These fellows took a beating.)

Thursday, February 22. Mission #45. This is the largest air raid over Germany to date. Over 6,000 aircraft participated including the 8th AF, RAF, 15th AF, 9th AF, and the 1st and 2nd Tactical Air Forces. The bombing was carried out at extremely low altitudes and our targets were secondary rail junctions and marshalling yards in smaller cities not previously bombed. Just east of Ansbach, our target, we passed over an enemy A/F and I counted ten 109s and other types on the field. We were only 5500 feet above the ground, but they did not fire at us. This was the first time that I felt the concussion of the exploding bombs and also the first time I saw boxcars tumble through the air.

I felt we were unnecessarily exposed to light flak which can be murderous at low altitudes and slow speeds. I feel uneasy when a boxcar attains almost as much altitude as our bomber.

Saturday, February 24. Mission #47. We were unable to open our bomb bay doors on the bomb run because of severe icing so Capt. Reed asked permission to leave the group at the rally point to clear our bomb bay doors and seek a target of opportunity. Cearley cranked the doors down manually and we decided to bomb the rail junction at Quackenbruck. He was unable to make last second correct-

ions because of cloud cover so the GP's hit a couple of hundred feet short of the junction aside the rail line. The incendiaries fell way short and landed in a patch of woods to the south of the village. It was probably the first time the citizens of Quackenbruck had heard a bomb explode in anger.

Lt Carlson's crew (their last mission) and Lt Tejars crew, both from the 410th Squadron, are lost.

Friday, March 2. Mission #48. We were attacked by Me 262s near Dresden, one of our bombers taking several hits from 30 mm cannon fire. It all happened so quickly only a few airmen saw the action.

We are flying deputy group lead (#2 position) now and so we have an extra crew member, an NCO who handles the ECM (electronic counter measures equipment) called "Panther". It is designed to jam enemy radar transmission. Our Group leaders are "Pathfinder" aircraft from the 333rd Squadron.

Saturday, March 3. At 2300 we heard the air raid warning siren--"Crash alarm, Red bandits, take cover". Our air raid shelter is only about 50 yards away, but no one rushes outside to freeze in the cold, enemy or no enemy. Inside hut #28, we were welcoming a new crew. Soon we heard the unforgettable rapid beat of unsynchronized twin-engined enemy intruders. I told the newcomers the enemy was overhead and if he followed the usual procedure, he would cut his engines and glide into position as soon as he identified his target. Several bombs exploded some distance from Bury. The new crew felt we were "putting them on". Suddenly, the raider cut his engines and seconds later all hell broke loose as the sound of hostile cannon fire destroyed the absolute quiet of the station. The rookie navigator, sitting on the bed across the hut from me, clad only in his underwear and flying boots, darted out the door. An hour later, he returned from the air raid shelter looking somewhat blue.

Sunday, March 4. Mission #49. Today we led our nine bomber section to the assembly over Troyes. This is a new assembly technique which conserves a great deal of gasoline. The section leaders took off first and flew directly to Bunchers in France where the assembly took place, instead of over Buncher 12 as usual. The enemy jammed hell out of the buncher at Troyes but I maintained position with the help of "Gee" fixes from advanced transmitters in France. We bombed Ingolstadt using H2X.

To date, I've flown with many bombardiers, most of

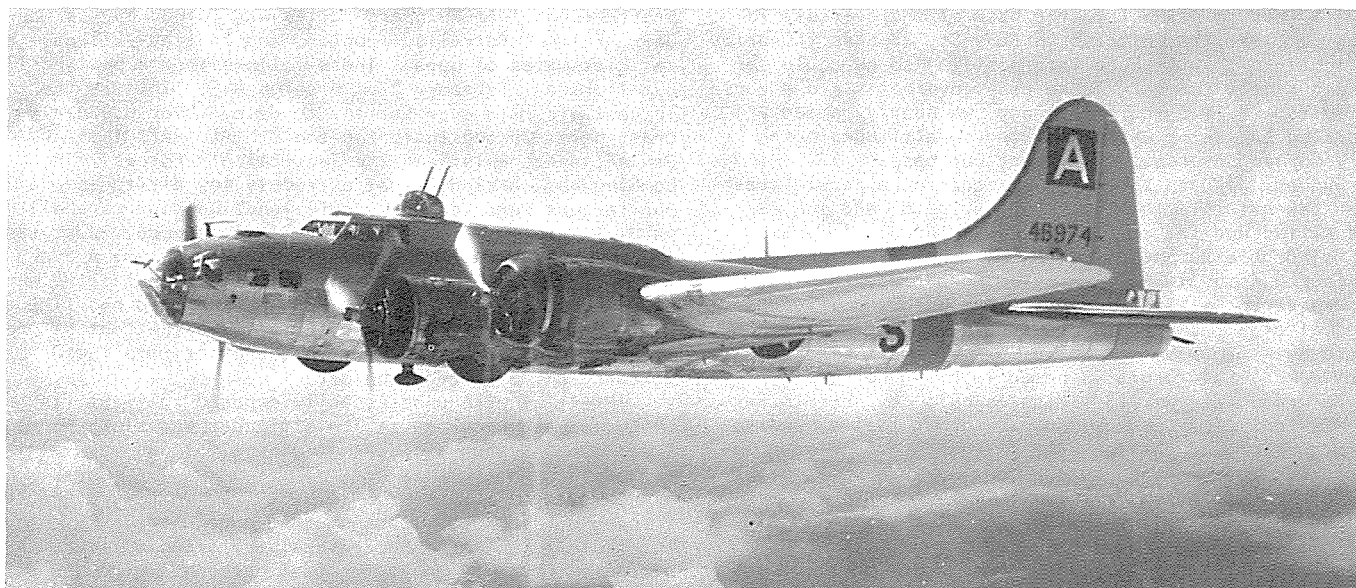
whom usually say, "Let's get the hell out of here," after "bombs away", but one fellow I'll never forget said very quietly instead, "Die, you bastards". Like love, hate is a very personal emotion.

Monday, March 5. Reports of the enemy intruder attack of the 3rd claimed approximately 20 aircraft participated, of which six were shot down, two of them by Mosquito pilots. The Ju 88 that strafed our station did a good job on our control tower. We learned that Great Ashfield was bombed and strafed and that Rattlesden, Lav-
enham and Sudbury were also attacked. They returned again last night.

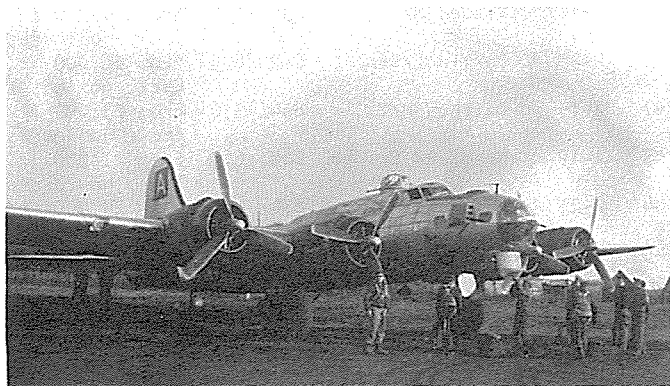
Thursday, March 8. I flew as navigator of a B-17 transport which hauled 27 officers and men from the 385th Group at Great Ashfield to Paris/Orly for 48's. At Orly, I spotted a Ju 52 and an He 177 so as soon as we landed, I went over for a good look. The He 177 had French markings, and on her fuselage in large letters were the words, "Prize de Guerre". It had crash landed and was in sorry shape. I looked for the clock and compass but someone had beat me to them, so I left with the entire engine pressure and temperature instrument panel. Over the operations room entry I noted the Luftwaffe equivalent of "Ready Room"--"Schmeissraum". After a couple of hours in Paris, we picked up a return load of "happy warriors" from the 100th Group and deposited them at Thorpe Abbots. Maj. Harry M. Crosby, group navigator of the 100th, helped me navigate the way back. It was good to see him again. We had first met on the "New Amsterdam" on our return to England last September.

Friday, March 9. Mission #51. My last mission was a whingding. We refused to drop our bombs eight miles short of the target where the rest of the group unloaded. Deputy group lead bombardier, Lt Cearley was mad as a wet hen because the lead aircraft did not turn the bomb run over to us when they began to experience mechanical difficulties. Capt. Reed was reprimanded for returning to base with a full bomb load, thereby reducing the group's tonnage for today's mission. The whole mess is ridiculous! Nobody seems to give a damn whether or not we hit the target anymore. What in blazes is tonnage worth if it does not hurt the enemy? Group is sore because we loused up their paper war--and I'm glad. To hell with them--tonight I will celebrate by getting plastered and forgetting the whole bloody war.

Lt Bonomo finished his second combat tour, (firing yellow-yellow flares as he landed) a total of 51 missions, some days ago. I believe he is the first of our squadron,



A modified 94th Bomb Group B-17G, with ball and chin turret removed, in flight, 1945. (Photo - W. T. Ashley)



TUTORWULF, 43-38834, "N", the B-17G in which Lt Dolim flew most of his last tour. (Photo - Dolim, 11-10-44)

and possibly the group, to be twice nominated for the "Lucky Bastard Club"--a club for those bomber crewmen who have completed a specified number of missions and so can return to the Zone of the Interior. I'm the second "two time winner" having amassed a total of 410.25 combat hours.

Sunday, March 11. Yesterday my photograph was taken for the group records. One look at it and I saw the same look that I have seen so many times on others. A sort of weariness is apparent but most of all the expression is one of emptiness, features completely drained of emotion. I have lost 15 pounds since I started combat flying, but none of my shirts fit me around the neck--it has expanded almost one inch within the last year. My nerves are not what they should be--I've become tense, irritable and unfit to fly with or live with. Tomorrow I leave for Chorley.

Now, twenty years later, I feel a sense of pride in having played a small part in the great drama of those days that truly belong to history. I formed friendships which have endured throughout the passing years with some of the finest men I have ever met. Many of our squadron mates suffered long imprisonment or gave their lives for our cause.

As for the B-17, I am not ashamed to say that in 1944-45 I regarded her as a slow, flammable old lady who was really out of sorts among fast young friends, and who became my potential enemy every time I flew a combat mission. Had it not been for the long range escort fighter, the Luftwaffe would have driven us from the skies over Germany.

It is to all the veteran "Little Friends" of the Eighth Air Force Fighter Command that I dedicate this attempt to capture a short period of aviation history as it took place in a very small organization, the 332nd Bombardment Squadron (Heavy).

FOOTNOTES:

(1) See pages 174, 175, I FLEW FOR THE FUHRER by Heinz Knocke, for enemy fighter action against the First Bomb Division, 29 April 1944.

(2) IDIOT'S DELIGHT was a veteran of the 14 October 1943 Schweinfurt mission. See BLACK THURSDAY by Martin Caidin, page 241.

(3) See Chapter 24, THE FIRST AND THE LAST by Adolf Galland. The initial 8th Air Force attack on the German oil complexes.

(4) The 385th Group received a DUC for this mission.

(5) See Chapter 25, THE FIRST AND THE LAST. Successful interdiction of German troops and materiel vital to their defense of the Normandy invasion.

(6) See Chapter 25, THE FIRST AND THE LAST. Galland's account of this mission does not quite fit the facts as our target A/P was devoid of military interest.

MISSION LIST FOR 1st LT ABEL L. DOLIM

(The following list has been compiled from Lt Dolim's war diary and combat navigation log. Abbreviations are: A/C No. - Last three digits of aircraft flown; E/T - Elapsed Time from takeoff to landing; M/Y - Marshalling Yard; F/Stn - Friedrichstrasse Station (subway); A/F - Airfield; Unk - Unknown bombing results.)

Mission No.	Date	Target	A/C No.	E/T	Remarks
1	4-22-44	Hamm RR M/Y	358	7.7	From 24,000 ft. Results, Excl., no losses
2	4-26	Brunswick C/T	584	8.0	From 20,000 ft. Good, no losses
3	4-27	Le Culot A/F	804	6.5	From 17,000 ft. Excl, no losses
4	4-29	Berlin M/Y	788	8.0	From 20,000 ft. Excl, two 94th a/c lost, flak
5	4-30	Clermont-Ferrand A/F	301	7.5	From 18,000 ft. Good, no losses
6	5-7	Berlin F/Stn	775	9.2	From 25,000 ft. Good, one 332nd a/c lost, flak
7	5-8	Berlin F/Stn	385	9.2	From 25,000 ft. Good, no losses
8	5-9	Laon A/F	301	5.4	From 21,000 ft. Excl, one 332nd a/c lost, flak
9	5-12	Zwickau Oil	574	9.0	From 18,700 ft. Excl, two 94th a/c lost, ftrs
10	5-13	Osnabruck M/Y	574	7.5	From 23,000 ft. Excl, no losses
11	5-19	Berlin F/Stn	342	10.1	From 26,000 ft. Good, one 332nd a/c lost, ftrs
12	5-22	Kiel Naval Base	574	7.5	From 22,000 ft. Missed, no loss
13	5-24	Berlin F/Stn	574	9.5	From 27,500 ft. Good, no losses
14	5-25	Brussels M/Y	574	6.5	From 22,000 ft. Excl, no losses
15	5-30	Pas de Calais V-1	900	4.5	From 25,000 ft. Fair, no losses
16	5-31	Geseke M/Y	574	7.5	From 22,500 ft. Excl, no losses
17	6-2	Conches A/F	574	7.5	From 20,000 ft. Poor, one 94th a/c lost, flak
18	6-6	Thury-Harcourt	342	6.0	From 14,000 ft. Unk, no losses
19	6-7	Nantes M/Y	574	8.0	From 20,000 ft. Excl, no losses
20	6-12	Montdidier A/F	574	5.5	From 24,000 ft. Excl, no losses
21	6-14	Florennes A/F	574	5.2	From 19,800 ft. Excl, no losses
22	6-15	Hanover/Misburg Oil	574	8.0	From 24,000 ft. Good, no losses
23	6-18	Hanover C/T	574	7.5	From 27,000 ft. Good, no losses
24	6-20	Magdeburg M/Y	574	8.0	From 26,000 ft. Excl, one 94th a/c lost, flak
25	6-21	Berlin/Charlottenburg	574	9.5	From 25,000 ft. Excl, one 94th a/c lost, flak
26	6-22	Nucourt V-1	342	5.5	From 21,000 ft. Fair, one 94th a/c lost, flak
27	7-7	Kolleda A/F	574	8.7	From 25,800 ft. Excl, no losses

Mission No.	Date	Target	A/C No.	E/T	Remarks						
28	10-30	Merseburg/Leuna Oil	358	5.0	Recalled over Zwole due to high overcast	40	1-16	Plauen M/Y	834	10.0	From 26,000 ft. Excl, no losses
29	11-5	Ludwigshaven	125	6.2	Aborted Thionville due to #4 engine failure	41	2-3	Berlin F/Stn	662	8.5	From 26,000 ft. Excl, no losses
30	11-10	Wiesbaden A/F	834	7.3	From 29,000 ft. Poor, one 94th a/c lost, flak	42	2-15	Cottbus M/Y	834	9.0	From 23,000 ft. Excl, no losses
31	11-16	Duren (tactical)	834	6.5	From 22,500 ft. Good, no losses	43	2-19	Wesel RR Bridge	834	6.0	From 23,000 ft. Poor, no losses
32	12-10	Koblenz M/Y	834	6.3	From 24,000 ft. Good, no losses	44	2-21	Nurnberg M/Y	834	9.0	From 25,000 ft. Excl, no losses
33	12-11	Koblenz M/Y	834	7.8	From 25,500 ft. Unk, no losses	45	2-22	Ansbach M/Y	834	8.5	From 5,500 ft. Excl, no losses
34	12-30	Mannheim	834	6.0	Aborted 30 mi. WSW target--#3 engine failure	46	2-23	Schwabische Hall M/Y	834	8.7	From 13,700 ft. Excl, no losses
35	1-1-45	Dollbergen Oil	834	7.8	From 23,000 ft. Poor, no losses	47	2-24	Bremen/Deschimag	834	6.3	From 26,000 ft. Excl, one 410th a/c lost, flak
36	1-5	Pronsfeld RR	834	8.0	From 27,000 ft. Poor, no losses	48	3-2	Quackenbruck T/O Dresden	834	9.8	834 only--fair
37	1-6	Worms M/Y	125	8.5	From 24,500 ft. Poor, no losses	49	3-4	Ingolstadt C/T	834	9.5	From 20,500 ft. Unk, no losses
38	1-7	Hamm M/Y	449	8.0	From 24,500 ft. Unk, no losses	50	3-7	Giessen M/Y	834	7.5	From 24,000 ft. Poor, no losses
39	1-13	Mainz RR Bridge	834	8.5	From 24,500 ft. Unk, no losses	51	3-9	Frankfurt Ost M/Y	834	7.2	From 23,000 ft. Miss, no losses

Names of aircraft flown in by Lt Dolim were: #788, HOUSE OF LORDS; #301 (42-30301), IDIOT'S DELIGHT; #775, FRENESI; #385, ORDNANCE EXPRESS; #834, TUTOR-WULF; #125, PUDDIN; and #449, TEXAS MAULER

Looking Up

It seems proper that occasionally I should spend a few paragraphs with you to pass on some of the behind-the-scenes happenings which concern our publication and mention some of the areas where we need assistance. In this way, I hope we can, together, improve the JOURNAL and come to know one another better.

During the past year, an Editor's Morgue has been established to gather together important aviation material with an emphasis on photos and color slides. In time, when the idea for a Society Library takes concrete form, all of this material will go to the Library and be available for the use of all Members. Meanwhile, it will serve as valuable illustration for a multitude of articles, and I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge some of the outstanding contributions.

True impetus was given to the photo collection by Irv Rosenberg who contributed to the Society some 500 photos on aviation subjects in the 1920s and 1930s. Several of these appeared in the last two issues and more will be seen in issues to come. A number of photos of early Naval aircraft were given to us by James Sidwell. Two other Members dug deep into their attics to make presents of many photos of the 1930s--they are Kenneth Schnabel and David Dwan. From Ken Sumney and Robert Hegge came many fine photos of WW II aircraft, and Jim Crow has done an outstanding job in completing arrangements for the acquisition of several hundred ex-7th Air Force photos. And Society old-timers have given tremendous help as always--Bill Larkins, Pete Bowers, Bob Cavanagh and Merle Olmsted to name a few.

Recently I have been able to build an exciting set of color slides of WW II aircraft, over 100 of them. This has been possible through the concentrated efforts of two Members--Les Clark and Joe De Fiore. Color slides of current types are being gathered from photographers such as Father B. C. Reed and Joe Handleman who have been so kind as to give us some of their extras.

In two recent cases, military installations were in

the process of getting rid of and destroying many aircraft negatives they had on hand. In both cases the negatives were saved and sent to the Society by two dedicated Members--Lt Col. Robert G. Mason and Robert Brooks. Another group of old negatives was presented to the Society by John Roby.

To all of these men I'd like to express again a very deep and hearty thanks. Their efforts will assure that we continue to do the best and most complete job of telling the history of aviation. And it is my fond hope that in the months and years to come others will come forward to help as these men have.

ASSISTANCE NEEDED

Looking ahead to the next six issues of the JOURNAL, there is one area where we need help. We need a number of short articles on aviation in the Golden Years with the emphasis on non-military flying, although pieces treating military aspects will be useful. Such articles can treat an individual airplane, a small number of a certain type of airplane, an event or a personality. The text should run 900 to 1200 words and should be accompanied by three or four photos with two being of 8 x 10 size. The article, "Friesley Falcon", in this issue is an excellent example of what we need.

Why do we need these stories? Our purpose in the JOURNAL is to tell the full history of aviation in all its major periods. The Golden Years are the true formative years but we've had too few stories on these times. Also excellent historical work has been done on the other periods in the form of long articles. To balance these, in every sense of the word, I feel that a number of shorter Golden Years stories is the answer. Thus, our need and this request for your help.

If you have some information or know a man or woman who has a story to tell about the Golden Years, it is not a difficult thing to sit down and write it--just as you would write an account to a friend in a letter. After all, doing a story--the act of creating it and the act of researching it--is one of the real thrills of our love for aviation and one that I think is unmatched.

Kenn C. Rust, Editor