



*Capt. J. Elliott Lt. D. Strong Lt. R. Kaplan Lt. H. Smith  
 T/ Sgt. W. Olmsted T/ Sgt. J. Foster S/ Sgt. W. Burcham  
 S/ Sgt. O. Bruner S/ Sgt. D. Green S/ Sgt. M. Glassman*

*LLoyd Jones digital painting commemorating John Foster's Cover Girl Diary, the story told in this article. Signed and unsigned Giclee prints are available through [APTCollectibles.com](http://APTCollectibles.com), with proceeds being donated to the AAHS.*

# Cover Girl Diary; The Combat Missions of B-24 Radio Operator John D. Foster

By John D. Foster, edited by Hayden Hamilton

*Editor's Note: John Foster kept a flight diary of each of his 30 missions covering the period from June 6, 1944, to November 30, 1944. This diary has been interwoven with the Eighth Air Force missions that occurred on each of the days Foster flew in order to provide a perspective of both the total picture and the role that the 845th and 329th Bombardment Squadrons played in it. Some missions were routine and stress free, while others had him wondering if he would make his full 30 missions.*

In 1943, a 20-year-old Californian enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps. After basic and specialty training as a radio operator, John D. Foster was assigned to serve in the newly formed 845th Bombardment Squadron (BS) of the 489th Bombardment Group (BG), equipped with Consolidated B-24 Liberators. Foster actually joined his crew during its transit to England in April/May 1944, where they would operate under the command of the USAAF Eighth Air Force. The unit was deployed via the South Atlantic route, with Foster meeting up with his crew in Africa.

Foster's crew was composed of:

|            |                               |
|------------|-------------------------------|
| Pilot      | Capt. John W. Elliott - Okla. |
| Copilot    | Lt. Douglas J. Strong - Mich. |
| Navigator  | Lt. Rubin Kaplan - N.Y.       |
| Bombardier | Lt. Hughey R. Smith - Okla.   |

Engineer  
 Radio Operator  
 Nose Gunner  
 Right Waist  
 Left Waist  
 Tail Gunner

T/Sgt. Villiain B. Olmsted - N.Y.  
 T/Sgt. John D. Foster - Calif.  
 S/Sgt. William Burcham - Ill.  
 S/Sgt. Ormand Bruner - Kan.  
 S/Sgt. David Y. Green - Ill.  
 S/Sgt. Marvin Glassman - Ohio

The 489th BG, along with the 845th BS was activated October 1, 1943, as part of the Second Air Force. The squadron was based at Wendover Field, Utah, where they trained until being deployed to the European Theater of Operations on April 3, 1943, arriving around May 1 at RAF Halesworth (AAF 365), Surrey, which would serve as their base of operation throughout the ETO deployment of the 489th BG. The squadron, after a short orientation, was sent on their first mission on May 30 as part of the build up to D-Day. Foster flew his first mission on

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Cover Girl crew - Front Row (L-R): Lt. Douglas J. Strong (copilot), T/Sgt. Villain B. Olmsted (engineer), Lt. Rubin Kaplan (navigator), Capt. John W. Elliott (pilot), S/Sgt. Marvin Glassman (gunner). Back Row (L-R): S/Sgt. Ormand Bruner (gunner), T/Sgt. John D. Foster (radio operator), Lt. Hughey R. Smith (bombardier), S/Sgt. William Burcham (gunner), S/Sgt. David Y. Green (gunner). (Photo from the author's collection)

the second squadron mission the following day.

For the first half of his combat tour, the 489th BG's missions were flown in support of the Normandy landings and eventual breakout. Targets ranged from coastal defenses, airfields, transportation infrastructure (bridges and railroad marshalling yards) to V-weapon sites. It wasn't until July that their targets would shift into Germany where they engaged in bombing strategic targets such as factories, oil refineries and storage plants, marshalling yards, and airfields.

Aircrews were not assigned specific aircraft, but flew whatever aircraft was available for a mission. In spite of this randomness, Foster's crew flew Consolidated B-24H-20-FO Liberator 42-4945, *Cover Girl*, on eight of their first 14 missions and their most stressful combat experiences were while flying this plane. On Mission 14, *Cover Girl* was badly damaged but got her crew home. While Foster's crew would complete their combat tour, *Cover Girl* was sent to a repair center (3rd Strategic Air Depot – see insert) and later returned to another unit, only to be lost in action a short time later.

#### **Mission No. 1, May 31, 1944**

Target: Longwy, France

Aircraft: 42-4945 (*Cover Girl*)

Flight time: 4:40

The Eighth Air Force dispatched 1,029 bombers accompanied by 682 fighters to attack marshalling yards and

aircraft industry targets in Germany, and rail and airfield targets in France and Belgium. Boeing B-17 squadrons drew the German targets dispatching 533 aircraft while the B-24s (491 aircraft) covered the French and Belgian ones. Accompanying them were 193 P-38s, 180 P-47s and 309 P-51s.

For the 845 BS this would be their second combat mission, having flown their first the day before. This was, however, John Foster's first introduction to combat.

*My first mission today, May 31. At least I lived to be 21, ha ha. We were briefed to hit an airfield in France, and I was wondering just how I would react. Well, I wasn't to find out today, for we didn't any more than get over the French coast when we were recalled because of bad weather. When we returned and were interrogated, some of the planes had seen flak so we naturally were given credit for the mission. We entered by way of Belgium near Ostend, but, as I said, didn't penetrate far. I'm afraid I got the wrong impression of just how rough a mission could really be.*

*It's surprising the time it takes to prepare for a mission. First we are awakened at 12:00 o'clock and are given an hour to eat. Then all the enlisted men go to a briefing. Being a radio operator, I had to go to another one. Into an electrically heated suit I jump and out to the plane on a truck. I get my sets all pre-flighted while the gunners are putting in the "50's" and the engineer is looking the ship*

over. Soon the copilot comes out with a candy bar and our individual escape kits. Next come the rest of the officers, and then we sit around, kidding and gabbing.

By 4:00, it's time to warm the engines up so the pilot and copilot crawl into their flak suits and everyone else takes his respective position. Within 30 minutes we are taking off and preparing to assemble into a formation. This takes an hour and a half, and then we are on course.

Just as we leave the coast of England, I put on my flak jacket, and Olmsted gets into the top turret. Everyone is prepared, and I sit there with a helmet halfway down on my face.

Upon returning from a mission, we first drink coffee and eat donuts, smoke like hell, and take our shot of whiskey.

Then into the interrogating officer we go and spill our story of the mission. We eat and then sleep, if that's possible.

Note: John D. Foster's 21st birthday of was May 30, 1944.

#### **Mission No. 2, June 2, 1944**

Bretigny, France

42-4945

7:45

In the run-up to D-Day, the role of the heavy bombers from June 2-5 shifted to focus on attacks against transportation and airfields in northern France and a series of blows against coastal defenses in the Pas de Calais area as part of Operation COVER focusing at confusing the Germans with regard to the real invasion location. The Eighth Air Force scheduled two missions on June 2. In the morning, 521 of 633 B-17s and 284 of 293 B-24s hit V-weapon sites in the Pas de Calais area; 11 B-17s are damaged; 1 airman is KIA, 1 WIA and 1 MIA.

In the afternoon, 242 B-17s are dispatched to railroad targets in the Paris area; 163 hit the primaries, 49 hit Conches Airfield, 12 hit Beaumont-sur-Oise Airfield and 1 hits Caen/ Carpiquet Airfield; 77 B-24s are dispatched to Bretigny Airfield in France; 13 hit the primary target, 47 hit Creil Airfield and 14 hit Villeneuve Airfield; 2 B-17s and 5 B-24s are lost, 2 B-24s are damaged beyond repair and 90 B-17s and 37 B-24s damaged; 1 airman is KIA, 4 WIA and 68 MIA.

The 845 BS was part of the group of 77 B-24s dispatched to bomb the Bretigny Airfield in France. They were part of the 47 aircraft that diverted to their secondary target of Creil Airfield due to weather over the primary.

*This was an experience I shall never forget. The mission originated in the afternoon and we didn't take off until 4:30 in the evening. We were to bomb an airfield directly south of Paris, and had another field north of Paris as a secondary target. Forty-eight planes were in the formation, and because of bad weather, it was necessary to hit the secondary (Creil).*

*We entered the coast at La Havre, and ran into some flak. Being in a bad position, I couldn't see much of it, but I*

*soon was to have my turn. As we hit the initial point (IP) of the primary target (PRI), I opened the bomb bays and had a first rate glimpse at it. You could see the guns flash or blink at you, and then in about 20 seconds the stuff would burst nearby. Well, I got an order to close the doors and then I knew we weren't going to bomb the PRI.*

*On our way to the secondary, I stood behind the pilot and saw a barrage go up over Paris. God, it was terrible and little did I know we were to pass through it someday. We saw a P-51 get hit by flak and down it went with the cockpit in flames.*

*We dropped our 2,000-lb bombs and headed for home. This is when all hell broke loose, and it was all within 40 miles of the coast. Some dumb navigator took us between Rouen and Dieppe at 16,000 ft. That's bad, as it's a hotbed for flak. Our right wing man "Stinky" 846, had the wing from No. 3 outboard shot off. The tanks caught afire, and down she went in a spin with pieces breaking from the tail section. No chutes were seen, so that meant the end of "Shorty" Davis, a radio operator in our squadron. It's the first one of those stately boxcars I ever saw go down, and it's hard to imagine that a large B-24 can go to its doom like that. It broke up and looked like a model, and I often wonder what the men were doing and thinking. Someone yelled "There goes Bouchard," and I just caught sight of a plane completely enveloped in flames blow up. This was enough, for that was the second one in our squadron.*

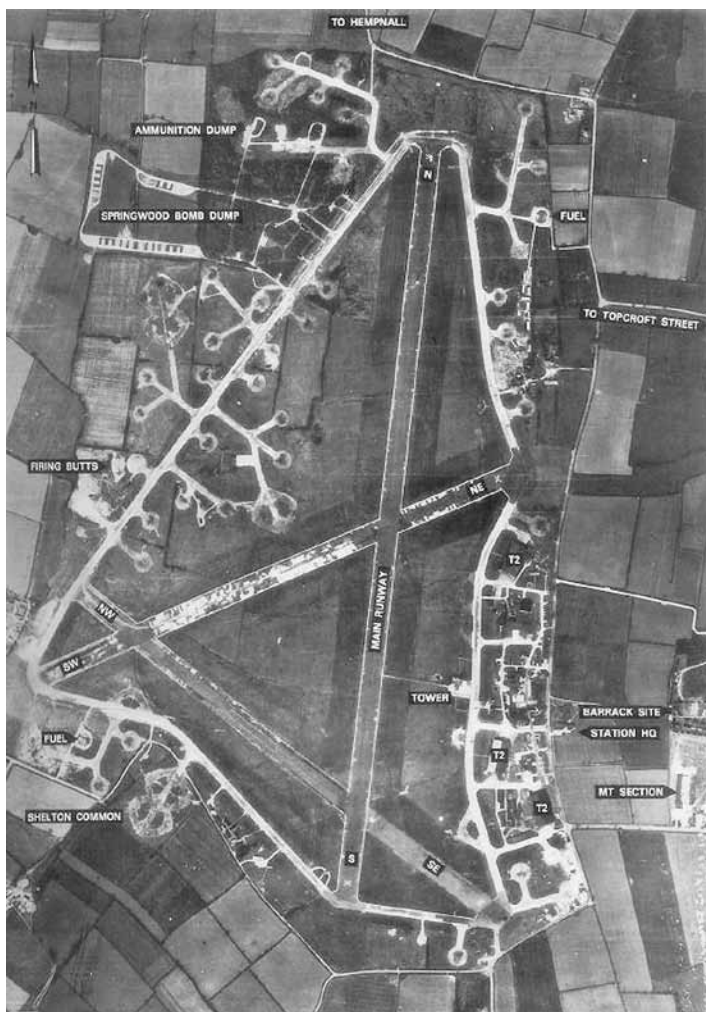
*The plane, coming low and right, just disintegrated in midair. Three chutes were seen from the waist, so someone got out. I felt a thud, and the whole plane lurched forward. One had burst directly underneath us. The damn things sound like dogs barking, "woof, woof."*

*Olmsted, in the top turret, saw a shell go directly through the wing flap and burst just over the ship. It made*



The airfield in Bretigny, France, was the target on Foster's second mission. This photo taken in late June 1944 shows the bombing effects of several missions flown against it. (USAAC photo from the NARA collection)

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RAF Halesworth, AAF 365, in East Anglia was home for the 845th BS and 489th BG. This photo was taken in 1944 about the time that Foster was based there. (USAAC photo from the NARA collection)

a hole large enough to put your foot in, which I almost did when jumping from the wing after landing. Had it exploded upon contact, I wouldn't be here now. It's things like that which make it hard to sleep at night, and make your eyes feel like baseballs in their sockets. All this time we were nearing the French coast, but the flak continued to follow us, a sure indication they were tracking the guns.

I smelled gasoline, and blared out over the interphone, asking if anyone else had. Sure enough, so down into the bomb bay I went. My knees were shaking like twigs in the wind. I opened the hatch, and there was a stream of 100-octane gas from the wing right into the bomb bay. I had no sooner told Olmsted, when a piece of shell fragment came banging through the doors. God, I jumped - for it would only take one spark and "poof." Dale came rushing from the turret and opened the doors. The petrol streamed out like smoke, and the rest of the ships stayed their distance thinking we were on fire. I had all electrical equipment turned off, and the boys stayed away from our turrets hoping and praying she wouldn't catch on fire. We were still at 16,000 feet and just leaving the enemy coast. Olmsted and I looked at each other. No oxygen mask or

flak jacket. In our haste, we had thrown them off and had been going through plenty of flak.

There is nothing finer than the lovable Channel, and when we reached it, we knew that it was luck from here on in. One tank was hit, but we didn't know which one. It turned out to be the No. 3 tank, and it was dry when we crash landed. In a space of time that seemed like hours, we reached the field, but it was dark and there were planes scattered in every direction in the pattern. We couldn't use our lights, radio or even flares, and got by with flashlights held at the windows. In our case, oxygen was out, hydraulic systems were out, gas was all over the fuselage, and a flat tire that we knew nothing about. The captain made a perfect approach and as we hit the runway, down the tire went. The plane wobbled like heck and started to shoot off the strip. He braked the wheel and throttled up the engines. Then both tires went out and we went down almost on our belly, skidding off the runway into the field. Our first move was to get out. It was pitch black. I climbed through the upper hatch, ran out on the wing and leaped off. It was a jump that most likely would have broken my leg under ordinary circumstances. We all just kept running. Luck was with us and the old girl had come back with a very much alive crew and 100 holes in her. It was necessary to put in a new No. 3 tank, a new left rudder and a brand new wing flap. Each crewman's position had flak holes nearby and I have several pieces that just missed me.

I was scared the first time in my life - really - and might add, there is no difference between officers and enlisted men when it comes to this subject. The copilot actually stood on the flight deck talking to me and it was nothing but jabber. His knees were shaking as were the rest of ours. Can't blame the poor fellow. He has twin sons he's never seen. A raid like that leaves me with one thought: just what standard the Good Lord goes by to pick those planes out of the air. By rights, I don't see why we should be alive and others shot down. At first, it's hard to see why it should be your turn, but then the odds decrease as more fellows go down and you're just waiting for your turn. Lost three planes from our squadron and 10 from the entire Group.

#### **Mission No. 3, June 4, 1944**

Le Touquet, France

1200 (Cover Girl in repair)

5:40

The Eighth Air Force's efforts on June 4, 1944, were to cover targets in both the Pas de Calais area (Operation COVER) and the Normandy assault area (Operation NEPTUNE). With the postponement of D-Day by 24 hours, the NEPTUNE force was cancelled. In total, 183 of 201 B-17s and 51 of 56 B-24s dispatched as part of COVER attacked seven targets in the Pas de Calais area. They were escorted by 130 P-47s and 42 P-51s. Of the bombers, 10 of the B-17s sustained damage with no casualties while two P-51s were lost.

The 845th BS headed to Le Touquet, France, located about 30 miles south-southwest of Calais.



Rare color photo of the Cover Girl's nose art in an undated photo.

*This was a raid of the type I would rather pull more often. We hit the small French coast town of Toque with 12 500 pound bombs. One target was a large hotel that supposedly had been used as a headquarters for German officers.*

*Our course took the outfit south to Beachhead and over the Channel. The IP was a coordinate in the Channel and we saw no flak whatsoever. Went as smooth as glass, and we returned to the base.*

#### **Mission No. 4, June 5, 1944**

Boulogne, France

1200

4:45

*This mission took us into very little of enemy territory, in fact it was right on the beach. It was a large gun emplacement near Boulogne, and after bombing it, we banked directly around and headed for more wide open spaces. I witnessed my first rocket, and they're really funny looking. It looks like a large, red, flaming basketball and travels slowly. Small parachutes with bombs hanging from them also came down through the formation. We ran into a slight bit of flak, and one ship went down in the Channel. This was a Path Finder Force<sup>1</sup> (PFF) mission, but we bombed visually. I don't care about running into anymore rockets, even though they say they're only for psychological effect.... my neck!*

The plane Foster refers to, the PFF, was the group's lead plane with unit's deputy group commander, Lt. Col. Leon R. Vance Jr., on board. On the run in to the target, the plane was seriously crippled by enemy fire and its pilot killed. Vance was severely wounded with his right foot almost severed. In spite of these injuries, Vance took command of the plane, led the group to a successful bombing of the target and then managed to fly the damaged aircraft to the coast of England. There, he

ordered the crew to bail out, but believing a wounded crewman had been unable to jump, he ditched the plane in the English Channel and was rescued. For his actions and leadership, Vance was awarded the Medal of Honor.

#### **Mission No. 5 (D-Day), June 6, 1944**

St. Lo, France

1200

7:45

In support of the D-Day landings the Eighth AF launched a number of raids targeting the coastal defenses in the Le Harvre, Caen, Boulogne and Cherbourg areas of France. A total of 670 bombers were dispatched of which 464 B-17s and 203 B-24s made it to targets. The costs were four B-17s and two B-24s being lost, one B-24 damaged beyond repair with another 37 B-17s and 39 B-24s sustaining damage. Crew losses amounted to one airman KIA, 10 WIA and 47 MIA.

Escorting the bombers were 127 P-47s and 245 P-51s with one P-47 and one P-51 being lost.

The 845th BS target for the day was St. Lo, France.

*This is what we are all working for, and I'm glad to see it come. Our target was St. Lo and a number of bridges and important highways. We took off very early and I have never seen so many airplanes. They were in endless chains and we later were told there were as many as 12,000. The route was flak free as told by the briefing officer, but we have learned to take that with a grain of salt. Moderate flak was encountered, but we lost one PFF ship. Our colonel was in it and they ended up ditching it in the Channel. The target was covered by clouds so we brought the bombs back.*

*We went out again that afternoon, but had a division recall, and again landed with a bomb load.*

#### **Mission No. 6, June 10, 1944**

Conches, France

42-4945

5:10

Bad weather set back in the day after D-Day and continued for a number of days limiting air operations. It is not until June 10 that Foster's crew draws another mission. The Eighth AF flew 883 bombers and 1,491 fighter sorties, but over 200 bombers aborted their missions due to cloud conditions. Principal targets for the day are marshalling yards and airfields in northwest France.

The 845th BS mission was to bomb the airfield at Conches on the outskirts of Paris. They were part of a group of 39 B-24s that attacked the target. This was *Cover Girl's* first mission after being repaired from damage sustained during Foster's second mission

*Carrying 52 100-pound bombs, we headed south of Paris after a Nazi airfield. I love to watch the bombs chew up the runways. We must have hit the target with all those bombs. Saw light flak, but lost no planes. I accidentally*

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Part of the Cover Girl crew dressed for a mission. (Photo from the author's collection)

*shut the bomb bay doors, and two bombs that were delayed in dropping fell right through them. Tore heck out of one door, and did the fellows ride me. Ha, ha. Six other planes came in with doors hanging. Cover Girl had been repaired, and we were seeing her today after quite a spell.*

**Mission No. 7, June 11, 1944**

Creil, France

42-40360

5:00

Weather continued to adversely affect bombing missions limiting targeting to areas of France. The Eighth AF would fly a total of 1,055 bomber and 914 fighter sorties this day, but over 400 bombers would abort their missions due to clouds and to the absence or malfunction of Pathfinders. Overall losses for the day were relatively light, three bombers and eight fighters considering the conditions.

The target for the 845th BS was the airfield at Criel, France, where Foster's B-24 would be one of 19 that made bombing runs on the target.

*We paid another visit to the same airfield north of Paris that we did on the second mission. It was much different this time for there was very little flak. Everything went smoothly and we returned to the base.*

**Mission No. 8, June 12, 1944**

St. Andre, France

42-4945

5:30

Foster's third mission in as many days. Bad weather in Germany continued to force the Eighth AF to find targets in France. Today, they would focus on airfields and landing grounds in northeast France, and rail and road bridges on the Brest Peninsula. Over 1,400 bomber and 988 fighter sorties

would be launched with 1,277 bombers making runs on targets.

St. Andre, France, west of Paris was the 845th BS's target for the day with Foster's crew flying *Cover Girl*.

*An airfield west of Paris, and a large number of planes went out. We had all sorts of fighter escort, and they're mighty nice to see. Passed over Caen, but high-tailed it when the "woof woofs" started to appear. Had an excellent view of the beachhead and also saw the first fighter bases in Normandy. As I opened the bomb bay doors at the IP, the bombs fell out and hit near a French farm home. If any building was left standing, it wasn't our fault. The target was really plastered. We got 50 miles from the coast going back and flak got No. 3 engine. She started to smoke and the captain hit the feathering button. We aborted from the formation and fell way back. As the squadron of planes flew ahead, taking all the flak, we cut off with plenty of evasive action. The flak was coming from south of Caen and there we were; right in it on three engines. Captain John brought us out, but we were really sweating that coast out. Got about 20 holes that time. We have had two new rudders and two flaps put on the plane so far.*

**Mission No. 9, June 15, 1944**

St. Cyr, France

42-4945

6:40

1,361 bombers are dispatched in eight forces to bomb an oil refinery in Germany and numerous tactical targets in France, including nine airfields, an aircraft plant, a CROSSBOW (V-weapon) site, 11 bridges, a marshaling yard, and various scattered targets; two B-17s were lost, but no B-24s.

The B-24s dispatched to France totaled 614 with various wings and squadrons given individual targets. These targets ranged from transportation infrastructure including railroad and highway bridges to airfields. The 845th BS's target was St. Cyr, most likely a rail marshaling yard though not specifically identified.

*Went to St. Cyr, just outside of Paris proper. Ran into plenty of flak, and I don't want to go back there again. I don't relish the job of standing in the bomb bay with all those woof-bangs popping around me.*

**Mission No. 10, June 15, 1944**

Domleger, France

42-4945

6:40

The Eighth Air Force launched 1,316 bombers broken into eight forces for Mission 414. Targets included a German oil refinery and numerous tactical targets in France, including nine airfields, an aircraft plant, V-weapon sites, 11 bridges, a marshaling yard and various scattered targets.

A total of 614 B-24s were sent to France, primarily hitting tactical targets in support of the D-Day invasion troops

struggling to break out of Normandy. Foster's 845th BS was assigned one of the many airfields in northwestern France that were being pounded by the allies.

*Blasted another airfield in France, and I mean we hit it. We were over enemy territory a long time. This was to avoid flak, so we took an evasive course. Expected fighters, but saw none. Had all kinds of fighter escort, and how I love them.*

*Missed the next mission the group went on to Angers and Lorient because of a tooth problem.*

**Mission No. 11, June 22, 1944**

Fleury, France

42-40360

4:55

The Eighth AF's morning mission on this day was concentrated on eliminating launching sites for the V-1 in the Pas de Calais area. Dubbed Operation CROSSBOW, 12 sites were targeted using 240 bombers (108 B-17s and 194 B-24s). The bombers were provided cover by an escort of 165 P-47s and 97 P-51s, some of which strafed coastal defenses. As aircrews would learn, these sites were well protected by flak guns in spite of the attempts by fighters to suppress them. On this mission, while only one B-17 and crew were lost, 123 of the bombers sustained damage.

The 845th BS attacked a V-weapon site located in Fleury, France.

*This was an all-out attempt to destroy the pilotless bomb launching sites in the Pas de Calais area. This is a hell of a place for flak and we got it. Lost another engine, but made it home on three engines okay, again. We bombed Fluery, France. Took off 8:30 and landed 12:45.*

**Mission No. 12, June 24, 1944**

Fressin, France

42-4945

5:35

During the morning, 967 bombers were dispatched to hit targets in Germany and France. The B-17s were primarily sent to Germany while B-24 groups hit logistic targets and airfields in France. Another mixed group of B-17s and B-24s were dispatched to continue to bomb V-weapons sites in the Pas de Calais region. Specifically, 12 CROSSBOW sites were designated but heavy overcast prevented any of these bombers from dropping on their assigned targets.

The 845th BS was part of the 60 B-24s assigned this mission, and aborted the mission due to the overcast.

*This once again proved to be a milk run. No flak near us, just a safe distance. We failed to drop our bombs as it was overcast. Our ship had booby-trap bombs on it, and we couldn't land with them. It was necessary to jettison them in the North Sea. Those poor fish caught hell, I'll wager.*

*Target was south of Abbeville, but 10/10 cloud coverage kept us from bombing. Take off 7:00 and returned at 12:25.*

**Mission No. 13, June 24, 1944**

Tingry, France

42-4909

4:20

During the afternoon 62 B-17s and 167 B-24s are dispatched to targets in France. The primary targets for these raids were V-weapons sites, electrical stations and marshalling yards.

The 845th BS's target was the electrical station in Tingry for which they managed to put 12 bombers on target.

*Our second mission in one day, and bombed Lille, France, instead. Again no flak or fighters and the pleasing satisfaction of blasting hell out of the target. Take off 1600, landed 20:20. This plane went down on the next mission, and almost took us down with it. Was on fire in the bomb bay.*

**Mission No. 14, June 25, 1944**

Villacoublay, France

42-4945

5:45

Eighth AF Mission 442 dispatched 463 bombers (274 B-24s and 189 B-17s) midday to target in France. Escort was provided by 127 P-38s, 35 P-47s and 181 P-51s. The fighters would claim four enemy aircraft destroyed along with three probables at the expense of the loss of one P-51. The bombers lost six aircraft.

The 845th BS was part of 63 B-24s that hit the Villacoublay air depot. The rest of the B-24s were targeted on Bretigny and Buc airfields, while the B-17s primarily hit transportation targets (bridges and marshalling yards).

*Our target was Paris, and again it was one of those afternoon raids. It started off bad, with one plane not being able to get off the runway. It kept right on going and plane parts were scattered all over. The plane caught fire, but eight crew members managed to get out. The heat started the bomb load off, and they blew up all the rest of the day. We took off right after it happened, and on the same runway. We had no more than passed over the wreckage when a bomb exploded, making Captain Elliott veer way to the left.*

*The next bad thing was the bombing itself. I was never so scared in my life. We went through hell for 15 minutes and I can't see to this day how we managed to get through. When our formation hit the bomb run, I was just waiting for the burst of flak that would blow our plane to bits. A hundred guns were firing at us, and I had resigned myself to getting it over Paris.*

*At the IP, I got down on the cat walk and opened the doors. I heard over the intercom that there was a hell of a lot of flak ahead but that we would probably miss it. In*

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Villacoublay airfield southeast of Paris in a photo taken shortly after the 845th BS's mission on June 25, 1944. This reconnaissance photo shows damage to field and facilities. (USAAC photo from the NARA collection)

and bandaged Marvin. By that time, we were over the field. This was the fifth time we had come back on three engines, but we didn't know if we had any brakes. The boys in the waist had chutes rigged up in case we didn't, and Pappy brought her in perfect. When we got out of that ship we had more people around than we could do with. The plane had over a 100 holes in it, and it was a miracle more than just one person didn't get hit. It cut the heated suit cords on Bruner's suit and knocked rivets into the captain's lap. The hit on the bomb bay door made a rip a foot long. It was impossible to fix her on the field, and was necessary to take Cover Girl to a sub-depot for a complete going over.<sup>2</sup>

Another B-24, coming in under the same condition as ours, crashed short of the runway and killed eight fellows. I knew the radio operator. That was the most nerve-wracking mission yet, and Capt. Elliott and Smitty are in the hospital with Marvin with shaky nervous systems.

Going to rest camp, hot dog! It was getting hard to sleep at night.

Our last mission on the Girl.

just a few minutes, the navigator blared out, "Pull her up, Pappy. Pull her up, Pappy." Blackburn, in the ship ahead of us was going down on fire, and we were headed right into him. Cover Girl jerked up, and the flaming B-24 slid underneath us. (At briefing, I later learned the radioman was seen plunging from the plane on fire. I knew the fellow.) This bomb run was terrible.

We must stay on course, and, thusly, offer the best target possible to the flak batteries. Although it's merely a matter of minutes, every one of them seems like hours. And there you are, a clay pigeon.

Smitty yelled, "Bombs away." This is one time I didn't hesitate closing the bomb bay doors. At the end of the bomb run, we were the only two ships still remaining in the formation. The rest took off like wild geese avoiding the damn flak. A "woof woof" hit right under the bomb bay and ripped out our hydraulic system. The bomb bay was immediately flooded with fluid, and there our troubles began. Number one engine started to smoke, so captain feathered the prop. Marvin reported he had been hit, and all this time we were straggling from the formation. Someone yelled the oxygen was out and for us to check our oxygen regulators. It was impossible to keep up with the outfit on three engines, so the copilot called for fighter protection and I started shooting green flares.

As we passed back over the IP, Captain Titus's PFF got a burst and was aflame from nose to tail. Several chutes were seen and the fellows floated directly into Paris. The P-51s and P-38s sure looked fine and they helped us all the way to the lovable Channel. The fellows went back

### Break in Action – R&R

After this mission, the crew was given a "flak rest," which was fairly common after a particularly stressful mission where the aircraft sustained substantial damage and/or crewmembers were injured or killed. These rest and relaxation (R&R) leaves could last for simply a couple of days or to more than a week. In the case of Foster's crew, they were sent to the Southport in the south of England. While there, serendipity would come into play as described by Foster.

Cover Girl comes to England - not the plane, but the movie starring Rita Hayworth and Gene Kelly. The events of July 1944, which brought together the original B-24 bomber crew of the plane, Cover Girl, and the movie, make an interesting story.

On June 25, 1944, the 489th BG, stationed at Halesworth, flew a late mission to Villacoublay, France. Cover Girl was badly damaged, the tail gunner wounded, and the crew in a state of suspended anxiety — all the requisites for a flak leave.

With the fifteenth mission [Foster's fourteenth] behind them, and not knowing they would never fly Cover Girl again, they headed for the hotels of Southport. As they detrained in Liverpool, a promotional representative from Gaumont Productions, Bill Luckwell, spied the motley crew with their jackets emblazoned with the Cover Girl logo. He

# 3rd Strategic Air Depot, RAF Watton

The 3rd Strategic Air Depot (SAD) was one of four SAD's set up under the Bradley Plan. The 3rd SAD was the largest (and the best), with 4,800 officers and men. It was responsible for the servicing, maintenance, modifications and repair of all B-24 Liberators in the 14 Bomb Groups of the 2nd Air Division. They were responsible for the recovery of all crashed B-24s anywhere in the United Kingdom as well as operating all supply functions for the 2nd Air Division.

The first American contingent arrived at RAF Watton on July 23, 1943. At this time the station was occupied by the RAF and for a while they shared the base. But as more and more American personnel arrived the RAF began moving out. By October 1943 the last of the RAF had left and Watton became Station 505.

RAF Watton was a standard RAF station designed to accommodate approximately 2,000 men. To cater for the large increase in manpower, a huge complex was built on the south side of the airfield at the village of Griston. It consisted of three T2 aircraft hangars, workshops, supply warehouses, a huge transport division, a hospital, a chapel, a theatre and various clubs as well as living accommodation and messing facilities. An extension was added to the perimeter track with dispersal areas to enable aircraft to reach the hangars and workshops. At the same time the main runway was constructed to take the large B-24s. Up to this time Watton had been a grass airfield, since the RAF had used the much lighter twin-engine Blenheim.

By late August 1943, large stocks of Liberator parts had arrived and the engineering section was ready to undertake major work programs. By early September the supply section was actively engaged in supplying the 2nd Air Division. By January 1944 the 3rd SAD was giving excellent service to the 2nd Air Division and repaired B-24s were coming out of the depot daily. On Easter weekend of 1944 the last of the 3rd SAD personnel moved from the permanent base to the Griston complex and the permanent base was taken over by the 25th Bomb Group.

To give just two examples of the amount of work they did. During the month of July 1944, 88 B-24s were repaired at Griston, one of them being Foster's *Cover Girl*, and returned to combat duty. Seventy of these had been battle damaged while the other 18 needed maintenance. During the week ending June 14, 1944, the supply and transport divisions hauled 3,600 tons of material, mostly high explosives, to the Bomb Groups of the 2nd Air Division.

It has been said that the men of the 3rd SAD knew more about the B-24 than did the manufacturers. This claim can quite probably be justified when one hears of the remarkable events that took place at Station 505. To quote just one - the case of the *Howling Banshee*. Two B-24s of the 458th Bomb Group at Horsham St. Faiths (now Norwich Airport) were joined together after one had lost its entire nose section in a crash and the other had lost its tail in a taxiing accident. Lt. Dick Ayers (of Illinois) decided the two sections could be successfully joined. The task had to be carried out at Horsham since the two sections were too large to be transported to Watton. The two halves were joined together at the center of the bomb doors. It took a team of 12 men 29 days to complete the work. The inspector found that less than one quarter of the variations allowed at the factory had been used. Capt. Henry Miller test-flew the aircraft and not only did it fly perfectly, it cruised at 10 mph. faster than the average B-24. This aircraft was named the *Howling Banshee*. (Source Martin Bowman "Fields of Little America".)

There are many amazing accounts of aircraft being recovered from fields where they had been ditched by their crews. To assist with these 'short field' takeoffs Major Witzenburg (senior engineering officer) and Maj. Tommy Land (chief test pilot) developed a rocket assisted takeoff system by using 8-inch motor rockets they obtained from the Royal Navy. Eight of these rockets were mounted under each wing of a war-weary Liberator and after several test runs they successfully took off using only one quarter of the normal takeoff run. One more takeoff took place for the top brass of the Eighth Air Force. After this all drawings and design specifications, details of rockets and timing devices were shipped off to Wright-Patterson Field for evaluation. Unfortunately they were never able to use their brain child in the field - by the time the evaluation had taken place the war had ended.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/tedder13/sets/72157622049225423/>



Salvaged B-24 engines at 3rd SAD. (Photo from the Les Corey collection via Richard Lindsay)



B-24 fuselage graveyard at 3rd SAD. (Photo from the Les Corey collection via Richard Lindsay)



Cover Girl under going repairs at 3rd SAD in July 1944. (Photo from the Les Corey collection via Richard Lindsay)



**Row 1:** Lt. Hughey Smith, B; Mayoress of Southport; Capt. John W. Elliott, P; Mayor Tomlinson of Southport; Lt. Douglas J. Strong, CP. **Row 2:** Theatre manager, Brown; Lt. Rubin Kaplan, N; S/Sgt David Green, G; S/Sgt Marvin Glassman, G; S/Sgt Ormand Bruner, G; T/Sgt John Foster, RO; T/Sgt William Olmsted, E; S/Sgt William Burcham, G; Bill Luckwell, Gaumont Productions.

locked onto them. It so happened that the picture, Cover Girl, was just being released in England, and he seized the opportunity to do a little promoting. In Southport, under the good graces of the mayor and mayoress, they were feted to a premiere showing of the film, plied with the best scotch, fed the finest food, and elevated to celebrity status. The boys of the 489th were appreciated,

The epitaph of Cover Girl was sadly written on August 6, 1944. After being repaired and sent out with a new crew, she went down over Hamburg, Germany. The new crew, fortunately, was able to bail out, but were captured and had to endure the hardships of German prison camp.

Cover Girl rests somewhere on the German countryside, but in the ensuing years, memories of "The Girl" have never rested in the minds of the men who named her, who flew her, and are identified in this picture at Southport.

### Back to the Fight

Following the crew's flak rest, they were reassigned to the 329th BS of the 93rd BG. This group was one that participated in the Polesti raid in 1943. Foster does not remember the details about the transfer but from letters home it looks like the crew as split up shortly after. He notified his family on August 7, 1944, about his change of address and in an October 1 letter wrote that due to an excess in gunners, that these were being sent home early. There would be more than a month's lapse between his fourteenth and fifteenth missions.

During Foster's tour with the 329th BS, they were based out of Hardwick, England.

[Editor's Note: Foster did not record the mission dates or aircraft for Missions 15 through 30. By comparing his diary entries with the Eighth Air Force mission chronology, we have been able to establish most of the mission dates.]

**Mission No. 15,** August 4, 1944  
Comptesse, France  
August 4, 1944  
5:20

On August 4, 1944, the Eighth Air Force launched Mission 516. As part of this mission 95 B-24s were dispatched. 24 of these (including Foster's ship hit V-1 sites in the Pas de Calais area, 12 targeted Achiet Airfield, 11 hit Gravelines, 11 hit Middelkerke, six hit Lens marshaling yard and six hit Villy/Montigne marshaling yard; 17 B-24s were damaged.

*This was our first G-H<sup>2</sup> mission, and it was like starting all over again. We led the 489 and had Louie Luschar (sp?) as command pilot. We bombed the buzz bomb launch sites in Pas de Calais area, and had a complicated course of withdrawal. Encountered light flak, but I was really sweating that one out. It was our first mission in over a month and here in the 93rd Bomb Group.*

**Mission No. 16,** August 6 or 8, 1944  
Pas de Calais, France  
6:45

The date of this mission is undetermined. It could have been either August 6, but more probably August 8. On both days, the Eighth Air Force dispatched B-24s to hit V-1 sites in the Pas de Calais area. On the August 6 (Mission 524), 24 of 91 B-24s hit two sites. They were escorted by 24 P-47s. On August 8 (Mission 530), 414 B-24s escorted by 265 fighters were dispatched to attack airfields and V-weapon sites in France. 115 hit V-weapon sites in the Pas de Calais area with most of the rest hitting five airfields or air depots. A few bombers hit targets of opportunity. Fighter escort was a combination of P-47s and P-51s. Losses on both days were light.

*Another buzz bomb site this time, and it was a milk run. Not much flak, but landed with less than 50 gals. of gasoline.*

**Mission No. 17, August 11, 1944**

Coulommieres, France

5:10

Three missions are flown this day by the Eighth Air Force Mission 541 dispatched 660 bombers and 300 plus fighters to attack 13 marshalling yards, fuel dumps, airfields, and targets of opportunity, in northeast France and the Paris area.

Foster's group was part of the 47 B-24s that attacked Coulommiers Airfield, just east of Paris, from total 141 that were assigned targets that included Pacy-sur-Armancon and St. Florentin. Losses were reported as five B-24s damaged.

*Bombed airfield east of Paris. Perfect run and bombed visual. The bombs ran right up the runway and really blasted the target. Just moderate flak and easy withdrawal. Flew low over the beachhead, and saw them fighting.*

**Mission No. 18, September 10, 1944 ?**

Baden, Germany

7:30

With the breakout of Normandy, targeting began to shift to more strategic targets in Germany – oil production, weapons production and transportation being high on the list. On Mission 619, 1,144 bombers and 570 fighters are dispatched to targets in the Stuttgart, Germany area. Defenses in this area were high and seven bombers are lost mostly to flak, and five fighters did not return.

*Our first trip to Germany, and it proved to be not so rough. Bombed Daimler-Benz engine machine shop, and things turned out bad. The outfit released too early by accident, and the greater part of the bombs hit in a nearby forest. We were lead ship and went in and bombed nevertheless Smitty hit the target perfect, and I saw the payload eat right into the factory buildings. Went in near Nancy and encountered light flak. Fighters have been expected since several groups have been jumped. Had*

*excellent fighter coverage. It was 32C below zero. Took my shot of whiskey after we came down.*

**Mission No. 19, October 5, 1944**

Rheine, Germany

6:00

Mission 665 sent 1,090 bombers and 733 fighters to hit industrial targets, airfields and railways in western Germany. A total of nine bombers and five fighters were lost on this mission.

Of the bombers dispatched, 360 were B-24s that were targeted on the Lippstadt Airfield (175), Rheine marshalling yard (107), Paderborn Airfield (28), which were bombed visually, another 10 B-24s hit targets of opportunity. The bombers were escorted by 260 P-47s and P-51s. Foster's 329th BS would lead his old 489th BG on the Rheine marshalling yard.

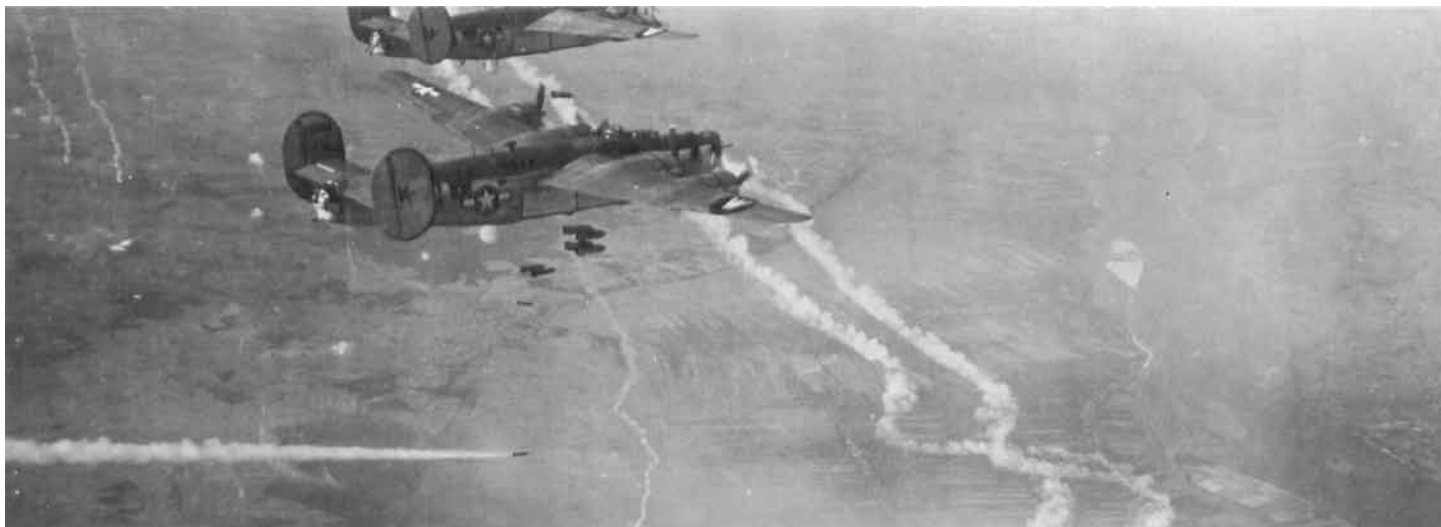
*A milk run to Rheine, Germany. The easiest run I've ever been on, and all saw absolutely no flak. Entered over Holland and crossed directly over the Zyder Zee. We bombed a marshalling yard with 500 lb. incendiaries, and hit the target, including the town. Love to see the bombs eat into the German towns. The group bombed the wrong target. We led the 489th BG, our old outfit. Carried a command pilot.*

**Mission No. 20, October 14, 1944**

Kaiserslautern, Germany

6:20

Mission 676 was the first of two missions flown this day by the Eighth Air Force. On this mission 211 bombers and 258 fighters make G-H attacks on two targets in Germany. The 93rd BG, led by Foster's 329th BS attacked Kaiserslautern, sustaining eight B-24s damaged. Their escort was comprised of 148 P-51s. The second mission (#677) dispatched 1,040 bomber and 491 fighters to make PFF attacks on the Cologne area.



*B-24s from the 489th BG releasing their loads on a mission over Germany in early October 1944 - possibly on the same mission that Foster's 329th BS led this group. (USAAC photo from the NARA collection)*

*This was another G-H run and we bombed through the clouds. Always like to see the 10/10 coverage, as the flak is so much more inaccurate. We led our own group, but haven't heard how the results were. Saw a little flak, but none came near us. One fighter got hit and went down for about 5,000 feet, but got control again and came back up to our altitude. Went in at 22,000 feet and it was about 32° below zero C. Easy mission.*

#### **Mission No. 21**

Koblenz, Germany  
6:00

Eighth Air Force records show several missions to the general area of Koblenz, but it is not possible to match Foster's record with a specific mission.

*Another trip to the Ruhr Valley. Supposed to be 2,000 Germans in the damn place, but we had cloud cover so the flak was way off. Made the run on G-H and came back.*

#### **Mission No. 22, October 25, 1944**

Munster, Germany  
42-95199  
7:30

Mission 688 sent 1,250 bombers and 522 fighters are dispatched to hit oil and industrial targets in western Germany. All targets were bombed using H2X or G-H guidance. Two bombers and one fighter are lost on the raids.

*A long drawn out raid just north of the Ruhr again. We hit the marshalling yards and bombed by PFF. H2X ship took over lead at IP as G-H went out. A lot of flak came up, but, again, 5/10 cloud cover helped us a lot. One ship had to land at Brussels, and several crew members were*



*B-24H-25-FO, 42-95199, Latrine Rumor, modified to carry the GH equipment. (USAAC photo from NARA collection)*

*hit. We had only one hole in our new ship, Latrine Rumor.*

*Latrine Rumor was a B-24H-25-FO, 42-95199/ RE-J, which was delivered to the 329th BS in May 1944 and saw service as a G-H lead aircraft with the squadron until January 1945, when it was transferred and relegated to being a "form-up" ship with another squadron.*

#### **Mission No. 23**

Dortmund, Germany  
6:00

*This was no milk run by any means, and we seem to hit nothing but the Ruhr (Happy Valley). Went in over the Zyder Zee, leading another group, 446th BG. Had about five tenths cover up to the target oil refinery, and then it became completely overcast. This didn't stop the flak, and plenty came up. Several bursts hit near the ship, and we got some nice large holes. Scared hell out of Olmsted, but I wasn't looking for the flak, so it didn't bother me. Bombed G-H and couldn't observe the hit. Got back to the base first and had about 15 holes.*

#### **Mission No. 24, November 2, 1944**

Gelsenkirchen, Germany  
6:00

Mission 698 put 1,174 bombers and 968 fighters in the air in five forces to make PFF attacks on the oil industry and rail targets in Germany. 131 B-24s were dispatched to hit oil industry targets in Castrop/Rauxel. 40 bombers and 15 fighters were lost in this mission, but only one bomber in Foster's force was lost. They were escorted by 37 P-47s with no enemy aircraft claimed. [Editor's note: In matching the diary entry with mission chronology, we know the 446th BG flew a mission to Castrop/Rauxel (about 12 miles from Gelsenkirchen) on this day. There was another B-24 mission to Gelsenkirchen the day before, but the 446th BG did not fly any missions on that day.]

*To the Happy Valley again, damn it. This group bombs bridges and we have to lead other outfits to the Ruhr Valley. Had eleven minutes of flak, but with the cloud cover we had, it wasn't as bad. Some of the ships got hit though. Had a colonel as command pilot, and he complimented the crew. Led the 446th BG and they can really fly formation. Plenty cold — 40° below C.*

#### **Mission No. 25, November 6, 1944**

Essen, Germany  
6:00

Mission 704 focused on attacking Germany's oil industry in the Ruhr Valley. The raid consisted of 1,131 bombers and 802 fighters split into six forces that makes PFF attacks targets. In total, five bombers and five fighters were lost. Foster's group was part of the 143 B-24s comprising Force 5 that hit the Sterkrade oil refinery about five miles northwest of Essen. The group was escorted by 40 P-51s.



B-24J-55-CO, Naughty Nan, from 328th BS, 93rd BG, sister squadron to the 329th during a mission to Friedrichshaven, Germany. This aircraft was lost September 21, 1944, over Belgium. (USAAC photo from the NARA collection)

*Right back to the damn Ruhr again. This time it was the 448th BG we had, and they too really know how to fly formation. Had cloud cover again because of bad weather, but had nine minutes of flak. Hit oil refineries. They have high priority. Cold once more and we are bombing from higher altitudes.*

**Mission No. 26**, November 9, 1944  
Metz, France  
7:00

Mission 707 found the Eighth Air Force switching to a more tactical role. It deployed 1,309 bombers and 738 fighters to hit front line strong points and tactical targets in the Metz and Thionville, France. Combat losses were fairly light with four bombers and five fighters failing to return or being damaged beyond repair.

The 329th BS was part of 385 B-24s dispatched to hit transportation targets at Metz while 15 hit the secondary target, the marshalling yard at Saarbrücken (two aircraft aborted the mission).

*Back to France and I never expected it. We bombed directly ahead of Patton's troops and hit a large fortress with 2,000 pounders. All three divisions hit the same target, and now Patton is making some advances. No flak near the ship, but it was a long mission.*

**Mission No. 27**, November 16, 1944  
Aachen, Germany, Eschweiler  
6:00 (est.)

This was an all-out effort with the combined forces of the Eighth and Ninth Air Forces and the Royal Air Force. The Eighth AF (Mission 715) contributed 1,243 bombers and 282 fighters with the attacks focused on tactical targets east

of Aachen, Germany, in support of the U.S. First and Ninth Armies' offensive.

The 329th BS was part of 243 B-24s and 490 B-17s that hit transportation targets in the Eschweiler area; escorted by 98 P-51s. Losses were limited to one P-51 lost and two B-17s damaged beyond repair with another eight sustaining damage. Three fighters were damaged beyond repair.

*Bombed directly ahead of the front lines, and all three divisions hit similar targets. We took off in very bad weather, but the infantry had been waiting for us six days now, and we had to go. Went in on G-H, leading the 448th Bomb Group. I didn't see the bombs hit, but we hit the target. Not much, as the Jerries weren't taking frag bombs very well. After I got the first weather from Hardwick, I knew we were going to be diverted because of bad weather. I finally got the diversion, and it was to Lisset in Northern England. Easy mission; the kind I like when you get so close to No. 30.*

**Mission No. 28**, November 26, 1944  
Bielefeld, Germany  
5:00

This mission (#725) was a combination of tactical and strategic targets. The Eighth AF dispatched 1,137 bombers and 732 fighters to attack rail viaducts, marshalling yards and oil installations in western Germany. All but one of these attacks were made with radar.

Enemy air opposition was substantial with an estimated 550 Luftwaffe fighters intercepting the bombers. Eighth Air Forces losses included 34 bombers and nine fighters with AAF claims of 133 enemy aircraft destroyed, 14 possibly destroyed and 42 damaged.

Foster's group of 240 B-24s attacked the Schidesche rail viaduct at Bielefeld.



A 93rd BG (B) B-24 leads a formation of 446th BG B-24s (H) on a mission to Germany in late November 1944. Foster's 329th BS was often assigned missions like this because of their GH equipped aircraft. (USAAC photo from the NARA collection)

*For once we bombed a place other than the Ruhr. Were supposed to hit a large viaduct just outside of town. We had the 448th and 93rd with Colonel Webb as command pilot. Quite a guy. Went in at 22,000 feet and it was visual all the way.*

*Didn't get any flak near, but missed it at Osnabruck, Hamm, and Rheine. Made a G-H run, but used sight. We missed the target, and didn't do a very good job. Had excellent fighter support all the way in and out. Saw a B-17 blow up.*

*This was a long mission, taking us down right near Switzerland. We hit the marshalling yards off Offenburg and encountered very little flak. Went in on G-H and made a perfect run. Must have hit the target as "Stars and Stripes" came out with a picture of it. We led the 448th again. Carried 500 pounders and incendiaries. Boy, we hit the town and someone sure caught hell. Capt., Dale, and Rubin [Kaplan, navigator] finished on this mission. I have one more to go.*

**Mission No. 29**, November 27, 1944  
Offenburg, Germany  
7:10

Eighth Air Force Mission 727 dispatched a total of 530 bombers and 770 fighters to make PFF attacks on marshalling yards in Germany and fighter-bomber strikes on four oil centers in north and central Germany; crews and pilots reported 102 enemy aircraft destroyed, four probable and 12 damaged with the loss of 15 fighters. Foster was part of 144 of 154 B-24s that hit the Offenburg marshalling yard; seven others hit targets of opportunity with nine B-24s being damaged. This group was escorted by 45 P-51s that sustained no losses.

**Mission No. 30**, November 30, 1944  
Neunkirchen, Germany  
6:00

The Eighth Air Force had been focusing in October and November on Germany's oil production with frequent missions being flown against these targets. Mission 731 dispatched 1,281 bombers and 972 fighters to hit synthetic oil plants in southeast Germany, along with rail targets. These targets were well defended and this mission would see flak downing 29 bombers and while three fighters were lost.

Foster's aircraft led the 446th Bomb Group as part of the 180 B-24s that targeted the marshalling yard at Nieunkirchen, while another 104 B-24s attacked the Homberg marshalling

yard. They had 56 P-47s flying escort.

*This was the last one, and I was really sweating it out. Flew with Capt. Buler, and we led the 446th Bomb Group. Again we hit the marshalling yards, and it was a G-H run, 10/10 cloud coverage, and we didn't expect to see flak. Saw quite a lot though, and two ships went down. One blew up and caught the other one on fire. Wasn't too pleasant on this last mission. Sure glad to see the English coast for my combat days over here are over? The boys got together and tossed me in the pond. Godamighty it was cold. It will seem funny not to be burdened by the thought of putting more missions in.*

*I'm coming home soon, I hope.*

*November 30, 1944*

*Took seven months to put in 30 raids.*

Foster's diary indicates a total of almost 180 hours logged on combat missions (178 hrs 55 min).

### Postscript

After leaving service, Foster attended Pepperdine College for his BA and USC for his Masters Degree. Following college, he joined the Los Angeles Unified School District as a teacher eventually becoming an elementary school principal, a career he pursued with passion and joy for over 30 years. He was honored as an outstanding educator by his alma mater, Pepperdine. Foster met his future wife, Lorraine Houghton, while at USC and they married in 1953. The Fosters raised two children, a son, Stanton and a daughter Holly in Long Beach, California. After retiring in 1981 John and his wife relocated to live on an avocado grove in Bonsall, Calif., in San Diego County, where they both live today, having just celebrated their 62nd wedding anniversary. →

*A 2013 photo of John Foster in his original Cover Girl flight jacket holding a photograph of the Cover Girl nose art on his B-24. (Photo by Patrick Gilbert / Strata Aviation Arts)*



### References

- *THE ARMY AIR FORCES IN WORLD WAR II: COMBAT CHRONOLOGY, 1941-1945* by Carter / Mueller, the Office of Air Force History.
- Various Bomb Group and Bomb Squadron websites to provide corroborating information.

### End Notes

- 1 PFF – Path Finder Forces. These aircraft were experienced bomb crews, sometimes having special bomb aiming equipment that led the squadrons and determined when the bombs were released.
- 2 G-H - A radio navigation system used for bomb aiming.

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