

RÉSUMÉ OF TOUR OF BOMBING ACTION IN EUROPE

AS RECORDED BY:

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547th BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (HEAVY)

[Hand-written additions in italic type.]

SOLINGEN, GERMANY

DECEMBER 1, 1943

PFF

Our first raid right into the Ruhr Valley. Flak intense and accurate; no casualties, only a few holes in the ship. Encountered no fighters on our group although the one ahead was hit; saw my first plane spin in and explode. NOTE - Later learned that a FW-190 made a pass from 12 o'clock on our ship, no one saw him at all, he fired but luckily missed. Red [Karcher, tail gunner] thought the bursts were flak. *Lost only lead plane of Squadron Cmdr. Maj Dillingham on this mission.*

EMDEN, GERMANY

DECEMBER 11, 1943

VISUAL

An easy mission, flak intense but fairly inaccurate; got six big holes in the ship though. A few fighters opposed our formation, no casualties. Saw a Ju-88 get shot down and hit the water and burn.

BREMEN, GERMANY

DECEMBER 13, 1943

PFF

Our first taste of an intense flak barrage, really terrific but more or less harmless, no fighter attacks on our group.

BREMEN, GERMANY

DECEMBER 16, 1943

PFF

The flak on this one was more intense even than before and more accurate. Several holes in the ship and a mess of dents right under my seat; fragments didn't penetrate however. Landed at an RAF field on the way back because of lack of gas. Spent two nice days there marching around their very proper quarters in my flying clothes. Returned by truck to the base. *We slept in hospital ward.*

LUDWIGSHAVEN, GERMANY

JANUARY 7, 1944

PFF

Rough! A long hard-fought mission. Fought on our way in and out. On the way out we were attacked by six 109s; shot down five out of the six but lost a new crew. Red got one of that six. Seemed like years before we reached the coast.

POMMEREVAL, FRANCE

JANUARY 21, 1944

VISUAL

A real milk run, no fighters, flak only way off. Never dropped our bombs because of cloud coverage. Mission was really nice and short.

FRANKFURT AM MAIN, GERMANY

JANUARY 29, 1944

PFF

The roughest one so far, no trouble on our group till we neared the target. A group

in front was really getting pased by about ten 190s. Saw three go down in flames. Then more than 20 190s lined up and came in low from eleven o'clock; Just as they came near our P-38 escort jumped them and they scattered. Our escort really saved our skins this day. Flak intense but not particularly accurate

BRUNSWICK, GERMANY
PFF

JANUARY 30, 1944

Another long hard one, plenty of fighters but none on us. The group behind lost five, all in flames or spins; later found out it was B group from here. One of its boys shot down was with us ever since Rapid City; Heck and I knew them damn well.

WILHELMSHAVEN, GERMANY
PFF

FEBRUARY 3, 1944

Fairly easy mission, flak only moderate, fighter escort superb. The worst part was the weather which was really lousy. Let down through 15,000 feet of solid undercast.

FRANKFURT AM MAIN, GERMANY
PFF

FEBRUARY 4, 1944

Another long hard one. Never saw an enemy fighter though but the formation was snafu and on the return some jerks led us right back through the Ruhr Valley with all its flak. We were in the stuff for 20 minutes, all of it intense too. No holes in the ship or casualties though.

NANCY, FRANCE
VISUAL

FEBRUARY 6, 1944

A long but easy mission, very good fighter cover. Didn't drop our bombs because of cloud cover. Meager flak fairly inaccurate. Weather and visibility good.

FRANKFURT AM MAIN, GERMANY
PFF

FEBRUARY 8, 1944

Even worse than the one on the 29th. Had a hell of a headwind on the way back; we were over enemy territory more than four hours. Were jumped by more than 12 190s just inside the French coast; they knocked 2 out of the lead group, none out of ours. Flak over target was intense and highly accurate, the worst we've had yet; several close over the ships.

BERNBERG, GERMANY

FEBRUARY 20, 1944

VISUAL (Low Squad Lead) App. 100 miles from Berlin

The perfect mission, even though 8 hrs 30 min. The target, a Junkers plant, was really primed, bombs most all landed right on target. Flak moderate, fighter opposition - two separate attacks - 25 plus 190s made pass from astern but were

scared off by our fire, later they were dispersed by P-47s. This was our first mission as lead, we led the low squad and sighted for note only. NOTE - photos showed our bombs off target because of poor formation.

LINGEN, GERMANY
VISUAL

FEBRUARY 21, 1944

A poor, disorganized mission; primary observed (*obscured?*), a target of opportunity at Lingen was bombed with fair result. No flak but scattered fighter opposition by 190s, no casualties or damage. Right waist shot 25 rounds with undetermined results at a 190 attacking from 7 o'clock. Formation poor.

*My worst
mission*

ASCHERSLEBEN, GERMANY
VISUAL

FEBRUARY 22, 1944

'This one was the worst by far that we've ever had; a long ride, more than eight hours of hell. Not much flak but more fighters than I've ever seen or want to see. The mission started off wrong, we had a mid-air collision on the assembly and lost two ships & crews. About a half hour inside the German border about twenty Me-190s [sic] hit our squad, they attacked for about five minutes and then left. The attack was taken up by more than thirty FW-190s who kept on us for about thirty minutes, just going around and around our squad. We lost three of our squad: Kew and DeFrees and McDonald. Evasive action and accurate shooting saved our necks, fired about 2,000 rounds in all. Tom [Farrow, Top Turret Gunner], Red, and I claimed one apiece. From there to the target we had no more opposition and no more trouble till three minutes from the coast on the way out when two more 190s made a pass; one was shot down with no damage to us. (High Squad Lead)

SCHWEINFURT, GERMANY
VISUAL

FEBRUARY 24, 1944

Fighter escort all the way, we were never out of sight of the escort, 47s, P51s and P-38s. Saw some of the biggest dogfights I have ever seen, but we had complete air superiority. The FW-190s still came in on the low groups and shot down about four B-24s and two B-17s that I saw. They were engaged by our P-47s however and several were destroyed. The weather was beautiful, did pilotage all the way and picked up the target without trouble. Target was obscured by bomb bursts from leading groups. We had to find its position by checkpoints around the area, target must have been hit at least partially though. Flak over the target - moderate, Fighter opposition - none, enemy fighters seen - 25 plus, time 8 hrs. (Deputy Lead)

AUGSBERG, GERMANY
VISUAL

FEBRUARY 25, 1944

This flight was more than 1100 miles, 9 hrs. and 50 mins. time. Sporadic fighter attacks on the way in and out with no losses. Fighter escort good, weather beautiful,

could see the Alps for hours. Bombing results good. Flak intense at the target and meager on the way in and out. An Me-110 jumped us from out of the sun on the way in; he was shot down by a P-51 as was a 109 that also jumped us. Also saw a Ju-88. This mission was our 5th in six days. (Lead of High Squad)

FRANKFURT AM MAIN, GERMANY
PFF

March 2, 1944

Flying no. 3 lead the group as visual lead for the first time; bombed by PFF though. The mission was long but fairly easy. Sporadic fighter attacks but escort was good enough to disperse them; no casualties. Flak going out moderate, only got a couple of holes. Logged 8 hours and 153 (sic) minutes. This was our fourth time to this target. P-47 & P-51 escort. (Group Visual Lead)

AUGSBERG, GERMANY *OBERPFAFFENHOFEN*
PFF

MARCH 16, 1944

9 hours and 10 minutes in the air. No fighter attacks on our group, flak moderate but inaccurate, fighter escort excellent. A few 190s were observed down among the clouds, they offered no opposition however. Bombing was by PFF aided by visual checkpoints seen through the clouds. This target is 15 miles from Munich and about thirty from the Alps. (Deputy Lead)

FRANKFURT AM MAIN, GERMANY

MARCH 20, 1944

An abortive sortie; got to within 80 miles of the IP and had to turn back because of impassible clouds. A solid front going from ten thousand up to at least twenty-five. The weather was terrific all the way from the assembly point to the Channel and then clear for away into France but soon developed into a front. Got some highly accurate flak coming out, thought we had had it for a while. No fighter attacks. (Flew lead of High Sqd.)

BERLIN, GERMANY
PFF

MARCH 22, 1944

Started out to bomb an air field close to the city but this was obscured so we bombed the city itself by PIP aided by visual checkpoints. We flew deputy lead and took over the lead bombing when lead ship had bombs hung up; dropped on PFF smokebombs and rest of group dropped on us. Flak intense over target and all the way out, no fighter attacks at all, escort and route good.

GÜTERSLOH OR FREENHORST
VISUAL

MARCH 23, 1944

Started out to bomb another airfield and factory but primary was obscured, also the secondary so we bombed a target of opportunity, a small town with only a marshalling yard in it; the bombs fell way short of the town even and hit open

fields. Fighter escort was excellent, flak meager and inaccurate, no fighter opposition.

(Flew Lead of Low Squad)

LE GRISMONT, FRANCE
VISUAL (PAS DE CALAIS)

MARCH 26, 1944

Led the high squad and did squadron bombing for the first time. Flew over in group formation and took squadron interval over the Channel. Visibility was excellent except for some ground haze, target was picked up without any trouble. Fighter escort good, opposition none. Flak intense and highly accurate, numerous flak holes in the ship. The target was really hit, excellent bomb pattern right smack on the aiming point. Pictures showed excellent results squad bombing.

(High Squad Lead)

MARIENBERG, GERMANY
VISUAL

APRIL 9, 1944

1750 miles not counting assemblies or deviations from course. Logged 12 hours time. Weather on assembly was the worst I have ever seen, layer upon layer of clouds up to fifteen thousand with only small spaces between layers. We finally found the group and managed to assemble eighteen ships. Out over the North Sea the weather improved and was good over the undercast, and clear from Kiel on to the target. Target was easily picked up and bombed with fair results. Flak was light and inaccurate. No fighter attacks on our group although there were plenty around, mostly Me-109s. Passed just next to Sweden, over the Polish Corridor and over Finland.

(High Squad Lead)

BRUSSELS AIRDROME, BELGIUM
VISUAL

APRIL 10, 1944

This component factory is right in the outskirts of the city of Brussels. The whole mission was only five and a half hours long, about forty-five minutes of that over enemy territory. Fighter escort was good as it usually is in that area; flak was moderate but accurate. Bomb (incendiary) results were poor, four ships dropping early by error and hitting the city area. Flew deputy lead. Booska finished on this one.

(Low Squadron Lead)

SORAU, GERMANY
VISUAL

APRIL 11, 1944

A flight of more than fifteen hundred miles, eleven hours flying time. The target was picked up with some difficulty as there was a four tenths cloud coverage; the aiming point was also difficult to pick up but was hit with good results. No fighter

attacks on our group as our P51 escort kept the fighters off. A group ahead was bit by about 20 FW-190s but I couldn't see any go down. While we were south of Berlin the evening interceptors kept coming up through the clouds and looking us over; there were at least thirty if them down there, but they offered no opposition. We got no flak except from some railroad guns in the Brunswick/Hanover area, they almost got us though. I've never had flak come so close, we got a hole in each elevator, one in the right aileron and one in the no. 2 gas tank plus several in the wings. It scared the heck out of me as it came up and hit us without warning and I didn't even have my helmet on.

(Low Squadron Lead)

SCHWEINFURT, GERMANY

APRIL 13, 1944

Flying group lead with Capt C. G. Stearns and 1st Lt. Bedsole and R E Heck as navigator; Ed Hill (radio operator), Heck and myself were all from our own crew. Weather was pretty bad on the assembly, in fact Stearns said he hoped they'd call the whole thing off. However, as we got over the French coast it cleared up and visibility was good despite some haze at our altitude which was around 22,000. Heck did a good job of navigating and we only got scattered flak, not close enough to do any damage. Somewhere in the Luxembourg area we had our first fighter attacks, not on our group however, on the lead group. These were by about 20 Me-109s who made one pass and then went off to the side and played around for a while. A few minutes afterward however we were hit by app. 30 FW-109s from 12 and 1 o'clock almost level. We were hit on that first pass and no. 3 engine caught on fire. The engine was feathered at once but the fire spread through the wing and into the bomb bays melting the radio room bulkheads away. The radio op informed the pilot of the bomb bay fire and the pilot gave the order to bail out. The navigator, after making sure I had heard the order, bailed out followed by the engineer. I was behind the engineer as the bombs were still in and I was trying to get them out, left immediately after the bombs were away though. Pulled a partly delayed jump, delaying for a few thousand feet, lost consciousness for a while but came to at about 18,000 and floated quietly down, took about 16 minutes. Had a good landing in a plowed field, had a farmer shoot at me when I hit though, missing me fortunately. Was taken into custody by some home guardists and taken a few miles to a nearby town where we were searched and put in a youth camp guardhouse for a few hours. That night we were taken in a truck around the country picking up the other boys. Spent the rest of the night and most of the next day at an airport also in a guardhouse. Late the afternoon of the 14th we went by truck to Dulag Luft at Frankfurt for interrogation. Spent two days in solitary and was sent to the transient camp, just next door. Stayed there til the morning of the 18th when we left by train for Stalag Luft I at Barth. Arrived there on the 21st of April 1944 and left on the 13th of May 1945, 13 months to the day after being shot down.