

Jesse Edward Maxey, Jr



Jesse's Story

By Guy Maxey

My name is Guy Maxey, and for the past 25 years I had never picked up any type of book to read until watching the mini-series "Band of Brothers." It opened a part of me I didn't know existed: reading. After talking to a Major from the 82nd Airborne about the mini-series at my place of work, RAF Lakenheath Military Clothing Store, he recommended that I read the book "Band of Brothers," and I did. From that day - 17th Nov 2002 - I have been studying and researching ever since. Most of my studies have been about D-Day, but I have also studied other campaigns. For the last three years, my partner Terri and I have traveled all over Europe to different battlefields in the European Theater of Operations (ETO). And now my research has taken me down a different path.

I have known for many years my Uncle Jesse was a bomber pilot during WWII, but never gave it too much attention. I met my uncle only once, back during the 70's, when he brought his wife Nina over with him, and while they were here he took Nina to Grafton-Underwood to show her where he flew out from during the War. My uncle passed away on the 3rd November 2000, taking with him all his memories of Grafton

Underwood. It was only after talking to my father made me think about my uncle's wartime service.

I asked my father: "Was Jesse here for D-Day?" He said, as far as he knew, "No. He had left the ETO in late 43." I decided to give my Aunt Nina a phone call to the States. I asked her if Jesse was here in England for D-Day? She said "Yes." That's when I decided to start researching my uncle's wartime service to find out exactly when he did arrive in England. With the help of my father, we wrote to the National Record Center in St Louis to retrieve my uncle's Military Records. A few months later I received my uncle's Records, which included his separation papers that told me when he arrived here. The rest of his documents were destroyed in the fire of 1973. Trying to put my uncle's history together has not been easy at all; this is the main reason why it has been hard...

On the 20th July 1944, bombing mission #162, The Liebert crew were briefed to bomb the Aircraft Plant at Nordhausen in Germany. While on that mission, Navigator Warren B. May, Jr. was killed; he was Jesse's best friend. From that day onwards my uncle never spoke to anyone about his days at Grafton Underwood, not even his own family or brother. For the past ten months I've been putting my uncle's history together. My father has helped me with Jesse's history as much as he could; the rest of his wartime service has come through a lot of research.

THE BEGINNING

Jesse Edward Maxey, Jr. was born on the 28th November 1920 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to US Army Captain Jesse Edward Maxey, Sr. and his wife Helen. Jesse already had an older sister by two years and her name was Helen, named after her mother. When Jesse was two years old, the family moved to Williamsport, Pennsylvania. While there, Jesse's parents gave birth to another son, Richard. They stayed for four years until they moved to Fort Hoyle, Maryland. After staying at Fort Hoyle for seven years they moved to Baltimore, Maryland, where their father retired from the Army. While living in Baltimore, their parents decided to take the family on their first vacation; they went to their father's home state of Georgia. They spent a month with their Uncle Clarence and their Uncle Ben. Their uncles worked on different farms not far from each other in Oconee, County. Because Georgia was a cheaper state to live at the time during the depression years their father decided to move the family there. The family moved to Bogart, Georgia in Oct. 1934 and stayed for one year before moving on to Statham, Georgia in 1935. Their father had bought a farm between Statham and Wynder in 1936 and moved the family to the farm 2 years later. Jesse and his brother worked on the farm after school and on weekends with their father while their sister helped her mother around the house. During the School holidays of '38 they worked up to 15 hrs a day on the farm earning 50¢ to \$1.00. Their sister left the farm and moved to Atlanta where she found work. While living in a bed and breakfast she met a Railway Postal Clerk who she ended up marrying. In the summer of '39, Jesse decided to visit his Uncle Joe and Aunt Sarah in Iowa. He stayed with them for six weeks and in that time his uncle decided to pay for his tuition at the University of Georgia. After his vacation was over he headed back to the farm where he packed his bags and headed off to University where he took a course in Agricultural Engineering. It was not mandatory at the time that all male students be a part of the ROTC on campus, but most of them joined anyway. Students had a choice of either Infantry or Cavalry; my uncle decided to join the Cavalry. A year later his brother Richard had left school and because he hated farm life so much he decided to go to University; his tuition was paid for him by their father. He studied Agricultural Engineering and joined the Cavalry rather than the Infantry. With the War heating up in Europe, Jesse knew it wouldn't be long before he was called up for service, he decided to join the Army Air Corps and leave University life behind. Not only did he sign up, his brother left University and signed up with him. Their father was very proud of what they did, being from a military background himself.

THE U. S. ARMY AIR CORPS



VETERAN TURNS SONS OVER TO THE ARMY
 Captain Jesse Maxey, With Edward and R. B. Jr.

Two Sons of 'Fighting Maxeys' Quit College to Enter Army

Father, Retired 'Soldier From Soldiering
 Family,' Says Boys Stand to Gain

By FRANKLIN NIX
 Captain Jesse E. Maxey, 61-year-old retired "soldier from a soldiering family," was back on his Winder farm Friday after watching his family go into another military generation with enlistment here of his two sons in the Air Corps.

The new soldiers, now awaiting assignment at Fort McPherson Reception Center, are Jesse Jr., 26 and Richard, 18. Both honor graduates of the Winder High School, the former has completed two years and the latter one year at the University of Georgia.

"I wanted them to finish college," said the captain, "but I also wanted them in the service. They couldn't wait to become soldiers, so college lost. I'm proud of my boys for enlisting, but I'm not forgetting that they stand to gain most from it."

Captain Maxey spoke from expe-

rience, he said, experience that began with his enlistment at Camp Mead, Pa., in 1899 and ended in 1933, when he retired as captain in the Sixth Field Artillery at Fort Hoyle, Md. During his long career he served in the Philippine Insurrection, the St. Mihiel and Chateau Thierry offensives of the World War, and with the Army of Occupation in Luxembourg.

As for the generations before his father, Barney Maxey, fought with the Confederacy, and his great-great-grandfather, whose name he "just couldn't recall," was in the War of 1812. On their maternal side, the boys are direct descendants of General George B. McClellan, Union officer in the War Between the States, he said.

"War has changed a lot in my time," Captain Maxey observed at the local recruiting office here. Even the slogan has changed. "In the last war it was 'They Shall Not Pass.' Now what's that tricky motto today?"

The younger generation grinned and chorused: "Keep 'em flying."

On the 11th August 1941, Jesse Edward Maxey, Jr. joined the US Army Air Corps at Fort McPherson, Georgia as a private. He then moved onto Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, where he did his basic training. Basic training lasted about two weeks. Then he moved on to Scott Field, Illinois to learn about Communications. He would not stay enlisted for too long. He decided to become an Officer, and went off to Officer Candidate School, which lasted three months. After receiving his commission he went back to Scott Field to become a Communications Officer. The one ambition he wanted to achieve before he joined the Army Air Corps was to be a pilot; Jesse tried joining the Navy as a pilot but was turned down for medical reasons. Now a Commissioned Officer, he can make his dream come true. And with the War in Europe taking its toll on pilots and crewmembers, the Military reduced the requirements needed in these fields.

In 1943 he applied and was accepted to go to pilot training school; all schools he went to, and the destinations are unknown. However, the following descriptions are based on what has been learned of the process of pilot training from research.

He left Scott Field and moved on to Pre-Flight Training, which lasted 9 weeks. With a total of 250 hrs of schooling and depending on where he went and what equipment they had there, determined how many hours they put into each

course. These are the courses Jesse would have gone through: Close Order Drill, Ceremonies, Inspections, Customs & Courtesies of Military Service, Honor Indoctrination, Interior Guard, Chemical Warfare, War Department Publications, Ground Forces, Safeguarding Military Information, Machine Gun, Sub-Machine Gun, Pistol & Rifle training, Identification & Tactical Functions of Aircraft & Naval Vessels, Code, Physics, Mathematics, Maps, Charts & Aerial Photos, Oxygen Indoctrination & Classification, Medical Aid and Physical Training; 6 days a week. After completing Pre-Flight training he moved on to Primary Flight School.

Primary Flight School lasted 9 weeks, flying in single engine planes like the Ryan PT-16, Ryan PT-20 and Fairchild PT-19s with up to 60 hrs + flying. After completing his Primary Flight he moved on to Basic Flying School. During his 9 weeks of training he flew in single engine planes like the Vultee BT-13B "Vibrator" the North American BT-14; with up to 70 hrs + flying. During Basic Flight School it was determined whether a cadet went onto Advanced Flying School for Fighter Pilots, or Advanced Flying School for Bomber Pilots. In Jesse's case he went to Advanced Flying School for Bombers. At Advanced flying he got the chance to fly in Twin Engine planes like the Curtiss AT-9 "Fledgling," Beechcraft AT-10 "Wichita," and the Cessna UC-78B "Bobcat." Training lasted 9 weeks, with up to 70 hrs + flying. After completing all his training he finally received his wings, and it was time to put all this training he went through to the test: Transition Training.

Transition Training lasted 9 weeks where he learned to fly B-17s. How many hours he had in one. I have no idea, but once he completed his transition he was qualified as a co-pilot. He was then sent off to a holding area where he waited for his pilot to pick him and the rest of the crew up. Once the crew had been assigned they went off for Operational Training and Crew bonding (to get to know each other). Once they received their orders they headed to the European Theater of Operations - England. With his pilot 2nd Lt Jack L. Liebert and crew they flew over from the States in a new B-17 and arrived in the United Kingdom in late April. The crew was sent to a Combat Crew Replacement Center where they waited to be assigned to a Bomb Group. They received their orders; special orders #91, assigning them to the 545th Bombardment Squadron of the 384th Bomb Group (H) from Grafton Underwood in Northhamptonshire on the 16th May 1944.

The Liebert Crew, On Assignment To The 384th

2 nd Lt Jack L. Liebert	Pilot
1 st Lt Jesse E. Maxey, Jr.	Co-Pilot
F/O Warren B. May, Jr.	Navigator
2 nd Lt Jack I. Haas	Bombardier
SSgt James R. Gray	AR
SSgt Alfred Fishbein	Engineer/Top Turret Gunner
SSgt David A. Wood	Ball Turret Gunner
Sgt Andrew Goresh	FG
SSgt Joseph D. Hrelja	G
SSgt Douglas B. Drysdale	TG

Because I didn't really know my uncle, it is hard for me to understand how he felt, what was going through his mind from day to day, what he liked and disliked, what were his hobbies, if he had any, did he like to read, did he like dance, did he listen to music, what type of bands he liked or disliked, so many things. Since the reunion at the Marriott Hotel on the 10th September 2005 in Huntingdon, England, I've become good friends with Dewayne "Ben" Bennett. During my Uncle's time at Grafton Underwood he became very good friends with Ben. They even shared the same living quarters; he also roomed with May and Haas. Ben has told me all they talked about was their chances of survival on Combat missions and of course, women. He even told me that Jesse never really drank, and he always had a smile on his face, and had a good sense of humor, and got on with just about anybody. Ben even said it took a lot to upset Jesse. But the one thing Jesse found hard but got along with was his pilot, Liebert. There were ill feelings between them; even the crew didn't care much for Liebert either, but still flew the bombing missions with him.

After reading Ben's web page, I came across a story of the 545th Lucky Mascot. The only reason I'm using parts of this story, is the fact that Warren May was part of the crew Jesse flew with and the dog slept in the same room with my uncle. Ben Bennett has given me permission to use whatever paragraphs I wish.



"Lucky"

"On April 13, 1944, the 545th Squadron was decimated. "Lucky" had visited our hardstand that morning, and we were the only crew to return out of seven planes that had been dispatched, it was a blow to the entire 384th Bomb Group. Nine aircraft had gone down taking with them 90 crewmen and 28 of them had been killed in action. A few days later new crews started coming in as replacements. I'll never forget the reaction in "Lucky" when he saw Warren B May, navigator on the Liebert crew. His one

good ear raised a little, and the broken tail started wagging. The old messed up tail was going back and forth like a bandleader's baton on a fast dance tune. "Lucky" had found someone to attach himself to, and he took to May like they had been friends forever.

"May patted him on the head, and got grease on his hand. He had to be careful when he had his pinks on and "Lucky" would get close to him, and stain his pants. May and the ugly old black dog bonded and became almost inseparable. Where May went "Lucky" went. "Lucky" moved into our barracks and slept at the foot of Mays bunk. At the mess hall May would load up on food and "Lucky" started gaining weight. It was funny seeing May walking down to the mess hall and old "Lucky" hopping along beside him. May was 19 years old, and "Lucky", in dog years, was probably old enough to be his grandfather. May talked to him all the time, and I swear, you could detect a smile on the old dog's face.



"Lucky" Reviewing the Troops

"Lucky" only went to the hardstand when May was due to fly on a mission. When May got up and dressed on the cold damp English mornings, "Lucky" would watch him intently, and then hopped with him to the mess hall. "Lucky" would go with him to briefing, waiting outside, and then while May drew his flight gear the old dog would go right straight to the hardstand May would be flying from. Some of us knew this about the ugly old dog, that he had a sixth sense and could always find the right plane and hardstand. Tied up with our own fears and apprehensions we paid little attention to it.



"On 20th July 1944 the Liebert crew with Warren B May as navigator took off for a mission to Nordhausen, Germany. Old "Lucky" watched the plane depart, then, laid down outside by the crew chief's tent. He would lie there until the plane returned. On this day, however, at about 2 o'clock in the afternoon, "Lucky" started moaning, deep in his chest. He got to his feet and hopped and moaned in a circle around the hardstand, and the mechanics knew immediately that their plane had gone down. Finally the old dog sat down on his crooked leg, put his head back, and let out a plaintive howl, and then started to the 545th barracks area. He was never seen again.

“When the B-17s of the 384th returned, the Liebert crew aircraft was among them. The plane was firing red flares, and was allowed to make an emergency landing, and the ambulance rushed to the hardstand to care for the wounded. There was no one wounded, but in the bloodstained nose at the navigator’s station, Warren B May was dead, his head nearly blown away.”

I'd like to thank Anthony Plowright for sending me the photo of Jesse, which was sent it to him from Ben Bennett. The picture below is Jesse with some of his best fiends standing outside their barracks in "44", while at Grafton-Underwood. From left to right: Eugene Burcham, Martin Rosenbaum, Dewayne "Ben" Bennett, Jesse, and Richard Cranstoun.

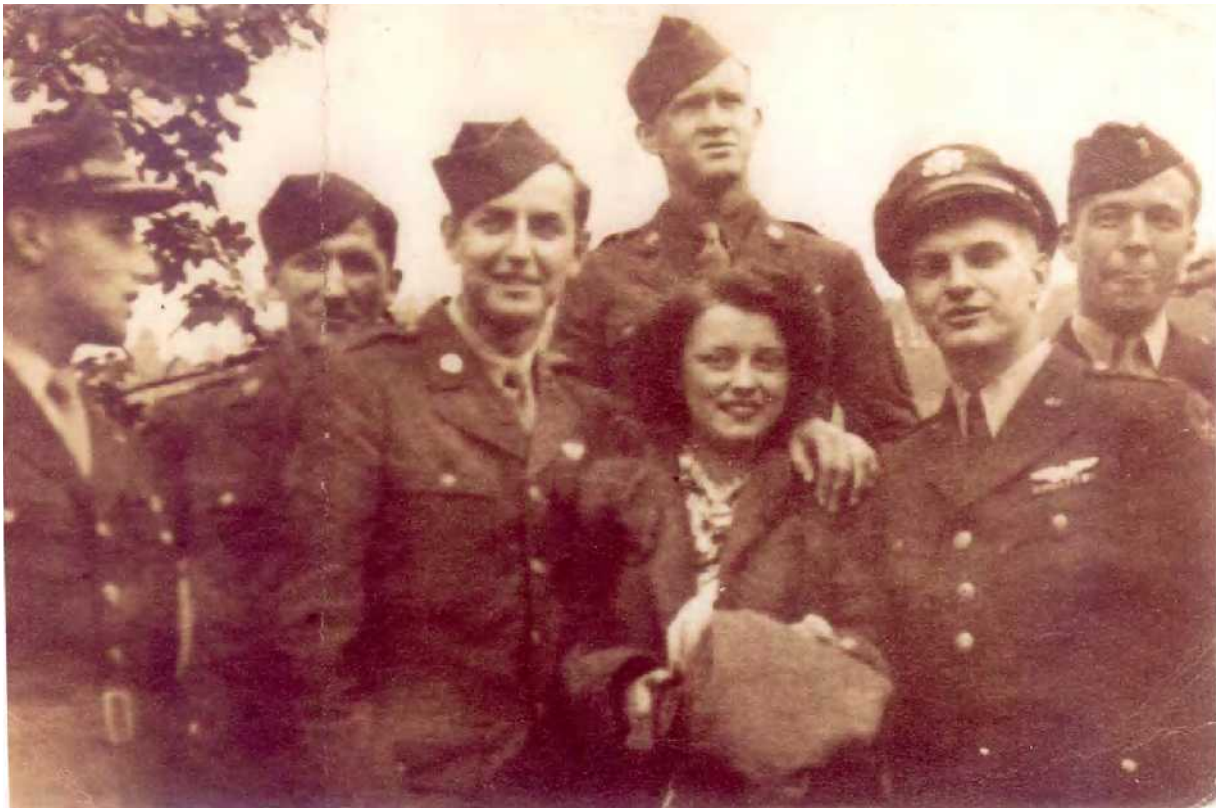


Here is a list of the bombing missions he flew as Liebert's co-pilot:

Date	Plane	384 th Mission	Target
29 th May 44	JD*P 42-107148 Dark Angel	119	Krzesinki, Poland: Aircraft Plant
30 th May 44	JD*J 42-102442	120	Haiberstadt, Germany: Aircraft Plant
31 st May 44	JD*J 42-102442	121	Colmar, France: Aircraft Plant
2 nd June 44	JD*O 42-102430 Spam-O-Liner	123	Neufchatel, France: Group B
3 rd June 44	JD*K 42-102518 Damn Yankee	124	Le Touquet, France: Airfield
5 th June 44	SU*O 42-102459 Little Kenny	126	Le Fosse, France: Tactical Support
6 th June 44	JD*O 42-102430 Spam-O-Liner	128	Caen, France: Tactical 'L' Group
8 th June 44	JD*B 42-37792 Bermondsey	131	Orleans, France: Bridge
10 th June 44	JD*H 42-97521 The Saint	132	Vannes, France: Airfield
13 th June 44	JD*O 42-102430 Spam-O-Liner	134	Dreux, France: Airfield
14 th June 44	JD*S 43-37717 Pro Kid	135	Couldommiers (Greil), France: Airfield
15 th June 44	JD*S 43-37717 Pro Kid	136	La Poissonniere, France: Bridge
16 th June 44	JD*S 43-37717 Pro Kid	137	Laon/Athiens, France: Airfield
18 th June 44	JD*S 43-37717 Pro Kid	138	Hamburg, Germany: Oil Depot

22 nd June 44	JD*S 43-37717 Pro Kid	144	Lille, France: Rail yards
24 th June 44	JD*S 43-37717 Pro Kid	145	Bremen (Oslebshausen), Germany: Oil
25 th June 44	JD*S 43-37717 Pro Kid	146	Coulanges, France: L Grp Bridge
27 th June 44	JD*O 42-102430 Spam-O-Liner	147	St Martin L'Hortier, France: Tactical
30 th June 44	JD*S 43-37717 Pro Kid	149	Montdidier, France: Airfield
12 th July 44	JD*F 42-31484 Mairsy Doats	156	Munich, Germany: Rail yards
13 th July 44	JD*S 43-37717 Pro Kid	157	Munich, Germany: Rail yards
16 th July 44	JD*S 43-37717 Pro Kid	158	Munich, Germany: Aircraft Factory
17 th July 44	JD*S 43-37717 Pro Kid	159	Bequitor (Laon, Vouel, Eu), France: Railway Yards
20 th July 44	JD*S 43-37717 Pro Kid	162	Nordhausen (Dessau), Germany: Aircraft Plant
24 th July 44	JD*P 42-107148 Dark Angel	164	Hebecrevon La Chapelle en Juger, France: Tactical (St Lo)

During many hours of flying missions over Europe, the crews became battle fatigue; flying at high altitudes in freezing conditions, being attacked by the German Luftwaffe; encountering heavy flak from German anti-aircraft batteries on the ground. These were the conditions the crews became familiar with day in and day out. One of the hardest things to come to terms with was seeing one of your Comrades being wounded or Killed by the enemy; it was hard to take in. To help with the fatigue crews were given R/R; time away from the War. The Liebert crew headed up to Scotland. Here is a photo taken on Prince Street, in July 44



From left to right: Jack Liebert, Unknown, Unknown, James Gray, Warren May, Jesse Maxey. The girl is Mays' girlfriend, Joan.

THE MAXEY CREW

Jesse's Crew From The 25th July To 5th Aug 44

1 st Lt Jesse E. Maxey	Pilot
2 nd Lt Thomas H. Gallenkamp	Co-Pilot
2 nd Lt Jack I. Haas	Navigator
2 nd Lt David H. Hogan, Jr.	Bombardier
TSgt Thomas H. Simmons	Ball Turret Gunner
TSgt Robert H. Poulton	Engineer/Top Turret Gunner
Sgt Omar E. Payne	Waist Gunner
Sgt Joseph Bombino	Radio Operator
Sgt Lawrence G. Sloulin	Tail Gunner

Also, 2nd Lt Robert Konopatzki (N) flew on the 25th July, 28th July and Sgt Albert G. Wilde (BT) flew on the 25th July and 2nd Lt James J. Brodie (P) Flew one mission with the Maxey Crew as copilot on 4th Aug, then went on to pilot his own crew from the 7th Aug, he was killed in Action on the 28th Sept 44; (Mission #201).



Standing, left to right:: Unknown, Unknown, Unknown, Unknown, James R. Gray.
Kneeling, left to right: Jack I. Haas, Jack I. Liebert, Jesse E. Maxey, Unknown.

Here is a list of the bombing missions he went on as a pilot:

Date	Plane	384 th Mission	Target
25 th July 44	JD*N 44-6294 Scotty	165	Montreuil, France: Tactical (St Lo)
28 th July 44	JD*N 44-6294 Scotty	166	Merseburg/Leuna: Synthetic Oil Plant

29 th July 44	JD*B 43-37917 Pauline	167	Merseburg/Leuna: Synthetic Oil Plant
31 st July 44	SU*C 42-37822	168	Munich, Germany: Aircraft Industry
1 st Aug 44	SU*C 42-37822	169	Chartres, France: Bridge
4 th Aug 44	JD*J 44-6135	171	Peenemunde, Germany: Rocket R&D
5 th Aug 44	JD*J 44-6135	173	Lagenhagen, Germany: Airfield



Jesse with Jack Haas, "Summer of 44"

MISSIONS AS PILOT

These pages below are the oral history of the seven missions Jesse went on as a Pilot, and were given to me from the book; "Keep The Show On The Road", By Linda & Vic Fayers-Hallin & Quentin Bland.

"Keep The Show On The Road"

The Definitive History of 384th Bombardment Group (Heavy)

By Linda & Vic Fayers-Hallin & Quentin Bland

Missions flown by Lt Jesse E. Maxey as a Pilot July & August 1944

Tuesday 25th July

DATE: 25 July	384 MISSION #: 165	8AF MISSION #: 494	FLT TIME: 5.03
TARGET: Montreuil and La Chapelle, France			
Lt J E Maxey,	44-6294 JD*N	Crew 55	

American bombers returned to the enemy lines in the American sector today to blast German strong points with considerable effectiveness, and opened a path for the U.S. Ground troops. Between three and four thousand aircraft of every description bombed and strafed the enemy positions, bombing being done from 13,000 feet - a record low for this group. None of our groups encountered flak or fighters.

Lt Col Alfred C Nuttall was the 41st "B"CBW Air commander for today's mission, and was piloted in 42-107125 by Lt James W Hines. Col Nuttall also appeared on the loading lists to fly with Lt James Hines in DARK ANGEL. The high group was led by Maj Gerald B Sammons, flying with Lt William A Fairfield and crew #143 in 42-102959, while the low group were led by Maj Gordon K Stallings.

A total of thirty seven aircraft took-off, and this included Lt William Donohue in THE CHALLENGER, who had been briefed as a spare, but who joined the regular formation and bombed with the lead group. The assemblies of the group, at 0845 hours over the base at 16,000 feet and the Wing at 0918 hours over Wellingborough, were accomplished without difficulties and as briefed. The Division assembled as they departed the English coast at 1006 hours over Selsey Bill, altitude 15,000 feet. No excessive speeds or climbs were encountered.

"On the route out," reported Col Nuttall, "we received a message from the First Bombardment Division that the weather at the target was expected to be 14,000 feet. Crossing the Channel, we were forced to go down to 13,000 feet in order to avoid the middle cloud. We crossed the enemy coast over Arromanches at 1034 hours. No flak was encountered prior to the target and no enemy aircraft were observed on the entire mission. Wing and group formations looked very good."

Weather over the target was 10/10th's alto-stratus clouds with visibility approximately six to eight miles. The Primary target at Montreuil-s-Lozon, six miles west North West of St Lo, was bombed by the lead group from 13,000 feet at 1044 hours with excellent results. Magnetic heading of bombs away was 200 degrees after a bomb run of ten minutes. Flak was observed at the target, but this group was not engaged. The low group attacked the target at La Chapelle en Juger, one mile away, also from 13,000 feet, on a Magnetic heading of 195 degrees on a bomb run of thirteen minutes, with excellent results. The high group did not release their bombs.

After making a left turn off the target, the cloud base dropped rapidly to about 9,000 feet. Col Nuttall took his formation under this and returned to base without incident. The low group made a sharp descent in order to get underneath the clouds over the peninsula and they dropped to 7,000 feet, gradually letting down to 5,000 feet before recrossing the English Coast at Portland Bill at 2,600 feet at 1152 hours. Visibility was bad all the way back to England and the air congested with a large number of aircraft, but the low group encountered no difficulty.

This raid, and yesterday's to the same area, had proved most effective as it paved the way for General Bradley's forces to begin a new drive across the Brest peninsula towards Rennes.

TSgt John Pratt was flying his twenty ninth mission today with Lts Ned Sweeney and Kenneth Halloran in LAZY DAISY. "It was a very unusual mission, as we gave the infantry boys a hand. At 12,000 feet we came in over France and gave Jerry a hellava pasting as we dropped thirty-eight 100 pound G.P.s. on troop concentrations and artillery (flak guns) and supply depots. It was good too - it had to be. If we dropped a second too early, we would have plastered our own boys.

"The target was two miles from St Lo which we could see very well. We could also see our artillery firing at Jerry - also lots of trucks and jeeps rushing about in our own lines. P-47 dive bombers knocked out flak guns before we got there - Thank God. At 12,000 feet we'd have been murdered if there had been any flak. We did see one flak gun, it fired just one shell and a split second later was blown to hell by a neatly placed salvo. Saw him go up - but good! Saw the bombs hit, those G.P.s are terrible. Jerry really caught hell. The target area was completely demolished; artillery from our lines marked the target nicely for us by dropping four red smoke shells in a rectangle to outline the area.

"We didn't wear oxygen masks today - it sure seemed fun to be on a bomb run with no oxygen mask. Turned off the target and came back over Cherbourg, and left France by the Isles of Jersey and Guernsey, crossed the Channel and hit England over Portland Bill and home OK - no one hurt. George Sheppherd and Frank Totourette (radio and tail gunner respectively on MacFarlane's crew) flew in our waist today on their last raid. Lucky boys. Oh well I only have three to sweat out now."

Also finishing their tours were Lt Alfred Cole and three pilots who had arrived on the unit as co-pilots: Lts William C Jennings, William R Donohue and Donald J Cadwallader.

All personnel on the Unit were reminded of a basic military function which was in danger of bringing a bad reputation onto the unit. An item in The Bulletin, which was repeated more than once this month stated,

“Failure to Salute

“Saluting is again becoming lax—watch it. To an outsider, it is a definite indication of our standard of discipline. Form the special habit of saluting all staff cars, regardless of occupants.”

Friday 28th July

DATE: 28 July	384 MISSION #: 166	8AF MISSION #: 501	FLT TIME: 7.50
TARGET: Merseburg, Germany			
Lt J E Maxey	44-6294 JD*N	Crew 55, D11	

Synthetic oil and chemical plants at Merseburg were bombed by PFF methods today. These plants are vital to the Germans as they manufacture the majority of their oil today. Most of the other plants in Germany have been heavily damaged in other operations. A Me109 staged a bold attack on one of our groups, but no damage was done and the fighter went on his way. Flak over the target was intense and accurate, but no serious damage was done.

There is a discrepancy in the records as to who the group leaders were. The Group Leader's Narratives state that Lt Col Robert E Thacker led the 41st "C"CBW, flying in a PFF ship #574 supplied by the 305th BG and piloted by Lt Omar Kelsay, with Maj George Koehne as the high group leader. There is no low group report.

However the loading lists give Maj Arthur Bean as the Air Commander with Lt Gordon Morris as the pilot in MARION, and Maj Gordon K Stallings as the low group leader, with Maj George Koehne as the high group leader.

As was the common practice, both Col Thacker's and Maj Bean's ships had an officer detailed to fly as tail gunner. For this mission, those detailed were Lts Phillip Kemp and John Stimer.

There were at least two spare aircraft briefed, Lt John F Teehan in 42-102617 with the lead group and Lt John R Bennett in SILVER QUEEN for the high group, both of whom returned to base with their bombs as briefed.

Take-off of thirty six aircraft began at 0600 hours, and the groups assembled over the airfield at 12,000 feet. The high group encountered a little difficulty which could be attributed to the fact that all the wingmen were on their first three missions!

The 384th's assembly ship, SPOTTED CALF, who had started her operational life in August 1943 as PATCHES II, was flown today by Lt Bert F Strong. Painted white with blue polka dots, she made the assembly of the groups much easier.

The low group was a little slow in assembling with the Wing; however they all turned on course for Point "B" and were assembled by the time they were at Point "C" at 0704 hours, 12,000 feet. There was an excellent Division assembly at 0737 hours over Saffron Walden, and there was no trouble with other Wings except that due to the slow speeds, Lt Col Thacker had to slow down to 145/150 indicated. They departed the English coast at 0752 hours over Orfordness, altitude 16,000 feet.

The route to the target was flown as briefed and without incident. No flak engaged the formation prior to the target. The weather at the Primary target was 10/10th's. Col

Thacker reported, "We made a very good PFF bomb run of fourteen minutes and the Navigator states that the bombs should have hit the target. No course corrections were made whatsoever. Bombs were away at 1007 hours from 25,000 feet on a Mag. heading of 120-125 degrees, bombing in good Combat Wing Formation. Flak at the target was moderate and fairly accurate. No enemy aircraft were observed at the target."

The formation made a right turn off the target and the route back to England was flown as briefed. Approximately twenty minutes after the target, one Me109 made a pass at the low group of the wing from three o'clock causing no damage. Other than that, the return to base was uneventful.

The descent was a little slow as there were a couple of ships in the lead group who had been hit by flak over the target and the formation was slowed to keep them in formation. This caused the high and low groups to overrun the lead group, but as soon as they levelled off at 20,000 feet they got back into a good wing formation.

The only suggestion made by Lt Col Thacker on his return was that when the group furnish a complete Combat Wing, an increase of fifteen minutes be allotted for assembling over the field before turning on course." Maj Koehne's report stated that "The Scouting Force was supposed to call us informing us of the weather at the target, but to my knowledge, no call was received."

Completing their tours today were pilots Lt James A Gibson from the 546th BS and Lt Billie B Brown from the 547th BS.

Saturday 29th July

DATE: 29 July	384 MISSION #: 167	8AF MISSION #: 503	FLT TIME: 6.50
TARGET: Merseburg, Germany			
Lt J E Maxey 43-37917 JD*B, PAULINE Crew 56, D12			

The synthetic oil and chemical plants at Merseburg were again the targets of this group. The results were expected to be good, clouds over the target preventing observations from being made. The group was represented by forty one aircraft, one of which is missing. No observations were made as to why this aircraft left the formation, but he was seen to leave immediately after bombs away. The group was subjected to enemy attacks by between twenty five and thirty Me109s and Fw190s who made one pass at the formation. A number of men were injured due to flak and the evasive action that was taken.

It was 0330 hours when someone went into the barracks and woke the aircrew who were to fly today's mission. Among those woken was Lt Ted Abbott, co-pilot to Lt Loren Green, who was today to fly his first operational mission. "After partially dressing in a cold barracks, then going across the way to the latrine for a face full of cold water, a tooth brushing, hair combing and what ever else, then returning to complete dressing, I was on my way to the mess hall. What a breakfast! Ham, bacon, sausage, fresh eggs the way you liked them, with all the trimmings you could want. It was then back on the bike for a trip to the briefing room.

"Taking a seat I joined in the conversations going on around me until the briefing officer took the podium and called for quiet. You could hear a pin drop for all was intent on what the map behind the drawn curtain was about to show. After a few words, the officer drew the curtain and immediately there was a deathly moan from all the experienced personnel. It was so bad, I didn't think I would live long enough to get out of the door of the briefing room. MERSEBURG!!! The most protected target in Germany, and deep into Germany with seventeen hundred 88's and 105's, plus other German aircraft in her favour."

Col Dale O Smith, flying in PFF ship #574, was the Air Commander of the 41st "B"CBW, with Maj Gerald B Sammons leading the low group, Lt John Shelley, (piloted in 42-97960 by Lt Marshall Wortman), as the high group leader, and Lt James Hines (flying with Lt Richard Keats in MARION) leading the high group of the 41st Composite "D"CBW.

Lt Vern Arnold was on the loading lists to fly with pilot Lt Edgar Bills in SILVER QUEEN. However, Lt Arnold in his diary recalls this day as, "Last day of classes! We should be ready to really get in it anytime now." He also records his first mission taking place on 5th August, while that of his pilot, Lt Bills, on the 3rd August. As SILVER QUEEN was also allocated to Lt Vernon Hannaford (also a 547th pilot), it is assumed that the inclusion of Lt Bills and his crew on the load lists was an error.

The first aircraft left the field at 0545 hours, and all the group assemblies were good. The lead group of twelve aircraft assembled at 0703 hours, altitude 16,000 feet over Grafton Underwood, although Lt Edgar J Hayes turned back over the field because of low oil pressure in DANIEL WEBSTER. No trouble was encountered by the twelve aircraft in the low group during their assembly, except that action was taken to avoid clouds. The high

group of thirteen aircraft also assembled without any difficulties, the briefed spare of Lt Donald Martin in SPAM-O-LINER turning back as briefed.

A further nine aircraft, without spares took-off from 0611 hours to form the lead and low squadrons of the 41st Composite "D"CBW. Lt Clifford F McDaniel in 44-6135 turning back twenty miles on course from Luton because he was unable to locate the formation. Assembly of these 384th aircraft was effected over Poddington at 0718 hours, altitude 16,500 feet and the three aircraft from the 303rd BG, who were briefed to fly with the high squadron, did not assemble with Lt Hines, and were not seen during the entire mission. The 41st "D" Wing assembled over Ely at 0724 hours without any difficulties.

The 41st "B" Wing also assembled over Ely but at 0722 hours, and the Division assembly was not entirely as briefed due to multi-layered clouds, and they departed the English coast at Louth at 0745 hours, altitude 15,800 feet. Point "C" could not be made good because of the cloud layer and the Division flew a roundabout route from Point "B" to Point "Q".

Flying in 44-6080 with Lt Kenneth Halloran was radio operator TSgt John Pratt, "Left England south of the Wash, went over the North Sea to Holland, where we hit the enemy coast north of the Zuider Zee, turned south-east and flew straight to Merseburg, the same target as on our first mission on 12th May". The formation crossed the enemy coast at 0902 hours where there was meagre flak. F/O Joseph D Patella was forced to leave the low group formation due to failure of the #1 engine in 42-102617, and dropped his bomb load of twenty 250 pound GPs on a target of opportunity near Minden Germany, prior to returning to base early.

Col Smith reported, "The route out was flown over 10/10th's clouds. All formations after entering enemy territory were very good. The 41st "B"CBW which I commanded flew very close and almost an integral part of the 41st "A" Wing, since the PFF equipment assigned to the 41st "B" Wing went out. Word of visual bombing conditions was received from the Scouting Force, but considerable difficulty was encountered in getting interval since the 41st "B", in flying so close to the 41st "A", had closed up all intervals and were rather closely jammed. However I decided to fly 1,000 feet above the briefed altitude in order to avoid prop wash on the bomb run. We reached the I.P. at 1005 hours, altitude 26,000 feet and continued on the bomb run at that altitude."

The bomb run was made perfectly, and the lead bombardier informed Col Smith that it was an excellent run in every respect. Flak at the target was moderate and accurate, while the weather was CAVU. Bombs, aimed on the briefed MPI, were away from the lead group at 1019 hours from 26,000 feet on a Mag. heading of 093 degrees, with the low group bombing from 25,000 feet, and the high group from 26,500 feet. No strikes were visible because of the heavily smoked target, although the low group toggilier reported to Maj Sammons that intense black smoke was coming from the target.

The 41st "D" high group bombed at 1029 hours from 26,000 feet on a Mag. heading of 097 degrees also with unobserved results due to the smoke screen at the target. They made a right turn off the target, but were cut off from their 41st "D"CBW by another Wing and were unable to pick them up again, and they returned with another Wing.

“We made a sharp right turn off the target and I was unable to find the 41st “A” lead, as enemy fighter were active.” reported Col Smith, “I picked the first Wing I could find with PFF aircraft leading and joined it. My low group did likewise, but my high group joined another Wing with PFF aircraft, and I advised them to remain with that formation. Numerous fighter attacks were encountered in the target area, although none directly attacked my Group formation to my knowledge.”

Lt Abbott recalled his first impressions of the mission. “After several hours of flying the regular courses through Germany, our squadron of twelve ships started its turn at the I.P. and headed for the M.P.I. This route was to take seven minutes. I saw several enemy fighters in the area but they were focusing on something other than us, probably trying to escape our barrel of fighters protecting us. Then I noticed the exploding of four bursts of red flak which I was told was the signal for their fighters to break off their attack. In front of us now was a big cloud of black smoke from all those shells that had exploded. I noticed that 88’s were tracking us perfectly but exploding about a thousand feet below us. Immediately there was four bursts of 88’s with their ugly red centres, right in my face not twenty five yards out and right on altitude. Suddenly flames began to come up through the floor behind the rudder pedals on both sides of the cockpit. Part of one of the shells that exploded in my face came through the plexiglass nose striking the bombardier helmet and then embedded itself in the navigator’s oxygen regulator. This caused a flash fire. The bombardier turned and pushed the navigator, Lt Phillip Seydel, up the tunnel from the nose. His oxygen hose had been severed about six inches from his mask by a flame of intense heat and hot metal had dripped on his back which had his flight jacket smouldering. He had also inhaled the smoke and fumes.

“I screamed at ‘Frenchie’ - Nolan Bordelon the engineer, for an extinguisher. He was sitting on the base of his gun turret, out of it for a moment. I grabbed my 45 that was strapped to my parachute harness and leaning over, stuck it in his face hoping it would bring him round. Nothing happened.

“I dropped the gun to the floor and turned to face the flames which were getting more intense. I HAD to get out of there. I was reaching under my seat for an extra oxygen bottle when Frenchie tapped me on the shoulder and at the same time handed me a fire extinguisher, before he began attending to the navigator by giving him oxygen and beating the smouldering clothing.

“I gave the flames under my feet a burst from the fire extinguisher which did a good job subduing the fire and then reached over and did the same for Green with the same results. I knew the fire was still burning and that I had to get up front to put it out and assess the damage. I hooked up to my extra oxygen bottle and managed to squeeze past the navigator and into the tunnel to the nose. Upon arriving there I found the bombardier on his back and his face navy blue.

“Every second he would gasp for air. His oxygen tube had pulled loose from his regulator when he pushed the navigator up the tunnel and he was anoxic. I plugged him back to his regulator, opened it to full flow and then grasped him by the belt giving him a few pumps. He didn’t respond. I gave him my oxygen bottle, checked the flow on his regulator connection and decided that this was best for him. This was almost a mistake for when I began to plug back to my bottle I could not co-ordinate, I was becoming anoxic.

“I made two attempts to make the connections and finally on the third attempt it connected. Taking a deep breath I went back to work on the bombardier. He was still blue. Pumping him in the belt a couple of times he responded by immediately turning bright red. His eyes opened and by giving him the OK sign with my fingers, he nodded OK. I turned then to give the fire my utmost attention. All the wiring in the instrument panel along with everything else was completely burned.

“There was still a flicker of flame on some wiring and this I blasted with a shot from the extinguisher. Seeing that nothing else could be done I turned to the bombardier and there he was, blue again. This time I could see that his oxygen mask wasn’t tight to his face. I pulled the straps tight until I could see the mask embedded in his face. Again he turned red and I stayed long enough to be satisfied that he could take care of himself.

“Meanwhile, the pilot’s oxygen system was shut down, and being busy did not realise it, and passed out, slumping over the throttle quadrant. (It is quite normal in the event of failure of the oxygen supply at altitude, for the loss not to be realised, and the suffering crewman will quickly pass out.) The radio operator, Bob H Myers, was watching from his position and suddenly realised that no one was flying the ship, grabbed an oxygen bottle and proceeded to the flight deck via the bomb bays. Upon arriving, he plugged Lt Green into a bottle and the pilot quickly revived to gain control of the ship.

Lt Abbott continued, “Returning to the flight deck everything seemed to be in order, with the exception of the navigator, who was still out, and most of the flight instruments which were worthless. Climbing back into my seat, I noticed we were alone and being deep in Germany, I never felt so lonely.”

According to other airmen flying in the formation, the aircraft must have been trimmed to perfection, for at the time Lt Green must have passed out, MISS ME started into a slight dive to the right passing through the low squadron which scattered to get out of the way. Gathering speed, she began climbing and she then passed through another squadron, which also had to scatter. These airmen thought that everybody in the nose of the ship was dead and that some other member of the crew was trying to fly the ship.

Immediately after bombs away, and while the high group was leaving the target, the deputy leader Lt Ned Sweeney in 43-37870 was heard calling for fighter support, although he was not observed leaving the formation. The ball turret gunner, SSgt Kenneth L Fernquist, was killed, while two of the crew are known to have been captured and became POWs. At the end of this mission, Lt Sweeney who had arrived on the 547th BS as co-pilot to Lt Jack Hickey back in April 1944, was due to have returned home to the USA, having completed his tour of duty. The aircraft was a new aircraft and was flying on her fourth recorded mission.

The high group was then attacked by enemy fighter aircraft, notably Me109s which made one pass at the group. The leader reported, “This group was unable to reassemble with the 41st “B”CBW Air Commander, and we withdrew with the 379th BG which was one section short. We advised the Air Commander of our position and he instructed us to remain where we were.”

Maj Sammons, the low group leader reported, "About five minutes after bombs away the group was attacked by Fw190s and at least one enemy aircraft was shot down, exploding in mid-air. The route back was essentially as briefed, although this group joined two groups from the 3rd Division, one of which dropped their bombs on Quakenbruck, following which the route back was flown as briefed, landing at base at 1355 hours."

Flying with the low group, Lt George Seidlein in LITTLE KENNY was forced to land at Foulsham, while Lt Harold Toler in 42-107224 landed at Hethel, both probably due to battle damage. Lt John H Hunt, who flew with the "D" formation, was forced, also due to flak damage, to land 42-97271 at Beccles.

TSgt John Pratt reported the battle in which the 8th Air Force had been involved. "As we hit the bomb run, about twenty five Me109s and Fw190s came tearing through our group. They only made one pass, but got some B-17s out of the group behind us. Then we got the flak! It was terrible. The most accurate I've ever seen. Every ship in our squadron was hit. We had about twenty holes and Lt Vernon Hannaford in SILVER QUEEN got forty two - thirty seven were in the waist where George Caster was flying. He never got hit, though we didn't see how! That flak was the worst I've ever been in, boy could they shoot. I saw a lot of flak guns firing as I stood in the bomb bay on the run. We bombed from 25,000 feet where the temperature was -28° not that anyone noticed it. The target was demolished completely, smoke coming up to 20,000 feet and I saw fires and explosions that must have come up 8,000 feet. We really hit it, so they won't get any oil from there for a long time. Just as we left the target, we saw several bursts of red flak.

"That is the signal to the fighters to come in and attack, which they did and fast. As we left the target area about two hundred Fw190s and Me109s hit the wing ahead of us, us and the wing behind us. It was terrific! I got in some good shots and hit an Me109 but good. Everyone else was going like mad. They came in from all angles, front, back, and sides - it was like a huge bee hive. We saw twenty five B-17s explode, burn or break up and go down, but only a few chutes. I watched seven bail out of one ship, then it exploded and flaming debris showered over them setting the chutes on fire. One twelve ship squadron was hit and came out with only two ships.

"Our P-51s did beautifully, and I saw several Fws and Mes go down. Watched one dive away from a P-51, go into a spin and hit Germany, exploding on impact. We had 20mm shells bursting all around us from the attackers, B-17s were blowing up and chutes floating through the formation. It only lasted a few minutes, but it was terrible. Never saw anything like it before.

"The group lost four planes and one gunner had his foot shot off. Wally Doughty, (MacFarlane's engineer), Lew Mayo and Don Manus finished up today; Halloran was 1st pilot and did a great job. Col Smith led today - did swell and came in on two engines. This was the worst raid I've ever had - Only the Lord brought us back."

The four planes which John Pratt refers to as being lost were the one of Ned Sweeney and the three which landed away, but had not yet got word back to base to say that they were safe. But of the forty four aircraft from the 384th BG which had left the field eight hours earlier, one was lost, nine received major damage, and twelve had minor damage. That meant a long hard night ahead for the mechanics.

Meanwhile the crippled MISS ME was struggling back to England. Lt Green handed the flying over the Lt Abbott and they were heading west. No planes could be seen anywhere, there was a solid cloud cover, no one knew exactly where they were nor how they were going to fly through the clouds without instruments. Luck prevailed. Lt Abbott recalled, "Off to my right at about two o'clock was a single Flying Fortress. He was fixing to let down through the clouds, so I quickly manoeuvred MISS ME to stick her right wing into his waist gunner's window. He didn't seem to mind and together we descended through the clouds. After breaking through, it was nothing to find our position and head for home. I sure would like to meet the pilot in that B-17 and thank us for getting us through the clouds. I feel certain that he sensed we were in trouble and was glad to help in any way possible."

Flying today also in either HELL'S MESSENGER or DARK ANGEL was pilot Lt Charles Majeske. (He was down on the Crew Loading Lists to fly both aircraft!). Among his crew as the radio operator was his brother SSgt Earl Majeske. This crew, who were flying their second combat mission, (their first had been yesterday with Lt Ned Sweeney as pilot and Lt Charles Majeske as the co-pilot), was also involved in shooting down two enemy fighters, while their aircraft suffered several bullet holes in the plexi-glass nose, and two holes in the waist section, along with a riddled horizontal stabiliser.

Lt James Hines concluded his high group leader's mission narrative, "Fighter escort was very good on the route out. However, its effectiveness was doubtful, since the main enemy attacks came in the target area and several B-17s were seen going down. I suggest sending eighteen ship groups rather than twelve ship groups on deep penetrations, since firepower and defensive strength is thereby increased. If Groups were able to maintain wing formation, this would not apply, but where groups take interval to bomb targets individually they are like 'Clay Pigeons'."

Col Smith was very pleased with the mission. "The fighter escort was very effective, except in the target area, where apparently it was swamped. The mission as a whole was excellently planned and conducted. Had the PFF equipment assigned to the 41st "B" been operational, there would have been no problems what ever."

Flying the mission with Lt Kenneth Myrick in SON'S O FUN was SSgt Art Beese. Forty two years later he recalled this mission. "On one of our Maximum-Effort missions, we were part of the 'combat column' of over twelve hundred bombers and five hundred fighter escort planes. At one point, up in my turret, I could see a group up ahead about five miles really getting pasted by Me109s and Fw190s. I could clearly see the silver flashes of the Fw190 cannon shells, and bombers going down left and right. It was definitely a scary sight. But you tried not to dwell on it and instead pay attention to your duties - 'cause it could happen to you!

"Our formation wasn't even troubled by enemy fighters that day. I wondered why. Later, on the ground, I learned what had happened. We'd started our engines to warm them up before take-off, at the briefed time. Then came an order to 'stand down'. We shut off the engines and waited. After perhaps an hour's wait, the Mission was 'on' again. Everything seemed routine at first. Until the Luftwaffe hit the combat column with everything they had.

“It seems that somehow or other the ‘stand down’ order had not been relayed to Fighter Command. As a result, our fighter cover took-off as originally briefed. By the time the last escort wave was so short of fuel that they had to head back to England, the bombers were still over Germany. I was told there’d been only five fighters left protecting the whole combat column. And they were our Group’s fighter cover. It was my twelfth mission. How lucky can you get? Maybe we had our own Guardian Angel!”

When MISS ME finally returned to base, the full extent of the cause of the damage became evident. When the flak hit the navigator’s regulator, the system failed to shut down immediately, thereby allowing an excess of pure oxygen loose in the nose. This was the reason the fire was intense and lasted as long as it did. The navigator and pilot are on one oxygen system, with the bombardier, co-pilot and engineer on another, which was why Lt Green passed out.

Of the crew the navigator, Lt Seydel, was destined to go on and become a lead navigator; Frenchie, the engineer never encountered any more problems and became an excellent member of the crew, but the bombardier was to fly only another four missions before being sent back home by the flight surgeon.

After debriefing, Lt Abbott ran into Cpt “Sonny” Jones, the operations officer, who asked what the hell had happened to him. “I still had on my flying suit,” recalled Lt Abbott forty five years later, “but my face was black with smoke from the fire and my eyebrows were singed. I wore a big smile and my ivory, of which I’ve always been proud, was all gleaming. Upon telling him briefly about what happened, he told me that I was lucky in that my worst mission was behind me. It turned out that this was to be the truth, but it didn’t prevent me from sweating out thirty four more. The B-17. Well it didn’t take too many missions for me to fall in love with her. You never took off in her with the idea she wouldn’t bring you back, and this was the name of the game.”

The flak and fighters had taken a toll on the aircraft. Of the forty three aircraft to go over the target and return, twenty one were suffering from battle damage, nine with major damage.

The Happy Warriors on the Unit today included Lt John Teehan (co-pilot to Lt Halasz in April 1944), Lt Marion Endelicato (co-pilot to Lt Meland), with a further three pilots not appearing on the loading lists again. They were 544th BS’s Lt L W Goodson, Lt EdgarHayes from the 546th BS and Lt Vernon Hannaford(547th BS).

Monday 31st July

DATE: 31 July	384 MISSION #: 168	8AF MISSION #: 507	FLT TIME: 8.10
TARGET: Munich, Germany			
High Group:			
Lt J E Maxey	briefed to fly 42-102459 SU*O LITTLE KENNY		
	flew ground spare: 42-37822 SU*C, #3 low sq		

Munich again came under the targets for today, when the city was bombed by PFF methods because of the cloud coverage in the area. Flak at the target was rather intense and fairly accurate, but none of the aircraft suffered heavy damage, all returning as briefed. There were no enemy aircraft sighted.

Thirty seven aircraft were prepared for the mission along with two PFF ships provided for the lead and deputy lead positions by the 305th BG at Chelveston. Lt Col Alfred C Nuttall, was the leader of the 41st "A" CBW flying in PFF Ship #574, Maj Arthur E Bean, in MARION, and Cpt Maurice Booska, in 42-97960, leading the high and low groups. The pilots for the three group commanders were Lts Omar Kelsay, Gordon Morris and John Bahten respectively.

The three spare aircraft: Lt Joseph D Patella, flying in LORRAINE, Lt Nicholas V Pranger in DANIEL WEBSTER, and Lt Charles Majeske in 42-102959 all returned their bomb loads of ten 500 pound M17 Incendiaries to base as briefed.

The assembly ship today, SPOTTED CALF, was piloted by Lt Richard Keats, while Lt Harland K Peck flew 42-102933 as the weather ship. A further three ships from the total force of fifty seven serviceable aircraft at Grafton Underwood were prepared as ground spares. Two of these would be needed as Lt Jesse Maxey encountered difficulties with LITTLE KENNY and returned to base to take-off late in the spare 42-37822, while HELL'S MESSENGER was flown by Lt Harry Neville.

All group assemblies were normal and over the base between 0940 hours (high group) and 1009 hours (lead group), 7,000 to 9,000 feet. During wing assembly, the wing was departing Point "A" when a Combat Wing made up of the 303rd BG crossed the same point at the same time, which broke up the formation, causing the low group to get considerable distance behind the wing formation. The lead group slowed up to 140 mph on the route out to allow them to catch up, and the wing was back in good formation by the time they crossed the enemy coast. All the other speeds on the route out were S.O.P., the Division having assembled as they departed the English coast over Clacton.

They crossed the enemy coast at 1127 hours over Ouddorp, altitude 20,000 feet, and from this point into the target, the route was flown as briefed and without incident. Although they formation saw flak bursts on the way out, none engaged them.

Flying on his thirty first mission with the deputy leader of the low group Lt Kenneth Halloran, in LILLY BELLE was TSgt John Pratt. His log recalls, "Left England north of the Thames Estuary and went over the Channel hitting the enemy coast south-west of Rotterdam, where we turned south-east and went to a point near Saarbrucken, turned left

and headed east-south-east to Munich. The Visual Primary was an aircraft factory seven miles west of Munich, while the PFF Primary was the rail marshalling yards in the city of Munich.”

Approximately thirty minutes before the target, Col Nuttall received a call from ‘Buckeye Blue’ advising him to make his bomb run at 26,000 feet, so they immediately climbed the additional 1,000 feet and got across the high cirrus clouds without difficulty.

“About five minutes prior to the I.P. I called ‘Buckeye Blue’ and asked him what he advised in regard to bombing,” reported Col Nuttall, “He told me to make an instrument approach on the Primary target of the aero engine factory, and further stated that we may be able to see the target visually at the last minute. From conversations picked up from preceding CBWs, I found that some had made visual runs and others PFF runs. Upon advice received from the Division Leader, I did not break up my combat wing. As we approached our Primary visual target, it could be seen straight down, but we could not possibly make a run on it visually. We proceeded to the PFF Primary Target, and bombed it in good Combat Wing Formation after a bomb run of eleven minutes duration at 1316 hours from 26,000 feet on a Mag. heading of 170 degrees, with unobserved results. The weather was as briefed throughout the mission, except for the target area where clouds were as high as straight down, but we could not possibly make a run on it visually. We proceeded to the PFF Primary Target, and bombed it in good Combat Wing Formation after a bomb run of eleven minutes duration at 1316 hours from 26,000 feet on a Mag. heading of 170 degrees, with unobserved results.”

The weather was as briefed throughout the mission, except for the target area where clouds were as high as 27,000 feet in places. Lt Col Nuttall found that the weather reconnaissance flight helped him considerably in deciding how to bomb on this particular mission.

Flak in the immediate target area was moderate but inaccurate. Maj Bean reported that they had observed moderate to intense and fairly accurate flak arising from the target whilst on their approach, but it had dwindled considerably by the time they arrived and it caused them very little trouble.

“While we were on the bomb run,” reported TSgt Pratt, “A message came through from Air Division which said ‘many fighters located at the target. Report information to friendly fighters’. Boy - did we sweat that out. We were waiting for a slaughter after we left the target.

“As tenth in a Division of twelve CBWs we expected to get it bad, but I guess our fighters got rid of the bandits because we didn’t see one, Thank God. The group behind us was hit, but we didn’t see anyone go down. One B-17 got a direct flak hit and exploded in a huge flame and puff of black smoke, not even a piece of it could be seen - it disappeared. Had a large escort of P-51s and P-38s.”

A left turn was made off the target and the return trip was flown as briefed. They encountered meagre but very accurate railroad flak on course south of Saarbrucken, but apart from this, the journey home was uneventful, although they did slow the speed down

to 160 on the let down because one of the lead group's ship had a feathered prop, but was trying to stay with the formation.

Following the 'near-miss' at Wing formation, it was not surprising that Cpt Booska suggested, "That no two Wings attempt to assemble on one Buncher. On today's mission, 'Cowboy-Baker' and 'Cowboy-Able' were both trying to assemble on our Buncher and both were at the same altitude."

In John Pratt's log, the strain of his thirty first mission was showing in his writing. "Lt Halloran flew us on his last mission today; he did a grand job as deputy lead in the low group. Monk Waltrip finished today and George Caster, MacFarlane's waist gunner finished with us too. I have one (1) left to do!!! I'm SWEATING."

Also finishing were Lt Raymond L Melzar, a 544th BS pilot and Lt Robert E Strand. Lt Strand was the co-pilot who, on 20th June had been awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for bringing the aircraft back safely after the pilot; Lt Edward Thoma had been killed.

Tuesday 1st August

DATE: 1 August	384 MISSION #: 169	8AF MISSION #: 508	FLT TIME: 5.22
TARGET: Chartres, France			
41 st "A" CBW Lead Group			
Lt J E Maxey	42-37822 SU*C	D2	

Suspending their attacks on targets deep on Germany, the 384th BG filled their Forts up with 2,000 pound bombs and went after a target in France - a bridge at Chartres. The weather conditions were perfect, but the results were uncertain, due to a traffic jam at the target! Although the enemy had no opposition to give, the group suffered the loss of a plane and crew just after take-off, with both the bombs and gas exploding, killing all the crew and scattering the wreckage.

It was very foggy when the crew got up for the mission, and they expected a 'scrub'. However after the take-off was moved back two hours, the mission finally got underway. Lt Col Robert E Thacker was briefed to lead the 41st "A"CBW, piloted in MARION by Cpt Dewayne Bennett. The high group was led by Maj Gerald B Sammons, piloted in 43-37822 by Lt William F Combs, while the low group was led by Lt Glenn June, flying in 42-102933 and piloted by Lt Harland K Peck.

Thirty nine aircraft took-off from 1130 hours, including Lt John H Hunt, the lead group spare pilot in 44-6149 and Lt L K Davis the low group spare in 42-102601, both of whom returned as briefed. The briefed spare of the high group was Lt Robert Harris, who had flown on only two missions.

At 1145 hours just after his take-off, Lt Robert Harris, who was piloting 544th BS's 42-97072, encountered engine trouble, the aircraft crashing at Weldon, one mile west of Deenethorpe. There were no survivors from the nine man crew #42, who had only reported to the 384th BG on the 15th July. The diary of TSgt John Pratt states, "A plane from our group and another collided over Corby and blew up. Visibility was really poor."

Assembly of the lead group was normal and completed over the base at 1215 hours, altitude 6,000 feet, with that of both the low group and the high group 2,000 feet higher six minutes earlier. Wing assembly was accomplished between Base and Market Harborough at 1239 hours, with Division assembly over Splasher #11. The 41st "A"CBW filled their proper spot and proceeded on course to the target. Climb was slow with respect to feet per minute, climbing at 200 feet per minute to 25,000 feet, the English Coast being departed over Selsey Bill at 17,000 feet.

On the route out the low group was straggling, especially the high flight being out of formation during the entire route. This was due to a little difficulty with the contrails, causing Lt Glenn June to remain below them before they could get into position over the Channel. The high group also encountered difficulty maintaining formation due to the slow speed of the Wing Leader. Maj Sammons reported that the indicated airspeed was 142, but that the gauge should be recalibrated by the ground engineers when the aircraft was next serviced. There were no encounters with enemy aircraft nor were they engaged by flak prior to the target. The enemy coast was crossed at 22,000 feet just north of Le Havre, before

turning south-east towards the target of a railroad bridge at Chartres, thirty miles south-west of Paris. There was a large flak barrage spotted at Orleans, and the crews also observed some red bursts, following which they expected fighters, but none came! The I.P. was reached at 1445 hours, altitude 25,000 feet and between here and the target the lead group were cut out by a Wing that was going further North towards Paris, which threw out the formation. Maj Sammons reported, "The route out was not as briefed, the Wing Leader reported no flak if I went through to the target on a heading of 270 degrees rather than 248. This action was taken to catch the Wing, as we had been cut off on our bomb run by an unidentified group."

At the target the weather was 1/10ths cloud coverage, and the flak was moderate with about ten guns. On the bomb run five ships from the lead group: Lt Henry Minor in 44-6135, the #2 in the lead squadron, three ships in the high squadron and one from the low squadron, released before the bomb release line, and the remainder of the lead group bombed at 1454 hours from 25,000 feet on a magnetic heading of 327 degrees, with fair results. The low group bombed from 24,500 feet on a magnetic heading of 330 degrees, with unobserved results. The high group bombed at 1502 hours from 25,600 feet on a magnetic heading of 334 degrees, the results also being unobserved due to blowing smoke. Some hits were observed, although only two bombs hit the bridge, a few hitting the railroad yard, the rest being scattered all over the area.

"The CBW ahead of us lost one plane over the target due to a direct flak hit," reported TSgt John Pratt who was flying as an extra gunner to complete his tour of thirty two missions in a high squadron aircraft 44-8011 piloted by Lt Edward P Dudock. "He went down in a straight dive and burst into flames. At about 5,000 feet altitude, broke into pieces. - No chutes. After we left the target, two ships in a CBW behind us got into propwash and collided. One had its tail cut off, both going down, but I only saw one chute."

The return journey was as briefed, having made a left turn off the target, recrossing the English coast at 1604 hours, with the Low group at altitude 6,500 feet. The fighter escort for the entire mission, according to the Air Commander, was excellent, many various supporting fighters being noted. The high group was escorted by four flights of P-51s returning to base in England. The hot-camera ships, piloted by Lts Minor and William Johnstone (lead group), Lts Bert Strong and Lt Robert Hughes (high group) and Lts Kenneth Myrick and William Henderson (low group) all returned direct to base, with the remainder of the aircraft finally landing back at base about 1750 hours after a six hour mission, two hours of which had been over enemy territory and three on oxygen.

Lt Col Thacker suggested upon his return that an improvement for the mission would be that other Wings be more thoroughly briefed on what preceding Wings were doing. He felt that if the Wing which cut him out had stayed on his outside of his turn, the lead group would not have encountered any difficulties.

Friday 4th August

DATE: 4 August	384 MISSION #: 171	8AF MISSION #: 514	FLT TIME: 8.38
TARGET: Peenemunde, Germany			
Low Section 41 st "C"CBW			
Lt J E Maxey	44-6135 JD*J	Crew 55, D10, #2 high	

The 384th attempted a double-barrelled attack on the buzz bomb nuisance today, but only one effort ever materialised. A full wing of three groups were dispatched to attack an experimental station at Peenemunde, north of Berlin. The target was well bombed, with hits all over that station. Flak was described as intense and accurate, but no fighters were present.

Maj Gordon K Stallings was the briefed Air Commander of the 41st "C"CBW for the main raid of the day, with Lt Quentin Wilson as his pilot in the PFF aircraft #7699. Lt John Shelley was the high section leader piloted in 42-97960 by Lt James McCartney, and Lt James Hines flying in BIG DOG with Lt William Combs was the low section leader.

The take-off for the thirty nine aircraft began at 0910 hours, the three briefed spares 42-102566 piloted by Lt Donald Hulcher, SON'S O FUN piloted by Lt Frank Mead and 42-97320 piloted by Richard Groff, returning to base.

The assemblies of the Groups, Wing and Division were normal, with the high group assembly over the Base at 1005 hours, 5,000 feet. In fact Lt Hines reported that the low group assembly was very good and effected with about fifteen minutes to spare. Both the Wing and Division assemblies were completed as briefed: the Wing also over the base at 1015 hours and the Division over Louth at 1054 hours. The English Coast was departed over Maplethorpe at about 1110 hours altitude 5,400 feet.

Amongst the loading lists, but not on the briefing sheets, for the mission was a PFF ship #691, assigned to the 546th BG, piloted by Lt H K Rosser. Listed among the ten man crew, (of which only three were non-officers), was Col Kermit D Stevens as Observer, while on the roster of 547th BS personnel, flying in 42-97994, was Lt J W Reed and eight other crewmen. There were thirty nine aircraft briefed to take-off, and as there are forty one crews listed, it is possible that these two crews have not been included with the 384th BG statistics as they flew with another formation.

The route out was flown as briefed in good wing and group formations, crossing the enemy coast at 1327 hours near Kiel, altitude 19,600 feet. They encountered no enemy aircraft enroute to the target, although flak was encountered just north of Kiel, which was meagre but accurate.

The I.P. was reached at 1441 hours, altitude of the high section being 22,300 feet. The weather at the target was practically as briefed, 2/10th's to 3/10th's clouds, flak was intense and accurate, and the bombs were away from the high section following a nine minute bomb run at 1450 hours on a magnetic heading of 210 degrees from 22,500 feet, with good results.

The low section completed their bomb run in one minute less than the high section, their bombs appearing to drop right on target from 21,500 feet on a magnetic heading of 187 degrees. The lead section also completed a good bomb run.

The route back was flown as briefed, with reassembly after the target being normal. All cruise and descent speeds were S.O.P., and the formation departed the enemy coast over Schleswig-Holstein at 1552 hours, altitude 17,000 feet, before recrossing the English coast at Cromer after one and a half hours over the North Sea. They landed back at base from 1807 hours.

The fighter escort given to the high section was very close and effective, while Lt Hines described it as "Very good, they were with us all the way". His report went on "I suggest in twelve-ship groups there be six ships in the lead section, three in the high squadron and three in the low squadron. I believe it would be easier for everybody."

"They sent up Red (our co-pilot) with Lt Wilbur Soester in SKYLARK on the same type of mission that Bills went on yesterday", recalled Lt Vern Arnold, who was still waiting for his first operational mission. "But his luck wasn't so good, and he drew a long, tough one across the North Sea. Got back OK but they were pretty badly roughed up."

Maj Arthur E Bean was briefed to lead the afternoon mission, along with Lt Gordon Morris, three crews and aircraft being provided by each of the 545th, 546th, and 547th Bomb Squadrons, but there are no narratives for this mission.

Amongst the aircraft flying on this mission were the three ground spares of the morning mission. Having arrived at Crepieul in France, this formation found that the weather conditions were 10/10th's undercast, and so the aircraft returned after four hours from the one hundred and seventy two missions flown by the 384th BG with their bomb loads intact.

There was a sickening accident on the field tonight. One of the crews, who were unnamed, were flying 42-107224 SU*Q and 'slow timing' a new engine, but didn't get back before the evening fog settled in over the runway.

Lt Vern Arnold described the accident. "We were out at the dispersal area cleaning the guns in our ship in preparation for our first mission tomorrow and we could hear the poor devil crossing back and forth just above our heads, but he was unable to make out the runways in the soup. The tower was firing flares which were apparently going up through the fog alright and the pilot must have finally decided that he had figured out just where he was. We could hear the change in the sound of his engines as he started his let down and he turned on his landing lights just as he passed over our plane, but he still must not have been able to see, because he was coming in crossways over the runway.

"Before he discovered the trouble, they brushed the tops of the trees in the adjoining forest, lost control and fell in a mass of flames and popping ammunition. One of the men back at our barracks was near to the crash site and ran over to see if there was anything he could do to help. He came across one of the men who had been thrown clear of the ship and who's clothes were aflame. As he was desperately beating out the flames with his jacket, a sudden flare of light from the burning plane showed him that he had been trying to save a

headless corpse! He became violently sick and staggered away from the area. None of the crew survived more than a few hours.”

This aircraft had been operational since mid June 44, and there had been no reports of any turnbacks for mechanical reasons during that time. Her last recorded mission on 29th July had ended with Lt Harold Toler landing at Hethel. For the mechanics on the unit, there was much work to be done as there were seven aircraft from the two missions returning with minor damage, while a further seven aircraft returned from the Peenemunde mission with major damage.

Two pilots appeared on squadron loading lists for the only time today: Lt J W Reed on the 547th BS's and Lt H K Rosser on the 546th BS's list.

Saturday 5th August

DATE: 5 August	384 MISSION #: 173	8AF MISSION #: 519	FLT TIME: 7.17
TARGET: Langenhagen, Germany			
Lt J E Maxey	44-6135 JD*J	Crew 55, D10	

The group executed its second commendable operation within two days today, when excellent hits were made on an airfield at Langenhagen, four miles north of Hannover. Its buildings were unquestionably demolished as they were converted into a cauldron of smoke and fire by the time the bombers had made their turn away from the target. The flak was heavy and very accurate, many of our ships suffering heavy battle damage. Five of the group's enlisted men bailed out over enemy territory due to a misunderstanding of orders over the intercom.

Lt Col William E Buck led the 41st "B"CBW on the mission today, flying in PFF ship #699. Piloted by; Lt Omar F Kelsay. Maj Gerald Sammons led the high group, piloted by Lt Frank Allred in BIG DOG. The low group was led by Maj Arthur Bean, who was flying with Lt Gordon Morris in MARION from dispersal 16.

Thirty nine aircraft took-off, the spares of Lt Harry Rainey (Lead Group) in HELL'S MESSENGER, Lt Robert D Hughes (high group) in 42-37822, and Lt Ernest Hanlon (low group) in 42-38014, returning as briefed, each with their loads of ten 500 pound GP bombs.

Group, Wing and Division assemblies were again good and completed on time. The lead group assembled at 0905 hours at 6,000 feet over the base, with the Wing ten minutes later, also over the base, the high group joining on a line between Base and Kimbolton at 0930 hours. Division assembly was at Louth, 11,000 feet at 1011 hours. The high group was forced to deviate slightly from course due to the fact that the Division lead was not on time.

The route out was flown as briefed, although slightly to the north of course, departing the English coast at 1014 hours at Maplethorpe in Lincolnshire, crossing the enemy coast at 1214 hours, altitude 25,000 feet over Terschelling. Maj Bean reported, "After we had started on course we were cut out by another wing, and just before rejoining with the lead group we were cut out by another wing."

There were no enemy aircraft not flak engagements enroute to the target, the I.P. being reached at 1253 hours. However at 1230 hours over Garlstorf, the hydraulic motor of 546th BS's low group aircraft WHITE ANGEL, piloted by Lt Frank W Mead, burned out, causing intense smoke in the cockpit. The pilot instructed the engineer to learn the source of the smoke, and ordered the remainder of the crew to standby for possible bailing out. Due to a misunderstanding of instructions issued by someone, the radio operator Sgt Alexander J Vennell, top turret gunner SSgt Robert O Joyce, ball turret gunner Cpl John A Treat, tail gunner Cpl Vincent J Castiglione, and FG Sgt Harold L Woods, bailed out. The remaining four men, Lts Frank W Mead (pilot), Thomas C Daniel (co-pilot), Jerry R Bryson (Navigator) and SSgt Howard A Dillon (NG) remained on board, successfully completing the mission. Apparently it was one of the men who had bailed out who had caused this misunderstanding.

Also encountering problems during the run onto the target was TREMBLIN GREMLIN, piloted in the high group by F/O Arthur J Shwery. A shell exploded at the side of her nose, and Lt Marvin Fryden, the bombardier reported over the interphone that he had been hit, but that was all. The aircraft then continued on her run, bombing with the formation.

At the target, Col Buck found 1/10th's to 2/10th's cumulus fair weather with visibility about twenty miles. Flak here was intense and very accurate. Bombs were away from the lead group at 1301 hours from 25,000 feet on a magnetic heading of 255 degrees with good results, followed one minute later by the high group on a magnetic heading of 280 degrees from 25,500 feet. At the same time the low group released their bombs from 24,000 feet on a magnetic heading of 255 degrees, again with good results. This group also included WHITE ANGEL which attacked the target, with just the four remaining crewmen on board.

It was only after 'bombs away' that the crew on the TREMBLIN GREMLIN discovered just how badly Lt Fryden had been injured. He had been hit in the chest, but his will power had helped him to carry on with the job and he had been able to complete the bombing before collapsing.

The lead group made a right turn off the target, and the route back was slower than briefed in order to permit stragglers to remain in formation. The enemy coast was departed over Zandvoort at 1402 hours, recrossing the English coast at 1438 hours at Lowestoft. Col Buck landed back at base at 1615 hours, his aircraft having some one hundred flak holes to testify to the intensity of the anti-aircraft defences.

TREMBLIN GREMLIN meanwhile, despite serious damage, managed to return to base safely. Her right inboard engine had been hit, the radio compartment was riddled with holes and the equipment destroyed, the trim tabs were in shreds, the hydraulic brake system was non-existent and part of the oxygen system was gone. The mechanics counted one hundred and six flak holes! F/O Shwery had been cut above one eye and the co-pilot Lt John Buslee (a newly arrived 544th BS pilot) handled the controls for most of the return journey. In addition to the serious injury to Lt Fryden and the pilot, three other crewmen were injured, but none seriously.

A total of thirty aircraft returned with battle damage, sixteen of them classed as major damage. Thanks to the fine efforts of the mechanics, within the next thirty six hours there were fifty aircraft serviceable of the sixty two aircraft allocated to the Unit at this time.

The fighter escort was excellent and Col Buck reported that the route both in and out were very good from a flak standpoint. Maj Sammons reported, "Fighter escort was close cover and very effective. Several fighters were noticed at low altitude, apparently doing ground strafing. The 41st "A"CBW was apparently early and caused our low section to be forced out of Wing formation on two occasions."

Three pilots on the unit had cause to celebrate returning to base. Lt Jesse E Maxey from the 545th BS arrived in April as a co-pilot with Lt Jack Liebert. He had completed his tour. On the 544th BS, two pilots were also flying their last missions. Lt Paul W Thompson had arrived as co-pilot to Lt Richard Maggart only eighty eight days ago, since then he had

flown thirty five missions. The same number of missions in a similar period had been flown by Lt Bert F Strong.

Lt Vern Arnold was also a very relieved man at the end of the day. He had finally flown on his first mission. "Here it is at last! After over two years of training, we are actually in it! I must confess that it was hard to hear the briefing officer's description of our mission above the pounding pulse in my ears! As the details of the day's plan unfolded, the realisation became all too clear that this trip was no simulated attack on some sleepy Texas town. We were shown 'flak' maps on which were spotted every permanent anti-aircraft gun emplacement in Germany. A route to our target was threaded down the narrow corridors between the areas protected by these installations. This is the real McCoy! As soon as briefing was over, we grabbed our 'chutes, oxygen masks and flying clothes and were whisked out to our planes by truck. We nervously checked our ship LADY MARGARET from nose to tail—bombs O.K. (my job), guns O.K., oxygen O.K., all control lines free --- everything was tip top. Then we climbed into our positions to await the 'start engines' flares. Ages later (about five minutes, to be exact), off went the green flares. One by one engines cough into life and thirty six sleek forms worm their way out onto the taxi strip—each ship is armed with ten calibre 50 machine guns and carrying two and a half tons of bombs (ten 500 pound G.P.s). Then comes the bright glow of the yellow 'take-off' flares and one by one each ship roars down the runway and reluctantly lifts its ponderous weight into the air. Curiously, as we leave the ground, our nervous tensions disappear. Self-confidence returns with a rush as we busy ourselves with the routines made familiar with endless hours of practice. Then comes the marvel of a thousand planes assembling, each on a pre-arranged tick of a second, into a formidable, hundred mile long procession.

"First individual planes uniting into their own squadrons of twelve each, then three of these squadrons uniting to form a thirty six strong unit group, and then the miracle of each group falling into it's proper place in the bomber stream. The patchwork quilt of England slides slowly underneath us and we nose out across the Channel. Only a few minutes of steady climbing and we are crossing the Dutch coast line. Across the Zuider Zee and we are in Nazi Germany. Someone yells 'Fighters at six o'clock', and nervous fingers train their guns on the tiny specks approaching from the rear, but as they move up to us we can make out the beautiful square lines of our own P-51s! It's our fighter escort joining us. Boy do they look wonderful. They are cocky little ships that slip past our lumbering bombers as though we were just so many floating clouds.

"The target is an airfield at Langenhagen on the edge of Hannover and as we turn on the bomb run, we can see the groups ahead of us beginning to catch a little flak. The first bunch is almost to the target now and they are really opening up on them. Holy smoke! Are we going through that too? We can hardly see the ships now; they are almost engulfed in the sinister, black puffs of the ack-ack. Suddenly our own ship is in it! The black puffs are continually closer and thicker - one burst just off our wing, and for a fleeting second there is a glimpse of its ugly red heart and then the sickening KAWHOOMP of the concussion shakes the plane. An almost irresistible wave of fear and panic tears at our self control and we frantically keep going over and over in our minds the things we must do in the next few minutes if the mission is to be a success. The stuff is bursting continuously now and the plane is being tossed around like a cork on a stormy sea. We can even hear the chunks ripping through the aluminium skin.

“Then, there is the signal and the switch is thrown and our bombs are away. We can feel the ship jump as we belch our two and a half ton load, the bomb bay doors come closed and the formation goes into a diving turn that takes us out of the nightmare. A quick check over the interphone discloses that no one is hurt, but the pilots are fighting to hold our position in the formation, in spite of the fact that we lost one engine to one of those near-misses. The oil is pouring out of it, blackening the wing and congealing in the severe cold of the extreme altitude. A few of the knots in our stomach smooth out as the smoking target fades from view. We are in a slight glide for that extra speed without consumption of fuel and in no time we can see the lines of the channel coast ahead. Even though all hands are still scanning the skies for 109s or Focke-Wulfs, the tension is almost completely gone.

“Now we are dropping fast and soon take off our oxygen masks and everyone is laughing and joking over the interphone. Man, how wonderful that cigarette tastes after several hours of breathing in the clammy wet oxygen mask. Only minutes more and we sweep over the chalk cliffs of England’s south coast. Our course takes us just west of the barrage balloon areas surrounding London and over the great rambling castle at Windsor. Then we are at our home field and landing. We taxi over to our parking area and scramble out to go over our ship and count the flak holes. The number is a little sobering, almost incredible that none of us were hurt. The poor ground crews were pretty unhappy with the hours and hours of work that will be required to put the old girl back in shape. The engine was completely gone and will have to be replaced. As soon as our guns are cleaned and oiled, a truck picks us up and runs us back to the interrogation room where we get a wonderful cup of hot coffee, a shot of whiskey and answer the questions of the interrogation officers. In the next room I get a peek at the strike photos and boy, did we plaster that airfield. It’s a wonderful feeling to know that we were really on the ball and knocked out our target. Our field didn’t lose any ships, but they are all so badly shot up that we are ‘stood down’ tomorrow to allow the ground crews to patch them up. I’ll bet the Nazi gunners would feel better if they knew how much damage they had inflicted.

“We did however lose five men who jumped over Germany when their ship caught fire. The rest of the crew elected to stay with the ship and try to put the fire out. They finally managed to get it under control and limped home O.K. Man, Oh man, am I going to sleep tonight!”

Authors Note: The differences in the Middle Initial of the pilot were due to discrepancies in the typing on the original Loading Lists.

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