

THE HAMM MASSACRE

Written by Dan F. Bauer

Once they started operations, the Germans could not stop the Flying Fortresses of the 8th Air Force. However, that did not mean they couldn't suffer horrifying losses.

On 4 March 1943, 71 Boeing B-17 Flying Fortresses from four bomb groups took off into a gray dawn to attempt the first deep penetration attack by the Eighth Air Force against targets in Germany. The Fortress crews had been briefed to bomb the Hamm marshaling yards. The yards were located just outside of the Ruhr Valley and 160 miles inside the outer ring of German defenses.

Heavy overcast and cloud formations forced two of the groups to turn south and bomb Rotterdam, a last resort target. The third group returned to its base with bomb loads intact.

Above the "overcast," 16 B-17Fs of the 91st Bomb Group flew alone to the target overcoming heavy flak and the attacks of an estimated 150 German fighters. Smoke partially obscured the target, but the objective was bombed in accordance with the briefed instructions.

Because of the determination and valor in attacking alone such a heavily defended target the 91st Bomb Group was awarded the first Presidential Citation to be given to a unit belonging to the Eighth Air Force.

Some months later, *Target Germany*, an official publication of the Eighth Air Force, stated that the Hamm mission, flown without fighter escort or supporting fire from other bomb groups, had convinced doubting officials in Washington DC. The prior belief had been that in a theater as strongly defended as the skies of Germany and in a climate where weather conditions provided so many obstacles, high altitude precision daylight bombing was unsound and would lead to large losses of air crews and planes. The successful bombing of Hamm gave a much-needed boost in morale to the promoters of the daylight bombing doctrine. However, the strike against Hamm was not achieved without loss. Four Flying Fortresses failed to return and practically all the other B-17s making the attack suffered major damage. No mission of the Eighth Air Force, escorted or not, was ever beaten back by German flak or fighters. The attack against Hamm by the 91st Bomb Group is a part of that proud tradition. What follows is the story of the fateful and bloody mission that has become known among the members of the 91st as simply "The Hamm Massacre."

At 3:45 am on 4 March 1943, Captain George Birdsong was awakened by Corporal Street. Street informed Birdsong that briefing would begin at 5:00am. Rubbing his eyes which Corporal Street's flashlight had temporarily blinded. Birdsong blinked, Birdsong slowly struggled out of the warm bed to face the cold English morning. Birdsong stumbled over to the wash basin, turned on a small light, and doused his face with cold water. The shock of the cold water was just what Birdsong needed to get going. Gathering his clothes and combat gear together he dressed in cold silence.

Birdsong, a veteran pilot, attached a sheathed hunting knife just above his left ankle. He then strapped a holstered Colt .45 automatic pistol under his left arm. Making sure he had no personal articles in his pocket, Birdsong collected two plain handkerchiefs, an extra clip of ammunition, and checked to see if his dog tags were in place around his neck. Now completely dressed Birdsong left quietly into the black night.

Bob Abb, a bombardier, was waiting for birdsong outside the front door. Using a diffused lens flashlight to check for landmarks and obstacles Abb and Birdsong wended their way along the blacked-out route, crossing the soccer field in front of the officers' mess.

After finishing breakfast Birdsong hurried over to the group briefing room to get a report over to the group's status and to check on the crew. Gene Rimmell, Birdsong's flight engineer, said the *Delta Rebel II* was ready to go, however, the radio operator, B.Z. Byrd, was down with the flu and wouldn't make the mission. Birdsong cursed softly under his breath, he hated crew substitutions.

Just before role call, the assistant operations officer approached Birdsong with two strangers in town. Birdsong was informed that his crew has been selected to give them newcomer "rides." The two men were from one of the recently arrived bomb groups and would take the place of the regular copilot, G. Joseph Reynolds, and the bombardier, Lt. Robert Abb.

The two-crew substitutions and the sickness of radio operator Byrd made Birdsong uneasy. Bomber crew integrity was essential, to be 100 percent combat ready, and any unnecessary crew substitution for experienced members was like playing Russian roulette.

The new copilot informed Birdsong that he was a first pilot, and that how and his bombardier were fully trained and represented one of the best crews in their group. The copilot asked Birdsong how much time he had in B-17s and was impressed when Birdsong answered "twelve combat trips."

The conversation between Birdsong and his replacement copilot ended as the briefing began. There were loud gasps from the assembled crews when the target map to unveiled. The string led across the map to a target deep inside Germany, a city called Hamm.

Hamm was adjacent to the Ruhr Valley, vast steel and arms producing industrial area, which hosted the most flak batteries in Germany. The railroad marshaling yards at Hamm was large and important as they carried eastbound traffic from Ruhr. Yard capacity was 10,000 cars in 24 hours as compared to a 3000 car capacity of the medium size marshaling yards.

As Birdsong looked at the wall map he recalled the lines of a RAF song he has heard recently, " You can send me twice a day, to the Pas de Calais, but don't send me to the Ruhr, send me to Paris or a target in France. Any old place where I might have a chance..." "Today," thought Birdsong, "we are going to see why those lyrics were written."

"Sunshine" Atwell the 91st Group's weather officer, told the men that the weather would be passable for takeoff and assembly, but deteriorating over the English Channel, once across the Dutch coast the weather should improve. Target visibility should be excellent, briefed Atwell, as a large high-pressure center was over mid-Germany.

The intelligence officer briefed the men on what opposition they could expect. The aircrews heard a grim briefing indicating large concentrations of flak and fighters. Opposition would heavy; the Germans could be expected to react violently to any bomber coming over to Reich. When the briefing officer warned that over 200 enemy fighters could be encountered a sobering silence settled over the room.

There was never any attempt to belittle the adversary, or to pretend that the Germans were not good. The pilots and aircrews knew that they would face resourceful, determined, courageous Germans flying superb heavily armed fighters.

On one occasion a misguided company back in America had put out an advertisement showing an insane-looking bomber pilot grinning cheerfully and demanding, "Who's afraid of the new Focke-Wulf?" A member of the 91st had pinned the advertisement on the group bulletin board with the laconic note underneath. "Sign here," the note said. Every combat officer in the Group signed; including the Group Commander, Colonel Stanley T. Wray.

After the briefing Birdsong took a jeep ride with the replacement copilot to the off base revetment area where the squadron aircraft were parked. Birdsong and the copilot got off the jeep when it reached the *Delta Rebel II*.

Soon the assistant ops officer jeeped by with a substitute radio operator and told Birdsong there was going to be a ground spare aircraft available. The spare B-17 was "Pappy" Rand's new *Stormy Weather* would be parked next to the control tower if needed.

Finally the "Start Engines" signal was received and the big, heavily loaded B-17s began to maneuver to the takeoff position, the morning air throbbing with the sound of the powerful Wright Cyclone engines.

Soon after takeoff the *Delta Rebel II* had a power failure in the number three engines. With a feathered engine Birdsong knew the *Rebel* would be unable to keep up with the group. He decided to land and transfer to the spare B-17 *Stormy Weather*.

Upon landing the ground crew was waiting, and helped the crew of the *Delta Rebel II* transfer gear and ammunition over to the spare plane. Soon *Stormy Weather* was airborne and flying at top speed to overtake the rest of the 91st Bomb Group.

The 91st was leading the bomber formation, with the other three groups, the 303rd, 304th and the 306th following behind. Birdsong spotted the rear group and using maximum power moved his new B-17 from group to group, and eventually fell into a "Tail-end Charlie" position with the 91st. Two of the original planes, which began the mission with the 91st, had aborted and Birdsong counted 16 planes, including *Stormy Weather* in the formation.

Birdsong could have flown back to the field after losing the engine in the *Delta Rebel II* and sat out the Hamm mission but it was typical of him to transfer to another plane and continue on.

Anybody with wings on his chest who shied away from flying sorties, misrepresented, and was a disgrace to the professional corps.

Hell, we were all scared, but pride, peer pressure, and maybe a little patriotism, kept the "regulars" going. Some figured they owed the government something for making it possible to get those wings and bars.

During the mission to Hamm *Stormy Weather* would run a gauntlet of fighters and flak. That the plane

and crew would survive the mission would be due to the teamwork, experience, luck and the leadership and flying skills of George Birdsong.

Bob Abb, who flew many missions with Birdsong while serving as the bombardier of the *Delta Rebel II* admired and respected his first pilot.

To describe George Birdsong is difficult. George was a typical of Mississippi. He had a drawl that made Texans think he was a foreigner. His home was in Clarksdale, Mississippi, and he never let anyone forget it. His build was that of a halfback on a varsity ball team. His disposition was that of a St. Bernard: cool, wonderful, calm and happy. He was always happy and easy going. Once on a combat zone, he became methodical to perfection.

He was an excellent formation flier even though the *Rebel* was not one of the fastest planes in our squadron.

George also excelled at “fire control”—he was an excellent spotter for incoming fighters and called them in nearly as often as the top turret or bombardier. He did his job superior to most and instilled confidence on the crew that was unbelievable. We all believed that we had a magic touch on that crew; that if only one plane ever came back, it would be ours. For fun and games, George was first in line for the railroad station to London when time was available—then we all went first class by taking suites at the Savoy Hotel in London; ordering Mum's '29 Champagne in magnums and proceeding to have one whale of a time. He took his fun as he took his flying-- he gave it everything!

George came as close to being “fearless” as it was possible to in combat strain of those days. He imparted it to his crew and this pulled us out of many a tight spot. Getting this crew to abort for mechanical reasons was difficult. They took chances with badly operating engines on several occasions to be able to stay in the fray but some of George’s skill invasive action made up for any mechanical shortcomings we may have had.

Leading the 91st Bomb Group to war was a 22-year-old squadron commander named Paul Fishburne. Fishburne grew up in Montgomery, Alabama, and acquired the flying bug in life:

Maxwell Field was in Montgomery. I knew when I was 13 or 14 what I wanted to do—I used to watch Captain Claire Chennault and his flying Trapeze practice in their Boeing P-12s at Maxwell.

I tried to get to West Point or Annapolis but my old man voted the wrong way in a local election so I didn’t get the chance.

I couldn’t get to the Academy so I waited tables in the boarding house in the summers and saved my money. I got through two years at Auburn and then applied for both the Army and Navy Flying Schools. The Army came through first and I graduated from flight school on 29 May 1941.

I originally checked out in a B-18 Bolo, but when the war broke out we got checked out very quickly in B-17s.

Fishburne was in the right seat of a B-17 named *Chief’s Fly*. He recalls his role as leader of the mission: At that time Squadron or Group Commanders didn’t have their own plane—they always took a lead crew and ran things from there.

I was in the copilot’s seat. Mine was one of trying to control things, as well as driving the airplane.

As the B-17s climbed the weather began to deteriorate. “We climbed through a whole bunch of

overcast,” recalled Fishburne. William Beasley flying the B-17 *Motise* felt the weather was terrible:

At altitude we got into a mist—it was not thick enough for instrument conditions but you couldn’t see more than a quarter of a mile. We could see our own group all right and we continued on our course.

As the 91st broke out of the mist at 22,000 feet they found they were crossing the German border. None of the other three groups were in sight. “We were supposed to stay roughly in contact,” remembered Fishburne, “but we got separated in the weather and we had radio silence and I didn’t know what the other three groups were doing.”

Two of the other groups discouraged by the soupy weather, had bombed the shipyards at Rotterdam, and one group returned to base with their bomb loads.

As the 91st crossed the German border, Fishburne debated what to do. He had no idea of what had happened to the other three groups. All he could see were the 16 B-17s of the 91st Bomb group heading unsupported into German territory.

Fishburne knew he had to make a decision to continue toward the target or not:

Where in the hell were the other groups? Should we go on? The weather was getting better now. I asked tail gunner how many ships we had. “ Sixteen, sir.” Sixteen Forts—against best defenses Germany had to offer. Should I risk those 160 boys’ lives to bomb Hamm? It was an important target, but the other groups had apparently gone to attack an alternate. Nothing would be said if I turned back. We went on.

The 91st continued on alone toward the target. The German fighter controllers apparently were confused by the various bomber trails for the first German fighter planes didn’t appear until the B-17s were only a half hour from the objective.

Neither the appearance of the *Luftwaffe*, nor a heavy flak barrage disrupted an excellent bomb run that planted the bombs of the 91st right on the rail yards. Once the bombers turned for home the German defense system was well alerted and fighter opposition became intense.

William Beasley flying *Motise* remembers the heavy fighter opposition as the bombers left Hamm behind:

Apparently we had gotten into the jet stream and if I remember correctly we were making a ground speed of about 90-mph fighting against the jet stream.

There was a time when my copilot was flying when I looked from my left on around to the right and was just counting fighter aircraft in groups of five or six and I counted in the neighborhood of 65 fighters.

We had night fighters on us and every other kind of fighter the Germans had. I can remember a group of JU-88s pulling up ahead and turning into us head in and suddenly we could see streamers coming toward us apparently from some kind of rocket but we avoid them through evasive action.

I lost two engines, which I assumed were knocked out by the fighter attacks, but when I got back I found out that both my inboard engines had been hit by .50 caliber shells from the tail gunner of the lead ship. We had been bobbing up and down through his gunfire.

For over an hour as they withdrew from the target the B-17s of the 91st Group were subjected to relentless German fighter attacks pressed home with great daring. “The German fighters came in closer than I had ever seen ‘em in the movies,” observed Sergeant Arthur Cressman, a gunner. “I could almost

have shaken hands with one of those fellows.” Luckily the attacks were uncoordinated. Had the Germans coordinated their attacks, as they learned to do later in the war, it is likely that all 16 of the B-17s who made the attack on Hamm would have been shot down.

Captain “Tex” McCrary was on board the B-17 *Invasion II*. McCrary’s reason for being there was newsreel photography. His mission was to get good pictures of German fighter attacks.

McCrary was standing quietly in the radio hatch when suddenly:

The radio gunner landed against my back, knocking me through the passageway, down onto the curve top of the revolving ball turret. My foot caught in the turret gears. A little panicky, I tried to yank it loose. But looking at my hands, I saw blood washing down the rubber-matted floor and curling over my fingers.

I had never seen so much blood before. I didn’t know where it could have come from. It was strangely impersonal—just so much red paint.

And then I looked beyond my hands slowly. Crumpled on the floor was the radio gunner. The strong-legged boy who had just snapped on my oxygen mask for me not ten seconds ago. I saw his face; it was twisted with pain. The red that was sogging my gloves and flying boots was bubbling out of a wound in his back. A slug had crashed down through the bomb bays and struck him squarely.

After the incident McCrary would have little time for photography. He would spend the rest of his time manning the wounded operator’s machine gun. McCrary would survive Hamm mission and co-author with David Sherman, a book dealing with the early days of the Eighth Air Force entitled, *First of Many*.

Stormy Weather, piloted by Birdsong, had taken hits from 20mm shells just before reaching the initial point of the bomb run. Birdsong had to feather his number three props. “The fighters were attacking with determination loading on desperation,” recalled Birdsong. “We had never been under such a siege. Some of the fighters seemed like mad dogs as they recklessly hurtled themselves at our formation. We took some flak fragments on the left side by the waist gunner.”

Birdsong had to take positive action on two occasions to avoid being rammed by German fighters. It also became difficult to maintain close formation. We took some flak fragments on the left side by the waist gunner.”

Birdsong had to take positive action on two occasions to avoid being rammed by German fighters. It also became difficult to maintain closer formation because of the evasive action being taken by the individual B-17s. The crews seemed to realize that the chance of returning home depended on using every trick possible.

Suddenly Birdsong felt the plane shudder. “We were hit hard.” A cannon shell fired from an FW-190, head on, pilot’s side. Birdsong felt a sharp pain in his face and left eye:

A quick glance over at the copilot, the left side of his face was laid open like it had been hit with an axe. I could see his skull. Never realized it was so white. The blood gushed spurting all over. Number two engines were fast losing power and I tried to feather it, but no luck. Oil was spewing over the wing. Frantic call from the bombardier saying the navigator had a head wound on the inside of the thigh.

I realized I could not see out of my left eye. Fragments in my face and oxygen mask. Copilot was thrashing with arms and legs, and slipped from his seat belt down out of his seat, jamming control column and rudder pedals. The copilot passed out and was a limp rag on the control column. Rimmell

(flight engineer) came to the rescue, and managed to pull him free, and the RO helped get him back to the radio room.

Looking out the windshield, Birdsong found they were 400 yards behind the group. He put the two good engines on maximum power but still continued to drop back. Remmell returned and tied a compress bandage on Birdsong's eye. Though seriously wounded Birdsong would do his best to bring *Stormy Weather* home.

Up ahead Birdsong noticed two other straggling B-17s. "I wagged my wings for them to close in. They did, and we had ourselves a three-ship formation for mutual support. It was all we had, for the group was just tiny specks in front."

The B-17 on Birdsong's right was *Stupn Takit* piloted by "Charlie" McCarthy and on the left was *Hell's Angels* piloted by "Happy" Felton of the 322nd Squadron. Both planes were shot up with engines out.

Suddenly from McCarthy's 3 o'clock position an FW-190 came boring in, machine guns and cannon blazing. McCarthy's B-17 took hits all over and disappeared in one giant ball of fire.

At almost the same instant Felton's B-17 took hits from a Me-110. Birdsong watched helplessly as "he just pulled right up and rolled right over, almost on top of us and went straight down, spinning slowly."

Birdsong took a quick appraisal of the nasty situation and figured there were at least 20 fighters, getting read to attack. Realizing the odds were hopeless where they were Birdsong called the crew and said, "Hold on everybody we're going for the deck!"

Stormy Weather was about 20,000-feet when Birdsong began to dive. He watched as the airspeed indicator went over 310mph, the maximum speed the B-17 was supposed to be flown, finally at 350mph, Birdsong eased back on the stick and leveled off a few feet above the ground.

By flying at a low level the fighters were now hampered in their attacks. They could not roll in and dive away. The tail gunner reported to Birdsong that most of the fighters had followed the wild dive to the deck.

With only two good engines the B-17s's airspeed had dwindled to 115mph. Fighting to survive Birdsong began to use desperation tactics. When the German fighters started any attacks from the ten o'clock sector, "I would turn directly into them, doing my damndest to ram their asses. On other attacks, I'd try to do something else unpredictable. Now they were the ones to blink, duck and dodge."

Stormy Weather took more hits in the next 20 minutes but nothing vital. As the North Sea came into view, there was just one German plane left flying parallel to Birdsong on the right, just out of gun range. The Me-110 skidded closer. Birdsong could see the pilot, as he pulled forward, "and he carefully gave us a good once over. Then he slowly wagged his wings, gave us a salute, and channeled to the right back to land."

Finally alone, Birdsong dropped the B-17 down to just over the green waves of the North Sea and pointed the nose of the plane for home.

As *Stormy Weather* skimmed over the waves the radio operator who had been attending to the wounded copilot came back on the intercom and asked Birdsong what he wanted to do about the bombs?

"Bombs? What Bombs?" thought Birdsong. It had been standard operating procedure for B. Z. Byrd, the radio operator, to notify the crew when the bombs left the bomb bay, but B.Z. was back in Bassingbourn with the flu. "Had the bombardier actuated the manual release, standard operating procedure after electrical release?"

After he came up to the cockpit the bombardier notified Birdsong he had forgotten to actuate the manual release. "This was his first mission," recalled Birdsong, "and he was green as grass. I didn't blame him as much as the phony crew substitution system."

Birdsong and his crew now found themselves in, to say the least, an interesting position. Only two of *Stormy Weather's* were running, and they had been going full speed for over an hour. The bombs they were carrying were RDX bombs, which were very sensitive. You had to climb to at least 4500 feet to drop them to be sure the plane wouldn't receive structural damage in case the bombs exploded. Standard bombs could be salvaged at a much lower altitude with little risk of detonation.

The control tower at Bassingbourn was expecting Birdsong as he neared the field. Setting up a straight approach Birdsong dropped the landing gear and began letting down for the landing:

We floated a bit down the runway before I could get *Stormy* to accept the ground, and got on the brakes lightly to get a feel for steering control. There was no feel! Pumped brakes, but both toe pedals, completely to the floor, meant no pressure; the main brakes were out!

Tried emergency brakes but that system was also inoperative...(I had to) try a ground loop before we got off the end of the pavement.

Hang on! The end of the runway passed beneath us, and we cut through the perimeter fencing, rolled barb wires in large coils like it was a plate of spaghetti. We were really moving! Rolled across the main road, which bordered the station, bounced through a large ditch, and just squeezed through two telephone poles. Was careening across a Brussels sprout field when I saw a large haystack in front. Had to ground loop it now! We made the 180-degree turn in just a few seconds, and I quickly shut down both engines.

As *Stormy Weather* ground looped to a halt amid Brussels sprouts the number three engine blazed up as the air pressure had been holding the fire down. As the crew was evacuating the wounded the fire trucks came racing up and the fire-crews began spraying volumes of foamite on the flames.

Later Birdsong looked over the damaged B-17. He found over 20 gaping holes made by the enemy cannon shells and hundreds of smaller holes made by shrapnel and bullets. "What an airplane!" he thought.

Invasion II was photographer Tex McCrary aboard had landed earlier. "The medics raced out to our bomber from the ambulance," wrote McCrary. "Men swarmed inside. Our gunner was stretched out through the side entry, as gently as men who admire courage can lift a mortally wounded boy. He died a few minutes later. He never had a chance. His spine was severed."

Birdsong was rushed to the hospital. His eye was saved and he went on to finish his tour of 25 missions. He would fly combat missions again in Vietnam, logging 212 primarily in the A-1 Skyraider, a fighter-bomber used mostly for close air support.

After the mission the gunners of the 91st would claim they destroyed 13 German fighters but the cost would be high with four bombers lost, one damaged beyond repair and some damage to all the rest. There were 33 men reported missing, one dead and five seriously wounded.

Although other missions and dangers would soon follow, the men of the 91st would never forget their first foray to the Ruhr. "A bunch of us used to kid each other," remembered Gene Rimmell, the flight engineer of *Stormy Weather*, "when we were going to breakfast early in the morning before a mission. We used to say, "would you like some *Hamm* for breakfast?" And, of course, the answer was definitely a big Hell No!"

There was talk of court-martialing Paul Fishburne because he had led the 91st alone to Hamm. “He was literally demoted after the mission,” remembered Bill Beasley. Once the strike photos came back, however, talk of a court-martial for Fishburne ended. “My ass was saved by a news photographer aiming his cameras down through the bomb bays” claimed Fishburne. “We did lose all our photo ships and we couldn’t prove anything except for this newsreel guy. He, fortunately, got the pictures which probably save me.”

In April 1943, Paul Fishburne received the Distinguished Flying Cross for his leadership on the Hamm mission. The award was given to him by none other than the “Father of the RAF”—Lord Trenchard.

The 91st would receive the Presidential Unit Citation for its courage in flying unescorted to Hamm. But the award was not made until 1947, reflecting perhaps command fears that if the heroics of such an action were overemphasized other formations of inadequate strength might attack rashly with disastrous results.

In May 1987, George Birdsong returned in the wartime home of the 91st Bomb Group, Air Station 121, Bassingbourn, England. He journeyed down to the end of a long runway with vivid memories of a day long ago, By the end of the field where *Stormy Weather* had come to a stop Birdsong stood and gave a quiet inward chuckle, “funny to see it now,” he thought, “the damn Brussels sprout are still here.”

Sheet No. 12 Entry 323rd Bombardment Sqd. Station 121

Month of March, 1943. Prepared by Capt. Alexander H. Bright_

Day	Events
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March 4 Four ships of this squadron, piloted by Capt. Clancy, Capt. McCarty, Lt. Giaouque, and Lt. Birdsong participated in bombing against enemy marshalling yards at Hamm, Germany. AA fire heavy. Sixty-five enemy fighters encountered. After a furious battle we shot down four of them. Lt. Fisher accounted for a ME 109. T/Sgt. Hemmell for a ME 110, and S/Sgts., Streets and Perri shot down one FW 190 each. Our ship No. 549 and entire crew missing believed shot down by enemy fighters. The following personnel is missing; Pilot, Capt. McCarty, Co-pilot, Lt. Hill; Nav., Lt. B. M. Bennett, Bombardier, Lt. Bell, engineer, T/Sgt. McCormick; Assistant Engineer, Sgt. Cardin, Radio OP., T/Sgt. Dunnivant, Assistant Radio Op., S/Sgt. Eagle, Tail Gunner, S/Sgt. Trent, Corrigan who was flying with the 324t squadron that day was missing in action. Ship No. 077 seriously damaged. Lt. Wiley Seriously wounded. Lt. Birdsong, Lt. Miller, S/Sgt. Kusowski and T/Sgt. Corl were also wounded. The 91st group was the only group over the target and the bombing was perfect.

March 6 Three ships of this squadron, piloted by Capt. Dwyer, Capt. Clandy, and Lt. Giaouque, took part in bombing mission against enemy's Marine Naval Power Plant at Lorient, France. AA fire was very light. Ten enemy fighters encountered but none were shot down. All our ships returned safely. Bombing results were excellent.

T/Sgt. Corl and S/Sgt. Kusowski were awarded the Purple Heart.

March 7 A full crew was assigned to this squadron. They were Lt. Lamberson, Lt. Nicholls, Lt. Sternglanz, Lt. Stark, T/Sgt., Bagwell and Moonsey, Corp. Reynolds and Pvt. Brummel.

Ship No 29475 was assigned to this squadron.

March 8 Three ships of this squadron, piloted by Capt. Dwyer, Capt. Clancy, and Lt. Giaouque, took part in bombing mission against enemy marshalling yards with good results. AA fire was light. Twenty-five enemy fighters were engaged, one of which was shot down and another probably shot down, Sgt. was accredited with on FW 190. All our ships returned safely. Bombing results were excellent.

March 9 Ship No. 5787 was assigned to this squadron.

March 10 Lt. Hammond assigned to this squadron as a co-pilot.

Here is the loading list for No. 225 for the Hamm mission, 4 March 1943.

P 1st Lt. George P. Birdsong, Jr.

CP 1st Eugene M. Wiley

N 1st Lt. Ernest Miller, Jr.

B 1st Lt. Julian R. Thornton, Jr.

E/TT T/Sgt. Eugene J. Remmell

BT S/Sgt. Steve Perri

WG T/Sgt. Harry Kulchesky

RO S/Sgt. James B. Carter, Jr.

TG S/Sgt. Henry A. Carter, Jr.

WG S/Sgt. Thaddeus F. Kusowski

From the above "Position" list and the "Duty" list, appears that Kulchesky was your RO, but was flying as a waist gunner that day (his rank and duty listing as R, indicate he was a RO)

The 323rd daily log listed the following crewmen on No. 225 as wounded:

Wiley, "seriously"

Birdsong

Miller

Kusowski

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