

# MISSIONS WITH CHARLIE

Written by Charles Hudson

My 37 Missions By Charles Hudson

Mission # 1, Nantes, France September 23, 1943

It all started one morning in the wee hours, when we were pulled out of bed, and headed for an early morning briefing. Ordinarily, being my first mission, I should have been all excited, and in the full pitch of things, but due to aborts and scrubbed missions, this was my tenth briefing. By this time, I had begun to feel like an old timer on the base, as though I actually had those ten sorties under my belt.

As the briefing started, we all sat around the room, sleepy eyed at first and listened to the various section heads give us the information from their various departments. The target and the opposition was explained by Major Alford and the intelligence officer and the station time was given. The group navigator gave the time, everyone synchronized their watches and the briefing was over. The chaplain was hearing confession and I retired to his humble gathering before leaving the building.

The target was a large supply ship for the enemy "U" Boats and it was in port for reloading at Nantes on the western shores of France. Our rendezvous was fairly successful, and our formation was soon assembled, so we set out across the channel and were soon in enemy territory.

Deeper and deeper our penetration went and still I had seen no flak or fighters. Having lived among all the experienced combat men and heard their descriptions of combat, I was beginning to be a little doubtful, but not for long. The target was coming into sight, and I still had yet to see my first burst of flak, and my first enemy fighter. At seems as though I had been leaning out the front of the nose, eagerly seeking my first look at flak. It happened all at once, and minutes later I still hadn't seen the flak because the first burst broke just above the nose of our ship, breaking glass out of the nose, and top windows. When the sound of breaking glass was over I raised my face.

Then I began to see fighters, both friendly and enemy. The flak was terrific; they had our exact altitude and airspeed, for the burst were precise. Upon reaching home, I heard many of the veterans declare that, the best of all times. I saw an enemy fighter go down in flames and several forts with engines smoking, but none of the formations seemed to be lagging. From the ground we could see flashes of fire in fours; that is, four gun batteries of anti-aircraft fire. Perhaps a minute of less after the flashes, four black puffs of smoke would appear in front of the formation, or slightly to one side. I watch the lead ship, and when his bombs went away I hit the toggle switch and jumped back to the front gun just in time to fire about thirty rounds into a Folke-Wolfe that appeared off the horizon.

Something went wrong in the lead ship because instead of turning east, and returning home over France, we turned west and went out to sea. After a short while we lost the fighters, both friendly and enemy and continued our journey out into the Atlantic, what seemed to be at least a hundred miles. We then turned and started a course that would take us back up the channel and into England. We had plenty of stragglers at this point and the formation was well scattered.

Coming into the Channel, a squadron of Folke-Wolfes came out from the west and jumped the group ahead of us. As far as I could see they did no harm but one of them went into the sea in flames.

We continued on home, sweating out gas as we reached England and our hydraulics were shot out. Lt. Jewett, the pilot, was contemplating just how to land, with the wheels up or down, as we had no brakes. He though a bell landing might be the thing to do. Having seen a few that didn't turn out so good, I told

him that I would jump in a chute first rather than ride a belly landing in. As we neared the field, he found the long runway open, so he elected to put the wheels down and I stayed aboard.

So ended my first raid into Germany; the ice had been broken, I had seen the enemy in action and now I felt that I could cope with him. At least I could talk about the raid with the rest of them that night.

Mission # 2, Frankfurt, Germany October 4, 1943

Here was a target we all knew well, for we had been briefed for it twice before, but each time the mission was scrubbed. The briefing was the same old thing, the communications officer, then the weather, intelligence and Major Alford to give the flight control and strength of escort. Last but not least was the simple little mass that the good Father Regan had to offer.

Take off and assembly were right on schedule, and we were eventually on our way. We crossed the Channel and headed into Belgium. Our escort picked us up as we turned south into western Germany. Several other wings had been in a few minutes ahead of us and many targets were seen in flames as we passed near them.

Our nose guns were giving us trouble and plenty of morbid thoughts. The right nose gun had the charging handle off, the left had a ruptured case in the barrel and the front gun had a malfunction which I couldn't determine. In a few minutes I had all three guns on the floor working on them, finally winding up with two guns that would shoot. This was the first time that we had encountered rocket ships and they were coming right into our formation to shoot their rockets. Our fighters had turned back due to their fuel range and they pounded us from all sides. I could look in almost any direction and see a plane on fire, going down or chutes pouring out into the icy air.

Minutes before we reached the I.P. the radio man started screaming over the interphone that someone was dying, and while I couldn't quite understand him, I told him to calm down and I would come to the rear of the ship. When I reached the radio room I could see the two waist gunners lying on the floor without oxygen. I grabbed two emergency bottles and made my way to their positions. We were at twenty-five thousand feet and moving about is very exhausting even with oxygen. Putting the masks on their faces, which before had been covered with ice, one filled with ice and the other nothing but ice; I rubbed them a little in an attempt to restore circulation and returned to the nose of our ship. I returned to my gun just in time to find an M.E.110 directly beneath our nose, traveling the same direction as we were, and firing rockets into the element ahead of us. My burst went in front of him as he was too close and my gun wouldn't shoot straight down. My second burst hit his cockpit and I held the triggers down as I watched pieces fly from his plane. I fired over a hundred rounds into the pilot's compartment and then swung my gun to his starboard engine. It started smoking and burst into flame, and still the ship was only about one hundred yards ahead of us. By this time many other guns were firing at the plane and it was burning fiercely. As it passed in front of the foregoing element it turned the right wing down and started straight for terra firma.

My first sight of violent death held me spell-bound and I couldn't take my eyes from the burning plane. I watched in vain to see if any chutes would blossom forth from the wreckage. My vision was interrupted by the sight of a parachutist from the wing in front of us which was flying higher; as he drifted slowly down a single M.E.110 probably having fired all his rockets was circling the chute. After making a tight circle he started a large one, breaking about halfway, then made a pass straight toward the dangling airman. Although I couldn't see any flashes from his guns I will always think that he was firing on a helpless man, but those are the fortunes of war. I guess, at any rate, I will always remember that day for right then I vowed never to open my chute.

By now I had dropped the bombs and we were well away from the target, several planes were in formation with smoking engines, and some were ablaze. When I could steal a look at the ground I could see the guns firing and what seemed to be hundreds of chutes in the air; actually our group losses weren't heavy. The fighters were still thick as flies and the air was full of rockets. Someone spotted the P-47's coming out to our aid and how welcome they were. The greatest sight that I ever expect to see was the first pass the P-47's made. The group that was flying to our left and about five hundred feet below had four M.E.110's sitting back at their rear with wheels down and firing rockets into the low squadron. The 47's came head on and high, about eight of them abreast. One swoop over the formation was sufficient; one of the ME's exploded and covered the sky with debris, another seemed to swell up a little and fall apart, the two were burning from nose to tail but still holding altitude. Soon they too started down and only one brown parachute was seen to emerge.

With the escort on had I returned to my patients in the waist and continued to work on them until we reached home. One of them seemed to be in a stupor while the other was cold and out like a light. He had turned blue from the cold and the lack of oxygen. I kept pounding on him until he began to revive a little. Final results were frostbite and fatigue.

Interrogation followed our three engine landing. Between cups of hot coffee and doughnuts we related what we had seen, damage done, ships lost and so on.

So ends Sortie number two...

Mission # 3, Bremen, Germany October 8, 1943

Here was a target we all knew well, as we had been studying it in ground school nearly every day and the group had been there many times. We were all aware of the flak guns of this target, and felt that the twenty six thousand foot altitude still wasn't enough.

After a routine briefing, we took to the air, joining the formation just above the thin overcast that seemed to umbrella over our home base. The sky was filled with planes, and we soon found ourselves crossing the English coast and heading into the North Sea. All are aware of the icy water below and our thoughts are always in sympathy with any poor devil that has to ditch that stuff.

Following the flight plan, we started well into Germany, then turned north-east to bomb our target, we were to skirt the flak area at Hanover and head to sea until we were out of fighter range, then turn west and head for the shores of England.

The flak was scattered going in, and we only saw a couple of fighters. Our escorts were on the ball this time. Then things began to happen. On our command radio, I heard a voice call out our ship; I turned the volume up so that I wouldn't miss a word. As it happened, there were few words to miss, he simply said, "Your ball turret man is hanging out in the Airstream". It didn't dawn on me at first, what this meant, but in a few seconds I had my flak suit on the floor and was busy getting my parachute harness off. This was necessary so that I could pass through the narrow Bombay. When I reached the radio room, I could see the ball turret man sitting in his position upright. Somehow, he had managed to turn his turret rightside up, but in doing so, he had fairly scalped himself. His head was open from the middle of his forehead, back to his ears, the scalp was hanging down the back of his neck, and the blood was filling the turret.

The fighters were giving us hell now, and the flak was hitting us now and then, so I told the radio man to stay on his gun, and I began to struggle to get the wounded man out of the turret. At this altitude, any exertion is very exhausting, and the pulling and tugging made my heart beat like a triphammer. The blood running down his face was now turning to ice, and his throat was filling with the chunks. As he

came clear of the turret, we both fell on the floor with him in my arms.

My first action was to stick my fingers down the wounded mans throat, and clear out the ice, and pull his tongue out. Then I pulled my mask off and shoved it on his face. When I finally found another mask I tried to put it on my face, but passed out just as I got the oxygen turned on. In a minute or two, I recovered enough to cut the boys sleeve open and inject a little morphine in his arm. Next I dragged him into the radio room, and hooked his mask onto the extra system there, plugged in his electric suit, and piled a blanked and couple of flak suits on him.

I reached the nose again, just as we turned off the I.P. and started the bomb run. The flak was terrific, and about seventy-five enemy fighters were giving us the beating of our lives. No escort was around, and it seemed forever that we were o that bomb run.

Just after bomb-away a Folke-Wulfe started a turn into us, and was about to roll out of his turn when my first burst hit him. While still a long way out, he started burning like hell, and my navigator was pounding me on the back, saying, "You sure got that bastard."

Our withdrawal escort finally showed up, so I returned to the radio room, and went to work on my patient again. He was still bleeding a little, I put a little pressure on the points around the temple, and finally the blood clotted over a little. I stayed with him until we landed, and sat astraddle his belly so that the landing wouldn't move him around.

We fired a red flare, and the ambulance met our plane. The medics took the gunner away, and the rest of us headed for the interrogation hut, to tell our sagas of the day.

My fighter claim went in, but was never confirmed. I vowed never to claim another one. We all told what we saw, and gave our opinions, so thus ended another hectic day, and sortie number three.

Mission # 4, Anklam, Germany October 9, 1944

It was quite a sight to see the faces fall as we filed into the briefing room on this fatal morning. The strings on the map seemed to run all over Germany, and they were the course that we were to fly. If the faces didn't fall at first, they did when they heard the altitude, and no escort would be used.

There was very little to the formation gathering this morning, it was a beautiful clear sky, and one could see for miles. According to plan, we made a little pattern and headed for our point on the English coast from which we would embark across the North Sea, climbing on course. Our top altitude was to be Twelve thousand feet, and we headed straight for Denmark.

Our load consisted of six, five hundreds, and a bomb bay tank which I dropped at the coast of Denmark. The order called for us to drop them there, but many of the boys saved theirs and dropped them on towns along the way.

The flak was very mild going in, but there were a few fighters in the air. Two of our forts were down before we reached the target. I had gotten very few shots until just before we reached the target, at that time, we were just sixty miles due north of Berlin. Several of the boys were aflame as we passed over the target, and one of them fell almost right on it. A pitiful sight, with the air full of chutes.

After bombs away we turned and headed out toward Denmark again, and ere I got my first taste of real flak. We had left the target about ten minutes when a burst hit right in front of us and a piece went through my left wrist, breaking the bone, and knocking me flat. All at once the sky was filled with fighters, and there was no time for first aid so I struck the broken mitt inside my Mae West and scrambled back to the guns. We had a little lull shortly afterwards, so I cut my sleeve open, and gave

myself a shot of morphine. It was here that I learned that we had one engine feathered, and one on fire. The next burst of flak came at the last part of the German Coast. A small piece hit me in the same arm, this time, just below the shoulder. It knocked me down, but the desire to live was greater than my curiosity to see how much damage was done, so I got back on the guns in a matter of a few seconds. At this point, the sky was filled with parachutes, and fortresses were burning all around us. The ship on our left wing had been hit by a squadron of Folke-Wulfe, and he had three engines burning. The crew was bailing out with all speed possible, but only four cleared the plane when it exploded. Debris of all sizes filled the air, bodies were very visible in the mass that seemed to be wheels, wing parts, fuselage, etc. In the midst of all this fire and destruction, a chute opened, and the owner floated down in the sea.

As we passed over Denmark on our way out I got my last fatal burst, it exploded just above the nose, and what seemed like a whole bucketful of flak, came right through the ceiling of the nose. One piece hit me just below the shoulder of the right arm, and another chunk hit me in the forearm of the same side. Again there was no time for first aid, as we were falling behind the formation, and the fighters were giving us a good going over. They chased us all the way down to the water, and turned back when we were almost halfway across the North Sea again, and headed for home sweet home.

Ever on the alert, the crew was scanning the sky for any enemy planes that might still be around. However, we came the remaining distance and weren't molested anymore. Our bomb bay doors had been hit and they were dangling in the slipstream. Now was the time for me to start seeing how badly I had been hit, so Bruce Moore, the navigator, started to look me over, and give what first aid he could.

The coast of England was a welcome sight to all of us, and we made a course straight for home. We had crossed the North Sea on two engines, and as we passed over the hanger, all eyes were turned up to see our riddled plane as it passed. I went to the radio room, as I didn't know how rough the landing would be, and while I hadn't felt much pain up to now, I had no desire to invite any.

On the final approach the engineer fired a flare to call the Medics to the scene, and they were right on hand when pilot Evers, greased in a landing, and made a wide loop off the runway as we had no brakes to stop us. So off to the hospital I went, and it looks like I will be a ground gripper for a few months.

So ends Sortie number four...

Mission # 5 Nancey, France February 6, 1944

After four long months of waiting, the medics have finally put the O.K. on me, and I am leading my first mission today. We are slated to destroy the hangers and factories around the huge airport at Nancey.

Filtering out of the briefing hut, the airmen stared into the low mucky overcast, and wondered if the mission would have to be scrubbed. Their thought were clarified a couple of hours later when they broke through and were looking down at what was now undercast.

The usual slow process of forming the groups and wings went fairly well this morning, and soon we were streaming across the Channel towards Dieppe. Soon inside France, our fighter support was covering the sky. Never had I seen such a sight, for all these powerful fighters had been introduced while I had been laid up. The P-38's were there with their paint scraped away for the first time. Their silvery bodies flashed by, and the P-51's relieved them as we neared the target.

Never before have I been so eager to see the target, as we had covered nearly three fourths of France without ever seeing the ground. I had little hope of seeing the target, but as we neared the I.P., the clouds began to break up, and once more my eagerness hit a high tempo.

It was a sorry sight for me to see, the wing leader, as he turned and headed for home without much search for the target, and I always will believe that we could have dropped on it if we had looked around, at least a little bit.

Heading from the target with all our bombs, we ran into some fairly good weather north of Paris and started searching for a target of opportunity. Several other groups could be seen in the distance, bombing airports which were blazing away. Nearing the coast again, I spotted a nice big airport and called for a permission to bomb it, but the wing leader refused, so with a few choice words I turned off the bomb sight, and put the pins back in the bombs; the first ones I had ever brought home.

This was my air medal raid, but it was a poor show. However, after my first four; I felt like I had a milk run coming to me.

Mission # 6 Leipzig, Germany February 20, 1944

I find myself getting eager these days and I can hardly wait until my turn comes up to lead the pack again. Just as I have always found, something out of the ordinary always happens to anyone who gets eager in this mans army, and my case is no exception. To end all of my eagerness, all I had to do was walk into the briefing room, and there it was!

The strings on the map made the usual turns over England, and then they stretched all the way across Germany, and passed within twenty-five miles of Big "B". My aiming point was to be a row of hangers, which in reality, were huge machine shops, manufacturing center and assembly plant for M.E. 109's.

My equipment was all set up, long before we reached the coast of Holland, so I had plenty of time to help the navigator on pilotage, and look the country over in general. As we passed at our closest point, I searched the horizon, and there I spotted Berlin for the second time in my tour of missions. It wasn't a very clear picture, but the contour of the huge city, was as much as I ever care to see of "Big B".

My navigators were really on the ball on this day, and never once were we in the slightest doubt as to our position. They brought me along to the Initial Point, and there I took the plane and flew it with the automatic pilot, turning it on to the bomb run. We had a pathfinder ship with us, and he must have gotten his signals mixed, because, as we made the final turn, he pulled out to take the lead. Since I had not intention of using him, I turned the ship onto the bomb run, and left him all alone away to our left.

The navigation had been super, and my turn was just right, because with all my data pre-set, I only made a couple of minor corrections, and I had the target synchronized perfectly. All my bombardiers had opened their doors as they say mine open and as my bombs were released, they also released theirs. The sky was full of bombs, and they soon hit the target square in the center. The flames were leaping hundreds of feet in the air, and destruction was everywhere. At this point, the flak was quite heavy, and very accurate.

We turned away from the target amid a flurry of flak bursts, and as we cleared the target area, we faced a handful of enemy fighters which made one or two passes, and continued on their way. Our fighter escort arrived, and we weren't molested by the enemy anymore.

The most disheartening thing of the whole show is to come back to England after six hours on oxygen, dead tired and worn out, only to find a solid overcast. We made our letdown through six thousand feet of this stuff, breaking out at fifteen hundred feet above our base. Since the lead ship is the most likely to use the least gas, we circled the traffic pattern until our wing ships were all on the ground, and finally we set down, and rolled to a stop at the dispersal area.

Col. Putnam was on hand to learn of our success, as he naturally is the most concerned person around the place. I showed him my aiming point, and where the bombs hit, he thanked me, climbed into his car, and my first interrogation was over. The next one came an hour later when the whole lead team was questioned by S-2.

I am quite proud of my days work, and thus ends my first successful mission as a Wing Leader.

Later on, this mission was photographed, and it was learned that 95% of our bombs hit the target.

Mission # 7 Augsburg, Germany February 25, 1944

When I first saw today's flight plan, I was quite convinced that someone has lost their mind, or General Doolittle was trying to get rid of us. In the first place, I couldn't figure how we were to reach home after such a deep penetration, having sweat out gas on much shorter missions. Next the oxygen problem was a sticker, as we were to be at altitude for over six hours.

So I said goodbye to all my friends, and away we flew, deep into the Reich, our target, another group of machine shops, which built enemy fighters.

Our fighter cover was excellent, and our navigators were unusually good at keeping us out of the flak. The snow on the ground made some of the checkpoints hard to see, but we made our way with very little difficulty. As we passed Stuttgart, and some of the larger cities, we could see the fires that the R.A.F. had started on the previous night.

We were leading the Wing again, and had quite a following behind us. Ahead there were Fortresses as far as the naked eye could reach, in all we must have had a thousand bombers up that day, and as many fighters.

The target was quite visible, and could be seen long before we made our approach to the Initial point. I took the plane over at the I.P., and flew it into the bomb run, opening the doors on the turn. The automatic pilot wasn't working quite as well as it should have, but I managed to kill the drift fairly well, and we made a pretty good run. My bombs hit over and to the left of my aiming point, but my wingmen made a nice pattern and we soon had the whole area ablaze. All the way down the run the flak was popping around our ship, and I was only too happy to cage my gyro at bombs away, and turn the controls back to the pilot.

Soon after leaving Augsburg, our friendly fighters were on hand to escort us home, and we didn't have a single attack on our Wing, during the whole trip.

There were a few stragglers, and now and then they would get an attack, but the only one I saw that got hit, was a B-24 that was straggling from the Wing ahead of us. Two F.W.'s made a pass at him, and within a few seconds he was in flames, and went crashing into the ground with a terrific explosion. Six parachutes appeared in the sky, and the others may have made good jumps, but I didn't take too much time to watch, as there were still fighters in the vicinity of the course we would take.

Again we neared the English coast to find it closed in, and again we had to let down through that damned soup for which England is famous.

The Colonel met our plane again, but this time we weren't at the dispersal area. A piece of flak had blown out our tail wheel tire so we had barely made it off the landing strip. After the usual questions, the Colonel congratulated me, and we went on the interrogation at the S-2 office. Amid streaming cups of coffee, and mouthfuls of cake, we described the situation the best we could; our observations were noted, and another days work was done.

So ends Sortie number seven!

Mission # 8 Koln, Germany March 4, 1944

After my hectic missions up until now, I had expected some easy ones but they seem to be getting worse all the time. A real toughie was starring us in the face today, and I will never fear another briefing, after this one, because today's target is Big "B". There is one consolation however; they will never be able to pick a worse one. Someone who is dreaming up these missions has either lost their mind, or they are trying to get rid of us. Our aiming point is a ball bearing works on the eastern side of Berlin.

They were a gloomy bunch that walked away from that briefing, and the Chaplain had an unusually large gathering for his mass.

Our group formed, and we picked up our wing leader at the designated spot. All the way across the Channel, you could see airplanes in either direction and as far as your eyes would reach. We were above a heavy undercast, soon after crossing the enemy coast and it got higher and higher as we penetrated enemy territory.

Finally we were at twenty-six thousand feet, and the extreme cold was almost unbearable. The thermometer registered minus fifty-three degrees and we were all suffering immensely.

The fuel consumed on the climb was so great that a hasty check clearly showed that we would never reach home if we went to the target, but our leader continued on. We were all concerned, as the other wings were turning back, and we were going deeper. We were still an hour from the target when we finally turned back, and started searching for a target of opportunity. The pathfinder ship pulled out into the lead, and fired a flare a few minutes later, to indicate that he was at an I.P. In another few minutes, we knew that he had really found something, as the flak came up in clouds, and was very accurate. The hail of flak continued for a couple of minutes after we had dropped our bombs, and we were all anxious to get the hell out of there.

By the grace of God, we weren't bothered by fighters, as we were all alone and no escort was available, and even if they were in the vicinity, they couldn't have found us, as I doubt if anyone knew for sure just where we were.

An uneventful departure from Germany, and a clear sky in England, soon found us on the ground again, and heading for interrogation number eight-- Now I can start sweating out Big "B", in earnest, because we are sure to go there now.

Mission # 9 Letchfeld/Augsburg, Germany March 16, 1944

My luck doesn't seem to be changing much, because briefing this morning was for another German target. This was to be a long drawn out ride into Southern Germany. The Target is an airfield just south of Augsburg, and the raid, the first trip to Augsburg. I took some pictures of this airfield and its assembly plants, as we passed over. Now the damned thing was staring me in the face, on the big map in the briefing room.

We are the Group Leaders today, Roberts, Daniels, Ryan, and myself. The assembly was a little slow, but we managed to get our formation fairly together in time for Wing Assembly. We headed across the Channel, and were soon deep into enemy occupied territory. The route has taken us around the flak areas, and our fighter escort is above reproach, so our worries are hardly mentionable thus far. Now and then the Wing leader has to "S" his formation to let us catch up with him, but that was the extent of our troubles until we were nearly to the target. At this point, a couple of M.E. 109's slipped up through a

hold in the clouds, and knocked down one of our tail end Charlies, but they caused no other damage as our escort soon drove them off.

Just short of the target, one of the boys in the lead Group, feathered two engines, and headed for the Alps, which were clearly visible to our right. Three P-38's escorted them over, so I guess all four planes are now in the Swiss Air Force.

The target was covered with ten-tenths clouds, and as our Wing had no pathfinder ship, we had to do a 360 degree turn at the target, to allow the Wing in trail, to come over the target first so we could drop on their smoke bombs. By the time we had completed our turn, and started our bomb run, the markers were beneath the clouds, and we were abreast our leader, when we should have been in the trail. After hauling those bombs all that distance, I had no desire to throw them away, so I closed my bomb doors intending to bomb a target of opportunity on the way home.

Roberts didn't like the idea of carrying all those fragmentation bombs through the flak, he told me to get rid of them. I opened the doors again and let them go, and the whole Group did the same. Pictures, later on, showed that we had hit the southwestern part of Augsburg. They weren't entirely wasted as German radio reported heavy casualties among civilian population. So What?

The return was quite uneventful; however we did see one of the ships ahead of us start smoking, and one man bailed out. The poor devil was pulled apart, because he popped his chute before he had cleared the ship, and as he floated by our ship, he was hanging very limp in his chute.

Amid the usual British weather, we sweated in another landing, and were soon telling our tales at interrogation, between cups of steaming coffee, and mouthfuls of cake.

So ends Sortie number nine; only twenty-one more to go. Alas!

Mission # 10 Schweinfurt/Frankfurt, Germany March 24, 1944

This was one that I hadn't been even alerted for: the alert officer, Combat Porada, got me out of bed after everyone else had been briefed, and it was only a few minutes before station time. I hurriedly dressed, grabbed up my maps and data, and was on board the lead ship in the high composite group, ready for my third hop with Major Mac.

We crossed Germany in solid undercast, and everything went along beautifully, we were on course at all times and as we neared the target, the PFF ship took the lead. Much to our dismay, we started a series of turns and circles that made us all wonder just who in the hell was leading our wing.

At last the turning finally slowed up a little and we opened our bomb doors. At this point, I looked to my right, to see if my wingmen had opened their bomb doors also. This was one time that I wished I had never been curious, because as my eyes fell upon a plane in the low group which was opposite us, a direct flak hit caused him to break in two at the waist door. The wing and fuselage pointed straight down, the tail went fluttering around the sky. Six chutes came out, a feat which surprised me a great deal.

The flak was very accurate and intense as we released our bombs. The Pathfinder was so far away I had to use my field glasses to watch his bomb-bays, as his bombs hit the air, mine did likewise. Immediately I ducked my head, and said the prayer that I always save for the flak.

The return home was quite uneventful, and we weren't bothered by anything, once we cleared the target area. That is with the exception of the usual English weather that we always must sweat out on our return home. This time it was fairly good, the undercast was only about three thousand feet thick, and

we broke out at about two thousand.

Something new has been added at the interrogation, we are welcomed home with a nice big charge of Scotch Whiskey. I can't drink the damned stuff, but it is a noble gesture at any rate.

My cluster raid has just been completed.

Mission # 11 Calais (Bohlen), France March 26, 1944

To the boys who have been going deep on every raid, here was an airman's dream for a target. Where we had been faced with missions that had kept us in enemy territory for six hours, here was one where we were only in there thirteen minutes. Some Fun!

This was to be squadron bombing, and we were to be the last ones to bomb. The target was one of the secret emplacements about which so many stories had originated.

Each lead crew in each squadron was briefed in detail for the target and its area. A pinpoint target, and a very difficult one to pick up under any visibility.

Armed with maps and charts of the whole area, we were soon winging our way across the Channel at its narrowest point. At The French coast, I flew the ship on autopilot, and made my own approach to the I.P. The squadrons ahead made their turn, and I held mine in order to put myself in trail at a reasonable distance. The navigator, Richards, with eyes like an eagle, picked up a checkpoint long before I did and soon had me all fixed up, as to course. I swung the bombsight on the target, clutched in, and was soon making the small corrections near the end of the run. In the sight, I could see other bombs hitting around the target, but none were in the meaty; part. Pieces of a fortress passed across my vision as I held my eye in the sight so I knew that someone ahead had gotten a direct hit.

My bombs hit the aiming point squarely and my six ships of the squadron wiped it off the map, for we each had five one thousand pounders.

At the interrogation, we learned that we were the only ones to hit the target at all so my luck is still holding out. My third synchronization and I have hit all three.

The whole show was so short and sweet, I am a little sorry that we hit it so square, because I would like to got there a few more times.

This makes up of some of the rough ones, and so ends number eleven.

Mission # 12 Stettin, Germany April 11, 1944

Things don't ever seem to be right when my turn comes to lead a mission. The group had made several runs to France, But when my turn came, It was the same old story; this time was worse then ever.

The map at briefing gave the bad news and the string made a course into a point south and east of Berlin. The aiming point was the workshops of an airfield that was producing single engine fighters.

We were leading the Wing, and that called for two navigators, so Moore and Ryan were both in the nose with me. Roberts was the pilot and Col. Gillespie his co-pilot. This was the last raid in the Colonels tour of duty. There were only two interphone outlets in the nose, so I didn't know what was going on half the time, as the navigators had both outlets. The assembly was pretty good, and as we neared the enemy coast, I struggled into my flak suit, as I could see our leading wing getting a heavy barrage, directly in front of us.

Our leader crowded us all over the sky and as we neared Hanover, we were pushed in too close, and got the hell shot out of our Wing. Our Squadron lost a good crew during this siege. We had hardly recovered from the first few accurate bursts when the fighters hit the Wing to our left, and a little in front.

They came in a swarm of about fifty and it was a pitiful sight to see the results of their first pass at the formation. Four Forts fell out of formation, burning, and falling apart; twenty M.M. were breaking all over the sky. Chutes started to open all about us, and the fighters rallied for another attack. Each time they would come through, more forts would go down and a few more chutes would open. At last the Wing was all broken up, and the few that were left, either joined our formation, or the one in front of us.

A straggler in front of us was being attacked by two twin engine M.E. 410's and they circled and rolled around him, but never knocked him down. Each time they would come anywhere near me, I would give them a short burst but I doubt if I hit anything. Another Wing to our right, had gone over Hanover by error, and it was a costly one, for soon the sky was filled with falling and burning ships, at least ten must have gone down from flak alone.

Finally we reached the area in which the I.P. was to be found, but we must have overrun it, for the leader called for a 360 degree turn, and then he was going on to the secondary. Actually, the leader was lost, because several other people saw the primary target, and some of them bombed it.

Anyway we flubbed all over Germany, until we finally picked ourselves up again. We were a little too close to Big "B", but eventually the leader moved out to the east, and we headed for our next target, another machine shop.

The landmarks were fair, but we were on the wrong side of the town, in order to reach the target, we had to fly directly over the city and the flak was terrific. As we neared the outskirts of town, I saw the Wing ahead drop their bombs on the center of the city, so I called the Colonel, and he told me to do the same.

I saw some pretty important looking buildings, so I started my bomb run on them. My sight came apart, but I managed to do pretty well, even if I didn't hit my aiming point. My bombs hit the docks and a lot of warehouses on a small island, and soon the whole area was ablaze. The flak was so intense, I couldn't look down, and even now I wonder how we ever survived that stuff.

They tracked us all the way across the town, and way past the target, but at least we got out of it, and headed for the Baltic Sea. We flew north until we were over Sweden, then we turned and flew west across Denmark, over the North Sea, and home to England.

Our formation was flawless as we passed over the field, and peeled off for the landing. Soon we were rolling down the runway, and turning into our dispersal area. No one will begrudge us our flight pay on this day, as we were airborne for eleven solid hours, and all our \_\_'s are dragging the ground. Now I can start sweating out number thirteen.

Mission # 13 Eschwege (Oranienburg), Germany April 18, 1944

Briefings show no or little promise of anymore good raids, so everyone has given up hope of getting a ride less than eight hours long. Today's was no exception, and two hours after briefing, when we broke through the overcast, and made air wing assembly, we were on our way to a little town on the outskirts of Berlin. Thank God, we were out of the flak area, because no sane man will ever sell the Jerry flak short, besides they are getting plenty of practice at Berlin these days.

Our route was excellent, and we wormed our way through the flak areas, finally reaching the Initial Point where we were to uncover our High Group from the Wing. Everything was fine until we reached this point, then all our elaborate plans went to hell. The target could be seen in the distance, and we were headed just right, but a cloud level was over the target and we had to drop down two thousand feet to get under them. This meant changing all my data in the bombsight, which I immediately started figuring out. Then it was time to open the bomb bay doors, but when I put the handle into the open emergency position nothing happened. The deputy leader couldn't be reached on V.H.F., so I did the next best thing that I could think of, and when I think of how disastrous this could have been, I shudder, even now. By using the emergency salvo release, I worked it forward until the doors fell open, another fraction of an inch would have dropped the bombs, and all the ships behind me would have dropped on me, falling miles short.

Anyway, the doors were open, and I set the data into the sight, got a fifteen-second bomb run, and let them go. No man ever sweated anything out like I did those bomb hits; the temperature was thirty-six degrees below zero, and the perspiration was literally rolling from my brow.

The amazing part about the whole thing is that we hit the aiming point, right on the button, and we won't ever have to go back there again. The flak at the target was terrific, but I hadn't even noticed it until after the bombs had hit, and we were fairly wallowing in the damned stuff.

Turning off the target, more trouble was staring me in the face, the doors wouldn't close. When Roberts told me how they were holding us back, I went into action again, getting my flak clothes off, parachute etc., I found an emergency oxygen bottle, and made my way to the yawning bomb doors and started cranking them up. The whole job was a Herculean task at the altitude, and I used up two bottles of oxygen in doing the job, which took a full half-hour. I froze my fingertips in the icy air, but at intervals, I would crawl to the top turret gunners position, and put my hands under Sgt. Neals heated suit. To this I can attribute the fact that I still have fingers on my hands.

Back in the nose, Moore had to put my chute back on me, as I couldn't close my hands on the buckles. The pain was terrific, and I spent the remainder of the journey home, trying to thaw out ;the stiffened members. The doc says that they won't cause me any trouble, so there goes number thirteen, and good riddance.

Mission # 14 St. Omer,(Croisette), France April 20, 1944

This day I hadn't the slightest idea of going o a mission, so I slept late and awakened just in time to talk my way on to it, one of those short hauls into the Calais area. Every body from the Colonel on down had a hand in this deal, and after much pleading and betting I found myself aboard a ship as waist gunner.

I had resolved to stand in the waist position and see how things looked from back there but the Bombardier on the ship decided that his was a good time for someone to do his work so I climbed up in front and set up the Bomb Sight.

We crossed the Channel and made our I.P. just inside the coast of France, the target was visible from quite some distance, and I soon had it in my sight. The aiming point was one of the secret gun emplacements, and it was just short of the Airport at St. Omer, France.

On the bomb run we were getting some pretty accurate flak, since my head was buried inside the Bombsight, I couldn't see any of it but that didn't keep me from hearing it. Among the combat men there is a saying "when you can hear it, it's to damned close."

The flak only lasted a few minutes and as soon as we were out of it we set course to depart France, and once more were headed for the friendly coast. A snap of a mission and all the bombs hit the target so I guess it might be called a successful sortie.

Mission # 15 Erding, Germany April 24, 1944

For some reason or the other I have really been sweating this raid out, and for no good reason at all. This was my same old crew, Bob Roberts and Bruce Moore. I have been through a lot with these guys and I would be more willing to stake my chances with them than anyone I know.

The briefing was short and snappy. We were leading the Low Group, and the target was an Airfield at Erding, Germany, right along side Munich, Germany. A long haul and plenty of scraps were to be expected. Something new about the Flight Plan, was the long chain of planes there were to pass over our target, enroute to theirs. After we had dropped our bombs, we were to follow them and pass over their target after they had bombed. I don't see much reason for it unless they want the Jerries to see how many we can put over there on one mission. We were one of the nine hundred planes that took to the air that morning. The assembly went off in fine fashion, and soon we were worming our way through the flak guns at the coast of France. It was a long trip but I sat there with my eyes wide open despite our excellent fighter support, I expected to see a flock of Folke-Wulfs come blazing out of the clouds at any minute.

No trouble came our way, and the target area was soon in view. We had everything all set up and the bomb run was a cinch. In the sight, I could see a rocket that was fired from the ground and was heading directly towards us. It looked as though it would hit me directly between the eyes but it passed in front of us and burst about five hundred feet above.

At bombs away I closed the doors and sat by my guns watching another Wing get shot up by fighters, but we didn't have a single pass made at us. We circled Munich, Germany as briefed, passing over all the air bases that had been bombed and some that were yet to be bombed. This route brought us pretty close to Switzerland and a few more of our planes joined the Swiss Air Force that day. Soon they will have more Forts than we have.

The rest of the journey was the usual run of the mill stuff, a little turning and twisting at the French coast. We let down over the Channel, the usual bad weather over England, and a nice peel off over the base, and the double landing that Roberts always gave me.

Mission # 16 Cherbourg (La Glacerie), France April 27, 1944

This was a rush deal when they hauled us all down to the briefing hut at mid-day for all the poop. And before we knew it, we were winging our way across the channel to attack one of the secret gun emplacements that we have been hitting every now and then.

We skirted along the coast of the Peninsula, and finally crossed the coast at a point about twenty miles south of the target, and proceeded on our run to the target after we had made our I.P.

Borellis was with me in the nose, and we were pinpointing our way right down the bomb run, and the flak was popping all around us. They had us in their sights this day, and were tracking us all the way. I strained my eyes for a look at the target, but this is one that I had to throw the towel in on. Our left wing was a cloud of flak puffs, and our number four engine was on fire, but not for long. Roberts feathered it at once, and blew the fire out. A piece of flak went zipping through the map I was looking at, and another hit Borellis in the back, went through his flak suit, and lodged in his parachute harness.

We hadn't quite reached the target yet, but we couldn't stay in there and take any more of that stuff, so we turned sharply away. As we headed for the coast again one of our ships got a direct hit, and dove straight into the ground. My roommate was in this ship. As we left the coast, the flak eased up, but we got to close to the Gurnsey Islands, and we were in it again.

On three engines, we couldn't keep up with our formation, so I jettisoned the bombs in the channel and we headed for home.

Every single one of our ships were filled with holes, and several men had been hit, and I didn't even drop on the target. This made me feel pretty bad, but it just couldn't be helped.

Mission # 17 Avord, France April 28, 1944

Today we were leading the Combat Wing, and Colonel Putnam and Bob Roberts were both on their last missions. The target is the airfields installations at Avord, my aiming point was the headquarters building, and my other two groups in trail, had hangers on each side.

The assemble came off all right, and the trip into France was quite uneventful. I made a couple of practice runs with the sight, and everything seemed to be O.K.

The target was visible from the I.P. and I had a beautiful bomb run. My cross hairs were right on the meat, but I couldn't get a correction out of the sight. At last I realized that something was haywire, so I called for Bob to give me manual run. He got in about two good connections before bombs away. We missed the hell out of the aiming point, but we took down the hangers that the other Groups was supposed to hit, so it wasn't a total loss.

The flak was pretty accurate around the target, but Roberts did a little evasive action and we were soon out of it. We had hardly cleared the flak area when about thirty enemy fighters hit us, making one pass, and disappearing into the clouds. I got the chin turret turned around in time to get about a hundred rounds into them. The Mustangs were soon on the scene, and we were not bothered any more.

The homeward trend was also very uneventful, and we crossed the French coast, and were winging our way to good old Base.

The Colonel and Roberts were whisked away by the big brass, and were dunked in a tank of water.

Mission # 18 Troyes, France May 1, 1944

To further the bid on marshalling yards our target today was a crowded yard in a small French town called Troyes. The strike photo indicated a highly successful mission, although very uneventful. So ends sortie number eighteen.

Mission # 19 St. Dizier, France May 9, 1944

Every time we get an early briefing I all ways imagine that this is invasion day, but one look at the target map was enough to satisfy my curiosity and shattered my dreams as a prophet. It turns out to be another of those airfield jobs we have been doing so many of, and this one is about a hundred miles east of Paris.

The morning air was crisp, and the day was starting to light up as we trudged our way out of the briefing room and made our way out to the planes. The pilot today was "Soft Hearted John Davis", Colonel Milton was the Co-pilot and Wing Leader, and out position was right at the front of the pack.

We crossed the French coast and were barely inside the coast when flak guns opened up on the Wing ahead of us. We did a nice turn that kept us clear of the guns and continued on our way. Every thing was going along fine when I took a look at my map and saw a big airfield. (It was Romilly, and I knew plenty about its flak) directly ahead of us. I told Borellis, the Navigator, about it and we made a sharp turn, and none too soon, as the guns had already started firing. No one got hit but it could have been costly. Soon we were nearing the I.P., and in the distance, the airfield that we were to bomb, was very distinct.

At this time I had the plane and was flying it on the "Auto-Pilot". I clutched in the bombsight and started cranking out the drift. Every thing was perfectly synchronized and all I had to do was wait for the bomb release point, when all of a sudden the auto-pilot went haywire, and the ship started a steep climb. The Colonel switched it off and Davis finished the run manually. My bombs hit the aiming point right on the button, and I don't think I have ever hit a squarer shack in all my experience as a Bombardier. The rest of the Group all dropped on me and we tore up everything in sight.

The return trip home was the same old routine, only Borellis got lost for a few minutes and we went through a little flak, but soon we had the French coast behind us and were homeward bound. As we peeled out of formation and were rolling down the runway I knew that this had been one successful mission. Little flak, no fighters, good bombing, no planes lost and no one was wounded. This brings down the curtain on sortie number nineteen.

Mission # 20 Kiel, Germany May 22, 1944

Today we were leading the Combat Wing. Borellis and I were flying in the nose of a PFF ship, as the weather was undecided, and there was a good chance of the target being visual. We were to hit the center of the industrial area, which is near the docks, practically the center of the city.

We assembled during the first few hours of daylight, and started the long trek across the North Sea to the shores of Denmark. Nearing the enemy coast, the clouds began to break up a little; between the small flak infested inlands and were soon headed toward our objective.

Our worming pattern made the flak very inaccurate and at the eight mile point Mickey gave me the signal, and I started my sight going. He killed the course, so I had very little to do. Just before bombs away, I picked up a large section of the city, and made a small connection and with-in a few seconds our tons of incendiaries and H.E. were raining down upon our enemy. Fires broke out all over the area, as we turned away from the town and starting making our way back to the coast. Our escort was beautiful, and few enemy planes reached our formations. A little careful navigation and we were out of the flak again heading for England where we would tell our tales to the S-2 officers and chalk up another mission of ourselves. Hilary Evers, and Col. Milton were the pilots on this trip which was sortie number twenty for me.

Note: A Mickey operator is the name given to the man who operates the secret equipment in the radio room. This is called Pathfinder Bombing.

Mission # 21 Berlin, Germany May 24, 1944

The trip wasn't to be my first trip to Big "B", but it was my first to be briefed for a target in the center of the city. The Fredrickstrasse Station was my aiming point, but no one expected me to hit it. Anyplace in the center of the city would do just as well.

I guess this was about the biggest deal that I can ever expect to be in or, as we are leading the entire Eighth Air Force. Our new Colonel is riding in the Co-Pilots seat, Evers is the pilot, and Borellis will do the bookkeeping in the nose.

The assembly went along beautifully. We left the English coast right on time and the sky was a mass of aircraft. The stream of bombers that crossed the Channel that day, will be one that will be unequalled for quite some time.

We crossed the enemy coast without getting a shot fired at us, between the Mickey and Borellis; we were picking our way between the flak guns approaching the big city. I dreaded to face all the flak that was expected there, but we turned from our I.P., and started the run, with only one thought in mind, to get our bombs on the target. The Mickey was killing drift, and I got my eight mile signal from him just as the clouds started to open up, exposing the center of the city to my bombsight. The aiming point was obscured by a low hanging cloud, but I finished my evasive action from the flak, just in time to level out and put the cross hairs on a relative point near it.

The sky was raining with bombs as the whole wing formation released on my sky markers.

Leaning far out into the nose, I watched the bombs hit, the H.E. were tearing things up, and the incendiaries were setting them afire. The terror that spread on the population, I can easily imagine, I have often put my own home town in their place, and such a thought makes me shudder, but this is total war, and I feel not the least reluctant about bombing this city.

Just off the target, about forty enemy fighters bounced us, and as they crossed in front of our formation preparing for the attack, I snapped a couple of pictures for my collection. Four P-38's jumped the whole pack, and they came through, but I doubt if I hit any of them. Our escort came in droves, but not until they had shot down a few forts. We weren't molested however and continued on our way back across the North Sea again. Col. Terry was quite satisfied with the day's work, especially when he saw the pictures. We had hit the station that we were briefed for and no one could have been any more pleased than myself.

This brings my twenty first sortie to a close.

Mission # 22 Dessau, Germany May 28, 1944

The weather looked good over the continent this day, and our Group was assigned the task of forming three Groups into a Combat Wing, which is not easy matter. There were to be twelve ship Groups and Colonel Milton was sitting in the Commanders seat as we circled the "Buncher". Getting this many ships together is always a headache and today was no exception to the rule. After we had circled the cone until the time of departure rolled around, we still had only about half of our airplanes.

The show must go on, so away we went into Germany with twenty-seven airplanes behind us. This is a pretty weak effort and easy meat for enemy fighters. However, we soon found another formation going the same way and we tacked on to them.

No trouble was encountered until we were almost on our bomb run, I was flying the ship on Auto Pilot, weaving the formation on the final approach, and as I could see what the flak was doing to the Wing ahead of us, I had no desire to sit still and let the A.A. gunners get a bead on us.

This was a high priority target; the home of the new enemy jet propelled fighter. My aiming point was almost in the center of all the buildings, and as I rolled out of my last turn I found the MPI right in the cross hairs. A couple of minor corrections and it was bombs away. I leaned far out over my sight to see my bombs hitting exactly where they were supposed. The satisfaction, that I get out of seeing things fly

apart down there, is always the greatest reward that I can ask for. The flames were up a thousand feet almost instantly; destruction was everywhere, my last look at the target showed that the other Wings had also done their work well. The enemy fighters jumped the Wing ahead and a few came through our formation. The friendly fighters were soon on the scene and the air was a regular hornet's nest, until the enemy fled.

The rest of the trip was pretty uneventful, and we arrived home for interrogation feeling that we would have some good news to tell for a change.

Mission # 23 Bordeaux, France June 15, 1944

This was my first mission since the invasion had started and I was pretty damned anxious to get started. Our route was to take us directly over the invasion coast, and I was anxious to have a look at the big show that was going on. The target was an Airfield in the Southern most point of France. We were leading the Division, which meant that we would be the first one to bomb and that usually means plenty of flak on the bomb run.

The assembly went along fairly well, and we were soon departing from our Base at sixteen thousand (16,000) feet. As we saw the coast of England pass beneath us I pulled on all my cumbersome flak clothes and settled back to see what I could of the beach head. Approaching the enemy coast, we could see a lot of heavy battleships standing off shore, shelling the enemy defenses far inland. It was quite a sight to see the ships belch flame from their heavy guns, then what seemed to be minutes later, columns of smoke would rise from a point far inland.

As we passed near Paris, all eyes were strained to see what we could of the place, but as usual there was very little to see. It was a long haul to the target, but we were eventually getting there. The friendly fighters were all over the sky and no enemy would dare show his face in that opposition.

Nearing the target another Wing pulled up on the right side of our Wing. This meant that we couldn't make the correct turn on the bomb run, as this outfit was in the way. Colonel Terry called them and told them to get ahead and bomb first which was all right with me as they caught the worst part of the flak.

This put our I.P. nearly into Spain, but we finally made the turn and started on the run to the target. As usual I made several large turns and circled out only in time for about a forty (40) second bomb run. The bombs hit where they were supposed to and soon the whole place was a mass of smoke and flame.

We turned away from the target, and went out to Sea far enough so that the guns on the coast couldn't reach us. Nearing the Brest Peninsula we cut across land and were soon in sight of the English coast.

Home always looks good, but when we can come home and tell of a job well done, it is even more inviting. Such was the case this time and this was the kind of bombing story that I like to tale about. So ends sortie number twenty-three (23).

Mission # 24 Letchfeld, Germany July 19, 1944

My narratives seem to be getting shorter and shorter as my missions progress, maybe it means that I have had all my tough raids at first, and maybe it means that I am getting a little "Flak Happy" and just don't notice all the things that I did before. At any rate, today's mission was one of those long drawn out affairs, and seemed like it was hardly more than a long ride.

The briefing was at a half decent hour in the morning, and we were hitting an Airfield just west of Augsburg which is a hell of a long way into the heart of the Reich. We took to the air before daybreak and made our assembly over the base, getting assembled just as the sun had lighted the whole sky. The

trip was quite uneventful, and Borellis had us well on course, all the way. We were leading the wing and had three groups to command.

We saw a few fighters as we neared the Alps, and the mountains were directly beneath us, as we made our I.P. to turn toward the target. I was flying the ship from the nose, and another Wing cut us out of our position, so I flew parallel with them until they started their bomb run to the target. After so much "flubbing" around, we finally got on the bomb run, and I soon had the target in my bombsights. One of the most horrible sights that I have ever seen, was a B-17, that went spinning down from the Group ahead of us. He had gotten a direct hit, and was instantly a mass of flame. I watched him in the sight as the Wings and fuselage broke apart. The flak was pretty hot all the way down the bomb run, and I heaved a sigh of relief as I felt our bombs leave the bomb bay. Then I sweated them out until I could see them rain down on our aiming point, a group of hangars and other buildings. A sharp turn from the target, and we were soon out of the flak, and back on our course that would take us home.

Nothing unusual happened on the way home, except one occasion where Borellis got a little off course, and the flak started to beat us up a little, but we were soon out of it and only a few planes suffered any damage.

Thus ends sortie number twenty-four which leaves me that one great big one that stands between myself and home sweet home.

Mission # 25 St. Lo, France July 25, 1944

Today will be a memorable occasion as we are going to bomb directly in front of our own front lines and make a break through for the foot soldiers. Only a thousand yards separate the good guy's from the bad guys, so there can be no bad sighting today! My own bombs hit exactly where they were supposed to, but someone made a premature release and wiped out some of our own men including a commanding general whose name was McNair.

\*Question was asked the type of bombs used on this mission, Charlie stated they were 100 pounders.

Mission # 26 Mulhouse, Germany August 3, 1944

A deep penetration today will carry us deep into the heart of the Reich to complicate the transportation problem in Germany. A direct hit put one Jerry marshalling yard among the missing. These people have a remarkable ability to repair and put these places back in operation again, but it is my guess that the hole they will have to fill will take a little more time than usual.

Mission # 27 Brest, France August 11, 1944

Ammunition dumps and fuel storage seems to be the most important targets these days. Here we encountered the worst flak in quite some time. All I can remember about was the pilot, Bob Roberts on the intercom, saying, "Get rid of the bombs and let's get the hell out of here!" No one was hurt but the old fortress really got aired out. Bombs on target!

Mission # 28 Kolleda, Germany August 24, 1944

Pulled out of bed in the wee hours, and after the usual shuffling around, we are once again on our way to harness the energy.

The things that used to fascinate me and scare me half to death are now becoming "run of the mill" procedure. I guess this is why my narratives are getting shorter every day.

Our target was labeled "Airplane Components", and my aiming point was the center of three huge buildings at one end of the field. Being the first one over the target, my target is selected so that the smoke and dust from my bombs will not obscure the aiming points of the bombardiers following me.

In the strike photos my first bomb was a direct hit, and I believe it was the best synchronization I have had to this date.

Mission # 29 Lutzkendorf, Germany September 13, 1944

Synthetic oil plants are the things of prime importance these days. The Germans have some ingenious way of making high-test gasoline from coal. These refineries must go, so we are cranking up the Forts today in a try to bring them to a screeching halt.

Several other groups were ahead of us on this target and we could see them taking the flak treatment ahead of us. The ground haze was very bad, but my favorite navigator, Bill Borellis had put me right on course and somehow I made an excellent sighting operation. The refinery appeared to be several miles long and unscathed at this point. At the impact, the primary explosion took place near the center of the installation and within seconds it was an inferno from one end to another.

On the way home we listened to the British broadcast to find what a good job we had done this day. The old man was pleased too, for he gave me a cluster on The Flying Cross for this effort.

So ends sortie number "29". They have told me I could go home when I reached twenty-five. How come? Anyway, I have agreed to do another tour as soon as I have a little vacation.

Mission # 30 Stendal, Germany February 22, 1945

My first mission after my return from Stateside has an exciting feeling, one I hadn't felt for quite some time. It was good to be back on the job again. One look at those poor civilians without gasoline, butter and cigarettes made me catch the first boat home to Bassingbourn.

The effort today will put everything in the air that will fly even a little bit. There is to be in excess of six thousand aircraft used to block all supply lines between the front lines and central Germany.

My aiming point is to be a marshalling yard and my approach right down the tracks leading me into target zone. Not a burst of flak appeared, and the bomb run was perfect. There was a long train pulling into the yards and my cross hairs were right on the engine when the release came. Nearby was a small lake, and from the splashes, it appeared that we had moved the yards quite some distance.

Instead of sending the usual coded message about the bomb strike, I decided to be humorous and use the expression the Limey Bombardiers use "Wizard Prang" arriving home. I found that I was the only one on the staff who had been amused by this humor. Frankly, I didn't realize that the message was monitored in London, but it was too late now! The entire Eight Staff was on General Gross's a\_\_ and he was on mine. Oh well, what the hell, the worst they could do was send me out to fight the Hun.

They fined me \$75.00 and confined me to quarters for ten days, so I swiped Col. Terry's car and driver and took off of London for ten days. This didn't get many laughs either.

Mission # 31 Vlotho (Hi Osnabruck), Germany March 14, 1945

This mission became on with a touch of confusion and humor combined, but a very successful one in any sense of the word.

Our target today was an eight span railroad bridge, located deep in the heart of Germany. Frankly, I haven't the slightest idea what an eight span bridge would look like but Intelligence assures us that it will move a lot of trains.

This is a wing lead and General Gross is riding in the Co-pilot's seat. At this point I might add that there is one distinct disadvantage in riding with the General. If the mission happens to be an easy one, he always sends someone else for fear he will be accused of picking the easy ones, or at least that is the way it appears.

At any rate, when the old man is along, you can expect a deep penetration and plenty of trouble.

Our fighter cover was effective and we made peaceful approach into the target area, then all hell broke loose. We started catching flak from the start of the bomb run, and during the sighting period the black pulp was constantly in the scope sight--a very discouraging sight, needless to say.

The target was very hazy and low clouds also are hampering the sighting, a few seconds before bombs away I decided that the drift wasn't killed so I elected to make a 360 and make another run. From the bombardier's control, I started a gradual turn to the right with the flak following us right around the turn. Suddenly a voice boomed over the intercom wanting to know why we were turning. Being busy at the moment, I heard a couple more requests so I retorted with " Get the hell off the intercom". With silence I then completed the turn and made a perfect approach, wiping out the bridge completely. Leaving the target, I could see the P-38's down there taking pictures of the results.

Back on the ground the General called me down for the manner in which I talked to him on the intercom. I assured him I believed the voice to be that of one of the enlisted men. Somehow I don't think he believed me, but so long as we had a successful sortie he forgave me.

Mission # 32 Berlin, Germany March 18, 1945

One of the most feared things to haunt life in a combat crew, is the thought of having to fly over Berlin. So you can imagine the size of the lump in my throat when we realized we had lost the dart game last night. All combat men are under the impression that before each mission the top brass has a big dart game in London, and that's the way they pick the targets.

My target was called the Fredrickhaven Station in the middle of the city. It would be much like the union terminal in our major cities. We had a little fighter opposition, but dread here is the tremendous amount of flak, for there are reported to be twenty-three hundred guns at this target. We now have fighter-bombers ahead of us and they release tinfoil strips, which kills the radar and louses up the shooting from the ground.

Over the target I found my target already hit and obscured by smoke, but I made a run on what I thought would be the aiming point, and as luck would have it, strike photos showed an excellent hit. About all the return home amounted to was a long trip.

Mission # 33 Coesfeld, Germany March 23, 1945

Briefing today was nothing out of the ordinary, but it now appears that the top brass is concentrating on railroad marshalling yards.

Our fighter protection was perfectly coordinated, we often hear of these skirmishes with enemy fighters but few are in evidence these days.

With the aid of field glasses, I had a front row seat in watching two fighters shooting up a train. The train was racing madly for a tunnel with bullet flashes all over the engine, and the 51's were making continual passes. The train made it into the tunnel, then the fighters made low approaches along the tracks and let their wing tanks go directly into the tunnel. With this there was fire and smoke at each end of the tunnel.

With no opposition at the target, a successful run was made, and it will be many days before they can move a hand car through the Coesfeld marshalling yards.

Mission # 34 Vechta, Germany March 24, 1945

All throughout this big clam bake there has been a standing joke that the bombardiers of the Air Force were the backbone of the outfit and that the government had spent all that money training the pilots just so they could fly us specialists around. This has been the cause for many heated arguments, although we know it is all in jest, they would have spent the money anyway!

With our present fighter support, these trips and making a sightseeing tour of these missions, and at least I am relaxing a little and Germany and all its splendor that one can see from 20,000 feet.

With super duper delayed action bombs, we plowed up another airfield today, no flying from here for awhile. There was no fighter opposition and very little flak. The Mustangs are shooting up the gun crews as soon as they locate the guns. Believe me, there is money well spent.

Mission # 35 Freiham, Germany April 11, 1945

About all this day's work amounted to was a lot of flying. The distance could hardly be much greater and still be in Germany. In any sense, this could be regarded as a long haul.

Our target is a fuel supply depot and bomb run was a story book affair, no fighters, no flak, a perfect synchronization and the complete destruction of one giant sized supply depot.

So ends sortie number 35.

Mission # 36 Neumunster, Germany April 13, 1945

Far across the North Sea the dart players found a target for today. Twice before I have been in this same area, and both times had my a-- shot off, so this briefing did nothing to elate my feelings about this "no opposition" target.

However, the information was correct and my best friend, John Davis, was the pilot. The entire trip was uneventful. In all my bombing, I believe this to be the best concentration of bombs on the aiming point that we have ever had. The strike photos indicate a completely successful mission.

Mission # 37 Bordeaux, France April 15, 1945

The war is over now and there is much to rejoice all over the Allied World. However, there are a few "die-hards" down in Southern France who won't recognize the Armistice.

Our job today is to wipe out these pockets of resistance, which are scattered around in the area of Bordeaux. Mostly gun crews and coastal defense operations. This was a maximum effort, and one trip was sufficient to discourage the hard ones, maybe we can go home now and start worrying about the Japs or maybe even the Russians.

I am starting to wonder about how I will feel about civilian life again. All the way home I sat in the nose of that big bird and somehow I feel that I am going to miss all this action and especially all the swell people I have made friends with.

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