

1945

16 January 1945

Marshalling Yards, Dresden, Germany

Enemy resistance at this secondary target was nil, and the fighter support was very good. Yet three aircraft were lost; all abandoned in flight. Others landed in France and three of these were abandoned or left for repairs! Group Commander, Col. Eugene H. Snavely, was flying Command Pilot on one of the MIA aircraft.

66th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #42-50660 A, Testa

MACR #2863

Note: This was a 66th Squadron crew flying a 68th Squadron aircraft.

66th Squadron Crew:

TESTA, JOHN J. ASN 0-659413	Pilot Injured, returned	Capt.	Arlington Massachusetts
SNAVELY, EUGENE H. ASN 0-221364	Command Pilot Returned	Col.	Harlingen, Texas
DUBOWSKY, ROBERT ASN 0-818128	Co-pilot Injured, returned	1st Lt.	Mineola, New York
ALBIN, CHARLES H.	Navigator Returned	1st Lt.	
JENSEN, ERNEST L. ASN 0-694676	Navigator Returned	1st Lt.	
ARMS, LESTER A. ASN 0-668696	Bombardier Returned	Capt.	St. Louis, Missouri
RICE, CHARLES F. Jr. ASN 0-699530	Pilotage/Nav Returned	1st Lt.	
GEGENHEIMER, JAMES E. ASN 14096114	Engineer Returned	T/Sgt.	New Orleans, Louisiana
STEDGHILL, EDWARD T. ASN 37417267	Radio Oper. Injured, returned	T/Sgt.	St. Louis, Missouri
FRADY, ROBERT G. ASN 34608949	Waist Gun Injured, returned	S/Sgt.	
DAVIES, GOMER B. Jr. ASN 31326950	Waist Gun Returned	S/Sgt.	
SCHOTT, ANTHONY J. ASN 33558662	Gunner Returned	S/Sgt.	
BRIDGE, RAYMOND E. Jr. ASN 32750351	Tail Tur Returned	S/Sgt.	Mt. Holly, New Jersey

Capt. Testa's aircraft began this mission as Group and division lead but was forced to turn over this lead shortly after crossing into Germany, as their H2X equipment malfunctioned. Subjected to considerable ground fire, smoke and low clouds covered the Primary at Ruhland, so the Secondary target at Dresden was bombed, with poor results.

Captain Testa's aircraft had lost two engines from the accurate flak near Ruhland and dropped from the formation, salvoed its bombs near Bernberg, and turned for home base. With the loss of power, the plane lost altitude quickly, with all of the crew being forced to abandon ship. The men came down safely in the Alsace-Lorraine area of northeastern France. Snavelly landed in Saarburg, with no one seriously injured, but four of the men sustained cuts and bruises. Capt. Testa broke blood vessels in his ankle, and Sgt. Frady also with an ankle hurt. Lt. Dubowski's heel was injured, and Sgt. Stedghill cut his head while being assisted from the plane, requiring five stitches.

Captain Testa's crew, along with nine others from the 492nd BG, had been transferred into the 44th BG when it was disbanded in August, 1944. Col. Snavelly had come with them. Capt. Testa's crew had completed 9 missions with the 492nd BG and went on to complete 20 more with the 44th. They led the 44th BG as well as the entire 8th Air Force on the last mission of the war to Hallien, Austria on 25 April 1945.

Captain Lester Arms stated that he was the group bombardier in the 492nd BG when they arrived in England in April, 1944.

67th SQUADRON:

67th Sq., #42-52293 G, Hinman JUDY'S BUGGY Salvaged 4 February 1945

67th Squadron Crew:

HINMAN, HOWARD L.	Pilot Injured	2nd Lt.
MUNRO, MILTON L.	Co-pilot	2nd Lt.
SPRAGUE, EDMUND K.	Navigator	2nd Lt.
WATKINS, HORACE L.	Nose Gun./Toggler	Sgt.
JOHNSON, CALVIN F.	Radio Oper.	Sgt.
WOLFE, ADOLPH A.	Eng./Top Turret	S/Sgt.
ARTHURTON, LESLIE A.	RW Gunner Injured	Sgt.
VANNESTE, ROBERT L.	LW Gunner Injured	Sgt.
DOYLE, MARTIN E.	Tail Turret	Sgt.

The pilot, Howard L. (Lewie) Hinman, wrote: "Berlin was the primary target and this was a target of opportunity. It had over 300 guns to protect the plant. As you know, a four-gun battery is rough, but 300 is hell. I didn't see any flak as the first flak up got our plane and apparently John Testa's plane. My co-pilot was Milton Monroe who later took over our crew. We followed the bomb stream and finally had to bail out over Alsace Lorraine. In the jump, I got a broken back and two of the other men were hurt. This was my last mission.

"Everything was going perfect till the old black stuff came up and took out the lead element, which our plane was part of. Really, I was so busy that I didn't know about the other planes."

The entire crew bailed out over Rimmely, France. Flak had hit and disabled #3, and #2's prop governor was out 10 degrees after #3 was lost. The aircraft left the formation at this time and headed for France. The aircraft crashed 10 miles southeast of Metz, but did not burn. Lt. Hinman, Sgt. Vanneste, and Sgt. Arthurton were injured. All three were awarded the Purple Heart.

 One 68th Squadron aircraft was abandoned over England – out of gas

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #42-110095 G	HELLZA DROPPIN'	Abandoned due to fog
68th Squadron Crew:		
LINDSAY, GERALD G.	Pilot	2nd Lt.
GRANEY, DONALD H.	Co-pilot	2nd Lt.
	Injured	
OLIVER, ARTHUR P.	Navigator	Flt. Off.
	Injured	
KING, ROBERT P.	Nose Gun./Toggler	Sgt.
	Injured	
CARLSON, DONALD	Radio Oper.	Sgt.
	Injured	
MARQUEZ, WILLIAM E.	Eng./Top Turret	T/Sgt.
	Injured	
WOOLMAN, JOSEPH S.	RW Gunner	Sgt.
	Injured	
TYNDALL, THEODORE B.	LW Gunner	Sgt.
WOLF, HOWARD C.	Tail Turret	Sgt.
	Injured	

Note: Five of the crew members (Graney, Oliver, King, Carlson, and Marquez) were sent to the Station 231 hospital at Wymondham. Woolman and Wolf were treated at the base hospital at Shipdham.

On return to Shipdham, 2nd Lt. G. G. Lindsay found the airfield fogged in solid as were other fields in the area. The crew bailed out, successfully (albeit with some injuries), approximately 7 miles east of Norwich. The aircraft, on autopilot, is believed to have crashed into the North Sea.

 As an example of the many planes that landed in France, here are some comments by pilot Bill A. Rosser: "We landed at Orly on 16 January. Had fields on the continent not been available, it is doubtful that the mission could have been completed as flown because a great many planes were low on fuel. I don't remember how many landed at Orly, but there were a lot of them. Someone ran off the taxi strip into deep mud and stranded several planes. Since there was no equipment available to free him, we were 'stuck' in Paris for three days. I told you we were lucky!"

 21 January 1945

Pforzheim, Germany

Only eleven aircraft were dispatched on a limited operation to attack Heilbronn Marshalling Yards. Equipment malfunctioned, so Pforzheim Marshalling Yards were hit visually, with excellent results. Several aircraft left the formation, low on fuel, to land in France. One 68th Squadron plane and crew failed to return.

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #42-50725 M, Franks

Returned to base later

68th Squadron Crew:

FRANKS, WALTER O. ASN 0-818784	Pilot Returned to duty	1st Lt.	
BURLINGAME, WILLIAM A. ASN 0-1997881	Co-pilot Returned to duty	2nd Lt.	
DELONG, FRANKLIN ASN 0-722285	Navigator Returned to duty	1st Lt.	
HUEY, WILLIAM E. ASN 34601283	Engineer Returned to duty	T/Sgt.	
WALKER, DONALD E. ASN 38468759	Radio Oper. Returned to duty	T/Sgt.	
POTTS, JAMES A. ASN 14100400	RW Gunner Returned to duty	S/Sgt.	
GLANZ, CLARENCE I. ASN 37706564	LW Gunner Returned to duty	S/Sgt.	
ENNIS, DONALD H. ASN 33355461	Nose Gun./Toggler Returned to duty	S/Sgt.	
STENSTROM, ROBERT W. ASN 16129841	Tail Turret Hospitalized due to parachuting injuries	S/Sgt.	Huntington Beach, Illinois

This aircraft was MIA on the 21st, but the crew returned on the 29th. The #4 engine had a runaway prop and the pilot, Walter Franks, could not feather it. This caused high fuel consumption and they ran low on gasoline, with both #1 and #2 engines running dry. The electrical system was out, and the aircraft also iced up, so the pilot ordered his crew to bail out. Only one crewman was injured, and he was hospitalized in Station Army Hospital #067.

S/Sgt. Robert W. Stenstrom told me that he was the injured crewman. He stated that he thought the plane had been hit by flak, causing the difficulty. When ordered to bail out, he and all the others got out fine and they all landed unhurt except Stenstrom, who landed in a tree and was injured when one of the limbs punctured his cheek. He also broke three ribs. Military personnel from the First Tactical A.F. Provincial #374 took him to the 51st Station hospital for treatment. He was there for three days and then joined the others from his crew at Hotel Francois and on the 24th, were flown back to London. A train brought them back to Norwich and they were back on their next mission on 6 February. The crew completed their tour of 35 on 6 April 1945.

28 January 1945

Dortmund, Germany

The Coking Plant at Dortmund was attacked but results of the bombing were poor, due to several circumstances. One 66th Squadron aircraft crash-landed on the continent, but with no injuries. One 68th Squadron aircraft did not return.

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #42-51101 H, Corwine	CORKY	MACR #12007
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68th Squadron Crew:

CORWINE, MAURICE D. ASN 0-771320	Pilot POW	1st Lt.	Sedalia, Missouri
LOUGH, ROBERT L. ASN T-126827	Co-pilot KIA, buried Ardennes (D-16-13)	Flt Of.	Mt. Clare, West Virginia
SCOTT, WAYNE S. ASN 0-206605	Navigator KIA	2nd Lt.	West Palm Beach, Florida
HOWSER, EARL P. ASN 0-864127	Radar-Nav. KIA	1st Lt.	Kansas City, Missouri
WALKER, JOSEPH H. ASN 14135751	Engineer KIA	T/Sgt.	Sycamore, Alabama
COLOSIMO, PATRICK N. ASN 13061725	Radio Oper. POW	T/Sgt.	Branchton, Pennsylvania
KIRKEY, VERNON O. ASN 31166867	Nose Turret KIA	S/Sgt.	Plymouth, Massachusetts
MACE, GLENN E. Jr. ASN 17151925	RW Gunner KIA	S/Sgt.	Washington, Iowa
STEINMILLER, WILBERT R. ASN 12239759	LW Gunner KIA, buried Ardennes (D-4-5)	S/Sgt.	Rochester, New York
WEINMAN, EDWARD I. ASN 32828525	Tail Turret KIA, buried Ardennes (B-23-16)	S/Sgt.	Long Island, New York

The MACR briefly states that this aircraft was flying at 21,000 feet, encountering intense, accurate flak. It was seen to take a direct hit in the bomb bay. At this time, 1200 hours, aircraft was seen to fall out of formation with a fire in its bomb bay. Three chutes were observed coming out. One was on fire. The aircraft staggered, continually losing altitude, and then blew up.

The following details come from a lengthier article that appeared in the Winter 1995 edition of 8 Ball Tails: "CORKY was hit by flak with a direct hit in the bomb bay shortly before 12:00 just prior to bombs away. She pulled out of formation, losing altitude and exploded several thousand feet below. Maurice Corwine, the pilot, and Patrick Colosimo, the radio operator, were the only two survivors. Three parachutes had been reported from the plane.

"While on the bomb run, Patrick Colosimo had gone down off the flight deck to open the bomb doors, as there apparently had been some technical problems with one of the doors which was partly stuck open. Glenn Mace had also come forward from his mid-ship position and was assisting him in opening the door. The gears were apparently stripped and the door on one side was only open about a foot. Corwine had told them to leave it and they were going to salvo the bombs later. Mace was returning to his waist position and Colosimo turned to go back up to the flight deck. At that point, the ship shuddered and there was severe heat on his back and flames

all around him. His clothes caught on fire, and as he was disconnected from the intercom, he didn't know what was said following this. Apparently he was pushed out by someone else through the bomb bay. He was not aware of what happened for a period till he came around, his parachute deployed, with no signs of any other parachutes, but a large fire on the ground. Patrick indicated that he had been picked up by Germans and thrown into a village prison where the news of his crew was variable and was told that six were dead and then later that they were all alive. He was moved to several different prison camps following this, and on the 5th of May, his prison camp was liberated coincidentally by the 82nd airborne to which his brother was attached. Being injured, he was shipped out by ambulance to a hospital. His brother, Jim, only missed him by 20 minutes. He returned to the U.S. in late May where he contacted the relatives of his crew. Maurice Corwine returned home shortly after and his story was basically similar, having been blown clear of the plane in the explosion and having been taken prisoner.

[According to] some copies of captured German documents...the story is that just before noon on a clear and cold wintry day, the American bombers flew over Dortmund. The anti-aircraft batteries hit a silver plane; the right wing, which went on fire, broke off, and the plane spun down. The witnesses only saw one parachute, though later information indicated that there were two survivors. The east wind blew the parachute towards Dortmund, suburb of Mengde, and the remains of the plane came down in Dortmund-Derne. Colosimo landed on a street called Am Ammerbaum. At this point, there was a flak unit 88mm crewed by members of the Arbeitsdienst (young men too young for military service) and 105-mm battery of the Luftwaffe.

There was some argument as to who should take him prisoner and in the meantime, two police officers arrived and lifted him up and carried him approximately 1.5 km. to the local police station. He was wounded and bleeding from the head and his right leg was broken. On the way, they passed a number of civilians who were standing on the street, screaming "murderer" and who spat and kicked him. One of them kicked his broken leg and Patrick screamed. At this point, the police officers did not take any action and the witness said that the journey was like running the gauntlet. One of the little boys grabbed a heated glove that he was carrying. When they reached the police station, he was left on the steps and the police officers went inside. The two young boys came up to Patrick and saw that he was covered in sweat and that there were tears running down his face.

At that point, the local Ortsgruppen Leiter (local Nazi party official) Franz Land arrived on his bicycle, ran up the stairs towards the prisoner. Patrick must have gotten a shock when he saw this real Nazi in his brown uniform coming towards him after what had happened on his journey from the street. However, Land entered the police station and there was a loud argument, the basis of which was that the policemen had not carried out their duty to protect the prisoner who had been abused. The police officers defended themselves saying that Dr. Goerbels had said (no mercy for the terror flyers). Patrick was then carried inside and put in a detention cell in the basement and the two boys saw him through a window. He was moaning, "Help me, help me." One of the police officers left the police station and fetched Dr. Hallermann, the local doctor, who came and gave him medical treatment."

66th SQUADRON:

66th Sq., #44-10542 G+, Perrault	TALLY HO II	No MACR required
66th Squadron Crew:	Entire crew returned	
PERRAULT, ROBLEE A. ASN 0-718741	Pilot Returned	2nd Lt. Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

HAGAN, JACK L. ASN 0-829720	Co-pilot Returned	2nd Lt.	Huntington, West Virginia
PETERS, WADE D. ASN T-132351	Navigator Returned	Flt Of.	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
LAROCCO, THOMAS C. ASN 12093731	Engineer Returned	T/Sgt.	East Bayonne, New Jersey
HELLEIN, GAULT M. Jr. ASN 33671241	Radio Oper. Returned	T/Sgt.	Baltimore, Maryland
VAN HORN, NORMAN E. ASN 13188024	Nose Turret Returned	S/Sgt.	New Castle, Pennsylvania
FOSTER, VIRGIL L. ASN 36900323	RW Gunner Returned	S/Sgt.	Princeton, Illinois
IHNACIK, JOHN J. ASN 35061436	LW Gunner Returned	S/Sgt.	Cleveland, Ohio
CLARK, WILLIAM N. Jr. ASN 35229520	Carpet Blk. Returned	Sgt.	Toledo, Ohio
DESCAMPS, JULES ASN 36957756	Tail Turret Returned	S/Sgt.	Detroit, Michigan

Lt. Roblee A. Perrault, pilot, crash-landed this aircraft 20 miles from Brussels (Bonneff-Gernblou). #2 engine ran away, #3 supercharger had failed. No field was in sight when #1 engine started to go out, so he lowered wheels and landed in a field. The plane broke up, but the crew was not injured.

Navigator Wade D. Peters added, "Yes, we did crash-land outside of Brussels and was this crew's first mission. We had just bombed over Dortmund when #2 engine had a runaway prop, which was eventually feathered, I think. We lost considerable altitude, so headed south to avoid the large concentration of flak. Then we turned west, and then north to the Brussels area.

"After letting down a bit, we made a 180 degree turn in order to turn back into Brussels, when we just ran out of engines. It happened so fast that the wheels were only partially down and less than 100 feet altitude, and the crew had no warning.

"We crash-landed in a large, open field which had about two feet of snow covering it – luckily, thank God! The only injury that I can recall is that someone in the waist had a bruised knee. Several of us made our way to a farmhouse where we spent the night. The next day an American Railway outfit picked us up, and we were taken to a large Gym-type building in Brussels, which housed crews and fighter pilots who had had accidents or emergency landings in Europe.

"The first plane assigned for us to fly back had only three propellers, so we took another to get back to England. I do not recall where we landed."

Pilot Roblee A. Perrault added, "Just at bombs away, a burst of flak just in front of #2 engine caused the prop to run away. It would not feather, but kept windmilling until the crash. We had lost the #3 supercharger, and with only two good engines, could not keep up with the formation. We proceeded west bound, eventually crash-landing about 20 miles east of Brussels. At that time, #2 was still windmilling, #1 was OK, #3 had power only at low altitude, but #4 was on fire.

"I don't know if there was other battle damage as the aircraft broke up to some extent when the nose gear collapsed and the right main gear did not lock and failed, too. The #4 engine was burning and continued to burn, eventually cutting through the wing just inside of #4. Both

outside props came off and we didn't see them again. The bullet-proof windshield broke out and away, providing a convenient exit route for the 'front office' crew members."

Lt. Jack Hagan, co-pilot, remembered, "One ship in our squadron received heavy flak damage and left the formation before we did. The briefed route was for us to turn east after bombing, into Germany, then north to the North Sea. But after incurring our damages, Lt. Perrault decided we were too badly hurt to follow those plans, so we turned west toward a possible emergency field. We were having trouble maintaining our altitude, so all unnecessary equipment was jettisoned. Radio contact was made with the emergency field and a heading was given to us.

"Overcast was from 10,000 feet to approximately 1500 feet. We were told we were over the field at an altitude of approximately 4,000 feet and were directed to proceed on heading and turn back to the airfield when we had visibility enough to do so. After breaking clear, we started a turn to the right and lost another engine. I spotted an open area and directed our pilot to it. Our windshield had frosted, making forward visibility very difficult, but being in the right seat and a right turn I could see out the side window. I engaged the landing wheels due to habit, but by this time, we were through some trees and very near to touchdown. Our crew in the waist area were not alerted as we didn't have the time.

"When the nose wheel, and then the right main collapsed, it put us in a slow ground loop – very fortunate for us, as we were heading into a large drainage ditch and we missed it. "Luckily, too, the fire burned through the wing without setting off an explosion. After getting out, three of us left to find help. We were directed to a nearby farm, where a phone was available. Contact was made with a railroad group, who picked us up the next day."

Engineer Thomas C. LaRocco added that with the loss of #3 engine, all hydraulically operated equipment failed – prop feathering, flaps, and landing gear. He had attempted to lower the landing gear mechanically, but the right gear did not come all the way down and lock.

Lt. Perrault and the others stayed with the plane until 11 PM guarding it and waiting for the fire to burn out. Sgt. Norman Van Horn said that the main landing gear melted from the heat, the magnesium alloy running in a stream. Help arrived at 11 PM and all of the crew stayed overnight at the farm. The railroad men failed to notify the base, so this crew was listed as MIA until they returned almost a week later.

None of the crew could clearly remember Sgt. Clark, except Lt. Peters. He told me that he thought that Clark was later KIA – and that is true. Sgt. Clark was killed on 19 March 1945 with Lt. Podojil.

66th SQUADRON:

66th Sq., #42-52618 V+, Muldoon	CHIEF WAPELLO	Crashed in Allied territory
66th Squadron Crew:	Entire crew returned	
MULDOON, JOHN J.	Pilot	2nd Lt.
DUERKSEN, OLIVER E.	Co-pilot	2nd Lt.
GROSSMAN, KARL D. Jr.	Navigator	2nd Lt.
JACOB, WALTER A.	Nose Gun./Toggler Leg broken	Sgt.
HREBAR, ADOLPH J.	Radio Oper.	Sgt.
WILNER, EDWARD A.	Eng./Top Turret	Sgt.
WILLIS, GEORGE K. Jr.	RW Gunner	Sgt.

ALBERADO, JOHN A.	LW Gunner	Sgt.
SCHONFELD, EDWIN L.	Tail Turret	S/Sgt.

Note: Walter Jacob did not fly again.

On withdrawal, southwest of Majmegese, this aircraft lost its #3 engine and was breaking up, so the crew bailed out. Ground witnesses (identified as 12th REA, 43rd battery, 3rd Canadian Div.) reported that they observed nine chutes and noticed a formation of enemy aircraft diving on the damaged aircraft, which crashed in woods near Berg-en-dal, Holland.

The co-pilot, Oliver Duerksen, told me a bit about the plane starting to break up in the air, so all crewmembers were trying to get out. He did not know the sequence of the crewmen as they jumped, but he was one of the last. He saw the plane crash and explode, so was happy that the bombsight was destroyed. He said a few of the men landed in a pocket occupied by Canadian Artillery Units close to the front line and in 'no man's land.' These troops got them to safety.

Duerksen was wearing his Lt. bars on his shoulder, and upon landing, his chin came down on the bars and cut his chin and part of his cheek. So he was bleeding a bit, and a Canadian military man took him to a nearby village, possibly a church where a "Mother Superior" took him inside for medical attention. He said she went to a locked medical cabinet, opened it, took out another key and opened another door, took out a bottle of Schnapps for a drink. He said he needed that.

One of the crewmen, nose gunner and togglier Sgt. Walter A. Jacob, broke his leg when landing, even though there was about a foot of snow on the ground. He did not fly more missions, but was sent home for medical treatment. The other members of the crew continued on active combat status.

Test Flight, Shipdham, England

One 68th Squadron aircraft was attempting a test flight on this date, presumably after the operational formation had left for their mission. The runway was slushy from snow.

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #42-50349 F, Almonia	FLAK MAGNET		Crashed on takeoff
68th Squadron Crewman:			
ALMONIA, VINCENT	Pilot	2nd Lt.	
CORNELY, WILLIAM F.	Co-pilot	Flt. Off.	
FERRARA, MICHAEL J.	Navigator	2nd Lt.	
SCOTT, LAYTON W. ASN 39468984	Nose Gun./Toggler DIED, buried Cambridge (B-2-18)	Sgt.	Westfall, Oregon
KIRSCHLING, ROBERT J.	Radio Oper.	S/Sgt.	
RICHARDSON, OSCAR A.	Eng./Top Turret	S/Sgt.	
CHAMBERLAND, NORMAND H.	RW Gunner	S/Sgt.	
WALTON, ELBERT B.	LW Gunner	S/Sgt.	
MANKUS, MATTHEW	Tail Turret	S/Sgt.	

Note: This crew had been assigned as a 68th Squadron spare for this mission.

This aircraft was on takeoff in bad weather, severely cold. Ice built up on wings and fuselage from mist thrown up by previous planes that had taken off, the spray froze on contact with this

aircraft, destroying lift. It mushed down after rising to about 50 feet of altitude, and crashed approximately two miles east of field. It caught fire and burned completely.

Sgt. Scott was crushed when the top turret fell from its mounting. Though he was rescued and was still alive, he died on 4 February from his injuries. The other crewmembers sustained minor injuries as well.

7 February 1945

Aircraft Fire and Explosion, Shipdham, England

One 68th Squadron combat man was killed by a bomb explosion in the early morning hours when a fully loaded aircraft accidentally caught fire and burned.

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #42-50509 Y	WANA		Fire and explosion at base
68th Squadron Crewman: (Gunner from Lt. J. R. Collins' crew)			
DUCKI, STANLEY H.	Tail Turret DIED	S/Sgt.	East Berlin, Connecticut

An ordnance crew was loading this 68th Squadron aircraft for the planned operations, when one of these workmen found it necessary to fill the gas tank on the aircraft's auxiliary electrical power unit (APU) which was providing power for their lights. In doing so, he spilled a bit of gasoline and when he turned on the main line and battery switches in order to re-start this auxiliary power unit located beneath the flight deck, the spilled fuel ignited. As the APU was located under the flight deck, out of sight, the fire was not immediately apparent, and when discovered, could not be extinguished.

There were ten 500-pound General Purpose bombs lined up beneath the aircraft in preparation for loading. Seven of them were moved before the plane blew up. Two of the bombs detonated while the fire fighting units were moving into position to fight the fire. A large part of one bomb casing, three feet long and two feet wide, was hurtled over 300 yards, tearing through a line shack in the 67th Squadron area, and killed Sgt. Ducki, who was warming himself during guard duty.

Sgt. Frank Chowanski, a 67th Squadron crew chief, investigated the damaged shack and found Sgt. Ducki still sitting on a bunk, but without a mark on him. The casing had nearly demolished the shack, going completely through it, but there was no immediate evidence to indicate that it had struck Sgt. Ducki.

Sgt. Ducki had completed his tour of duty of 29 missions as part of Lt. James R. Collins' crew and was assigned guard duty pending arrangements for him to be returned to the States, as was the generally accepted procedure for most combat men. It was most ironic that this man could complete 29 missions over Europe and then be killed by one of our own bombs and on our own base.

23 February 1945

Rail Center, Weimar, Germany

67th SQUADRON:

67th Sq., #42-51552 F, Bakanic

Crash-landed

67th Squadron Crew:

BAKANIC, GEORGE Jr.	Pilot	2nd Lt.
BOUGHNER, JACK L.	Co-pilot	2nd Lt.
FLAHERTY, F. I.	Navigator	Flt. Off
ROBBINS, JEAN B.	Bombardier	Sgt.
LARAMORE, JAMES L.	Radio Oper.	Sgt.
LINDGREN, MORTON G.	Eng./Top Turret	Sgt.
WEBER, HERMAN P.	RW Gunner	Sgt.
BUHLER, THEO W.	LW Gunner	Sgt.
MANZER, CLYDE F.	Tail Turret	Sgt.

Clyde Manzer, the tail gunner, wrote: "That mission, I believe it was our fifth, scared the hell out of me and I guess Robbins too. From a tail gunner's point of view, this is what happened. I don't know where we were going, but it was a routine mission. We had turned on the IP and we were on the bomb run when we lost the #2 engine. With the loss of power, we dropped under the formation. The pilot and/or co-pilot tried to feather the prop. It wouldn't feather, and started to windmill. It windmilled the rest of the way.

"I am guessing that the pilot, George Bakanic, made a decision to fly to France, rather than try to fly back to England because of the additional fuel demands of flying on three engines. While we were under the formation, I happened to look up into the open bomb bays filled with what looked like 1,000-pound bombs. I pressed my intercom button and said, 'Bakanic, get the hell out of here.' He said, 'Why?' I said, 'Look up.' The next thing that I knew, the plane was standing on its right wing and we were out of there.

"There was cloud cover under us and somehow we had picked up an escort of P-51s. The pilots of the P-51s saw the windmilling prop and thought that we were flying normally. They stayed with us until the cloud cover disappeared and we were over the twin cities of Mannheim and Ludwigshaven on the Rhine River.

"They shot the hell out of things. We were their only target. They shot 88s, 105s, and 155-mm anti-aircraft guns at us. They shot black flak, white flak, and red flak at us.

"I was still in my tail turret when the pilot started to take evasive action. I thought that we had been hit and that we were going down. I pulled the ripcord on my flak suit. It fell off and I rolled backward out of the tail turret and grabbed my parachute and tried to hook it to my parachute harness. I was so nervous (scared) that I couldn't hit the hooks. I was trembling from the tips of my toenails to the ends of the hair on my head.

"I finally got the parachute hooked and headed for the escape hatch. Buhler and Weber pointed out to me that we were still flying. There I stood with my flak suit on the floor in three pieces. (I used to sit on the apron). I did wear my flak helmet though. Somehow we got through all of that flak. They must have had their second string in.

"We flew on to St. Dizier. I remember looking down at crossed runways. One ran into a canal. The other ran into a field. As the pilot prepared to land, he tried the flaps. They didn't work. He tried the landing gear. They didn't work. The engineer, Morton Lindgren cranked down the flaps and the landing gear. We knew that the hydraulics were damaged. The pilot didn't want to test

the brakes in case there was a little pressure left. The pilot and co-pilot put it down rather gently. I don't remember a big bump. We coasted smoothly for awhile until we went off on the end of the runway, across the field, and hit a ditch. The ditch sheared off the landing gear and we were on the belly for awhile. The brakes didn't work. I set an unofficial record of the 100-yard dash getting away from that airplane. B-24s had a reputation for blowing up. I was in full flying gear, too.

“The whole crew was standing away from the plane, looking at it, when a column of Jeeps and ambulances drove up. A medical officer looked us all over and asked if we were hurt. When we all said no, he said, “What do you want, bourbon, scotch or cognac?” The navigator had a cut over one of his eyes. He was offered a Purple Heart, but declined. We left the aircraft there, fully armed, with only our personal belongings removed.”

25 February 1945

Marshalling Yards, Aschaffenburg, Germany

Thirty-five of the 44th BG aircraft attacked this target with excellent results. The weather was clear, no flak in the target area, and our fighters offered excellent cover. Yet one aircraft did not return – and it was not recorded in the official records of the Group.

66th SQUADRON:

66th Sq., #42-51258 J+, Derrick	BEVERLY JEAN	Low on fuel, parachuted
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66th Squadron Crew:

DERRICK, JAMES V. ASN 0-721660	Pilot Returned	1st Lt.	Jacksboro, Texas
MEYERS, JOSEPH G. ASN T-128326	Co-pilot Broken Back/Evacuated	Flt Of	Baltimore, Maryland
THOMAS, ROGER J. ASN 0-2066074	Navigator Neck injury	2nd Lt.	Wheaton, Illinois
ANTHONY, ROBERT I. ASN 13141785	Nose Turret Returned	S/Sgt.	Baltimore, Maryland
BROWN, CLARENCE J. ASN 32938216	Engineer Broken Leg/Evacuated	T/Sgt.	Wallingford, Vermont
BROWN, HARRY R. ASN 19203793	Radio Oper. Broken leg	T/Sgt.	Long Beach, California
HORTON, STARR W. ASN 34910189	Waist Gun. Returned	S/Sgt.	Miami Shores, Florida
STROH, DONALD E. ASN 36822565	Waist Gun. Minor injuries	S/Sgt.	Denver, Colorado
ANDRES, ROBERT J. ASN 36784563	Tail Turret Returned	S/Sgt.	Kildier, Illinois

Sgt. Donald E. Stroh wrote that, “I always was under the impression that we ran out of gas while looking for an airfield at Charleroi in the fog, to set down in. But Lt. Meyers and navigator Lt. Thomas told me that we had been hit, (probably by flak) and we had lost fuel out of one engine. They had been transferring gas to the other three supply tanks in order not to lose all of it.”

Co-pilot Joseph Meyers added, “We were very close to an auxiliary landing field in Charleroi, Belgium, but did not have time to locate the field. So Lt. Derrick and I took the plane back up to 3,000 feet and we all jumped.

“I landed in an open field after believing that I was going to hit a wire fence, pulled the shrouds to miss the fence and landed hard. I was rescued from the very beautiful local girls by some GIs from an AA Station. On the way to town, we picked up other crewmembers and we all met at a local hospital where we were attended by American physicians.

“I carried Harry Brown’s parachute as he was limping – his leg was broken. Upon the insistence of the physicians, I had to be X-rayed – walked into the X-ray room – and left on a stretcher and spent the next three months flat on my back and six more recuperating. Ended up in Plattsburg, New York, along with Clarence Brown and his badly broken leg.

“Most of the crew returned to duty but did not fly again as a crew until 19 March. I was finished on this, my eighth one. Lt. Derrick continued flying till end of hostilities.”

25 February continued:

68th SQUADRON:

67th Sq., #42-110031 H-Bar, Warner	PHYLLIS	Crash-landed
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Note: This was a 67th Squadron aircraft flying with a 68th Squadron crew.

68th Squadron Crew:

WARNER, WILLIAM L.	Pilot	2nd Lt.
DRAKE, DUDLEY D.	Co-pilot	2nd Lt.
KAY, ROBERT P.	Navigator	2nd Lt.
BENGSTON, CLIFFORD	Nose Gun./Toggler	Sgt.
LEIBNER, AL	Radio Oper.	S/Sgt.
GRAU, BILLY E. ASN 18194464	Eng./Top Turret	Sgt. Shoulder injury, sent to U.S.A. 11 March 1945
SPRENGER, KEITH W.	RW Gunner	Sgt.
SCORPIO, ANTONIO	LW Gunner	Sgt.
SWEGEL, ROBERT V.	Tail Turret	Sgt.

Note: This crewman was originally identified as Graube [no first name] but it appears from later research that this is Billy E. Grau, whose last mission is listed on 25 February 1945 in the database.

Lt. William Warner, low on fuel, headed toward an A-26 field near Laon, but he came up short by about a half of a mile and crash-landed in an open field. Billy Grau, the Engineer, received a broken shoulder when the top turret broke loose. Grau ended up in a field hospital and was finally sent back to the States; his combat days were over. The balance of Warner’s crew had only minor scratches and bruises.

The 67th Squadron war diary reports indicate that three of their planes landed on the continent this mission. The pilots were: Lt. Bethel landed at Brussels due to gas shortage, while Lts. Stephen C. Harris and Hildebrand landed at Verdun, in France. No further information can be located. Six other 44th aircraft that were low on fuel landed on the continent. All returned later.

 1 March 1945

Marshaling Yards, Ingolstadt, Germany

This aircraft was abandoned over or near the French town of San Quentin.

67th SQUADRON:

67th Sq., #42-95049 O-Bar, Crandell	FEARLESS FOSDICK	Crew bailed out
67th Squadron Crew:		
CRANDELL, LEONARD J.	Pilot	2nd Lt.
CROLL, WILLIAM B.	Co-pilot	2nd Lt.
CARLBERG, BERTIL	Navigator	2nd Lt.
ROACH, JAMES E.	Nose Gun./Togglier	S/Sgt.
FEENEY, LARRY L.	Radio Oper.	T/Sgt.
OGILVIE, ROBERT. B. Jr.	Eng./Top Turret	T/Sgt.
GERMOLUS, IRWIN E.	RW Gunner	S/Sgt.
BATTENBERG, WALTER R.	LW Gunner	S/Sgt.
BROWN, JAMES M. Jr.	Tail Turret	S/Sgt.

Note: This aircraft went down at Vermand, France (Ingolstadt). It was salvaged 30 March 1945 on the continent by five SAD. The entire Crandell crew, with the exception of Bertil Carlberg, was KIA on 24 March 1945.

The following account is by Bertil Carlberg, the navigator. “The mission was to bomb a target in the vicinity of Munich – quite a long mission timewise in those days. The flight was uneventful until we left the target area and headed home. After about an hour into the return trip the flight engineer and co-pilot reported that our fuel gauges (sight gauges) were showing that we were or had been using more fuel than anticipated. At the same time I reported that we were encountering much stronger headwinds than we had been briefed on that morning. Another hour passed and we dropped behind the formation to conserve fuel. By this time it was apparent that we did not have enough fuel to make it back to Shipdham so Lieutenant Crandell asked me for a course heading to a friendly alternate in France. Paris was the best alternate; but we decided against it because, since liberation of that Capital, too many bomber crews had, on the slightest pretext, landed there in order to have a brief fling with the French beauties. This had resulted in a stern warning issued at briefings that Paris was more or less off limits. I selected an airfield 90 miles north of Paris near a town named San Quentin because it was located in an area, shown on our topographical map, that was low countryside free of any high hills where a crash landing would be more survivable.

“We descended into a solid cloud cover that we soon found out extended right to within 100 to 200 feet of the ground. The only means of navigation I had during the descent was the G box (RADAR) and that only from one blip radiating from the master station giving me a course reading. We became quite concerned when we were still in the clouds at 500 feet on the altimeter; however, we broke out at about 300 feet flying in and out of some low scud clouds. The course heading brought us over the portion of the airfield where there were parked B-26 aircraft, but the pilots could not line up for an approach to the runway due to the low clouds. Finally we lost sight of the airfield altogether, so I asked Lieutenant Crandell to take a reciprocal heading back towards the direction we had come from. After a few minutes I picked up the course blip reading again on my G box, and we headed back to the airfield a second time. Again

we experienced the same problem: crossing over a portion of the airfield but not being able to make a visual approach to the runway. By this time our fuel indicators were hovering just above the empty mark.

“While all of this maneuvering is going on the gunners were just sitting listening to our conversation over the intercom realizing that we are running out of fuel and not able to land. After we were not able to make our second approach, they pleaded with Lieutenant Crandell to climb up to a safe altitude so that they could have the opportunity to bail out safely. At this point he also felt that we probably did not have enough fuel to continue to circle the field any longer, so he started an ascent north of this weather-bound alternate. We climbed to 11 or 12 thousand feet where we finally broke out on top of all clouds. The aircraft was leveled off on a westerly heading, and the evacuation began. The gunners and radio operator bailed out, then the flight engineer was crouching on the catwalk ready to jump, and I to follow, when he looked up at me and shook his head. I took this to mean that he did not want to jump, so I just pushed him out. We were about 1,000 feet over the cloud layer, and I watched him tumble down and disappear into the clouds without his chute opening. With this on my mind I jumped and pulled my ripcord at the same time barely clearing the aircraft. I floated down into the clouds watching the aircraft flying serenely on as if on a routine flight. I found out the next day that as soon both pilots bailed out the engines stopped and the aircraft crashed into an open field.

“It was a thick cloud mass that we descended through. What fixed in my mind, even after 51 years, was the stillness and complete silence that I experienced as I floated to earth. When I was able to see the ground, I attempted to stop pendulating, but the base of the clouds and the ground itself were not far apart so when I hit, I was apparently on top of my swing coming down and hit the ground with my entire body. I was knocked out for a short time, and on awakening my parachute was lying limp because there was no ground wind blowing. It was early evening and still light, but it must have been a rainy day because my impact on the wet ground left an entire body imprint which was still there the next morning when I returned to look for a couple of lost items. With my flight clothing I weighed about 230 pounds so the soft ground most likely saved me from serious injury. Some days later the boys in the parachute shop voiced some concern that I should have been issued a larger chute!

“This area of France had been taken from the Nazis some months earlier and, being an agricultural region, it was being prepared for the spring planting. In the waning light I spotted a farmhouse and out buildings about a half-mile away and walked to them carrying my silk parachute. I knocked on the door of the farmhouse, and it was opened by a farmer’s wife who registered some alarm upon seeing on her doorstep a large airman whom she could not immediately identify as friend or foe. A couple of younger women, presumably daughters, crowded around her and spoke to me in French. Not speaking the language, I kept repeating “American” which finally registered. They indicated by sign language for me to come in and sit down in the kitchen while one of the daughters went to the nearby village by the name of Fresnoy-Griscourt, for assistance in communicating with me.

“While I waited they prepared for me a cup of ersatz coffee, at least it was hot and supposed to taste like coffee. The daughter soon returned from the village with a man who spoke English very well. We spoke briefly, and then he asked me to come with him to the village. Before we left the farm house I told him that I appreciated the hospitality given to me by that particular family and that I would like to leave the women my parachute as a token of appreciation. He told me not to do it because that particular family had been quite friendly with the Germans during

the occupation, so they were not very popular with the rest of the villagers. This French gentleman was truly a gentleman and, in addition, was a bonafide Count by the name of Comte de Tacher de la Pagerie with a most beautiful home dominating the countryside.

“In the center of the village was a small café, which we entered. There I found the flight engineer Bob Ogilvie who I had pushed off of the bomb bay catwalk about an hour earlier, wolfing down a meal! He had been picked up earlier but none of the other crewmembers showed up. We assumed that they found their way to the airfield that we had tried to land at but eventually had to abort our attempts. Inasmuch as it was now dark and getting late our new friend invited us to stay in his home overnight. He did however call the airfield and tell the authorities that he had us under his wing and that he would bring us there in the morning. The evening was a memorable one for Ogilvie and myself. Comte de Tacher brought out some of his food and drink that he was saving for the war’s end celebration. We spent a wonderful evening with this fantastic person and finally went to bed in goose down pillow and comforter covered beds.

“During our evening of relaxation Comte de la Pagerie told us about the conditions that they lived under during the German occupation. He advised that his home, which we were enjoying at the moment, had been requisitioned by the Germans and used as officers’ quarters. We certainly agreed that they had good taste. In the morning we were taken to the airfield, rejoined with the rest of the crew and, a few days later, flew a spare B-24 back to Shipdham, England.

“I am the sole survivor [of this incident] because three weeks later, on March 24, 1945, Lieutenant Crandell’s crew flew on a low level supply dropping mission over the Rhine River in support of Field Marshall Montgomery’s thrust across the Rhine. They received a fatal hit from ground fire that caused the aircraft to go out of control and crash leaving no survivors. Two weeks prior I had been transferred to Captain Ed Reynolds’ crew as a lead navigator, so my replacement on Len’s crew [William M. Hummer] suffered the fate that I escaped. After all this time the details of my experiences on that March day remain vivid in my mind, but time will eventually wipe out this memory.”

12 March 1945

Marshaling yards, Wetzlar, Germany

Captain Mack led 33 ships from the Group to the marshaling yards at Wetzlar, Germany, on 12 March. Bombing was by H2X with unobserved results. Enemy opposition was nonexistent. Fighter support was good. There were 33 ships in the formation.

506th SQUADRON:

67th Sq., #44-49323, Mack

Crewmember bailed out

Note: This was a 506th Squadron crew flying a 67th Squadron aircraft.

506th Squadron Crew:

MACK, FIRMAN B.	Pilot	Capt.
SAYLER, DAVID E.	Command Pilot	Capt.
FUSS, CLARENCE	Co-pilot	1st Lt.
MARGOLIES, MURRAY G.	Navigator	2nd Lt.
CODY, RICHARD E.	Navigator-PFF	1st Lt.
LINDSTROM, ALFRED Jr.	Bombardier	1st Lt.

HESELINK, GARRITT	Radio Oper.	T/Sgt.
TEWKSBURY, ROGER L.	Eng./Top Turret	T/Sgt.
RIGGAR, DEWEY Jr.	RW Gunner	S/Sgt.
ASSELTA, GEORGE A. Jr.	LW Gunner	Sgt.
LOGAN, GROVER C.	Tail Turret	S/Sgt.
	Injured	

In the August 1988 issue of the 44th Logbook, Firman Mack wrote: “Our mission to Wetzlar got complicated almost at once. At some point on the way to the Group forming area, the airplane suddenly filled with acrid smoke. Everyone except me was coughing and hacking and gasping, trying to put on their oxygen masks. Fortunately, I had put on my oxygen mask before we left the ground because I was usually pretty busy during form-up. After the people got their masks on, someone in the waist told me that Logan had triggered a smoke bomb accidentally while walking through the bomb bay. After a certain amount of confusion, we got the bomb bay doors open and dropped the 100-pound smoke bomb into the 10/10-cloud cover below us. I never could find out where that bomb landed. Either the people didn’t know or they didn’t want to tell me.

“After we got rid of that bomb, the smoke cleared out of our drafty old B-24 pretty rapidly. However, our troubles were not over. I received a call from the waist that the acid from the bomb had sprayed Logan in the face and he was unable to wear an oxygen mask. If he continued on the mission with us, he would surely die of anoxia. It shouldn’t happen to a nice guy like Logan. We had a little pow-wow in the cockpit. The guy that was riding Command Pilot that day said, “You can’t go back!” I guess we already knew that because we knew that we were expendable. On the way to the target, you were working for the Government, but after you dropped your bombs, you had the luxury of working for yourself.

“While I was still trying to figure out what to do about this situation, the waist called me and said ‘Logan wants to bail out!’ I had another short pow-wow with the navigator who said, ‘If he’s going to do it, he had better hurry because we are approaching the coast.’ I called the waist and told Logan to go ahead, but he shouldn’t open his chute until he hit the clouds below us, which were at about 5,000 feet. (We were then about 13,000 feet.) The wind was behind us and if he drifted too far, he might end up in the drink. Logan said, ‘Okay,’ and shortly after that he bailed out. The guys in the waist said he opened his chute almost before he got out of the airplane. I think he came down somewhere around Ipswich.

“I don’t remember much about the mission, but when we returned to Base, our revetment was swarming with staff cars. I seem to remember that General Johnson was among those present. In the uproar someone said, ‘We found one of the people who bailed out, but we can’t find the other two!’

“It took a little while to figure that out, but it seems that someone in the formation had reported that we bailed out three people. The ‘two people’ who were missing were Logan’s pants and jacket, which had been thrown out because they were smoldering from the acid.

“Shortly after this mission, at a meeting, which Colonel Snavelly was addressing, someone commented that Capt. Mack and his crew were to be congratulated for the way they handled the Logan incident. Colonel Snavelly said, ‘I don’t know whether they should be congratulated or whether Capt. Mack should be court-martialed.’ To which I responded, ‘I’m right here, Sir.’ Colonel Snavelly and I never liked each other.”

I spoke by telephone with Grover Logan and got the following information: This was Logan's 24th mission. While gaining altitude, smoke bomb pins were being removed before reaching high altitude. A bomb was activated when the arming pin was removed and Logan's face was badly burned. Smoke filled the bomb bay. Bomb was on the rear bomb racks.

To get Logan ready to parachute, his crew stripped him down, as his leg straps were too loose. They got him ready to go out shortly before the plane was nearing Great Yarmouth, and as they had taken off his Mae West gear, it was necessary that he got out before going out over the North Sea. Finally ready, he bailed out and managed to come down on land. He was a mess upon landing, face burned, clothes burned a bit, and was quite a sight when people came to his rescue, got him to Yarmouth and called military help. He spent over two weeks in the hospital.

19 March 1945

Neuberg, Germany

A Jet Plane Assembly Factory was bombed this date by thirty-three of the 44th Bomb Group's planes, with excellent results. Enemy opposition was nil, while our fighters furnished very good support. However, one of the 66th Squadron's aircraft did not return.

66th SQUADRON:

66th Sq., #42-51907 B+, Podojil

MACR #13574

66th Squadron Crew:

PODOJIL, ROBERT J. ASN 0-720346	Pilot KIA	1st Lt.	Shaker Heights, Ohio
RITTER, FREDERICK M. Jr. ASN 0-719431	Co-pilot KIA	1st Lt.	Springfld. Gdns, Long Is., N.Y.
CHASE, DUDLEY S. ASN 0-1051904	Navigator KIA	1st Lt.	Cleveland, Ohio
CRANE, WALTER W. ASN 0-785168	Bombardier KIA	1st Lt.	Santa Ana, California
BAIL, BERNARD W. ASN 0-807964	Radar-Nav. POW, wounded	1st Lt.	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
REICHENBACK, THEODORE H. ASN 6860263	Engineer KIA, buried Margraten	T/Sgt.	Duluth, Minnesota
VEITCH, MAX ASN 15140229	Radio Oper. POW	T/Sgt.	Toledo, Ohio
CLARK, WILLIAM N. Jr. ASN 35229520	Nose Turret KIA	S/Sgt.	Toledo, Ohio
WEST, JOHN W. ASN 35917694	RW Gunner KIA	S/Sgt.	Dennison, Ohio
MOSEVICH, WALTER F. ASN 16081757	LW Gunner POW	S/Sgt.	Broadview, Illinois
SCHMITZ, NORBERT J. ASN 35224546	Tail Turret Wounded, POW, died later	S/Sgt.	Miamisburg, Ohio

Very little was learned at Headquarters as to exactly what happened to this crew. At 1503 hours, this crew was heard from at a point approximately ten miles southwest of Stuttgart, Germany, and 55 miles east of the bomblines. At this time, the pilot thought he would be able to make it

back to friendly territory. He was observed to have two feathered engines. No further word was heard over VHF, and no additional information had been received at Headquarters.

Lt. Bernard Bail, radar navigator and survivor of another bail out in June 1944, stated, "On this, my 25th mission, our plane was jumped by a couple of Me 109s. The entire crew, with the exception of four of us, was killed over Germany, near Stuttgart. The tail gunner, S/Sgt. Norbert J. Schmitz, sustained a leg injury that necessitated amputation, which I witnessed. This young tail gunner later died of gangrene. I was present at his burial in the little town of Goppingen. The following day, Easter, services were held by the Germans and the three of us were permitted to attend.

"As for myself, I was wounded in my head and neck. I spent some time as a POW; later freed. Max Veitch and Walter Mosevich were freed separately, but all three of us by the 10th Armored Division."

Max Veitch added: "We became a lead crew and were on our 18th mission when we were shot down over Germany. We were flying B+ a PFF ship (#42-51907). We had an 11-man crew on board. We were on the bomb run when we lost our #3 engine. After dropping our bombs on the target, we lost our #1 engine and had to leave the formation as we were losing altitude rapidly.

"We called for fighter support, but none came. Our pilot ordered us to get rid of all the excess weight that we could. We headed back towards our lines. I was in the bomb bay throwing out all the excess stuff that I could, when I felt a large explosion and heat coming toward me from the rear of the ship. I grabbed my chest chute to dive out as the ship started down. I was able to get only one side hooked, but it carried me down okay.

"As I was floating down, I saw three German Me 109s following the ship down. I did not see it crash. I also saw only three other chutes going down on the other side of a river. I did not know who got out until that night when the German civilians got us together and took us to a town and put us in a small jail cell.

"Our tail gunner's leg [Schmitz] was shot up from his foot to his knee. Mosevich, our waist gunner, was shot in the arm and I was hit below the eye and in the hand. The 'G' Navigator, Lt. Bail, had minor injuries.

"After about a week in that jail cell with only a loaf of bread and some water, two German soldiers came and escorted us to the railroad station in Stuttgart. We got on a train and were taken to the town of Goppengen where there were four German hospitals. Sgt. Schmitz was operated on April 1, 1945 and died shortly afterwards. He was buried in a cemetery near the hospital.

"We were liberated on 21 April 1945 by the 44th infantry. Sgt. Mosevich died a few years ago. As a side note, our navigator, Lt. James Haney, was in the 44th base hospital at that time and did not fly with us on this mission. Lt. Dudley Chase was his replacement. It was the first time for Lt. Bail to fly with our crew also."

The following statement was made on 2 October 1947 by Willi Wagner, a lumberjack from Neubaerenthal: "On 19 March 1945 while working in the Hagenschiess forest, I observed an American bomber pursued and fired on by three German fighter planes. Thereupon the planes disappeared. Several minutes later, however, the bomber returned flying upside down at an altitude of approximately 40 meters only. As far as I could see a piece of the right wing with one motor had broken off. When the plane was just over the road leading from Wurmberg to

Pforzheim-east I saw one crewmember falling out of the plane. On visiting the place where he crashed I discovered one deceased American whose parachute had failed to open. The plane itself continued its flight for approximately 2,000 meters and then crashed into the so-called 'Hartheimer Rain.' I heard a strong detonation and saw a dark smoke cloud at the place concerned.

"On the next day I found the charred remains of five or six bodies of the place of crash. The crewmember who had fallen out of the bomber was buried at the spot where he had crashed by Rudolf Sigricht, former postman and two other men from Neubaerenthal three or four days later as I have learned.

"Nothing is known to me with regard to the burial of the five or six bodies found among the plane wreckage.

"In June 1945 the deceased American who fell out of the plane was disinterred, examined and evacuated on a truck most probably to Pforzheim by a French team. I believe no identification was possible."

Note: This statement's identification number is AGRC case #4785, Evacuation #1F-1750.

Rob Fisk, a navigator who flew thirty missions with Howard Hinshaw's crew, believes that Dudley Chase was killed by German civilians. Fisk's son, Bradley Fisk, wrote: "Dudley Chase and my father were good friends at Shipdham. They had adjacent bunks in the same Quonset hut. Mrs. Chase would occasionally send cookies. To keep her son honest she would frost them with a D for Dudley or an R for Robert. Around the time my father rotated home, he received word that Dudley Chase had been shot down. Parachutes were seen, and my father held out hope for his friend. However, after Dad came home, he heard that when that section of Germany was occupied by the Allies, the locals pointed out the location of the graves of several Allied airmen. One of these turned out to be Dudley Chase...Dad had heard that Chase had landed safely near another crewmember but that they had separated for safety. My Mom and Dad were told at Cambridge cemetery [during a 1983 visit] that Chase was captured and killed by civilians. His body was exhumed after the war and Dad was told that he bore the marks of multiple pitchfork wounds."

24 March 1945

Low-level supply on Rhine River, Wesel, Germany

This day's effort was one of the most important since the invasion of France. It was imperative that the ground forces gain a crossing of the Rhine and our support to them came in the form of supplies that were dropped in an area west-northwest of Wesel, on the east bank of the Rhine. To assure accuracy, this drop was made at rooftop height – and without machine guns for protection. The decision was made not to shoot at opposition on the ground as we might hit our own troops. The crews were unable to protect themselves from heavy ground fire. Two aircraft and crews did not return – one each from the 67th and 506th. One other 506th crewman died, as well, in a related accident.

67th SQUADRON:

67th Sq., #42-100314 G+, Crandell

MACR #13601

67th Squadron Crew:

Entire crew KIA

CRANDELL, LEONARD J. ASN 0-720197	Pilot KIA, buried Netherlands (H-16-26)	1st Lt.	Peoria, Illinois
CROLL, WILLIAM B. ASN 0-2058627	Co-pilot KIA	2nd Lt.	Larchmont, New York
HUMMER, WILLIAM M. ASN 0-783265	Navigator KIA, buried Netherlands (C-15-4)	2nd Lt.	Dover, New Jersey
ROACH, JAMES E. ASN 17147154	Nose Turret KIA	S/Sgt.	Denver, Colorado
OGILVIE, ROBERT B. Jr. ASN 32736724	Engineer KIA	T/Sgt.	Auburn, New York
FEENEY, LARRY L. ASN 39466210	Radio Oper. KIA, buried Netherlands (H-17-27)	T/Sgt.	Spokane, Washington
GERMOLUS, IRWIN E. ASN 39047565	RW Gunner KIA	S/Sgt.	Albany, New York
BATTENBERG, WALTER R. ASN 36832427	LW Gunner KIA	S/Sgt.	Milwaukee, Wisconsin
BROWN, JAMES M. Jr. ASN 34316177	Tail Turret KIA	S/Sgt.	Rosehill, North Carolina

The MACR states that this aircraft was in #11 position in the second squadron, high on the low lead squadron. At 1314 hours, after supplies had been dropped, this aircraft took a sudden, climbing attitude, nose high, and at the same time, number one engine was smoking. This aircraft then stalled out and nosed directly into the ground, exploded immediately. The 44th BG's film of this mission includes the view of this aircraft going down and crashing.

The second aircraft lost on the 24th was that from the 506th Squadron and piloted by 2nd Lt. Max E. Chandler.

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #42-50896 Bar-R, Chandler	SOUTHERN COMFORT IV	MACR #13600
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Note: This was the fourth SOUTHERN COMFORT, but it had "III" painted on the aircraft.

506th Squadron Crew:

CHANDLER, MAX E. ASN 0-2059456	Pilot KIA	2nd Lt.	Monticello, Indiana
O'DONNELL, HUGH X. ASN T-65165	Co-pilot KIA	Flt Off.	Brooklyn, New York
DANTZLER, ROBERT T. ASN 0-207275	Navigator KIA	2nd Lt.	Birmingham, Alabama
CORDES, THOMAS H. ASN 12100258	Nose Turret KIA, buried Netherlands (K-7-15)	Sgt.	Oradell, New Jersey
NEDDER, SARKICE T. ASN 31360823	Engineer KIA	Sgt.	Hyde Park, Massachusetts
ELLIOTT, EUGENE L. ASN 31378866	Radio Oper. KIA, buried Netherlands (K-7-14)	Sgt.	Hartford, Connecticut
DEBLASIO, LOUIS J. ASN 12145683	RW Gunner POW, severe injuries	Sgt.	Brooklyn, New York
CLARK, THOMAS W. ASN 12100209	LW Gunner KIA	Sgt.	Hutley, New Jersey

VANCE, ROBERT D.
ASN 35605905

Tail Turret
POW/Injured

Sgt.

Empire,
Ohio

The MACR states that, “This aircraft was flying as number three in second squadron of a force re-supplying paratroopers, at very low altitude, in an area over 2 miles west-northwest of Wesel. At 1314 hours, this aircraft was observed to lose control momentarily. It struck the ground and came back up to about 100 feet, under control. It flew along for about 90 seconds, then the right wing dipped and struck the ground, causing it to pinwheel and hit the ground again. It disintegrated as it started to burn.”

Sgt. Richard V. Lynch stated, “I was flying nose gunner on Lt. Lee’s aircraft, I-Bar 193. We were flying at approximately 300 feet and dropped our supplies at 1314 hours. Immediately after this, I noticed number four engine on R-Bar 896, Lt. Chandler’s ship, begin to smoke and then noticed the plane hit the ground with its belly and bottom part of the rudders, then bounce up into the air and maintain level, controlled flight at approximately 100 feet – for about a minute and a half.

“The plane, then apparently out of control, banked sharply to the right with the right wing hitting the ground and continued to revolve to the right in a clockwise direction, pivoting on the right wing tip and ending up skidding along on its belly, 180 degrees to our path of flight. The plane started to burn immediately as it hit the ground and I was unable to determine whether or not there were any survivors.”

One cannot imagine anyone escaping from that terrible scene, but two of them did! Sgt. Robert Vance stated in his interrogation later, “Immediately after dropping our supplies, we were under intense small arms fire. Sgt. DeBlasio, Sgt. Clark and myself were in the waist section. Sgt. Clark was standing between the ball turret well and the bomb bay, while DeBlasio and myself were standing at the waist windows. Shortly after this, we heard a rather large explosion and right after that, we noticed flames in the bomb bay. We heard nothing over the interphone nor did we call the pilot. Sgt. DeBlasio and myself laid down on the flak suits lying on the floor in the waist of the ship. I don’t remember anything after this until I woke up some time later. (It was determined the time to be several hours later near 1730 hours) ”

The plane split at the waist, and DeBlasio and Vance found themselves partially thrown clear. DeBlasio’s arm was badly injured and his left eye was bloody and beginning to swell. Vance had a deep head laceration, a fractured clavicle, and had lost one tooth. Bleeding and in semi-shock, they crawled away from the plane, minutes before it exploded.

Louis DeBlasio recalled, “Knowing the Germans would be watching to see if anyone got out of the plane, we crawled across a field, and hid under a wagon. I bandaged Bob’s bleeding head and he bandaged my eye. I never lost consciousness, but due to his head wound, Bob was incoherent for some time.”

They tried to take off their parachute harness, but weren’t able. Vance’s right clavicle was fractured, and DeBlasio’s left arm was practically non-functional. Neither had the strength nor coordination to open the buckle.

German soldiers were hiding in the woods nearby, but they would not come out for fear of being strafed by our fighters. Instead, they sent civilians to find the survivors.

Louis DeBlasio wrote: “Immediately, they took our guns. One ordered me to take mine apart. I took out the clip and field stripped it. Then they told me to put it back together. I pretended that I

didn't know how. I decided that if they were going to shoot me, it would not be with my own weapon. They carefully wrapped the parts in a handkerchief, creating a little sack. They studied our escape kits, taking the pain pills, chocolate and other candy. I had five English Pound notes, which they took out. To my amazement, they returned them to me.

“Actually, they were surprised to learn that we were Americans. They kept asking us if we were Canadians, knowing that the British were operating in that area.”

A German officer who had been hiding in the woods, took command of the two, along with a pilot from a P-47 that had crashed nearby. The officer spoke a little English, and was able to provide some first aid to their wounds. The fighter pilot had managed to bail out of his upward spiraling craft, but had a badly injured leg. The three prisoners were kept hidden in the woods, presumably to avoid the continuous strafing. When night fell, they were put on a horse-drawn wagon to be transported to where? They had no idea. Both recall the driver's commands to his horse, shouted out in the darkness, “Hooh hot.”

They woke up the next morning on the kitchen floor of a farmhouse, with German guards standing by. Louis DeBlasio's strongest memory was of suffering from overwhelming thirst; and with his multiple contusions, could hardly walk. From there, they were moved to a First Aid Station where a German doctor ordered a tetanus shot for both. Because they were wearing so many clothes, the injection was placed in the pectoral muscle in their chests. DeBlasio had a grossly abnormal reaction, tremendous swelling at the needle site and a case of hives that lasted five days. The misery of the itch kept him awake for five nights without relief. Next, they were marched across a field and into the woods to an artillery unit. Fully expecting to be shot, they were relieved that their luck continued to hold. Once again darkness brought another move. The next morning, they woke up on the straw-covered floor of a dance hall, along with other wounded soldiers, German and Allied side by side. Bob Vance's memory upon waking up was seeing a Coca-Cola sign on the wall. It took him a minute to remember he was a POW.

After eight days of being a POW, the two men were liberated by the 2nd U.S. Armored Division. DeBlasio remained at the hospital on the continent for treatment, while Vance, who had received head wounds and a fractured arm, was soon returned to Shipdham.

The 506th Squadron suffered yet another casualty on the 24th when one of their combat men was killed on this low-level mission.

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #42-50535 Bar-O, Pyle	JOPLIN JALOPY	Returned to base
506th Squadron Crew:		
PYLE, LEONARD G.	Pilot	2nd Lt.
SCHAKE, DONALD M.	Co-pilot	2nd Lt.
SOLOMAN, ED. M.	Navigator	2nd Lt.
GOHL, HARRY G.	Nose Gun.Toggler	Sgt.
WOLFSON, MURRAY R.	Radio Oper.	Sgt.
WEISS, PAUL	Eng./Top Turret	Sgt.
CLARK, PAUL J.	RW Gunner	Sgt.
DIAZ, ANIBAL C. ASN 34530358	LW Gunner KIA	Sgt. Tampa, Florida

ALLEN, DONALD B. Tail Turret Sgt.

Note: Sgt. Diaz was on his fourth mission.

Sgt. Diaz was flying as left waist gunner on Lt. Pyle's aircraft Bar-O. The supplies were dropped at 1314 hours, at approximately 300 feet. Sgt. Diaz was standing between the open ball turret well and the bomb bay, facing the rear of the ship. He was hauling in the static lines that had been attached to the parachute-packed supplies. Sgt. Diaz was wearing a chest pack type parachute at the time and it is unknown in what manner, but his parachute was spilled open and went out the open ball turret well. The force of the air in the open chute pulled him down into the well and out of the plane. The low altitude and excessive speed at which all aircraft were flying, made it impossible to ascertain the effectiveness of the spilled chute in breaking Sgt. Diaz's fall or of his actually hitting the ground.

The Germans later reported him as dead.

5 April 1945

Transportation Network, Plauen, Germany

Thirty eight of the Group's aircraft bombed this secondary target via H2X method as extremely adverse weather conditions were encountered at the Primary, Plauen Marshalling Yards; and one aircraft bombed visually. Enemy opposition was nil, so it was surprising that one 506th aircraft did not return. It crashed near Wipperfurst.

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #44-40158 Bar-Q, Brown TINKER BELLE MACR #14110

506th Squadron Crew:

BROWN, GEORGE F. Jr. ASN 0-831104	Pilot Wounded, KIA	2nd Lt.	
FLOWERS, HARL N. ASN 0-834782	Co-pilot Returned	2nd Lt.	
THOMAS, ROBERT S. ASN T-133888	Navigator Returned	Flt Of.	
BARRY, JAMES J. Jr. ASN 0-727299	Bombardier Returned	1st Lt.	Flushing, L.I., New York
OTTO, JAMES E. ASN 13200898	Nose Turret Returned	Sgt.	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
BURKHART, HOWARD M. ASN 37347802	Engineer Returned	S/Sgt.	Denver, Colorado
NASH, TRAVIS E. ASN 36851997	Radio Oper. KIA	S/Sgt.	
SAMPLEY, ROBERT E. ASN 35299849	Waist Gun. Returned	Sgt.	Marion, Ohio
McALPINE, EARNEST E. ASN 38608646	Tail Turret Returned	Sgt.	Earth, Texas

Quoting the MACR, "Aircraft Bar-Q (158) was last seen at 1217 hours, 5 April 1945 at 14,000 feet, 11 miles northeast of Frankfurt. The aircraft was in radio contact with the formation which was flying at 18,000 feet and approximately three miles ahead of this aircraft. He was reported to

be under control with number one engine feathered and was letting down through the 8/10 to 10/10 undercast, so as to land at an airdrome in friendly territory. He was observed to have a fighter escort of three P-51s and under complete control. Weather at this time was 8/10 to 10/10 cumulus tops, generally 10-12,000 with CAVU conditions above the undercast. No other word has been heard from this aircraft nor its occupants since 1217 hours on 5 April 1945.”

No word was heard from these men until 10 days later, when Lt. Barry, bombardier, telephoned the 44th Base and asked for a plane to come and pick up the returnees. Lt. Barry reported that, “We let down through the overcast to about 3,000 feet. We were over the Ruhr pocket, and they opened up on us with machine gun and small arms fire. Our gunners fired back, and we could see the Germans running for cover. Right after that they really opened up on us.”

The engineer, Howard M. Burkhart, continued, “We had lost one engine before arriving at the target – mechanical failure was the reason. Losing power and altitude after target, we were soon on our own as the formation pulled ahead. #1 engine was feathered, #2 was on fire and the pilot, Lt. Brown, was wounded. #3 and #4 engines were smoking, and the radio operator, Travis E. Nash was killed by flak. The decision was made to try to land at Brussels, Belgium. We didn’t make it! Flak, along with small arms fire, got us about sixty miles east of Koln. I was busy transferring gasoline when the pilot rang the bail-out signal, and we all hit the silk.”

“George F. Brown and Travis E. Nash both had been hit in the head. Brown was hit just above the ear, and he was never heard from after he parachuted. Travis went down with the plane, which crashed near Wipperfurth.”

One man did not take to his parachute immediately, however. He was Sgt. James E. Otto, who was busily strafing enemy troops from his nose turret position. This 19 year old gunner had not heard the bail out signal, and when he turned around to look, he found he was all alone in the Liberator except for the dead radio operator. He bailed out immediately, with his chute opening at about five hundred feet. He landed in a tree, and was hanging in mid-air for about five minutes until a German soldier climbed up to cut his straps, so that he could fall to the ground.

While Otto was immediately taken in hand by the German soldiers, his fellow crewmates were going through a series of adventures that kept them well occupied. Lt. Barry had three bullet holes put in his parachute by a German soldier. Sgt. Robert E. Sampley had been caught in a tree also. When he tried to unharness his parachute, he lost his balance and suddenly found himself hanging upside down from a branch some twenty feet in the air, precariously suspended by one foot caught in the straps of his chute. Gingerly, he pulled himself upright and slid down the tree to momentary safety. Within thirty seconds, he had his hands in the air and a number of bayoneted rifles were pointed at him.

The fifth member of the group landed in the midst of a band of Hitler’s Youth. Sgt. Ernest McAlpine, 19 years old and a tail gunner, reported that he had never thought much of that Nazi organization, but that he owed them a debt of gratitude now. “They kept a bunch of angry civilians away from me and brought me to the military authorities. These civilians were all for taking care of me right then and there.”

All five crewmen eventually ended up in a large prison camp that had French and Russian slave laborers in it. “The Russians and French were wonderful to us,” said Lt. Barry.

“They couldn’t do enough for us. Some of the Frenchmen had been there for five years and when we arrived, they broke out food they had been saving all that time and gave us a party. They even told the Germans that they wouldn’t work the next day, either.”

On the morning of the ninth day, the first platoon of American soldiers, members of the 78th Division, arrived in camp and set them free. Two days later, the men were in Paris; shortly after that, back in England.

Sgt. Burkhart said that the pilot, Lt. Brown, had bailed out with the rest of the crew, but no one saw him again. No other information has been found to clear up the mystery of what happened to him. He eventually was determined KIA, so it is possible that he was killed while parachuting, or was killed by civilians or soldiers trying to avoid capture, or even died from his head wound.

The other two crew members, co-pilot Flowers and navigator Thomas, also returned to military control – Flowers on the 18th, and Thomas on the 14th of April.

Lt. George F. Brown’s plane and crew were the last recorded combat casualties of the war in Europe so far as the 44th Bombardment Group’s Operations were concerned, and for the men shown in the Roll Of Honour Book located in the American room, central library, Norwich, England. But there were further casualties sustained, and they are included in the following pages.

11 May 1945

Air Transport Command Practice Flight, Watton, England

With the European phase of the war completed, efforts were begun to get our planes and crew readied for their return flights back to the States. On this date, a 506th Squadron crew had made a four to five hour practice flight in preparation for the over-water return to the U.S. and were then returning to base when the plane crashed.

506th SQUADRON:

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #44-50698 Bar-C, Edkins

Crashed

506th Squadron Crew:

EDKINS, DONALD	Pilot Badly injured	Capt.	Johnstown, Pennsylvania
WHITTLE, JAMES L. Jr.	Co-pilot Badly injured	1st Lt.	Sacramento, California
SMITH, EDWARD	Navigator Injured	1st Lt.	Lansdowne, Pennsylvania
JONES, CHARLES K.	Engineer Badly Shaken	T/Sgt.	Los Angeles, California
HEYBURN, WILLIAM	Radio Oper Badly Shaken	T/Sgt.	Louisville, Kentucky
CZARNECKI, VICTOR	Asst. Eng. Badly Shaken	S/Sgt.	Dover, New Jersey

(Now) Lt. Colonel James L. Whittle Jr. wrote, “Although I was a regular 1st pilot, this day I was in the co-pilot seat as we were returning from southern England fulfilling certain ATC (Air

Transport Command) requirements. I had completed 28 missions as had most of my crew and was preparing for our flight home.

“One of the drills was to practice feathering procedure to test the pilot’s reaction to engine failure and the subsequent change in flying characteristics, etc. We were probably near 5,000 feet, with lots of airspeed, since we were descending to our base at Shipdham, so the loss of one engine would create no danger at all. One outboard engine was feathered, with nothing more than a slight drop in airspeed.

“As soon as that simulated emergency was under control, the opposite outboard engine was feathered. That simulated emergency, too, was handled with no difficulty because of the experience of the pilot and the higher than normal airspeed. But from that point on, things get a little vague, but I believe that a pretense was made of feathering one of the two remaining engines, and in fact, I think that feathering button was momentarily depressed, but without any intent of actually feathering it.

“Unfortunately, at that time, everything began to happen very quickly and very unexpectedly. When that feathering button was pulled out, which should have either stopped the feathering and returned it to normal, or if it had actually feathered, it should have immediately unfeathered. For some reason or reasons still unknown, neither of those things happened. Both of us reached for an outboard button to unfeather them immediately. But neither of those worked, either (Murphy’s Law), and after a few very rapid, but futile, attempts to unfeather any of them, our attention turned to finding the nearest airfield.

“From the co-pilot’s seat, I remember seeing an airfield off of our right wing, and took over the controls since I was in the better position to see the field. By this time, we were rapidly losing both airspeed and altitude, and in a matter of minutes, we would be on the ground – airfield or not!

“The events happened so fast that there was no time to alert the three airmen in the rear of the aircraft, nor did we even have the time to broadcast MAYDAY. Fortunately, our men in the rear realized that there was an emergency and took up the appropriate positions for a crash-landing. We now had emergency military power on the one remaining engine (#3) but it was a constant fight to keep from stalling.

“By now I had managed to get lined up with the runway, and since the field had been off the right wing, it meant having to make two turns into the one good engine. Although we were lined up with the runway, it was now a question of whether we would make it to the runway before our altitude and airspeed ran out.

“One of the last things I remember was wondering whether we would be able to top the big trees which loomed between us and the field. The airspeed was now just slightly above stalling speed and my last conscious thought was that if I hauled back on the yoke at the very last moment, we could zoom over the tree tops and I then would be able to get the nose back down quickly enough to keep from stalling. None of us remember exactly what happened, but we obviously had not gotten over the trees because my very next recollection was that we were on the ground.

“Through the haze, I can remember the navigator walking – or trying to walk – and complaining about his back. He had been standing between the two pilot’s seats and never had a chance to move before we impacted, and was propelled through the bulletproof glass that surrounded the cockpit.

“Next hazy recollection was opening my eyes in a hospital bed and feeling like every bone in my body was broken. Luckily, that wasn’t the case, as the only broken things were a rib and a tooth. Next to me was our navigator who had broken his back and was encased in plaster of paris from his neck to his hips.

“Don Edkins had sustained the most severe injuries of any of us which included the shattering of most of the bones in his face, and head injuries which were life-threatening. The three men in the rear were limited to cuts and bruises that did not require hospitalization.

“It hardly seems possible that any of us survived, especially since the trees had sheered off our outer wings between #1 & 2 on the left and between #3 and 4 on the right. This “short wing” modification has a tendency to be very unstable! Best of all, the very volatile fuel did not ignite when the fuel cells were torn open, and probably should have been ignited by the hot engines or superchargers.

“To this day, no one has been able to explain why none of the props would unfeather...”

“Although the three of us eventually recovered from our injuries to the extent that we were able to carry on a normal life, we all suffered various degrees of physical incapacity. I remained in the Air Force and retired in 1966.”

Although Capt. Whittle thought the crash occurred on the approach to the Shipdham runway, they actually were approaching Watton, several miles to the south of Shipdham, according to records found at Watton.

13 June 1945

Scottish Highlands (Non-Operational), Gairloch, Scotland

Unfortunately, the end of the war in Europe was not the end of death and loss of aircraft for the 44th BG. A writer of fiction could not have conceived a scenario with a situation any worse than this one. This event involved one combat crew of nine that had, at last, completed their long tour of combat duty exceeding 30 missions and covering a period of more than six months. The other passengers were all “old” veterans who had served heroically in the dangerous air over Europe with Troop Carrier units and Bomber Units. Each of these men had accumulated many combat experiences that he could not divulge to anyone due to the strict censoring of all correspondence. For the few days that these men were held at the Redistribution Center awaiting passage on ship they had written letters home with the super news that they were alive, had survived the war, would soon be home, and could then tell everyone about their dangerous experiences. Likewise, the families were so thankful that their loved one had survived the war, were just fine, and very soon would be together again. What a truly crushing blow it was to these families to then receive a telegram telling them he had been killed!

All fifteen of them had been assigned to slow surface transport back to the US, but orders were changed when a B-24 from the 93rd BG that had just been repaired at a Sub Depot, was then available for a fast trip back to the U.S. and home. Combat men were given top transportation priority as the war with Japan still existed, and all combat units (ground personnel included) were scheduled for a month leave and then return for assignment to the Pacific War Zone.

Official records for the 44th BG do not extend beyond the month of April 1945, and consequently, they did not contain information about the loss of this 66th Squadron Air Crew

when returning to the States. I did not learn about it until nearly 40 years later when Ian Shuttleworth from Yorkshire, England contacted me for data to help him in his research concerning an aircraft and the fifteen men that had crashed on their way back to the U.S. All fifteen men had perished.

The Shuttleworth family, from Eastern Yorkshire, England, had discovered the crash site while on "holiday," had "adopted" it and wanted to place a memorial marker there. Ian was a teenager at that time, wanted to contact the next of kin to obtain personal data about each of these veterans and to share with them the data that he had collected about this accident. The Shuttleworth family even offered to guide anyone who was interested to visit the remote crash site.

Irene and I met Ian and his father in Yorkshire to get acquainted the next time that we visited Norwich, and each of us shared the data that we had acquired independently. That was the beginning of our joint efforts to learn as much as possible about the crash, the combat crew, and the passengers. Since then we have visited Gairloch and the crash site several times, including twice with the entire Shuttleworth family on their summer vacations.

On one of these visits, both Ian and his father, David, took me a few miles from the site and showed me several pieces of the stricken aircraft that had come off from it a few miles from the actual point of impact. We spent considerable time examining these large pieces, searching for any clue that might indicate a possible reason for the crash. These parts were in remarkably good shape and condition for having withstood the many cold winters they had been exposed.

All three of the bomb bay doors had no evidence of a glancing contact with any high ground, as some had speculated, when the airplane circled Gairloch and the surrounding mountain tops. The front portions of the tops of the two vertical stabilizers had no marks or dents that any of the three bomb bay doors would have made had they been the cause of those stabilizers breaking loose. But whatever the cause for those tops to break off, the crash was inevitable as nearly all control was then lost, the pilots helpless in their desperate fight to seek a safe landing area.

Ian has compiled a booklet about these facts and has placed it near the crash site at the Shildaig Lodge Hotel south of Gairloch. His purpose was to make all possible data about this incident readily available to guests, any hikers or others who might want to learn more about the men, the airplane, or the circumstances.

Ian also designed, paid for and installed a memorial plaque on a rock wall facing the site in 1987, replaced it with a larger, more durable one in 1991. At that same time he organized an official Gairloch Memorial Service to make it an official Memorial Site. As a result, Ian recently advised that now many people now visit it, bring flowers, American flags, etc., in honor of these heroes.

66th SQUADRON:

93rd Bomb Group, #42-95095, Ketchum	SLEEPY TIME GAL	Crashed
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Note: The crash site is near Gairloch, Scotland.

66th Squadron Crew:	Entire crew perished		
KETCHUM, JACK B. ASN 0-720263	Pilot	1st Lt.	Topeka, Kansas
SPENCER, JACK H. ASN 0-777858	Co-pilot	1st Lt.	Ionia, Michigan

ROBAK, RICHARD J. ASN 0-2015143	Navigator DIED, buried Milwaukee, Wisconsin	2nd Lt.	Milwaukee, Wisconsin
CHEEK, HILLBURN L. ASN 39333461	Engineer DIED, buried Cambridge, England (E-0-78)	T/Sgt.	
STAMMER, JAMES C. ASN 17152057	Radio Oper. DIED, buried Casey, Iowa	T/Sgt.	Casey, Iowa
GILLES, ELDON J. ASN 36275004	Gunner DIED, buried Cambridge (E-0-56)	S/Sgt.	Plum City, Wisconsin
RIEFEN, HERMAN ASN 16028870	Gunner DIED, buried Cambridge (D-2-26)	T/Sgt.	Bronx, New York
DAVIS, RAYMOND E. ASN 35151144	Gunner DIED, buried Washington, Indiana	S/Sgt	Oak Grove, Indiana
NATKIN, ALBERT L. ASN 38558214	Gunner DIED, buried Cambridge, England	S/Sgt.	San Antonio, Texas

This aircraft was on a redeployment ferry flight from Prestwick, Scotland to Meeks Field, Iceland, when it went off course and crashed into the ground in the highlands of western Scotland. The pilots had been flying in heavy clouds, probably on instruments, had mechanical equipment or severe weather problems that took them off course.

The weather in this area often was subject to severe up and down drafts, radio transmission very poor. In this instance, there was no radio contact, and very severe damage was done to the aircraft while in the air. It will never be known how or why the aircraft itself was disintegrating when it arrived over Gairloch, but the pilots could not have had any possibility of gaining enough control to land safely.

This combat crew was assigned to the 66th Squadron in November 1944. Lt. Ketchum, being the first pilot, flew his first mission as a co-pilot for experience, then with the full crew flying as a unit on 10 December 1944. Their last mission was dated 25 April 1945, and also was the last mission of the war in Europe for the 44th Bomb Group. Lt. Ketchum completed 34, while most of his crew received credits for 33. Several of these missions proved difficult, with two of them ending with emergency landings on the Continent due to battle damage or other problems.

In late April, four entirely new B-24s equipped with the super secret Loran radar were assigned to the 66th Squadron. The Ketchum crew was selected to train in one of them. These new aircraft required careful handling due to the addition of a small wing-like platform near the nose wheel in which this new equipment was housed. During the last of their several test flights with their new aircraft, a "hard" landing occurred that damaged this airplane, and it had to be taken off flying status. That is the reason that the Ketchum crew did not have a plane with which to fly back to the U.S. They were then transferred to the Redeployment Base to return to the U.S. via a boat.

Lt. Leo D. Crooks, 66th Sq. pilot, said, "I knew Jack (Ketchum) well enough to shoot the breeze with him frequently, but not well enough to have any real background information about him. Since his crew and mine were two of the "older" crews, we were not shipped back to the States for delay-in-route to the Pacific. I do not remember how many missions Jack had, but he left earlier than I to fly a ship back to the States. I remember Jack Spencer as being an officer who came up through the ranks.

“I knew Jack Ketchum as a good pilot. He wore a mustache, always smiling, quick-witted and ready with a one-liner remark most of the time. He was always well groomed and I always thought, a credit to the uniform.”

Passengers:	All passengers perished		
HALLISEY, JOHN H. ASN 12046305	Passenger	S/Sgt.	93rd Bomb Group DIED, buried Framingham, Mass.
FRANCIS, ROBERT J. ASN 31309090	Passenger	S/Sgt.	323rd Bomb Group DIED, buried Cambridge, England (E-0-88)
EINARSEN, EMIL ASN 32455476	Passenger	S/Sgt.	314th TC Grp. DIED, buried Cambridge, England (G-7-7)
ELLIS, JOHN B. Jr. ASN 34038466	Passenger	S/Sgt.	314th TC Grp. DIED, buried Cambridge, England
HARVEY, JAMES D. ASN 32433806	Passenger	S/Sgt.	314th TC Grp. DIED, buried at Calvary Cemetery, New York City, NY
HASTINGS, ALEXANDER W. ASN 12153113	Passenger	S/Sgt.	314th TC Grp. DIED, buried at Cyprus Hills, St. Albans, Kings County, NY

Note: Casualties included members of the 314th Troop Carrier Group.

Sgt. John Hallissey had flown combat missions with the 93rd Bomb Group. He and his crew had completed their tour of duty of 50 missions. His crew had received their orders to return to the U.S. earlier but Sgt. Hallissey's papers were missing, not in order, so he could not leave with his crew when they flew home.

Sgt. Hallissey flew his combat missions in the period between 24 July 1944 to 9 April 1945. He was waiting at the same Replacement Depot waiting his assignment on a ship to return to the U.S. when he learned plans were changed and he would be flying back to the U.S. after all.

Earlier, he had written to his sister that one of his crew was very good playing an accordion, and another was a good singer, so they kept everyone pleasantly entertained, morale high.

Sgt. Robert Francis was a member of the 323rd Bomb Group. He was born 14 July 1924 in North Plymouth, MA. He was raised in a Portuguese/Italian/German neighborhood where most of the people worked for the Plymouth Cordage Co. After high school, he worked as a delivery truck driver for Danforth's Bakery in Plymouth. Later, he worked at the Fore River shipyards in Quincy, Massachusetts.

He was drafted into the Army Air Force in 1942. "Chipper" received training at Fort Meyers, Florida, and also in Texas. He was sent overseas as a replacement to join the 455th Bomb Squadron of the 323rd Bomb Group, which operated with the US Ninth Air Force from bases in France and Belgium. Sgt. Francis served as a Tail Gunner flying on B-26 Marauders. He had completed over 65 missions by the time the war in Europe was won.

S/Sgt. Emil Einarsen was 49 years old! He had a most unique situation, having served nine months in WW I, with six months overseas in France. He was again drafted for WW II, in error, but after reaching his induction center he decided to again serve his country. He was a member of the 61st Squadron of the 314th Troop Carrier Group.

His last letter to his sister Evelyn was dated 26 May 1945 when he told her “that after his last infrequent letter he had spent several days on the Riviera (Nice); also a bit at Cannes. Must come back again as a civilian. Now, I’ve been in England for more than a week. Needless to say, I’ve seen quite a bit of Germany from the air. Unfortunately, my duties did not take me further than the airstrips, so did not get into their towns. The mills of the Gods grind slowly, you see. I have a furlough home, but how soon I will see you, I don’t know. It looks discouraging and we have plenty to do in the meanwhile. Guard duty and K.P. are with me again. Regards to all. P.S. Don’t write (Will be home soon)”

John Ellis was a member of the 32nd Squadron of the 314th Troop Carrier Group. One of Ellis’ colleagues had this to say about him: “John acted as our radio operator several times and occasionally as our radar operator. He was very competent, friendly, and a true gentleman. On the second day of the Normandy invasion, my plane was being flown by our Squadron Commander, Col. Wilson. We were the lead aircraft in the lead squadron. We took off in dense fog and lost the other 35 planes that were to be following us. Thanks to ‘Red’ Ellis, we were able to fly the course which took us out over the Atlantic Ocean and then across the English Channel. We actually made a one-plane invasion of Normandy.

“By that time we had reached Normandy it was early in the morning. The sun was just coming up and everything looked peaceful. We pushed out the parachute-equipped load and triggered off the parapacks attached to the underside of the plane. Col. Wilson began a climb to get a better view of the territory, but then dove for the ground just as a German machine gun nest opened up on us. Because we were so low, the Germans could not use their anti-aircraft guns. So they got only a few shots at us. Just then a .30 cal. Bullet struck the piece of armor plate I was sitting on and passed through the radar compartment where Red Ellis was, and buried itself in a parachute right behind the pilot. An inch or two one way or the other, the bullet would have hit me, Art Roberts or Red Ellis.”

John was an only child. After graduating from high school, he went on to Mars Hill College, and earned a degree in accounting from the University of North Carolina. He enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps in 1942, became a Radio Operator on a glider-towing C-47 aircraft. His hometown was Greyer, North Carolina.

S/Sgt. James Harvey was born 30 September 1914. His home address was: 5406 Tibbit Avenue, Bronx, New York. Sgt. Harvey served with the 9th Troop Carrier Command as a member of the 314th Troop Carrier Group. He had the honor of spearheading the invasions of North Africa, Sicily, Normandy, Holland and the invasion of the Rhineland. His chief work was dropping paratroopers behind enemy lines, towing gliders, and evacuating wounded from battle areas.

S/Sgt. Alexander Hastings was born on 5 April 1922. His home address was: 514-201 P 1, St. Albans, Long Island, New York. He was a member of the 314th Troop Carrier Group.
