

torturous journey through those snowy Pyrenees, hunted by the German soldiers with dogs. Some had frozen toes and fingers and other injuries [gotten while] trying to avoid their patrols. We were lucky as we had flown over those Pyrenees.”

Fred continued with their story about their experiences in Spain, travel to Gibraltar, and eventual flight back to England at night in a C-87. But, according to the “Rules” this crew could no longer fly combat from England, so they eventually were transferred to Italy and the 15th AF where most of the crew completed their tour from that Theatre of Operations.

8 April 1944

Airdrome, Langenhagen, Germany

The month of April cost more plane losses and casualties of the entire war so far as the 44th Bomb Group was concerned! More so than the August 1943 disasters of Ploesti and a later mission to Foggia, Italy. The 8th of April was the worst single day.

For the first time in the war, the 44th BG was led by 389th BG aircraft equipped with PFF (Pathfinder equipment). With them as Command Pilots were Col. Gibson, Group C.O., and Captain Robert Lehnhausen, 68th Squadron C.O. They flew with 389th Bomb Group personnel and airplanes. It was not a successful endeavor.

The primary target, Brunswick, as well as the secondary were obscured by a successful smoke screen, so a target of opportunity, Langenhagen Airdrome, was bombed instead. Enemy aircraft attacks were numerous and severe, with our gunners claiming 12 destroyed, 6 probables and 1 damaged. But the 44th Bomb Group’s formation was subjected to concentrated attacks and lost a total of eleven aircraft! This, compared to the nineteen other B-24s lost by all other Groups. This was the worst loss of the war for one mission by the “Flying Eightballs”.

66th SQUADRON:

66th Sq., #42-99996 I, Richardson MACR #3763

66th Squadron Crew:	Entire crew KIA		
RICHARDSON, WILLIAM M. ASN 0-687496	Pilot KIA	2nd Lt.	Macon, Georgia
MILLER, ARTHUR L. ASN 0-818724	Co-pilot KIA	2nd Lt.	Birmingham, Alabama
ORBACH, NORRIS F. ASN 0-698138	Navigator KIA	2nd Lt.	New York City, New York
DAVIS, MILTON H. ASN 0-691878	Bombardier KIA, buried Ardennes (C-2-13)	2nd Lt.	North Hollywood, California
NAPPIER, VERNON D. ASN 37438712	Engineer KIA	S/Sgt.	Bedford, Iowa
GOOLSBY, RAY K. ASN 13066720	Radio Oper. KIA	S/Sgt.	Waynesboro, Virginia
POHLMAYER, ROBERT L. ASN 15097510	Ball Turret KIA, buried Ardennes (C-5-47)	Sgt.	Montgomery, Ohio
SIECKE, ELDON D. ASN 17165143	RW Gunner KIA	Sgt.	Pilger, Nebraska
BRUCE, W. B. Jr. ASN 14159347	LW Gunner KIA	Sgt.	Nashville, Tennessee

POWNALL, OTIS H. ASN 20733281	Tail Turret KIA, buried Ardennes (B-43-20)	Sgt.	Little River, Kansas
----------------------------------	---	------	-------------------------

The plane and crew lost was that piloted by 2nd Lt. William M. Richardson. He and his entire crew were KIA – no survivors. There were even few observers to this loss. The MACR is equally brief because of this, stating only that aircraft #996 apparently was hit by enemy aircraft at 1345 hours in the vicinity of Salzwedel and was seen to go down. No chutes were observed. At least five airplanes were lost within the three minutes near 1345 hours from one pass by enemy planes, as described by survivors from the other crews lost.

Two planes and crews were lost by the 67th Squadron plus one other that crashed in England, killing another crewman.

67th SQUADRON:

67th Sq., #42-110083 X-Bar, Mayes

MACR #3855

67th Squadron Crew:

MAYES, ROBERT A. ASN 0-742181	Pilot KIA	2nd Lt.	San Antonio, Texas
RUSSELL, JAMES F. ASN 0-812315	Co-pilot KIA	2nd Lt.	Ashville, North Carolina
RUSSELL, ROBERT P. ASN 0-797076	Navigator KIA	2nd Lt.	Ashville, North Carolina
PLASZCZYKOWSKI, EDMUND M. ASN 0-688396	Bombardier KIA	2nd Lt.	Chicago, Illinois
O'NEAL, CHARLES E. ASN 13104794	Engineer KIA	S/Sgt.	Cumberland, Maryland
SIEGERT, PAUL C. ASN 17175511	Radio Oper. KIA	S/Sgt.	Toganoxie, Kansas
NEWTON, ROGER J. ASN 31254221	Ball Turret KIA	Sgt.	Burlington, Vermont
THOMAS, ARCHIE M. ASN 18118735	RW Gunner POW	Sgt.	Palestine, Texas
LOGAN, DONALD J. ASN 35564011	LW Gunner KIA	Sgt.	Peru, Indiana
BURK, WILLIAM J. ASN 14091412	Tail Turret KIA	Sgt.	Talladega, Alabama

2nd Lt. Robert A. Mayes was the pilot of aircraft #083 and was probably one of the first 44th aircraft to go down. The MACR states that in the vicinity of Langenhagen Airdrome, at 1410 hours, Lt. Mayes gave orders to bail out on the interphone. The plane was on fire and in a spin. This plane had been hit by enemy aircraft before the target and went down. Sgt. Archie M. Thomas was the first to bail out, and probably the last, as his chute opened at about 400 feet. The plane exploded when it hit the ground.

For the first edition of the Roll of Honor, Archie Thomas wrote that there wasn't much that he could add to the data in the MACR. "We were hit by enemy aircraft fire on their initial pass through our formation. Our plane caught fire and went into a spin immediately, probably indicating that our pilots were injured, too. We had been flying in the "tail end Charlie" position.

I am certain that the other men in the rear of our ship with me were KIA – William J. Burk, Roger J. Newton and Donald J. Logan.

“The craft went down in a tight spin, on fire, and I was the first one to leave from the rear area. My chute opened probably no more than 150 feet from the ground. It is also safe to say that there were no other survivors. But I did see that there was another plane that went down at the same time that we did.

“I spent my POW time in Stalag 17B until the war was over.”

Thomas later provided a more extensive account. He titled this “That Fateful Easter Eve, April 8, 1944”: “Our take off time was delayed from 07:00 a.m. to 09:00 a.m., due to a very heavy fog. While waiting for take off the officers were gathered at the front end of the B-24 whereas the six enlisted men were gathered at the tail end of the aircraft. During this wait, one of the enlisted men stated that, ‘If it is my time to die, I am ready to die for my country.’ One by one, four of the remaining crew made the same statement. I, alone, had not spoken, and at this time I stated, ‘I am not ready to die for my country, but rather I am ready to LIVE for my country.’

“After loading on the aircraft my intercom was out and as a result, I missed out on some of the conversation. The radio operator took care of this problem before we got over enemy territory. After breaking through the fog, we had a beautiful spring day. We test fired our guns and the assistant engineer transferred fuel. At one point, we had to take evasive action to avoid colliding with another aircraft. We could see a little anti-aircraft flak in the distance near the Zuider Zee.

“Our preliminary checks were all made over the Channel. We were now entering enemy territory. As we proceeded over enemy territory, we kept a close lookout for enemy aircraft and gunfire. We were joined by one Allied Fighter Escort who stayed with us for some time. After they turned around and prior to our second Escort group joining us at approximately 13:00 o’clock, we spotted German fighters at a 3:00 o’clock position. They proceeded to move ahead of our formation and they attacked from directly in front of us, coming through our formation firing their guns. I am quite sure these were Me 109s.

“Our aircraft was hit on this first pass, caught fire and went into a spin. I was at the right-hand waist gunner position with Don Logan flying left waist gunner, Roger Newton, ball turret, and Burk in tail gunner position. We received word on the intercom stating, “We are hit. Get out!” This order was given by the pilot. I pulled the cord to my flak suit and it fell off. By this time, due to the spin, the weight of our bodies had increased several times, and everything was fairly well held to the floor.

“I grabbed my parachute and was the first to get to the escape hatch, which was also known as the camera hatch or main entrance hatch on the B-24. I made an attempt to open the hatch alone and had planned to jump holding my chute as I figured the plane would probably blow up in a few seconds. It would be better to try to hold onto the chute and put it on as I was on the way down, rather than face certain death in an exploding aircraft. This attempt failed and I managed to put the parachute on. By this time, two other crewmembers, Logan and Newton, had managed to get to the escape hatch, one at each end and I at the center of the door where it opened. We managed to get the door opened approximately eighteen inches and could open it no further due to the [centrifugal force of the] spin.

“I looked at Burk in the tail, unable to get out of his turret. Beads of perspiration were on his face and a look of fear, even death was on his face. I looked at Logan and Newton, neither in a

position to jump. I thought if I try to exchange places with either of these men, no one will get out of this plane alive. I layed down and tried to get under the low opening of the door. Finally, after what seemed a long while, I felt my body hurled from the force of the spinning aircraft. I reached for the ripcord and thought I had missed it somehow. At this time I said, 'Oh, Lord, I'm gone.' As I uttered these words, the tumbling stopped. I glanced up and there was my chute. I glanced down and the pine treetops were just below my feet. The ripcord had caught on the door as I squeezed under it. Thanks to God and my crewmates, I was able to eject from the aircraft seconds before it dashed into the ground.

"I figure that had my stay in the aircraft been extended as much as one-tenth of a second, or even less, I probably wouldn't be here today. One has to wonder about the remarks of the other enlisted crewmembers who all perished at this time, as well as the officers on the plane. The aircraft crashed about 100 yards from where I landed, and exploded seconds later. Just prior to the explosion, I disconnected my chute which was hanging in a tree and attempted to get out of the area. Of the crewmembers left in the aircraft, the Germans were able to identify all the bodies with the exception of the co-pilot who, I believe, was probably hit by the exploding shell that brought our ship down.

"I was not captured until approximately one hour later. Two German enlisted men had gone out to inspect the wreckage of our aircraft. On their return to the village near by, they found me in the woods, where I was attempting to keep hidden to avoid capture. One said to me, 'For you the war is over.' This was spoken in English.

67th SQUADRON:

67th Sq., #42-7767 C-Bar, Thom	SHACK RABBIT		MACR #3849
67th Squadron Crew:	Entire crew POW		
THOM, GEORGE J. ASN 0-742628	Pilot POW, Very seriously injured	1st Lt.	Burlington, Wisconsin
ABAD, ANTHONY J. ASN 0-684456	Co-pilot POW	2nd Lt.	San Francisco, California
GILLE, GERALD G. (506 Sq.) ASN 0-676373	Navigator POW/WIA	1st Lt.	Quincy, Illinois
ALCOTT, RUSSELL J. ASN 0-679598	Bombardier POW	2nd Lt.	Houston, Texas
KOWALSKI, ANDREW A. ASN 33168900	Engineer POW	T/Sgt.	Reading, Pennsylvania
JOHNSON, ALVIN D. ASN 17063731	Radio Oper. POW	T/Sgt.	Hastings, Nebraska
MEINKE, HARVEY H. ASN 36305301	Ball Turret POW	S/Sgt.	Elmwood Park, Illinois
PROULX, EARL D. (506 Sq.) ASN 19114709	RW Gunner POW	S/Sgt.	Tacoma, Washington
KNOTT, LOYES H. ASN 33397479	LW Gunner POW	S/Sgt.	Waynesburg, Louisiana
SMILANICH, BRONKO ASN 37316734	Tail Turret POW	S/Sgt.	East Hibbing, Minnesota

Note: Lt. Gille and Sgt. Proulx were from the 506th Squadron.

The second 67th Squadron aircraft lost was that piloted by 1st Lt. George J. Thom. The MACR briefly states that this aircraft is believed to be the one that exploded after being hit by enemy aircraft and that no chutes were seen. (Time: 1347, in the vicinity of Salzwedel.) However this cannot be correct as George Thom rode this aircraft nearly to the ground and everyone else had time to bail out.

1st Lt. Gerald G. Gille, navigator on this crew, gave me his story, "On the early morning of April 8th, 1944 I was awakened and asked if I would like to volunteer for the navigator's job, flying with the 'foreign' 67th Squadron. Being one mission behind my regular crew, I consented, and found myself with Lt. Thom's crew after breakfast. Our mission was to Brunswick with a direct route through 'Flak Alley'.

"After assembly in the air, and crossing the European coast, I noticed we were having trouble keeping in formation. I always thought we should have aborted, but Lt. Thom was making every effort to keep up. Upon entering Germany, we were straggling badly, and sure enough, Me 109 enemy aircraft were attacking between eleven and one o'clock, high.

"It seemed as though they were about 10 abreast. The first pass they crippled two of our engines. Now we were really far behind our formation. On the second pass, they shot out the far left (#1) engine and our electrical system, and the remaining left engine, #2, was smoking. A 20-mm shell exploded just under the nose turret and blew out the nose wheel tire and covering. The bombsight also got a direct hit, saving my life, I believe, as only my right ankle caught the fragments.

"This all started at approximately 21,000 feet. After helping to get the bombardier (Alcott) out of the nose turret, I stood up and looked out the astrodome to see Lt. Thom motioning for us to bail out. We were in a flat spin, and after watching the altimeter slowly winding down, I checked my chute straps, zipped my leather jacket closed, after making sure I had escape rations. I decided to forget about my flight cap, checked the altimeter again – it was at 6,000 feet – stood up and looked out the nose astrodome again and saw no one left, and got ready to jump. The last reading on the altimeter was 1500 feet when I dived out the missing nose door head first.

"We were in the suburbs of Hannover when the plane crashed and exploded. (So the MACR data was incorrect) I found myself landing in a two acre plowed field with a sprained, wounded right ankle, with blood running out of my G.I. boot. I was gathering my parachute together when a German soldier on a motorcycle came to me off the road, into the field where I was. He jumped off his motorcycle and pointed his rifle at me, yelling, 'Pistol? Pistol?' I said 'Nein' and offered him some chewing gum, which he declined.

"I tried to explain to him about my damaged ankle and that it was hard for me to walk. But he forced me to carry my gathered parachute down the road approximately one-half a mile to a flak tower. Then I was able to sit down on the mound levee around the flak gun. Several of our crew's sergeants soon were captured and brought to this same assemblage where I found out all of the crew got out safely!"

Left waist gunner, Loyes Knotts, added a few facts, "Our crew had been grounded when the April 8th mission came up. We had two crew members – Lt. Jackson and Sgt. Arthur Silverburg on leave in London for the weekend. Two temporary crew members were given to us for this mission – a right waist gunner, (Proulx) and a navigator (Gille), who I think was from the 506th Squadron."

George Thom never committed his amazing survival story to paper, but it seems proper to tell it as best as I can based on a conversation I had with him. Lt. Thom said that he stayed with the plane as long as he could, waiting for all of his crew to parachute. When satisfied that all of his men had jumped, he then made his escape.

However, by that time he was so close to the ground that he never got his parachute on by the time he jumped. Nor did he have time to hook it to the rings before he landed in a large tree! Lt. Thom was a big man, well over six feet tall, and that may have contributed to his survival. The large tree did break his fall so that he did not go through to the ground. But even though suspended in that tree, he did “break most of the bones in my body, including my back!”

Col. Thom did not continue on with how he was rescued, but at the time of his conversation in the late 1990s, he was still suffering from that or those injuries.

His story is truly amazing, for he is one of the very few, or even the only account we have of a survival from escaping a falling plane, no parachute opening, and surviving.

67th SQUADRON:

67th Sq., #42-52293 G-Bar, Wahler	JUDY'S BUGGY		Returned
67th Squadron Crew:			
WAHLER, WILLIAM L. ASN 0-746488	Pilot Crash-landed OK	2nd Lt.	California
PINO, PIETRO ASN 0-807042	Co-pilot Crash-landed OK	2nd Lt.	Burlington, New Jersey
MURRAY, THOMAS P. ASN 0-682123	Bombardier Parachuted OK	2nd Lt.	Cambridge, Massachusetts
TRUMBO, GROVER C. (506/68 Sq.) ASN 0-739637	Parachuted, injured legs		
JONES, ROBERT G. ASN 35492819	Engineer Parachuted OK	S/Sgt.	Louisville, Kentucky
MAZER, EDWARD ASN 13167474	Radio Oper. Parachuted OK	S/Sgt.	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
HARMEYER, CHARLES H. ASN 15336777	Ball Turret Parachuted OK	Sgt.	Cincinnati, Ohio
RAY, CHARLES W. ASN 14170302	Waist Gun. Seriously Wounded	Sgt.	Chalybeate, Mississippi
WARREN, JAMES H. ASN 32514996	Waist Gun. Seriously Wounded	Sgt.	Queens, New York
MESKINIS, JOSEPH M. ASN 33355549	Tail Turret KIA, buried Cambridge (C-6-55)	Sgt.	Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania

A third 67th plane was badly damaged but was not counted in the total of eleven lost as the pilots succeeded in getting it back to England

Co-pilot Lt. Pietro Pino wrote that, “The 67th Squadron was leading the Group and the Group was leading the entire 8th A.F. We were flying in the #4 position, and that probably is why I am alive today. We were in the vicinity of Dummer Lake where we were making a turn to the right towards our target, when approximately 100 enemy aircraft made one sweeping attack on us out of the sun, with almost no one seeing them coming. It reminded me of the second-hand car lots, with their hundreds of bare bulbs, only these “bulbs” were 20-mm cannon shells exploding!

“They made only one pass but they got several planes, and hit us quite badly. They hit both #3 and #4 engines, with the oil pressure on #3 dropping to nothing quickly, but we held formation, got to the target and bombed. Soon, #4 engine quit and we lost more altitude quickly, while the crew was heaving everything that they could overboard so we wouldn’t go all the way down.

“Alone now, we got back over Holland, having a difficult time trying to fly a course with full rudder and trip tabs set against that loss of all power on the right side. Lt. Wahler suggested that perhaps we should bail out over Holland, but I felt that as long as we were not on fire, we should try for England – and that is what we did.

“We came in from over the North Sea over a small village of Beccles, where we saw an airfield with newly completed runways and bailed our crew out except for five of us. Sgt. Meskinis, our tail turret gunner, had his turret almost completely demolished around him, but not too badly injured. Our bombardier, Lt. Murray, helped Meskinis from the tangled wreckage, put his chute on his harness, got him to the rear hatch and helped him bail out. But Joe never did pull his ripcord. Instead, he must have become confused because when they found him, he had his heated suit cord in his hand – not the ripcord – and his chute was unopened.

“Wahler and I landed the plane at Beccles without further trouble as our engineer, Robert G. Jones, pumped the flaps and the landing gear down manually (#3 engine out). Those with us still in the plane were the two waist gunners who had been peppered full of shrapnel. When we checked the waist area, there were so many holes for daylight that it was like looking at the sky at night and seeing stars everywhere.”

Frank Stegbaur, Squadron navigator, who was the regular navigator on this crew, sent his recollections of this crew:

“The Wahler crew was assigned to the 67th in February ‘44, but because of a shortage of navigators, I was assigned to another, more experienced crew to fly while the rest of the Wahler crew were undergoing ground training. I had flown 5 missions before I was re-assigned back to Wahler. Later, I was sent to PFF School, and it was during this time that the incident involving Joe Meskinis occurred.

“Lt. Wahler informed me the crew had been decimated while on this mission. Their aircraft encountered severe fighter attacks and was badly damaged. His two waist gunners, Charles Ray and James Warren, had been badly wounded in the buttocks and legs when a 20-mm shell burst in the waist position between these two gunners. The aircraft had other serious damage as well. Lt. Wahler was able to nurse the aircraft back to England, and then ordered the crew to bail out, and they did. All landed safely except Joe Meskinis. They found him on a hillside with his chute unopened. The ripcord was still in the chute and the handle or cord was not fouled.

“Joe and I were good friends. Our friendship started because we both had type AB blood and we always said we had to stick together in case either of us needed a blood transfusion.

“After this experience, S/Sgt. Robert Jones was so badly shaken that he was taken off of flying status and re-assigned.”

Three airplanes and crews were lost by the 68th Squadron. They were: Lts. Altemus’, Barry’s, and Townsend’s.

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #42-110020 Z, Altemus

MACR #3854

68th Squadron Crew:

ALTEMUS, WILLIAM B. ASN 0-2045026	Pilot KIA	2nd Lt.	Hollywood, California
PHELAN, EUGENE A. ASN 0-748234	Co-pilot POW	1st Lt.	Chinook, Montana
BELLARD, HAROLD W. ASN 0-675984	Navigator KIA	1st Lt.	Woodlawn, Maryland
STEADHAM, ROY J. ASN 0-668816	Bombardier KIA, WOM Netherlands	1st Lt.	Jacksonville, Indiana
BAKER, LANNING C. ASN 35350340	Engineer POW	T/Sgt.	La Grange, Indiana
LOPEZ, VICTOR A. ASN 18135755	Radio Oper. KIA, WOM Netherlands	T/Sgt.	Claremore, Oklahoma
MICKEY, JAMES D. ASN 35305177	Ball Turret KIA	S/Sgt.	Cleveland, Ohio
FEENEY, JOHN E. ASN 33155399	RW Gunner POW	T/Sgt.	Washington, Dist. of Col.
GILBERT, ROBERT N. ASN 15102189	LW Gunner KIA, buried Margraten (L-5-13)	S/Sgt.	Conneaut, Ohio
GAFFNEY, WILLIAM J. ASN 12143699	Nose Turret KIA, WOM Netherlands	S/Sgt.	Brooklyn, New York
HOCK, FRANK ASN 33186384	Tail Turret POW	S/Sgt.	Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

2nd Lt. William B. Altemus was the pilot of #020. The MACR includes this explanation, "At 1344 hour near Salzwedel this aircraft was attacked by enemy aircraft. It broke into flames and blew up. No parachutes were seen."

Again, it appears that the wording on this MACR is not quite correct as I have been advised by the engineer, Lanning C. Baker that, "We were flying a new plane so it had no name. It was a beautiful sunny day, not a cloud in the sky. I remember feeling quite secure because there were so many bombers in the air, well escorted by P-51s.

"We were hit by fighters which came out of the sun from above and in front. Our plane was hit so hard it seemed to momentarily stop in the air. Fire immediately erupted from the bomb bay and flashed onto the flight deck. I got out of the top turret, losing my oxygen mask in the process, and opened the top hatch door. This allowed the fire to go over us and out that hatch between the pilots. I then passed out from lack of oxygen.

"When I came to, I was lying on the flight deck floor right next to my parachute pack. I noticed that the right front bomb bay door was open or had been blown off. The other three were still closed. So I snapped on my chute and got out as quickly as I could. The bombs were still in place. "By this time, the plane could not have been too high because I hit the ground in no more than 3 or 4 minutes. I remember looking up after my chute opened and the plane was still flying, but there was a lot of fire.

"What happened to the others on board? Hock and Feeney were in prison camp with me. I saw Lt. Phelan at Camp Lucky Strike in France after the war was over. He said Lt. Altemus told him to jump and he would follow. He also said he saw me lying on the deck and thought I was dead.

But when I got out of the plane, I saw no one! Altemus could still have been in his seat as the smoke and fire made poor visibility. As hard as we were hit in the front, I'm sure all in that area were killed or badly wounded.

"The big question of the day was, how did the single bomb bay door get open? I discussed it with Lt. Phelan when we met in France. He thought I had opened it and I, in turn, thought that he did it. I have now concluded that for some reason the Almighty decided to keep a couple of us guys around a little longer."

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #42-99987 S, Barry	PIZZ AND MOAN	MACR #3853
------------------------------	---------------	------------

Note: This aircraft was also known as TOOTIE BELLE.

68th Squadron Crew

BARRY, WARREN H. ASN 0-678992	Pilot POW	2nd Lt.	New Albany, Mississippi
KREBS, ANDREW J. ASN 0-669738	Co-pilot POW	2nd Lt.	Memphis, Tennessee
MURPHY, GEORGE J. ASN 0-688456	Navigator POW	2nd Lt.	Baltimore, Maryland
CHOMA, JOSEPH ASN 0-752317	Bombardier POW	2nd Lt.	Cleveland, Ohio
McKENNA, RAYMOND H. ASN 31155162	Engineer KIA	S/Sgt.	Readsboro, Vermont
CRACOLICI, JOSEPH Jr. ASN 12190881	Radio Oper. POW	S/Sgt.	Brooklyn, New York
PERRY, DONALD L. ASN 13042032	Ball Turret POW	Sgt.	West View, Pennsylvania
EURE, WILLIAM H. ASN 13119398	RW Gunner POW	Sgt.	Wakefield, Virginia
WHITWORTH, JOHN L. ASN 34448789	LW Gunner POW	Sgt.	Martin, Georgia
DAY, RUSSEL A. ASN 16008549	Tail Turret POW	Sgt.	Tomah, Wisconsin

The second aircraft lost by the 68th Squadron was piloted by 2nd Lt. Warren H. Barry. The MACR does not have an observation reported on this airplane. It only states that the aircraft disappeared after a furious attack by enemy aircraft and heavy anti-aircraft fire. About six planes were lost at this time and it seems no one had an opportunity to observe other planes or crews. Sid Kipnes told me that he learned from S-2 that Lt. Barry's ship was seen to drop out of formation under heavy fighter attack. Six chutes were seen to come out of plane before it disappeared from view.

The bomber formations were attacked by German fighters just after bombing. The #2 engine of this aircraft was knocked out and when #3 was set afire, the crew bailed out. The B-24 crashed at Ilse, 5 km NE of Petershagen or 12 km N. of Minden, Germany.

This aircraft and crew fared better than many others this day, as nine of the crew survived to become POWs. Sgt. John L. Whitworth, left waist gunner, sent this information, "I have no idea what the name or number of our ship was. Nor can I remember just what our location was when

the fighters hit us. We should have been pretty close to the target by the time they say the attack came. I was left waist gunner, and on about the first pass, they got us. Number two engine was knocked out and started windmilling. So I told our pilot, Lt. Barry, he would need to feather it if he could.

“Someone else reported that #3 was on fire, too. We were then told to get out. Sgt. Raymond McKenna was our top turret gunner, and I never did know if he got out or not.

Note: McKenna was KIA. His body was finally identified in the early 1950s. The radio operator, Joe Caracolici, reported that McKenna had exited the plane prior to him and was uninjured at that point. Based on McKenna's injuries, the Army determined that his parachute had failed.

“Incidentally, I was shot down on my first mission, so I did not get a chance to know many of the fellows. But one thing that impressed me was the concern shown when it was about time for the Group to return from a mission. All the boys who didn't go would go to the flight line to watch to see if all their friends made it back.”

This crew had just joined the 68th Squadron in mid-March. Lt. Barry had flown two missions during the latter part of the month, but as a co-pilot on another crew as was the standard practice. This was normal procedure for first pilots to gain experience before taking his own crew on missions. All others on this crew were flying their first mission. Also, as was the customary procedure for new crews, was flying near the end of the formation.

Donald Perry, the ball turret gunner, wrote: “The plane (Tootie Belle and Pizz and Moan) was attacked by both German Me 109s and FW 190s. We flew as tail end Charlie, outside on the last end of the “V.” We had no guns firing from that side. We were attacked all the way up the line.

“We were shot down over a German town, two months before the Normandy invasion. The crew bailed out at 21,000 feet and I free fell through the clouds about 10,000 feet before opening my chute. I landed alone in a tilled field about three acres in size, with no buddies in sight and only a lone manure pile for cover. I frantically stuffed the parachute into a hole I hollowed out in the mound. I saw that a piece of our B-24 and an engine had dropped into the field nearby.

“I was equipped with a meager survivor's kit – water in a rubber bottle, tablets, and a candy bar. None of the three compasses I had pointed to the same north direction. So, I first ran toward the pieces of our plane and then towards the woods beyond. We had received no training on what to do after we hit the ground. In the woods, I stripped the patches off my clothing, cut away my earphones and threw them in different directions. Then I retraced my steps and went the opposite way so as not to leave a trail.

“It was three long, cold and hungry days before I was captured. Later moved to Stalag 17B and there was re-united with several from my crew.”

Note: Perry kept a diary with drawings and observations while a prisoner that he donated to the 44th.

Warren Barry, the pilot, provided the following account: “We were attacked by German fighters and knocked out of the formation and lost altitude quickly. The top of number two engine and wing was blown off. I feathered #2 and observed a hole in the broad part of the prop just above the hub. The bombardier, Lt. Choma was in the front turret which he reported was “shot out.” I called our engineer S/Sgt. McKenna out of the top turret to help and to assess other damage and to check the back of the plane. He returned and reported, “#3 was on fire and there was a fire in the back.”

“I told the crew to bail out and told Lt. Krebs, the co-pilot, to be the last man out and to see that all men were out. He followed S/Sgt. McKenna out. I did not think I could get out so I took a heading of 275 degrees and headed for England. After flying awhile, I saw two B-24s; one about a mile ahead and the other about two miles ahead at 10 o’clock a little below me, both with mechanical trouble. I thought if I could catch up with them, we three might have a better chance. The rear plane had an internal explosion, both wings broke off and the fuselage tumbled. The front plane flew over what appeared to be a rocket battery and was blown up. I did not observe anyone getting out of either plane.

“I continued on but picked up two Me 109s which fortunately, came in at 12 o’clock high. As I saw them fire, I would take evasive action as best I could. After each attack, they would climb, pass on my left side and attack 12 o’clock high again. I suspect they kept this pattern as no one was shooting back at them from the front, had they come in from the rear...

“Along the way, I flew over an elevated gun tower, but fortunately no one was in the tower. Later, in the prison camp, I was trying to determine just where I was. I talked to a lead navigator. He asked where the target was and my compass heading. I described a lake I had flown over. He determined I flew over Damme Lake [Dummer Lake]. He said, “How is it you are still alive? That is where the Germans are working on “heavy water” and a very highly defended target.” I told him I had two German fighters following me. He said, “They saved your life.” I had lost altitude to about 2,000 feet and realized I would not make it across the North Sea and to England. I did not want the Germans to get a good B-24 so I decided to try to bail out. I trimmed the plane up, here God became my pilot. I headed for the bomb bay and jumped, opening my chute just as soon as I cleared. My flying boots and shoes came off as my chute opened.

“I hit in a plowed field and bounced over a barbed wire fence. My chute was hung in the fence. It was a large, open field with no place to hide. I saw a small depression in the field, so I ran there and sat down and put on my G.I. shoes which I had wired to my parachute harness (we were advised to wire a pair of G.I. shoes to our parachute harness). I got up and started walking. In a few minutes, bullets started whizzing by – not knowing where the shots were fired, I stopped. Soon I was picked up.

“All the crew survived except the engineer, S/Sgt. McKenna, the next to last man out. He was listed as MIA for nine years. A grave was located in a church yard at Bissendorf, Germany, located about eight miles northwest of Isenhagen, Germany, with a cross marked “Hier ruht in Gott ein amerikanischer Flieger” (“Here rests in God an unidentified American airman”). His death was caused by parachute failure.”

S/Sgt. McKenna remained missing after the war. Finally, in 1953, the body of an unidentified US airman was found in a cemetery of Bissendorf, which is 9 km NE of Reese and 14 km SE of Helstorf. (These are the locations where S/Sgt. Cracolici and Lt. Krebs were captured, according to German reports attached to MACR 3853). McKenna’s remains were first buried in the Mausoleum at Frankfurt-Griesheim and later repatriated to the USA for permanent burial in his home state Vermont.

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #42-109822 O, Townsend	TOWNSEND’S TERRIBLE TEN	MACR #3857
----------------------------------	-------------------------	------------

68th Squadron Crew:

TOWNSEND, RAYMOND H. Jr. ASN 0-670670	Pilot KIA, WOM Netherlands	1st Lt.	Idaho Falls, Idaho
--	-------------------------------	---------	-----------------------

WARD, EDWIN M. Jr. ASN 0-2045032	Co-pilot KIA	2nd Lt.	Clifton, Virginia
JONES, PAUL A. ASN 0-676068	Navigator POW, wounded	1st Lt.	Nashville, Tennessee
NEALON, WALTER K. ASN 11032594	Bombardier POW	T/Sgt.	Malden, Massachusetts
CLEMONS, ARCHIE D. ASN 15015217	Engineer KIA, WOM Netherlands	T/Sgt.	Bradonton, Florida
LYMAN, JOHN M. ASN 11066620	Radio Oper. POW	T/Sgt.	Meshoppen, Pennsylvania
CHURCHILL, DOUGLAS E. ASN 16108271	Ball Turret KIA	S/Sgt.	Detroit, Michigan
NOSAL, JOHN A. ASN 17029388	RW Gunner POW	S/Sgt.	Omaha, Nebraska
BRAY, ROBERT S. ASN 39011105	LW Gunner POW	S/Sgt.	Pacific Grove, California
WENKE, RAYMOND G. ASN 6150461	Tail Turret KIA	S/Sgt.	Kalamazoo, Michigan

Note: S/Sgt. John Nosal was a veteran of the 1 August 1943 Ploesti raid.

1st Lt. Raymond H. Townsend, Jr. was the captain on the third ship lost by the 68th on the 8th of April. The MACR includes the information that this aircraft was observed at 1407 hours, west of Hannover, was hit by flak, fell back in the formation with one engine smoking. Later, it blew up and one parachute was seen.

The navigator, 1st Lt. Paul A. Jones sent his account, "We were hit by fighters three times. The first time, we lost one engine, which caused us to drop out of formation. One shell came through the little window in the nose compartment and went into the electrical box which knocked out power to the nose turret.

"I called Lt. Townsend and asked him if he was going to jettison the bombs, and he said 'No'. He thought that he could get us back into formation with them and continue on to the target. I checked with Sgt. Nealon who was in the nose turret and he told me that his power was out, but he was going to stay in the turret and use his guns manually.

"We were almost back into formation when we were again hit by the fighters, losing two more engines. Now, we could no longer remain airborne, so Townsend gave orders to bail out. I relayed this to Nealon, and crawled back to open the nose wheel doors – and that is when we were hit the third time. I guess I stuck my head right in the middle of those exploding shells as my steel helmet was blown off and my eyes were immediately sealed with blood, my head and face were bleeding, riddled by the shrapnel from the cannon fire.

"I sat down and decided I would not jump if I was going to be blind – I would just ride her in to the ground. But then I explored my head with my hands, pulled at one eyelids, and it opened and I could see! So I tried the other eye and found it to be alright, too.

"I turned to see where Nealon was, found him sitting on the shell compartment, trying to get his parachute on, but was unsuccessful because his hands were nearly frozen. I went to him, helped him get the chute attached to his harness, and he followed me to the nose door opening and I

jumped. But just before I went out, I looked up towards the cockpit to see that both Townsend and Ward's legs were hanging down off the controls – both unconscious or dead?

"I made a delayed jump for a considerable distance, until I started spinning like a leaf, then pulled the cord and I said to myself, 'Well, what do you know, it opened'.

"About this time one of the big wheels from the plane came by me, so I assumed the plane had blown up. I looked up to see one other parachute way above me and some distance away. It was Nealon's chute. I checked my watch and remember it to be 2:15 PM.

"I was captured in a small village that I thought was Weinhausen, but can't find it on a map. I have been told that Weinhausen means 'wine house' so I might have only seen the sign on a building. I spent 401 days in a German Prison Camp.

"At Camp Lucky Strike, France, after being liberated, Nealon and I located each other, and there also were our two waist gunners, Sgts. Lyman and Nosal. They told me that before they jumped, the ball turret gunner (Churchill) was killed while out of his turret. They saw Wenke get out of his rear turret to put on his chute, but he did not survive. I understand he is still buried in Germany. I know nothing about the top turret gunner or radio operator."

T/Sgt. Walter K. Nealon was an enlisted bombardier, one of five enlisted bombardiers in the original 68th Squadron back at Barksdale Field, Louisiana in early 1942. Sgt. Nealon remembered that, "If it were not for Paul (Jones) I would not be here today. I had been shot in the head, and although appearing to be conscious, I remember nothing. When Paul saw me fumbling with my chute, he thought my hands were frozen, but I simply was not thinking at all, but was out on my feet.

"When Paul attached my chute to my harness, he accidentally put it on upside down, and then bailed out. Until I talked with him recently I had always thought I was still in the plane when it blew up, and I was blown clear. I finally came back to consciousness floating through the air and remember trying to open the chute. But the ripcord was on the left side instead of the right, and still not thinking clearly, I had to practically tear the chute open with my fingers.

"Sgt. John Nosal and I were captured in the same area – and we never saw anyone else from the crew until the war was over and at Camp Lucky Strike in France."

John Lyman's daughter Esther wrote that her dad told her that he was trying to move Doug Churchill's body away from his gun when they were hit again. She said her father credited Churchill's death with his own survival since the pilot (Townsend) had sent him back to take Churchill's gun. Otherwise he would have been on the flight deck when the plane exploded, and of course everyone on the flight deck died.

The 506th Squadron bore the brunt on this mission and lost five aircraft as well as another man being KIA on a returning aircraft.

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #42-110023, Herzing	RUBBER CHECK	MACR #3860
506th Squadron Crew:	Entire crew POW	
HERZING, ERNEST A. ASN 0-663911	Pilot POW	2nd Lt. Houston, Texas
FILLBACH, VIRGIL W. ASN 0-687023	Co-pilot POW	2nd Lt. Gregory, South Dakota

DUNKERLY, GAYLE J. ASN 0-688006	Navigator POW	2nd Lt.	Detroit, Michigan
BALL, WILLIAM F. Jr. ASN, 0-1296624	Bombardier POW	2nd Lt.	Bessemer, Alabama
BROWN, JOHN J. Jr. ASN 31228632	Engineer POW	Sgt.	Abington, Massachusetts
WEISS, WILLIAM J. ASN 13128091	Radio Oper. POW	S/Sgt.	Weatherly, Pennsylvania
HIRSCH, MOREN ASN 32617876	Ball Turret POW	Sgt.	New York City, New York
THORSON, ALVIN L. ASN 16035901	RW Gunner POW	Sgt.	Newark, Illinois
LEBLANC, ALBERT A. ASN 31085436	LW Gunner POW	Sgt.	Waltham, Massachusetts
MAHANEY, FRANCIS X. ASN 33198065	Tail Turret POW	S/Sgt.	Washington, Dist. of Col.

Again, the MACR is very brief in its explanation of what transpired with this plane and crew. "At 1347 this aircraft left the formation in difficulty after enemy fighters had attacked. No chutes were seen."

The engineer, Sgt. John J. Brown. wrote that, "I believe that they were mostly Me 109s that hit us in that one flashing pass. We didn't know they were coming and were shocked when we heard the firing.

"As engineer, and sitting in the top turret, I could observe everything as it was happening. The damage was this – #1 and 2 engines were knocked out and smoking; #3 was on fire immediately, and the flames engulfed the whole right wing area. #4 engine was the only one operating!

"I quickly reported this damage to Lt. Herzing, our pilot, and it seemed that a long time elapsed with no answer, so I repeated it a second time. Apparently he and the co-pilot, Lt. Fillbach, were nearly in shock trying to determine what had happened and what to do about it.

"Lt. Herzing then said, 'What do you think, Phil?' The reply came back from the co-pilot, 'Let's get the hell out of here!'

"The next order was to salvo the bombs – then to prepare to bail out. Very shortly after that, Lt. Herzing could see the hopelessness of the situation then said, "Go ahead and jump."

"Well, it was our first jump. We had practiced the procedure earlier, but only from the ground and just to orientate each person which exit to take. But this was the real thing and we had complications, as the bomb bay doors were swinging back and forth, apparently damaged as well.

"After checking those swinging doors, it was decided to jump as soon as they were about to open because they swung back almost immediately. We all bailed out and landed with only a few minor bumps and bruises, banged up legs and backs, but otherwise in good shape. Amazingly, with all of the damage to the plane, no one had been hit! I was told that shortly after we bailed out, the ship blew up.

"We were quickly rounded up by German soldiers somewhere near Hannover and taken to Dulag Luft for interrogation. Then on to Stalag 17B, Krems, Austria."

Navigator Lt. Gayle Dunkersley remembers that, “The name of our airplane was RUBBER CHECK – you know, always comes back. We were attacked by Me 109s and had hits on both wings, but none in the fuselage. At least two engines were knocked out, with a fire in one wing. Not being able to maintain altitude we were ordered to bail out. The plane was set on automatic pilot, and was observed to blow up shortly after we all got out.

“All crew members were captured upon landing, and by evening, we were rounded up together in jail cells at an air force base in the area. Once we were in the hands of the German Air Force personnel, we were treated with mutual respect. The following day was Easter Sunday, and were fed a good dinner and then were put into one large cell for a few hours so that we could compare experiences with each other. All four of us officers were sent to Stalag Luft I, near Barth.”

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #42-73506 X-Bar, Johnson

MACR #3852

506th Squadron Crew:

JOHNSON, GUY W. ASN 0-681431	Pilot KIA, buried Ardennes (A-36-2)	1st Lt.	Parkersburg, Iowa
WILLIAMSON, LEROY M. ASN 0-805717	Co-pilot POW, wounded	1st Lt.	Sealy, Texas
BAUMANN, ROBERT J. ASN 0-735244	Navigator POW, wounded	1st Lt.	St. Louis, Missouri
WIEST, CHARLES L. ASN 0-736742	Bombardier POW	1st Lt.	Baltimore, Maryland
HICKMAN, ROBERT J. ASN 12132169	Engineer POW, escapee, returned	S/Sgt.	Frankfort, Delaware
GOLDMAN, MARTIN R. ASN 11073423	Radio Oper. POW	T/Sgt.	New Britain, Connecticut
PROCYSZYN, WALTER W. ASN 33284808	Ball Turret POW	S/Sgt.	Ford City, Pennsylvania
RANDALL, WILBUR R. ASN 39458252	RW Gunner POW	S/Sgt.	Lewiston, Idaho
MANAK, PAUL ASN 36196213	LW Gunner POW	S/Sgt.	Lawton, Michigan
REED, GEORGE W. ASN 12181955	Tail Turret POW	S/Sgt.	Wilmington, Delaware

The second 506th Squadron aircraft lost was an aircraft piloted by 1st Lt. Guy W. Johnson. His MACR includes this information, “Left formation at 1347 hours, in difficulty after an enemy aircraft attack. Johnson was shot on ground when trying to surrender to some soldiers. He was overheard to be saying words like, ‘Don’t shoot! I give up.’ The aircraft was hit by flak in the nose section, bomb bay, tail and left wing. It caught fire immediately while still over Brunswick. Orders to bail out was given and all jumped successfully.”

Co-pilot Williamson stated that, “After all personnel had cleared the aircraft and were descending to earth, we were fired upon by small arms. Upon hitting the earth, I recognized the voice of 1st Lt. Guy W. Johnson saying, ‘I give up. Don’t shoot’ – or words to that effect. Then followed a burst of rifle fire. I was wounded and did not see Lt. Johnson, although I would judge from the sound of his voice he was about 400 feet away. I could see a number of German soldiers running in the direction of Lt. Johnson.

“I was told by German military personnel at the time I was taken prisoner that Lt. Johnson was dead and notice of his death would be sent through the Red Cross.”

Lt. Robert J. Baumann, navigator, states that, “While in prison camp I made notes of what I remembered about the mission and I still have them. My listing shows that Johnson was killed, Williamson, Wiest, Goldman, Procyszyn, Manak, Hickman and myself as alive, and I knew nothing about Reed and Randall.

“On that last flight, our Group was leading the formations and our plane was flying in the number 4 position. We were catching some flak, but just before the IP, I was looking out the side window checking pilotage points when the window was shattered by flak. Other parts of the plane also were hit by flak, but no one was hurt at that time.

“We began to get fighter attacks while on our final approach to the target. Our section had good fighter support and although there were a lot of enemy planes, I don’t believe we received any hits, nor do I recall hearing that any other planes in our Group were hit seriously.

“We began to get heavy accurate flak just before bombs away and it continued. I remember hearing noises as though flak was hitting the plane at various places. It sounded like rocks being thrown against the plane. However, no one was hit – at least I heard nothing on the intercom about serious hits. I turned around to reach for my log to record the bomb data when all hell broke loose.

“The ship shuddered, my legs felt like they had been blown off, and I fell face down on the floor. The space below the flight deck and just to the rear from me was an immediate roaring inferno. I was able to get up on my right leg, but my left leg was useless. I started to open the emergency nose wheel door, but I couldn’t hold on long enough to get the door completely open, as the flames were burning my face.

“I recall backing away, and then making another try at it with my head turned to the side. The side of my head and face were pretty badly burned, but I did get the door open. I passed out a few times but before I finally got out of the ship. I remembered to open the nose turret door. Our ship was an older model and was the only one in our Squadron that did not have an emergency release handle inside the nose turret. Had I not gotten that door open, the bombardier (Wiest) would have been trapped.

“I don’t know how I got out of the ship, but I did, and ended up in a prison camp after a few transfers and transportation problems. This flight was my 22nd mission, but my first with this crew. I am almost certain that Lt. Johnson, the pilot, was killed by flak.

“I was on Lt. Money’s crew during my first 15 missions or so, then I was being trained for lead crew. My notes also show that our bombs were away at 1402 hours, so the information about our crew leaving the Group at 1347 is in error.”

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #41-29153 Z-Bar, Marx	GREENWICH		MACR #3850
506th Squadron Crew:	Entire crew POW		
MARX, ROBERT H. ASN 0-806104	Pilot POW	1st Lt.	Chicago, Illinois
BROCKMAN, VERNIE R. ASN 0-812538	Co-pilot POW	2nd Lt.	Seattle, Washington

MASCOLA, LEON A. ASN 0-811645	Navigator POW	2nd Lt.	Hartford, Connecticut
POLJANEC, RAYMOND L. ASN 0-752935	Bombardier POW	2nd Lt.	Winston, Minnesota
FRANKLIN, ROBERT C. ASN 17161318	Engineer POW	T/Sgt.	St. Louis, Missouri
TAYLOR, RONALD J. ASN 36174618	Radio Oper. POW	T/Sgt.	Dewitt, Michigan
APPLEGATE, EDWARD J. ASN 32326464	Ball Turret POW	S/Sgt.	New York City, New York
ZIMMERMAN, THEODORE F. ASN 16036987	RW Gunner POW	S/Sgt.	Chicago, Illinois
JOHNSON, DEAN F. ASN 18118882	LW Gunner POW	S/Sgt.	Pelly, Texas
NELSON, ESLEY E. ASN 16155835	Tail Turret POW	S/Sgt.	Eugene, Oregon

The third 506th lost was an aircraft piloted by 1st Lt. Robert H. Marx. The MACR briefly states that at 1357 hours, in the vicinity of Langenhagen, the ship started down under control. No chutes were observed.

Sgt. Theodore F. Zimmerman, right waist gunner, expanded a bit on the above observation. "The entire crew bailed out over a town named Herford, Germany. Fighters hit us, but what really got us was flak.

"After we dropped our load of bombs (4 x 2,000 pounders) we lost engine power and went into a spin. Our two pilots pulled it out at 4,000 feet, and hit the horn – and we all started to bail out. The ball turret gunner, Applegate, and I were the last to leave. He had to get his shoes, and then he lost them when he opened his chute. I guess he did not have time to tie them to his harness.

"We were captured when we landed. Then we were all sent to Frankfurt for interrogation. From there we went to Stalag 17B, Krems, Austria. The officers went to Stalag I."

Bob Franklin recalls: "As I remember, we were hit by flak in the #3 engine putting it out of commission and caused us to drop out of the formation. It wasn't but a few minutes before the #4 engine decided to quit. As you know, the B-24 does not fly too well on two engines, especially on the same side.

"We went into a spin and I threw the hydraulic switch to get pressure to get the flaps down and open the bomb bay and nose wheel doors open so we could bail out if necessary. We went into a spin but our pilot Bob Marx was able to pull it out and gave the alarm to bail out as he couldn't hold it very long.

"As I was floating down, I remember seeing a crowd of people following my descent and were there to greet me on my landing. I was taken to a house where I was met by Lee Mascola, our navigator, and Ray Poljanic, our bombardier. We were then taken to another place where the rest of the crew was rounded up. It was good to see that we all had gotten out safely. From there, we were taken by train to Frankfurt for interrogation. From Frankfurt, we were put in boxcars with what seemed like hundreds of other POWs and transported to Stalag 17B at Krems, Austria." This was his eighth mission.

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #42-109827 Q-Bar, Sprinkle

MACR #3858

506th Squadron Crew:

SPRINKLE, DALLAS L. ASN 0-440634	Pilot POW, injured	2nd Lt.	Akron, Ohio
NEUTZE, ROBERT E. Jr. ASN 0-755738	Co-pilot KIA	2nd Lt.	San Antonio, Texas
SMITH, JOSEPH R. Jr. ASN 0-813456	Navigator KIA, WOM Netherlands	2nd Lt.	Brooklyn, New York
SCHUYLER, ROBERT E. ASN 0-682125	Bombardier KIA, WOM Netherlands	2nd Lt.	Little Falls, New York
RADU, CHARLES ASN 35317454	Engineer KIA, buried Ardennes (D-23-14)	S/Sgt.	Lakewood, Ohio
WINN, CHARLES ASN 17091138	Radio Oper. POW, burned	S/Sgt.	Ft. Collins, Colorado
SPRINGS, CHARLES F. ASN 34598241	Ball Turret KIA	S/Sgt.	Mt. Holly, North Carolina
MURACH, STANLEY Jr. ASN 31104988	RW Gunner KIA, buried Ardennes (A-31-19)	Sgt.	Bridgeport, Connecticut
HICKS, JEANE M. ASN 39410222	LW Gunner POW	S/Sgt.	Stockton, California
FREEMAN, JACK B. ASN 19112691	Tail Turret POW	Sgt.	Tacoma, Washington

The fourth of the five planes lost by the 506th on the 8th was that of 2nd Lt. Dallas L. Sprinkle. His MACR states that for reasons unknown, at 1357 hours near Langenhagen, this aircraft was last seen under control, but no chutes were observed.

Sgt. Jack Freeman sent his recollections, "I was flying in the tail turret position that day and we were flying 'tailend Charlie'. We had just turned at the IP for the bomb run, had opened our bomb bay doors, when several [fighters] came down out of the sun and decimated our formation.

Note: Freeman thinks the fighters were Me 262s, but Sprinkle was sure they were FW 190s.

"Our plane was hit with cannon shells in the main gas lines across the front of the wing above the flight deck, as well as on the deck above the wing over the bomb bay where all of the oxygen supply bottles were secured. Fire erupted immediately, fed by the fuel, the oxygen and the wind blowing in the open bomb bay. It quickly spread back to the waist positions and forward into the flight deck area.

"Lt. Sprinkle sounded the bail out alarm very soon after the hits and everyone hurried to get set to abandon ship. We in the waist area prepared to leave through the bottom camera hatch, as the heat from the fire soon was igniting the ammo in the waist gun belts.

"Sgt. Charles F. Springs was in the ball turret and he never rotated his turret or raised it in order to get out. As far as I know, he never showed up later. Sgts. Stanley Murach and Jeane M. Hicks, waist gunners, both bailed out ahead of me and were, apparently, OK at that time. Jeane Hicks made it all right, but I have heard nothing of Stanley Murach.

"I landed after a delayed jump near a wooded area where I ditched my chute, and took off toward the west and Holland. I was loose for about 8 to 10 hours before I was captured by a JU 88 pilot

who was home on leave. He spoke English, took me to a Luftwaffe airfield jail near Luneberg for the night. Next day they drove me to the area where our plane crashed to see if I could identify one body there without dog tags. It, unhappily, turned out to be my friend and crewmate, Sergeant Charles Radu, of Lakewood, Ohio. His chute had not opened.

“I was then transported under guard to Dulag Luft, the interrogation center in Bavaria for several days – and where I saw Lt. Sprinkle. I had no chance to speak to him, but he had evidently been blown through the cockpit roof when the ship blew up. He had a heavily bandaged nose as though it was broken. I was transported, along with many Air Corps POWs, in boxcars to Austria and Stalag 17B. There I found Jeane Hicks in good shape, and learned that Charles Winn had been able to get out, but was very seriously burned. I’ve heard nothing about the rest of the crew since that date.”

Dallas Sprinkle, the pilot, wrote: “The fire in the bomb bay and flight deck was severe. I signaled to bail out and those on the flight deck went out the top hatch. I know that Lt. Neutze, Sgt. Radu, and Sgt. Winn got out of the plane. It seems I was told later that Radu’s chute burned up and he fell to his death.

“When I couldn’t control the plane any longer, I started for the hatch and that is the last I remember until I came to, falling through space! I pulled my ripcord and in a second was on the ground. I was either blown or thrown clear of the plane. I landed near a small village and near some woods.

“I hid my chute in the woods. Took off my flying boots and started to run and I ran right into a home guard detail that captured me. They were wearing the spiked World War I helmets and long coats.

“After being captured, I was taken to Frankfurt and then to Barth and Stalag Luft I. I was injured and burned around the face and nose. At Stalag Luft I, I was put in the hospital staffed with English doctors captured at Dunkirk in 1939.

“I spent about six months in the hospital with an infected right leg, which I almost lost. I was released in mid-May 1945 by the Russian Army and shortly after was air evacuated to a hospital in Paris. I eventually got back to the states in July 1945.”

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #42-100423 A, Winn	OH MY SUFFERIN’ HEAD		MACR #3856
506th Squadron Crew:	Entire crew POW		
WINN, JACK M. ASN 0-807092	Pilot POW	2nd Lt.	Dallas, Texas
McEVER, JAMES H. ASN 0-755587	Co-pilot POW	2nd Lt.	Waco, Texas
FINESMITH, MAX ASN 0-692306	Navigator POW	2nd Lt.	Brooklyn, New York
WALKER, ALFRED C. ASN 0-691912	Bombardier POW	2nd Lt.	New Philadelphia, Ohio
TURANSKY, LOUIS A. ASN 15323105	Engineer POW	S/Sgt.	Canton, Ohio
VAUGHAN, CHARLES W. ASN 33450690	Radio Oper. POW	Sgt.	Sacramento, California

MATTHEWS, ALLEN T. ASN 33075854	Ball Turret POW	Sgt.	Royersford, Pennsylvania
ALBERT, RICHARD L. ASN 15105209	RW Gunner POW	Sgt.	Freemont, Ohio
ISAACS, LEON PRESTON ASN 15382857	LW Gunner POW	Sgt.	Berea, Kentucky
GOLDBERG, SIDNEY I. ASN 13041065	Tail Turret POW	Sgt.	Uniontown, Pennsylvania

The fifth and last aircraft lost by the 506th Squadron on the eighth of April was that piloted by 2nd Lt. Jack M. Winn.

The MACR states in part that there was a collision with an enemy aircraft at 1346 hours. This enemy aircraft first hit the deputy lead ship in the formation and then continued on to crash into this aircraft. Both airplanes exploded. No one was believed to have survived this collision, but all of them did!

This was the pilot's second mission, while the remainder of his crew were on their first flight against the enemy.

Lt. Jack Winn, pilot, gave this information, "Actually, my crew and I did not spend enough time with the 506th Squadron to even get acquainted. We flew a new ship to England during the middle of March 1944, but upon arrival, we were told that the 506th needed replacements badly. I flew a mission as a co-pilot on April 1st [for Lt. Mendenhall], and on the very next mission, April 8, my crew and I had an unfortunate encounter with an FW 190.

"With luck, all of the crew made it to the ground in reasonably good shape, considering the circumstances. We spent the next 13 months as POW. I understand that the 44th took a terrible loss that day."

Lt. Max Finesmith, navigator, added, "We were knocked down on our very first mission over Germany on the way to Brunswick. Our position in the formation was behind the deputy lead. A FW 190 hit our port engines, our plane caught fire, and all of our crew bailed out safely. We were supposed to get fighter support at rendezvous point, but never saw them.

"The altitude when I bailed out was about 5,000 feet. I injured my back and ankle on landing, and was captured soon after. I was a POW for 13 months at Stalag Luft I, until liberated by the Russians in May 1945."

Note: 2nd Lt. Jack Winn should not to be confused with 2nd Lt. Jack Wind, a pilot who also flew his first mission this day – also from the 506th Squadron – also was badly shot up. Lt. Wind crash-landed at the base. He and his crew went on to successfully complete 31 missions, many of which were in SOUTHERN COMFORT II. (For more on Lt. Wind, see below.)

Finally, one other 506th Squadron aircraft returned to base with a co-pilot killed in action. Although there is no official information in either the 506th Squadron or the 44th BG, the pilot of that plane, 1st Lt. John M. McCaslin, Jr. sent his recollections of this tragedy.

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #42-7509 Bar-V, McCaslin	GALAVANTIN' GAL	Returned, salvaged
-------------------------------------	-----------------	--------------------

506th Squadron Crew:

McCASLIN, JOHN M. Jr. ASN 0-440434	Pilot	1st Lt.	Cincinnati, Ohio
BARTOL, STOCKTON R. ASN 0-680595	Co-pilot KIA, buried Cambridge (C-2-15)	1st Lt.	Wynewood, Pennsylvania
WILLIAMS, ALLEN N. Jr. ASN 0-683887	Navigator	1st Lt.	
GUTKNECHT, ROBERT E. ASN 0-738635	Bombardier	1st Lt.	Maplewood, Missouri
PETERSON, MELVIN P.	Radio Op.	S/Sgt.	
HALL, MAURICE G.	Engineer	T/Sgt.	
STRUBLE, ROBERT	Nose Turret	T/Sgt.	
RUSH, PERL R.	RW Gunner	S/Sgt.	
RICHARDSON, COLEY W.	LW Gunner	S/Sgt.	
GUTIERREZ, TRINADAD	Tail Turret	S/Sgt.	

Note: Hall's name is also listed as M. Glenn Hall.

Lt. McCaslin stated that, "My crew had not been together very long. We were, including myself, former members of other crews. I think some of the gunners came from Bill Duffy's crew (as I did), but I'm not sure of it. Possibly, they included Richard Hershey, John Stewart and William Drumel.

"Stockton had flown quite a number of missions with another pilot. Shortly before he was killed, I had checked him out in the left seat and he was in line to get a crew of his own. Stockton entered the Army Air Corps after completion of his freshman year at Princeton University.

Note: Stockton Bartol had flown quite a number of missions with another pilot. In fact, he had flown 30 missions in all with three pilots, from 9 September 1943.

"The plane that we were flying was GALAVANTIN' GAL, with a bottle of 'Old Crow' painted on the other side of the nose. This old plane had flown the low level Ploesti mission.

"My impression now is that on the mission of 8 April 44, the 506th was leading the 44th, and the 44th was leading the 2nd Air Division. Stockton and I were flying on Col. John Gibson's left wing, and the deputy commander, Lt. Col. Robert Lehnhausen, was on Col. Gibson's right wing.

"Shortly before reaching the target area, we were raked pretty severely with head-on attacks by Me 109s. We took a hit in the leading edge of the left wing between number one and number two engines which, unaccountably, seemed to do no serious damage.

"Hannover, I believe, was our secondary target. I think this was the reason for the unusually long bomb run (straight and level for about four minutes); and hence the god-awful flak. I don't recall how many planes we lost, but I do know it was one of our very bad days.

"Because we were on the Colonel's left wing, I had to fly cross-cockpit when in formation. Stockton, in the right side seat, could more easily keep us in tight, and hence flew during the bomb run. He was at the controls when he was hit.

"This happened almost exactly on 'bombs away'. Some flak came through the windshield and hit him in the head. Despite my proximity to him, I wasn't even scratched, nor was anybody else on the crew. Our plane, though considerably riddled, did not suffer any extensive functional damage, and I had no undue difficulty in flying it back to England.

“Col. Gibson then took evasive action, but I did not stay with him due to the commotion in my plane. It was several minutes before I located the Colonel and found a place back in formation.”

1st Lt. Stockton R. Bartol was buried at the American Cemetery in Cambridge, England. Plot C, Row 2, Grave 15. His father visited him annually for more than 20 years.

Robert Struble, the nose gunner, wrote: “Flak was so heavy we could not see our wing man on the bomb run. We took a burst in front of the cockpit dead even. One large piece of shrapnel went thru the cockpit safety glass, thru Bartol’s flak helmet, thru his head, thru the armor plate to his rear and hit the radio operator on the face which drew blood.

“We lost #3 and #4 engines on the way back. At the base we cranked and pushed the wheels down. McCaslin sideslipped the ship in on the north/south runway for as beautiful a landing as I can remember.

“After burying Bartol in Cambridge, we went on a rest leave to Southpool, England for a week.”

Glenn Hall, the engineer, wrote: “We not only had a bomb sight for Robert Gutknecht, our bombardier, but also we had a nose gunner who was an engineer. On the bomb run our tail gunner, Trinidad Gutierrez was letting us know as each plane was shot down. As I remember it, we had dropped our bombs before Bartol was hit. He was wearing a flak vest and flak helmet. He was hit in the forehead just below the helmet. He was flying the plane when he was hit. Gutknecht acted as co-pilot until we were ready to land and then I sat in the right seat and the nose gunner took over as engineer. Two weeks later that plane had armor glass, but it was too late for Bartol.”

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #42-100429 Bar-O, Wind

Crash-landed

506th Squadron Crew:

WIND, JACK J.	Pilot Hit by shrapnel	2nd Lt.
WALDO, EDWIN L.	Co-pilot	2nd Lt.
MAZZA, BEN K.	Navigator	2nd Lt.
STANTON, ARTHUR C.	Bombardier	2nd Lt.
WRIGHT, W. H.	Radio Oper.	S/Sgt.
LIGHTCAP, HAROLD E.	Eng./Top Turret	S/Sgt.
GURT, WILLIAM A.	Ball Turret	Sgt.
EMCH, HAROLD D.	RW Gunner	Sgt.
TULINI, DENO C.	LW Gunner	Sgt.
ECCLESTON, CHARLES R.	Tail Turret	S/Sgt.

Jack Wind recalls: “After I had flown my first mission with Sid Paul, my crew was waiting to hear what combat was all about. Since the mission had been a milk run, I reported with, ‘Hey guys, nothing to it. We just flew there, dropped bombs and came home.’ Two days later, I took my crew on their first mission. Brunswick!

“Our position was lead of the ‘coffin corner’ element of the lead squadron. Everything was fine till the bomb run. Our fighter cover had pulled out and their relief was coming up behind us.

“Suddenly, I saw a trail of smoke way out in front of us. Then there was what appeared to be a swarm of blackbirds coming at us head-on. Despite our training to call out fighters by clock position, my crew said I screamed, ‘Fighters, Fighters, Fighters.’ Those fighters went through us with their cannons blazing like crazy.

“One fighter picked us out and passed close to our left wing. I don’t know if it was an FW 190 or a Me 109, but the top turret gunner, Lightcap, said later that he was blond with a mustache.

“We took six 20-mm hits on the left side. Luckily they were armor-piercing shells. There were two hits in the gas tank between the #2 engine and the fuselage. The #2 engine took a hit that shattered a rocker-arm box and caused a fire as oil poured onto the exhaust. We had to feather that engine. One hit us between the #2 and #1 engine and then continued into the wheel. The last hit was through the tail.

“I managed to pull up on the leader’s wing in time to drop bombs. After our turn from the target, we could see chutes everywhere below us.

“It was not over yet. We were flying over solid clouds and suddenly were caught in a solid box barrage over Hanover. Flak was everywhere. Fortunately, Ed Waldo was wearing a flak vest when the piece of shrapnel came through the windshield. I caught a “dollar’s worth” of Plexiglas in the eyebrows, eyelids, and eyes. At that point, the whole world turned “blood red.” When I could see again, we were clear of the flak.

“However, it still wasn’t over! As we were coming in to land and I was turning into the final approach, the plane ahead of us ground-looped, blocking the runway.

“I turned to make the cross-runway as the engineer called out that the #3 engine red-lined. The co-pilot feathered it. Then it was the #4 engine that redlined and Waldo and I were struggling with the controls to get us down. When the wheels struck the runway, we were surprised to hear what sounded like a million tin cans. We didn’t know that our left tire was shot out. Suddenly, we ground-looped in the grass.

“They later counted 78 flak holes in the ship. Included were holes in both the #3 and #4 oil tanks. We had lost all of our oil while coming home. That was the end of a very close first mission for my crew. This was no milk run.

“After the debriefing, Dr. Allison, the flight surgeon, took me to his clinic and bandaged one eye. He then sent me by ambulance to a hospital, which was located not far from Shipdham (Wymondham). About 7 p.m. that evening, a doctor put me in a dentist chair and began removing the glass from my face and eyes. All during this procedure, he was showing and lecturing another doctor on his technique. This went on until midnight. I was relieved when it was over and I found out that there was nothing serious. There were six scratches in one eye and seven in the other. I left there with a bandage on one eye.”

9 April 1944

Airdrome, Tutow, Germany

Very unfavorable weather confronted the 44th’s formation, so a recall was issued. Some of the planes had dropped their bombs prior to receiving the recall, however. Very heavy flak and enemy aircraft attacks were experienced, with the 68th Squadron having one aircraft that did not return.

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #42-72858 U, Palmer	PISTOL PACKIN' MAMA		MACR #3851
68th Squadron Crew:	Entire crew interned		
PALMER, HIRAM C. ASN 0-729892	Pilot Returned to duty	1st Lt.	Novelty, Missouri
STERNBACK, LAWTON L. ASN 0-693572	Co-pilot Returned to duty	1st Lt.	New Holstein, Wisconsin
GILLESPIE, JAMES ASN 0-755150	Navigator Returned to duty	1st Lt.	Camden, New Jersey
BABICH, ANDREW F. ASN 36225989	Bombardier Returned to duty	S/Sgt.	Ironwood, Michigan
KRUSE, PAUL J. ASN 35467328	Engineer Remained	T/Sgt.	Covington, Kentucky
PUTMAN, DAVID C. ASN 15338965	Radio Oper. Returned to duty	T/Sgt.	Detroit, Michigan
FEINSTEIN, JACK H. ASN 12062017	Ball Turret Returned to duty	S/Sgt.	Brooklyn, New York
LONG, RAYMOND J. ASN 35678775	RW Gunner Remained	S/Sgt.	Cheviot, Ohio
DAMICO, RAYMOND J. ASN 33588383	LW Gunner Returned to duty	S/Sgt.	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
JOHNSON, NORMAN B. ASN 39454377	Tail Turret Returned to duty	S/Sgt.	Susanville, Oregon

The MACR states that the right wing was damaged, so the plane headed for Sweden at 18,000 feet. All engines apparently were operating, under control. This plane landed at Bulltofta airfield, Sweden, with considerable damage to the right wing and nose section. PISTOL PACKIN' MAMA had completed 29 missions, but only half of her 30th, and proudly displayed 29 pistols, not bombs, on her left nose section.

T/Sgt. Paul J. Kruse stated that, "PISTOL PACKIN' MAMA was not our plane. Oh, we flew her that day, but it was on loan because our aircraft, SHOO SHOO BABY had been shot up on our previous mission. We had returned to base with over 130 flak holes, and it was out of service for repairs.

"April 9th was Easter Sunday and our crew was assigned to PISTOL PACKIN' MAMA for this raid over Berlin. Our regular radio operator, Paul Brown, and our bombardier, Lt. Hybarger, were replaced by Sgts. David Putman and Andrew Babich. Later, I learned that Lt. Hybarger was killed on another mission.

Note: Lt. Hybarger was KIA on the 7 July 1944 mission.

"We were attacked on our way to the target by the yellow-nosed Me 109s and FW 190s. About the third or fourth pass, we got hit in our right wing. It missed #4 engine, but that big hole in the wing, compounded by the large section of the skin peeled back, caused us to pull 60 inches of mercury on all four of our engines. We also took a hit in the nose area which disabled our nose wheel landing gear.

"We couldn't keep up with the formation, even with absolute maximum power, so we slowly started dropping back. At the time of the hit, we were near Hamburg, Germany so we headed for

Sweden. Several German fighters started chasing us, but they didn't shoot at us! They could see we were in trouble and headed for Sweden and out of the war.

"We were over Denmark by this time, close to Malmo, Sweden. Before any further German fighter attacks could be made, a group of Swedish fighters, Regiani 2000, came up to protect us by chasing off those German planes. Then they led us to an airfield in Malmo, Sweden.

"We couldn't get our nose gear down, even though we tried to lower it manually. It was shot up pretty badly. The crew was throwing everything overboard to make it less of a drag on those engines. We couldn't hold out any longer, so we followed the Swedes to Bulltofta, the no-runway airfield, in Malmo. With our main gear down, nose wheel up, we went in for a crash-landing on that grass field. I was stationed in the bomb bay where I could see our pilot, Lt. Palmer, and the crew was back in the tail section but where we could see each other. After the pilots had landed on the main gears and was slowing down, the four in the tail started moving slowly forward in order to allow the nose to lower slowly, following my hand signals.

"The nose settled down slowly until it started skimming up the grass and dirt. Then it started digging in. Since I was standing in the bomb bay at the edge of the flight deck, I had to lift my feet up to keep the dirt from burying them. That was the most beautiful crash-landing I've ever seen or heard about, anytime, any place. We were shaken and very scared, but none of us were injured.

"The Swedes treated us excellently. They explained that since our bomber was in trouble, they took our side in chasing off the German fighters. Nine other U.S. planes landed in Sweden that Easter Sunday."

Sgt. Kruse went on to relate the crew's experiences of being interned; sent many photos of 8th AF ships also interned. The Swedes retained the engineers and those familiar with the mechanics of the B-24 to help them in repairing the planes.

11 April 1944

Bernberg, Germany

For the third straight time, fierce enemy opposition from the air as well as from the ground was experienced by our Group. The specific target was the Junkers Aircraft Assembly Plant, which was bombed with good results. One aircraft did not return, a 506th plane piloted by Lt. John D. Money.

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #42-7522 S-Bar, Money	SOUTHERN COMFORT II	MACR #3848
----------------------------------	---------------------	------------

506th Squadron Crew:

MONEY, JOHN D. ASN 0-740104	Pilot POW	1st Lt.	St. Louis, Missouri
STAMOS, ROBERT G. ASN 0-730646	Co-pilot KIA	1st Lt.	Danville, Illinois
WHEATLY, HAROLD J. ASN 0-675979	Navigator KIA	1st Lt.	Jefferson City, Missouri
BLAKE, FOSTER A. ASN 11055810	Nose Turret KIA	S/Sgt.	Bradford, Vermont

GRAFF, ANDREW C. ASN 37428100	Engineer KIA, buried Ardennes (B-36-54)	T/Sgt.	Geneva, Iowa
WERNICKI, EDWARD A. ASN 32765359	Radio Oper. KIA, buried Margraten (P-10-5)	T/Sgt.	Jersey City, New Jersey
HILL, HERBERT S. Jr. ASN 11088586	Ball Turret KIA	S/Sgt.	Revere, Massachusetts
YOUNG, DONALD L. ASN 19193283	RW Gunner POW, burned hands	S/Sgt.	Topeka, Kansas
KIRSCHNER, WALLACE E. ASN 12155416	LW Gunner POW, repatriated (burns)	S/Sgt.	Bronx, New York
ROOP, EUGENE W. N. ASN 14158075	Tail Tur KIA	S/Sgt.	Knoxville, Tennessee

The MACR states that this aircraft went down at 1123 hours. The right bomb bay doors failed to open, so when the bombs were dropped, the right side fragmentation bombs hit the closed doors, immediately setting that area on fire. The ship flew on for awhile, then winged over, breaking in two at the waist section. It went down and exploded. Four bodies came clear of the falling wreckage, but only two chutes were seen to open.

Sgt. Wallace Kirschner, left waist gunner, sent his experiences, "According to my diary, we had flown nine missions prior to this one on 11 April. We were carrying incendiary bombs. Near the target, we were under a barrage of flak, getting set for our bomb run. The bomb bay doors would not open as the tracks were frozen tight. Upon informing Lt. Money, our pilot, that I could not break the ice, we received a direct hit in the bomb bay. The rest is history.

"Sgt. Roop, tail gunner, saw that Sgt. Young's hands were badly burned, took his own parachute and placed it on Sgt. Young and helped him get through the rear camera hatch door. This resulted in Sgt. Roop being without a parachute of his own. I followed Young out the rear hatch, after removing my oxygen mask because I couldn't get the hose to release from the regulator. With the mask removed, I got 3rd degree burns on my face and right hand due to the fire all around me.

"I was picked up by German soldiers upon landing and was taken to an aid station in Frankfurt. They had converted an Agricultural School into a hospital. The doctors and aids were all part of the Dunkirk Evacuation Force captured – who were a wonderful group of men. Then I was sent to Bad Soden for work on my eyes. Even the doctors there were also from Dunkirk. I was later repatriated and returned to the States on 21 February, 1945. I saw Sgt. Young once after the war."

Lt. Money wrote that, "When the fire erupted in the bomb bay it quickly spread forward, filling the cabin with fire and smoke. I gave the bail out signal, as my co-pilot, Robert Stamos, was already dead from flak wounds. I then contemplated my own escape from that inferno. There was absolutely no way I could get back to the bomb bay, and the top hatch itself was burning. So it would have to be out one of the windows, but they were still intact. While still trying to maintain some control of the craft, I got my feet up, braced my back, and succeeded in kicking out the co-pilot's side window.

"Then I managed to get over Stamos, got hold of his wheel, and continued to hold the plane under control as I worked myself out that window. Soon I was entirely outside the ship, but still

holding onto the wheel as I needed to tilt the plane right-wing high, as that #3 prop was still churning the air a very short distance behind me.

“Then I let go – and immediately got clipped on my head by a tip of one of the propeller blades that knocked me out. But the cold air brought me to my senses before I hit the ground and I got my chute open in time. On the ground I found I was not seriously injured, and soon was taken prisoner.”

James H. Stevens was part of Capt. Schmidt’s crew (K-314). He saw Money’s aircraft go down and spotted two chutes. He noted that on this mission his aircraft’s nose turret was demolished, one engine was knocked out, and one tail section was shot up, but the aircraft returned safely to Shipdham. He wrote: “Lew Karstadt (in the nose turret) was saved by the rather small panel of armored glass. When we all got out of our flight gear at the base later on, we found that Lew had been the only one wounded in the attack. As I recall, it was a flak fragment in his knee.”

13 April 1944

Lechfeld, Germany

A twin-engine fighter plant and an adjoining German airfield were attacked visually with good results. One aircraft from the formation was missing, being forced to land in Switzerland.

67th SQUADRON:

67th Sq., #42-100330 L-Bar, Griffith

MACR #4045

Note: This aircraft’s name is not known but it is believed to have had nose art of a flying woman.

67th Squadron Crew:	Entire crew interned		
GRIFFITH, ROCKFORD C. ASN 0-531343	Pilot	1st Lt.	Fort Worth, Texas
TINSMAN, WILLIAM Jr. ASN 0-748844	Co-pilot	1st Lt.	Newton, Pennsylvania
JACKSON, RALPH B. ASN 0-671364	Navigator	2nd Lt.	New York City, New York
HOERL, NORBERT A. ASN 0-699407	Bombardier	1st Lt.	Houston, Texas
PARRISH, EARL J. ASN 35360264	Engineer	T/Sgt.	Freedom, Indiana
CLARK, FORREST S. ASN 32562885	Radio Oper.	S/Sgt.	Caldwell, New York
STRUTZ, GEORGE J. ASN 32472766	Ball Turret	S/Sgt.	Rochester, New York
HARMON, HAROLD P. ASN 31150094	RW Gunner	S/Sgt.	Gorham, Maine
MARION, SID T. ASN 34303358	LW Gunner	S/Sgt.	Asheboro, North Carolina
BARTAY, FORREST E. ASN 38410822	Tail Turret	S/Sgt.	Rosenberg, Texas

Pilot of this plane was 1st Lt. Rockford C. Griffith who had made the spectacular one-wheel landing at Shipdham on 18 November, 1943. (Recorded on film!) His MACR states that, “At

1535 hours, #330 L-Bar was seen leaving the formation, headed for Switzerland, under control. All four engines seemed to be OK, and there were friendly fighters for escort.” He landed at Dubendorf airfield.

“Rocky” Griffith sent this account, “When we went into Switzerland, it was about the only mission when I never met German fighters or encountered flak!

“About half way to the target, all of the engines began to overheat. I opened the cowl flaps as far as they would go, and put the fuel mixture controls into full rich position. I knew at that time I was using too much fuel, but had no other choice.

“After we dropped our bombs, I pulled out of formation to check the amount of fuel left. There was just not enough left to get back to England. As I turned toward Switzerland, I lost #2 engine due to low oil pressure. At that time I began to worry about the rest of the engines going out. I don’t think I could have made it back to England even if there had been enough fuel.

“As we crossed into Switzerland, the Swiss fighters came up to meet us, but they did not come in too close. I didn’t know why until we were hit by three rounds of Swiss flak! I immediately dove down and to the right, but up where I would have been, three more rounds exploded. I believe I landed at Dubendorf without any further trouble.

“After about nine months I escaped into France and was flown back to England.”

21 April 1944

Zwickau, Germany (Mission Recalled)

The 68th Squadron lost an airplane and crew on this date to severe icing conditions. Sgt. Siteman from the Hawkins crew (506th) wrote the following in his diary: “We were briefed at 1000 hours for a mission to Germany. However, when we got to 14,000 feet, ice formed on the plane and we couldn’t continue and had to return to base. The entire formation was recalled due to this weather. That ice gave us a hard time and for while we thought we might have to bail out. We lost 6,000 feet a minute, were in a spin and managed to pull out at only 4,000 feet! It was close, but we made out okay. The whole group returned to the base due to bad weather. No mission or sortie credit. (One 68th Squadron plane did crash, with eight men killed)”

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #41-29418 U, Havens	PAPPY’S CHILLUN	Crashed, ice a factor
-------------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------

Note: This aircraft was also known as TURNIP TERMITE. Its nose art was painted by Clayton Hutsell at the 486th Bomb Group at Sudbury, but was transferred to Shipdham before he could put the name of TURNIP TERMITE on it. It was renamed PAPPY’S CHILLUN at the 44th.

68th Squadron Crew:

HAVENS, FORREST C. ASN 0-687031	Pilot Hospitalized at Station #231	2nd Lt.	
DEL GRANDE, LEON L. ASN 0-817399	Co-pilot Injured, severe ankle sprain	2nd Lt.	San Francisco, California
ZAJICEK, JAMES L. ASN 0-698812	Navigator KIA	2nd Lt.	Chicago, Illinois
COLE, EDWARD A. ASN 0-691634	Bombardier KIA	2nd Lt.	El Dorado, Kansas

LAMBERT, LEONARD P. Jr. ASN 18202589	Engineer KIA, buried Cambridge (C-5-17)	Sgt.	Breckenridge, Texas
HOUCHINS, GEORGE B. Jr. ASN 15339517	Radio Oper. KIA	S/Sgt.	Bluefield, West Virginia
EDMONSON, ROGER W. ASN 18218286	Asst. Eng. KIA	S/Sgt.	Avery, Texas
HIGGINS, HARTWELL J. ASN 14094125	Asst. Rad. KIA	Sgt.	Winder, Georgia
WOOD, HAL N. ASN 18113166	Ball Turret KIA	Sgt.	Rogers, Arkansas
TAYLOR, RUSSELL G. ASN 39196030	Tail Turret KIA	Sgt.	Seattle, Washington

At first it was reported that this aircraft collided with another plane – a B-17. This was found to be in error, as there is another report to the contrary. It states, “It is believed that due to severe icing conditions, this plane stalled, spun, and fell apart. The pilot and co-pilot were the only survivors.

“At five miles northwest of Norwich, and one mile northeast of Pingland Hills, this aircraft was climbing into formation, travelling at 155 to 160 MPH through overcast, in severe icing conditions. When it reached 14,000 feet, the aircraft lurched violently and started swerving to the right. The pilots had no control over the ship as it swerved back to the left, and then started to spin tightly toward the ground. The plane then turned onto its back and the right wing and tail were torn off by the violent maneuvers. The two pilots were thrown into the top of the cockpit, and when the cabin ripped apart, they were thrown clear of the wreckage.

“No definite statement can be made as to the cause of the accident, but it was the opinion of the investigating board that the airplane picked up too much ice, was forced into a stall, and from there into a spin, when it fell apart.”

The aircraft was heavily loaded with eight 1,000 lb. bombs and 2,700 gallons of fuel. Another aircraft and crew (Lt. Dine, 506 Bomb Squadron) experienced the same icing conditions, went into a spin, but finally managed to recover control at 4,000 feet.

The two survivors from this accident, Lt. Havens and his co-pilot Leon Del Grande were taken to the hospital immediately. This was their second mission. Lt. Havens suffered severe injuries when he landed in a tree, fractured his left ankle, and his spine. Lt. Havens spent some time at the 231st Hospital. He did not return to the 44th Bomb Group. Lt. Del Grande injured his ankle when he landed, apparently quite seriously. He flew no more missions for the 44th, was transferred to the 70th RCD on 10 December 1944 for transfer back to the United States. However it appears that Lt. Del Grande recovered, was transferred to the 93rd BG, and completed his tour with them.

On April 21, 2001, the owner of the property where the plane crashed conducted a ceremony to honor the memories of the eight airmen who died there. It was 57 years to the day that they crashed. A memorial was also dedicated at the site on which the names of the entire crew are listed. It was Jo Cottingham, recreation manager for Anglian Water, who made the decision to provide the memorial at this crash site, and was instrumental in locating next of kin of the men who died there.

27 April 1944

Moyenneville, France

This day was the first of the double-header days for the Group, with two separate missions being flown. One plane was lost on the first mission due to the moderate to intense, accurate flak, which hit Lt. Clarey's aircraft.

67th SQUADRON:

67th Sq., #41-29467 X-Bar, Clarey

MACR #4257

67th Squadron Crew:

CLAREY, HOWARD A. Jr. ASN 0-676748	Pilot KIA	1st Lt.	Yardley, Pennsylvania
RHODES, CARL E. ASN 0-747318	Co-pilot KIA	1st Lt.	Birmingham, Alabama
FORREST, GEORGE W. ASN 0-695641	Navigator KIA	2nd Lt.	Upper Darby, Pennsylvania
HINKLE, GLENN E. ASN 0-752855	Bombardier KIA	2nd Lt.	Burlingame, California
SHIRLEY, RAYMOND ASN 15081820	Engineer POW	S/Sgt.	Lexington, Kentucky
CHAGNON, PAUL L. ASN 11116914	Radio Oper. POW	S/Sgt.	Salem, Massachusetts
LYTLE, LESLIE L. ASN 39328109	Nose Turret KIA, buried Normandy (B-5-17)	Sgt.	Portland, Oregon
RIEGER, MARTIN A. ASN 32414057	RW Gunner KIA	S/Sgt.	New York City, New York
PHILLIPS, ALLEN W. ASN 32612831	LW Gunner KIA, buried Normandy (C-14-32)	S/Sgt.	Richmond Hill, Queens, N.Y.
YOUSE, CHARLES M. ASN 33498702	Tail Turret KIA	Sgt.	Sunbury, Pennsylvania

The MACR states that aircraft #467 was observed to receive a direct hit by flak in its #3 and #4 engines. The right wing fell off and the aircraft tipped on its left wing – started down in a tight spiral. It soon became enveloped in flames and then exploded. No chutes were seen.

Radio operator Paul Chagnon was the first man to escape from the falling aircraft, followed by the engineer, Sgt. Raymond Shirley. The pilot, Lt. Howard A. Clarey, Jr. also managed to free himself from the doomed ship but his parachute did not open, or did not have time to open. It could have been that he was knocked out by the explosion and never regained consciousness, but the two men who survived to become POWs did not know for sure.

This was Lt. Clarey's 28th mission, having flown all previous missions as a co-pilot for Lt. McCormick. This was his first mission with a new crew, which was on its fifth mission.

In a letter dated December 4, 1992, Ray Shirley wrote: "At briefing that morning we had been told that there was one battery of four guns at the target. We were on the bomb run. Paul Chagnon, radio operator, was on the catwalk holding the bomb bay doors open, I was in the top turret. Immediately after dropping our bombs, we took a direct hit just outboard of #3 engine and

lost the wing from there out. I saw it start spinning like a seed pod falling from a tree in the fall season.

“I was thrown forward in the turret as the aircraft started spinning to the right and I started coming out of the turret during which I saw Chagnon bailing out from the catwalk with my chest chute. Someone pulled the plane out briefly and then we started spinning again to the left. I managed to get Chagnon’s chute from his position, got it on and went to the catwalk to bail out. When I bailed out, Lt. Clarey was on the catwalk to bail out when I left the ship. I finally found the ripcord and started my descent slipping the chute on the way down and ending up with a badly sprained right ankle upon landing. I took up bowling after the war to strengthen it up.

“After getting to the ground, Chagnon came to help me and French civilians were trying to help us. They carried our chutes off and, of course, were speaking French. Chagnon had been born in Canada and had been brought up on French until they moved to the U.S. when he was six or seven years old. But that day he didn’t remember one word of French so the civilian efforts were of no avail. Anyway, Chagnon was helping me. Then the French abandoned us as the German military began to arrive at the scene.

“Chagnon and I approached a barn, which we hoped to get into and hide. As we rounded one corner of the barn, the Germans came around the barn corner at the opposite end with their little ‘burp guns’ and that was it. They put us into a small truck, the bed portion had a cover on it, and inside the truck was Lt. Clarey’s body. His chute had failed to open. We saw no other bodies other than that of Lt. Clarey.

“The Germans took us to a building with an underground bunker where we stayed one or two nights, then through Paris to Dulag Luft and from there to Stalag Luft VI via the 40 or eight rail cars. We were subsequently evacuated from Luft VI to Luft IV via that damned freighter down the Baltic. From IV, I was shipped to Luft I, again on a 40 or eight-rail car and Chagnon wound up on one of those forced marches as the Germans fled from the approaching Russians. The Germans abandoned us at Luft I just a few hours before the Russians arrived. We were eventually evacuated to Camp Lucky Strike in France.”

29 April 1944

Berlin, Germany

Specific target was the underground railway in the heart of Berlin. Our formation of 21 aircraft encountered moderate to intense flak and from 30 to 50 enemy aircraft sustaining their attacks from Berlin back to Holland, most of this time unescorted. Three of our aircraft did not return. Squadron losses were as follows: one each by the 67th, 68th and 506th.

67th SQUADRON:

67th Sq., #100279 I-Bar, Schuyler	TUFFY		MACR #4464
67th Squadron Crew:	Entire crew POW		
SCHUYLER, KEITH C. ASN 0-808597	Pilot POW	2nd Lt.	Berwick, Pennsylvania
EMERSON, JOHN F. ASN 0-818847	Co-pilot POW	2nd Lt.	Santa Monica, California
RAUSCHER, DALE E. ASN 0-678774	Navigator POW	2nd Lt.	Goodland, Kansas

DAVIS, JAY LARRY ASN 0-692481	Bombardier POW	2nd Lt.	Cleveland, Ohio
SANDERS, WILLIAM L. ASN 36634767	Engineer POW	S/Sgt.	Karnak, Illinois
ROWLAND, LEONARD A. ASN 37495062	Radio Oper. POW	S/Sgt.	Portland, Oregon
REICHERT, WALTER E. ASN 19130088	Ball Turret POW	Sgt.	Farragut, Idaho
COX, GEORGE G. ASN 15336328	RW Gunner POW	Sgt.	Louisa, Kentucky
RENFRO, GEORGE N. ASN 38426809	LW Gunner POW	Sgt.	Handley, Texas
SCHOW, HARRY J. ASN 36032490	Tail Turret POW	Sgt.	Austin, Minnesota

2nd Lt. Schuyler was the pilot of TUFFY. His navigator, Dale E. Rauscher relates his experiences, "Our aircraft was under control as we dropped behind the formation. We had been badly damaged by flak and we were unable to keep up with the formation. We were doing okay until about ten or twelve FW 190s spotted us and came in at us head-on. Their first pass hit us pretty badly, although no one was killed or wounded.

"There was cloud cover at about 5,000 feet, so Schuyler put the nose down and we headed for the clouds. I think only one enemy aircraft followed us, and he kept coming in on us each time we came out of cloud cover. We had iced up and had to come out of the clouds to try to get rid of a little ice buildup. We played hide and seek in the clouds for awhile, but finally ran out of clouds.

"Our gun stations were out of ammunition, fuel tanks had been hit and we had two fires in the tail section, so we were told to bail out. We had about fifteen minutes of fuel left when we finally abandoned ship. As we had been flying all over the sky and in every direction while trying to shake off those fighters, I was not positive where we were, but we were about forty or fifty miles east of the Zuider Zee. We bailed out safely and were all captured a short time later."

The plane crashed at 1400 hours, 10 miles east of Holland at Tilloy-Florville, County of Meppen.

Lt. Keith C. Schuyler, pilot, has written a book of his wartime experiences titled "Elusive Horizons" and gave permission to include some of his account of that day. "Berlin was always a rough one. This was a symbol of Germany's might. There were still plenty of German fliers willing to die for Berlin for ideological reasons. There were plenty more who had lost their grasp on symbols but flew and fought us in exquisite machines that were manufactured out of the best parts available.

"We were told that we could expect heavy fighter opposition. The Luftwaffe had been unusually quiet for the past week, and we expected plenty of trouble today. 'You will have fighter cover much of the way, but you know they can't stick around long,' we were told.

"Some fighters were overhead, friendly fellows cutting contrails back and forth in a protective web that made you feel good. Then Larry Davis, bombardier, cut in on the interphone, 'Fighters! A whole swarm of them!' I didn't see them at once. Larry pinpointed them, "Straight ahead, low at twelve o'clock!"

“Then I saw them ... and took a deep breath. Coming up at us like a swarm of bees was a literal swarm of at least forty German fighters. And they were headed directly at our formation! Like specks at first, in almost an instant they materialized into wings and engines.

“Then there was a hellish roar as everything became a confusion of sound and motion. Like entering a tunnel with the windows open on a train – dust, noise, and debris became indistinguishable. Right over my windshield a German fighter came apart in a glimpse of flame and junk. That was Larry’s.

“A B-24 that had been lagging at seven o’clock, drew in close at five o’clock just as a German came through. The fighter smashed head on into the big one right at the nose turret and both planes exploded in a ball of flame. Then it was over. For us.

“Somehow, after you have dropped your bombs, you get the feeling that everything is all right. If your airplane is working as it should, it becomes more a matter of whether you have enough fuel for the trip back. At least that is the feeling you have. But deep down inside you know it is not over. This is not a game. They want to punish you for what you did if they can. So they try.

“Somehow our lead plane took us over Brandenburg on the way out, so the Germans would now get another crack at us with their flak guns. Although it was heavy, we seemed to be getting by without incident. Then I noticed four bursts off our left wing, maybe a hundred yards out, and just below our level. Then four more, closer. Fascinated, I watched as four more burst just ahead of and below our left wing, possibly 30 yards away. I didn’t see the next bursts – but I heard them. And our ship shook to the concussions. Immediately, #2 prop ran away. The torque, as the propeller screamed up to over 3,000 rpm, dragged at our wing, and I leaned into the rudder, then hit the feathering button. We were hurt again – badly.

“A hole in #2 cowling gave visual evidence that we had caught plenty from the last volley of flak, the manifold pressure on #4 was down badly. The supercharger had probably been knocked out. Although the engine was running smoothly, it would not do much more than carry its own weight at over 20,000 feet.

“Normally, we wouldn’t have too much to worry about, but we were still a long way from home. The disruption in power had dropped us back behind the formation and there was no chance of catching up. I personally called the lead ship. ‘Red leader, we’ve got some problems back here. Can you slow down a little?’

‘We’ll try,’ the answer came back, ‘but we can’t cut it back much.’

“But it soon became evident that we couldn’t keep up. We kept dropping back – slowly, inexorably ... If we were hit in the wings as much as I feared, there was a good chance that we would be losing fuel from the wing tanks. I called Sanders, our engineer, who climbed down out of his turret to check the gas supply. His report confirmed my suspicions. There was a serious imbalance in the gasoline tanks to indicate that we were losing some somewhere. I asked Rauscher, navigator, for our estimated time of arrival in England and his fast mental calculations convinced me that we were not going to make it home. We’d be lucky to stretch our glide to make the North Sea. But I kept this news away from the crew.

“Again it was Larry who alerted us to fighters, ‘Off to the left. They are hitting the group off to the left.’ There were eight of them! And had they elected to come at us singly, subsequent events might have been different. But they came straight on, strung out wing to wing, like a shallow

string of beads. FW 190 they were! And I had only an instant to make a decision of how to deal with them.

“Get ready, I called. I, too, got ready. I didn’t make my move until I saw the leading edges of the FW’s start to smoke and yellow balls begin to pop around out wings. Then I dove straight for the middle of the string of beads! Either they would get out of the way or we would take a couple of them with us. They scattered!

“Deliberately, I held the nose of the bomber as straight down as I could manage. But she was trimmed for level flight and wanted to come out of the dive. Jack Emerson saw my quivering arms and added his strength to keep the nose down. I wanted those fighters to think they had us. The strategy worked on five out of the six remaining, but that one was destined to give us more trouble than all of the others combined. He did not believe us.

“I heard Jack shout under his oxygen mask and I felt the controls wrenched from me for an instant. Jack had seen him coming from his side and he rolled the bomber into the attack. Tracers cut by the left side of the fuselage as the tortured Lib responded. We kept the pressure on the elevators and the nose toward the ground as I watched the air speed pass the red line. Then it touched 290, which gave us somewhere around 400 mph at our altitude. Below us I could see a solid cloud cover and it was our only refuge. But in one of the frequent paradoxes of war, to gain them was also our undoing. Our precious altitude, needed to get us somewhere near home, was being used up in a desperate effort to escape the more obvious danger from the fighters.”

The cat and mouse drama continued for a considerable time, including the added problem of icing, and then the clouds ran out. The tail gunner, Schow, later told Lt. Schuyler, “The fighter came in at 5 o’clock. I started firing but the tracers bounced right off him. And then, when I was just pressing triggers, nothing was happening. It was only an instant before I could find the extent of damage. A 20 mm had hit us in the right elevator. It blew my hydraulic unit onto the floor, clipped off my left gun, cut my mike cord about an inch and a half from my throat, and generally took my plexiglass.

“I tried to fire my right gun manually, but it, too, was ruined. So I got out of the turret, went to the waist, where another fire had started, put on my chute and told Sgt. Cox to relay the news to the pilot, but Cox had already done that.” Both men then attempted to extinguish the two fires, waist and turret.

“With only 50 gallons of fuel left, two fires and only one gun left firing, the time had come. We were close to being over Holland – possibly 40 miles away from the Zuider Zee. “I started a 180-degree turn. Let her blow in Germany! A quick glance back through the fuselage – it was empty. Flicked on the aileron switch of the automatic pilot, always set for emergency, rose hurriedly from my seat; then onto the catwalk in the bomb bay.

“As I tumbled below and away from our airplane, I was determined to delay the opening of my parachute. And I almost waited too long! Later, I was told our ship blew all to hell.” All ten men survived to become POWs.

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #41-29471 X, Sweigart

MACR #4472

68th Squadron Crew:

SWEIGART, GLENN H.
ASN 0-747360

Pilot
POW

2nd Lt.

Fort Thomas,
Kentucky

GREENE, FLOYD H. Jr. ASN 0-812577	Co-pilot POW	2nd Lt.	Salt Lake City, Utah
TUROCY, JOHN W. ASN 0-695992	Navigator POW	2nd Lt.	Cleveland, Ohio
ROBERTS, GILMAN N. ASN 0-688402	Bombardier KIA, buried Ardennes (A-41-31)	1st Lt.	Brooklyn, New York
McWHORTER, LAMER ASN 34442753	Engineer KIA, buried Ardennes (B-36-56)	S/Sgt.	La Grange, Georgia
LE VAKE, JOHN W. ASN 19186283	Radio Oper. KIA	S/Sgt.	Walnut Creek, California
NABER, JULIUS V. ASN 37263649	Ball Turret KIA, buried Ardennes (B-24-13)	S/Sgt.	Marshall, Minnesota
TILLER, HOMER M. ASN 38101171	RW Gunner KIA, buried Ardennes (D-11-41)	Sgt.	Colorado City, Texas
KOEHLER, HAROLD F. ASN 15019186	LW Gunner KIA, buried Ardennes (B-40-56)	S/Sgt.	Canton, Ohio
NOME, ALBERT A. ASN 35544549	Tail Turret KIA, buried Ardennes (A-32-32)	Sgt.	Mishawaka, Indiana

The pilot on the 68th Squadron aircraft lost on the 29th was 2nd Lt. Glenn H. Sweigart. The MACR states that at 1101 hours, aircraft #471 was hit by enemy aircraft, peeled off to the left, #3 engine was on fire and spreading to the fuselage. Two men bailed out before it went into a spin and then exploded.

Mrs. Mary E. Turocy, widow of Lt. John W. Turocy, navigator on this airplane, sent this information "It was their eighth mission when their B-24 was hit by the Germany fighter and exploded. Two crew members were blown out with the debris and when John regained consciousness, he was falling through space. He jerked his ripcord and the shock pulled his shoes off. He threw his gun away, and tore up what papers he was carrying as he was descending. When he landed bare-footed in a little Germany town, the villagers surrounded him with pitchforks until German soldiers came and dragged him off to jail, bleeding feet and all. He was in several POW camps, one of which was Stalag 13.

"Being an officer, he was given the privilege of using their library and John took this opportunity to study theory – he played classical violin – and to occupy his mind, he translated from German to English copious notes. When John was liberated, he weighed just 110 pounds!

The pilot, Lt. Sweigart, added, "Our call was Smokey Blu Joe, X for X-ray. Somewhere over Germany we lost all the oil pressure on #3 engine and had to drop out of formation because the prop flattened out on us. I couldn't hold altitude or air speed. So we finally maintained altitude at 9500 feet and 105 mph, skidding sideways against the prop with near full rudder and still making a long arc, which we corrected occasionally by a circle. We had good cloud cover and limped along until, I think, it was Nuremburg where the clouds gave way.

"Then all hell broke loose! I had told the crew that if anyone wanted to leave, they could jump at any time. I had two men I didn't know, replacing Gwin and Tony (Goodman). I told them if we got hit and lost intercom to go, cause I'd go if we got hit or went below 7500 feet. I believe that our radioman, Sgt LaVake, took off.

Note: The two men that Sweigart didn't know were Julius Naber and Harold Koehler. Naber was from the 66th Squadron and had flown 22 missions previously. Koehler had joined the 68th Squadron on 31 January 1944 with the Dyer crew. He had flown 15 prior missions.

“When we got hit, it took the putt-putt right out of the side of the aircraft, and split the control pedestal wide open and knocked out all controls as well as the intercom. Our bombardier, Gil Roberts, was begging for us to all go as he would not go alone. Turocy showed me black and blue fingerprints on his shoulder where Gil was hanging onto him when we were hit. The explosion blew Turocy out the nose wheel and Gil into the front of the airplane and killed him. I was told about Gil’s position at prisoner interrogation.

“McWhorter, my engineer, tried to get to the back of the plane to help the fellows in the back. He was blown off the catwalk by another hit, I think. Greene (co-pilot) then left, and I hung up my mike and earphones, looked at Greene’s cigarettes and lighter – for some reason I left them, thinking he’d be back after them.

“The aircraft crashed and burned after a long, slow, even half circle when anyone in it could have and should have bailed out. At interrogation, they kept asking me why I had only a six man crew, so I know that some of my men got out but they didn’t live. Turocy, Greene and I were together. I saw who I thought was McWhorter lying in a field as I came down, and Gil Roberts was still in the plane. That makes five that I can account for. And they had pictures of Sgts. Nome and Tiller – that’s seven.

“I do know that I bailed out without my leg straps buckled and hung myself by the neck. When I tried to take the pressure off by swinging my feet into the shrouds, I skidded back and forth across the sky. I think that’s why I survived because I could hear those 88 mms going off nearby all the way to the ground and couldn’t see anything else in the sky but me for a target!

“I came down in the middle of a plowed field and about 3,000 people. I spoke enough German to get myself into the hands of a little infantry corporal, who took me to his Captain and eventually to the airdrome.

“As far as the MACR account, it must be about another aircraft because we were at least an hour and a half out of formation and completely alone when we were shot down. Turocy, Greene and I were together in POW camps at Sagan, Nuremburg to Moosburg, until liberated.”

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #41-29513 Z-Bar, Hruby	Ditched near English coast		
506th Squadron Crew:	Entire crew rescued		
HRUBY, RICHARD J. ASN 0-682866	Pilot Rescued	2nd Lt.	Mt. Holly, New Jersey
SMITH, THOMAS L. ASN T-61379	Co-pilot Rescued	Flt Of.	Okarche, Oklahoma
ROSENBERG, EDWIN H. ASN 0-684989	Navigator Rescued	2nd Lt.	
ARTHUR, WILLIAM D. ASN 0-690535	Bombardier Rescued	2nd Lt.	
CLARK, CLETUS C. ASN 17157054	Engineer Rescued	S/Sgt.	Canova, South Dakota
BLANCHARD, EUCLID F. ASN 11083941	Radio Oper. Rescued	S/Sgt.	Belmont, New Hampshire

FOSTER, EVERETTE E. ASN 37499715	Ball Turret Rescued	Sgt.	Lowery City, Missouri
BARTLEY, FOUNT B. ASN 37284336	RW Gunner Rescued	Sgt.	Indiahoma, Oklahoma
BARTLEY, THOMAS L. ASN 37284340	LW Gunner Rescued	Sgt.	Indiahoma, Oklahoma
PETKOFF, ROBERT ASN 37284310	Tail Turret Rescued	S/Sgt.	Carnegie, Oklahoma

Note: Three of these men must have enlisted together from Oklahoma – both Bartleys and Petkoff, per serial numbers.

This 506th Squadron aircraft and crew was not listed on the 44th Bomb Group's Battle Casualties due to a technicality of reporting – they ditched and all survived! It appears to be appropriate to include them here.

2nd Lt. Richard J. Hruby was the pilot of aircraft #513 and was returning from bombing the Friedrichstrause Railroad Station in Berlin, 29 April, 1944. The Group had experienced heavy and intense anti-aircraft fire and damaging attacks by many enemy aircraft.

In the target area, Lt. Hruby's plane was damaged by flak and it is believed this caused a leak in either the main gas tanks or gas lines. The prop-governor stuck at 2500 rpm, and #2 engine was surging as much as 600 rpm. Furthermore, the formation was nearly 45 minutes late on the flight plan, prior to reaching the enemy coast on the way out.

Lt. Hruby, believing that his fuel supply must be low, asked his engineer, Sgt. Clark, to check the amount remaining in the tanks. Despite the fact that the engineer reported all gauges registering nearly empty upon leaving the Dutch coast, Lt. Hruby was determined to complete the mission and bring his aircraft and crew back. He cut back his RPM on all four engines, instructed his crew to throw out all possible equipment, and told the engineer to switch all engines to crossfeed fuel to keep all four engines running as long as possible. He knew that this would mean losing all engines at once with little or no notice, but worth the gamble.

The men then assumed their ditching positions while they tried to call air-sea rescue service, but were unable to transmit due to a malfunctioning of VHF radio equipment.

Flying at 5500 feet and with the English coast barely in view, all four engines quit! The pilots lowered one-half flaps and put their plane into a dive to maintain airspeed. As they neared the surface of the sea, Lt. Hruby leveled off and after skimming off one swell, settled down into the next one in a slightly nose-high position. The nose of the aircraft buried itself for approximately 30 seconds and then the plane came to rest on the surface – floating and intact.

So skillfully did the pilots hit the water that not only was the plane not visibly damaged, but the plexiglass in the nose turret remained unbroken – and no member of the crew was injured! The ditching belt proved very successful.

The crew then exited the upper hatch and released the two life rafts, but found one of them unserviceable and the other would only partially inflate. The plane slowly sank and was gone in approximately 15 minutes. One man got into the raft, while the others clung to the ropes and remained in the water at least half an hour until picked up, luckily, by a British minesweeper.

This remarkable ditching is described in great detail in the following U.S. military document:

“The ditching of a B-24H aircraft, serial number 41-29513, of the 44th Bombardment Group, occurred at 1505 hours, 29 April 1944, at approximately 52° 35' N, 02° 00' E, about 40 miles NE of Cromer. This is the first USSTAF incident involving a B-24 where a complete crew of ten was saved.

“Events preceding ditching: The aircraft was returning from an operational mission. At an altitude of 5,500 feet it was definitely decided that there would be insufficient gas to reach land. The pilot immediately lowered 20 degrees of flaps and set the trim tabs for a glide of approximately 125 mph. In the meantime, the crew was notified by interphone that they were going to ditch, and orders were given to jettison excess equipment. The formation leader was contacted on VHF ‘A’ channel and informed of the situation, which was acknowledged, then contact with U.S. Air/Sea Rescue Station was tried without success.

“The radio operator had been operating the top turret guns, pinch hitting for the engineer while he was transferring fuel. On order ‘prepare for ditching,’ he started to set up his liaison set to send a distress message, but the trailing antenna was clipped off by a jettisoned flak suit. However, one SOS was sent using the fixed aerial, and IFF toggle switch was turned to the emergency position.

“The bombardier, navigator, radio operator, and engineer jettisoned every piece of equipment that was loose or could be pried loose, such as flak suits, tuning units, A-3 bags, and frequency meters. The co-pilot put on his steel helmet and assisted the pilot on with his helmet. In the waist section, the gunners threw out waist guns, ammunition, and some radio equipment. The ditching belt was then connected in the waist position. The belt later proved very efficient in protecting the men from the impact that occurred when contact was made with the water.

“At approximately 1,000 feet, the co-pilot informed the crew on the interphone to take their ditching stations. In the waist three gunners sat with their backs to the ditching belt, and one of them sat between the legs of another. On the flight deck, the bombardier sat with his back against the pilot’s armor plating, with the navigator between his legs. The radio operator’s station was behind the pilot’s armor plate next to the bombardier, but because of the fire extinguisher holder, he was unable to get a good back rest. At 200 feet, the engineer was still endeavoring to close the bomb bay doors, but a flak suit was hanging across the catwalk just forward of the aft bomb bay, leaving the doors open about eight inches on each side. The engineer had just reached the flight deck and closed the hatch to the bomb bay when the aircraft hit the water. He had not fully assumed his ditching station when the aircraft landed.

“Another attempt was made to contact the Air/Sea Rescue Station on VHF just before ditching in a last-minute try to obtain a fix.

“Touchdown: When the flattening out was started, the pilot noticed that the air speed was about 120 mph, though that was the last time he noticed the instrument panel until after the landing impact. The aircraft made contact with the nose slightly up in a normal landing attitude using 20 degrees flaps. The approach was made directly into the swell, and the aircraft landed on the upslope of a crest. Only one moderate impact was noticed. The co-pilot was thrown against the glass, but was protected by his tin helmet. The co-pilot’s seat was more forward than the pilot’s, though the pilot also recalls hitting the glass.

“Exit from the aircraft: The water started rushing in through the nose, and filled up the cockpit in a matter of seconds. The cabin was completely under water within 30 seconds. The pilot and co-pilot tried to get out of the escape hatch, but the other crew members were still climbing out

the exit. The pilot had on his steel helmet and he tried ramming his head through the top to get some air. He was unsuccessful because glass and metal structure were still intact, and he could not break clear. The airplane then settled to a level position, and the crew on the flight deck had about four or five inches at the top of the compartment to breathe.

“On the flight deck the jolt was not felt to any extent except by the radio operator, who received a bruise from the fire extinguisher holder, and the engineer, who received a leg bruise from the radio seat.

“The navigator was the first one out of the top hatch, followed closely by the engineer, bombardier, radio operator, pilot, and co-pilot.

“In the waist, on impact, the ditching belt absorbed the shock, though the men were lifted off the floor, but the belt prevented them from being thrown forward into the ball turret. The water filled the waist to about two inches above the waist windows. The gunners made their exit through the waist windows, taking with them the emergency equipment. They joined the other crew members on the top of the aircraft.

“The navigator pulled the life raft release handles, but both rafts failed to inflate. He then pulled a raft from the compartment and pulled the inflation cord, which broke off inside the plastic cover and could not be reached. The cord on the other raft was then jerked, and this also broke off. The co-pilot, however, was able to get a grip on it and released the CO₂ to inflate the raft, which, only inflated halfway. Again, every effort was made without success to inflate the other raft.

“*Events preceding rescue:* The navigator, engineer, radio operator, ball gunner, and a waist gunner occupied the half-inflated dinghy on the right side of the plane, while the bombardier, co-pilot, and pilot dragged the uninflated raft around to the left side as the aircraft started its final dive under the sea. The aircraft floated for approximately 15 minutes before it began to settle slowly. Gradually, it sunk nose first.

“When the right waist gunner made his exit from the airplane, he started after the emergency equipment, which had floated away. Before he could retrieve it, he had drifted quite a distance from the aircraft, and was unable to get back to the rafts. The crew members in the dinghy paddled over to the rest of the crew, and together they started after the right waist gunner. It soon became apparent that they would be unable to reach him because the current was taking him away at a faster rate than they could follow with five men hanging on the side of the life raft. They could only see him when they were both on the crest of a swell, and there were times when they did not see him for several minutes. The navigator looked through the accessories of both rafts trying to find a pump to inflate the rafts, but without success. It was then decided they could hang on until the rescue craft arrived.

“The crew had been in the water about 40 minutes when the minesweeper “Catsmuir” pulled alongside and fished them out of the water. A lifeboat was lowered for the waist gunner, who was about 200 yards away.

“*Other points of interest:* Inspection of the B-24 after exit revealed a small fracture of the skin just forward of the waist windows. It was about three inches wide, and seemed to have ripped the rivets from about six inches behind the tear. The rip was located about a foot to the left of the top center of the fuselage. One main wheel was floating off to the right, slightly behind the aircraft. The Plexiglas on the nose turret appeared to be in good condition. One oxygen bottle was thrown

loose, and was floating in front of the plane. The tail section and tail turret were still in good condition.

“*Conclusions:* This incident demonstrates that a B-24 aircraft can be ditched successfully provided the crew is adequately trained. However, a few mistakes were made, and are emphasized below:

“The effectiveness of the liaison set was reduced because it was necessary to use the fixed aerial for transmitting rather than the trailing antenna which was broken off by equipment jettisoned by the crew.

“The emergency kits should not have been released without a tie rope to keep them from washing away.

“The flight engineer should have assume his ditching station sooner and all members should have used padding to help absorb the shocks, particularly the radio operator over the fire extinguisher holder.

“The malfunction of the life rafts, something over which the crew has little, if any, control, could have been disastrous had the crew not been rescued quickly. This should be adequate proof of the care that must be exercised when packing and inspecting all life raft installations.”

8 May 1944

Brunswick, Germany

There was an operational mission to Brunswick this day, and all of the aircraft returned safely. But the 66th Squadron lost an aircraft and two crewmen killed in an apparent unrelated incident.

66th SQUADRON:

The 66th Squadron had had a tremendous turn over in personnel due to their being established as a Pathfinder (PFF) Squadron. One of the new crews being transferred into the 66th Squadron was a PFF aircraft #41-28795 and crew from the 466th Bomb Group. 1st pilot was Lt. Forest M. Musgrave. On this date, this crew was performing a practice flight at 23,000 feet, while on their way to Shipdham with a partial crew. They did this to gain experience and were making a practice run using their PFF equipment in the vicinity of Great Yarmouth.

66th SQUADRON:

66th Sq., #41-28795, Musgrave Shot down, crashed

66th Squadron Crew:

MUSGRAVE, FOREST M. ASN 0-677848	Pilot KIA, buried Cambridge (F-12-13)	1st Lt.	Tampa, Florida
RICE, RODERICK F. ASN 0-686494	Co-pilot Parachuted	2nd Lt.	Crystal River, Florida
BRANCH, WELDON P. ASN 0-759792	Navigator Parachuted	2nd Lt.	Atlanta, Georgia
DOVEY, ARNOLD J. ASN 0-808009	Nav-Radar Parachuted, injured spine, hospitalized	2nd Lt.	Newport Beach, California
PERMAR, DONALD S. ASN 0-671173	Bombardier Parachuted	2nd Lt.	Michigan City, Indiana