

FAVORS, ALVA F. ASN 35572908	Engineer Rescued	S/Sgt.	Frankton, Indiana
RANIELLO, JOHN V. ASN 31269979	Radio Oper. KIA, WOM Cambridge	S/Sgt.	Brockton, Massachusetts
PARKER, VICTOR ASN 33586476	RW Gunner KIA, WOM Cambridge	Sgt.	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
GARRETT, WAYNE D. ASN 39294443	LW Gunner KIA, WOM Cambridge	Sgt.	Lomita, California
BEHNKE, GEORGE C. ASN 32736648	Nose Turret KIA, WOM Cambridge	Sgt.	Syracuse, New York
GROSS, GALE H. ASN 39167088	Tail Turret KIA, buried Cambridge (F-1-71)	S/Sgt.	Vancouver, Washington

Except for Sgts. Gross and Favors, all other men from this crew are listed on the Wall of the Missing at Cambridge American Cemetery. Apparently the body of Sgt. Gross was recovered later after the MACR was prepared, as his burial place is shown to be at Cambridge, England. Sgt. Favors was taken to a hospital.

After recovering from his injuries, Sgt. Favors was returned to Shipdham. Sgt. Harry Lemond, formerly of the 464th Sub-depot at Shipdham, noted that Sgt. Favors was taken off combat as he was over 30 years of age at that time and was placed under the supervision of Sgt. Lemond repairing airplanes. Sgt. Favors told Lemond that he saw the collision coming, had his chute on, and was attempting to escape the aircraft when the collision occurred! He said that the formation was executing a turn to the left when the two aircraft approached each other on a collision course. Apparently this forewarning was sufficient for him to get to snap on his chute and to get free of the aircraft without serious injury. He stated that an ammunition can fell on him as he tried to get out. Except for that, shock and exposure, he was not seriously injured.

Also, I am told that later, Sgt. Favors became a Crew Chief on General Leon Johnson's aircraft for a period of time.

Another account states that Sgt. Favors was standing between the two pilots at the time of the collision. Lt. Green's ship came in too close and the props on his plane hit the pilot's compartment of his plane and sheared off Eberhardt's head. The nose turret on Green's plane with the gunner in it went down like a sinker. Airolti (the co-pilot) took over and tried to get out of a flat spin, but could not. Favors bailed out. He went around and around with the plane. Some force kept him close to the plane and he could not open his chute. He finally pushed himself away and pulled the ripcord. He hit the water and his chute pulled him under and he almost drowned. Finally, he got it off and was picked up by a British Air Sea Rescue boat (after 15 minutes in the water). They brought him around with brandy. It was said that when he returned to the base and his hair turned from red to gray or white

6 August 1944

Hamburg, Germany

Hamburg is another great port city in Germany, but this day an oil refinery was the target for the bombs of the Group. Our bombs hit directly on the MPI (Mean Point of Impact) with 80% within 1,000 feet. No enemy aircraft was observed, but flak was intense and accurate. One of the 66th

Squadron's PFF aircraft, which was flying deputy lead for the 492nd BG, was hit by flak just after the target and did not return.

66th SQUADRON:

66th Sq., #42-95561 I+, McKenna	STORMY WEATHER		MACR #8081
66th Squadron Crew (one exception):			
McKENNA, JAMES P. ASN 0-693866	Pilot KIA	1st Lt.	Bronx, New York
BYRNE, AUSTIN P. (492nd BG) ASN 0-25011	Command Pilot KIA, WOM Netherlands	Capt.	Ventura, California
GRENO, PAUL J. ASN 0-817662	Co-pilot KIA, WOM Netherlands	1st Lt.	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
GOO, WILLIAM L. Y. ASN 0-711390	Navigator KIA, WOM Netherlands	1st Lt.	Bremerton, Washington
TUCKER, EMMETT Z. Jr. ASN 0-752633	Pilotage-Navigator POW	1st Lt.	Greensboro, North Carolina
LEROUX, VINCENT W. ASN 0-802651	Nav-Radar POW	2nd Lt.	Toledo, Ohio
FORSETH, VERNON E. ASN 0-701588	Bombardier POW	1st Lt.	Iola, Wisconsin
SHELDON, STANLEY W. ASN 11116435	Engineer KIA, WOM Netherlands	T/Sgt.	Oakland, Rhode Island
KOVACH, RAYMOND J. ASN 3532716?	Radio Oper. POW	T/Sgt.	Cleveland, Ohio
HOBBS, DOUGLAS U. ASN 34529824	RW Gunner POW	S/Sgt.	Manchester, Tennessee
MILLER, DONALD R. ASN 36805649	LW Gunner POW	S/Sgt.	Beloit, Wisconsin
GAUDIN, PERCY J. ASN 18151328	Tail Turret POW	S/Sgt.	Destrehan, Louisiana

Note: Capt. Byrne was from the 857th Bomb Squadron of the 492nd Bomb Group.

The MACR includes this information: "Just after target, this aircraft was hit by flak and went into a tight spin. Two chutes were seen at first, then eight more. Plane was seen to blow up when it crashed. Pilots apparently were able to pull it out of the spin once or twice, but then it would go back into a dive again. It crashed in the target area, with seven of the twelve men on board surviving." There was no accounting for the other three chutes observed (ten chutes).

2nd Lt. Vincent W. LeRoux, navigator-radar on board this stricken aircraft, adds, "The mission was routine until we hit Germany – all equipment was working beautifully. We came in over the North Sea and flew south into Germany. It was a thousand-plane raid and shortly after entering Germany, we split in two. 500 planes went on to Berlin and our 500 hit Hamburg.

"We had extensive flak all the way in but received no damage. Shortly after bombs away, I heard someone yell, 'Look out!', and we dropped about 1500 feet out of formation. We had sustained a hit in the nose knocking out the intercom. Later, I was told the #3 plane (in our element) came up and over us, then dropped down on us, forcing us out of formation to avoid a collision.

“Both of the men in the nose section watched helplessly while they observed one German Battery begin tracking their plane. With the intercom out, they couldn’t warn Lt. McKenna. Just as we were about to rejoin our formation, they hit us with all four guns. We were hit in the nose, the waist and the #3 engine. This engine exploded and two cylinder heads from it came through the side of our ship and landed in my lap! I lost six to eight layers of skin from my palm when I tried to dislodge those burning hot objects.

“Immediately, the flight deck floor ignited, with flames two to three feet high. Lt. Goo seemed to have been hit by the flak as he kept staggering around, holding his stomach. I pushed him back into his seat several times, but he wouldn’t, or couldn’t stay there. The fire extinguisher was behind Lt. Greno, co-pilot, and I tried to reach it. However, Captain Byrne was frozen to the bulkhead and I couldn’t get past him. I tried to pry his hands loose but was unable to do so. Finally, I gave up and turned around to see the flames were licking at Sgt. Sheldon’s feet – and he was still in the top turret operating his guns.

“Escape from the flight deck through the bomb bay was impossible by now, and my hand was so badly burned I doubted if I could pull myself up and out of the top hatch. So I was in a quandary. Finally, I saw the hole that the cylinder heads made in the side of the plane and decided that was my way out.

“I was fortunate that day as I had just picked up my new back pack chute and had worn an asbestos-lined suit for the first time. Without that fireproof suit, I probably would have lost my right leg. If I had had my old chest pack, I would have been unable to exit through the hole in the side of the ship. I threw myself out head first, but caught my feet in my chair or something. I kept swinging back and forth in the slipstream until I finally tore loose.

“Shortly after I ripped free, the plane went into a dive that turned into a spin. I was captured shortly after landing.”

Douglas Hobbs, right waist gunner, sent additional information, “We were a ‘mickey ship’ radar equipped for bombing through cloud cover. But being clear weather over the target, this equipment was not necessary and not utilized.

“Just after bombs away, someone observed another B-24 in an extreme attitude, practically upside down and above us. The pilots put our ship in a nose down attitude, diving down to avoid the other ship. Then, when we were attempting to return to the formation, we were hit by anti-aircraft artillery fire just before we were returning to our slot in the formation. Our ship was struck two or three times in the area forward of the bomb bay – and perhaps in the bomb bay as well. The result of these hits was that something in the bay exploded and started to burn. Fire was streaming back past the right side waist window where I was. This all happened immediately after the flak hit.

“Someone said, ‘Let’s get out of here!’ and we left the ship. There was never any communication from the front of the ship to advise us to jump. (Intercom knocked out?) The action of the ship at this time was not violent, but more like a falling leaf.

“The officers went to Barth, Germany, to Stalag Luft I and the enlisted men to the new Stalag Luft VI and Stalag Luft IV. We were liberated by the English in early May, 1945.”

Lt. Emmett Tucker said, “I was flying a make-up mission to catch up with my regular crew (Lt. Peterson) and was in the nose turret. When the plane went into that tight spin, I was unable to move for quite a while. But when the plane came out of the spin, I bailed out. The bombardier,

Forseth, went out first, then the navigator and then me. I think the pilot and co-pilot were killed by the flak hits because when I went out of the bomb bay, I could see no movement in the upper part of the plane. Smoke was very bad, though.”

Major Heaton, the Command Pilot in a 66th Squadron aircraft piloted by Capt. Raymond Craig, wrote, “On the bomb run flak was intense. We were briefed for a descending left turn after bomb release. This we did, only to plunge into the densest flak I saw in 25 missions. As Command Pilot, I was sitting in a sling between the armor plates behind the pilot and co-pilot. We took a 155 through the fuselage forward of the tail turret. Fortunately, it went off above the plane, but we lost one engine and the ship was well perforated. The deputy wing lead, with Byrne aboard, had been on our right wing. In the dense flak he swooped above us and to the left. He looked okay, but started to slip toward us. I put my left foot on the pilot’s control column and shoved, sending us down and out of the way. We lost about 4,000 feet, feathered the bad engine and limped back to the 44th on the remaining two and a quarter engines, landing on one good and one flak-shattered tire. Nobody aboard was scratched.”

Note: Heaton describes Byrne’s role as Deputy Command Pilot and states that Byrne was the Operations Officer of the 492nd’s 857th Squadron.

In 1946, a British salvage team visited the crash site and removed two bodies (Byrne and Greno). They were buried in the Ardennes National Cemetery at Neuville-en-Condroz, Belgium.

8 August 1944

La Perth Airfield, Romilly, France

The target was hit visually with excellent results. Our fighters provided excellent coverage. However, one 506th Squadron aircraft went down shortly after the target. The crew was observed to bail out approximately 60 miles east of Paris.

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #42-100415 Bar-Y, Komasinski MY PEACH MACR #8080

506th Squadron Crew:

KOMASINSKI, BERNARD J. ASN 0-700477	Pilot Evadee, returned	2nd Lt.	Michigan City, Indiana
GIPPERT, WINFIELD S. ASN 0-696765	Co-pilot Evadee, returned	2nd Lt.	Rock Island, Illinois
MICHAELS, EDGAR W. ASN 0-717473	Navigator Evadee, returned	2nd Lt.	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
LAIN, CHARLES H. ASN 0-717078	Bombardier Evadee, returned	2nd Lt.	Bradley, Illinois
SCHAEFFER, FRANK N. ASN 16116632	Engineer Evadee, returned	S/Sgt.	Milwaukee, Wisconsin
McKEE, JOHN H. ASN 16079990	Radio Oper. POW	Sgt.	Michigan City, Indiana
BROTT, NELSON E. ASN 32855843	RW Gunner Evadee, returned	Sgt.	Troy, New York
BOHENKO, WALTER E. ASN 13108425	LW Gunner Evadee, returned	Sgt.	McKeesport, Pennsylvania

RICHARDSON, COLEY W. ASN 34129217	Ball Turret Wounded, evacuated	S/Sgt.	Conway, South Carolina
HULEWICZ, STANLEY J. Jr. ASN 35914236	Tail Turret Evadee, returned	Sgt.	Cleveland, Ohio

The MACR variously reported this ship with #1 and #4 engines out. Then #2 engine caught on fire shortly after the target. Crew bailed out approximately 60 miles east of Paris while the plane itself, apparently on AFCE (autopilot) continued on in flight, burning.

Frank Schaeffer, Engineer, remembers: "The mission was delayed for several hours because of the ground fog. This was our sixth mission.

"Because the prop governor was faulty on #2 engine, I was told to stay on the flight deck to monitor the engine RPMs with the synchronizing switch. Sgt. Nelson Brott took my place in the top turret. One of our gun positions was left unmanned.

"As I recall, there was little to no flak up to the point of the target area. While on the bomb run and with the bomb bay doors open, the #2 engine began to speed up and the synchronizing switch would not slow it down. We had a runaway prop that was turning over at 4500 RPMs. Our co-pilot, Gilbert, operated the feathering button and closed the throttles, but the propeller would not feather.

"I went to the forward end of the bomb bay to turn off the fuel selector valve and booster pump switch to that engine. But the engine continued to run wild and the oil pressure went to zero. The engine continued to howl and shake violently. I was afraid the prop would come off and fly right through the fuselage. By that time we had reached the target and the bombardier, Lain, had released the bombs. I had dropped my flak suit and removed my helmet, head set, oxygen mask and gloves in order to more easily cope with that runaway engine.

"I heard no bailout order or bell. Suddenly, the co-pilot raised out of his seat and headed back. With my parachute snapped on, I tapped Brott, who was in the top turret, on the knee and motioned for him to come down. Then I got into the bomb bay and suddenly thought that, because I had not heard any bailout signal, I'd be the first one out. In order to get out of way of others, I swung out and around the bomb rack in order to move back on the catwalk. With the chest pack on I could not go along the catwalk between the bomb racks.

"When I made my move around the bomb rack, the handle of my ripcord caught on a bomb shackle and it pulled out about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch. I pushed it back in, but the damage had been done. The chute started to spill out. I started to bundle the folds of my chute in my arms. However, the wind going through the ship spilled even more of the chute onto the catwalk. Frantically, I gathered the remaining folds in to my arms.

"It was now or never, so I moved to the forward end of the aft bomb bay section. There I rolled head first off the catwalk and out the right side of the bomb bay. The chute was immediately pulled out of my arms. A moment later I was swinging violently. Overhead I could see the chute fully open, but there were three rips, each about a foot long in the panels.

"While drifting down in the silence I searched for our ship. Then I saw it about a mile away flying level. There was a long trail of black smoke behind it. While looking, I saw that one of my fellow crewmen was below me. I yelled as loud as I could, but got no answer. When I was a few thousand feet from the ground, I noticed two bicycles or motorcycles running along a road. A little lower and I could see people running out of houses and along the road. I prepared to land

with my knees slightly bent. On impact my legs folded and I fell backward. Being dragged by my un-spilled chute, I quickly collapsed it.

Frank managed a successful evasion, thanks to the many Frenchmen who hid and helped him.

Nelson E. Brott, right waist gunner, sent additional information, "Coley W. Richardson was assigned to our crew for that mission when our regular member, Frank La Fazia, was placed on guard duty. He was our ball turret gunner. This was our seventh mission.

We had been flying at 25,000 feet, I bailed out at about 22,000, landed about 100 to 200 feet away from my co-pilot, Lt. Gippert, as we both pulled a delayed jump. Luckily, we landed in a corn field and there to greet us quite unexpectedly, were members of the French Forces of the Interior.

"They hid us in the woods away from all civilization where we had to fend for ourselves for food. We caught rabbits in snares, drained a pond, stripped, and then went into the mud and ooze to catch carp. They provided us with our civilian clothes, we threw away our dog tags, and hoped we'd never be caught as we would have been shot as spies.

"But it was only about a month until the American Forces came through near us and liberated us. What a celebration that was! Coley W. Richardson was seriously injured, eventually being evacuated back to the States on 23 December, 1944."

The following information comes from Coley Bill Richardson, Jr., Coley Richardson's son: "After my dad was shot down, he was severely injured in a hard parachute landing. His right leg was compound fractured at the knee joint. He, too, was contacted by the French underground, but after seeing his condition, they left him. They said, 'The Nazis are your best chance for survival.' They were right. After the underground left, the Nazis captured my father. He was taken to a POW hospital and though he was roughly treated while the leg was being screwed and pinned together, he did survive."

To sum up, the entire crew bailed out and made it with a few of being injured in landing. Eight were taken care of by the French underground and became evadees while the other two were taken prisoner.

A second aircraft and crew was lost by the 506th Squadron . This second aircraft was one of the eight sent out on the mission to La Perth by the 506th Squadron, but was forced to abort.

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #42-50328 Bar-D, Jacobs PREGNANT PEG

Note: This aircraft was also known as FLYING LOG.

506th Squadron Crew:	Entire crew KIA		
JACOBS, MYRON G. ASN 0-700615	Pilot KIA	2nd Lt.	Muscantine, Iowa
HARMON, HOWARD K. ASN 0-556125	Co-pilot KIA	2nd Lt.	Salt Lake City Utah
McDARIS, FREDERICK F. ASN 0-719113	Navigator KIA	2nd Lt.	Inola, Oklahoma
WARD, KENNETH P. ASN 0-716788	Bombardier KIA	2nd Lt.	Burlington, Iowa

9 August 1944

44th Bomb Group Roll of Honor and Casualties

GROGG, EMIL L. ASN 33566080	Engineer KIA	S/Sgt.	Dunmore, West Virginia
WHALEN, JACK V. ASN 16162293	Radio Oper. KIA	S/Sgt.	Decatur, Illinois
BELL, ROBERT J. ASN 11106940	RW Gunner KIA	Sgt.	Springfield, Massachusetts
BREAKEY, KARL D. ASN 33408973	LW Gunner KIA, buried Cambridge (E-4-53)	S/Sgt.	Johnsonburg, Pennsylvania
JONES, SHIRLEY A. ASN 39680958	Arm/Gun KIA	Sgt.	Largo, Florida
BORGSTROM, ROLON D. ASN 39917713	Tail Turret KIA	Sgt.	Tremonton, Utah

As this aircraft was had no survivors, there is very little available information about this aircraft and crew. The 506th records only briefly state that, "Bad day for our Squadron as we lost two crews and ships. Lt. Jacobs and crew, in #328, crashed near our field due to engine failures and burst into flames. All crew members being lost..."

The 44th BG Operational Report for August probably clarifies the situation. It states, in part: "The other aircraft aborted [from the mission] because of mechanical reasons [engines?] and returned to the field. While flying the traffic pattern, the aircraft suddenly spun in and crashed with a full load of bombs [6 x 1000 lb.] on board. All crew members perished."

The crash site was 2 miles northeast of the base near Yaxham.

9 August 1944

Saarbrucken, Germany

Actually, the primary target was Sindelfingen, Germany but due to adverse weather, the mission was officially recalled. However, 17 of our aircraft bombed the secondary at Saarbrucken with excellent results. In addition to two men severely wounded in a 68th Squadron aircraft, the 66th Squadron lost one man over Germany.

66th SQUADRON:

66th Sq., #41-28785 B+, Peterson

Crewmember bailed out

66th Squadron Crew:

PETERSON, WILLIAM O.	Pilot	1st Lt.	
DAVIES, HUGH J. ASN #0-682819	Co-pilot POW	1st Lt.	Shandon, Ohio
WILLIAMS, LOWELL E.	Navigator	1st Lt.	
ROSS, ARTHUR B.	Navigator-GEE	1st Lt.	
PARTRIDGE, WILLIAM R.	Navigator-PFF	2nd Lt.	
LAFORM, JOE J.	Bombardier	Capt.	
ST. LAURENT, ANTHONY R.	Radio Oper.	T/Sgt.	
KELLEHER, MICHAEL J.	Eng./Top Turret	T/Sgt.	
FOGELSTROM, EUGENE B.	Ball Turret	S/Sgt.	
SCOTT, CLARK S.	RW Gunner	S/Sgt.	

BLOTCHER, MALVIN N.	LW Gunner	S/Sgt.
GIVENS, ARTHUR M.	Tail Turret	S/Sgt.

Note: Fogelstrom later became a POW (24 August 1944).

This PFF aircraft was piloted by 1st Lt. William O. Peterson with a crew of twelve men. It was hit by flak on the bomb run which severed rudder control cables. Co-pilot Davies, realizing the aircraft to be out of control, rang the bailout bell and then proceeded to bail out himself. This occurred about 10 miles west of Saarbrucken, Germany at 1125 hours. His chute was observed to open after dropping about 4,000 feet. Later, the Germans reported him a POW.

When hit, the aircraft started “washing and weaving” to such an extent that when Lt. Davies tested the aileron and rudder controls, he believed the aircraft to be out of control. He got up from his seat, rang the bell, put on his chute and exited the plane through the bomb bay section. Michael J. Kelleher, engineer, watched him go down and saw his parachute open. The remainder of the crew returned to base after the plane was brought under control.

Lt. Davies told me that, “This was my 33rd mission and I had observed several planes hit, blow up and no parachutes. So when we were hit and all control was lost, I panicked – and have had to live with that fact all of these years. It is a very tough thing to live down – and to forget. I could never discuss the war and always changed the subject when it came up in conversations. It has affected me for all of these years.

“I came down right in the middle of a German flak battery in Saarbrucken and of course, soon taken prisoner. Then two young German officers held me and let an old man beat me with a large club before taking me to jail.”

S/Sgt. Eugene B. Fogelstrom, tail gunner on this plane, also added, “I heard the alarm go off back in the tail, but the waist gunners hadn’t. So we were slow in responding. Someone from the front came back to check on us and by that time, Lt. Peterson decided we weren’t in such a bad situation, having established some control with the autopilot. Mike Kelleher, engineer, came back looking for damages and found the stabilizer cable severed, so we used a short ammo strip to splice the cable together. But, as I remember, the splice was never used as the autopilot was doing the job. Our pilot even landed the plane by manipulating the toggles on the autopilot system. The plane was classified A-C damage.”

William R. Partridge wrote: “You had my crew right in the 66th. I was on the mission when Davies bailed out. The cable on the horizontal stabilizer was severed, but the plane worked on autopilot and Bill Petersen landed the aircraft on autopilot – even though the gunners had reconnected the cable using an ammunition belt. Fun days. Petersen’s crew finished up and I flew 14 more missions with the various crews in the 44th, mostly with Seever [Lt. R.G. Seever]. Such was the life of a Mickey Operator.”

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #41-29156, Collins	V-PACKET	Injured crewmembers
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68th Squadron Crew:

COLLINS, J. R.	Pilot	2nd Lt.	
SCHUYLER, FRED B. ASN 0-820840	Co-pilot Injured	2nd Lt.	Dallas, Texas
MORGAN, EARL J.	Navigator	2nd Lt.	
KENNEDY, ROBERT W.	Bombardier	2nd Lt.	

12 August 1944

44th Bomb Group Roll of Honor and Casualties

HILL, DONALD R.	Radio Oper. Injured	S/Sgt.	Bellaire, Michigan
DRESSLER, TED W.	Eng./Top Turret	S/Sgt.	
COHN, WALTER M.	RW Gunner	Sgt.	
GENGLER, JAMES N.	LW Gunner	Sgt.	
REXFORD, WILLIAM J.	Tail Turret	Sgt.	

The group encountered intense and accurate barrages of flak over the target. Two men of the 68th were wounded by flying flak fragments: Lt. Fred B. Schuyler and Sgt. Don R. Hill. Lt. Schuyler was evacuated back to the States on 16 October 1944. Sgt. Hill was treated at the base hospital, recovered, and completed his tour of duty on 28 February 1945.

12 August 1944

Airdrome, Juvincourt, France

Visual bombing again proved to be excellent. No enemy resistance was encountered and fighter support was good. However, one 506th aircraft failed to return.

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #42-110024 Bar-P, McGuire	OLE COCK		MACR #7896
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506th Squadron Crew:

McGUIRE, THOMAS J. ASN 0-817721	Pilot KIA	2nd Lt.	Elmhurst, L.I., New York
TITUS, DUDLEY G. ASN 0-556131	Co-pilot KIA, buried Normandy (G-26-25)	2nd Lt.	Lake Grove, Oregon
CRAWFORD, PETER G. ASN 0-717392	Navigator Evadee, returned	2nd Lt.	Springfield, South Carolina
TURLEY, MERLE G. ASN 0-716997	Bombardier POW	2nd Lt.	Tulsa, Oklahoma
KRAMER, EDWARD ASN #31308781	Engineer POW	S/Sgt.	Chelsea, Massachusetts
CULLINANE, JOHN C. ASN 12126106	Radio Oper. POW	S/Sgt.	New York City, New York
REINER, ROBERT J. ASN 13152107	Arm/Gun Evadee, returned	Sgt.	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
DANIELS, CARL E. ASN 32669213	RW Gunner KIA	Sgt.	Sidney, New York
NOKES, JAMES C. ASN 33733373	LW Gunner POW	Sgt.	Brunswick, Maryland
HANSEN, JOSEPH L. ASN 36738150	Tail Turret POW	Sgt.	Chicago, Illinois

The MACR states, in part, that this aircraft left the formation at 1037 hours, losing altitude. The pilot called to say he was low on fuel. He was advised to call for fighter cover and then head for Allied lines. He called again to say that #3 engine had cut out and the fuel tank to #4 engine was empty. When last seen, he was headed for Allied lines and escorted by fighters. They crashed near Pont L'Evêque, France.

Both Lt. Crawford, navigator, and Robert J. Reiner, gunner, bailed out, evaded capture, and with the assistance of the French Underground, returned to duty on 31 August 1944. Only 19 days from date of mission until they returned to duty! Five other men survived to become POWs.

I spoke with Peter Crawford, the navigator, and he provided the following information: Shortly after bombing the airfield in France, one engine failed, thought to be caused by flak. Shortly thereafter, another engine also failed, so Peter gave his pilot directions to the nearest Allied airfield to land. However, the plane lost altitude too quickly, and it was necessary for the crew to abandon ship. Peter said that it was about 12,000 feet when he bailed out, but that he free fell down to about 800 feet before he opened his chute because the Germans were shooting at them. As soon as he landed, he started running, and kept it up for about five miles. Shortly thereafter, he was contacted by the French Underground and they quickly got him near the British/Canadian troops, and away from German capture.

I asked him if all of the crew bailed out and he was quite sure that both pilots remained with the plane. The pilot, Thomas J. McGuire, had several times stated that, "Like the captain on a ship, the pilot should stay with his airplane."

As both McGuire and Titus (the co-pilot) were KIA, one could assume that they elected to stay with their plane. But, of course, another possibility could be that when down to the lower altitude, German gunners could zero in on it with small arms fire or anti-aircraft guns to shoot it down. Also, one gunner, Carl Daniels, also was KIA. It is not known if he remained with the plane or was killed coming down in his parachute.

Peter said that as soon as the pilot gave the orders to bail out, he was the first one out, followed by the bombardier, Merle Turley.

After returning to the base at Shipdham and relating everything that happened to him on the 12th of August, evasion and assistance by the French, Crawford asked to be put back into combat. However, he was not permitted to do so, but was never told why not. After some weeks, and no job found for him, he asked to be returned to the States, and was.

Merle Turley, the bombardier, provided the following account: "We were in the 44th/506th for a very short time. As I recall, only a couple of weeks. Therefore, I met very few other airmen and have to admit that I cannot, at this time, remember any outside of my crew. We flew nine missions in the ten days that we were in the 44th, and did not return from our ninth mission.

"On the morning of the 9th mission, we had breakfast very early and were briefed on the mission, then driven to our plane in a truck. Upon arriving at our plane, which was named "Old Cock," we did our walk around and other pre-flights and were told by the ground crew chief that our fuel had just been topped out full.

"After takeoff, and arriving at assembly area, our flight engineer, Edward Kramer, reported that we were low on fuel by the gauges. After much conversation between the pilot, McGuire, and the flight engineer, the pilot made the decision that after the conversation with the ground crew chief, that the gauges were at fault and that we would continue on the mission.

"The mission was supposedly a 'milk run' to hit the runways at an airport near Paris, which was really a short mission. After dropping the bombs and the squadron headed home, the fuel gauges were indicating that we were very low on fuel and in a short time after this, the operation of the engines indicated that we were, indeed, low on fuel. At this time we radioed for a friendly landing strip on the peninsula taken by the recent invasion.

“We left the protection of the squadron and shortly were intercepted by three P-51s escorting us to the friendly base. The pilot feathered the engines, we threw out all excess baggage to lighten the weight of the plane, and put the plane in a descending glide in order to conserve fuel.

“As we approached friendly territory, the plane was so low that ground fire was beginning to hit the plane. For fear of disabling, the pilot ordered the crew to abandon the airplane. Seven parachuted out, two evaded, and five were captured and interned as POWs. Also, the pilot, Thomas J. McGuire, the co-pilot, Dudley Titus, and gunner, Carl E. Daniels, were killed in the crash of the plane. Why they did not bail out, I don't know.

“Joe Hansen and I were captured together and taken to the front line POW camp where we were held for about a week then loaded in trucks headed for the interior of France. After some days in a truck, we arrived at Charlon, France. Here, again, I met with Hansen and Sgt. James Nokes. Here the officers were separated from the enlisted men and we were put in boxcars for seven days and arrived at Frankfurt, Germany interrogation camp.

“After about a week there, we were loaded in trains and arrived at a permanent POW camp, Stalag Luft I, in Barth, Germany. There, I stayed until the end of the war and was liberated by the Russians on 2 May 1945. I was flown from Barth, Germany airport on 12 May in B-17s. We arrived at Camp Lucky Strike 15 May. Sailed from Camp Lucky Strike 14 June on the USS Admiral Mayo. Docked in Boston Harbor and arrived at Camp Miles Standish on 21 June. Left by train for Fort Chaffee in Ft. Smith, Arkansas on 22 June.”

13 August 1944

Road Junctions between Le Havre and Rouen, France

Bombing results were very good for the 25 aircraft dispatched against this target. No enemy aircraft was observed, but the flak was heavy and accurate, causing the loss of another 506th Squadron aircraft and crew.

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #42-95150 Bar-B, Milliken	PASSION PIT	MACR #8322
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506 Squadron Crew:

MILLIKEN, JOHN L. ASN 0-693063	Pilot POW, escapee, returned	1st Lt.	Little Neck, New York
MANIERRE, WILLIAM R. ASN 0-702308	Co-pilot POW	1st Lt.	Lake Forest, Illinois
BERTOLI, ROBERT J. ASN 0-708393	Navigator POW	1st Lt.	Cleveland Heights, Ohio
STOVROFF, IRWIN J. ASN 0-1995783	Bombardier POW	2nd Lt.	Buffalo, New York
RICHARD, MARTIN W. ASN 38483211	Engineer POW	T/Sgt.	Grand Chenier, Louisiana
BECKWITH, KENNETH E. ASN 38276416	Radio Oper. POW	T/Sgt.	Gray, Oklahoma
LARKIN, MORRIS WILLIAM ASN 11050469	RW Gunner POW	S/Sgt.	Revere, Massachusetts
LARSEN, DARRELL E. ASN 19176307	LW Gunner POW	S/Sgt.	Ventura, California

ALLEN, LEON J. ASN 338402646	Arm/Gun POW	S/Sgt.	Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
GUEBARD, VIRGIL R. ASN 15328202	Tail Turret POW	S/Sgt.	Ft. Wayne, Indiana

Statements in the MACR include, “At 1321 hours, this aircraft was hit by flak. #1 and #2 engines burst into flames and it slid out of formation, under control. Nine chutes observed to open before aircraft exploded and crashed.” Six other 506th aircraft received heavy damage.”

Lt. John Milliken stated that, “Your information (MACR) is quite accurate. Our plane’s name was PASSION PIT, which was named after the basement bar of the Santa Rita hotel in Tucson, Arizona where we took our phase training. This plane had been our regular one since 14 June 1944. We had arrived on the 6th of June and were assigned this one on the 14th. It belonged to the 506th Squadron and was designated ‘B’ for Baker.

“They had raised the tour requirement to 33 missions and this one was our 31st. I found out later that they had lowered it to 31 that day. If we had returned, they would have told us it was our last mission! (Beckwith was on 30th)

“This raid required a long bomb run over, the Falaise pocket. We had three road intersections in a direct line where we were supposed to drop 1/3 of our bombs on each one to stop the Germans from escaping Patton’s pincher. It was too long and straight a run. The first flak burst did knock out both #1 & #2 engines and set us on fire. I was flying deputy group lead (#2) and had a hard time sliding out of the box without hitting others.

“We all bailed out and were captured by the Germans. I escaped that night by jumping out of a canvas-back German G.I. truck that was taking us back to Germany. I walked through the German front lines and joined the advancing Canadian 1st Army four days later.

“No one was hurt as far as I know except Larson, who suffered a wrenched back that he still has today. He escaped before the end of hostilities when he was being marched across central Europe by the Germans. Stovroff, a Jew, was beaten up and given a bad time by the S.S.

“The rest of my crew were prisoners ‘till the end of the war. They are all alive and I correspond with them occasionally.”

John McClane, a navigator on Lt. Peritti’s 68th Squadron airplane, tells his observation of this event: “The 506th Squadron was perhaps a half mile ahead of us or less. As they approached the river, very heavy and accurate flak burst in their formation. I was looking directly at it when one of their planes (Millikens) started to burn. The plane fell out of formation and the crew bailed out just in time.

“As I looked at it, the plane exploded in front of us. There was a monstrous explosion, the plane literally disintegrated before my eyes. The engines were torn from the wings and went tumbling through the sky with their props windmilling as they fell in a large non-linear arc. The wings and the fuselage and tail were torn to shreds.

“As the pieces of aluminum drifted and twisted while they fell, with each turn the sun would reflect off their surfaces back into my eyes as if they were mirrors. But the most spectacular sight was the fuel cells which had been torn from the wings. They did not explode their gasoline, but rather they burned in huge orange tongues of flames streaming out behind the cells as they fell in a wavy fashion toward the earth.

“But now we must fly straight through that same shooting gallery, and would we suffer the same fate? It was very frightening, terribly frightening, but they missed us.”

Roger Tewksbury, a flight engineer on the Firman Mack crew (506th Squadron), had the following observations: “This was my first mission. We were flying on the right side of the PASSION PIT when it was hit by the first bunch of flak. The PASSION PIT slid under our open bomb bay. I saw several chutes open and the plane go into a slow, flat spin. It leveled out just before it hit in a flat area. The right wing was sheared off and caught fire.

At the time I was just wearing my parachute harness when the PASSION PIT passed under us with the left wing afire. Before the plane hit the ground, I had managed to hitch only one buckle on my chute. Needless to say, after this devastation, I wore my chute fully buckled.”

24 August 1944

Langenhagen, Germany

The mission to Langenhagen airfield was well into Germany, near Hannover, where there was a FW assembly field. Results of the bombing ranged from very good to excellent, with the drop being made visually. Barrage type flak was intense and accurate, causing the loss of one 68th Squadron plane.

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #44-40098 B, Dittmer	LONE RANGER	MACR #8273
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68th Squadron Crew (one exception):

DITTMER, ARTHUR H. ASN 0-818843	Pilot KIA, buried Margraten (E-14-14)	2nd Lt.	Glendale, L.I., New York
REDDICK, MARVIN J. ASN 0-813419	Co-pilot POW	2nd Lt.	Avon Park, Florida
GRUEBER, ARNOLD A. H. ASN 0-716650	Navigator POW	2nd Lt.	Byron, Nebraska
DAVIS, WAYNE R. ASN 0-717040	Bombardier POW	2nd Lt.	Pendleton, Oregon
DEVICH, JOHN E. ASN 37275604	Engineer POW	T/Sgt.	Duluth, Minnesota
DOMOGALA, JOHN W. ASN 33756755	Radio Oper. POW	S/Sgt.	Central City, Pennsylvania
GASPERETTI, RAYMOND ASN 39043892	RW Gunner KIA, buried Margraten (C-10-8)	Sgt.	San Francisco, California
BRASWELL, HOMER H. ASN 14105559	LW Gunner KIA	S/Sgt.	Eufala, Alabama
FOGELSTROM, EUGENE B. ASN 37317934	Top Turret POW	S/Sgt.	Staples, Minnesota
DOBSON, GROVER L. (66th Squadron) ASN 6397582	Tail Turret POW	Sgt.	Mt. Airy, North Carolina

Note: Dobson was on loan from the 66th Squadron

MACR #8273 includes this information, “At 1127 hours, aircraft #44-40098 was seen to peel off from the formation with its #3 engine and right wing in flames. When last seen, it appeared under control and two chutes were seen.” [Near Hannover]

The navigator, Arnold H. Grueber, provided additional information, “I had been flying with two or three crews – lack of manpower, you know. Was flying with the Minnesota boys every day, and when my crew was called up, I flew with them.

“This day I was flying with my crew and we were tail end Charlies. The low slot was clobbered heavily by anti aircraft fire. It not only riddled the aircraft with holes, it also set us afire and knocked out #4 engine. I bailed out at 24,000 feet and the darned plane went into a flat, but wide, spin and came at me four times! It landed in the same dry field as I did, cartwheeled and all hell broke loose.

“Injured, I was picked up by the hostile civilians and saved from hanging when the Luftwaffe Polizei arrived. Just like the old movies! I was taken to a temporary hospital and put into a room where a B-17 pilot was bedded down. He was severely burned – name of Maier, from Minnesota. I tried to nurse him the best I could while we were being transported to Dulag, near Frankfurt. But I don’t believe my litter patient survived.

“I was immediately identified as a traitor by my captors because both my grandfather and great grandfather went to the USA in the 1870’s and prior had lived in the Hanover area.”

Apparently all of the crew parachuted safely except Homer Braswell. However, at approximately 1300 hours, pilot Lt. Dittmer and right waist gunner Raymond Gasperetti, were lined up and shot – apparently by the civilians before the military arrived. This, according to statements made by Arnold Grueber. They were murdered!

S/Sgt. Eugene B. Fogelstrom, substitute top turret gunner from the 66th Squadron, remembers, “This was to be a routine flight. I thought that it would be a milk run as it was over water most of the way and we had been there before. Dummer Lake was our IP and always had accurate flak.

“From my position in the top turret, I could see smoke and some fire too, coming out of an engine when the alarm was sounded. I was the second one out from the front area. I counted to 10, pulled the ripcord, and felt a slight shock when the chute opened.

“I looked around but couldn’t see the plane or any other chutes. It was so quiet, no breeze, and so beautiful. I seemed so stationary that I began worrying that I wasn’t going down – perhaps I was too light and was just suspended there.

“Then I noticed that I was losing altitude and quit sweating, so reached into my pocket for a cigarette. But my lighter was in a lower pocket, so I started to unstrap my leg strap to get at it, when it dawned on me I could fall right out of the chute, so gave it up. I have always wondered what the Germans would have thought of me coming down smoking a cigarette. I really wasn’t all that cool, of course, did strange things, sometimes.”

Homer Braswell had been wounded so badly that when it came time to bail out, he simply could not make it.

There were several crewmen seriously wounded during the month of September but there are few records with which to do little more than to identify the names, dates and Squadrons. These men are shown this month in date & Squadron order.