

“Later, our crew was loaded into an old bus and we were transported through several villages and cities like Seville and Madrid. Eventually we arrived at Gibraltar where they, at last, made arrangements to fly us back to England.”

Sgt. George Whitlock, tail turret gunner, said, “This was my eighth mission. I remember that we were still out over the ocean when two of our props ran away, and we immediately dropped like a rock. We immediately salvoed our bombs and threw overboard everything we could get loose. The pilots got things back under control at about 2,000 feet, I’d guess, and we headed for Spain. We managed to gain some altitude on the way, and landed without any enemy action.

“After about two months, we made our way down to Gibraltar and were there for nearly two weeks – 3rd of August – when we were loaded into a C-47 and flown back to England. A few of us were reassigned to an anti-submarine patrol unit at Talbenny, Wales [the 479th], where we flew eight more missions out over the Bay of Biscay. That unit disbanded, so I was assigned to the 392nd BG until we were shot down in July 1944, and it was a POW Camp for me until the end of the war.”

68th SQUADRON:

66th Sq. Casualty	Capt. Diehl’s aircraft	Returned to base
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68th Squadron Crewman:

HOGAN, HARRY C. ASN 37009698	Waist Gun/Radio Op. T/Sgt. KIA, WOM Cambridge	Springfield, Missouri
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On this Bordeaux mission, one of the more unfortunate accidents of the war took place. As Captain Diehl was heading his plane across the Bay of Biscay a mere twenty miles from the coast of France, he suddenly heard the excited voice of S/Sgt. Herbert H. Gentry, his engineer, who was manning the gun at the right waist window shouting, “We’ve lost Hogan out of the window!”

As they were nearly on the bomb run, there was little else to be done except man their stations. It was not until they had started back on the route for home that they discussed what happened. T/Sgt. Harry C. Hogan had been standing by the left waist window when somehow, his parachute accidentally opened and was immediately caught in the speeding air stream and was sucked outside through the open window. Hogan was pulled out through the window to his death, the parachute being torn and Hogan hit both the fuselage and tail assembly before falling clear and then down to the ocean below. He must have been seriously injured by the contacts with the aircraft, so there was little chance of surviving once into the cold water below.

2 July 1943

Ground Crew Incident, Cornwall, England

Shortly after the Air Echelon departed Shipdham on 26 June several of the Ground Echelon were moved to southwestern England to assist the Anti-Submarine Group personnel with their Liberators on patrol from there. Two men from the 68th Squadron were killed when making contact with a German land mine at Mawgen Porth Beach, near St. Eval Air Field, Cornwall.

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq. Casualties	Killed by mine explosion
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68th Squadron Ground Crew:

CALVIN, WILLIAM A. ASN 7010352	Ground crew KIA, buried Cambridge (D-5-69)	S/Sgt.	Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
CLOSSON, WILLIAM E. ASN31088145	Ground crew KIA, buried Cambridge (D-4-69)	Private	Milton, Massachusetts

2 July 1943

Airdrome, Lecce, Italy

On June 26th, the 44th BG departed Shipdham, having been placed on temporary duty in northern Africa, at Benina Main Airdrome, approximately 20 miles west of Benghazi, Libya. Most of the crews took two days en route. The first target while operating from this base was the Italian Airdrome at Lecce, Italy.

Twenty-four of our bombers departed base but only 19 of them reached the target and bombed, all with excellent results. However, one 68th aircraft was lost shortly before the target, and another one was forced to ditch in the Mediterranean.

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #42-40094 Bar-E, Garrett	MISS VIRGINIA		MACR #21
68th Squadron Crew:			
GARRETT, WILMER J. ASN 0-727982	Pilot Eye injury	1st Lt.	Fresno, California
LEHNHAUSEN, ROBERT J. ASN 0-728890	Co-pilot Cuts & bruises	1st Lt.	Peoria, Illinois
JOHNSON, CARL E. ASN 0-730268	Navigator Broken ankle	1st Lt.	Riverside, Rhode Island
LAFLEUR, ROBERT A. ASN 0-727351	Observer KIA, WOM North Africa	Capt.	Waterville, Maine
TAYLOR, ORAN J. ASN 18062096	Bombardier KIA, WOM North Africa	T/Sgt.	Raymondsville, Texas
WAITE, EDWARD R. ASN 13013601	Engineer Cuts & bruises	Sgt.	Chareroi, Pennsylvania
BRZOZOWY, ADOLPH E. ASN 11018046	Radio Oper. Cuts & bruises	T/Sgt.	Turner Falls, Massachusetts
BERNSTEIN, DAVID G. ASN 39234569	Asst. Eng. KIA, WOM North Africa	S/Sgt.	San Diego, California
TENOSKY, ANDY J. ASN 16072477	Waist Gun KIA, WOM North Africa	S/Sgt.	Sesser, Illinois
COLE, MELVIN J. ASN 11012152	Hatch Gun Chest injury	S/Sgt.	Waterbury, Connecticut
GARRARD, JAMES M. ASN 14070592	Tail Turret KIA, WOM North Africa	S/Sgt.	Greenwood, Mississippi

This first 68th Squadron aircraft was damaged over the target by flak hits in the #1 and #2 engines, tearing a hole in the gas tanks between these two engines as well. The plane ran short of fuel on the return across the Mediterranean Sea and was forced to ditch in the water. When the plane struck the water, Lt. Lehnhausen, co-pilot, was thrown completely through the windshield. He swam back to the stricken craft and released a life raft, and then seeing that a number of the

crew were having difficulty with the second raft, swam to it and found that a rope securing the raft had become fouled in the wreckage. All efforts to disentangle the rope failed and Lt. Lehnhausen, fearing that the sinking airplane would drag the raft and the injured men under, took the rope and managed to chew it in two, releasing the raft!

For this heroic deed and his gallant efforts beyond the call of duty, Lt. Lehnhausen was awarded the Soldier's Metal.

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #42-40745 Bar-A, Peterson

MACR #22

68th Squadron Crew:	Entire crew KIA		
PETERSON, ROBERT E. ASN 0-421662	Pilot KIA	1st Lt.	
CRAMER, THOMAS R. ASN 0-23925	Command Pilot KIA	Major	
TABOR, JAMES A. ASN 0-736908	Navigator KIA	2nd Lt.	
MONAHAN, EUGENE R. ASN 0-734485	Bombardier KIA	2nd Lt.	
PHARIS, CHARLES W. ASN 34268115	Engineer KIA	T/Sgt.	Douglas, Georgia
COONEY, WOODROW J. ASN 35307128	Radio Oper. KIA	T/Sgt.	Cleveland, Ohio
NIZNOK, STEVE ASN 35307431	Asst. Eng. KIA	S/Sgt.	Cleveland, Ohio
HALL, CLIFTON C. ASN 18157469	Asst. Rad. KIA	S/Sgt.	Austin, Texas
SMITH, HARRY G. ASN 35370944	Waist Gun KIA	S/Sgt.	Sullivan, Indiana
YOAKUM, ARTHUR M. ASN 36068208	Tail Turret KIA	S/Sgt.	Decatur, Illinois

The MACR has two versions of what occurred. One observer states that just as we crossed the coast of Italy, and before we reached the target, he looked back to see an Me 109 coming up from below at about 0730 o'clock. The Me 109 was firing at ship #42-40745 and was apparently hitting it from the bomb bay to the cockpit. Smoke was coming out of the left wing. The ship turned over on its back and started down in large circles. The next thing he saw was a flash at about the time of the crash. He did not see any of the crew bail out.

A second witness said, "I saw cannon shells bursting off of the right wing of ship #42-40745 and saw that #4 engine had been hit, and started smoking. Apparently the cockpit had been hit as the ship started down on its left wing, out of control. None of the crew bailed out."

Captain Lehnhausen stated that this was the first mission for Lt. Peterson and that Major Thomas R. Cramer, as per his usual procedure, flew as co-pilot to offer his experience to this new crew. Lt. Raymond Hamlyn, the regular co-pilot, did not fly that day. Colonel Leon Johnson later said that Thomas Cramer was a super person who had all the qualifications to become Chief of Staff. It was a tremendous loss!

In response to an inquiry to the Department of the Army, I received the following reply dated September 26, 2004: "Our official files reveal eye witness accounts, that airplane B-24D, #42-40745 assigned to the 44th Bombardment Group, 68th Bombardment Squadron departed Benina, Libya, on an operational mission to Lecce, Italy, at approximately 0931, July 2, 1943. The weather conditions were given as South, South West surface wind with unlimited visibility. Shortly after crossing the coast of Italy, the airplane was intercepted by a German fighter, an Me 109, and a running battle ensued. The intercepting aircraft riddled the bomber from its bomb bay to cockpit with machine gun and cannon fire. The fighter then proceeded to disable the already damaged plane by concentrating its attacks upon its wings and engines. Cannon shells damaged the right wing severely, number four engine was smoking, and smoke was coming from the left wing. The cockpit of the bomber was hit and the plane turned over and went down out of control. None of the crew was seen to parachute from the plane during its descent. Immediately after the plane crashed to earth, it burst into flames and the flash was seen by other planes of the same formation flying high above.

"Members of the American Graves Registration Service recovered remains from a mass grave in Muro Leccese Civilian Cemetery, and the Civilian Cemetery of Cavallino, Italy. These remains were reinterred in the United States Military Cemetery, Bari, Italy, with unknown designations, pending further investigations. Although the circumstances rendered individual identification impossible, sufficient evidence was present to determine that the unknown remains were those of the 10 service members of flight #42-40745 and to warrant a group identification of the remains.

"These group remains were interred in Zachary Taylor National Cemetery, located in Louisville, Kentucky, in accordance with the provisions of Public Law 383, 79th Congress, as amended by Section 3, Public Law 368, 80th Congress. Final internment in a National Cemetery in the United States where perpetual care will be given to the graves is fitting and proper. This particular National Cemetery was selected in order that no undue burden of travel would be placed on any one family wishing to attend the burial services."

17 July 1943

Naples, Italy

27 of the 29 aircraft dispatched bombed the target of Naples, Italy with good results. Defensive flak was quite heavy and there were several aircraft damaged. One of these was a 67th Squadron aircraft piloted by Lt. C.S. Griffin.

67th SQUADRON:

67th Sq., #42-63763 F, Griffin	LADY FIFINILLA	MACR #149
67th Squadron Crew:		
GRIFFIN, CURTIS S. ASN 0-727211	Pilot KIA, WOM Sicily/Rome	Capt. Kansas City, Missouri
POTTER, JOSEPH H. Jr. ASN 0-736345	Co-pilot KIA, buried Sicily/Rome (H-8-13)	2nd Lt. Fairhaven, Massachusetts
LEVINSON, SAMUEL E. ASN 0-795273	Navigator POW	2nd Lt. Greenville, Kentucky
ROUSER, CHARLES L. ASN 0-734961	Bombardier POW	2nd Lt. Elwood City, Pennsylvania

CORCORAN, JAMES A. ASN 11037316	Engineer POW	T/Sgt.	Brockton, Massachusetts
HARRINGTON, DAVID G. ASN 17037028	Radio Oper. POW, injured, repatriated	T/Sgt.	St. Paul, Minnesota
SWANSON, ERNEST V. ASN 37211566	RW Gunner POW	S/Sgt.	Smolar, Kansas
GREATTINGER, GORDON J. ASN 16048131	LW Gunner KIA	S/Sgt.	Caledonia, Wisconsin
NICHOLLS, ROBERT W. ASN 39678019	Hatch Gun Evadee, returned	S/Sgt.	Mina, Nevada
TERABERRY, PHILLIP F. ASN 19101247	Tail Turret Evadee, returned	S/Sgt.	Malcom, Iowa

Note: Lt. Levinson, navigator, was a substitute for Lt. Walter Sorenson. Lt. Levinson was from Lt. Worden Weaver's crew. And as fate would have it, Lt. Walter Sorenson was a member of Worden Weaver's crew that was lost over Ploesti. Both of the navigators managed to survive these mishaps!

George L. Kelsey, who was in another aircraft, made these observations of the fate of LADY FIFINILLA: "When I first saw Lt. Griffin's ship, he was out by himself, heading in for the formation. There was smoke coming out from the wing at approximately the position of the #4 engine. There were two fighters coming in on the ship. One at about 2 o'clock high, and one at 6 o'clock low. There was one chute that came out by itself. The ship then looked to be out of control and sliding off to the left. The right wing broke off between #3 and #4 engines. At the same time, five other chutes came out. The last I saw of the ship it was headed down towards a bunch of white clouds. It looked like the ship might have been partially brought under control at this time."

Lt. Rouser, bombardier on this stricken aircraft, was an original member of the Leroy Hansen crew (see 13 November 1943), but was selected to fill the bombardier slot on Griffin's crew. As Rouser became a POW on 17 July, he never flew a combat mission with his regular crew. About this mission, Lt. Rouser stated, "We were hit by flak over the target and our controls were damaged. Approximately a dozen fighters – 4 or 5 Italian and the rest German – finished off our plane, setting two engines on fire (#3 & #4). Immediately after bailing out, I saw the wing of the plane hurtle past me, and then the plane itself spun past on the way to earth. Of the ten of us in the plane, 8 parachuted out – and one of these, the co-pilot Potter, was shot by the Italian soldiers as he hit the ground.

"Captain Griffin, the pilot, and one of the waist gunners [this could have been Greattinger] – did not get out and I heard from others of the crew later that they both had been wounded in the plane. Two of the men were hurt very badly while landing. One was the Radio Operator Harrington, who had a broken right hip (later repatriated) and another whose name I have since forgotten [believed to be Sgt. Corcoran], hit the top of a fence post with his face and it was terribly lacerated. He, too, was later repatriated to the States to have plastic surgery performed.

"I was the first one captured by the Italians, both civilians and military, and given pretty rough treatment. This began a very long experience for me of two years – in 13 different prison camps, an escape which lasted 7 months, etc..." Rouser's escape from the Italian mainland ended when he was recaptured while moving south through German lines. He was finally freed from his POW camp by General Patton's tanks in Moosberg, near Munich.

(Then) Lt. Cameron included this in his recollections: “On this day, for some odd reason I can’t remember now, we had a seventh airplane flying under our box formation of six B-24s; i.e. two flights of three aircraft. This was a most vulnerable position as the fighters would attack this low aircraft staying away from our upper guns. It is quite probable that the fighter attacks which we came under were directed primarily at this aircraft piloted by Lt. Griffin, who was one of our best...At any rate, our crew blasted away at these enemy fighters for possibly a half hour or more. Unfortunately, though, we lost Lt. Griffin. Word came back later that Joe Potter, a member of that crew, was killed by Italian farmers after he had parachuted safely.”

Phillip Teraberry, the tail gunner recalled: “We were bombing the docks and marshalling yards at Naples on the day that we bought the farm. We were at about 25,000 feet, I think, had dropped our load and were turning to haul out of there, when we got it in the #4 engine. We dropped out of formation to the right, then the fighters hopped on. The bell dinged to abandon ship and I got out of the turret, I unplugged heated suit, intercom, but left oxy tube plugged in. I figured I would suck oxygen until I got up to the back hatch. Well, I got there, had a hell of a time getting my chute pack hooked up. Had put it on a whole lot of times in practice, but that day it balked, finally managed. When I got to the hatch, Harrington was facing me on the front side, then I saw Nicholls go out the left waist window, about that time, the damn oxy hose came loose at the other end and hit me a wallop, I stepped back, ripped the mask off, and Harrington went out the hole, me right behind him. Greattinger was ready to jump, but never did, rode her down I guess. I saw the guys from up front out before we did.

“Anyhow the chute worked, thank God, and I saw Harrington and Nicholls below me, being a little guy, about 125 lbs., I guess I did not go down as fast as they did. The wind was blowing pretty good so I was drifting pretty smartly, I saw this little creek with trees on the banks, anyhow my chute caught in the trees and flipped me head first into the creek bank. I came to hanging about 4 feet off the ground, bleeding like a stuck pig. Nicholls, who landed about a block away came running up and poured sulfa on my face and wrapped me up. Boy, I smeared my nose all over the left side of my face.

“We started to walk, I don’t know where, but we could hear people crashing around in the brush around us, and here comes the paisano civilians, mad as hell. They had found Harrington who had hit a tree and broke his leg. I was wearing heated suit, fatigue pants, khaki shirt, flight coveralls, flight jacket, helmet and gloves. Well they stripped off the coveralls and then took our belts, I guess they figured we could not run because our pants would fall down. Anyway, that mob was damn ugly, finally a couple German soldiers showed up and ran them off. They had a litter and loaded Harrington up and took us to the local jail in a little town called Avellino. They had the rest of the surviving crew members there.

“From there Harrington and I were taken to the local hospital in Avellino, there they did set his leg, me nothing. After several days a guy from the International Red Cross showed up with a card we could send home, which my folks got, all they knew was MIA, so it was a great boost for them. This guy could speak English so I told him we would like to go to a POW camp where at least English was spoken. A couple of days later we were loaded on a train, and eventually landed in Sulmona POW camp.

“Harrington went to the infirmary, such as it was, and they made him as comfortable as they could. Myself, I had started to heal pretty good, but looked like hell, so they left good enough alone. Swanson, Nicholls and Corcoran were sent to another POW camp in Italy, and the officers

were sent to Germany, or so I was told by Swanson and the others who I saw in London after we all managed to get out of Italy.”

After spending some time in an Italian POW camp, Teraberry escaped and headed south with a small group of POWs that was made up of Teraberry, two English Sgt. Hurricane pilots, a Sgt. Maj. Aussie, and Mike Siegle from Col. Kane’s 98th bomb group. After several days and nights of walking the group met up with some Canadian soldiers. Eventually, Teraberry and Siegle were ordered to report to 12th Air Force Headquarters in Algiers. From there Teraberry went to 8th Air Force headquarters in Scotland and then he was sent home for reconstructive surgery on his face.

1 August 1943

Ploesti Oil Complex, Romania

The great ground-air battle of Ploesti has been told in numerous publications so there is no need to expand on it here. My intent is mainly to relate the stories of the individual aircraft and crews lost this day as well as those returning with dead or injured crewmembers. At the end of the accounts, I have included Tom Holmes’ recollection of the entire mission.

Eleven aircraft and crews failed to return. Of those, two were interned in Turkey.

66th SQUADRON:

66th Sq., #42-40182 A, Gentry	FORKY II	MACR #2415
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66th Squadron Crew:

GENTRY, ROWLAND M. ASN 0-727983	Pilot KIA	Capt.	Miami, Florida
MOSS, BENJAMIN M. ASN 0-793818	Co-pilot KIA	1st Lt.	New York City, New York
CHORZELSKI, MICHEL ASN T-190738	Navigator KIA	Flt. Of.	Laramie, Wyoming
AYERS, JOHN T. ASN 0-734779	Bombardier KIA	2nd Lt.	Plymouth, Pennsylvania
LIGHT, EDWIN C. ASN 38047888	Engineer KIA	T/Sgt.	Dallas, Texas
GOODMAN, EARL E. ASN 11011586	Radio Oper. KIA	T/Sgt.	So. Attleboro, Massachusetts
WILSON, STANLEY ASN 12060904	Asst. Eng. KIA	T/Sgt.	Brooklyn, New York
BRIDGES, CHARLES T. ASN 10601003	RW Gunner POW, returned to duty	S/Sgt.	Anderson, Indiana
LEISINGER, WILLIAM L. Jr. ASN 37068883	Tail Turret KIA, buried Ardennes (C-12-23)	Sgt.	Yancopin, Arkansas

The last wave of aircraft over target “White Five” consisted of four airplanes led by Rowland M. Gentry in FORKY II. His orders were to bomb from 400 feet at the top of the stepped up formation that had been adopted for the five “Eight Ball” waves. The last wave was well exposed to the German gunners.