

Schroeder said that this crew had been up five times, but had only two missions credited. Just a couple of days earlier they had aborted, in Flak Alley, when the props ran away. On this mission, they went over the target but when swinging around to return, two engines on the same side had the props run away again. The pilots tried to counteract this strong torque with all their strength but could not do so, fell out of formation, and apparently were attacked by fighters, finishing them off.

Schroeder was caught by civilians and farmers who started to beat him with pitchforks. He started to resist but decided to appeal to them with sign language and assure them he had no weapons and they then took him prisoner. Shortly after Lt. Schroeder parachuted safely, a German citizen, Mr. Irbrukker, took him to his home for treatment of his injuries. Later he was befriended by a German soldier who spoke good English who said his brother was in Texas. He was taken to the wreck of his plane which had both the nose and the tail sticking up from the ground. He believes that he was taken prisoner near Isenburg, placed in a church for a while, and then was sent to POW camps.

Witnesses on the ground reported that the aircraft had been shot down by an Me 109. They also said that a man from the village pulled one of the crewmembers from the burning bomber. This man was later abducted after the war by the Soviets and never heard from again.

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### 3 March 1944

#### Oranienburg, Germany

##### 68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #42-109822 O, Townsend

Returned to base

##### 68th Squadron Crew (partial):

TOWNSEND, RAYMOND H. Jr. ASN 0-670670	Pilot	1st Lt.
McDONALD, JAMES R. ASN 0-738994	Bombardier Severely frozen	1st Lt.

*Note: Lt. Townsend was killed in action on 8 April 1944.*

On recall and while over the North Sea/Channel, all instruments were frozen and inoperative. When the bombs were salvoed, they exploded, causing severe damage to the bottom of the aircraft. Due to the overcast, the crew was not aware of the altitude, and were very close to the sea. Lt. McDonald was so badly frozen that he was taken off combat status and re-assigned as Assistant Armament Officer. On 18 January 1945 he was transferred to 2nd Air Division headquarters.

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### 7 March 1944

#### Training Flight, Shipdham, England

After a mission to Lippstadt was scrubbed due to adverse weather, local formation flying was scheduled for several crews. One of these was pilot Glenn R. Folsom and a crew of six, one of whom was a ground crewman. The time was 1610 hour (CAVU 10 miles), cloud base 2,500 feet, 1/10 overcast.

Lt. Folsom was leading an element of three ships and was approaching the field when he was involved in a collision with a P-47 and both planes crashed. Lt. J.B. Williams, co-pilot of the plane on Folsom's left, was looking at Lt. Folsom just as the P-47 hit Folsom's right wing, and saw the startled look on his face as he never saw the P-47 approaching.

## 66th SQUADRON:

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66th Sq., #42-7582, Folsom Collision with P-47

66th Squadron Crew:	Entire crew perished		
FOLSOM, GLENN R. ASN 0-745068	Pilot DIED	1st Lt.	Elk City, Oregon
PURDUE, PAUL F. ASN 0-686492	Co-pilot DIED	2nd Lt.	Newburgh, Indiana
MAUK, CHARLES N. ASN 0-685346	Navigator DIED, buried Cambridge (A-1-5)	2nd Lt.	Toledo, Ohio
GILLIGAN, EUGENE G. ASN 18110321	Engineer DIED, buried Cambridge (C-4-5)	S/Sgt.	Brookville, Pennsylvania
BESSEN, THEODORE ASN 20227109	Radio Oper. DIED	S/Sgt.	New York City, New York
BARBER, THOMAS G. Jr. ASN 34163105	Crew Chief DIED	S/Sgt.	Birmingham, Alabama
HAWKES, HAZEN E. ASN 39120898	Tail Turret DIED	Sgt.	Drummond, Idaho

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## 65th Fighter Wing:

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65th FW, #41-6356, Schreiber Collided with B-24

## P-47 pilot:

SCHREIBER, CHARLES H. ASN T-190930	Pilot	Fl. Off.
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*Note: Flight Officer Schreiber was assigned to HQ 65 Flight Wing, HQ and HQ AAF 370 65 Fighter Wing.*

S/Sgt. Raymond McNamara, a 67th Squadron Crew Chief, was an observer. He stated that the P-47 could have made a simulated attack on the B-24, but for reasons unknown, the P-47 crashed into the B-24, tearing off its right wing, and the P-47 then spun on down and crashed. The B-24 flew on for a few seconds, winged-over and also crashed and blew up. The wing that had been torn off kept fluttering and flipping all the way to the ground. No parachutes were seen from either of the stricken craft, with much debris landing near the runways 15 – 21 (northwest). A search was conducted for several hours for the pilot of the P-47, as its wreckage had been strewn over a large area. His body was eventually found in some widely scattered parts.

In a letter from dated April of 1998, Harold Morrison writes: "After arriving at Shipdham on February 28, 1944 I was required (as a new aircraft Commander) to be checked out prior to being certified for combat ready status. This involved an area orientation flight on March 3rd (1:30 hours), take offs, landings and bomb procedures (3:15 hours) on March 6th and a formation flight check (2:00) on March 7th. In addition I was to fly two missions as co-pilot with an experienced combat crew prior to flying combat missions with my own crew.

"On the morning of March 7th, 1944 I was directed to report to the flight line, in mid-afternoon, for the formation flight check. After forming up in a three aircraft flight we later returned to the

field at traffic altitude heading East expecting to complete a formation landing maneuver. I was flying the aircraft from the co-pilot's position (right seat) and was tight on the lead aircraft's left wing (Lt. Folsom – lead aircraft). The right wing aircraft was lagging out of good position.

“Lt. Folsom had just reached forward to turn off the C-1 autopilot in preparation for our formation landing maneuver. On impact with the P-47 he turned abruptly, looking directly at me, over his left shoulder, with an astonished look on his face, probably thinking that I may have bumped his aircraft. The B-24 aircraft flipped hard right into a two and a half turn right spin and exploded on impact. The P-47 had made a diving left bank and struck the lead aircraft's right wing outboard of #4 engine and that portion of the wing was severed. At the time the aircraft started to flip hard right I observed a crewmember standing in the open left waist gunner window, fall back into the fuselage.

“The pilot flying in the left seat of our aircraft grabbed the controls and banked close to the 90 degree right bank position to observe the impact area. My concern at the time was that we could stall and end up the same way. I thought that Lt. Walter T. Milliner was the left seat pilot, but in late 1993 he informed me that he was not. [Looks like it was J.B. Williams...] He was the aircraft commander on my first two missions that I was required to fly as co-pilot. On March 8, 1944 (Berlin) and March 9th (Berlin area). It was on March 9th that we flew #4 position (slot) and Lt. Ken Jewell, lead aircraft, lost his leg.

“After landing, we were close to the impact area (our parking hard stand) and we were going to go over and look at the crash area. We decided against it when a ground crewman returned and informed us that the object laying on the taxi-way was a flying boot with a foot in it.

“At the time I thought the P-47 pilot, who was heading west into the sun (which was low on the horizon) was blinded. The accident report seems to confirm this.”

## 9 March 1944

### Airframe Factory (Berlin Area), Brandenburg, Germany

The airframe factory at Brandenburg, Germany was the primary target for this day. It was a PFF mission and the results were unobserved. On the return, one 66th Squadron aircraft made a crash-landing with the pilot severely wounded.

#### 66th SQUADRON:

66th Sq., #42-99980, Jewell	BANSHEE IV/E. Z. DUZIT	Returned to base
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#### 66th Squadron Crew:

JEWELL, KENNETH G. ASN T-60062	Pilot Lost left leg	1st Lt.	Bedford, Pennsylvania
KOONTZ, HAROLD L. . ASN 0-681439	Co-pilot	Lt.	
SAKOWSKI, ARTHUR T. ASN 0-683323	Navigator	Lt.	
FOLEY, MATHEW J. ASN 0-676367	Bombardier	Lt.	
CARROLL, WILLIAM F.	Nose Gun./Toggler	S/Sgt.	New Haven, Connecticut

SHANLEY, EDWARD M.	Radio Oper.	T/Sgt.	New York City, New York
WIKE, WILLIAM M. ASN 35313566	Eng./Top Turret	T/Sgt.	Warren, Ohio
POIRRIER, GEORGE G. ASN 31110968	Ball Turret	S/Sgt.	Laconia, New Hampshire
SAPORITO, SAM S.	RW Gunner	S/Sgt.	Houston, Texas
GUZIK, EDWARD P.	LW Gunner	S/Sgt.	Latrobe Pennsylvania
McCLOSKEY, JOHN S. ASN 12154447	Tail Turret	S/Sgt.	Port Washington, LI New York

(Then) 1st Lt. Kenneth G. Jewell stated that, "On March 9th, which was our second raid on Berlin, I led the 2nd section and avoided the heavy flak so that none of the Group was damaged. Over the target we found solid cloud cover but the flak there was extremely heavy and accurate. Just as we released our bombs, my plane was hit by four bursts of flak.

"Our nose section was shot up and the front wheel assembly was lost. The front oxygen system was destroyed and all the radio equipment was put out of action. The #3 engine and the right side of the plane was heavily damaged and we feathered #3 engine, losing our hydraulic pump.

"I had my left leg severely damaged – so much so that we tried to remove what was left of it, but we did not have a knife to cut the remaining portion free. It was a gory mess and my new co-pilot (his first mission) vomited into his mask, couldn't breathe and passed out. The crew had to revive him, of course, so someone could fly the plane while I was out of my seat trying to tend to my leg. My crew helped me back to my seat so that I could help fly the plane back to base, utilizing the auto pilot most of the way, as I now had only one leg.

"My co-pilot [Harold Koontz] had never landed a B-24 by himself, so I had to instruct him so that he could get us down – and he did great. With no hydraulics and no nose wheel, we were in plenty of trouble, but my crew used two parachutes out of the waist windows, attaching them to the gun mounts to slow us down as we had no brakes, either. We nosed in at about 70 mph but kept things under control and skidded to a halt with most of the nose scraped off.

"MovieTone was there that day, along with Major Generals Kirk and Grant, along with Brig. General Johnson. Kirk sent me to ZOI, Walter Reed Hospital for treatment. There I met "Hap" Arnold, who put me back on flying status in Feb 1945. I became the first amputee to fly in the USAA Corp with a wooden leg."

Later Captain Jewell was recognized as one of the most decorated men in the USAAC.

Bob Weatherwax wrote: "I was at the General Hospital when Jewell was injured. Two generals came to see him, one was the Surgeon General from Walter Reed Hospital. They told Jewell he would be given the best artificial leg available and guaranteed he would fly again."

An account of this mission was published in Air Force Magazine in the October 1991 issue under the title "Valor: The Will to Endure." The author was John Frisbee.

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 12 March 1944

Military Installations, Siracourt, France

These military installations were bombed with unobserved results. Due to the closing in of the “unusual weather” back at Shipdham, this crew was ordered to find an ‘open’ field in southern England. However, unable to locate any open fields, this crew was running low on fuel, so was forced to attempt an emergency landing on the RAF fighter field at Friston. Unfortunately, a fire erupted and the aircraft was completely destroyed. No serious injuries among the crew. This was the second time that Lt. Bowman had crash-landed his plane in the last few weeks.

68th SQUADRON:

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68th Sq., #42-7507, Bowman	HEAVEN CAN WAIT II	Crash-landed
68th Squadron Crew:	No serious injuries	
BOWMAN, SAM. H.	Pilot	2nd Lt.
ROSSMAN, JAMES M.	Co-pilot	2nd Lt.
YOUNG, WILLIAM A.	Navigator	2nd Lt.
GORDON, CHARLES S.	Bombardier	2nd Lt.
CREEDON, BERNARD D.	Radio Oper.	T/Sgt.
DROPEK, KENNETH S.	Eng./Top Turret	T/Sgt.
COMMISA, PATRICK J.	Ball Turret	S/Sgt.
TARZIA, MICHAEL	RW Gunner	S/Sgt.
GURRY, THOMAS P.	LW Gunner	S/Sgt.
ENNIS, DON	Tail Turret	S/Sgt.

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Ken Dropek wrote: “Our crew trained at Davis Monthan in Arizona in B-24-Ds; and at Blythe, CA in B-24-Hs. While at Blythe we made several flights to Norton AFB to get the planes modified. We left Forbes AAF Base in Topeka, KS in a B-17-G, and arrived in ETO on 30 November 1943. Our destination was to be Prestwick, Scotland. We then went to Cheddington, which was the 2nd CCRD (replacement depot) and flew some training missions in the B-24-D. They were blue and white jobs on Sub Patrol, Coastal Command.

“We arrived at the 44th on January 29, 1944. Four planes had been shot down in the Pas de Calais area the previous week (21 January) and the 44th needed replacements. We flew several missions with Sam Bowman being our 1st pilot.

“On March, the day we went down near Beachy Head, we had #2 engine out. It was a mission to the Pas-de-Calais area, with only three 8th AF Groups sent up that day. They were the 44th, “the 93rd, and the 392nd BGs – all B-24s.

When we took off, the ceiling was almost zero. We climbed through solid overcast to 18,000 feet. We finally made a formation and went to our target, bombed okay. We had to feather #2 engine, flew back to England okay, but still solid clouds at all bases. After formation flying around for several hours, we were notified we were again over France and to put the machine guns back in place. After milling around for awhile, we were back over England, and by then were told to land wherever we could, and suggested Ford Field.

“After following the formation around on only three engines, we were low on gas, so we left the formation and, as the fickle finger of fate would have it, we found a small hole in the clouds.

With our engines cutting out, set down as soon as land appeared. We barely cleared some high voltage power lines by lowering the flaps about 10 degrees. The crash caused the plane to burn up, but we were the able to get out with only minor injuries.

“We made one more mission as a complete crew, to Frederickhafen on 18 March 1944, but that is a complete story unto itself. A few substitute crewmembers flew with us on the rest of our missions but five of the original crew finished our 30 missions together on the 30th day of May, 1944. They were: Rossman, Young, Dropek, Creedon, and Gurry.

“Bowman was reduced to co-pilot and flew with Lt. Rose and different crews. The rest of our crew made it, too, and I have been in contact with a few of them.”

The bombardier, Charles “Shep” Gordon, wrote: “While in the target area, we were hit by flak in the #2 engine and it was shut down and ‘feathered.’ As we came back over the channel, we could not maintain altitude, so it was decided to land as soon as possible. We had either lost hydraulic pressure, or because of the short strip at Friston, we came in wheels up.

“We landed with a sharp impact which caused the batteries under the flight deck to tear loose and short out. Almost immediately a fire started, forcing us to scramble out the top hatch or side windows, and congregate about 100 feet from the burning ship to watch it go up in smoke and flames.

“However, shortly thereafter, the ammunition started firing off, so everybody started running away for safer ground. The next day I went back to look at the wreckage, found my parachute ring with my G.I. shoes tied to it! Why the shoes did not burn is a mystery to me. I also remember a crew landing there to pick us up and take us back to Shipdham.”

## 15 March 1944

### Brunswick, Germany

Specific targets at Brunswick were the Bomber Aircraft component factory, Primary, and constructional engineering works as a bonus. Results were unobserved due to undercast, and enemy aircraft attacks were strong but ineffective, due to excellent fighter support we received. However, the 66th Squadron reported than one plane did not return.

#### 66th SQUADRON:

66th Sq., #42-52332, Talbott	MY ASS'AM DRAGON		MACR 3220
66th Squadron Crew:			
TALBOTT, DAVID R. ASN 0-742224	Pilot Evadee, returned	1st Lt.	Bristol, Maryland
CLAUSEN, LEMOINE H. ASN 0-684490	Co-pilot POW	1st Lt.	Blairstown, Iowa
MORIARTY, CLIFFORD F. ASN 0-679201	Bombardier KIA, buried Margraten	1st Lt.	Memphis, Tennessee
GOLDMAN, ARTHUR ASN 0-671345	Navigator KIA	1st Lt.	Cleveland, Ohio
ARBON, ERNEST W. ASN 39832379	Engineer POW, interned, wounded	T/Sgt.	Malta, Idaho
SWICK, RAYMOND E. ASN 15335773	Radio Oper. Evadee (underground)	T/Sgt.	New Richmond, Indiana

HADDOCH, SAMMY W. ASN 14181734	Ball Turret POW	S/Sgt.	Florence, Alabama
WILLIAMSON, JACK D. ASN 14001629	RW Gunner POW, wounded	S/Sgt.	Ruth, Mississippi
GASSER, HERMAN C. ASN 35333614	LW Gunner POW	S/Sgt.	Toledo, Ohio
SYMPSON, CECIL H. ASN 35508939	Tail Turret POW, wounded	S/Sgt.	Clarkson, Kentucky

1st Lt. David R. Talbott was the pilot of MY ASS'AM DRAGON, and his left waist gunner, Sgt. Gasser remembers, "When we were shot down, the FW 190s came in from the low rear because our ball turret was up, having been earlier knocked out of commission. So they shot us up pretty badly – and set us on fire. I was the waist gunner on the left side and I could see all the bullets coming into the fuselage on the right side. I had a flak suit on which probably saved my life. I could feel them hitting the suit and grazing my body. I was lucky I got out with only one in my leg below my flak suit. I think that Williamson got hit but don't know to what extent because I never saw him again in the POW camps. (He was in a Dutch hospital)

The rear gunner, Sympson, came running out of the rear and went out the waist window. That was a dangerous thing to do as you might hit the stabilizer. I think that Arbon went out the waist window the same way. I don't remember where Sammy Haddock, ball turret gunner, went out. I know I went out the bottom hatch, which I had to straighten out first because it was all shot up. The ship was really burning by then and I was lucky to get out – I guess it blew up later after the pilot got out.

"I didn't pull the ripcord for quite awhile, and I still remember the smoking ship flying away. An American fighter followed me down to the clouds and when I got below them, a German fighter came towards me, but he didn't shoot. I never saw any of the crew in the POW camps except for Sammy Haddock, who was with me most of the 14 months. Moriarity and Goldman were both killed; Williamson, Clausen, Sympson, Arbon, Haddock, and myself were all POWs. Swick was with the Underground and stayed with them throughout the war. I was in Stalag Luft IV from March until after Christmas, 1944, when we 'went on the road' until liberation on 2 May 1945."

Lt. Talbott wrote his recollections of this mission, "We were about half way across the English Channel when trouble developed again with our superchargers, but I felt we could avoid aborting by manipulating the supercharger and throttle controls so that they wouldn't over-power each other. But it didn't prove very successful. We had lots of trouble in formation as we were not able to regulate power properly. But at any rate, we got through to the target and we probably would have gotten back home had it not been for the fact our Group was assigned the job of distributing some sort of pamphlets, which meant that we flew around over Europe dropping these damned papers. Not being able to closely control my power settings, I wasn't able to fly my close position in the formation that we should have. For that reason, and being out of formation, we were attacked by fighters. I think we were about 22,000 feet when we took some hits in the fuel tanks, which caused leaks into the bomb bay.

"The engineer was not able to open the bomb bay doors to let the gas flow on through, and we took another hit in our main hydraulic engine (#3), and he wasn't able to knock the doors loose with anything. We were losing altitude because we lost that engine, and although there was a fire in the bomb bay, it wasn't a large fire until we lost enough altitude so that the increase in oxygen increased the flames.

“So I finally gave the orders to abandon the plane. All of the men in my section of the plane went back through the bomb bay area and left the plane from the rear. My inclinometers were not working too smoothly, either. No one told the bombardier and navigator about the abandonment, and I could see the boys there, but there wasn’t much I could do to advise them. I finally got the plane trimmed pretty well and went down through the flight deck opening, down to the bomb bay and started up to the nose section under the flight deck to tell those two men that we had to get out. But as I was approaching the nose compartment, the plane went out of control. I was going to ask them why they were still in there, but just then the nose wheel snapped down and knocked me out!

“When I regained consciousness, I was on the ground near a small Dutch village of Nieuw Leusen. I released my parachute as the wind was dragging me across the ground. I got up and started walking, had a twist in my back, flak in my shoulder, flash burns around my head, but nothing to stop me from walking. Some gentleman came up and asked me if I could use some help – of course I could – and he directed me to go in one direction, not to look back, but just to keep walking as I would be watched. Well, it wasn’t long after that I was told there would be another gentleman, and I could see him riding down the road on a bicycle. I thought it prudent to look for a few minutes, so I crawled into a canal and hid along the bank, allowing him to pass. In less than an hour, walking in the direction I was instructed to, I was met by some gentleman who told me to hide. They piled brush over me out in a field and instructed me to stay there until nightfall. They returned that night and took me to a village...

“After a couple of days I was taken to another village where I witnessed the burial of my navigator and bombardier. The ship had crashed within sight of the house I was being hidden in. So I saw the bodies being removed from the plane and carried to the village to be buried...

Lt. Talbott gave me considerable material about his days on the loose. Eventually he was met by American soldiers. This was the crew’s 14th mission.

J. van der Maas of Amsterdam, Netherlands advised me that S/Sgt. Williamson was gravely wounded and spent many weeks in Queen Wilhelmina Hospital in Amsterdam. He received special attention from Dutch nurses as they often smuggled in books in English, flowers, sugar, etc. against all German rules. One of the nurses was caught in the act of making Jack’s life more comfortable and was sent to Germany as slave labor. I was informed that she survived these hardships and often wondered how well Jack recovered. I learned that he never did become completely well and died several years ago.

I also received several letters from Robert C. Gibson, who served with the 3059th Graves Registration Company at Meppel, Holland in 1945 and 1946. His unit disinterred American airmen from civilian cemeteries in Holland and Germany. He noted that Moriarty and Goldman were buried side by side in a cemetery in Nieuw-Leusen, Holland and that Goldman was holding a rabbit’s foot in his left hand.

The following material is from a translation of an official police report dated 15 March 1944:

“On March 15, 1944, at approximately 1230 hours, I, Pieter Postma, commander of the air raid precaution service received a telephone call of Mr. Th. P. Leenhouts, head of section IX (region Hoogenraven). He stated that a burning aircraft crashed in the northern part of the municipality and that several parachutes have been seen. Immediately, I drove, together with the mayor of Ommen and the commander of the military police, by car to Balkbrug. There we saw that the aircraft crashed in the municipality of Nieuw-Leusen.



“On the way back to Ommen, we met the car owned by the air raid precaution service and stationed in section VIII (region Ommerkanaal) and driven by Mr. G. Baas. He stated that he had taken an airman who landed in his section to the barracks of the military police in Ommen.

“At approximately 1445 hours, I received a telephone call that a wounded parachutist was staying in the house of Mr. S. Lantinga in Junne. I asked Doctor G. Pos to go to Junne and later went together with the mayor and the commander of the military police also to Junne where we found an American who was wounded at his right leg. After he was treated, we brought him to the barracks in Ommen.

“In the meantime, a farmer from Witharen brought a parachutist to hotel ‘The Sun,’ in Ommen. We picked him up and he also was brought to the barracks.

“At approximately 1815 hours, the commander of the military police informed me that another parachutist arrived at the house of Mr. Bolks in Witharen. This, according to a statement of Mr. Bolks.

I took the car, together with commander, to this farmhouse where we found a parachutist who was taken to the barracks.”

Mr. Postma assured the authorities that the necessary telephone calls have been made to the Commandant at Zwolle, the German police in the province of Overijssel, and the federal inspection of air raid precautions in The Hague. He wrote that a total of 15 liters of gas from his reserves had been consumed in the process. Later, he provided the following additional details:

“On March 16, 1944, at approximately 2100 hours, I received a message that another airman was staying at the house of Mr. E. Egberts at the Hardenbergerroad near Ommen. This man was also taken to the barracks of military police at Ommen.”

## 16 March 1944

### Friedrichshafen, Germany

The 68th Squadron had the honor of leading the 44th BG and the entire 2nd Air Division. Flak was ineffective for most of our formation, credited to the use of aluminum chaff for the first time. However, even with the reduced damage by flak and few enemy air attacks on the 44th's formation, the 67th Squadron had a plane crash at Kingsnorth, near Woodchurch, Kent, England.

#### 67th SQUADRON:

67th Sq., #42-7549 K-Bar, Scarborough	THE SHARK/SHARK FACE	Crash-landed
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#### 67th Squadron Crew:

SCARBOROUGH, JOHN I. ASN 0-730624	Pilot KIA, buried Cambridge (D-6-39)	2nd Lt.	Lake Charles, Louisiana
BEAN, LORAN M. Jr. ASN 0-756831	Co-pilot KIA, buried Cambridge (D-6-29)	2nd Lt.	Wichita, Kansas
NESBIT, ALDEN C. ASN 0-678381	Navigator KIA	2nd Lt.	Magnolia, Arkansas
EDMONDS, DAVID ASN 0-734660	Bombardier KIA, buried Cambridge (D-3-75)	2nd Lt.	Whitemarsh, Pennsylvania
MUIRHEAD, EDGAR P. ASN 18188771	Engineer KIA	S/Sgt.	Houston, Texas

HOWLEY, ROBERT M. ASN 19144166	Radio Oper. KIA	S/Sgt.	Spokane, Washington
STICKEL, ROBERT J. ASN 16097147	Waist Gun Severely wounded, KIA	Sgt.	Moline, Illinois
SILVERMAN, JEROME B.	Asst. Eng. Slightly injured	Sgt.	Bronx, New York
LANDELLS, CHARLES ASN 32606252	Ball Turret Severely injured	Sgt.	Wood Ridge, New Jersey
BRENN VERN A. ASN 39266431	Tail Turret Broken ankle, nose	Sgt.	San Diego, California

Charles Landells sent his description of this day, “We lost an engine before the target. We saw Switzerland across the lake but Lt. Scarborough said, ‘Let’s go home.’ Fortunately we were not attacked as I think we lost another engine before reaching England. We were banking to make a landing on a fighter field somewhere in Kent when our other two engines quit! Our left wing dropped and an observer on the ground said we hit a tree with our wing tip. I know when I looked out of the waist window I was looking straight down at the ground. I remember being thrown forward and then the waist section rolling over and over, with dirt and spent casings falling on me. When it all stopped, my one thought was to get out before any explosion or fire. I saw an opening above me and crawled up to it and without hesitating, went right out. I dropped about four feet to the ground and kept moving. About 20 feet away from the plane, I heard Vern Brenn call and saw him in a drainage ditch. I fell in beside him to learn that Jerome also was out and a bit farther away.

“When we realized there was no fire, we went back to see if anyone else survived. We found Lt. Bean, our co-pilot and Lt. Edmonds, our navigator next to one another. We knew that Bean was dead, but Jerry gave Lt. Edmonds a shot [morphine] from the escape kit because we were not sure about him. We saw Sgt. Howley, radio operator, laying across a bush, but people had arrived by then and forced us to lay down on stretchers.

“Up until then I hadn’t realized that I had injured my back and my head was bleeding. Vern had a broken nose and ankle, while Jerry only had frostbite. Bob Stickel died a few weeks later. Bob was new to our crew, having been picked up when we were in Ireland.”

Sgt. Vern A. Brenn clarified some items. “I’ve always carried a sense of guilt about being one of the three of us who lived through it. All of the other seven were far more deserving to live than me. The only one who was not one of our regular crew members was the navigator, Edmonds. He flew as a spare, replacing 2nd Lt. O’Connell from New York.

“Yes, we were a new crew in the 67th. Lt. Scarborough and I had flown our first mission as spares on another crew – he as a co-pilot and I as a ball gunner. That mission was to Berlin. The plane we were flying when we crash-landed was SHARK FACE and it had a lot of missions on it.

“The day we went down was mission number three for Lt. Scarborough and me. Flak was heavy and we had to feather one engine due to low oil pressure – this on the way to the target. We were still able to hold our position in the formation and completed the bomb run. On our way back we lost another engine and were then not able to keep up with our group, and the P-38 escort took turns covering us back to the English Channel.

“By this time our fuel supply was about gone. I remember the pilot asking all of us if we wanted to ditch or try to make it to the English shore. We all said to go for England. Somewhere over the Channel, we lost another engine and started to lose altitude very fast. One crewman in the front spotted a farmer’s field and we headed for it. At this time we were only about five hundred feet with the pilots struggling to keep the plane in a position to crash-land. Then I heard the last engine cough and die!

“I seem to remember a large bump and a very loud crushing noise – and then I must have been knocked out. When I came to and realized I was still alive, I tried to get out and run but I couldn’t move. So Jerry Silverman and Charles Landells carried me to a safe grassy place away from the wreckage, then they went back to check on the rest of the crew. They found all the others dead except Bob Stickel. He was injured so badly that I don’t think they tried to move him immediately.

“Some English farmers were the first to arrive on the scene after they had called for assistance from the nearest hospital and an ambulance. All four of us survivors were loaded into the ambulance and driven to the hospital. We were there several days until they transferred all of us except Bob Stickel, to an American hospital near Southhampton. We were told that Bob could not be moved and he later died.

“Landells was so badly injured he never flew again. Jerry Silverman retrained to fly the nose turret position. I flew only three more missions after being grounded for a long time.”

Many years after the war, Charlie Landells visited Woodchurch and learned more about the perspective of the people on the ground. It was their contention that Lt. Scarborough pulled up to save the houses, and the green where the school children were playing.

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## 18 March 1944

### Friedrichshafen, Germany

The specific target here was the Manzell Air Armaments and it was hit with good results. But it proved to be a black letter day for the 44th BG as eight aircraft failed to return to base. This was a shocking loss for a period of time until it was learned that six of our damaged ships had made it successfully to neutral Switzerland. The planes were lost, but most importantly, most of our men were safe, and many were able to ‘escape’ and return to duty.

Dan Culler, engineer on the Telford crew noted: “We were heading to Lake Constance to bomb a target in this German town [Friedrichshafen]. Our leader lined up on the target and flew over the town, but didn’t drop the bombs, due to other planes bombing at a lower altitude so the leader did a big circuit for a second run. All the time, there was heavy flak and also enemy fighters making passes at the formation, so the group planes were taking lots of hits.

“Planes were dropping out of the formation heading into Switzerland to be interned. Eleven planes were lost, most were hit bad enough that they felt that they wouldn’t make England, so chose Switzerland and a chance for another day. Needless to say, we were not very happy with a second bomb run. This also was the first time we had seen P-38 fighters. They must have come up from Italy. They made passes at the German fighters, but kept close to our formations all of the time and not overly aggressive on making kills of the German fighters. It also might have been from England on their first flights.”

*Note: Culler wrote a book about his war experiences entitled “Hell Hole of Wauwilermoos.”*

## 66th SQUADRON:

66th Sq., #42-7618 C, Telford

MACR #3982

66th Squadron Crew:	Entire crew interned		
TELFORD, GEORGE D. ASN 0-800967	Pilot Interned, returned	1st Lt.	Grey Stone Park, New Jersey
COUNÉ, FRANCIS L. ASN 0-748582	Co-pilot Interned, returned	1st Lt.	Tampa, Florida
McCONNELL, DONALD H. Jr. ASN 0-735949	Navigator Interned, returned	1st Lt.	Portland, Oregon
CARROLL, WILLIAM E. ASN 0-738616	Bombardier Interned	1st Lt.	Johnstown, Pennsylvania
CULLER, DANIEL L. ASN 15105134	Engineer Interned, returned	T/Sgt.	Syracuse, Indiana
TESTA, FRANCIS J. ASN 31169235	Radio Oper. Interned, returned	T/Sgt.	Waterbury, Connecticut
HANCOCK, JAMES H. ASN 14073058	Waist Gun Interned, returned	S/Sgt.	Columbia, South Carolina
PETRIK, GEORGE A. ASN 33305379	Waist Gun. Interned, returned	S/Sgt.	Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania
MELSON, HOWARD E. ASN 32065296	Ball Turret Interned, returned	S/Sgt.	Dagsboro, Delaware
HUGHES, JOHN J. ASN 12127437	Tail Turret Interned, returned	S/Sgt.	Long Island, New York

1st Lt. George D. Telford was 1st pilot of this 66th Squadron aircraft. The MACR states in part, "This aircraft left the formation in the vicinity of target at 1445 hours with no apparent visual difficulty. The pilot was heard to say on the radio, 'Am landing in Switzerland.' The plane landed at Dubendorf airfield."

T/Sgt. Daniel L. Culler was able to expand further, "We were on our last mission before our tours would be ended and we would be sent home. After bombing, we were hit by flak that ruptured our left fuel cells. Being the engineer, I got out of my turret and was in the process of transferring fuel from these damaged tanks to the right side. It was just then that Lt. Telford, our pilot, reported that we had lost oil pressure on #1 and #2 engines – on the left side. Perhaps the same flak that got our fuel cells got those two engines. However, when I got back from transferring that fuel, we were surrounded by Swiss Me 109s which were escorting us to an airfield in Switzerland. (Dubendorf)

"Because of the damages we got on our previous missions, we had to fly replacement planes so I cannot remember any details of our plane this day. I don't know what number, name or logo it had, but I believe it was an "H" model.

"We were interned at Adelboden until 12 July when Howard Melson and I attempted an escape. We made our way towards Italy, but Melson and another British Army man, Matthew Thirlaway, were captured by Swiss police close to the Italian border. I had to return to camp because of illness that was caused by eating some poison plants while up in the mountains. All three of us were moved to a regular prison camp called Wauwilermoos. And it was here that a Brigadier General, a Military Attaché, visited me and told me that due to this attempted escape, we would be considered common prisoners and would not be released even with war's end. For that reason

we made attempts to escape every chance we got. And we finally succeeded!" Sgt. Culler had quite a time of it in Switzerland until escaping to France, and eventually back to England. Even in England he was mistreated until he could get back into military clothes and was issued mess gear, etc.

## 67th SQUADRON:

67th Sq., #42-100073 H-Bar, Lacombe	SACK ARTISTS		MACR #3407
67th Squadron Crew:	Entire crew interned		
LACOMBE, RAYMOND J. ASN 0-2044994	Pilot Interned, returned	1st Lt.	Providence, Rhode Island
CARDENAS, ROBERT L. ASN 0-423198	Command Pilot Interned, returned	Capt.	San Diego, California
TINNEY, JACK RUSSELL ASN 0-382727	Co-pilot Interned, wounded	1st Lt.	Bowie, Texas
BYERS, EDGAR M. Jr. ASN 0-670085	Navigator Interned	1st Lt.	Scottsdale, Pennsylvania
CARVOUR, GEORGE W. ASN 0-728704	Bombardier Interned, returned	1st Lt.	Mansfield, Ohio
HIGLEY, GLENN O. ASN 36237827	Engineer Interned	T/Sgt.	Gaylord, Michigan
CHAROCHAK, JOSEPH ASN 15332900	Radio Oper. Interned	T/Sgt.	San Antonio, Texas
LOOKER, ROLLIN C. ASN 37207413	Ball Turret Interned, returned	S/Sgt.	Topeka, Kansas
HEDGELON, ROBERT P. ASN 13100540	RW Gunner Interned, returned	S/Sgt.	Honesdale, Pennsylvania
WALLACE, JAMES G. ASN 12182501	LW Gunner Interned, returned	S/Sgt.	New York City, New York
LAIRD, JOHN C. ASN 14150821	Nose Gun Interned	Sgt.	Decatur, Mississippi
FLISTER, HENRY O. ASN 36232737	Tail Turret Interned, returned	S/Sgt.	Edgerton, Wisconsin

The 67th Squadron crew that also made it to Switzerland was that piloted by 1st Lt. Raymond J. Lacombe. The MACR states that, "Several crews reported seeing this aircraft peel off, apparently under control, and headed in the direction of Switzerland. Time – 1447 hours.

Lt. Carvour, bombardier, relates that, "The formation made two passes at the target and the second pass had allowed the anti-aircraft gunners to zero in on us. That is when most of the planes were damaged. Captain Cardenas, Command Pilot from the 506th Squadron, said that the ship took a shell in the right wing, weakening it so much that it bent upwards, a dihedral of about 15 degrees. The plane was so badly damaged and on fire, that after getting over Switzerland, all of the crew were forced to parachute. The airplane then exploded at such a low altitude that it seared off the top of some trees before finally crashing.

"The flak hits caused insulation to fly about in the nose section of the ship, looking for all the world like feathers. Lt. Tinney, co-pilot, had wounds to his face, Sgt. Charochak was the first to bail out, but I was the first to land."

Damages reported by other crew member included one engine on fire, then followed by a second engine fire. Severed fuel and hydraulic lines, electrical system inoperative, and control lines cut made the plane almost uncontrollable, but Lt. Ray Lecombe skillfully nursed it over neutral territory where he then ordered abandonment of ship.

In November of 1944, LaCombe was awarded an Oak Leaf Cluster to the Distinguished Flying Cross for this mission. Below are some details from that award: "Raymond J. LaCombe, 0-2044994, 1st Lt. Army Air Force. For extraordinary achievement, while serving as pilot of a B-24 aircraft on a bombing mission to Germany, 18 March 1944, Lt. LaCombe's aircraft sustained flak damage causing one engine to catch fire. Damage to the left wing caused the aircraft to descend at a 45-degree angle.

"By skillful manipulation of the controls, Lt. LaCombe succeeded in righting his aircraft and regaining his position in the formation to complete a second bomb run. Additional flak damage set fire to a second engine, severed fuel and hydraulic lines and rendered the electrical system inoperative.

"With several members of his crew badly wounded, the aircraft on fire and uncontrollable, Lt. LaCombe entered neutral territory where the entire crew parachuted to safety. The superior flying skill, cool courage, and determination demonstrated by Lt. LaCombe on this occasion reflects the highest credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of the United States."

Capt. Cardenas, ranking officer, worked with the Swiss Embassy. Later he was a pilot with Chuck Yeager on the Mach One project.

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Two 68th planes and crews were lost, those being Lts. Dyers and Nichols, but both were able to get their damaged crafts to Switzerland and safety.

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #42-109800 T, Dyer		MACR #3410
68th Squadron Crew:	Entire crew interned	
DYER, EUGENE N. ASN 0-680192	Pilot Interned, returned	2nd Lt. New York City. New York
CULBERTSON, EARL W. ASN 0-747756	Co-pilot Interned, returned	1st Lt. Corvallis. Oregon
WALSER, WALTER A. ASN 0-808192	Navigator Interned	2nd Lt. El Paso, Texas
McFARLAND, JOHN W. ASN 0-682557	Bombardier Interned	2nd Lt. Bronx, New York
WILLIAMS, GEORGE V. ASN 13018547	Engineer Interned	T/Sgt. Hepners, Virginia
DE LUCA, SALVATORE J. ASN 32535381	Radio Oper. Interned	T/Sgt. Mount Vernon, New York
MILOJEVICH, JOHN H. ASN 37457663	Ball Turret Interned	S/Sgt. Rock Springs, Wyoming
WILLIAMS, HOMER W. ASN 33211862	Waist Gun Interned, returned	S/Sgt. Burgoo, West Virginia
SEAMAN, JOHN S. ASN 11101134	Waist Gun Interned	S/Sgt. Bridgeport, Connecticut

FAIRALL, ALFRED V. ASN 13104569	Tail Turret Interned	S/Sgt.	Cumberland, Maryland
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Lt. Dyers's plane, per the MACR #800, was seen to leave the formation at 1448 hours, headed for Switzerland, under control. They landed at Dubendorf at 1520 hours, and were interned.

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The second 68th aircraft, piloted by Lt. Hollis R. Nichols, was last seen at 1447 hours in a gradual dive, all 4 engines running and under control, states the MACR.

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #42-100112 Q, Nichols	PAPER DOLL or LADY DOT		MACR #3408
68th Squadron Crew:	Entire crew interned		
NICHOLS, HOLLIS R. ASN 0-738223	Pilot Interned, returned	1st Lt.	Seattle, Washington
BOLICK, SIDNEY R. ASN 0-204505	Co-pilot Interned, returned	2nd Lt.	Toronto, Canada
McNAMARA, JOHN S. ASN 0-694686	Navigator Interned	2nd Lt.	Albany, New York
SLOVACEK, ADOLPH ASN 0-685093	Bombardier Interned	2nd Lt.	Caldwell, Texas
McGOLDRICK, WILLIAM E. ASN 32381135	Engineer Interned	S/Sgt.	Silver Creek, New York
WIKLE, EARLE E. ASN 35508635	Radio Oper. Interned, returned	S/Sgt.	Eaton, Ohio
COUNTS, GEORGE E. ASN 34645869	Ball Turret Interned	Sgt.	Prosperity, South Carolina
SCOTT, JOHN P. ASN 14139690	Waist Gun Interned, returned	S/Sgt.	Rome, Georgia
WADDELL, CARROLL ASN 18169374	Waist Gun Interned	Sgt.	Manila, Arkansas
CUMBIA, JOSEPH L. ASN 13119162	Tail Turret Interned, returned	S/Sgt.	Brodnax, Virginia

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This account is by Lt. Hollis R. Nichols, the pilot: "Today, I started my second mission as first pilot with practically a new crew. Lt. Bolick and Sergeant Scott had previous combat experience, but the balance of the crew was on their third mission. This was my second trip to Friedrichshafen, both trips in 112Q, PAPER DOLL. We took off with very bad visibility that formed over our field. The assembly was normal.

"Starting out on course, I had to pull excessive manifold pressure and RPM to stay with the formation. Coming up to the south coast of England, we had a very bad series of light cirrus clouds and prop wash causing a lot of trouble. The entire formation made a 360 over the Channel as we were ten minutes early and needed another 2,000 feet of altitude. This maneuver made us late and last in the division. We had to draw excessive settings again to stay with the bomber stream.

"My element, the high in the second section, caused a lot of trouble by the 'S' turns required to stay behind the lead section. Bad settings and varying speeds made me sweat fuel all the way to the target. We approached the target the first time in pretty good shape and not bothered with

enemy fighters, although the flak was pretty accurate and intense. We did not drop the first time, although the formation went directly over the target (a group of B-17s slid under us). We did a 180-degree turn to the right to go back to I.P. and make another run.

“We (the 44th) proceeded into the second run at the same altitude, speed, and heading, but all alone at the end of the bomber stream. Just as we approached the city, my #3 engine ran wild. I had been sweating #1 supercharger and #3 came to me as quite a surprise. The prop governor had gone bad and we couldn’t feather it. I tried everything, including circuit breaker and shutting off fuel and ignition, but with no results.

“We still maintained 60 inches of manifold pressure and 3,700 RPM. The prop was coming loose and causing excessive vibration throughout the ship. Sparks, oil and flames were coming out from all around the engine. In the meantime, I ordered the bombs salvoed on the city and dropped out of formation, swinging toward Switzerland in hopes that if I were terribly lucky, I could get it shut down, hit the deck and head back. But my fuel was so low, I probably would have been darned lucky if I got to the French Coast. When I saw I couldn’t do anything about it, I made sure I was far enough inside Switzerland before I gave the order to bail out so my men wouldn’t drift back into Germany.

“I stayed with the ship as long as I dared to make sure the crew was all out. I had it on AFCE [Automatic Flight Control Equipment] and in 140-mph glide to ensure I could get out. The ship was beginning to fall apart now. I had fastened my GI shoes to my parachute to be sure I had shoes when I got down. I then went to the catwalk and paused. As I did so, the engine blew up and the prop went through the ship – too darned close to where I would have been sitting. Flames and debris sprayed back on me and I decided then to jump. The tail gunner came out at the same time I did. He saw all the control cables go in back when they were severed by the prop.

“We all landed safely and were taken into custody by the Home Guard in the little town of Wil, 28 miles inside the Swiss border.”

Lt. Nichols and his entire crew were interned at a golf club facility above Neuchatel, Switzerland, until early summer when, due to overcrowding, he was separated from the enlisted men and transferred to Davos. Later, Lt. Nichols managed a successful escape aided by the Free French, and returned to duty.

In November of 2000, an article in ‘Smile with Nile’ magazine mentioned Nichols story, noting that the plane had crashed in Wil, Switzerland. A former resident of Wil, Fred Greuter, saw the article and contacted Nichol’s widow. He wrote: “I was there and saw the crew jumping out of the plane. It was three days after my 22nd birthday, and I was just working outside behind our business, when I heard the sound of this heavy B-24 bomber coming in our direction from Germany and all of a sudden the whole crew jumped out of the plane and landed smoothly in the wide field next to us, then gathering their parachutes. In the meantime, our police and military officers arrived and interrogated the young flyers and shortly thereafter whisked them away to the nearest hotel. We never heard or saw anything from this crew during the war year.

“The empty bomber flew over us and lost a propeller after a quarter of a mile then steered to our mountain village of Kirchberg, about nine miles away. There the plane overshot by inches a big farmhouse, then clipped a walnut tree behind it, and crashed to pieces on the mountainside. The farmer saw the plane coming and ran away with his wheelbarrow as fast as he could!”



Sidney Bolick, Nichol's co-pilot, wrote: "We were badly damaged by flak, but managed to make it across Lake Constance to Switzerland, where we bailed out. The whole crew landed safely and were interned by the Swiss. After D-Day, I escaped into France and made my way back to England. After debriefing in London, I went back to Shipdham for a couple days to 'clear the base,' then was flown back to the States."

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The 506th Squadron uncharacteristically bore the brunt of the losses on this day with four planes and crews not returning to base.

## 506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #42-52305 P, Albert

MACR #3406

## 506th Squadron Crew:

ALBERT, FRANK L. ASN 0-800804	Pilot KIA, buried Lorraine (K-37-22)	1st Lt.	Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania
McGEARY, MEREDYTH F. ASN 0-748729	Co-pilot KIA	1st Lt.	Cleveland, Ohio
DONNELLY, EDMUND H. ASN 0-682156	Navigator POW	1st Lt.	Flushing, New York
CASTELLOTTI, PAUL E. ASN 0-671279	Bombardier KIA	1st Lt.	Corona, New York
WALKER, BEAUFORD K. ASN 38182539	Engineer POW	T/Sgt.	Konawa, Oklahoma
WARVEL, JAMES K. ASN 35283432	Radio Oper. POW	T/Sgt.	Toledo, Ohio
BOLICK, CARL C. ASN 14188101	Ball Turret POW	S/Sgt.	Lincolnton, North Carolina
BRADY, LLOYD J. ASN 37232782	Waist Gun. KIA	S/Sgt.	Wichita, Kansas
ANDELLO, DAVID F. ASN 15016119	Waist Gun. KIA, buried Lorraine (K-48-18)	S/Sgt.	Girard, Ohio
MONTELEONE, EDWARD G. ASN 39841223	Tail Turret KIA, buried Lorraine (K-15-29)	S/Sgt.	Mountain View, California

Lt. Frank L. Albert's plane did not make it to the sanctuary of Switzerland. The MACR includes, "At just after bombs away and near Friedrichshafen, this aircraft was hit in #1 and #4 engines by flak. It slid under the formation and to the right for about a minute, seemingly under control. Two chutes were seen, then the left wing tore off and the plane exploded.

1st Lt. Donnelly, navigator, has this story, "March 18, 1944 was a bad day from the word go. Takeoff was delayed to begin with. After forming up on the Striped A\_ Ape (Lemon Drop), we did a 360 over the Channel. The trip in was fairly routine. On final, another Group slid under us, so the 44th held its bombs. The leader decided to make a second pass at the same heading, altitude and airspeed. We were hit early, and #4 engine was burning. I offered a heading to Switzerland, but Lt. Albert said that we had brought the bombs this far and they would go on the target. Immediately after bombs away, he gave the bail out signal. I crawled back to the bomb bay to see if we could hold on for the few minutes needed to get to Switzerland. But Frank motioned me out. I asked Lt. Castellotti if he was OK. He nodded, so I bailed out.

“The bomb bay was a shambles. The fuel lines over the ‘putput’ [A.P.U.] had been hit and fuel cascaded from either side. The fire on number four had spread to the wing, and was approaching the fuselage. My last view of Frank Albert was of him hunched over the controls giving four of us a chance for life. Frank knew what the odds of survival were. He gave his life for the mission, just as Colin Kelly did. The big difference was that there was no Press Agent to plead his case. I recommended him for the Medal of Honor as soon as I returned, but was informed that he merely did his duty and that the cluster to the Air Medal was sufficient. (Obviously by some clerk who had never seen 88 mm in action) Frank was a credit to the 44th and to the Pennsylvania State Police. The State Police Hall in Wyoming, Pennsylvania is named after Frank.

“Sgts. Warvel, Walker, Bolick and myself survived. The others were all killed. I tried to delay opening my chute I counted 60 seconds before I pulled the ring. I must have counted quite rapidly for it took an eternity to get down. As I descended, I could see a little man in a gray-green uniform riding a bicycle. He had a rifle over his shoulder which was about twice as long as he was. I, therefore, was not too surprised to find a greeting committee when I finally landed.

“I was taken to a local jail and put in solitary for three days. I was then taken for a three day jaunt through Germany winding up at Dulag Luft at Frankfurt. On the first day I was reunited with Sgt. Walker. His first three days were better than mine. He had been held in a small communications detachment staffed by Wehrmacht enlisted personnel. On his last night there one of the Germans brought in a guitar and they had a minor blast.

“The Germans’ interrogation was thorough. They insisted that I tell them what time we dropped our bombs as this would prove we were legitimate prisoners of war. I did not answer and I am certain that none of the others did either. I am sure that this was to give them a measure of the effectiveness of their augmenting the normal flak batteries with additional railroad and portable units. I saw several railroad units three days after the raid.

“I then took up residence a Stalag Luft III at Sagan but that is another story...”

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #41-29172 T, Houghtby	LUCKY STRIKE		MACR #3404
506th Squadron Crew:			
HOUGHTBY, RAYMOND C. ASN 0-800541	Pilot POW	1st Lt.	Shebbona, Illinois
SAFRANEK, LOUIS A. ASN 0-976442	Co-pilot POW	1st Lt.	Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
RAMSEY, GEORGE K. ASN 0-736027	Navigator POW, head wound	1st Lt.	Davenport, Iowa
BOGART, CLOMAN D. ASN 15105558	Nose Turret POW	S/Sgt.	Sycamore, Ohio
WARREN, WAYNE M. ASN 35400551	Engineer POW	S/Sgt.	Springfield, Ohio
PHILLIPS, FRANK P. ASN 12083302	Radio Oper. POW	S/Sgt.	Staten Island, New York
LEWIS, JAMES W. ASN 32486667	Ball Turret POW	S/Sgt.	Somerdale, New Jersey
CASTRO, LADISLAO C. ASN 18201801	RW Gunner Evadee, returned	S/Sgt.	Austin, Texas

DYE, NORMAN L. ASN 14158242	LW Gunner POW	S/Sgt.	Hickory Flat, Mississippi
CANNON, THOMAS M. Jr. ASN 34396263	Tail Turret POW	S/Sgt.	Birmingham, Alabama

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The second of four 506th aircraft lost on the 18th was that piloted by 1st Lt. Raymond C. Houghtby. The MACR states in part that this aircraft, #172, was last seen at 1446 hours peeling off for Switzerland, under control. Apparently there was a mistake in identification of this aircraft because it did not head for Switzerland. The navigator on board this ship, Lt. George K. Ramsey, sent his recollections:

“Our mission on the 18th was to Friedrichshafen, near Switzerland. In one of the incredible foul-ups of the time, the 44th BG arrived at target on time, at the right altitude, only to find a Group of B-17s below us and making their run on this target. We could not drop our bombs so the 44th had to make a full circle and come back over the target a second time. We were no longer part of the stream of bombers, but one Group coming back alone – at the same altitude, same heading and same speed. We did hit the target, but took so much flak, we could not continue with the Group, and became a straggler.

“We encountered enemy aircraft after we left the target and headed back for England. An occasional American fighter would give us some cover, but we continued to have problems. We arrived at the French coast near Abbeville at about 8,000 feet and not moving very fast. We were within several miles of the coast and it was heavily fortified because the Germans were expecting the invasion. We were sitting ducks for their anti-aircraft fire, and in short order! Ray Houghtby had to call ‘Mayday’. We all parachuted out and were captured immediately upon landing. I received a head wound at about the time we jumped. To my knowledge, everyone survived.

“Our crew was on its 25th and last mission of our tour of duty and I was of the opinion had we made it all the way back we would have been the first complete crew to have completed 25 missions. At least we did bomb our target on that 25th and last mission. Pat Gallagher, our regular co-pilot, was not with us as he had just been given a crew of his own.”

*Note: Gallagher completed his tour of duty on March 22nd as a 1st pilot. This mission was to Berlin.*

Lt. Houghtby provided his recollections of that day, “As I recall, one of the newer replacement Groups had missed their target sequence and made their run directly beneath the 44th BG. We held our bomb drop and circled, falling in behind the last Group in that portion of the bomber stream. Apparently, the German anti-aircraft gunners had zeroed in on our flight parameters.

“The first flak burst was in the center of the Group and continued very accurate, especially as we were on our bomb run and had to hold steady on course and altitude. Our flight took several hits (noted by sound), but no apparent damage until after one burst when one of the waist gunners, Castro or Lewis, reported a stream from under the wing. It had to be our fuel.

“As I recall, I advised the engineer, Warren, to transfer fuel to the opposite wing. Also, after quick consultation with the navigator, Ramsey, and a intercom check with the crew, we decided to try to make it home. I noted that we could see several B-24s crossing Lake Constance to Switzerland. I also remember German fighters working them over as they left the formation!

“In any event, we did some flight planning and concluded that we couldn’t make England and keep up with the Group, so I established minimum power – about 15hg/1500 or so – had the

crew jettison guns, flak vests, ammo, etc. as we'd requested and got two P-51s for individual escort.

"We started a very slow descent to hold adequate flight speed. Ramsey and Bogart (bombardier) were in the nose, scanning for any visible towns or other possible anti-aircraft installations which we flew around. This procedure worked okay all the way to Pas de Calais area. As we approached that area, knowing it was heavily fortified with anti-aircraft and other artillery, we discussed the advisability of dropping to the deck to cross – as the P-51s did, but I decided that with the fuel showing empty, we'd better hold what altitude we could, which presently was at about 11,000, and continue our power glide on towards Ford field on the coast of England.

"As we approached the coastline, the first 4 shell burst pattern from anti-aircraft took off four feet of our left wing tip. I immediately started violent evasive action. However, the obvious pointed fire stayed close to us with numerous partial hits. After one burst, I jammed in maximum right roll/turn controls and almost wound up in the co-pilot's lap!

"Apparently, the control cables had been damaged. I tried differential power and autopilot, but couldn't stop a shallow right turn. I lowered the landing gears and the Germans stopped shooting. (Not all bad, huh?) We could look across the Channel to the white cliffs of Dover, but there was no way to get there! Reluctantly, I ordered the crew to bail out. I believe Castro went out first, understand he evaded, got with the French Underground and back home through Spain. One of the gunners, I forget which, had to be thrown out of the bomb bay. I was the last out – even checked forward in cockpit and nose area – and then bailed.

"There was a strong westerly wind blowing and I drifted east rapidly. While floating down, I recall our aircraft circling in the distance, with all four engines still running! Pratt & Whitney made good engines!

"I came down in a French hayfield, narrowly missing a power line. The field was covered with small hay cocks. I did my best to miss one, but apparently caught my right toe on it, which sent me tumbling. I released my chute and hurriedly stuffed it under a hay cock, then started running toward a nearby woods. After about 100 yards, I stumbled and fell. My right foot was broken (I found out later). In any event, as I stumbled on towards the woods, a motorcycle/sidecar came out of the woods and across the hayfield towards me. The uniformed Germans dismounted and continued towards me, waving pistols and yelling, 'Camerat!' They apprehended me, loaded me into the sidecar, and we went to a nearby small town where several others of the crew were also held."

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #41-29431 Q-Bar, Irwin

MACR #3405

506th Squadron Crew:	Entire crew interned		
IRWIN, WINSTON C. ASN 0-804341	Pilot Interned, returned	2nd Lt.	Detroit, Michigan
HARTMAN, URIAH G. ASN 0-627851	Co-pilot Interned, returned	2nd Lt.	Brodhead, Wisconsin
NORTHFELT, WALLACE D. ASN 0-695959	Navigator Interned	2nd Lt.	Minneapolis, Minnesota
LIBELL, ROBERT W. ASN 0-752875	Bombardier Interned	2nd Lt.	Portland, Oregon

BOATMAN, GEORGE ASN 38349850	Engineer Interned, returned	S/Sgt.	Gallup, New Mexico
MERISOTIS, PETER E. ASN 31281547	Radio Oper. Interned, returned	S/Sgt.	Derry, New Hampshire
BEUOY, JAMES L. ASN 33557064	Ball Turret Interned, returned	Sgt.	Eaton, Indiana
LAWSON, GROVER R. ASN 35576130	RW Gunner Interned, returned	Sgt.	Joliet, Illinois
HUNTER, JAMES ASN 35791732	LW Gunner Interned, returned	Sgt.	Lexington, Kentucky
LAUX, PAUL M. ASN 33242974	Tail Turret Interned, returned	Sgt.	Williamsport, Pennsylvania

The third aircraft lost by the 506th was that piloted by 2nd Lt. Winston C. Irwin. The MACR briefly states that this ship was last seen at 1446 hours near Friedrichshafen, peeling off and heading towards Switzerland. It was reported that one engine was feathered and one was windmilling, losing fuel.

The bombardier, Lt. Robert W. Libell, sent his recollections, "We were on our first mission, except that Lt. Irwin had flown a mission earlier [16 March] as co-pilot with an experienced crew [R.C. Houghtby's]. The mission was listed as Sortie Number 199. The plane number was #431 Q-Bar. Six 1,000 pound bombs were loaded in the bomb bay. The 44th put up 18 B-24s in three boxes of six and our ship was number five in the lead or middle box. Major Kolliner, the 506th Commander, was leading the formation. As bombardier, I was manning the nose turret on our ship.

"The weather was bright and clear, take-off and join-up were uneventful. The target area was reached without incident; no fighters and no flak that threatened the Group. Friedrichshafen was passed to the north and 180 degree turn was made to begin the bombing run. Approaching the bomb release point, a lone B-17 was moving ahead of and about 3,000 feet beneath the formation. From my viewpoint, the B-17 would be well clear of our bombs, but the lead signaled No Drop. Our 18-ship formation made a perfect race track pattern for a second bomb run with no change in altitude or airspeed. On this pass, all of Friedrichshafen came up to greet us. There was intense flak everywhere – you could smell it!

"The deputy leader [LaCombe], number two directly in front of us, dropped about 1,000 feet and appeared to explode in a huge ball of fire. No chutes were seen. Number three and four began losing altitude and trailing black smoke. Some crew members bailed out of one of these aircraft. I have no recollection about the fate of the rest of the formation. The distinct impression that remains is that the only ship to leave the target area under what seemed normal power was the leader [Fox/Kolliner].

"Attention was now diverted to our own problems as we had taken several severe flak hits. The crew was safe but the B-24 was not. One engine was out and feathered, another was windmilling, and our fuel tanks had large holes. There was a one-foot hole in the nose turret enclosure probably cause by concussion since no flak fragments were found in the nose turret. Fuel was streaming from between #3 and #4 engines in a feathery white pattern. It was burning from the tail on behind the airplane. For some miraculous reason, the flames never reached the wing. By this time, considerable altitude had been lost and we were alone.

“S/Sgt. Boatman, the engineer, checked the remaining fuel supply and found that slightly more than 30 minutes flying time was left. After reviewing possible alternatives, Lt. Irwin made the decision to turn to Switzerland, located on the opposite shore of Lake Constance. After crossing into Swiss air space, we were joined by a Swiss fighter that looked like an Me 109. It directed us to the Dubendorf military airfield near Zurich. Lt. Irwin made an excellent emergency landing and the crew was interned by the Swiss. Except for minor cases of frost bite, the only crew injury suffered was when Lt. Northfelt, the navigator, cut his finger on the bomb salvo lever to insure our bombs were released.”

## 506th SQUADRON:

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506th Sq., #42-100400 Y-Bar, Lucas			MACR #3409
506th Squadron Crew:	Entire crew interned		
LUCAS, ROBERT R. ASN 0-677807	Pilot Interned, returned	1st Lt.	Rosebud, Texas
WASKA, CHARLES D. Jr. ASN 0-742541	Co-pilot Interned, returned	2nd Lt.	Helena, Montana
CAPELLA, BERNARD J. ASN 0-807897	Navigator Interned, returned	1st Lt.	New Orleans, Louisiana
KIRCHNER, DONALD E. ASN 0-679629	Bombardier Interned, returned	2nd Lt.	Quincy, Illinois
BASS, JOHN F. ASN 14098031	Engineer Interned, returned	T/Sgt.	Brookhaven, Georgia
STAMBAUGH, JACOB F. ASN 16114109	Radio Oper. Interned, returned	T/Sgt.	Hanover, Pennsylvania
DUBAIL, ARTHUR W. ASN 31144498	Ball Turret Interned	S/Sgt.	Sheldon, Connecticut
BRICE, DOUGLAS D. ASN 18034469	RW Gunner Interned	T/Sgt.	Dallas, Texas
HAMMER, LLOYD W. ASN 20720758	LW Gunner Interned, returned	S/Sgt.	Wichita, Kansas
LUTHER, ERNEST C. ASN 20318816	Tail Turret Interned	S/Sgt.	Wellsboro, Pennsylvania

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The fourth and last airplane lost by the 506th Squadron was that piloted by Lt. Robert R. Lucas. The MACR includes these words, “Just after bombs away, at 1446 hours, this aircraft peeled off formation under control and started across Lake Constance for Switzerland. It then turned back towards Germany and was last seen going down at 1500 hours in that vicinity.”

Again, there appears to be some mis-identification with this aircraft on the MACR as all men from this crew were interned in Switzerland. Either that, or the plane managed to remain airborne and again turned back to Switzerland. The Swiss show that Lt. Lucas was the last to land at Dubendorf at 1538 hours.

Lt. Lucas wrote: “Just as we were preparing to drop our bombs on Friederichshaven another group cut right under us. The 44th lead ship had no alternative but to make another run. We made a 40 mile circle and came back over the target at the same altitude. Of course, they were there waiting for us. We took a hit in the right wing and soon began to lose altitude. When it was determined that we had lost most of the fuel in that right wing, we tried for Switzerland. Entering Swiss airspace, we searched out the biggest, flat field, and belly landed (the nose wheel

collapsed). The field was Dubendorf. No one was injured.” [Editor’s note: Photos show that there was a light covering of snow on the ground.]

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23 March 1944

Training Mission, Shipdham, England

Aircraft #41-29538 crashed on take-off during a training mission. No one was injured.

68th SQUADRON:

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68th Sq., #41-29538, Barry Accident on take-off

68th Squadron Crew

BARRY, WARREN H. ASN 0-678992	Pilot	2nd Lt.	New Albany, Mississippi
KREBS, ANDREW J. ASN 0-669738	Co-pilot	2nd Lt.	Memphis, Tennessee
MURPHY, GEORGE J. ASN 0-688456	Navigator	2nd Lt.	Baltimore, Maryland
CHOMA, JOSEPH ASN 0-752317	Bombardier	2nd Lt.	Cleveland, Ohio
McKENNA, RAYMOND H. ASN 31155162	Eng./Top Turret	S/Sgt.	Readsboro, Vermont
CRACOLICI, JOSEPH Jr. ASN 12190881	Radio Oper.	S/Sgt.	Brooklyn, New York
PERRY, DONALD L. ASN 13042032	Ball Turret	Sgt.	West View, Pennsylvania
EURE, WILLIAM H. ASN 13119398	RW Gunner	Sgt.	Wakefield, Virginia
WHITWORTH, JOHN L. ASN 34448789	LW Gunner	Sgt.	Martin, Georgia
DAY, RUSSEL A. ASN 16008549	Tail Turret	Sgt.	Tomah, Wisconsin
DAVIDO, FRANK	Observer	1st Lt.	

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*Note: This crew was shot down on 8 April 1944. McKenna was killed in action. The rest were taken prisoner.*

John Whitworth was able to provide details on this incident. He noted that his crew arrived on 15 March 1944. He wrote: “One morning, we went out to a plane and practiced on the ground seeing how fast we could get out from the crew positions when the alarm was sounded. After dinner, the crew was to fly around over England. Lt. Frank Davido went with us. We went down the runway and we were going 105 miles per, according to someone on the flight deck.

“I was on the left side in the waist and we bounced off the runway maybe a foot and touched back and the left wheel was retracting and the left wing came down on the ground, tearing #1 and 2 propellers off as they hit the runway. The right wheel held up so no damage was done to that side. The plane skidded for some distance before it stopped and did not catch fire.

“This was Lt. Warren H. Barry’s crew along with Lt. Davido as instructor. No injuries to any of the 11 men aboard.”

## 27 March 1944

Airdrome, Mont-de-Marsan, France

This target, almost on the Spanish border, was one of the longest flights for the 44th BG out of England. Stationed at this air base were long-range reconnaissance German aircraft. The airdrome was hit visually with good results. Two aircraft were lost, one each by the 66th and the 67th Squadrons.

## 66th SQUADRON:

66th Sq., #42-109836 B, Harleman

MACR #3590

## 66th Squadron Crew:

HARLEMAN, RICHARD E. ASN 0-799767	Pilot KIA, WOM Cambridge	1st Lt.	Lehighton, Pennsylvania
JOHNSON, MELVIN J. ASN 0-749695	Co-pilot KIA, WOM Rhone	1st Lt.	Utah
COBANE, WILLIAM E. ASN, 0-735857	Navigator KIA, WOM Rhone	1st Lt.	Detroit, Michigan
BAUM, PAUL F. ASN 0-685420	Bombardier KIA, buried Rhone (C-9-18)	2nd Lt.	Sandusky, Ohio
WOOD, FRED D. Jr. ASN 13119193	Engineer KIA, WOM Rhone	S/Sgt.	Madison Heights, Virginia
LAWYER, DONALD A. ASN 33244873	Radio Oper. KIA, WOM Rhone	S/Sgt.	Chambersburg, Pennsylvania
FIELDS, LEE H. ASN 19180515	Ball Turret Captured, injured, liberated in Paris	S/Sgt.	Sheridan, Wyoming
CRANE, JAMES J. ASN 12074922	RW Gunner POW, injured	S/Sgt.	Brooklyn, New York
BENOIT, JOSEPH G. ASN 18171590	LW Gunner POW, injured	Sgt.	Kaplan, Louisiana
PETRICEVICH, JOHN J. ASN 12085309	Tail Turret POW, injured	Sgt.	Brooklyn, New York

1st Lt. Richard E. Harleman was the pilot on this 66th Sq. aircraft, which was damaged by flak over the target. The MACR for this aircraft states in part, "Moderate accurate gunfire was encountered at Mont De Marsan and several aircraft were damaged. #836 left the formation at 1438, just after bombing, one engine hit by flak and losing altitude, but under control. Was last seen headed for Spain." It did not reach that neutral country, but came very close to it.

Left Waist gunner Joseph G. Benoit filled in the missing pieces, "Seconds after we dropped the bombs, the plane was hit by flak. The right wing had a big hole just aft of the #4 engine that caused this engine to backfire and the prop began windmilling. It hit the fuel cells, too, and we were losing gas.

"We could not keep up with the formation, therefore, we decided to go to Spain. The pilot decided that we should hit the deck and take our chances with ground artillery rather than be shot down by enemy aircraft at higher altitude.

"As we approached the French coast, we were fired on by machine guns and small arms along the beach. The plane caught fire in the bomb bay area and that halted all hopes of making it to



Spain. We ditched about one mile from shore. The plane broke at the waist windows when we hit the water, and the four of us standing in the waist section were thrown into the water. These were John Petricevich, James Crane, Lee Fields and myself.

“When I could see again, bombardier Paul Baum was out of the nose section and swimming near me, but he soon sank and I never saw him again. The Germans picked up his body the next day, and I was told that he had bullet holes in him – seven of them, as I remember it.

“The four of us were picked up by a Frenchman and his young son who had been fishing nearby. John Petricevich had a cut over his eye; Lee Fields was badly burned; James Crane had a crushed forehead, and I had a broken left leg at the knee, light burns on my hands and face, and a cut on the back of my head.

“We four were taken to a hospital in town, can’t remember the name, but was in the area of Bayonne and very near to the French border [with Spain]. I remember that Crane was in the operating room for at least three hours while the doctors were removing pieces of shattered bone from his brain.

“The next day John Petricevick was sent to a POW camp in Germany. Three or four days later I went by train with German guards to a hospital in the heart of Paris – it was a Catholic hospital. A young German doctor put my leg in a cast; then later I was sent to a hospital in Obermassfeld, then to another in Meinigen, Germany.

“Five months later I was sent to Stalag Luft IV until the Russians got close; then to Stalag Luft 1. John and I were in the same camp together, but in different compounds. It seems to me that I saw Lee at a hospital waiting to be repatriated to the States, and that is the last I saw or heard from him. (He was never listed as a POW but was repatriated).

“Lts. Harleman, Johnson, Cobane and Sgts. Lawyer and Wood never got out of the plane after ditching and went down with it. Harleman, Cobane, Baum and Fields were not members of my regular crew, but were replacements for Roy Jorgenson, James Lidell and Fred Gatens who had been shot down earlier when flying as replacements. Sidney Hawkins also had been lost.

“The plane had no name and was a new one, this being its first and only mission.”

Joe Benoit provided additional information on Lee Fields’ injuries: “He had both legs broken; one was a multiple break with some bones crushed. He also had facial burns. He was transferred to a hospital in Paris where doctors worked for months to save his leg. He was not repatriated, but was left in Paris and liberated by our troops during the Paris takeover. The German doctor left written instructions with Lee on the condition of his leg and what he was attempting to accomplish. After all the work and surgery was done on his leg, he still had his leg, but it was one and a half inches shorter than the other.”

#### 67th SQUADRON:

67th Sq., #41-29554 J-Bar, Hess	TEXAS ROSE	MACR # 3588
67th Squadron Crew:	Entire crew interned	
HESS, HAROLD F. ASN 0-798299	Pilot 1st Interned, injured (broken ankle)	Lt. Terra Haute, Indiana
BINSWANGER, WALTER MAX ASN 0-755505	Co-pilot Interned, returned	2nd Lt. San Diego, California
PECK, FLOYD C. ASN 0-692432	Navigator Interned, returned	2nd Lt. Watten, Pennsylvania

FISHER, ALBERT R. Jr. ASN 0-690556	Bombardier Interned, returned	2nd Lt.	Hollis, New York
CHRISTOPHER, ANTHONY J. ASN 31037024	Engineer Interned, injured (broken neck)	S/Sgt.	Ipswich, Massachusetts
BLACK, PETER E. ASN 12124754	Radio Oper. Interned, returned	S/Sgt.	New Hyde Park, New York
BEDNAR, ADAM B. ASN 13081348	Ball Turret Interned, returned	Sgt.	
BAILEY, CLARK G. ASN 35400754	RW Gunner Interned, returned	S/Sgt.	Linworth, Ohio
HOLLADAY, FRED R. ASN 18163207	LW Gunner Interned, returned	S/Sgt.	Tulsa, Oklahoma
BUTLER, JOHN M. ASN 14182636	Tail Turret Interned, returned	Sgt.	Tifton, Georgia

Note: Bailey participated in the Ploesti low-level mission

1st Lt. Harold F. Hess was the captain of this 67th's ship lost on the 27th. The MACR for this aircraft states in part, "Several crews saw J-Bar 554 leave the formation at 1456 hour and head in the direction of Spain, under control. At 1459 hour, one engine was feathered (not true) and still headed for Spain." And they made it! This was the sixth mission for this crew.

Lt. Hess remembers, "After several delays, we took off about the middle of the morning – take off was on instruments and we broke out of the overcast at 10,000 feet. Since the mission was a very long one, and in order to save fuel, we flew at 10,000 feet and also bombed at that altitude.

"We finally arrived at our target, an airfield, and encountered the most flak of any of my 50 missions! This from a briefing of only 12 anti-aircraft guns. We were badly shot up by this flak as we went in at 10,000 feet and were sitting ducks when all those guns opened up on us at that altitude.

"Peck, our navigator, came up on the flight deck and said there was a hole in the nose the size of a washtub. Christopher, our engineer, was busy transferring fuel from the damaged tanks. We debated whether to drop the ball turret, but decided not to attempt it. We flew over the Bay of Biscay and threw overboard the bombsight, guns, ammunition, etc. All of the crew bailed out in the vicinity of Navarra. I tried to put the airplane on automatic pilot, but it wouldn't work, so I trimmed it the best I could with that #3 engine revving up like it was. I aimed the plane out towards the bay and bailed out. The plane circled around and didn't miss me by too far and then brushed the top of a house and crashed without burning. I landed in the vicinity of San Sebastian on the coast. We had two injuries – Christopher broke his neck, and I broke an ankle. Through all of this, I still don't understand two things – how the engines kept running, and why we didn't blow up from the gas leaks."

Lt Hess graciously canvassed several members of his crew to obtain as much input as possible for their story. Left waist gunner Fred Holladay then compiled their stories, ably assisted by the bombardier, Lt. Albert Fisher. I have included much of it here.

"The 67th sent 10 planes along with the 44th's formation. The airdrome was hit visually with 500 pound bombs, and with good results. The anti-aircraft fire was heavy and accurate. We were hit quite hard, as we counted approximately 400 holes in the aircraft that we could see, about 250 on the left wing, including a large hole right through the left inboard fuel tank, made by an 88-

mm shell that failed to explode! The bomb bay was saturated with fuel and hydraulic oil fumes, so I opened the bomb bay doors to reduce the fire danger.

“When Lt. Hess asked me about the stabilizers and rudders, I told him that the left stabilizer had a hole in it. When he asked me how big, I told him, ‘About the size of your hat’. The number three throttle cable was shot in two.

“Then Pappy Hess told us to throw everything overboard that we possibly could get loose to lighten the plane so that we could make it to Spain – and for a slower landing speed. We also discussed if we should drop the ball turret. We had been briefed before takeoff that if we couldn’t make it back to England, we should try for Bilbao, Spain, where they had an airport. And so we headed for it.

“Upon arriving there, we attempted to lower our gear for the landing but had only the right main gear come down. The left tire had some holes in it and the hydraulic lines to that left gear had been shot in two. The runway was sod, was very short, and we could see a few World War I type aircraft on the field. Lt. Hess then made his decision for us to bail out, as a crash-landing would be too hazardous.

“As I jumped out from the right rear bomb bay, Max, co-pilot, was ready to go out the front right bay. I had the small-type chest pack chute and it failed to open! So I hurriedly pulled at the chute to open it manually as I had remembered in a training lecture. As Max watched, he was relieved to see that it finally opened – not to mention my anxiety!

“Lt. Hess told me that he trimmed the plane and headed it out of our landing area and bailed out. But as he was descending in his chute, the airplane had a mind of its own and circled back around, and appeared to be headed right back toward him. Luckily, it missed him, headed down and struck the roof of a house, and the fright caused a pregnant woman to give birth to her child right then. No one was hurt but a dog was killed. The plane then skidded out across the rocky and stumpy hillside to a full stop, and didn’t even burn. Not enough fuel left to burn, I guess. Christopher hurt his neck when he landed and couldn’t fly combat anymore. He was hospitalized in England later and eventually sent back to the States. Hess also broke an ankle when he struck the hard ground.

“Added to our problems as we circled Bilbao attempting to parachute, was that the Spanish soldiers were firing their rifles and artillery at us! They even showed us their empty cartridges later. Happily, their aim was not very good, and nothing or no one was hit.

“The American Counselor and most of the city then turned out for the occasion. We were taken to the Priest’s home and were permitted to stay. But the Spanish military confiscated all of our military items and our money. So the American Counselor drove us into town and purchased civilian clothes for us. Some civilians thought we were invading Spain and appeared to be very happy about it. One of the Spanish girls gave me a book with her picture and her address in it, which I still have. Later, I bought a Spanish dictionary to use in writing to her. Peter Black, our radio man, who knew Spanish, would read her letters for me.

“Three days later, we departed Bilbao and were taken to a beautiful resort in rolling hills and with a desert-like climate. It had warm mineral water flowing out of the hills and into large, stepdown bathing pits about six foot square and with about three feet of water flowing through them. Some pools had the largest goldfish I’ve ever seen. Here we stayed with a large number of air crewmen, some of whom had been there for a long time. Many of them had made the

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