

“We did drop our bombs, but only to get rid of them. We saw no fighters or flak! In my opinion, there was no explosion as the German interrogator discussed our tail markings, base, Group, Squadron, town, Base Commander, etc.”

“Griffin, Capps and I were sent to Dulag Luft, Frankfurt, Stalag Luft IV; and moved to Stalag Luft I. Capps left Stalag Luft IV 30-31 January 1945 with 4-5,000 POWs who walked (snow waist deep) until the first week of May 1945. I saw him at Camp Lucky Strike after we were liberated. Griffin and I were sent from Stalag IV to Stalag I by railroad freight cars. We had it made!”

10 November 1944

Hanau, Germany

The Lanzendieback airfield, Hanau, which was near Frankfurt, was the target this date. There was no enemy resistance in the target area, but moderate and fairly accurate flak was encountered in Koblenz area. Two men were seriously wounded by this flak.

67th SQUADRON:

67th Sq., #42-50795 N-Bar, Spencer Injured crewmember

67th Squadron Crew:

SPENCER, EDGAR J.	Pilot	1st Lt.	
COLELLA, FRANK J.	Co-pilot	1st Lt.	
BEAVERS, JOHN R.	Navigator	2nd Lt.	
GREEN, WILLIAM T.	Bombardier	1st Lt.	
FISHBONE, HENRY	Radio Oper.	T/Sgt.	
MOSKOVITIS, PETER	Eng./Top Turret	T/Sgt.	
STEWART, THOMAS R.	RW Gunner	S/Sgt.	
SCHOFIELD, GEORGE E. ASN 32057010	LW Gunner Evacuated to U.S.	S/Sgt.	Rockaway, New Jersey
PICARDO, EDDIE	Tail Turret	S/Sgt.	

The target was in Hanau, Germany, near Frankfurt; probably an industrial plant. Lt. Spencer flew in the number 4 position (the center of the formation and logical aiming point for enemy ack-ack gunners). The flak was intense and accurate that day, resulting in 20 holes in the plane (N-bar).

During the bombing run, George Schofield was hit in the lower jaw and began bleeding profusely. It was the nose turret gunner, Tom Stewart, who went from the front of the plane, all the way to the back to administer first aid to Schofield. Lt. Spencer received permission to leave the squadron and got fighter escort on the way back to England. By flying in a gradual descent, he was able to increase his speed enough to keep up with the fighters and return to base approximately one hour ahead of his squadron. Flares were fired in the landing pattern to signal injured aboard. Ambulances and medical personnel met the plane at the hard stand.

The entire crew visited Schofield in the hospital the next day. (Lt. Spencer later learned that Schofield required multiple operations over the next several years to reconstruct his face.) The crew was given the next ten days off before the next combat mission, as was the custom when a crew member was badly injured. Schofield was replaced on the crew by Abercrombie, an armament gunner.

Sgt. Peter Moskovitis, engineer on this plane, said, "The flak was fairly heavy near Koblenz when one burst hit directly under us. George Schofield was standing just ahead of the waist window when the explosion occurred. A piece of flak came up through the bottom of the ship and hit George in his jaw, breaking it, and then exited through his cheek.

"Blood was flowing everywhere and George was convinced that he was mortally wounded. He mumbled through the blood and broken bones for us to get him back to England as fast as possible so he could die in England. When we told Lt. Spencer this, he immediately dropped out of formation, called the 44th BG leader to advise him of his actions and also called for fighter support, as he headed straight back toward Shipdham alone. Our fighters picked us up and escorted us to the Channel. As we circled the field preparing to land, I kept shooting Red Red flares to warn them that we had wounded on board. When we landed, an ambulance was waiting to rush George to a hospital,

"A few days later, the entire crew caught a train at Thuxton station that took us to the hospital [at Wymondham] so we could visit him. By that time he was in good spirits and enjoyed showing us how he could suck spaghetti up a straw in order to eat! George was later returned to the States for further treatment on his jaw and face, as he was badly scarred."

On a later mission [21 November 1944]. Lt. Spencer's aircraft was again peppered with flak, resulting in 62 holes in the plane. This time it was Tom Stewart who got hit, but he did not say anything. After returning to base, Lt. Spencer went over to the barracks to talk with his crew. There, he found Stewart sitting on his bunk with a knife, digging flak out of his leg. Spencer told him he should go to the hospital to have it taken care of. Tom told him it was all right, he had sterilized it. He begged Spencer not to report him because he would not be allowed to go on the next mission if he did. Tom Stewart had been born in England and had lost relatives there in the war, so was more eager than most to go on combat missions. Spencer didn't report the leg injury, and has felt badly ever since that Stewart didn't get the Purple Heart he deserved.

68th SQUADRON:

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

Injured crewmember

68th Squadron Crew:

HOBBS, JOHN C.	Pilot	2nd Lt.	
COOPER, WARREN H.	Co-pilot	2nd Lt.	
RICHFERTIG, SEYMOUR L.	Navigator	Flight Officer	
SMITH, THOMAS P.	Bombardier	Flight Officer	
BROWN, HARRY H. Jr.	Radio Oper.	Sgt.	
MONTRE, DON W.	Eng./Top Turret	Sgt.	
COWAN, HENRY Jr.	Gunner	Sgt.	
KIRK, VERNON E. Jr.	Gunner	Sgt.	Randallstown, Maryland
	Seriously wounded		
KRAYNIK, DANIEL J.	Tail Turret	Sgt.	

Note: Kirk was transported to Hospital 4210 on 15 November and did not fly combat again. The Hobbs crew went down on 2 December 1944. Hobbs, Cooper, Smith, Brown, Cowan, and Kraynik were KIA.

Vernon Kirk wrote: "The flight to Hanau was routine, though we did see some flak and some planes we thought were German jets [Me 262s]. They seemed to be just staying out of range and did not attack. When we approached Koblenz, we could see heavy flak ahead so we started to

drop the strips of anti-aircraft foil. The flak became thick and close, rocking the plane. I reached over to pick up my flak suit and for an instant I could or did not move from that leaning position. It was then I heard a loud noise and knew flak had hit the plane. Then I felt a burning in my right hip. I told Hank, the other waist gunner to help me and then we found blood. He and another crewman bandaged to stop the bleeding and we made it back to base. At the hospital that night I saw another person, probably George Schofield, and though I felt pain I realized how lucky I was because he appeared to have a head injury. This was only my second mission though one time we became lost in heavy clouds and lost the formation.

“Some of the crew came to visit me in the hospital, then I never saw them again. Later I asked about them and was told they were lost over France, but could not get any other information. Hobbs gave me the piece of flak and a Cuban nickel I had in my wallet. The flak had struck it and ripped it almost in half and then came out my hip at my waist. This nickel evidently deflected the flak and saved more serious injury and possibly my life.”

14 November 1944

Aircraft Salvaged, Europe

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #42-94952 Bar-A	SHACK RAT	Salvaged on continent
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506th Squadron crew (no record of crew)

Records indicate that this aircraft was salvaged on the continent this day due to battle damage. Aircraft must have been damaged some time prior to this date as no missions had been flown by the 506th Squadron since 10 November. This aircraft was loaned to the 458th Bomb Group. Their personnel were flying it. No records exist for it.

21 November 1944

Harburg, Germany

The primary target was the Crude Oil Refinery located at Harburg which was attacked by 30 of the 44th BG planes utilizing PFF equipment. Intense, accurate, barrage type and tracking flak was encountered in the target area. One man was killed and several others were wounded, one seriously.

67th SQUADRON:

67th Sq., #42-51552 M-Bar, Phillips		Crew casualties
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67th Squadron Crew:

PHILLIPS, CHARLES E. Jr.	Pilot	1st Lt.	
NAGY, ALEXANDER S.	Co-pilot	1st Lt.	
BURKE, ROBERT A. ASN 0-886703	Navigator KIA	2nd Lt.	Los Angeles, California
POULSEN, KENNETH R.	Bombardier	1st Lt.	
CODDINGTON, JAMES W.	Radio Oper.	T/Sgt.	
VANDER BOOM, JOSEPH F.	Eng./Top Turret	T/Sgt.	
FAY, RAYMOND C.	RW Gunner	S/Sgt.	

KOSTOCKA, PHILIP ASN 37231265	LW Gunner Seriously wounded	S/Sgt.	Humboldt, Nebraska
DENNISON, JAMES T.	Tail Turret	S/Sgt.	

2nd Lt. Robert A. Burke, navigator, was killed instantly when he was struck in the abdomen by a heavy, unexploded projectile as he was leaning over his table. The impact simply blew him to pieces, knocking his head out of the navigator's window, bending #2 propeller, and scattering his body over much of the aircraft. S/Sgt. Philip Kostocka, left waist gunner on this same plane, was seriously wounded by flak. He did not return to duty until 19 January, 1945.

This aircraft was cleaned and repaired but 67th Squadron combat crews would not fly in it – for various reasons. The aircraft eventually was transferred to the 506th Squadron where the combat men did not know about this gruesome incident.

The pilot, E. C. Holmer wrote: “Burke was my navigator. He was one of, or, the youngest officer [19] in the 67th at that time. A very great and likable person and did a fine job of navigation with no problems. He guided us safely from U.S. to England in a new B-24 without following the ‘beam’ to axis territory. He was not flying with me at the time of death – was on loan to another crew catching up on missions to finish with the rest of us. I accompanied the body to Manchester for burial. After discharge, I visited his parents in California. A sad job.”

2 December 1944

Bingen, Germany

The Marshalling Yards at Bingen was our primary target but weather conditions forced bombing to be done via the Gee-H method. Flak was meager and inaccurate in the target area and enemy fighters attacked only stragglers of other Groups. In spite of that, two of our aircraft were missing – one each from the 68th and 506th Squadrons.

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #42-50805 T, Hobbs

MACR #10834

68th Squadron Crew:

HOBBS, JOHN C. ASN 0-828430	Pilot KIA	2nd Lt.	Lancaster, Pennsylvania
COOPER, WARREN H. ASN 0-829129	Co-pilot KIA	2nd Lt.	Hampton, Virginia
RICHFERTIG, SEYMOUR L. ASN T-128471	Navigator POW? Evadee?	Flt Of.	Brooklyn, New York
SMITH, THOMAS P. ASN T-126546	Bombardier KIA	Flt Of.	Sharon, Pennsylvania
MONTRE, DON W. ASN 39331313	Engineer POW, badly burned	S/Sgt.	Topeka, Kansas
BROWN, HARRY H. Jr. ASN 15327559	Radio Oper. KIA	S/Sgt.	Cadiz, Ohio
COWAN, HENRY Jr. ASN 31240322	RW Gunner KIA	Sgt.	New Bedford, Massachusetts
FAULKNER, JAMES L. ASN 34927059	LW Gunner KIA	Sgt.	Louisville, Mississippi

KRAYNIK, DANIEL J.
ASN 32934067

Tail Turret
KIA

Sgt.

Buffalo,
New York

This aircraft was leading the low, left squadron of the 392nd. Shortly after having passed the IP (initial point) between 1246-1250 hours, the squadron passed through heavy cloud banks and the formation was completely broken up. Enemy fighters attacks were reported in this area.

The only information located for this aircraft is that from the MACR, which states, “Between one and four minutes before bombs away, at 1238 hours, this formation flew into a cloud layer formed by a junction of high and low clouds. This aircraft was last seen when the formation flew into this cloud bank. Flak at this time was meager and inaccurate; enemy aircraft were seen in the area, but attacked other units following this formation. The 44th did not have attacks on its formation.”

Sgt. Don W. Montre was reported returned to military control on 27 March, 1945, but no record of him returning to base.

Flight Officer Richfertig had only the notation of “EUS” beside his name on the MACR, indicating that he survived and was returned to the US. There is no record of him having been a POW.

Louis G. Montre, brother of Don, sent me the following information, “Don was on his seventh mission and was flying as a gunner in the top turret. The pilot (Lt. Hobbs) pulled their plane up when the formation ran into that high overcast to avoid any possible collision with other planes in the formation. But when they broke into the clear at about 23,000 feet, they were attacked by enemy fighters. These attacks caused major damage to their plane and fire erupted in the bomb bay and probably injured or killed other crew members.

“Don made his evacuation from the flight deck after getting out of his turret. He said that he had always kept his chute nearby, put it on quickly and then dove from the flight deck into that burning inferno in the bomb bay. And that was the last he remembered until the cold air revived him. When he regained consciousness, he felt like he was floating, and made a free fall to about three thousand feet. Although badly burned, he managed to reach and pull his ripcord – and the chute opened. BUT his chute had a large hole burned in it – it must have been smoldering as he fell. Again, he was lucky because he came down in a forest, his chute caught on a tall tree, breaking his fall or he surely would have been killed.

“An elderly German woman, her daughter, and a dog found him, helped get him to the ground, and from there to their farmhouse nearby where they tried to give him first aid. He was taken into custody by the Germans and spent five weeks at a German hospital near Wiesbaden where he received treatment. At that time a German doctor, when examining his eyes, said ‘Kaput’. Don also said that this hospital was full of young American men with grievous wounds, and that he always was moved when he spoke of those young men. Don was 33 years old at that time.

“Eventually, he was moved to the Heppenheim prison camp near Koblenz where he remained until he was liberated on 30 March 1945 by General Hodge’s Third Army. Then he went to a hospital in Paris, still bandaged over his eyes and could not see. He arrived home in April, and then went to a hospital in Palo Alto, California, for extensive plastic surgery and skin grafts. Eventually he regained sight in one eye.

“The first word we heard from him was in March 1945, when he telephoned from New York. Don was sent to California where he spent eighteen months for treatment for his burns. His face

and his hands were terribly burned. But they did a wonderful job on him – new eyelids, new eyebrows, and part of his nose. His hands were better, too.

“I’ve always suspected that Don was caught in the bomb bay section to received those burns. The plane was afire and probably exploded.

“I’m sorry to tell you that Don passed away on May 12th, 1966, and I have no other information about that mission.”

Don’s daughter, Edith (Montre) McBride, wrote: “On the day his plane was shot down, the plane went into the cloudbank you described in the letter you sent to my uncle. My father said the pilot was not comfortable flying by instruments, and wanted to get out of the clouds. Others on the plane wanted to stay in the clouds, but the pilot chose to take the plane out, and they immediately encountered 15 Messerschmitt German fighter planes and [the plane] was hit. My father said the small door leading to the bomb bay was totally engulfed in flame, a wall of flame. The entire plane was burning, and he dove to where he thought the small door opening probably was, and miraculously fell clear of the plane, after hitting his head on the catwalk in the bomb bay area. He was unconscious for some moments due to the blow on his head and the altitude of the plane. When he regained consciousness, he was amazed that his chute was open, that somehow he had pulled the ripcord. When he looked up he saw flaming holes in his parachute. When he looked down, he saw forest and the Rhine River. He landed in a tree, and was severely burned – face and hands. That is when the elderly German woman, her daughter, and their dog found him.”

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #42-50766 Bar-D, Bayless

MACR #10848

506th Squadron Crew:

BAYLESS, HERBERT L. ASN 0-768414	Pilot KIA	1st Lt.	Bakersfield, California
LOUISA, VICTOR P. ASN 0-813186	Co-pilot POW	1st Lt.	Carnegie, Pennsylvania
JOLOVITZ, ALFRED W. ASN 0-719085	Navigator POW	1st Lt.	Canton, Ohio
BRENNAN, FRANCIS W. ASN 0-562611	Bombardier POW	1st Lt.	Orlando, Florida
MOORE, ROBERT L. ASN 34407173	Engineer KIA	T/Sgt.	Daytona Beach, Florida
DOSMANN, JOSEPH B. ASN 35542266	Radio Oper. POW	T/Sgt.	Mishawaka, Indiana
PASSANTINO, THOMAS J. Jr. ASN 39537767	Nose Turret KIA	S/Sgt.	Kansas City, Missouri
McBRYDE, WILLIAM H. ASN 34665208	LW Gunner KIA	S/Sgt.	Red Springs, North Carolina
BEGGS, WILLIAM A. ASN 38345296	Tail Turret KIA, buried Ardennes (C-34-5)	S/Sgt.	Chalk, Texas

This aircraft (766), per the MACR, was leading the low, left squadron of the 392nd BG. Shortly after having passed the IP, between 1246 and 1250 hours, the squadron passed through heavy cloud banks and the formation was completely broken up. Enemy aircraft attacks were reported in this area. Nothing specific on this aircraft as no one reported seeing it again.

Although there were four survivors from this aircraft, only two of them, Lt. Brennan and radio operator Joseph B. Dosmann, were still alive when this book was first published. Sgt. Dosmann told me about his experiences that day.

Although this aircraft was leading an element of the formation, they did not have PFF equipment. When their aircraft came out of the clouds, they were separated from the other planes and were soon under attack by enemy aircraft. His first indication of the attack was hearing the top turret firing, so he looked out of the small window in the radio compartment and saw Me 109's attacking from about 4 o'clock, a bit high. One or more 20-mm shells exploded just under the flight deck, hitting either the gasoline in the "putt-putt" or the hydraulic fluid reservoir, (possibly both) as flames immediately erupted.

Joseph Dosmann said that his instructions were for him to leave his radio and go to the waist position to man a gun there when and if they were attacked. Upon hearing the top turret firing, he had snapped on his parachute and was on his way toward the bomb bay when the explosions and fire occurred. The crew was one waist gunner short this day.

At this time, Robert L. Moore, engineer, seeing the fire and feeling the heat, dropped down out of his top turret in order to determine the extent of damages and attempted to extinguish the fire. Finding the situation hopeless, he opened the top hatch next to the top turret, but decided against that exit, preferring to attempt to open the bomb bay doors. Sgt. Dosmann says that the last he saw of Bob Moore was when Bob jumped down onto the catwalk in an attempt to open the doors, and he was waist deep in flames.

At that moment, the pilots lost control of the ship and it flipped upside down and provided a miraculous escape for Joseph. He was thrown completely out of the plane through that open top hatch! It is believed that the co-pilot, Lt. Victor P. Louisa exited from this hatch, but for him it was a real struggle as by then the plane was in a flat spin, upside down, so centrifugal force made movement difficult. Every time he tried to push away, the falling plane would catch up to him. But at about 2,000 feet, he finally managed to free himself and barely got his chute opened before he hit the ground. This ended mission number 23 for him, but his first with this crew. He had volunteered for this mission as this crew was short and his regular crew was not scheduled.

Lt. Louisa recalled that his hearing was damaged for several days while he took evasive measures. He stripped himself of all identifications and began working his way back to Allied lines. Along the way he was subjected to barrages of artillery, which he later learned was our own. But he was captured on 12 December while hiding along a river bank trying to locate a means of crossing it. Had he found a means to get across that river, there was a good possibility that he may have made it to the nearby Allied lines. He was sent to Stalag I until liberated by the Russians.

Bombardier Lt. Francis W. Brennan said that, "I never saw the planes attacking us, but when I was coming down with my parachute, I saw radial-engine fighters, so they had to be FW 190s. The cannon fire did hit the auxiliary power unit and the gasoline from it started the fire. With that fire between us and the bomb bay, our only way out was through the nose wheel doors. I opened the doors, then Alfred Jolovitz and I got ready to bail out. Jolovitz was first out, and I was next. Just as I was about to jump, I looked back at the nose turret gunner, Thomas Passantino, to see him snapping on his chest type chute. I jumped, but never saw Passantino again and don't know why he did not make it.

“My understanding is that both the pilot, Herbert Bayless, and our co-pilot Victor Louisa, managed to get out, and I think Louisa was last out. Bayless did not survive for reasons unknown, although there were several rumors about what happened to him.”

Records show that Passantino was the right waist gunner on this mission, but he actually was the nose gunner. So this could explain why the radio operator Dosmann was on his way to man a waist gun – the crew was one man short. Lt. Brennan confirmed this, stating that Sgt. Robert Crawford had been granted a leave about two weeks earlier and no replacement was made. Sgt. Tom Passantino was moved up to the nose turret so that bombardier Lt. Brennan could handle the bomb sight if need be – they were flying as deputy lead.

Frank Brennan wrote: “My recollection is that we, who were a lead crew, were flying lead for the 392nd on this mission. We had not been on the battle order the preceding night and were less than pleased to be awakened at 3:30 a.m. and told we were to lead the 392nd on this mission. The reason we were given was that there was a possibility of bad weather over the target area and a bombardier who had been checked out for G-H bombing was needed. I had been checked out for G-H. We were told that no bombardier in the 392nd had been. I didn’t believe that then and still don’t.”

4 December 1944

Kolschhausen or Wetzlar, Germany

Due to heavy traffic over the Primary target of Soest, and the necessity to bomb with the aid of malfunctioning instruments, two targets are believed hit. Even though Allied fighters gave excellent protection, one 66th Squadron plane did not return.

66th SQUADRON:

66th Sq., #42-95124 P+, Rogers	SAND BOMB SPECIAL	MACR #10835
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66th Squadron Crew:

ROGERS, WARREN ASN 0-771541	Pilot POW/Injured	2nd Lt.	Pasadena, California
MOIR, ALEXANDER B. ASN 0-2058239	Co-pilot POW/Injured	2nd Lt.	Papaikou, Hawaii
McCRACKEN, JOHN Jr. ASN 0-1102377	Navigator KIA, buried Lorraine (A-11-39)	1st Lt.	Oakland, California
FRAZIER, JOHN S. ASN 0-927690	Bombardier POW	2nd Lt.	Oneonta, New York
MILLER, FRANCIS J. ASN 13114418	Engineer POW	S/Sgt.	Bangor, Pennsylvania
MISKIEWICZ, FRANK A. ASN 11073501	Radio Oper. POW	S/Sgt.	Jewett City, Connecticut
SPEIR, ROBERT J. ASN 16063102	Nose Turret KIA	Sgt.	Detroit, Michigan
HARKOVICH, MICHAEL ASN 33353758	LW Gunner POW	S/Sgt.	Boise, Idaho
SPENCER, LEWIS D. ASN 36763796	Tail Turret POW/Injured	Sgt.	Roodhouse, Illinois

Included in the information shown in the MACR is the statement that a Lt. Wilson saw P+ (124) fall out of formation between the IP and the target. It appeared to be under control at that time. Another crew saw a B-24 with two engines feathered going down at the same time (1245 hours) and same place, but could not see the identification letter, but apparently it was the same one.

Left waist gunner Michael Harkovich, later wrote his account for this day, which was published in "American Diaries Of World War II". Information was abstracted from this book with his consent: "We no sooner hit the target when #2 engine went KAPUT. Ten miles further, the 'mate' joined her (#1). We lost the formation, lost altitude, and before we knew it, we were all by our lonesome. We tried to get fighter protection, but no soap. The transmitter was also Kaput. We had to throw out most of our ammo, etc. It was 33 degrees below zero, but that was no sign it was cold. I, for one, honestly sweated to beat hell. Nothing to do but pray.

"We went quite a way, then suddenly #1 got competition, as #3 decided to cut out. It was smoking and giving trouble. Lt. Rogers gave warning to be set to hit the silk as we drifted down to 12,000 feet. Bingo; hold your cards, out of nowhere 6 Jerrys – 109s – came at us. Ring! Ring! sounded the emergency alarm to abandon ship. We left in the following order: B. Speir, F. Miskiewicz, F. Miller, A. Moir, Red Spencer, myself, then last of all, the pilot, Rogers.

"When it came time for me to jump, I couldn't think, completely forgot the procedure they gave me at lectures, looked out the hatch, said to myself, 'What am I waiting for?' and then left. I went head first, did a half somersault, and pulled the ripcord.

"I only counted eight chutes. Evidently our navigator, John McCracken, stayed with the plane, or his chute failed to open. I hit the good old earth with an awful thud, fell backward and hit my back and head soundly. Was slightly dazed, got up on my feet and had a time trying to unbuckle due to the fierce wind blowing. Suddenly I heard a 'Kachow', turned my head to see a soldier coming at me with a rifle. I threw my right hand in the air as high as I possibly could. But in so doing, I had to release my grip on my chute roll, causing the wind to knock me for a loop. Before I regained my feet, this character was upon me. He frisked me, yelling, 'Pistul, pistul?'

"Out of nowhere I started to get hit from all sides, kicked in the head, kicked in the mouth, punched in the nose and all parts of my face. Don't know how I ever held consciousness. After the bloody ordeal, I was picked up and was astonished to see a group of civilians gathered around me. They had nothing but evil plans for me. Then three soldiers proceeded to march me to their big wheels, over what seemed like three miles of dirt roads.

"They showed me Speir's dog tags and asked me if I knew him. Then they led me to a large room where I found Lt. Moir, co-pilot. He had two fingers on his right hand broken, claiming he received them while protecting his head from being bashed in by an iron bar from a civvy. A trickle of blood came from his chin, otherwise apparently unhurt. He told me Bob Speir was dead.

"Later Red Spencer hobbled in on one leg. He had sprained his right ankle, which had ballooned up – otherwise, unhurt. Frazier, our bombardier, didn't have a scratch on him. But someone had stolen his watch. Miskiewicz claimed that he had been hit a few times and his watch also was stolen, but Warren Rogers was practically carried in. He couldn't walk as both of his feet were hurt. It was quite a time before Miller, engineer, came in. But Bob Speir and McCracken didn't show – ever."

Bombardier John Frazier sent this information, "This was pilot Rogers' second mission, but the first for the remainder of the crew. Although we arrived at Shipdham as a 10 member crew, the pilot bumped one of the waist gunners to provide room for me on the mission as no bombardier was required. I flew as right waist gunner, not in the nose with navigator Lt. McCracken and nose turret gunner Speir – both of whom were lost.

"I seem to recall that the pilot had difficulty in getting the plane to lift at takeoff and we were delayed in reaching our position in the Group formation. During the bomb run, the left waist gunner, Sgt. Harkovich reported that the left engines were throwing oil. Ordered to check it by the pilot, I could not identify the liquid and told Rogers to rely on his instruments to reach any decision to feather. Although there was some flak, I am inclined to believe that we had suffered engine failure rather than a hit. Shortly thereafter, Lt. Rogers feathered the prop on #1 engine; then, on the second engine, too.

"Unfortunately, we could not keep up with the group. Fighter escort was radioed, but did not respond. Later, it became known that the signal had been sent over air-sea rescue channel (I think #4), rather than the fighter escort channel. As the formation and fighters continued to pull further away, flares were fired from our plane and a fighter did return. However, inasmuch as there was no radio communication, the fighter left and returned to the formation.

"There had been considerable cloud undercover up to that point and the navigator, Lt. McCracken was unsure of our position. By consensus, it was decided to take a compass heading of 270 degrees, believing that this would bring us to France. Lt. McCracken, upon receiving my instructions, toggled the bombs singly, at timed intervals, and all gunners jettisoned all ammunition except approximately 50 rounds each. With full trim and with the effort of Lt. Rogers and co-pilot Moir, the plane stabilized and flew on the compass heading at an altitude of somewhere around 7 to 8 thousand feet.

"After what seemed to be a considerable period of time, we encountered German fighter planes within sight of what we believed was the Rhine River. Lt. Rogers ordered the crew to parachute and sounded the bail out signal. I saw several crewmembers bail out through the bomb bay before doing so myself. I do not recall their identities, but imagine they must have been engineer Miller, radioman Miskiewicz. Am not sure whether nose turret gunner Speir was one of those who preceded me or not. Tail gunner Spencer bailed from the rear hatch in the waist. I was knocked unconscious upon impact with the ground in a ditch, and had been searched before regaining consciousness.

"We were assembled and taken to a post in nearby Freiburg, in southwestern Germany, being much further south than we had anticipated. At the German post, we were informed that Sgt. Speir's parachute had failed to billow and just trailed. He was dead, they reported. I heard nothing about Lt. McCracken. The Germans asked about him, as he was missing. Lt. Moir had an injured hand and was taken for treatment the following morning. The rest of us began our trip to Frankfurt, then to POW camp Stalag Luft I at Barth."

According to the MACR, the document 'Reviews of War Crimes Trials at Dachau 1945-1948' (Case 12-1934) confirms that Sgt. Speir landed near Freiburg in a railroad freight yard and was bayoneted and then shot. He was buried in the Jewish Cemetery at Freiburg. One German got a ten-year sentence.

 18 December 1944

Mission recalled

One aircraft crashed on takeoff. Fog and cold contributed to this mission being recalled.

67th SQUADRON:

67th Sq., #42-51309 V-Bar, Collins

Crash on takeoff

COLLINS, ORELL	Pilot	2nd Lt.
POWELL, RAYMOND C.	Co-pilot	2nd Lt.
DUNWOODY, JAMES M.	Navigator	2nd Lt.
FISHER, DONALD	Bombardier	2nd Lt.
HOOVER, E. E.	Radio Oper.	S/Sgt.
WARPACK, E. H.	Eng./Top Turret	S/Sgt.
OURS, ELVIN D.	RW Gunner	Sgt.
WYSOCKI, EDMUND	LW Gunner	Sgt.
PETZOLDT, WILLARD	Tail Turret	S/Sgt.

Raymond Powell wrote: “We crashed the aircraft V-Bar [#42-51309] on takeoff in early December. This was on our tenth or eleventh mission. According to my photos, the ship’s fuselage was split 4’ to 5’ upward between the flight deck and forward part of the bomb bay. We really never knew the cause other than we (the pilot and co-pilot) felt the left landing gear give way as we were approaching lift off speed. I recall Fisher, the bombardier, calling out the air speed. At 95 mph, Collins beginning to lift the nose wheel and suddenly the left main landing gear folded causing the nose wheel to fold. From that moment on, some of the 500-lb. bombs dropped from their shackles, sparks through the bomb bay, #1 engine ripped partly out of the wing and smoking, propeller ripped off #2 engine and landed about 300 yards away and no fire. After an eternity, we finally skidded to a halt about 150 yards from the end of the runway with the crew scattering in all directions. The ship never exploded nor did we have any injuries. It was a miracle to me. I was really surprised to read that it had been placed back into service and finally flown home.

“As far as I can remember and looking at the photos I have, the weather was not a problem – cloudy as usual that time of morning and cold as always, but I do not recall icing, however, this is quite possible at high speed. There is one aspect of the crash that I have not been able to reconcile and that is the bomb bay doors are opened in my photos and the doors are always closed prior to takeoff!

“At any rate, it is amazing how quickly two large men (190 lb. myself and Collins about 200 lb.) with flak suits, heavy flying suits and boots can get through a small hatch and run the 100 yards under ten seconds. I recall as I ran down the wing past a smoking #1 engine, that I prayed to the Almighty to allow me to touch the ground before it exploded – after touching the ground, I asked, “Lord, please give me another ten yards. And I’ll hit the ground.” Needless to say, I didn’t hit the ground until I had covered 75 to 100 yards.”

28 December 1944

Kaiserslautern, Germany

A road and rail junction at Kaiserslautern was the target for the bombs this date from our 36 aircraft. Results were considered excellent. Meager to moderate, fairly accurate flak was encountered at the target, fighter support good, weather clear. But this was a bad day for the 68th Squadron as they lost one aircraft in action, another was forced to land on the continent and a third crashed while aborting, due to a malfunctioning engine.

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #42-95260 P, Bledsoe	LILI MARLENE	MACR #15998
68th Squadron Crew:	Entire crew KIA (five buried at Cambridge)	
BLEDSON, JESSE W. ASN 0-718848	Pilot KIA, buried Cambridge (D-2-43)	2nd Lt. Corpus Christi, Texas
GRIFFITH, WARREN W. ASN 0-828160	Co-pilot KIA	2nd Lt. Greenfield, Indiana
WELLMAN, HARRISON W. IV ASN 0-2065203	Navigator KIA, buried Cambridge (F-6-129)	2nd Lt. Battle Creek, Michigan
FIDARES, NICHOLAS J. ASN 42068546	Nose Turret KIA, buried Cambridge (D-6-23)	Sgt. New York City, New York
ARNOLD, ERNEST F. ASN 17035780	Engineer KIA, buried Cambridge (F-2-82)	Sgt. Watertown, South Dakota
FRANGOS, THEODORE W. ASN 12036607	Radio Oper. KIA, buried Cambridge (F-2-66)	S/Sgt. Bronx, New York
STELL, CHARLES E. ASN 18187261	Asst. Radio KIA	Sgt. Bay City, Texas
BARTH, DAVID ASN 42069644	RW Gunner KIA	Sgt. Brooklyn, New York
GARRETT, JAMES J. ASN 31388309	LW Gunner KIA	Sgt. Worcester, Massachusetts
KISER, WILLARD ASN 32836806	Tail Turret KIA	Sgt. Endicott, New York

Reports state that this aircraft had to turn back from the mission because of engine trouble. As the plane approached the field with #2 engine out, it was seen to lower to about 500 feet on approach. It missed the runway and then began a right turn, when it stalled out and crashed. One bomb exploded, demolishing the plane and killing the entire crew.

The second aircraft lost on the 28th was that piloted by Captain Gus Konstand, who was one of the five lead crews brought in from the 492nd BG when it was disbanded in August 1944.

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #44-10582 D, Konstand		MACR #11373
68th Squadron Crew:	(One Exception)	
KONSTAND, GUS ASN 0-794428	Pilot KIA	Capt. Akron, Ohio
HENDERSON, JOHN L. (491st BG) ASN 0-666173	Command Pilot POW	Capt.

OLIVER, GEORGE H. Jr. ASN 0-819153	Co-pilot KIA, buried Lorraine (D-35-34)	1st Lt.	Valdosta, Georgia
PARKER, GEORGE J. ASN 0-699237	Navigator KIA, buried Lorraine (D-33-34)	1st Lt.	Houston, Texas
COHEN, ROBERT M. ASN 0-1998577	G-H Navig. POW? Evaded?	1st Lt.	Cincinnati, Ohio
LOFLIN, WILLIAM E. ASN 0-1996110	Bombardier KIA, buried Lorraine (E-34-36)	1st Lt.	Huntington, West Virginia
POVICH, GEORGE ASN 33675477	Nose Turret KIA, buried Lorraine (B-31-26)	S/Sgt.	Cannonsburg, Pennsylvania
FIELDS, EDWIN D. ASN 33522224	Engineer KIA, buried Lorraine (E-35-36)	T/Sgt.	Richmond, Virginia
LYBARGER, WILLIAM B. ASN 39556559	Radio Oper. POW	T/Sgt.	Miami, Arizona
DAVIS, ADDISON C. ASN 31312747	RW Gunner POW, wounded	S/Sgt.	Canterbury, Connecticut
GARRETT, HOWARD N. ASN 18098718	LW Gunner POW	S/Sgt.	Gladwater, Texas
STEPHANOVIC, REUBEN J. ASN 13169810	Tail Turret KIA, buried Lorraine (D-30-41)	S/Sgt.	McKeesport, Pennsylvania

Note: Robert M. Cohen was never listed as a POW, but the MACR indicates that he survived and was returned to the United States. Capt. Henderson, the Command Pilot, was from the 853rd Squadron of the 491st Bomb Group.

The MACR states that, "Aircraft #44-10582 was the Gee-H lead of the 491st Bomb Group. At 1235 hours, on the bomb run, this aircraft received two direct flak hits in the bomb bay. Fire broke out immediately and this aircraft's bombs were dropped. The aircraft dropped below the formation and seemed to stay under control for approximately 90 seconds before breaking in two at the waist. Both sections of the aircraft were seen to crash into the ground."

Right waist gunner Addison C. Davis, sent his recollections, "We were on the bomb run when we took two direct hits. The first set off a box of flares on the flight deck and set us on fire. The second one hit right under us in the waist and knocked us over. Edwin D. Fields, engineer, was standing right beside me and was not injured. I picked up my parachute pack and put it on, then started back to the tail to help Stephanovic, tail gunner, to get out.

"The next thing I knew, I was out in the air! I opened my chute and looked down. I could see four chutes below me. The plane was completely gone! They were still shooting at us on the way down. When I hit the ground, a bunch of German soldiers jumped on me. I had a broken leg, so they put me in a wheelbarrow and pushed me up a hill into a town.

"Later that day, I saw Lybarger and Garrett. They were both all right. Lybarger said he landed right near Captain Henderson, and he, too, was not seriously injured. But I never saw them after that. They put me in a hospital train for four days. Later, I wound up in a military hospital where they finally set my leg.

"About a month later, they sent me to a POW hospital where I stayed until we were liberated by the American Armored Division in April, 1945."

William Lybarger's wife Phyllis, wrote about what Bill said about the day they were shot down: "He said they were hit by flak and on fire, so three of them (probably Henderson, Garrett and

Bill) became lodged trying to escape out the top hatch. It was fortunate that the plane exploded (broke in two?) as it released them into the air. Bill often complained of a shoulder injury as his arm was locked above his head when he was trying to get out.

“The explosion knocked off his flight boots. He missed them until the Germans gave him something to wear as it was very cold. I think he even may have said the ground was snow-covered. He got flash burns on his face, but luckily his goggles protected his eyes, his face healed up well and he wasn't left with any scars.

“He said it was very scary when he was parachuting down as at first, he thought he'd land in a big body of water he saw, then he thought he'd land on top of the many pointed trees! But, it turned out he landed far from water and in a clearing. A group of cocky German SS officers in a jeep picked him up right away and took him to camp. That was also a very scary experience as they drove over a bumpy road with their cocked guns pointed at him all the way! Also, they had neglected to search him and he was carrying a concealed gun! He was very relieved to turn it in to someone else the first chance he got.

“He spent the next three days in solitary confinement, although he didn't exactly know why as it appeared from the papers they got that they knew as much as he did about their mission. He was first in camp 13D [Nurnberg-Langwasser] then, as the front lines were moving so fast, they had to march them to camp 7A [Moosburg] as they were supposed to be 200 kilometers behind the line. That march, too, was quite an experience. There was snow on the ground and they had only one blanket each. Three would sleep together and they would take turns being in the middle. They had little or no food. From that experience, he said he'd never be caught again without a jack-knife, fishhook, and candy bar in his pocket! He continued to carry a knife the rest of his life and ate loads of Hershey bars, but although he loved to go fishing, that's the only time I knew him to carry a fishhook!

“He never felt any animosity toward the Germans for as on the whole, he got the best treatment they could give. The older Germans knew they were losing the war and the people just didn't have much themselves. He even wondered about what the poor German farmer would do the next spring as he stole and ate his seed potatoes during their long march!”

A 68th Squadron aircraft made an emergency landing in Merville, France

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #44-10553 L		Emergency landing
VAN DYKE, THURSTON E.	Pilot	2nd Lt.
HALL, JOHN R.	Co-pilot	2nd Lt.
HAFT, RICHARD A.	Navigator	2nd Lt.
RICHMAN, BENJAMIN	Bombardier	2nd Lt.
GROTHAUS, JOSEPH V.	Nose Gun./Toggler	S/Sgt.
BLUE, FRED E.	Radio Oper.	T/Sgt.
ROSE, LAURENCE F.	Eng./Top Turret	T/Sgt.
MCLEAN, DONALD	RW Gunner	S/Sgt.
CRITES, F. L.	LW Gunner	S/Sgt.
STAPLES, CHARLES W.	Tail Turret	S/Sgt.

Thurston Van Dyke recalls: “Most other missions were without incident except the one when I was flying back to England as a cripple and flew directly over Cherbourg at 5,000 feet. Needless to say, the 105s didn’t allow that. Being badly damaged this necessitated a belly-landing on a bombed-out runway in Merville, France. The plane was a wreck but luckily no one was hurt.

“I was a member of the 44th Bomb Group, 68th Squadron from June 1944 to May 1945, flying back to the U.S. the last of May and arriving in the U.S. on May 31st. I flew SAN ANTONIO ROSE back with crew and passengers via Wales, Iceland, Greenland, and Bradley Field, Conn.

“My first mission was as co-pilot on an orientation mission with Lt. Bonnet. We were shot up over Munich, and eventually landed in the English Channel. The four survivors, all severely injured, spent time in the hospital. The rest were lost, and their bodies never recovered (to my knowledge). I flew two more missions as co-pilot as a favor to my friends, Lts. Washburn and Kohler, on their last missions. They thought I was a good-luck charm. My remaining missions were flown as first pilot with various crewmembers until I wound up with a semi-permanent crew, which I flew home.”

1945

16 January 1945

Marshalling Yards, Dresden, Germany

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

66th SQUADRON:

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

MACR #2863

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

66th Squadron Crew:

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