

Their Last Mission over Germany
What Happened to the Crew of B-17 #42-30210 over Germany July 30, 1943

By Seth P. Washburne
Nephew of the Co-Pilot, Richards P. Washburne

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Foreword

What is most important is how someone lives, their love for others, the way they cared about us or those around them, and the good they did. War is best forgotten and not spoken about, as was the policy of many involved.

Yet relatives of those who served may have lingering questions about what occurred. This report is meant to gather information available about one flight of the 8th Air Force, 388th Bomber Group, 561st squadron, on Mission 80, to Kassel Germany, July 30, 1943, which resulted in the loss of three lives, and 7 men becoming prisoners of war.

This report was prepared first in 70 hours over 10 days from June 29, 2008-July 9, 2008, then in 40 more hours 7/29-8/5/08 after additional materials were obtained, then more hours 8/31/08-9/2/08 a total of 110 hours, by co-pilot Richards Washburne's nephew Seth P. Washburne, after he came across the accident report in researching his own dad's war experience. It also draws on information from perhaps 30 different websites. Seth feels some connection to Richards (known as Dick) because they both attended the same boarding school, which was the same as Dick's father (Seth's grandfather) attended, and they were the only ones in the family to do so.

Invaluable information was contributed by:

- **Joseph Spiga, Jr.**, the Crew Chief and Top Turret Gunner for the flight, including:
 - 16 pages, single-spaced, he wrote describing in detail in two accounts the final flight, from wake-up, to his being taken prisoner, sent to me by his daughter Barbara Spiga;
 - 108 pages of once-classified documents, de-classified in 11/95, obtained by Joseph, and scanned, lightened, assembled, and sent to me by his son Ron Spiga;
 - Memories shared with his wife Bernice Spiga, of Aurora, OH, who shared them with me.
- **Marion O'Neal**, 83 years old in 2008, of Powder Springs, GA, the last living member of the flight, who was the Right Waist Gunner, 18 at the time in 1943.
- **Evelyn Virginia Penn**, 77 years old in 2008, of Savannah, GA, wife of the Pilot Charles Penn, who provided a postcard her husband marked up, and some details he shared with her.

I highlight quotes from these sources in yellow boxes. Because the information these persons shared was personal and of their loved ones, it is asked that this write-up not be shared beyond family members. I highlight in blue details elsewhere potentially relevant to our group. The 10 men on the final flight were assigned together in the U.S., and are referred to as "our group."

This report is dedicated to the fond memory of all the ten men who served their country on this mission.

Seth P. Washburne
New York, NY
August 31, 2008

The 8th Air Force, the 388th Bombardment Group, the 561st squadron.

The war in Europe in World War II relied on bombers based mostly in England and Italy. The bombers in England were under command of the 8th Air Force.

The 8th Air Force had many bombardment (or “bomber”) groups, based at various locations in England. One of these was the 388th Bomber Group, at Knettishall, England, also referred to as “Station 136,” and sometimes referred to as “The Country Club of the Eighth Air Force.”

The 388th was activated December 24, 1942, at Gowen Field, ID. It moved to Wendover Field, Utah, February 1, 1943, then to Sioux City Army Air Base, Iowa from April 29 to June 10, 1943, and arrived at Knettishall June 23, 1943. Our group likely trained at these other locations, and a picture of the co-pilot in his home backyard with his wings (right) suggests members may have had a brief home leave in early June, 1943, before flying overseas.



The 388th “BG” was further divided into four squadrons, the 560th, 561st, 562nd, and 563rd squadrons. Each squadron consisted of 9 aircraft, which in formation would fly in 2 or 3 “V’s” of 3 aircraft each. **Our group was in the 561st squadron of the 388th Bomber Group of the 8th Air Force.** All squadrons flew the B-17 Flying Fortress. Aircraft of the 388th had an “H” on the tail.

The first 16 missions in Europe in which the 388thBG participated in are shown at right. For each mission, the 388th would select perhaps 3-4 aircraft and crews from each of its 4 squadrons (the 560th-563rd) to contribute roughly 14 aircraft to the mission. Because each squadron had 9 aircraft and crews, the other 5-6 crews would have that day off, and their aircraft might be in maintenance or repair.

388th Bomb Group (H) Missions		
#	Date	Destination
1	17 July	Amsterdam
2	24 July	Bergen
3	25 July	Wustrow
4	26 July	Hanover
5	28 July	Oschersleben
6	29 July	Warnemunde
7	30 July	Kassel
8	12 August	Bonn
9	15 August	Merville-Lille
10	16 August	Puix-Abbyville
11	17 August	Regensburg
12	19 August	Woensdrecht
13	24 August	Evreux/Merignac
14	24 August	Bordeaux
15	27 August	Watten
16	31 August	Brussels/Evers

The first mission to which the 388th contributed was 24 days after arriving in England, to attack an aircraft factory in Amsterdam on July 17. **Our group of 10 men was chosen to fly on this.**

The fourth mission the 388th Bomber Group contributed to, and **the second our group was assigned to**, was on July 26, 1943, at the beginning of what was referred to as “Blitz Week,” an attack against a tire and rubber factory in Hannover, for which the 388th received a Distinguished Unit Citation (DUC, later renamed a Presidential Unit Citation), based on the danger encountered. This was the first of three DUCs for the group, the others being for the bombardment of a synthetic oil refinery in Brux on May 12, 1944, and another for a strike against a synthetic oil refinery at Ruhland on June 21, 1944. **So our group on its second mission July 26th, 1943, to Hannover, Germany, was part of the 388th Bomber Group effort that earned the Presidential Unit Citation.**

The seventh mission of the 388th BG, and the third and last in Europe for our group, was July 30th to Kassel, Germany.

The 388th BG later attacked many other significant targets, including aircraft factories in Kassel, Reims, and Brunswick; airfields in Bordeaux, Paris, and Berlin; naval works at La Pallice, Emden, and Kiel; chemical industries in Ludwigshafen; ball-bearing plants in Schweinfurt; and marshalling yards in Brussels, Osnabruck, and Bielefeld.

O'Neal: "We didn't beat the German Air Force, we beat their ability to survive the bombing they were taking."

Bombing was a dangerous job.

The 388th BG stayed in England from June 23, 1943 until August 5, 1945, just over 2 years (774 days), during which it flew 308 combat missions, lost 91 aircraft, had 524 men killed in action, and had 801 men taken prisoner. This means in 25 months, on average, the 388th BG:

- flew a mission every 2.5 days;
- lost one of its estimated 36 aircraft (4 squadrons of 9 aircraft each) every 3.3 missions; i.e., lost 1 of its 36 aircraft every 8.5 days;
- lost all 36 of its aircraft 2.5 times over.

The 388th BG also lost an entire squadron - the 563rd, 9 aircraft - on September 6, 1943.

For the roughly 360 men in the aircrews (10 per each of 36 planes, vs. ground crews), on average:

- 1.0 men became POWs every day;
- 2.6 men became POWs every mission;
- All 360 men became POWs 2.2 times over (i.e., all the original members plus 1.2 replacement units) during the 26 months;
- 1 man died every 1.5 days.
- 1.7 (0.5%) died on each mission.
- All 360 died 1.5 times over during the 26 months (i.e. all the original members plus 50% of all replacements), on average.

Consistent with the above statistics that the 388's 36 B-17s in 26 months were shot down 2.5 times over, for the 8 B-17Fs of serial number 30202-30211 for which there are records (none for the other 2 in this serial number range), which includes the aircraft our crew used July 30, 1943 (#42-30210), 7 of the 8 were shot down or lost in 1943, and the 8th crashed in early 1944 after an electrical malfunction, i.e., 100% of the aircraft were lost in their first year.

- 42-30202 (388th BG, 563rd BS) lost July 30, 1943. MACR 3125
- 42-30203 (388th BG, 560th BS, "Shack-Up") shot down by Fw 190A of JG2, at Coudray (Loiret), France Sep 6, 1943, Germany. MACR 3126, 4 KIA, 3 POW, 3 evaded.
- 42-30204 (385th BG, 548th BS) lost Nov 29, 1943. MACR 1581
- 42-30206 (94th BG, 410th BS, "Happy Daze") shot down by 3 Fw 190s during attack on Hamburg and ditched in sea Jul 25, 1943. MACR 89. One crew MIA. Remaining 9 crew were rescued and returned to England.

- 42-30207 (388th BG, 561st BS, "Big Red") crashed in Vendee region of France due to electrical malfunction and fire in oxygen system Mar 27, 1944. MACR 3540. 4 KIA, 2 evaded, 4 POW.
- 42-30208 (388th BG, 563rd BS) lost Jul 26, 1943. MACR 3142 and 5386
- **42-30210 (388th BG, 561st BS) lost Jul 30, 1943. MACR 3264 (our aircraft, "210")**
- 42-30211 (95th BG, 335th BS) lost Jun 22, 1943. MACR 4903

The B-17F-90 –BO “Flying Fortress”



The B-17F went into action with the 8th Air Force in Europe, and was used for the first American bombing raid against the German homeland starting on January 27, 1943, in a raid on Wilhelmshaven.

Note from the picture above how they flew in groups of three, with a high squadron (taking this picture), a middle squadron of three (left above), and lower squadron of three (right above).

The B-17 was a long-range bomber, so it could not rely on a fighter-plane escort, and instead had 5 gunners manning the: “Top Turret” (“TT”) on the top aimed forward; “Ball Turret” on the bottom of the aircraft (“BT”); Left and Right Waist - the narrow back section of the aircraft looking to the left and right (in the picture above, for the aircraft at left, at the open square black openings ahead of the tail); and Tail, in the tail looking backward (the Tail Gunner). It also had a “bombardier” in a glassed-in nose section to site the target. The bombardier would take over from the autopilot flying the plane near the destination and release the bombs. When flying in large groups, though, all bombardiers would release when the lead plane did so, not based on their own sighting. En-route to the target, the bombardier, and also the navigator and radio operator, also manned guns in the nose.

The B-17F was vulnerable to attack from the front by enemy fighters

Most of the factory-installed pieces of heavy armor plate and flak curtains were not well-positioned to protect the crew against frontal attacks. **When hit from the front by machine gun or cannon fire, the crew of the B-17 was relatively unprotected.** Hasty modifications were made in the field in an attempt to beef up the armor protection, but these were not entirely successful.

Another option that was explored was an increase in the number of forward-firing machine guns. In order to beef up the forward defensive firepower, various installations were made to increase the armament in the nose. Additional flexible machine gun installations were fitted in the nose, firing from extra sockets cut into the nose cone or from windows cut into the side of the nose.

O'Neal: "It seemed to me, based on the mission to Hannover, which was a terrible mission on which many planes were lost, that the fighters would come in in waves of 3, all from the front. Very few made a pass from the back, because it would take a long time to close, since they went 300 mph and a fully loaded B-17 redlined at 210mph, but missions were flown between 160-175mph - if you got 175 out of a loaded b-17 you would be pushing it.

"If a German pilot shot down a 4 engine plane, he got credit for 4 kills, so he liked the B-17. Fighter planes lined up to fire their explosive 20mm cannons at the planes, and when they turned toward you, you could see the blinking, shell firings from their aircraft. The German Air Force at that time had us outnumbered. But the B-17 was a hell of a tough airplane.

"The fighters were smart, so they would come up just high enough to be out of the angle of the ball turret - which could only fire level. But in general on the B-17, the ball turret claimed more German aircraft than any other position. The only aircraft ours destroyed was on the Hanover mission, by the Ball Turret."

The B-17 had a service ceiling of 27,000 feet, i.e. this was the maximum altitude it could reach. Flying high provided better gas mileage, so missions were always at about 22,000 feet. Going higher did not provide that much better speed, nor much better resistance to flak (which could go higher), so this was the usual altitude. Approaching the target, all the aircraft would maintain this same altitude, and would not descend lower for the bomb drop. Therefore, even when flying at 22,000 feet, the B-17 was still vulnerable to "flak," exploding shells shot up from the ground.

Because the air temperature drops 3.6 degrees per 1,000 feet, at 22,000 feet, it is 79 degrees colder than on the ground, so when 79 degrees on the ground in England, it is 0 degrees Fahrenheit at 22,000 feet. Therefore the men wore wool flight suits, especially the waist gunners exposed to outside air. Each station also was equipped with a connection to oxygen, and a portable emergency supply in case flow on the aircraft was disrupted.

On the day of the third mission to Kassel, our group flew a different group's aircraft.

O'Neal: "We flew Lt. Kruger's plane, because ours was in the hangar for repair, getting holes patched up. Two days before, on a bombing mission to Hanover, we got hit by so much flak from the ground that the ground crew counted and needed to repair 303 (three-hundred three) flak penetrations. That was what we got hit with on just one round-trip flight.

"There was no pressurization, so every position had an oxygen regulator, or diluter demand connection, and we would hook to this. There were also some "walk-around" bottles that would last 5 minutes for you to get out.

Photos of the inside of a B-17

Top left note how exposed the cockpit is to a frontal attack. Top right – note how the navigator sat near the glass nose where the bombardier sat; both shared forward gunning until the target was reached. Mid left: the radio operator's prescribed method to exit was forward through the narrow passage in the bomb bay; to go backward meant to climb over the ball turret (gun) in the floor behind him (bottom left).

Cockpit



Navigator's Table, Bombardier Position in Nose



Radio Operator's Table looking forward



Radio Op's view forward through bomb bay



Radio Op view back, Ball turret in center bottom.



Left and Right Waist Gunner Positions Looking forward, Radio Op. desk visible.



B-17G (much later model) Side View

Note: a) Top Turret, b) Navigator's bubble (near nose), c) ball turret underneath behind wing. This model has additional guns in the front on the side and bottom.



Note ball turret below left.

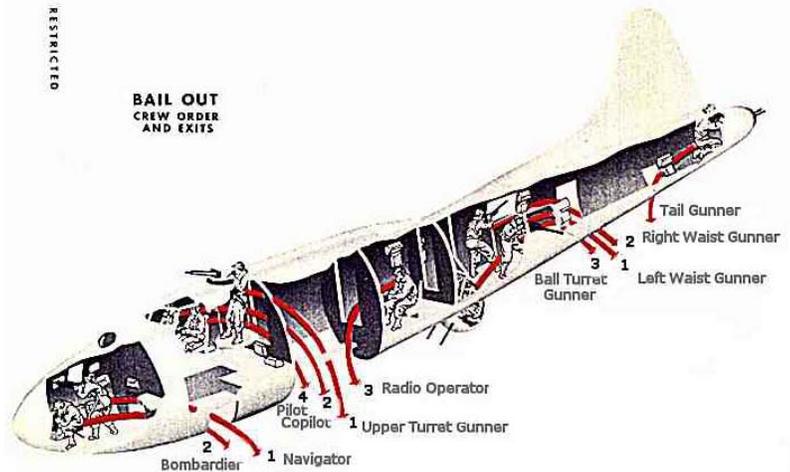


Bail Out Procedures

The B-17 had prescribed bail-out procedures for all personnel as shown below. The most time consuming were for the navigator, who was to quickly estimate the location, and for the radio operator, who was to wait for the navigator's estimate, and then radio this in; however, in practice, perhaps neither may have done this when in a true emergency.

Pilot Duties

1. Notify crew to stand by to abandon ship. The bell signal consists of three short rings on alarm bell. At first alarm all crew members put on parachutes.
2. Notify crew to abandon ship. Bell signal consists of one long ring on alarm bell.
3. Check abandoning of airplane by crew members in nose.
4. Clear bomb bay of tanks and bombs, using emergency release handle.
5. Turn on autopilot.
6. Reduce airspeed if possible. Hold ship level.



Co-Pilot Duties

1. Assist airplane commander as directed.

Navigator's Duties

1. Determine position, if time permits.
2. Direct radio operator to send distress message giving all pertinent information.
3. Stand by emergency exit in nose of airplane.

Bombardier Duties

1. Assist navigator.
2. Stand by emergency exit in nose of airplane.

Engineer Duties

1. Assist pilot as directed.
2. Notify pilot when crew in nose has abandoned the airplane.
3. Stand by to leave via bomb bay immediately after crew in nose has abandoned airplane.

Radio Operator Duties

1. Find exact position from navigator.
2. Send distress call.
3. Stand by to leave via bomb bay.

Our Crew

Our crew of 10 was:

Role	Rank	Name	Age	Died?
Pilot	2 nd Lt.	Charles Hughes Penn	27 years old	
Copilot	2 nd Lt.	Richards Pomeroy Washburne	22 years old	Died
Navigator	2 nd Lt.	James Terrance Barryhill		Died
Bombardier	2 nd Lt.	Frank Norbert Pelkowski		
Radio Operator	Tech Sgt.	William David Nadler		Died
Top Turret/ Engineer	Staff Sgt.	Joseph Spiga, Jr.	28 years old	
Ball Turret	Sergeant	Edward Friedholm Jacobson, Jr.,	23 years old	
Waist Gunner – Right	Staff Sgt.	Marion Lester O’Neal	18 years old	
Waist Gunner – Left	Staff Sgt.	Julius D. Colonna	22 years old	
Tail Gunner	Sergeant	James Vincent Pacella		

These were a group, and had flown 2 prior missions together, to Amsterdam (7/17/43), and Hannover, Germany (7/26/43), other than Colonna, who was temporary for only this mission.

At right the “Three Eighty Eighth Bombardment Group (H), Army Air Force” personnel list for the July 30, 1943 flight for aircraft “210.”

Co-pilot Richards Washburne was known as “Dick,” the third of 5 brothers, born June 22, 1921.

THREE EIGHTY EIGHTH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H), ARMY AIR FORCE
APO 634

(Station) _____ (Date) 7/30/43

(Aircraft Type) 210 (Squadron) 56 (Hours) _____

(Take-off) _____ (Landing - Estimated) _____ (Mission) _____

P	<u>PENN</u>	TT	<u>Spiga</u>
C	<u>Washburne</u>	BT	<u>Jacobson</u>
N	<u>Barryhill</u>	WG	<u>O'Neal</u>
B	<u>Pelkowski</u>	WG	<u>Colonna</u>
RO	<u>Nadler</u>	TO	<u>Pacella</u>
X		X	

(PRINT NAMES CLEARLY)

Charles H. Penn
(Aircraft Commander)

Charles Penn



Dick Washburne



Dick Washburne



Nadler and Spiga



Nadler and O'Neil



Nadler Sleeping on Plane



Pacella Sleeping on Plane



O'Neil



Pacella



Colonna



No pictures of: Barryhill, Pelkowski, or Jacobson.

Joseph Spiga on Writing Later in Life on How He Would up on our Flight

“My thoughts almost daily are on my military life, mostly my last mission of July 30th 1943, also on my days when I was confined back of barbed wire two years.

“I did not want any part of fighting in a war. I was brought up to be a Christian. I loved people, and I loved peace and a peaceful life, but I was drafted into the military and was resigned to make the best of it. I went to airplane mechanic school, and was looking forward to becoming a mechanic, but I had three buddies that I chummed with, and when school was out, they wanted to fly, to be crew members on an airplane. I did not. So every day for about one week, they begged me to go and sign up with them, but I refused. Then when the last day for signing up approached, they came up to me and said that if I did not sign up to fly, that they would not either, and then the Air Force would be minus 4 flyers, so I gave in and signed.

“We went for our physical. No. 1 chum failed his physical, had gum problems. No. 2 chum failed his physical had crossed eyes (barely noticeable). No. 3 chum failed physical, something wrong with his hip. No. 4 chum (me) passed physical with flying colors. So the three chums that wanted to fly so badly stayed on the ground, had further mechanical training, and were mechanics. I that wanted to be a mechanic now went for training to be a flight crew member on a bomber that would go out and bomb cities and kill innocent children and babies.”

The Army prepared a report on 7/29 that identified which men were chosen for the next day's flight, and so they were to be woken up early the next day. For our 561st squadron, 3 aircraft and crews were selected. In the report below, our group is the center one.

CREW ALERT STATUS AND A/C AVAILABLE FOR COMING DAY
Due 1630 Each Day at Group S-3

Squadron 561 Date of Submission 7/29

1. Set up crews as planned for my missions for coming day with A/C as assigned or substituted with proper notations where substituted. Extra crews, crew members and airplanes available to be listed separately and so noted.

Flight Flt Comdr		Flight Flt Comdr		Flight Flt Comdr	
Flt. Position <u>1-1</u>	Flt. Position <u>1-2</u>	Flt. Position <u>1-3</u>	Flt. Position <u>1-4</u>	Flt. Position <u>1-5</u>	Flt. Position <u>1-6</u>
A/C No. <u>1-</u>	A/C No. _____	A/C No. _____	A/C No. _____	A/C No. _____	A/C No. _____
P <u>BAILEY</u>	P <u>PENN</u>	P <u>COLLESTON</u>	P _____	P _____	P _____
CP <u>SCHMUNK</u>	CP <u>WASHBURNE</u>	CP <u>BISSONETTE</u>	CP _____	CP _____	CP _____
N <u>BARSTON</u>	N <u>BERRYHILL</u>	N <u>DORSETT</u>	N _____	N _____	N _____
B <u>BARTUSKA</u>	B <u>PELKOWSKI</u>	B <u>FLETCHER</u>	B _____	B _____	B _____
RO <u>TRANSOU</u>	RO <u>NADLER</u>	RO <u>BOYLE</u>	RO _____	RO _____	RO _____
BTG <u>GRAZIANI</u>	BTG <u>JACOBSON</u>	BTG <u>MOLINARI</u>	BTG _____	BTG _____	BTG _____
TG <u>HIGGINS</u>	TG <u>FACELLA</u>	TG <u>CEELY</u>	TG _____	TG _____	TG _____
WG <u>GWINNEL</u>	WG <u>O'NEAL</u>	WG <u>HOLLIMAN</u>	WG _____	WG _____	WG _____
WG <u>MARBLE</u>	WG <u>COLONNA</u>	WG <u>CLARK</u>	WG _____	WG _____	WG _____
E-THOMPSON	E-SPION	E-GALLAGHER	E-_____	E-_____	E-_____
Flight Flt. Comdr _____		Flight Flt. Comdr _____		Flight Flt. Comdr _____	

O'Neal: The pilot Penn, I always thought was a _____, not much good to say about him, a _____ ever since training in the states, first class. Instead of leading the squadron, he would break us up. Washburne took a lot of it so it wouldn't get down to the others. Pelkowski used to go back for reunions of the POWs, and said he saw Penn at one throwing his weight around, all cocky. It is hard to believe that the Air Force could put someone like that in charge of a crew. On the Hannover mission, Pelkowski went up to Penn on the catwalk and told him "One of these days someone is going to take a machine gun and blow your brains out."

"My only contact with Washburne was on the missions. Washburne was as fine a gentleman as I ever met. Navigator Barryhill was married. The Navigator and Radio Operator would man guns, too, when we were being attacked. Spiga remained a good friend afterwards. "Jake" (Jacobson) was a party man, a graduate of the South Dakota School of Mines, he didn't let the grass grow under his feet. He was a great poker player.

"Colonna was the oldest on the crew that day, and was a replacement on our crew, not a regular member (perhaps why in his Missing Air Crew Report afterwards he did not know the squadron # or other details). People would sometimes volunteer to go on missions, because once you got to 24 you could go home. Later they raised this to 30.

"The waist gunner position was not very effective. The gun was 36" long, and 24" high. The enemy aircraft if approaching us from head on were passing at perhaps 400 MPH, too fast to get an accurate hit."

Blitz Week

Four paragraphs from “B-17 Flying Fortress Units of the Eighth Air Force (Part 2),” by Martin Bowman, Page 11.

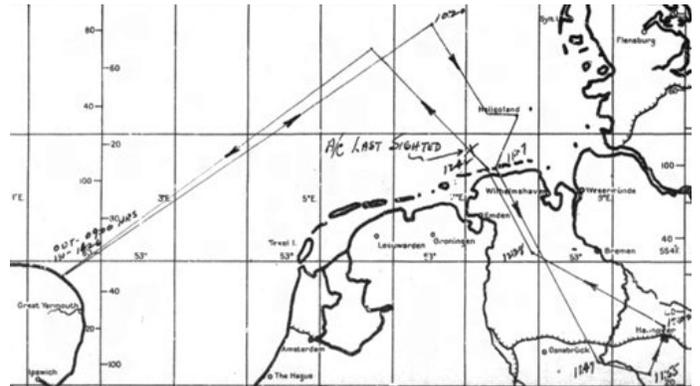
“Van’s Valiants” had moved to Great Ashfield in Suffolk during the first week of July, and the 388th set up operations in nearby Knettishall. Two days later the 390th – the sixth and final group to join the 4th Battle Wing – flew south from Prestwick to a permanent base at Parham, near Framingham. The Eighth now had the means to launch an all-out air offensive. All that the commanders needed was some fine weather for “Blitz Week” to succeed.

“On July 24, a week-long series of raids went ahead, beginning with a 208-B-17 mission to Heroya and Trondheim in Norway. One B-17 was lost and 64 were damaged. The following day, 218 bombers attacked Hamburg – devastated the night before in the great RAF Bomber command fire raid, and Kiel. The Kiel force lost four B-17s and 50 returned damaged, two of which crashed on landing. JG’s I and II (German squadrons) accounted for most of the 19 bombers that failed to return, claiming 15 shot down.

July 1943						
S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

“On the 26th, 92 heavies ([including our group](#)) [bombed rubber factories around Hannover](#) while 54 others attacked shipbuilding yards at Hamburg – 24 aircraft were lost, most of them to enemy fighters. (16% of 146 aircraft lost).

The map for the Hanover mission is shown at right. This was the mission on which our group’s plane received 303 hits, requiring they borrow a plane for July 30th.



“There was a stand down on July 27, and a day later the Eighth sent just over 300 bombers in two forces to hit German targets, but bad weather interfered with the mission and only 49 struck the Fieseler aircraft works at Kassel, while 28 hit the Fw-190 factory at Oschersleben. Once again, JGs I and II (German fighter aircraft) shot down most of the 22 bombers lost, and L/JG 26 claimed two B-17s as they headed home over Holland. Most of the bombs hit the houses of the residents and factory workers in the “Fieseler” and “Eichwaldsiedlung” of Kassel. 45 residents lost their lives during the July 28th bombing raid.

On 29 July, four Fortresses were downed from the 81 sent by the 4th BW to bomb Heinkel aircraft factory at Warnermunde.”

On the last day of “Blitz Week” July 30th, 186 B-17s were sent to Kassel, our final mission.

8th Bomber Command Mission #80

On the last day of “Blitz Week,” and four days after the mission to Hannover, on July 30, 1943, 186 bombers were sent to bomb the Fieseler aircraft factories near Kassel, a city of 200,000, the third mission to Kassel that week, after prior missions July 23 and July 27 (or 28th per first table).

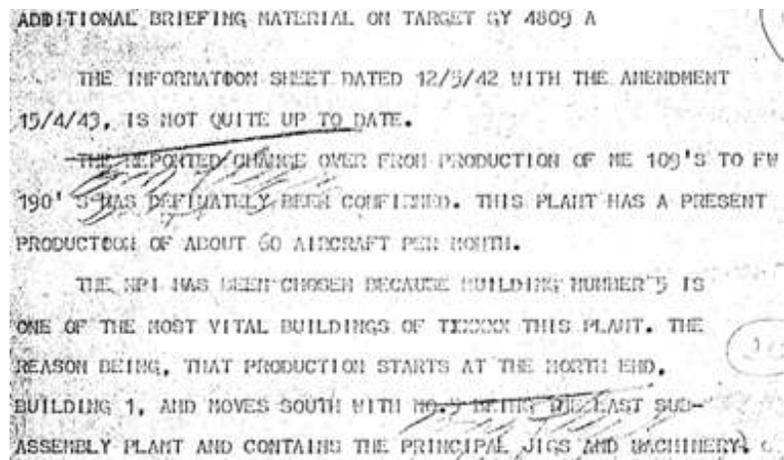
The **Gerhard Fieseler Werke** was founded on April 1 1930 as **Fieseler Flugzeugbau** in Kassel by World War I flying ace and aerobatic champion Gerhard Fieseler. Fieseler had been a manager for the Raab-Katzenstein, but when this company went bankrupt, Fieseler bought a sailplane factory in Kassel and quickly turned it to building sports planes. At the same time, Fieseler still custom-built sailplanes for some of Germany's most prominent designers and pilots.

In 1934, the company achieved prominence when Fieseler won the World Aerobatics Championship in an aircraft his company had built, the F2 Tiger. This was followed by the highly successful F5, generally regarded as a classic among sports planes. Even greater success was to follow in 1936 when an aircraft of Fieseler's own design won a tender for a new STOL observation and liaison aircraft for the Luftwaffe. Designated the Fieseler Fi 156 *Storch*, the company would produce over 3,000 of them during World War II. In 1939, Fieseler changed the name of the company to the Gerhard Fieseler Werke.

Fieseler's other **wartime production would largely consist of building other firms' aircraft under licence, including the Messerschmitt Bf 109 and Focke-Wulf Fw 190**. In 1941, however, a Fieseler project for an unpowered flying bomb attracted the attention of the RLM (*Reichsluftfahrtministerium* - "Reich Aviation Ministry"). This went into production as the Fieseler Fi 103, better known as the V1.

The Fieseler factory was the target of many Allied air raids, but continued production throughout the war. Following the War, part of the factory continued in business for a few years, producing automotive components. Its most famous products, the *Storch* and the V1, continued to be produced by foreign companies. (ref: Wikipedia)

As noted in the Additional Briefing materials, “the reported change over from Me-109’s to Fw-190’s has definitely been confirmed. This plant has a production of 60 aircraft per month.” “Building Number 5 is one of the most vital buildings of this plant...The production starts at the north end, Building 1, and moves south, with No. 5 being the last subassembly plant and contains the principal jigs and machinery.”



These aircraft were the main ones shooting at the bombers. These were previously built in plants in Vienna, Regensburg, or Paris, but were moved here when other sites were threatened.

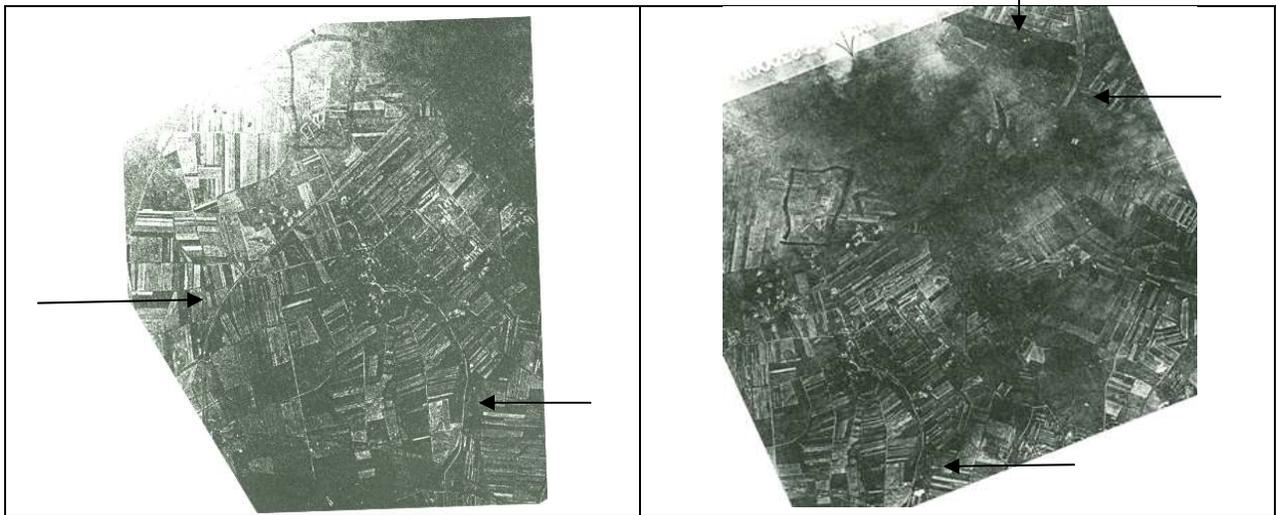
The 186 B-17s sent to bomb targets near Kassel were divided into two groups:

- **1st Wing: 119 aircraft.** Target: Fieseler Flugzeugbau G.m.b.H aircraft components factory at Bettenhausen, near Kassel (dropped bombs at 9:10-9:17 AM)
- **“4th” Wing: 67 aircraft.** Target: Fieseler Flugzeugbau G.m.b.H aircraft assembly plant at Waldau, near Kassel (dropped at 9:26-9:28AM). Our group was part of this wing.

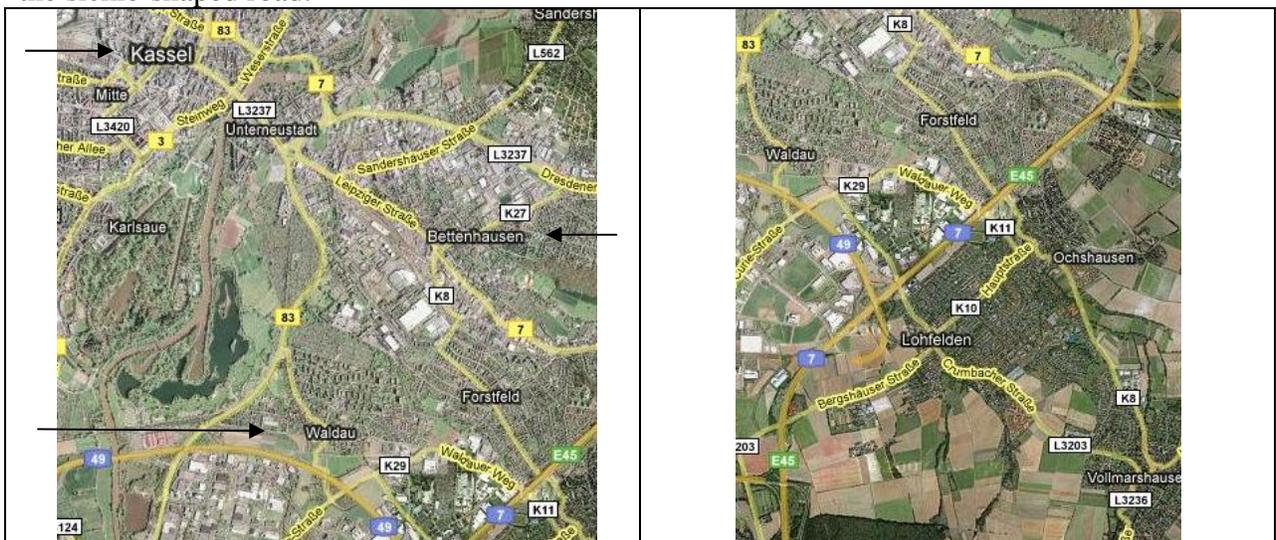
The Target

The target location today can be determined from aerial photos of the target area taken in 1943, after rotating them, and looking for distinguishing features that may still exist. The 1943 photos, after rotating, are shown below, both of the same target. The black cloud is smoke, blowing south, from the 12-15 minute earlier bomb drop by the 1st Wing 10 miles to the north at Bettenhausen, from an unexpected and unidentified ground explosion.

The first identifying feature is a highway below the square, in both pictures; in the left picture on its left side this highway curves down, and in right picture in its upper right the highway curves up. The second feature is a dark area in the right picture in the upper right. The third feature is a sickle-shaped road below the target.



Below left is a satellite image today of Kassel (top left), with 1st Wing target Bettenhausen on the right, and our target area Waldau in the lower center. Below right shows Waldau, and all of three objects also in the 1943 photos: the highway (blue 7), the green area in the top right, and the sickle-shaped road.



Zooming in on the sickle-shaped road shows many features still there, 65 years later:



From these, it is determined the 1943 target was in the triangle shown below left. Zooming in, three streets are indeed still named the “Am Fieseler Werk.”



To determine the specific 1943 target, from the picture at right, highway blue-7 is seen at the bottom right, similar to the picture above left, and an arching road bottom left is likely blue 49. The white hatched target area then may have been to the left of the vertical Am Fieseler road above right.

Mostly likely one could visit there and find the exact location of the aircraft factory’s 5 buildings. Because the factories were dismantled in 1947, they may not have been rebuilt, but there may be a plaque.

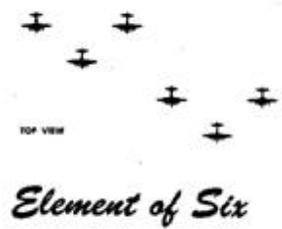
The briefing instructed the group to cross the target at a heading of NW, which is consistent with the arrows on the 1943 pictures.



The Formation

A Squadron

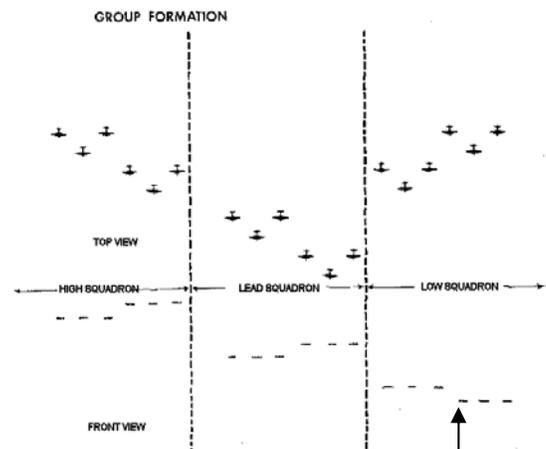
The B-17 Flying Fortress flew in 3-plane V's. The noses of the two trailing planes were to be 50 feet behind the tail of the lead plane, with the wing tips 50 feet horizontally from the wingtips of the lead plane. The plane on the right was in the “#2 position,” and on the left the #3. A tight formation was crucial to successful bombing, as it would result in the maximum ordnance on the target.



A squadron in the air was composed of two 3-airplane V's, with the second referred to as the “second element,” behind and to the right of the lead V, again maintaining the same 50 foot horizontal clearances, but also being 50 feet lower.

A Group

Two to four squadrons (of 6 aircraft each) could be combined into a “group,” with a high and low squadron 150 feet above or below the lead squadron as shown at right, and a fourth squadron behind.



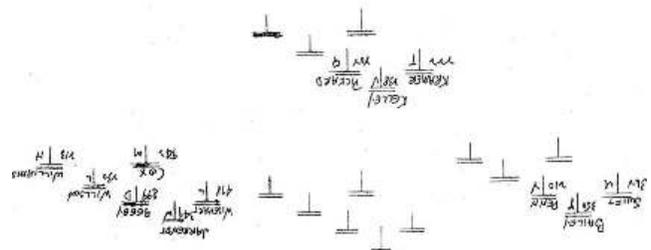
Our Aircraft Position on July 30, 1943

For the July 30 mission, the 4th Wing, code-named “Pluto,” had its 67 aircraft arranged in 3 “combat wings,” or 3 groups of 21-24 aircraft as at right, the:

- 401st: Code name: “Franklin” 24,000 feet (high)
- 402nd: “ “ “Zootsuit” 23,000 feet (our group- but a report herein on Page 57 says we were in the low Group)
- 403rd: “ “ “Wolfgang” 22,000 feet (low)

Our aircraft was in the 402nd combat wing, i.e. the mid-height group of 21. In this, we were the “#2 position of the second element of the low squadron,” which per the above right diagram, the low squadron is on the right of the picture, the second element is the lower one, and the #2 position is to the right of the lead plane, making it the third aircraft from the right in the diagram.

The actual formation for the 24 aircraft of the 402nd combat wing is shown at right, turned upside down to be consistent with the above diagrams. The 388th Bomber group contributed 12 aircraft, in the positions as labeled. The unlabeled positions were filled out by aircraft of the 96th Bomber Group. As expected, our aircraft flown by “Penn,” “#210,” is the third from the right (read upside down).



O’Neal: “When airborne, I looked out my window at Right Waist Gunner, and as far as I could see there were B-17s.” (Would see 22 B-17s from the 401st, 19 from the 402nd, 43 total)

The Route of Flight

An official map of the mission is from the accident report for 42-30238, which took off from Ipswich, England, but would have joined the other planes, as shown below. The point on the map after crossing the English Channel and reaching land inbound is consistent with that mentioned in our plane's report as "Knokke-Heist," also referred to as "Knocke" and "Heist." The inflection point below Aachen is right at another location in our plane's report, Eupen. The location where the group crosses the Rhine south of Koln (Cologne) was just below a bend in the river, near a town named Remagen. The official route and time from formation, was:

Inbound:		Outbound:	
Felixstone	10 minutes	Rally point	117 minutes
51:23 N-03:23 E	34 minutes	Dransfield	121 minutes
Eupen	65 minutes	Geseke	137 minutes
Remagen	79 minutes	Rinkerode	149 minutes
Rorshain Airdrome IP	103 minutes	Haldern	164 minutes
Target Kassel	111 minutes	Moyland	167 minutes
		51:51 N- 04:00 E	195 minutes
		Felixstone	229 minutes

The Rorshain Airdrome "IP" is the "initial point" where they prepare to bomb. There would be no fighter support inbound, but a rendezvous with fighter support outbound after Haldern.



On a map today, starting from Knettishall, this is as shown at right. Note Hannover, destination of the 4-day earlier run, is in the top right. The two datapins next together between Eupen and Remagen are an estimate of when our group left the path and crashed. Our aircraft departed Knettishall at 5:37 am.

O'Neal: "I remember our expected route from the Briefing Room had strings on a board that were south by Brussels, then turned back north."



The Hazards

In addition to hazards of mechanical problems and weather, the bombers had two main enemy threats: From the preflight briefing:

- **“Enemy Fighters:** The route in and the route out go thru a very heavily defended area, but the total number of fighters at any one point en-route will not exceed the maximum numbers of fighters that can be brought to bear in the target area: within 120 miles of target: S/E 125, T/E 120.”



These were German Fw190 and Me-109 fighter planes, pictured at right, respectively. (These both produced at the aircraft factories to be bombed).



- **“Flak (original text shown below):** There are guns at Knocke on course in. Aerodromes here probably are defended also. Suggest some evasive action when making a landfall. There are eight guns at St. Trond and 8 at Vise. Target area is well defended. The larger part of the defense being around and to the northwest of target. Munster is well defended and should be avoided. Emmerich is defended by heavy guns. Rotterdam has 36 heavy guns and in addition there are 40 heavy guns between Nordwaal and Rotterdam. Suggest some good evasive action in this whole area. This description is probably not a complete coverage but is consistent with our present information.”



Flak is 88mm shells (3.5” in diameter) that were shot from the ground by movable guns as pictured at right. The shells would explode upon impact. Some would explode near a group like grenades. This flak came up and hit many aircraft, often disabling engines.

FLAK:
THERE ARE GUNS AT KNOCKE ON COURSE IN, AIRDROMES HERE
PROBABLY ARE DEFENDED ALSO: SUGGEST SOME EVASIVE ACTION WHEN
MAKING A LANDFALL. THERE ARE EIGHT GUNS AT ST. TROND AND EIGHT
AT VISE. TARGET AREA IS WELL DEFENDED, THE LARGEST PART OF THE
DEFENSE BEING AROUND AND TO THE NORTHWEST OF THE TARGET.
MUNSTER IS WELL DEFENDED AND SHOULD BE AVOIDED. EMMERICH IS
DEFENDED BY HEAVY GUNS. ROTTERDAM HAS 36 HEAVY GUNS AND IN
ADDITION THERE ARE 40 HEAVY GUNS BETWEEN NORDWAAL AND ROTTERDAM.
SUGGEST SOME GOOD EVASIVE ACTION IN THIS WHOLE AREA. THIS DESCRIP-
TION IS PROBABLY NOT A COMPLETE COVERAGE BUT IS CONSISTENT
WITH OUR PRESENT INFORMATION.

Preventive Action: Woensdrecht and Wevelgem Airfields

Woensdrecht Airfield (Hoogerheide) was a sod landing field and repair base for fighter planes of the German Air Force. It was located just south east of Knokke-Heist, or “Heist,” close to the English Channel, making it valuable to the enemy for interception of the heavy bombers going to targets in Germany.



The airstrip there today is shown at right. The blue in the top left is a bay that leads out to the English Channel. On the map on page 20, it is at the base of one of the inlets just above Antwerp.

A second airfield that was a threat to the inbound bombers was Wevelgem Airfield, roughly 18 miles NE of Lisle, and 40 miles due west of Brussels (both on the color map on page 20). It is also pictured at right above the highways (note the town name of Wevelgem in the bottom left corner). This, too, was ideal for German fighters to launch from in order to intercept bombers.



The route of the B-17s would take them near these airfields, so the 8th Air Force early in the morning of July 30, through the 8th Air Support Command Mission Numbers 10A and 10B, targeted these as preventive measures.

But the results were bad:

- 24 B-26B's Marauders were dispatched to the Woensdrecht Airfield, The Netherlands. But only 11 hit the target at 06:57 hours. One B-26 was lost (41-31597), 6 were damaged, with one damaged beyond repair. Casualties were 7 WIA (wounded) and 6 MIA.
- 24 B-26B's are dispatched to the Courtrai/Wevelghem Airfield (also known as Wevelgem, 2 miles southwest of Kortrijk) in Belgium, but the mission was recalled because the escorting fighters were fog-bound on the ground.

So 48 light bombers were sent to attack two airfields along our route, but only 11 aircraft of the one group of 24 hit the first target, and none hit the second target.

Our B-17s would be flying overhead an hour later, now more exposed to German fighters.

Final Briefing

Our group was awoken at an estimated 3:00 AM. They received the following briefing (first 2 pages). #4 Wing Assembly at "Splasher 6" at 6:46 AM refers to a radio homing beacon near Diss in South Norfolk. They are then to climb from 9,000 to 22,000, at 150 MPH, 300 feet per minute. Expected to return to the English Coast at 11:19-11:30.

HEADQUARTERS
THREE EIGHTY EIGHTH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H), ARMY AIR FORCES
Office of the Operations Officer
APO 634

High 5604 - 5:20
Low 5:25

BRIEFING

DATE: 30-7-43

1. Order of Take-Off and Formation.
2. Take-off 05:30 Runway Direction 10 Surface Wind _____
3. Group Assembly: Place Smethton (take off at 05:40)
Time 5:40 Altitude 2000
4. Wing Assembly: Place Splasher 6 - Kingsley - Splasher 5 - Splasher 6
Time 6:46 Altitude Climb from 9000 to 22000
5. B.C. Assembly: Place _____
Time _____ Altitude _____
6. Climb: 150 MPH Indicated and 300 feet per minute.
7. Zero Hour: 07:30 Altitude 22000 Place Splasher 6
8. Route Out: Smethton - Kingsley - Splasher 6 - Kingsley - Splasher 5 - Splasher 6
Splasher 6 - Felixstowe - 5123-032 SE - Europa (5058-0602E)
Remagon (5035-0714E) - RAF Shaw Airfield (5056-0915E) (19)
Target - Witzgenhausen (R.P)
9. I.P. Rosheim A/D Time 0915 Turn _____
10. I.P. to Target: Magnetic Heading _____ Dist. _____ Time _____
11. Bombing Altitude: 1st Flt _____ 2nd Flt 22000 3rd Flt _____
12. Turn from Target _____
13. Secondary Target: Magnetic Heading _____ Dist. _____ Time _____
14. Last Resort: Magnetic Heading _____ Dist. _____ Time _____
15. Route Back: (R.P.) - Dransfield - Hales - Rinkenode
Haldon - Filton Road (11:14) - Mayland - 5151-0741E
Felixstowe (11:19) - R.P.S
16. ETA: English Coast 11:19 NO 11:30

Point #19 on the briefing indicates 3 squadrons of P-47s will meet them on the return to provide fighter support on the way out.

17. Target Sea Level Pressure _____

18. Must leave vicinity of A/D to join at Zero Hour at Coast Out at _____

19. Fighter Support: 3 squadrons P-47's
RAF & US Mediums, Typhoon
will attack enemy airbase

20. Miscellaneous: Only leader & deputy lead have VHF on
5065 KC. - ~~VHF~~ Bomber to Bomber
VHF - Bomber - Plus Box spread to mostly
Fighters Hay Bank
Attached planes use their own w/t ops. call
signs and A/C letters but will respond to
collective w/t call sign of group to which
attached. Also use R/T code words of gp to which
attached

--- REMEMBER ---

EVERYTHING THAT TRANSPIRES IN THIS BRIEFING ROOM
 IS SECRET AND IS NOT TO BE DISCUSSED WITH ANYONE
 OUTSIDE OF THIS ROOM. YOUR OWN SAFETY MAY DEPEND
 ON THIS INFORMATION BEING KEPT SECURE.

40.1st - High - 24000.
 40.2nd - Low 23000
 40.3 - Low 22000

Each aircraft carried ten 500 lb bombs. Loading for our aircraft #42-30210 is the 2nd listed on the right below.

BOMB LOADING

560TH SQ.					561ST SQ.				
Plane No.	No. Bombs Loaded	Size	Retrnd	Expend	Plane No.	No. Bombs Loaded	Size	Retrnd	Expend
5899	10	500			20362	10	500		
40478	10	500			30210	10	500		

Enemy Attack Details

Enemy attacks, by flak and aircraft, were recorded afterward, and these same comments summarized in several reports. Reports by the 1st Wing refer to roughly the same course.

“Bomber Command Narrative of Operations Report” (Excerpts)

1st Wing: Flak: “Meager, inaccurate” flak at Knocke, Antwerp, and Aachen. At Cologne fire was moderate and of a barrage type. At Kassel, flak was intense and extremely accurate.”

Aircraft: “From 150-200 enemy aircraft, mainly Me-109s and FW-190s as well as a few DO-217s and Me-110s were encountered. Attacks began at 8:08 AM near Antwerp, and continued until 11:15 AM, on the route back, near mid the English Channel. Attacks were from the tail at 5-6 o’clock, both above and below, and from the nose, at 11-2 o’clock, from above, with a few scattered attacks from the sides. Enemy aircraft markings were as usual, except for larger numbers of checkerboard designs. Enemy FW-190s with markings similar to Allied P-47s met one group at designated escort rendezvous, rocked wings and behaved like friendly fighters, then lined up and attacked stragglers.”

4th Wing (same route, 15 minutes later) Flak: “Intense, accurate flak was encountered at Knocke, and 2 B-17s were lost to this fire. Intense accurate flak was also reported over the target area. Moderate inaccurate flak was reported at other points en-route to and from the target.

Aircraft: “Time and places of attack were similar to 1st Wing.” A maximum of 75 enemy aircraft were encountered at any one time.”

Intelligence Narrative Kassel Report (Original details)

Note that “AA (anti-aircraft) fire at Knocke (after crossing the English Channel) was intense and accurate on two groups.” Enemy aircraft were then “encountered in the vicinity of Antwerp” which is shortly after the coast. Also note “enemy aircraft coming in from high out of sun in rotations of 4-6 aircraft. The first attacks were on the lead group, and then concentrated on back groups.” Recall that the B-17 was particularly susceptible to fighter attacks from the front, where the pilot and co-pilot were not well shielded.

S-2

AAA FIRE AT KNOCKE WAS INTENSE AND ACCURATE ON TWO GROUPS. SHOT DOWN 2 B-17'S. OTHER GROUPS REPORT AA FIRE ENCOUNTERED ENROUTE TO AND FROM TARGET AS MODERATE AND INACCURATE. AA FIRE AT TARGET WAS INTENSE AND ACCURATE, PROBABLY A PREDICTED BARRAGE

S-1

ENEMY OPPOSITION WAS FIRST MET ENCOUNTERED IN THE VICINITY OF ANTWERP AND THE ATTACKS CONTINUED ALL THE WAY INTO THE TARGET AND OUT. NONE OF THE ATTACKS WERE PARTICULARLY INTENSE - THE HEAVIEST WERE IN THE VICINITY OF KNOCKE AND AT BOCKEN ON THE WAY OUT, THE ATTACKS WERE NOT PRESSED HOME IN THE VICINITY OF THE TARGET. ENEMY OPPOSITION CEASED IN THE VICINITY OF DOROECHT. THERE WERE A MAXIMUM OF 75 A/C ENCOUNTERED AT ANY ONE TIME. THE MAJORITY OF A/C WERE ME-109'S, A FEW FW-190'S. THERE WERE AN UNUSUAL TACTICS EMPLOYED, THE METHOD BEING SIMILAR TO THAT OF THE PAST FEW MISSIONS, WITH MOST E/A COMING IN FROM HIGH OUT OF SUN IN ROTATIONS OF 4-6 A/C. THE FIRST ATTACKS WERE ON THE LEAD GROUP AND THEN CONCENTRATED ON BACK GROUPS. ONE LOW WING MONOPLANE WITH TWIN SCOOPS WAS

388th Bomber Group Narrative Report on Kassel Mission

This notes below enemy aircraft attacks started at Knocke. Note in the last line that “On the head-on attacks, practically all the enemy fighters broke off to the left and went down for the low squadron.” Our group was in the low squadron of the 402nd (middle) wing, and on the left side, though it is unclear if the fighters turned to their left, or the squadron’s left.

NARRATIVE REPORT ON KASSEL MISSION.

S1 (A) 50 ENEMY FIGHTERS MOSTLY ME 109'S, AND ONE OR TWO ME 110'S.

BLACK NOSES AND ON SILVER FUSELAGE, WERE NOTICED AMONG THE ME109CS AS WELL AS LIGHT GRAY BELLIES AND DARK TOPS. YELLOW AND BLACK NOSES AND SILVER FUSELAGES WERE NOTICED AMONG THE FW 190'S.

(B) ENEMY FIGHTERS FIRST OBSERVED AT KNOCKE ABOUT 0800, AND ATTACKS LASTED ALL THE WAY INTO THE TARGET AND OUT AGAIN.

(C) MOST OF THE ATTACKS MADE FROM THE SUN, AND WERE LOW AGAINST THE THREE (0300) AND NINE (0900) O'CLOCK FORMATIONS, IN AN APPARENT EFFORT TO HIT THE BOMB BAYS. ATTACKS WERE MADE BY THREE OR FOUR FIGHTERS TOGETHER. SOME ATTACKS WERE MADE BY DIVING THROUGH THE FORMATION, WHILE OTHERS FLEW ALONG SIDE AND TURNED IN AGAINST THE NOSE. ON THE HEAD ON ATTACKS PRACTICALLY ALL THE ENEMY FIGHTERS BROKE OFF TO THE LEFT AND WENT DOWN FOR THE LOW SQUADRON.

Separately it is noted: “Flak – on way in and out flak varied from slight to moderate. Flak was as indicated on the flak map. Flak was observed at Knocke, Warburg, Hamm, Walcheren Island, as well as Kassel. It varied in altitudes from 22,000 to 23,000’.”

Sun Position

An analysis of the sun position that morning, shows that at Knocke, at 8:30am, on July 30, 1943, the sun would be at a “solar azimuth” (angle from true north one would turn to face the sun) of 110.2 degrees, i.e. one would face E-SE, and at an elevation of 39 degrees above the horizon. So our group was flying almost directly into the sun initially and attacks “from the sun” would be head-on – hitting the pilot and co-pilot. At Eupen they turned more east at around 8:45am, so the sun would be at the 116 degree position, and 42 degrees high, on the right side.

NOAA ESRL Solar Position Calculator

City: [City] Deg: [51] Min: [23] Sec: [0] Time Zone: [GMT-7] Daylight Saving Time: [No]

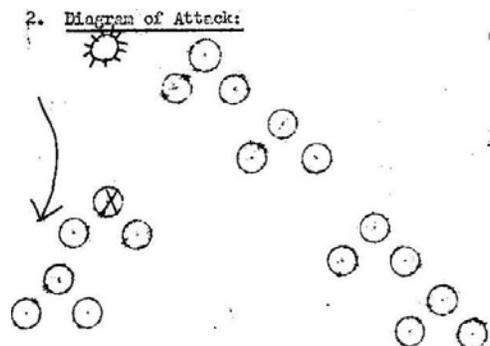
Month: [July] Day: [30] Year (e.g. 2000): [1943] Time: (hh:mm:ss) [08:30:00] AM PM 24hr

Equation of Time (minutes)	Solar Declination (degrees)	Solar Azimuth (degrees)	Solar Elevation (degrees)	cosine of solar zenith angle
-6.34	18.7	110.21	38.75	0.6259

From a “Combat Form” (diagram at right is from this)

“One ME 109F came out of the sun from 11 o'clock and pressed attack to 800 yards. It turned away from our group, peeled down to attack low group (96th).”

Our group was in formation was with the 96th, and 5 of the 10 96th aircraft had by then aborted.



Detailed Reports on 13 of the 186 Aircraft

A main source of detailed accounts of crashes is Missing Air Crew Reports (“MACR”s), completed any time a crew member’s whereabouts was not known. The aircraft did not need to crash, and may have returned to base, e.g. after a man parachuted out over enemy territory. The table at right lists the MACRs for the July 30, 1943 mission, by type of aircraft (B-26, B-17, P-47), then by aircraft serial number (“42-“ being the year the aircraft was built). There are 18 MACRs for that day’s mission.

In addition to crew from 1 B-26 lost on the morning raid on Woensdrecht, crew members from 12 B-17s were also lost, the fourth being our group’s #42-30210. The aircraft that went with these crews were also lost for all but the last B-17, 42-5820, which returned to base after 3 men jumped out over Belgium. This aircraft was shot down for good two weeks later on August 12, 1943. Crews from 5 P-47 fighter aircraft that provided support to the bombers on the return trip were also lost.

Reports for these 12 B-17s describe what others experienced on the same mission, some of which may be similar to what our group’s plane experienced.

On this July 30 Kassel mission, at least five other aircraft were also lost, without a loss of crew. Aircraft 42-29738 ditched in the English Channel and the crew was all rescued; “Dry Run” ditched in the North Sea and all were rescued; and 42-5813, 42-3046 (to Woodbridge), 42-5848 (to Voxted) and 42-29726 (to Leiston) all returned to England with the crew safe but the planes condemned for salvage. There are accounts from these flights also with relevant details.

Below in the order attacked is described what happened to the 12 aircraft above. Because 5820 was not shot down on July 30, little information is available for its July 30 flight, and rather I include its August 12 last flight. Also included is a story about 42-29726 noted in the prior paragraph as having returned, but so damaged it was condemned for salvage. Much of the text below is the crew members own words, written on Missing Air Crew Reports, or Individual Casualty Questionnaires. Each surviving member of a crew had to complete a one page report summarizing his last contact with each missing member, but these often were not written until after the survivor was released from POW camp 2 years later.

The fate of our group’s plane, although not the last to go down, is reserved for last. [Comments from other planes potentially relevant to our group’s plane are highlighted in blue.](#)

#42-30192 (from our 4th Wing)

This aircraft was of the 95th Bomber Group, 336th squadron, with pilot Robert B. Jutzi. It flew as the low squadron, which is a position with a higher risk factor. “At 8:07 AM, about 10 miles east of Knokke, [the aircraft was hit by flak. The oxygen and hydraulic systems were knocked out and three engines failed.](#) The crew was told to stand by to bail out. The five enlisted men bailed out immediately.

Missing Air Crews, July 30, 1943

AC #	BG	Location	MACR
Early Morning Attack (B-26)			
41-31597	386	Holland	212
Kassel Mission (B-17s)			
42-30192	95	Holland	217
42-30290	96	Germany	145
42-5829	379	Holland	1361
42-30210	388	Belgium	3264
42-29746	379	Germany	1355
42-30238	388	Germany	3133
42-3100	381	Germany	129
41-24399	91	Germany	148
42-29916	91	Germany	147
42-30202	388	Holland	3125
42-3212	379	England	1364
42-5820	379	Holland	1362
Fighters for Return (P-47s)			
41-6391	78	Germany	135
42-7961	78	Holland	135
42-7935	78	Holland	135
41-6209	56	Holland	218
41-6265	56	Holland	219

“The pilot realized he could handle the ship and countermanded his order. He then made a course for the nearest point on the English coast, and landed six miles off Dover, where the remainder of the crew were saved by the British Navy.

Per one of the five who jumped: “The pilot lost control of the plane and we started to drop, so he gave us the order to bail out. The Germans kept shooting at me as I was coming down in my chute, and they were also shooting at the others. I don’t know what happened to the other two. The Germans who captured us told us they were dead.”

#42-30290 (from our 4th Wing, and one of the 6 closest to us)

Of the 96th BG, 338th squadron. A survivor blamed leaders course error: “Off course 12 miles near Antwerp, Belgium, we were hit by flak as a result of this error by leadership.

A “fighter had made an attack and numerous bullets had exploded in the waist and radio room.” “During the attack, the interphone system was shot out and no one could contact other members by voice. I was laying by the ball turret when the plane pulled out of the dive. The next I knew the turret was gone.

Engineer “did not have a chest pack and could not wear the seat pack while operating the upper turret.” Last seen trying to get into his parachute harness. Peasant on ground said one man landed near her and his parachute didn’t open in time.

Per a book: “A number of Fw190s from L/JG 26 scrambled from Woensdrecht and intercepted the bombers, shooting down 42-30290, “Lucky Lady II.” By the time it was attacked, Lucky Lady II had already jettisoned its bomb load and had two engines knocked out by flak over Belgium. The B-17 exploded in mid-air, and came down near Tielrode (10 miles SW of Antwerp), taking five crewmen with it. The remaining five bailed out and were taken prisoner.

Pilot Pelusi “was hit in the chest by a 20mm shell,” “by enemy fighter shell fire and fatally wounded” (see right)

Navigator Mayer Isiah Hurwitz was also hit by a 20mm shell, but still parachuted out 30 kilometers east of Antwerp, but did not survive.

INDIVIDUAL CASUALTY QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of crew member: PELUSI, Canale Piana, Jr.
Rank: Capt. 1/Lt.
Serial number: 0-725 525
Position: Crew (Bomber) ~~Navigator~~ 1.Pilot

Did he bail out? No

Where? _____

If not, why not? Hit in chest by 20 mm shell

Last contact or conversation just prior to or at time of loss of plane: Walked to him over interphone system just prior to being attack by enemy fighters.

Was he injured? Yes

Where was he when last seen? To his seat in the cockpit

Any hearsay information: Was hit in the chest by enemy fighter shell fire and fatally wounded.

Any hearsay information: He was hit in nit of the stomach at the same time that Lt. Pelusi, by 20 mm shell fire, he bailed out but was dead when he reached the ground.

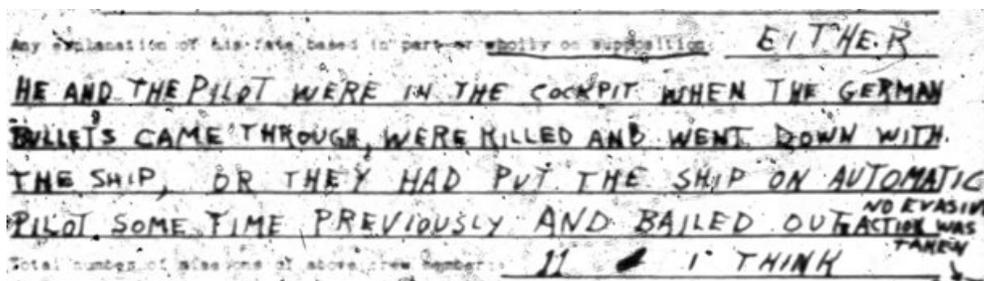
“German pilot Feldwebel Christof who shot it down, was killed just over two hours later when he went to attack the bomb group on their return from the target. The Germans were surprised by Allied Forces fighter planes that flew over for the first time with long range tanks to protect the bombers on their way back. Christof became the first victim of future five-kill ace Lt. Kenneth G. Smith of the 335th FS/4th FG. The German ace had been “bounced” by the P-47 pilot over Schouwen (Schuddebeurs – on the maps above, the second island south of Rotterdam on the English Channel), and when he attempted to bail out of his Fw190, he got hung up on the fighter’s tail. Christof finally broke free, although he lost his parachute in the process.”

#42-5829 (from earlier 1st Wing – not our Wing)

Of the 379th (H) BG, 525th Squadron, departed Kimbolton, England, carrying incendiary bombs to ball bearing plant at Kassel, weather 9-10,000 stratus, fog.

At 8:20 AM, near Antwerp, was hit by flak. “Left formation in middle-southern Belgium.”

Fighter planes also scrambled from Woensdrecht came after it. The pilot, seeing them coming, announced: “Look out boys, we are in for it.” After the first wave of fighters, “The plane flew level and smooth as if on automatic pilot even after the German fighter put a warning burst of 5 holes in the right wingtip. No evasive action was taken. No one answered over the phone. Either the pilot and copilot were in the cockpit when the German bullets came through, were killed, and went down with the ship, or they put the ship on automatic pilot some time previously and bailed out. No evasive action was taken.”



Any explanation of his fate based in part or wholly on supposition. EITHER
HE AND THE PILOT WERE IN THE COCKPIT WHEN THE GERMAN
BULLETS CAME THROUGH, WERE KILLED AND WENT DOWN WITH
THE SHIP, OR THEY HAD PUT THE SHIP ON AUTOMATIC
PILOT SOME TIME PREVIOUSLY AND BAILED OUT. NO EVASIVE
ACTION WAS TAKEN.
Total number of instances of above: 11 I THINK

Also from the report: “The pilot is believed to have been killed by the first attack on the ship. Believed he (co-pilot) tried to keep ship under control, died from wounds or fire. Navigator was killed by second attack on ship while fighting fire in bombardier compartment, after saying: ‘There goes one for us,’ over intercom. Top Turret gunner Denny last seen in bomb bay with clothes on fire, believe he bailed near Aachen Germany at 24,000 feet, but died in German hospital. Ball Gunner was killed by a 20mm shell through his chest. Pilot may have been trying to climb through pilot window when plane blew up.”

Eventually the aircraft “peeled off from formation, smoking, heading down.” It crashed in a little Belgian village 5 miles west of Aachen Germany (roughly 10 miles NW of Eupen that Dick’s plane flew over), later noted as at 9:15am.

Dick’s plane 42-30210 was next – see later.

#42-29746 (from earlier 1st Wing – not our Wing)

Of the 379th BG (H), 524th squadron, based at Kimbelton, England. Sky 1-10/10's Stratus, fog. Time 9:16am, in vicinity of target. There is a reference to going down "in the vicinity of target," Gelsenkirchen, Germany, but this is far from its own stated target of Kassel, and perhaps on the return route, so may not be correct. All crew left the ship, aircraft exploded. 5 KIA. No other information available.

These were all the accidents inbound.

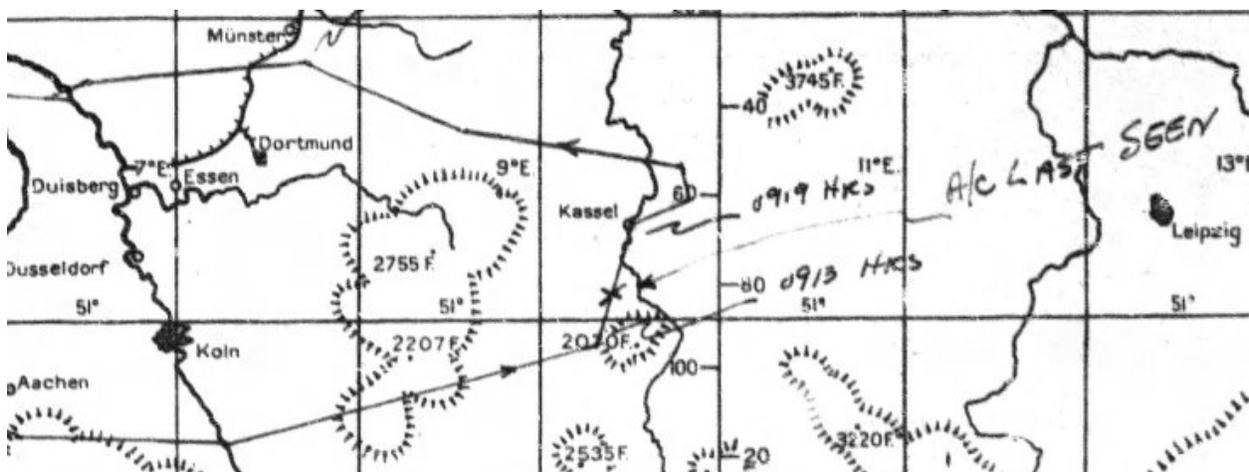
Outbound after the target:

#42-30238 (from our 4th Wing, and our squadron, but after we were shot down)

42-30238 was one of the 12 aircraft put up, and 9 that did not soon abort, by our same 388th Bomber Group. This aircraft was of the 563rd Squadron, vs. our 561st, and the second (after our aircraft) of 3 for the group to be lost.

Lt. Kelley was flying as lead ship of the third element in the high squadron in ship 238. He is reported to have gone down shortly before reaching the target. He was trailing smoke from #4 engine for approximately 5 minutes. #4 engine was feathered and he dropped back out of formation. Fighters hit him for 1st time, and then seemed to go away. When last seen, his ship was not in distress, but was definitely out of formation on three engines."

Last seen at "x" where arrow points below, south of Kassel, on last leg. After all bailed out, the aircraft on automatic pilot glided to a landing in a field and exploded. All survived.



The detailed story of 42-30238 is as follows:

Ref: "A Wing and a Prayer – Fighters at 12 O'Clock High" © www.thetroubleshooters.com.

"The aircraft they flew on July 30th was not their original aircraft. Two days before, (Pilot) Kelly's crew came back with "Shack Up" from a mission against the German town Aschersleben. This was their original plane. They came back, but the plane was heavily damaged. German fighter planes had pierced the wings of "Shack Up" with bullets and 20-millimeter shells. Both wings had to be changed. This was no big problem. New wings had come with the latest transport from the States, but they couldn't be changed quickly enough for the plane to be used on this mission.

"The commander gave the order to Kelly's crew to fly the next mission with "Wing and a Prayer", but the former pilot of this plane, Ken Alexander, would be switched to Kelly's crew as a copilot. For this mission, they had to leave their own copilot 2nd Lt. W. M. Topin back at the base. This aircraft was brand new.

"The pilot 1st Lt. Frank Forrest Kelly was born in Chicago. He was 28 years old. First, he was an officer of the Army, and then he switched to the Army Air Force. In his squadron, he was the only one of the rank of 1st Lieutenant.

"Over German territory, "Wing and a Prayer" and his group flew heading east. Near the mountain Knuell, in central Germany, they changed direction. Now, they were flying north, in the direction of Kassel. As they passed the big railroad center in the town of Bebra, "Wing and a Prayer" got two direct hits by flack. The left wing had a huge hole in it. Two engines of this wing were knocked off. Another shell damaged several controls in the "office", or cockpit. The oxygen-system went off. The bomb controls of the bombardier were also damaged and lost electrical power. It was not possible to follow their group with two damaged engines. The crew threw all loose equipment overboard to lighten the plane. The 23-year-old Bombardier 2nd Lt. David B. Adams climbed into the bomb bay and opened the doors of the bay manually. He released every single bomb with a screwdriver, one after another. Adams did not close the bomb bay. At this moment, "Wing and a Prayer" was the target of a group of German fighter planes. They attacked the plane several times. They damaged the two working engines as well. Now, it was time to leave the aircraft.

"Kelly knew that everything was lost. He gave the order to bail out. Over the next few miles, one after the other of the crew bailed out. The two pilots and the engineer used the open bomb bay to bail out.

"Before Kelly had bailed out, he had activated the autopilot to stabilize the aircraft, but "Wing and a Prayer" was too badly damaged. Without the pilot at the controls, the aircraft flew a curve, gradually lost altitude over the next few minutes and landed softly without the crew a few kilometers away on the meadow near the small village of Dorla

"Witnesses on the ground saw this and reported later about a B-17 with a huge hole in the wing. Over the town Altmorschen the first fliers bailed out. S/Sgt. Alexander W. Milligan bailed out successfully, but a big part of the aircraft fell together with him to the ground. After the parts of the aircraft had passed him, he opened his chute. This was at the very last moment. The aircraft

did not change direction and was still flying north. Near the town of Melsungen two more fliers left the plane. They landed between the small villages of Kehrenbach and Kirchhof. One flyer hit a tree that cut his chute; the other landed on a field near the village of Kehrenbach. Shrapnel had wounded his arm and back.



Picture of A Wing and a Prayer burning in a meadow near Doria, Germany July 30, 1943



The bombed out Fieseler Aircraft Factory
(From the referenced report, damage may have been from a later bombing)

#42-3100 (from earlier 1st Wing – not our Wing)

Of the 381st BG (H), 532nd squadron, based at Sta. 167, broken clouds, visibility good. Time 9:50am, at Ascheberg, Germany.

“Flak over the target of Kassel, Germany, knocked out #3 engine and the bottom of #2 gas tank. Soon afterwards, #2 engine was feathered and believed this was due to loss of gas supply. Lt. stayed slightly below the formation until near Munster at which time fighters made heavy attacks on the crippled ship. He was using evasive action and then was seen to slide off to the right of the formation and head for the clouds below, about 5 fighters following. This position was about SW of Munster on course and believed to have landed around 6der 30’s, 51 deg, 45N. Just before entering clouds, 3 chutes were seen to open. The ship seemed to be under control at all times. During these happenings, two enemy fighters were shot down by the crew aboard the ship. Last seen on return trip near “X” in upper part of below map.

“Shortly after leaving target area (Kassel),” “Waist Gunner jumped out of left waist gunner’s window, because door was stuck, and was struck by the horizontal stabilizer. His chute never opened.” “When I went out after him, I never saw another chute in the air.”

Pilot or co-pilot: “Since most of the controls were shot away, three engines gone, radio gone, oxygen supply in rear of ship gone, near 25-30 fighters on us, and inside of cockpit windows covered with black smoke so the windows had to be opened in order to see out, I had no chance to contact crew.”

Navigator and tail gunner bailed out, aircraft landed in Appladoorne Holland, or Deelen, Holland.



#41-24399 (from earlier 1st Wing – not our Wing)

Ref: <http://www.basher82.nl/Data/Opijnen/cianfici.htm>

Ref: <http://www.awca.nl/history/opijnen.html> - second article

"The outbound leg, to the target, proved uneventful. The formation did not meet with the Luftwaffe. The weather was excellent, and the target was found without difficulty. It was subsequently bombed with good results. On the way back to Bassingbourn, their luck turned. They were intercepted and attacked by FW190 fighters of JG26. A fierce fight ensued during which the 'MAN-O-WAR' and a second B17 ('Yankee Dandy', commanded by 1Lt. Robert M. Miles) were forced to leave the relatively protective realm of the bomber formation. The 'Man-O-War' was last seen leaving the formation, burning from under the wings with both inboard (no. 2 & 3) engines out and going into a dive. [The German fighters pressed home their attacks on the 'straggler'](#). After fierce fighting from both sides, Lt. Johannes Neumann, a leading fighter pilot with JG26, finally claimed the 'MAN-O-WAR' 5 kilometers south of Est, close to Opijnen

Lt. John Bruce, co-pilot of the 'Man-O-War' wrote: '[Our mission to Kassel, as with all missions, started with a very early wakeup call, around 3:30 in the morning for breakfast and briefing. Takeoff was in daylight and eventually the group had gathered into formation for crossing the channel. I don't recall any action of any consequences going in to the target but there was intense flak around and over the target. At some point after leaving the target we encountered flak again but not as intense as before. We lost #2, inboard, engine and encountered a good many fighter aircraft very shortly as we began losing airspeed and beginning to drop back from the formation. I noticed a hole in the nacelle of #3, inboard, engine and lost it as well. By this time we had dropped back further and were essentially alone insofar as any protection from the aircraft of our group. We were having enemy attacks which caused the roaring fire in the empty bomb bay. I looked back to the walkthru opening into the bomb bay and flames were shooting into the forward section of the aircraft. A fuel line had apparently been hit by a fighter 20mm cannon exploding ammo to ignite the fire. McCammon switched on the bailout switch which operated several bells at locations in the plane. The interphones were out with no way of communicating with crewmembers. I looked behind my seat at the engineer/topgunner, Cianfichi, and he had a small fire extinguisher in his hands trying to activate it and I motioned for him to come on and leave it. We had no idea of the condition of the crewmembers when we left the aircraft through the nose hatch. As it turned out, McCammon and I were the only survivors.'](#)

From the missing Air Crew Report that was made up after the crash: "'Plane 399 slid out of the formation at 09:56 and was never identified thereafter, that is as to number. One A/C was seen at 10:15 at an altitude of 23,000 feet with inboard engines out, steadily dropping back with 3 enemy A/C on it. At 10:20 there was a huge ball of fire from under wings followed by a thick black burst like flak. A/C started down in dive and observing A/C lost sight of it. This aircraft was last by Lt. Hubert H. Davis at 10:20 hours.'

The crash was witnessed by 13 year old schoolboy Jan van Arkel. 'It was a very hot day. It was around 10:30 and already it was about 25 degrees Celsius.' He remembers, 'It was summer holiday and I was helping in my father's fruit yard. Then I heard a rambling sound. [I looked up and saw a burning bomber coming over. It made a turn and several of the crew bailed out just before the plane blew up in the air.'](#)

THE LAST FLIGHT OF MAN-O-WAR
A flight to Kassel, Germany, the summer of 1943
By John P. Bruce

The Keene McCammon crew's first combat mission to Kassel was aborted due to cloud cover over the target. Two days later on July 30, the target was again the Messerschmidt aircraft plant at Kassel. My position was copilot.

We were assigned an old plane, Man-O-War, the oldest plane in the 91st Bomb Group. It had endured combat as evidenced by the small aluminum patches on its outer skin. I discovered other evidence as I climbed into my seat. A splotch of dried blood on the floor near my foot. A copilot's blood. I wondered if he had survived. I hoped so.

With the crew in their positions, we began readying for takeoff. All four engines were started. . . good engines with 4800 horses. All systems checked and it was last call for crew check-in. Familiar voices checked in one by one. On cue, all 27 Forts were rumbling and snaking down the taxiway. In turn, we received our green light from the tower and proceeded to get airborne with our ten 500 pounders. This was no time to lose an engine.

We put on oxygen masks at 10,000 feet and within 45 minutes, at 17,000 feet, the group had assembled into formation. [We were not to have fighter escort on the way to target but escort P-47's were to meet us on our return.](#) We flew up the Channel, crossed the Holland coast and continued climbing to target altitude of 25,000 feet.

[At this altitude, the outside air temperature is -40 degrees F.](#) Only the flight deck and nose section were designed for some heat from the engines. Protection for the other crewmembers was provided by electric suits underneath bulky sheepskin-lined clothing. The two side gunners stood with their 50 caliber guns at window openings in the fuselage. The worst locations.

[All eyes were on the lookout for enemy fighters from this point on. There was some light amount of anti-aircraft bursts, puffy black clouds we call flak, but they were not at our altitude at this point. Other group formations could be seen off at a distance on our left, but ahead of us. It was surprising that we had no encounters.](#)

[As we approached our initial point, the lead plane started a turn onto the bomb run. Flak began popping up in all directions around our formation. It was intense. Our bombardier, Dan Ohman, released our cargo and our group turned for a heading home. While doing so, we could hear fragments hitting the plane.](#)

[The fighters stay away from the target area because of the flak barrage. From here on in we could expect the FW-190's and ME-109's. Hopefully, our escort would show up soon and give us some cover on the way back.](#)

McCammon called on the interphone for the crew to check in. Fortunately, no one reported any problem. No injuries. The task of sky surveillance resumed, but we didn't have too long at it until someone shouted that fighters were sighted and coming toward the formation. They were

attacking our nine-ship element, the lower one. These were the infamous yellow nose 190's based at Schiphol airport.

Our gunners were shouting out the directions of attacking planes amidst the chatter of their 50's. It sounded as if all guns, top, rear, sides and underneath were opening up. This was an entirely new experience for all of us. A shocking one.

At one point, I watched a yellow nose 190 passing underneath our right wing and I saw him look up at us as he zipped underneath no more than thirty yards away. It was also at this time that I noticed a hole in the cowling of #3 engine, on my side. The oil pressure gauge for #3 indicated a dropping of pressure. We were losing that engine. The #2 was coughing and it wound down as well. Both inboard engines gone.

With the loss of power, our effort to stay in close with the formation was a losing one. We began lagging behind into that well known vulnerable position, "Tail-end Charlie" - an easy target with no firepower help from the formation.

What happened next was chaos. McCammon and I heard the top gunner, Cianfichi, yelling from his position behind us. We turned and saw flames roaring in the bomb bay and billowing into our flight deck. McCammon flipped on the bailout bells and called on the interphone to leave the plane. It was evident that it was a fuel fire from damaged fuel lines.

Cianfichi had a small fire extinguisher in his hands trying to extinguish the flames. As I was getting out of my seat while clipping on my chute pack, I yelled for him to leave it and go. I dropped down to the nose hatch and saw Ohman and Duggan huddled at their positions, probably held down by force, as the plane had started downward in a tight spiral. I pulled myself to the hatch and popped through the opening. I had enough awareness to delay the chute opening until a count of three.

#42-29916 (from earlier 1st Wing – not our Wing)

“Yankee Dandy,” referred to in above report. “No. 399” (above) and 916 from this group slid out of the formation at 9:56 AM and were never identified thereafter, as to number. One a/c was seen at 10:15 at an altitude of 23,000 feet with inboard engines out steadily dropping back with 3 enemy a/c on it. At 10:20 there was a huge ball of fire from under wings, followed by a thick black burst like flak. *A/C started down in dive, and observing a/c lost sight of it.* This a/c was last seen at 51-55x06-20'E at 10:20 AM.

The other a/c was last seen at 10:05 am at 52det 00 N, 05-45' E, going down under control trailing small amount of smoke.

Tail gunner fell by the tail wheel after a shell burst by him, and he was dead or wounded beyond possibility of help.

#42-30202 (from our 4th Wing, and our squadron, but after we were shot down)

42-30202 was one of the 12 aircraft put up, and 9 that did not soon abort, by our same 388th Bomber Group, this of the 563rd Squadron, vs. our 561st, and the third of 3 for the group to be lost. Flight officer Pickard was flying the #2 position of the third element of the high squadron. Pickard bombed the target with the formation and was lost on the way back in the area around Antwerp. They claim he was struck by flak; #2 engine caught fire and the crew was evidently ordered to bail out. The tail gunner of the ship is definitely reported to have gotten out okay. There were seven other chutes reported.

In the area of Putte near Maline (?) Belgium. Right side of ship enveloped in flames. One Casualty Questionnaire puts time at 9:15am, left formation off Antwerp, plane landed about 20 miles of Lier, Belgium. Note x below on return route, near English Channel.

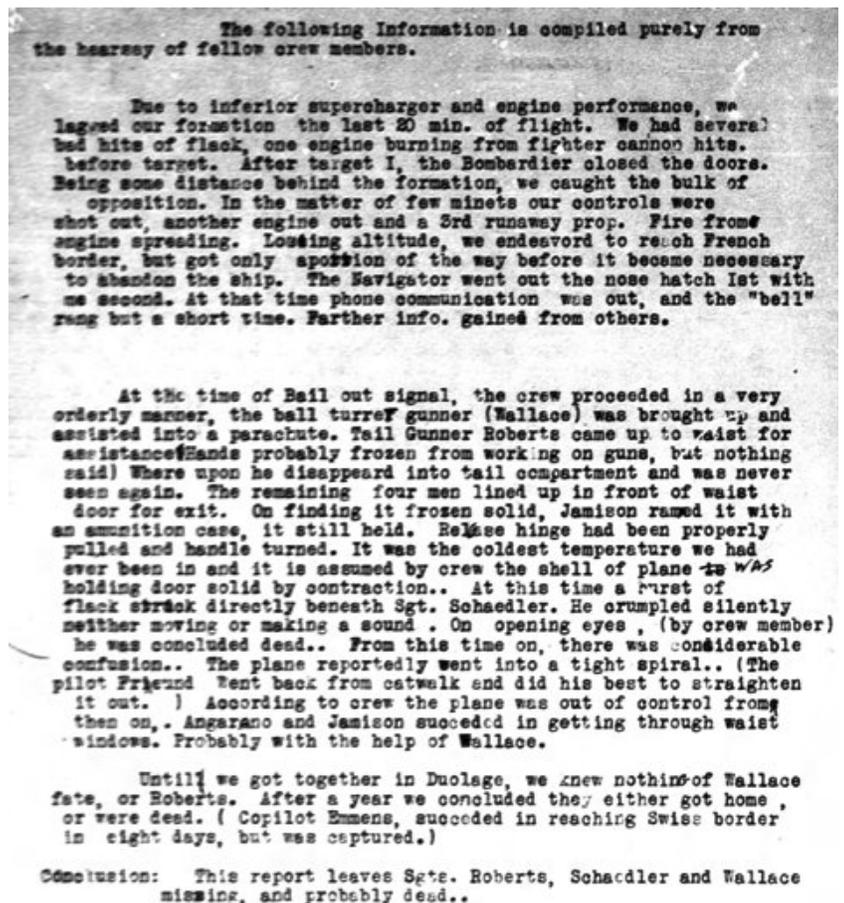


#42-3212 (fr. earlier 1st Wing)

Of the 379th BG, 527th squadron, based at Kimbelton, England, at 11:15AM at Framlington, England, crashed due to battle damage, all crew members were killed and burned.

#42-5820 (fr. earlier 1st Wing)

42-5810 on July 30, 1943 appears to have had 3 crew members bail out, or otherwise die, but the aircraft returned to base, so has a Missing Crew Report #1362 for the July 30, 1943 flight, but the aircraft was not lost. Two-weeks later the aircraft was in fact shot down, and although not on July 30, its MACR report for that flight provides likely relevant details of a B-17 crash.



...“We had several bad hits of flak, one engine burning from fighter cannoning hits before target....In the matter of a few minutes, our controls were shot out...Fire from engine spreading. The plane went into a tight spiral...the pilot did his best to straighten it out.

#42-29726 (from earlier 1st Wing – not our Wing)

Of the 351st BG, on July 30, 1943 made it back to England. Detailed diary entries of day.

Rf:http://oralhistory.rutgers.edu/Docs/diaries/wartime_diaries_of_edward_c_piech/chapter_four_piech_diaries.html

Captain Edward C. Piech, USAAF, 1942-1944

Dear Diary:

Your Edward was very near destined not to come back home (England), to fill in this page or any other pages. Events: Up at 0200. Briefing at 0230. Almost missed breakfast. Altitude: 26,500 feet. High group, but, tail-end Charlie in the squadron. Target: Kassel. Ten 500-pound demos. Six-and-a-half hour flight over Belgium and, on the way back, over Holland. Account: Forty minutes before reaching the target, the #4 engine went out; pulling fifty inches of H and still trailed behind. Coming in over Belgium, the wing was hit by a few dozen FW 190s. We drove them off. Heavy flak along the route and especially over Kassel. Hit the target, huge smoke billows. Then, we had the hard time keeping up with the formation for two hours. Just before crossing the Holland coast, swarms of FW 190s hit us from all sides. We were straggling. Maginnis had to feather another engine. Lack of gas; no pump to transfer fuel. Down we dove, to almost sea level. Before that, a .20 mm shell burst in the oxygen bottles and knocked Bill and me for a loop. Another tore a hole in the bomb bay and three others made huge holes in the wings. Co-pilot's window cracked to pieces by a deflected bullet. Plane was literally filled with holes. More trouble, the interphone system was practically out and very troublesome. Injuries:

1. Tail gunner, hand bloody from shrapnel and shot in the right leg; bleeding slowly. His name is S/Sgt. Reeder, a good boy. He's well.
2. S/Sgt. McCurdy, WG, seriously wounded; shot in the neck and back. I administered most of the first aid. Bill gave him O₂.
3. S/Sgt. Richards, WG, shrapnel, light wounds in the forehead and back. He's okay.
4. Pilot, Maginnis, shot in the right thigh. He's well.
5. Top turret, T/Sgt. Glenn, cut up hands.
6. Co-pilot Lt. Peterson, got a pin-point shrapnel wound in the arm.

T/Sgt Long, in the ball turret; Harvey at the radio; Bill and I in the nose. Threw out all ammunition and waist guns; thought we were going to have to ditch. Crossed the Channel on two engines, slow speed and flying low; barely landed on an unfinished runway near East Ipswich, England. Landed finally on one engine and with only three minutes of gas left. McCurdy was taken to the hospital with the others. The rest staggered here and there until a home base plane came to bring us back. #726, *Poisonality*, sits there, a total wreck. I hope I never see that jinx ship ever no more, not at all again. God, thank you for helping us to come back all in one piece. We were lucky a thousand times today. **Pilot was the hero, 250 MPH dive**; also, trouble with bomb bay doors when diving.

#42-30210 – Our Aircraft

There are four sources of information about our aircraft: many official reports by the crew and other aircraft observers at the time, comments by still-living O’Neal, a detailed memoir by Joseph Spiga, and comments by Penn and Spiga to their wives, relayed to me. Below I combine all of these except the Joseph Spiga memoir, which I include separately.

First we were hit by flak in the #2 engine (left side inboard)

Similar to aircraft #42-30290 of the 96th Squadron, one of the 6 closest to us, described above, and perhaps as asserted by one of #42-30290’s members because the wing was 12 miles off-course, just after crossing the English Channel, at Knocke-Heist, our aircraft was hit by flak. This knocked out our #2 engine.

Lt. Reilly also of the 388th reported flak was slight to moderate, and at Knocke was from small batteries with varied accuracy.

O’Neal: “Somewhere over Belgium, no idea where, flak came up from the ground in 88mm, very high exploding shells.

“Many aircraft returned to base after a bombing run on three engines, with one out, so having one did not necessarily mean you should turn back. I don’t remember a single plane ever making it home safely after turning back. One that tried ended up ditching in the English Channel (though all were rescued).”

The engine could not be feathered and the adjoining fire could not be put out.

It was standard practice to feather an engine’s propeller blades after an engine goes out, to reduce drag, but this is done using oil pressure, and the oil pressure to that engine was also gone, so the engine could not be feathered. The propeller “wind-milling” slowed the aircraft down. A fire extinguisher system targeting that engine area was turned on, but could not put out the fire.

The Crew Chief Aborted the Mission

Joseph Spiga, the Flight Engineer, or chief mechanic, had the authority to abort the mission, and “did without hesitation.” He “told the pilot to pull out of formation and head back for our base.”

Penn’s report on Washburne (at right) notes that he, too, “Advised pilot to return to base.”

INDIVIDUAL CASUALTY QUESTIONNAIRE File # 3066

Name of crew member: WASHBURNE, Richard Patrick
Rank: 2nd Lt.
Serial number: 6-75000
Position: Crew (Bomber) (Washburne/Hubler): Co-Pilot

Did he bail out? No

Where? _____

If not, why not? inboard

Last contact or conversation just prior to or at time of loss of plane: Advised pilot to return to base.

Although O’Neal stated many aircraft completed their missions after losing one engine, in those cases they likely were able to feather the engine and there likely was no fire, but our aircraft with this one engine out, not feathered, and burning, was not likely to complete the mission.

Pilot Penn over-ruled the Flight Engineer and ignored the suggestion of the co-pilot.

Pilot Charles Penn had the authority to override the Flight Engineer, and did so stating he was “going to the target come hell or high water.”

A report from another plane observed:

“Lt. Penn’s plane was struck by flak either while crossing the coast at Knocke or shortly thereafter. The pilot apparently left formation as though to return to England on his own; he apparently could not keep up with the formation. The point at which the ship left the formation is variously estimated from 10 miles East of Knocke, all the way to Eupen.”

Actually due to slower speed our plane gradually fell behind the formation, but did not try to return, and stayed on course until well after Eupen.

What happened to four aircraft from our wing that were hit by flak at Knocke is described in Post Mission Report S3, below:

A/C 210 OF THE 388 WAS REPORTED SHOT DOWN BY FLAK NEAR KNOCKE
10 CHUTES WEJE REPORTED SIGHTED.
A/C 183 OF THE 96TH BG WAS HIT BY FLAK NEAR KNOCKE NXXX AND TURNED
OUT TO SEA FOLLOWED BY ENEMY FIGHTERS, IT WAS DITCHED NEAR THE
ENGLISH COAST AND 11 CREW MEMBERS WERE PICKED UP BY AIR SEA
RESCUE.0
1 B-17 WAS REPORTED WITH FIRE IN RAIXXX RADIO COMPARTMENT
APPROXIMATELY 51 DEGS 23' N 03 DEGS 237' E LATER REPORTED TO HAVE
BLOWN UP, 6 CHUTES WERE SEEN TO BE LANDING NERXXX NEAR WESTKAPELE
1 B-17F WAS SEEN TO DISINTEGRATE IN THE AIR NERXXX NEAR ANTWERP, 8
OR 9 CHUTES WERE SEEN.

Note that:

- A/C 210 (our aircraft) – “shot down near Knocke, 10 chutes,” - *but neither is true.*
- A/C 183 – “hit by flak, but turned out to sea followed by enemy fighters...ditched...all 11 crew members were picked up by air sea rescue.”
- ___ (probably #192, 1 of 12 described above) – “with fire...(probably from the oxygen bottle being hit) later reported to have blown up...6 chutes landing near Westkapelle (3 miles SE of Knocke)” – *actually 5 men bailed out and it didn’t blow up – it was able to fly to 6 miles off Dover where the rest of the crew was rescued.*
- ___ (probably #290, 1 of 12 described above) – “was seen to disintegrate in the air near Antwerp.”

i.e. both aircraft that sought to return to base, one being pursued, made it to the English side of the English Channel and all onboard were rescued.

Fighter aircraft approach, and we fall far behind the wing, losing altitude and distance

Spiga writes that soon after the engine was hit and we started to fall back, three Me-109s flew on our right, then turned in, but he started firing at them at 1,000 yards away, which was greater than their guns' range, and they pulled up.



And: “We kept flying ahead in the direction of our target area, but losing altitude and distance. The formation was but a blur in the far-off distance. We were now nothing but sitting ducks ready to be blown out of the sky as we moved slowly ahead.” Tail gunner Pacella also noted “at or after Brussels” having trouble keeping up, and the aircraft having to leave the formation.

We were hit by flak a second time, knocking out the #3 engine (right-side inboard)

Spiga writes: “We were again attacked by ground fire, and this time the No.3 engine was hit, and it caught on fire. The pilot and I went through the same procedure as with the No. 2 engine, but again with no success...We also had fire from each engine going through the waist windows, and out the tail. Three men in the tail section at this time bailed out.

O’Neal: “Flak from the ground hit the #3 engine, which was one of two on the right side, and flames were coming off the wing. The last thing I heard over the intercom was from the pilot or copilot talking between themselves saying “Feather 3,” to feather the third engine prop. We had to feather it when the engine was dead, or it would start windmilling and really slow us down. So #3 was feathered, and #4 was still turning. This still slowed us down, though, and we had to drop out of formation.”

Fighter aircraft attacked again

Spiga writes: “We were again attacked by a formation of German fighter planes.”

Adjustments were made, an Me-109 is on our tail, pilot goes into a dive to 2,000 feet

After the fighters left, at Chief Engineer Spiga’s suggestion, bombs were jettisoned to lighten the aircraft. Spiga also recommended a left 90 degree turn to try to meet the squadron on the return leg. Pilot Penn “made a left ninety degree turn, but soon decided that it was too late.”

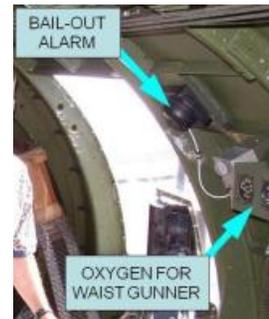
Spiga writes that Pilot Penn then put the aircraft into a dive, perhaps to try to shake off the fighter aircraft, or to be able to parachute out from a lower altitude, perhaps to reduce the distance falling during which one could be shot at while parachuting (as happened to others), and pulled out around 2,000 feet, and put the plane on automatic pilot (Penn told Spiga).

At this point the aircraft was near Nettersheim, Germany (right).



Bail Out

There is a bell that rings in many places that everyone can hear, and that is separate from the intercom, and the bail-out bell was rung (shown at right for the right waist gunner).



O’Neal: “After crossing the channel, as is standard procedure, we were all told to man our stations, and test fire our guns, and put our parachutes on.

“The pilot and copilot had parachutes recessed into the back of their chairs. They would have to clip these on to a harness they wore, but might not do this during the flight, because it could get hot against their backs and would not take long to attach, so might wait until necessary.

“The parachute for everyone else was a “chest pack,” and would be put on when instructed after crossing the English Channel. But the Top Turret Gunner, Spiga, could not fit in the turret, so would wait to attach his. Spiga improvised with a piece of chain so that when he went out, he would jump and hook the parachute to the harness with this. When in the Ball Turret, “Jake” also would not wear his parachute, and the procedure was for the waist gunners to help him out and to put his chute on.

“The Radio Operator would man a gun that popped up in a hatch in the roof. That hatch slid backward (in contrast to the side waist windows that slid forward), and a gun mounted in a harness with bungee cords would move into place, for shooting upward, only about 40 degrees from vertical, so could not shoot horizontally.

“Top Turret Gunner Spiga came out of the turret and, with the bomb bay doors opened, and manually released some bombs.

“I was in the Right Waist, and turned on the intercom, and heard the pilot tell the leader (Bombardier) “Initial Point” (*SW: the start of the bomb run, where the formation would make final alterations in course to pass over the target area, perhaps the lead plane would slow down to all get in a tight formation, it should be 12-15 miles from the target. It is odd for Penn to have said this, because they were still very far from Kassel*).

After we dropped out of formation, we began spinning to the right. I imagine the controls were shot away – there were an awful lot of cables running back and forth. German fighter planes followed the plane all the way down, shooting at it.

The first it seems to bail out were the Bombardier Pelkowski, who sits in the nose window to guide the bombs, through a door in the floor toward the back of his area, southwest of Cologne, and Jacobson (the Ball Turret, who pilot Penn had ordered instead be a nose gunner so was up with the Bombardier in the nose), “followed me immediately” (per Pelkowski), per the prescribed procedure for each position.

After Pelkowski and Jacobson bailed out, it seems the 3 from the tail did so next:

O'Neal: “We went down about 2.5 hours after we took off. We had helped Jake out of the ball turret, we had to crank this around, a manual drill we had been through to open the hatch door, and he pops right out.

“What made me jump was the flames coming from below the wing under the #3 engine (closest on the right side, which was out), being sucked in through my window, right in my face. The flames made the insulation and other flammable things in the waist catch fire. I did not see flames on the left side.

“You didn't jump out the window, because there was a risk of hitting the tail. If you went out the window, you had to get your head down pretty quick or would be hit by the tail. There were flames coming in anyway.

“The exit door for the waist is on the right side, 10 feet forward of the tail wheel, and 8 feet behind my station.

“We were already hooked up with parachutes, when the bell rang, it is very loud. I didn't hear a verbal call to abandon ship, because by then the communications were shot out, so there was no way to communicate to anyone in the rear of the ship.

“I didn't jump until 2,000 feet because we were in a dive spinning right, so losing altitude, and it took time to get to the door, you couldn't just run out the door, due to the centrifugal force, which was tremendous, it was a real fight to get to the door. I was already on my way out when the bell rang. I expect the pilot or copilot were trying to straighten it out to make it easier for everyone to get out.

The tail gunner Pacella pulled the door release, the door flew off, and he tumbled out first out of the waist. I went out right after him. The last of us three was Left-Waist Gunner Colonna, who was pretty badly burned around his face, since in the path of the fire (*when spinning right, the left side flames would come in*). I don't know much about the front of the airplane.”

Sixth to bail out, and second-to-last, was pilot Penn. Seventh and last out was top-turret gunner Spiga, through the bomb bay. It appears Spiga did not hear the bell go off because he was up in the turret, with the noise of his shooting.

Spiga: “That I had no power (*in the top turret*), it was time to get out of the turret, and when I dropped down on the deck, I saw the pilots head in the hatch below. I reached down, and tapped him on the head, and asked him if he was getting ready to bail out. I did not hear any bailout signal. He told me that he was. So I asked him what our altitude was, and he replied that it was 1,800 feet, and that the plane was on automatic pilot but that it was losing altitude. With that the pilot disappeared.

The Three Left on the Plane

Virginia Penn: “He (Pilot Lt. Penn) tried to get everyone out before he went out, but there were a few of them that would not go, perhaps because they didn’t have enough experience with parachuting. My husband always told me that some of the men in the plane refused to jump. Absolutely he encouraged everyone to jump. That is what upset him. They all would have been safe if they had gotten out when he told them to.”

It is possible that some of the 4 men in the front of the plane other than the pilot (co-pilot, navigator, radio operator, bombardier) had heard from the prior missions about German fighters and soldiers on the ground shooting at men hanging from parachutes, making them resistant to jumping.

Quotes below are from the Missing Air Crew Reports (MACRs) by our surviving crew members.

Navigator Barryhill

He was “Last scene at hatch with bombardier.” “I think he was killed by machine gun fire. He waited for bombardier to jump and nose attack took place.” “Body found among the wreckage of the aircraft.”

The navigator seems to have moved toward the correct exit door, this in the instructions above, but was shot by one of the fighters probably during descent (assuming Pelkowski and Jacobson bailed out after the dive), and never left the aircraft.

Radio Operator Nadler

Last contact “Was when he was called upon to drain Tokyo Tanks (internally-mounted self-sealing fuel tanks used in the B-17 Flying Fortress bomber during World War II). Last seen in the radio room. Nadler affirmed the fact that bombs had been dropped. I last saw him coming out of the burning radio room. He was very excitable, and was lying near the ball turret, trapped by flames coming through the radio room doors and through left waist window. Then evidently he bailed out, but too late. His body landed 50 feet clear of the plane wreckage and intact. His chute covered his body and a hole with his imprint was a few feet away. Upon capture, I was taken to the plane, and his body was there, with his dog tags around his neck.”

V.Penn: “Chuck said one guy used wrong exit and jumped into the fire.”

O’Neal: “The Radio Operator had been shot by machine gun fire from the German planes, that came through the walls.”

The Radio Operator, as shown in the diagram before, was supposed to exit forward through the bomb bay, but due to fire in the radio room went back toward the waist, and was temporarily trapped with fire in the back, too. He eventually exited, but too late for his chute to help him.

Co-Pilot Washburne

Colonna: "He was screaming over the intercom just before it was shot away."

O'Neal: "Heard voice just before ship caught fire. I also saw his body and dog tags near burnt ship after I was captured."

Spiga: "I saw him last seated in the co-pilots seat - My Turret (Top) went dead. I crawled out. Pilot was down in hatch getting ready to bail out. I moved up to co-pilot to see if he was injured. His face (sweating) was turned to the right, his hands were moving, giving me the impression that he was getting ready to bail out. I picked up my chute and moved into the bomb bay, fastened my chute, and lowered myself. Then I heard Co-pilot cry, scream (twice) **"God, Please help me someone."** I raised myself on catwalk, intending to help him, but the plane started to turn on its side. I dropped out, plane immediately exploded. Later I saw his body about 35 feet from burning wreckage." "Radio Operator and Co-Pilot blown out of plane."

Where was he when last seen? I saw him last seated in Co-pilots seat. - My Turret (Top) went
~~Any noteworthy information:~~ dead. I crawled out. Pilot was down in hatch getting ready to bail out. I
moved up to Co-pilot to see if he was injured. his face (sweating) was turned to the right. his
hands were moving. giving me the impression that he was getting ready to bail out. I picked up
my chute + moved into bomb bay, fastened my chute + lowered myself. Then I heard Co-pilot
cry, scream (twice) God Please help Me Someone. I raised myself on catwalk intending
Source: To help him but plane started to turn on its side. I dropped out, plane immediately exploded.
Any explanation of his fate based in part or wholly on supposition: _____
I saw his body about 35 ft. from burning wreckage.

Spiga's wife: "Joe climbed all the way back up and looked forward, but when he saw him, he realized he couldn't help him. Then the plane was tipping, and so would never have gotten him out anyway. But this always bothered him. He talked about it a lot.

"The co-pilot had been shot in the face. That's all I want to say." "Do you know something else but just don't want to say it?" "Yes." "What is that?" "Well, he said the whole side of his face was shot off."

V.Penn – "I think he told me the copilot had been hit, but not fatally at the moment, he said it was a bullet, not flak that hit him. He said the copilot was wounded and couldn't do anything. He offered to help him get out, and the copilot wouldn't do it.

He (Penn) was very upset that he lost crew members. The only thing he ever emphasized was that if they had jumped when he told them to, they all would have lived.

Burial

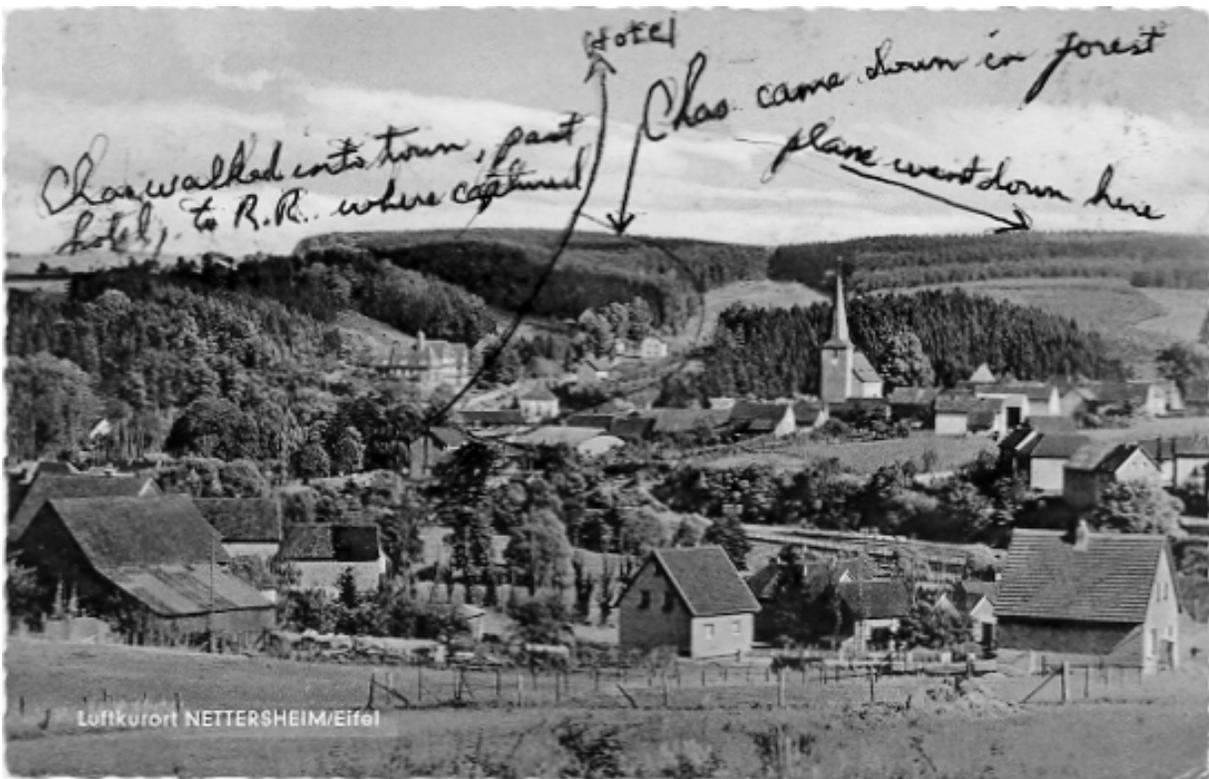
The three deceased were buried at Nettersheim Cemetery, Nettersheim, which is in the Eifel region of Germany, with Washburne in Grave #801 (estimated; hard to read number), Nadler in Grave 800, Barryhill 802, and unknown in 803. They were interred on August 8, 1943. This apparently was the custom, as indicated in an Individual Casualty Questionnaire by Engineer James Ragland for Radio Operator Francis J. Schaedler, 42-5820 that crashed the same day:

Any explanation of his fate based in part or wholly on supposition: _____
BURIED NEAR WHERE PLANE CRASHED (USUAL CUSTOM)

Seven years later, around October 21, 1950, when Washburne's family was gathered in their house preparing to go to the cemetery to bury Washburne's father (who died October 19, 1950), there was a knock at the door, and a serviceman there said: "We have Lt. Richard Washburne's body in a casket in a truck outside, where can we put him?" The body had been dug up from Germany and returned to the family. His mother apparently almost had a heart attack.

Where the pilot, aircraft, and three left aboard landed

Pilot Penn stayed in the service and from 1959-64 was stationed in Germany, and with his wife Virginia returned to Nettersheim, bought a postcard, and marked on it where he and the aircraft landed, shown below. (His son Chuck was kind enough to scan and email SW this image).



The Seven after Parachuting

O'Neal: I only took 3-4 swings in my parachute and hit the ground (so not a long drop). I hit the ground in a pasture somewhere, actually in a forest of fir trees. I hit the ground and my watch said 9 AM. This was shortly after the plane hit the ground. I did not watch the plane go down, because I was looking around at my own situation. I hit the ground pretty hard, so I had back problems for 3-4 months.

I spent that night in a Russian labor camp, and the next day they sent a guy in to get me, to take me to interrogation. There I saw the rest of the guys. I acted like I didn't know who they were, which is what we were supposed to do. I saw Penn, too.

After a year in prison camp, they called Spiga, Colonna, Pacella, and me and took us in to meet with a German, and he told us it was time to tell them who the 4th body found was. And we could not tell them. There wasn't a fourth on our plane."

"Pelkowski wasn't captured for 3-4 days, and managed to get west into Belgium, and thought he would be safe, and went to a Dutch person's house. They let him stay there, but the guy there didn't like Americans, so he shot Pelkowski in the knee. Eventually Pelkowski was captured."

V. Penn: "After parachuting out, he (Penn) landed in a tree, tangled up with the parachute. He got himself out of this. He had seen the village of Nettersheim from plane, so started walking to it. One other crew member (SW: probably Spiga) landed near him. He told that crew member to go to town and give himself up. When asked years later why he told the crew member this, he said "Because he would have been shot if I hadn't told him that. This is what the commander was supposed to instruct the crew." We were enemies of the Germans.

"He then walked along the road to the village by himself. Perhaps it would have been too scary to the villagers if they both were together. He bumped into Roman Catholic priest, and since everyone over there walks, I suppose the priest was walking. The priest took him to a small hotel. The woman there called the police and turned him in.

"When my husband was stationed in Germany from 1959-64, we drove up to Nettersheim. We went to visit a little hotel where he had been taken. He saw the same lady who turned him in. When she saw him she turned white as a sheet and screamed. She never calmed down, she cried and sobbed, so we left. We didn't think she felt bad for turning him in, but instead felt frightened. He had hoped to also find the priest, and asked a woman, but learned the priest had died.

"He drew on an aerial-view postcard of the town where he came down and where the plane came down. These are a little distance apart.

"Being in the prison camp was not fun either. The 21 months in the prison camp added to the crash was horrible."

Mission 80 Overall Results

Of the 119 aircraft in the 1st Wing, 94 reached the target, and 23 had mechanical problems, 2 were hit by the enemy, and of these 25 with mechanical or enemy problems, 6 aircraft and aircrews, 4 after reaching the target, were lost. The 23 with mechanical problems are 19%. The MIA numbers include many KIA or WIA.

Of the 67 aircraft in the 4th Wing, 40 reached the target, and 23 had mechanical problems (as noted above), 2 were hit by the enemy, and of these 25 with mechanical or enemy problems, 6 aircraft and aircrews were lost, 1 after reaching the target.

1st Wing Damage (Bombing Effectiveness) results

The 1st Wing had 94 B-17s drop 680 500 G.P. fused 1/10 second nose and 1/100 sec. tail bombs, and 378 x 250 British incendiaries from 23,500-26,000 feet at 9:10am - 9:17AM. **The heaviest concentration of bombs fell on the living and accessory buildings southwest of the plant, and extended across the buildings of the Spinnfaser A.G. textile plant.**

Also damaged were:

- At least 2 large buildings of the aircraft components factory (“seriously damaged”)
- The Feka factory for special machine tools
- A large building of the Bahr Ludwig paper factory was 25% destroyed
- Slight roof damage was caused to a multi-bay building of the Salzman factory devoted to linen, sailcloth, and cotton weaving.
- An unknown item had a violent explosion causing a column of smoke 4,000 feet high.

At right is a picture looking back at Kassel, at the cloud from something that exploded where the bombs were dropped July 30, 1943 by the 1st Wing (not ours):



4th Wing Damage (Bombing Effectiveness) results

The 4th Wing had 37 B-17s drop 260 500 G.P. fused 1/10 second nose and 1/100 sec. tail bombs, and 146 x 250 British incendiaries from 22,000-24,300 feet at 9:26am-9:28AM. **One large assembly shop was severely damaged by high explosives and fire, and another smaller building suffered damage.**

Three aircraft dropped 16 250 I.B. and 20 x 500 G.P. with unobserved results on targets of opportunity.

1st Wing

Bomber Group	Aircraft					Men		
	Sent	Reach.	Mech.	Weath.	Lost	KIA	WIA	MIA
91	20	17	3	0	2	0	0	20
303	23	19	4	0	1	1	4	0
351	21	16	5	0	0	0	4	0
379	24	13	9	2	2	10	1	22
381	18	18	0	0	1	0	1	10
384	13	11	2	0	0	0	0	0
119	94	23	2	6	11	10	52	

Reach.=Reached target

Mech.=Mechanical or Personnel failures; Weath=Weather+other.

KIA=Killed in Action, WIA=Wounded; MIA=Missing.

"4th" Wing (2nd of two)

Bomber Group	Aircraft					Men		
	Sent	Reach.	Mech.	Weath.	Lost	KIA	WIA	MIA
94	15	10	5	0	0	0	0	0
95	6	3	1	2	1	0	0	5
96	10	4	5	1	2	0	0	10
100	17	14	3	0	0	0	0	0
385	7	2	5	0	0	0	0	0
388	12	7	3	2	3	0	1	30
67	40	22	5	6	0	1	45	

388th Bomber Group Results

Our 388th Bomber Group, as shown below, initially planned to send 14 aircraft, 3-4 from each of its 4 squadrons, but 2 did not take-off, resulting in sending 12. The further right table shows the takeoff and return times for all the aircraft. A 15th aircraft piloted by Bensel seems to have not taken off. This shows the 6 that completed the mission returned at: 11:50 am, 11:56, 11:57, 11:58, 11:59, and 12:00.

The 3 lost were Penn, Kelley, and Pickard.

388th Bomber Group Aircraft Sent 3-4 from Each of its 4 Squadrons 12 Sent after 2 Did Not Take Off

#	Squ.	A/C #	Pilot	Status
1	560	42-30349	Jarrendt	
2	"	n/a	Melville	No T.O.
3	"	s/n 5899	Beeby	Aborted
4	"	42-30478	Wisehart	
5	561	42-30210	Penn	Shot Dn
6	"	42-30362	Swift	Aborted
7	"	42-30350	Bailey	
8	562	42-30230	Willson	
9	"	s/n 5942	Cox	
10	"	295	Rodgers	No T.O.
11	"	42-30213	Williams	
12	563	42-30222	Kramer	Aborted
13	"	42-30238	Kelley	Shot Dn
14	"	42-30202	Pickard	Shot Dn

PILOT	A/O	O/S	FLYING TIME		
			ATD	ATR	TOT.
BAILEY	30350	X	0537	1200	6.4
PENN	30310	V	0537		5.0
SWIFT	30362	U	0538	0852	3.2
JARRENDT	30349	W	0529	N5L	6.4
BEEBY	5899	D	0530	0855	3.4
WISEHART	30478	L	0530	N50	6.3
WILSON	30230	L	0531	1158	6.5
WILLIAMS	30213	H	0533	1157	6.4
COX	5942	U	0531	1159	6.5
BENSEL	5984	J			
MELVILLE	3062	Z			
RODGERS	3295	B			
KELLEY	30238	V	0532		5.0
PICKARD	30202	Q	0534		5.0
KRAMER	30222	T	0536	0908	4.5

The table below shows for our 12 aircraft, including the 6 aircraft that completed the mission, the Enemy Aircraft ("E/A") Opposition encountered, and that they shot down ("Destroyed," "D") 3 enemy aircraft, one by a 562nd squadron BT gunner, 1 probable ("P"), 1 damaged. Other columns describe the flak encountered.

TARGET _NITY _____ DATE July 30, 1943

PILOT	SQDN	SHIP NO.	E/A OPPOSITION				FLAK							FIGHTER SUPPORT	WEATHER	REMARKS			
			INTEN-SITY.	D	P	DAM	NO & TYPE	LOCATION	INTENSE	MODERATE	MEAGER	NIL	ALT. IN 1000 FT.				AUTO	GUN	ACCURACY
Swift	561	362	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	None		Abortive (See Report)
Beeby	560	5899	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	None		Abortive (See Report)
Kramer	563	222	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	0	0	0	Fair	None		Abortive (See Report)
Wisehart	560	478	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	0	0	0	Accurate	Flak in Kassel area		Flak in Tail Section
Cox	562	942	20	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	0	0	0	Accurate	1 Spot P-47		Flak in Tail Section
Willson	562	230	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	22	0	0	0	Accurate	On Way Out		Flak in Tail Section
Bailey	561	250	26	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	0	0	0	Accurate	On Way Back		Flak in Tail Section
Williams	562	213	35	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	23	0	0	0	Accurate	On Way Back		Flak in Tail Section
Jarrendt	560	349	20-25	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	22	0	0	0	Accurate	P-47 Expected		Rattle Damage
Penn	561	210																	
Pickard	563	202																	
Kelley	563	238																	

388th Completely Missed the Target (but may have had to follow the lead plane)

Per the official report (below left): "None of the 388th aircrafts' bombs struck the target. Some of our bombs fell short, and others to the right of the target. All of the 388th's bomb bursts appear to have been within 500 yards of the target. About 10-12 bombs from one of the other groups hit the target" (of the 260 dropped?). This is also shown in the picture at right, which shows the target area again, but the white "puffs" below and to the right of it are the 388th's bomb explosions, almost all far off the target.

HEADQUARTERS
388TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)
APO 634

July 30, 1943

SUBJECT: S-2 Report on Kassel Mission.

TO : CO.

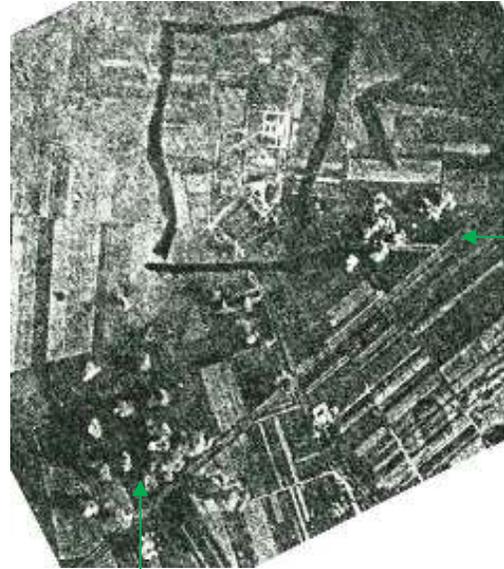
12 ships of this Group took off between 0529 and 0548 hours. The 4th Bomb Wing put three groups in the air for this mission, each Combat Wing furnishing one Group. The 388th furnished the second element of the low squadron and 9 planes of the high squadron, while the 96th furnished the rest of our Group. This Group was the low Group in the Wing formation. Group and Wing assembly were effected without any marked difficulty, and the briefed route was followed throughout.

3 of our ships aborted. Lt Beeby, flying Ship No. 5899, turned back over the field at 0755 hours from 51° 43' N - 02° 10' E because the No. 2 and 4 superchargers kept running away. He landed at 0900. Lt Kramer, flying No. 222, turned back over the Channel at 0805 hours from 51° 20' N - 03° 30' E because his No. 2 and 3 superchargers could not be controlled. He landed at 0906. Lt Swanson, flying Ship No. 262, turned back over the Channel at 0805 from 51° 33' N - 02° 53' E because his right-hand oxygen system in the nose of the ship was completely out. He landed at 0930.

The assigned target was an Aircraft Factory located Southeast of Kassel in the suburb named Waldau. It is a Fiesler plant converted to FW 190 production. None of our bombs struck the target. Some of our bombs fell short and others to the right of the target. All of our bomb-bursts appear to have been within 500 yards of the target area. About 10 or 12 bombs from one of the other Groups hit the target.

From 50 to 75 enemy aircraft, mostly 109's with a few 190's, were encountered along the route. The attacks commenced a few minutes after the Coast had been passed on the way in and continued on the way to the target and out. None of the attacks was vigorously pressed home. The attacks broke off at the target area and commenced again on the route back.

Flak encountered along the route at a number of different points varied from meager to moderate. Over the target flak



←“None of our bombs struck the target. Some of our bombs fell short, and others to the right of the target...About 10-12 bombs from one of the other Groups hit the target.”

S-7

PRELIMINARY PHOTO INTERPRETATION SHOWS NO HITS ON TARGET CLOSEST BURST BEING ABOUT 300 TO 400 YDS FROM AP. SOME EVIDENCE SEEM TO INDICATE THAT CREWS BOMBED ON SMOKE CLOUD CAUSED BY 1ST AIR DIVISION BOMBING.

For the 388th, because not one bomb hit the target, the mission was in some ways a failure.

Post-Target Encounters

As noted above, waiting for the bombers on their return home were the fighters from all four of the Jagdflieger defensive zones -between 100 and 200 German fighters.

Midway through the engagement, 107 P-47s of the 4th, 56th, and 78th FGs arrived on the scene over Bocholt, Germany, to prevent further bombers being lost. For the first time, they were carrying auxiliary fuel tanks, which were drop tanks they would use for the flight over, then drop when in combat, and these greatly enhanced their range, contributing to heavy German fighter losses that day. Germany as the enemy was not yet accustomed to fighter escort penetration beyond the coastal fringe. The US fighters claimed 24 aircraft shot down ("they claim 25-4-8 Luftwaffe aircraft"), including three by Maj Eugene Roberts of the 78th FG. 7 P-47's are lost and 1 is damaged beyond repair; casualties are 6 MIA. < <http://www.basher82.nl/Data/margraten/horton.htm>:

Per Edward C. Piech:

The sixteen out of twenty-one 351st Flying Fortresses that completed the mission prevailed over, "moderate but accurate flak." Seventy-five fighters greeted the group's planes as they crossed back out over the Channel. These interceptors made passes at the "Queens" in formations of up to eight, a tactic that the *Luftwaffe* developed especially to counter the American bomber streams.

Fieseler works later bombing results and eventual dismantling

Per Wikipedia on the Fieseler works

"The July 28, 1943 hit mostly residential areas and adjacent staple AG> But on October 22, 1943, the British RAF attacked again killing 10,000 people. All industrial enterprises were heavily damaged. Attacked again April 19, 1944."

On 10/14/47, the Allied military governors, with this plant on their dismantling plan, dismantled it.

MACR Summary

In this summary of the Missing Air Crew Reports (MACRs) for the 11 aircraft that crashed with missing crews (excluding 42-5820 that has missing crew but returned ok), and this for all 186 aircraft sent from both the 1st and 4th Wings, and 138 that did not abort, one sees the following:

B-17s That Crashed with Missing Crew Members On the July 30, 1943 Bombing Mission to Kassel, Germany

#	Time	B Grp	Squ.	A/C #	MACR Pilot	Result by Position										Comment
						P	CP	N	B	RO	BT	T	W1	W2	TT	
Inbound																
1	8:07	95th	336th	42-30192	217	Jutzi			2 killed while parachuting						Ditched after 2 jumped	
2	8:15	96th	338th	42-30290	145	Pelousi	K		K		K	K	K		*Shot down	
3	8:20	379th	525th	42-5829	1361	Hoveland	K	K				K			*Shot down	
4	9:00	388th	561st	42-30210	3264	Penn		K	K	K					*Shot down	
5	9:16	379th	524th	42-29746	1355	Kain	K	K		K	K	K		K	*Shot down	
6	9:15	388th	563rd	42-30238	3133	Kelley									Landed in Germany	
Outbound																
7	9:50	381st	532nd	42-3100	129	Post							K		Crash landed	
8	10:05	91st	323rd	41-24399	148	McCannon			K	K	K	K	K	K	K	6 shot parachuting
9	10:25	91st	323rd	42-29916	147	Miles						K		K		*Shot down
10	10:50	388th	563rd	42-30202	3125	Pickard			All parachuted, POWs						*Shot down	
11	11:15	379th	527th	42-3212	1364	Wallace	K	K	K	K	K		K	K	K	Crashed in England

Positions are Pilot, Co-Pilot, Navigator, Bombardier, Radio Operator, Ball Turret, Turret, Waist Left, Waist Right, and Tail Turret. Times 8:15 estimated.
Ref: From the National Archives, Publication M1380, Missing Air Crew Reports (MACRs) of the US Army Air Forces 1941-1948.

Observations include:

- 12 aircraft (8.7%) were downed, 6 before the target, and 6 afterwards.
- Either the pilot or copilot was killed on 4 of the 6 in-bound flights and on all of those attacked over southeastern Belgium, but on only 1 of the 6 outbound flights. Perhaps this is because the aircraft were attacked from head-on on the in-bound leg, due to the direction of the sun, and from the back on the outbound (direction of the sun again).

Blitz Week Revisited

In just 7 days, General Ira C. Eaker of the Eighth Air Force cut his number of serviceable B-17s from 330 to less than 200.

Per Edward C. Piech:

“Blitz Week cost the Eighth 105 heavy bombers: 80 lost over the Continent and 17 damaged beyond repair upon their return, and about 1,000 experienced airmen. Although the weather was cooperative in the days following the second raid on Kassel, the VIII Bomber Command did not resume heavy bomber operations until August 12. The level of combat ready aircraft had fallen below the maxim dictated by Gen. Eaker. Also, six days of harrowing raids had left Gen. Anderson's crews mentally exhausted.”

Conclusions

Background Summary

1. The group trained in Sioux City, then in June 1942 flew to Knettishall, England as the 388th Bomber Group, 561st Squadron, which was under the 8th Air Force.
2. Bomber Groups were high-risk outfits, as the 388th Group with at any one time 36 aircraft, and for any one mission 360 men in the air, in 2 years:
 - Lost 91 aircraft, i.e. all of its aircraft 2.5 times over.
 - Had 524 men KIA, every person 1.5 times, plus still has 43 missing.
 - Lost an entire squadron (9 aircraft, the 563rd) on September 6, 1943.
3. They flew on their first mission together July 17, 1943 to Amsterdam
4. After flying this one first mission, they were part of Eighth Air Force General Eaker's costly "Blitz Week," during which 80 bombers crashed over Europe, 1,000 men died, and likely many thousands became POWs.
5. They flew their second mission to Hannover Monday July 26, when their aircraft received 303 holes.

July 1943						
S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Our aircraft was shot down and three crew members died because:

1. Bad weather on July 27 or July 28 when 300 bombers were sent to Kassel allowed only 49 bombers to strike Kassel, and a 7/23 raid was also not successful, perhaps requiring Mission 80.
2. Fog on the morning of July 30 prevented a fighter escort from accompanying the bombers sent to hit Wevelgem, a German base near the English Channel where fighter planes would take off from to attack our group, and only 11 of 24 aircraft sent on a separate mission to hit Woensrecht reached it, so our group would not benefit from having the threat from these fighters reduced.
6. Our aircraft was assigned to the most vulnerable low spot in its group called "Tail end Charlie," maybe in the lowest group in the total wing of 67 aircraft.
7. 39% of the aircraft in their wing aborted due to mechanical problems soon after takeoff and returned to base, leaving a smaller wing.
8. The leader of the lead aircraft of the wing took the wing 12 miles off course, and over a higher flak area near Knocke, and again near Antwerp, vs. the earlier wing reported going over less flak.
9. They were hit by flak at Knocke, along with three other aircraft in their wing, and others in the earlier wing, that knocked out the #2 engine and oil pressure to it.
10. The #2 engine's oil pressure line was also hit, making it not possible to feather the prop, and causing the aircraft to fall behind the others. The fire extinguisher system for the engine also did not work.
11. After the Chief Engineer, who had the authority to abort the mission, did so "without hesitation," and after co-pilot Washburne advised the pilot to return to base, Pilot Penn overruled the Chief Engineer and announced he was going to the target "Come hell or high water."

Since the 2 of the 4 aircraft that were hit by Flak at Knocke and in a similar situation returned to England and were able to make it almost all the way across the English Channel before ditching, then had everyone onboard safely rescued, it seems this decision by Penn to continue to the target was the main reason for the crash and three deaths.

12. The aircraft was hit by flak again near Antwerp that knocked out the #3 engine.
13. The #3 engine, too, could not be feathered, nor its fire extinguished.
14. The fire in both inboard engines, or fighter aircraft bullets, eventually caused fire onboard in the aft portion, and perhaps forward near the navigator.
15. One fighter aircraft attacked the plane as the pilot put the aircraft into a dive, to get to a lower altitude of 2,000 feet to bail out, likely:
 - a. Shooting and killing the navigator as he prepared to bail out.
 - b. Making a 20mm (0.8” diameter) bullet hit co-pilot Washburne in the left side of his face or explode near his face.

Of the four aircraft that were attacked by fighter planes over Belgium after hit by flak and leaving the formation, 3 pilots and 3 copilots were killed, making it appear the pilot and copilot were vulnerable to frontal attacks.

Some may have refused to abandon the plane when told to by the pilot, perhaps from hearing stories of parachutes being shot by fighter planes, or because not comfortable jumping, but it appears the pilot did not give the signal to abandon ship until the three had been shot.

16. The Radio Operator, rather than go forward through the bomb bay to exit, went backward, may have tripped over the ball turret, was temporarily trapped by flames, then got out, but too late for his parachute to open.
17. Washburne, despite being shot, was still alive and talking. The pilot’s wife says Washburne refused help from the pilot, who offered to help, but this may have been before the bailout, as Washburne’s last words were: “God, please someone help me, God, please someone help me.”
18. Spiga to his credit looked in on Washburne before jumping, and waited for him, then hearing Washburne cry for help, climbed back up through the bomb bay to the catwalk, but had to drop out when the plane began to roll.
19. The aircraft then exploded, and came down in Nettersheim.
20. They may have been shot down eventually, but the three may have lived.

It is unfortunate these ten young men experienced this.

Follow-Up

Pilot Charles H. Penn

Pilot Charles Hughes Penn, Born June 25, 1916, Died April 11, 1966

Ref: <http://veteransmemorial.us/bios/heroes.php?name=PENN,CHARLES,H.>

“Charles Hughes Penn was from Louisville, Kentucky. He grew up there. He was the youngest of 11 children born to Everett Sleet Penn and Anita Court Penn. Seven of his older siblings died in infancy. He entered the Army-Air Corp as an enlisted man in 1942 and became a flight officer candidate. He was commissioned a 2Lt and trained as a B-17 pilot. He served in the African, Middle East and Western European Theatre. **His B-17 was shot down on a bombing mission over Germany in mid 1943 and he spent 21 months as prisoner of war.** He was released after the war and was separated from the Army Air Corp in 1945 and he remained in the reserves. He married Evelyn Virginia Penn in 1947 and became the father of three sons and one daughter.



“During the Korean Conflict, he was recalled to active duty. He flew transport planes during the conflict and spent 18 months in the Korean Theatre. He remained on active duty in the Air Force and trained as a civil engineer. He was assigned as civil engineer to Webb Air Force Base in Big Spring in 1963. His family resided off base and his sons attended Big Spring schools.

“His unit the 6003th Support Squadron, 13th Air Force was mobilized to Vietnam in October 1965. **He was killed in a non-hostile accidental homicide event on April 11, 1966 in Quang Nam, South Vietnam.** There are no details on the event. After his death, the family remained in Big Spring for several years.”

Chuck Penn, Jr.: “He died from two gunshot wounds to the head. They initially labeled it a suicide, but then realized it was unlikely anyone could shoot themselves two times in the head, so changed it to a homicide.”

O’Neal: “Pelkowski on one of the prior two missions (in 1943, 22 years earlier) went up to Penn on the catwalk, and told him someday someone was going to take a machine gun and blow him away. So that he died like this doesn’t surprise me at all.”

Dick’s Potential Wife Sallie Walsh

Ref: <http://www.winnetkahistory.org/gazette/winnetkaatoz/v.htm>

“Each Memorial Day the names of Winnetka (IL) servicemen who lost their lives during this nation's armed conflicts are read during a moving ceremony. But aside from Memorial Day, few people take the time to examine the lists of names and the art on Winnetka's war memorial, a cenotaph on the Village Green. It was dedicated Nov. 13, 1927, to recognize the 10 men who died during World War I, the 81 men and one woman (Millicent Yates) who did not return from service during World War II, the two who died in the Korean conflict and the six who were lost in the Vietnam conflict.

“Although there has been no comprehensive research tracing the lives of those listed on the cenotaph, longtime Winnetka residents recall how their own lives touched some of the names.

“When the name of Richards P. Washburne is intoned, it revives a poignant memory for Sallie Van Arsdale. Mrs. Van Arsdale grew up on Westmoor Road in Winnetka as Sallie Ellen Welsh, a graduate of The Skokie School and North Shore Country Day School, class of 1940. A classmate had a brother, "Dick" Washburne.

“At the time of the Pearl Harbor attack in December 1941, Richards P. Washburne was a junior at Williams College in Massachusetts. He volunteered the next year and joined the U.S. Army Air Corps. By then, **he and Sallie Welsh had talked of marriage after the war.** Washburne was a co-pilot on a B17 bomber that was shot down on July 30, 1942, over Kassel, Germany. His death officially reached Winnetka in the fall of 1942. **Mrs. Van Arsdale was wearing his Air Corps wings.**

O’Neal, Jacobson, Spiga

Marion O’Neal, born April 2, 1925, stayed in the Air Force for 27 years, and in 2008 was 83 years old, living northwest of Atlanta, and when called was enjoying his great grandkids.

“Jake,” Edward Friedholp Jacobson, Jr. (10/29/19-9/5/93), was shot down over Germany on a later mission to Hanover. But he lived to be 74, and passed away in 1993, was cremated, and his remains are at Memorial Gardens Cemetery in Grand Junction, CO.

Joseph Spiga (9/14/14-9/29/05) – built his wife a home with his own hands. He is described by his daughter as a rather quiet man. He lived to 91 years old.