

“In some way or another, the ball turret gunner was taken out of that damaged turret before the landing. He, too, managed to survive his wounds.” (This was William D. Scott.)

Lt. Duffy and his co-pilot demonstrated exceptional skill in landing their craft in a tricycle landing without even touching that lowered turret on the runway! Simply amazing!

2 February 1944

V-1 Sites, Watten, France

“Military Installations” were the words used to describe the target for today, which we later learned meant V-1 launching sites. The mission was flown under severe icing conditions and a 10/10th cloud cover over both France and southern England. Over the target area moderate accurate flak was encountered with several of our ships suffering minor flak damage. One 506th Squadron plane crashed upon return on the outskirts of Eastbourne.

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #41-24282 Bar-Y, Bolin	RUTH-LESS	MACR #6385
506th Squadron Crew:	Entire crew KIA	
BOLIN, JAMES O. ASN 0-424895	Pilot KIA, buried Cambridge (F-3-83)	1st Lt. Pine Bluff, Arkansas
WULFF, ORVILLE L. ASN 0-675462	Co-pilot KIA, buried in U.S.	1st Lt. De Smet, South Dakota
ACKERMAN, EDWARD J. ASN 0-798720	Navigator KIA	2nd Lt. Brooklyn, New York
SCHWAB, HAROLD W. ASN 0-733360	Bombardier KIA, buried in NYC	1st Lt. Bronx, New York
BALES, JAMES H. ASN 34283420	Engineer Injured, KIA	T/Sgt. Dayton, Tennessee
YURICK, CHESTER W. ASN 31140518	Radio Oper. KIA, buried Cambridge (F-3-4)	T/Sgt. Needham, Massachusetts
WILSON, JAMES L. ASN 14124998	Ball Turret Injured, KIA	S/Sgt. Easley, South Carolina
MALOY, AUBREY J. ASN 34335159	RW Gunner KIA	S/Sgt. Hacoda, Alabama
STRAIT, RALPH E. ASN 13074162	LW Gunner KIA, at Cambridge (D-1-75)	S/Sgt. Saluvia, Pennsylvania
DEWALD, GEORGE M. ASN 13124616	Tail Turret KIA	S/Sgt. Norristown, Pennsylvania

Note: All of Bolin's crew were buried temporarily at a military cemetery at Brookwood Woking, Surry, England. Other details: This B-24 was named "Ruth-less" after the wife of its original pilot, Frank Slough. Schwab was a veteran of the 1 August 1943 Ploesti raid.

Lt. Bolin, pilot of A/C #41-24282, became separated from the formation during the return. While lowering altitude in trying to find a base in southern England, he crashed into a low hill inland from Eastbourne. Eight of the crew were killed instantly, while Sgts. Wilson and Bales were taken to Princess Alice hospital where they both died later that same day.

Ruth Wulff Swanson, sister of Orville Wulff, wrote: “Our parents did receive a letter from someone back in 1944 who apparently was either related to or who knew the Radio Operator (Chester W. Yurick) who lived a short time after the crash that day – long enough to tell the details of the crash. If our information was correct, they had accomplished their mission and were then attacked and lost two to three engines, and the instrument panel was badly damaged. They were too badly (#3 only?) damaged to return to Shipdham, so opted to attempt a landing on the coast of Eastbourne. However, being a British field, they had to establish identification before clearance for a landing, had to circle back around Eastbourne (which was covered in a heavy cloud bank). They were cleared for landing, and needed to complete the final circle and land. In that final circle, without instruments, they came in too low and couldn’t clear the hill (Butt’s Brow). They crashed just below the crest of it.”

A detailed description of this crash is included in the book “Eighth Air Force Bomber Stories” by Ian McLachlan and Russell J. Zorn (Patrick Stephens, Ltd., 1991). See Chapter 8 “Hurry Home Boys.” The authors gathered eyewitness accounts, including one from a Mrs. Ellen Barrow who heard the approaching plane and wondered if it might be a German raider. However the engines sounded irregular and the plane was low. Soon thereafter the bomber appeared, flying slowly and looking exhausted according to Mrs. Barrow. She saw an airman standing at one of the waist-gun windows, and her heart went out to him. As it went by she whispered: “Hurry home, boys.”

A schoolboy, Derek Wilkinson, was outside on the grass at Willingdon Golf Course. He saw the bomber and realized that unless it gained altitude, it would crash into the nearby hills. On those hills was Audrey Armstrong, rounding up sheep with the golf-club’s greenskeeper. She heard the straining engines and saw the pilot as both realized that a crash was inevitable. The aircraft crashed into the hill and exploded. An engine tumbled down the hill near her. She and the greenskeeper ran toward the wreck once the explosions had stopped, but found only smoldering debris. Amazingly there were some signs of life. One aviator died at the scene despite receiving first aid. Two more died later at a nearby hospital. Audrey thought that if the bomber had only been 40 feet higher it would have been able to make it to the emergency landing strip at Friston near Eastbourne.

A stone memorial was placed at the crash site on 13 May 1995 due to the exceptional efforts of Kevin Watson and through the backing of the Eastbourne Mayor. Each year a memorial ceremony is conducted at the crashsite. There is also a small museum in Eastbourne in honor of this crew. Mr. Watson has compiled a book covering this crew and the crash. It is called “Ruth-Less and Far from Home.”

66th SQUADRON:

66th Sq., #42-99996, Milliner

Returned later

66th Squadron Crew:	No injuries	
MILLINER, WALKER T.	Pilot	Lt.
BENADOM, DALE F.	Co-pilot	Lt.
GRIMES, ARTHUR V.	Navigator	Lt.
CROWDER, J. A.	Bombardier	S/Sgt.
GRIFFIN, DENNIS P.	Radio Oper.	Sgt.
SMITH, BEAUFORD, R.	Eng./Top Turret	T/Sgt.
NABER, JULIUS V.	Belly Gunner	S/Sgt.

NELLUMS, FRED B.	RW Gunner	S/Sgt.
PASAVANTIS, PETER G.	LW Gunner	Sgt.
DAVES, JAMES F.	Tail Gun	S/Sgt.

Note: Everyone but the pilot and co-pilot bailed out over the coast of England. The pilots landed the aircraft at Shoreham, Sussex. Julius Naber died on the 29 April 1944 mission.

The two pilots, Milliner and Benedom elected to try to land this seriously damaged plane after the eight crew members bailed out over the south coast of England. Then the pilots moved the trim tabs as well as the AFCE (Automatic Flight Control Equipment) in a successful attempt to save their aircraft by making a rough but safe landing at an airport close by. Their aircraft, unnamed, was eventually repaired between 21 February to 20 March 1944. Both the #3 and #4 engines were replaced as well as the entire empennage (tail section). Great job of landing a badly crippled aircraft!

3 February 1944

Essen, Germany

A mission was scheduled this day but was later recalled. However, while the planes were warming up, all engines running waiting for the green flare, S/Sgt. Hantober, radio operator, discovered he did not have his mission radio codes. He decided to leave the ship to go to the one in the next dispersal to get a copy. But in his haste and about dawn, he forgot about those spinning propellers, ducked out of the bomb bay, and ran directly into the propeller of #3 engine, killing him instantly.

67th SQUADRON:

67th Sq., #41-29231 J, Thom	THE IMPATIENT VIRGIN		
67th Squadron Crew:	Partial crew list		
THOM, GEORGE J.	Pilot	Lt.	
HANTOBER, MANUEL ASN 32509732	Radio Oper. KIA	S/Sgt.	Brooklyn. New York
SCOTT, RAYMOND E.	Radio Oper.	T/Sgt.	

T/Sgt. Raymond E. Scott, radio operator, gave this information, "I was not scheduled this morning and was in bed when I heard this Jeep right outside of my barracks. An officer rushed in, told me to get up as I must fill in for an injured radio operator. They hurried me to this dispersal where the plane and crew were waiting – the others scheduled for the mission were already airborne. Everyone was pretty shook up, blood scattered around, but Lt. Thom was set on catching the formation and to complete his first mission. We took off at least one-half hour behind the others and never did catch them. We flew out over the North Sea alone without ever seeing anyone and finally had to give up and return to base, much to my relief, as we were most vulnerable out there alone."

5 February 1944

Tours Airdrome, Central France

Fifteen of the 44th BG's aircraft departed Shipdham at 0700 hours, reached the objective, bombed and return was at 1430 hours. One 68th Squadron aircraft did not return.

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #42-100181 Z, Bohnisch	STAR VALLEY	MACR #2233
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68th Squadron Crew:

BOHNISCH, CARL A. ASN 0-735031	Pilot KIA, buried Normandy (A-16-30)	1st Lt.	Lindsey, California
GIFFIN, JOHN S. ASN 0-805903	Co-pilot KIA	1st Lt.	Schenectady, New York
EDE, HUBERT J. ASN 0-729151	Navigator KIA	1st Lt.	Louisville, Kentucky
SPINK, HAROLD W. ASN 0-678399	Bombardier KIA	2nd Lt.	Lincoln, Nebraska
LEVERICH, WILLIAM F. ASN 37224192	Engineer KIA, buried Normandy (B-10-11)	T/Sgt.	Kansas City, Missouri
OHLER, BERNARD A. ASN 13135813	Radio Oper. KIA	T/Sgt.	Baltimore, Maryland
EDGERTON, EUGENE C. ASN 31281654	Ball Turret KIA, buried Normandy (A-16-5)	S/Sgt.	Andover, Connecticut
KLEIN, WARREN E. ASN 16064248	RW Gunner POW, later returned to base	S/Sgt.	Detroit, Michigan
HALL, KENNETH E. ASN 11114148	LW Gunner KIA	S/Sgt.	Haverhill, Massachusetts
MORIN, JOSEPH E. ASN 20108691	Tail Turret KIA, buried Normandy (E-20-27)	S/Sgt.	Easthampton, Massachusetts

The 68th plane, STAR VALLEY, #42-100181 Z, was shot down by enemy aircraft, which made very concerted attacks against the Group's formation. It crashed at St. Leonard en Beauce, near Blois on the crew's eighth mission.

Note: St. Leonard en Beauce is in the Loire-et-Cher region of France.

Very little was recorded concerning this loss, including the MACR. The loss was caused by enemy aircraft, which managed to shoot off part of one wing. The plane went into a spin and couldn't recover. Three parachutes were observed to come out and open. As there was only one survivor who cannot be located, no further information has been found to determine why only he managed to survived.

Sgt. Keith Nutter from Perry's crew (see more on this below) stated: "A FW 190 made an attack straight in on our nose, turned over on his back just as he passed under our left wing, then started down. As he came back up, I started firing straight down. He went down and with him went the B-24 which was flying on our left wing. Both seemed to hit the ground at approximately the same time and place. This fighter had hit our #2 engine and navigator's compartment and also hit our wingman (Bohnisch) at the same time on that first pass. Our waist gunner claimed hits as well."

In the 1990s, a chaplain named James A. Marvin from Hillsborough, New Hampshire heard from a group of French villagers who had additional information on this crash. The following account was translated from the French by Marvin's wife:

“St. Leonard in Beauce, Saturday, 5 February 1944, 10:00 German time: After a white frost, the weather is very calm and the sky very clear. Coming from the east there appeared in the sky at a medium altitude a very large formation of bombers heading west to return to England. The significance of this squadron in perfect order made witness to a sight never seen. The rising sun illuminating under the planes which reflected to earth luminous streaks which moved.

“The inhabitants had gone out into street alerted by the strength of the roaring of the motors of such quantity of planes and this in spite of the altitude of these last ones. Each one commented on thinking that the place of the bombing must have been seriously hit.

“Among the group of neighbors where I found myself, a wife of a Spanish lumberman who was there with his daughters, following a glance at this aerial parade, in terror cried “fire.” All turning at that moment, flames exiting from the left wing of the one (pair) near the outer motor.

“Several minutes afterward, the aircraft reduced its altitude and a little after a parachute was seen opening behind the bomber. The fire spreading rapidly one then saw the aircraft start a downward spiral to the left – the ellipses reducing and in site of the reduced speed, the ground was soon reached.

“Immediately, a giant black cloud was visible rapidly following a loud explosion. Flames and smoke were quickly dissipated. The last lines of bombers disappeared to the west when at very low altitude and at lightning speed, a fighter plane passed several meters from the last houses in the direction from south to north. Was the pilot the originator of the chute and who went across to see the result of his shooting?

“Before the last moments, the eyewitnesses put forth some probabilities of where this plane could have crashed, to the west, passed the village of Sigogne. From afar the people, knowing the region had seen the impact not far from the farm of Monchoux. All the eyewitnesses of the unfolding of this catastrophe were certainly impacted by that which they came to see.

“Without hesitating, the mayor, Monsieur Redouin, took his bike and in parting said, ‘It is necessary to look over the spot immediately.’ [I must go to the crash site immediately.]’

“On returning, he indicated that the bodies had been gotten out of the plane with the help of the people who were there, lined up and covered with their parachutes. The Mayor had taken down the identity of the flyers of whom the state of the burns made it possible. He asked the people of the village to stay away and to not let their dogs wander over the place.

“After lunch, we went with the son of the mayor to Sigogne to see the place. The wreckage was broken up, a motor was pulled off. A propeller was lying rather far away, under the detached motor and half-buried in the ground. One noticed a brown leather bag under this metallic mass. The ground was littered with metal, machine gun cartridges, and pieces of wreckage, such as the small electrical motors used inside this bomber.

“This visit to the place did not last long for we noticed a column of German military come out from the hamlet of Sigogne where the trucks were parked. With the other curious who like us, wished to make a report on the place we believed the soldiers at arms coming from Blois.

“From this moment on, there were no eyewitnesses for the transfer of the bodies or the salvage of the plane. The victims had been transferred to the cemeteries of Blois. The older students wanted to help and to decorate the graves, but they couldn’t leave the site.

“The surviving parachutist (Sgt. Warren E. Klein), pushed northeast by the light breeze in the morning, ended his descent close to the farms of LaCoudraie, south of the Marchenoir Road from where, at that time, the path to the cow shed went off.

“The airman, after having rolled his parachute, approached the houses and went in by the north entrance at the Leroux-Genty Farm. The people of the house were not up to date on the events, and surprised by this presence, had the visitor come in for refreshment, but he accepted only some milk.

“To leave his name at the French house which he came to enter he discreetly wrote his name on the back of an almanac taken from a hook on the wall.

The German soldiers from the watch post of Boisseau burst into the house at the same moment. Madame Leroux treated several wounds on his head. This woman and her son died about 20 years later without having news of the American.”

From the City of Blois Cemetery Service comes this account dated 8 February 1944: “I, undersigned, Crussy Henri, commander of the Legion of Honor, Mayor of the city of Blois, certify that: Sunday, 6 February at 3 p.m. the German military authorities carried nine bodies to the city cemetery. The commanding officer of the detachment declared that it is a matter of nine servicemen of the American Army Air Corps fallen over the jurisdiction of the community of St. Leonard in Beauce. After having examined the papers, the German servicemen left the bodies in the hut located behind the caretaker’s dwelling and sealed it.

“7 February at 5 p.m. Doctor Land of the Field Command at Blois took us to proceed immediately to identify the bodies and put them in coffins which we did in the presence of a German military doctor.

“After having removed the seals and opened the door of the hut, we certified that the bodies carried no distinctive marks, no papers or objects and that only five bodies had a name tag on their clothing.

“After this operation, we had the bodies placed in the coffins furnished by the German supply depot on the Avenue Chateaudun. The coffins were closed and numbered, we placed them, following the orders of the Feldkommandantur, in the public shelter.

“8 February at 10:00 the Feldkommandantur ordered us to place the coffins in the graves which had been prepared in the Basse street city cemetery from the west along the outer wall.

“The grave have been numbered from 1 to 9.

“8 February at 4 p.m. A detachment from the German army came to render military honors. Then we were given orders to fill the graves.”

The letter below dated 21 November 1944 was written by Roger Leroux:

“Dear Friends, On the 5th day of February, 1944 an American plane fell in flames a mile from here and then exploded. It had been attacked by a German plane. A single airman jumped out in a parachute, but the nine others were killed and the plane reduced to a scrap heap. The nine bodies have been interred in the Blois cemetery.

“The injured airman who parachuted, landed in a field and was discovered an hour later by our searching party and brought to our home. He was unable to walk and had a head injury. I do not believe that he was seriously injured.

“The Germans were on the lookout for the parachutist in the vicinity and found him in our home, whereupon they took him as prisoner of war to Blois, 25 miles from here. The following day, according to information received, he recovered from his shock.

“Since he did not leave an address, I have tried various means to get in touch with him, but have not received an answer. I would greatly appreciate if you could give me some news, that is, if you have some and I shall gladly give you further details.

“Please accept my expression of sincerity.”

Many years later, Mr. Leroux’s question about the identity of the airman was finally answered according to information supplied by Mr. Philippe Canonne: “At the end of July, I received a very touching letter from Mr. Frank M. Komor, the best friend of Warren Klein, the survivor of the crash. He told me that he encountered Warren when they were both prisoners and that Warren died on 25 April 1975 of a massive heart attack. He left behind three daughters and two sons.” Mr. Komor put Mr. Canonne in touch with Nancy Klein, one of Warren Klein’s daughters.

On 8 May 1945 the city of Saint-Leonard-en-Beauce conducted a memorial service to honor the memory of these nine airmen who died there. In every subsequent year they have conducted a ceremony to honor their memory.

67th SQUADRON:

67th Sq., #42-72873 B, Perry	RAGGEDY ANN II	Returned
67th Squadron Crew:		
PERRY, JAMES R. Jr.	Pilot	1st Lt.
GASPERONI, RICHARD O.	Co-pilot Wounded	1st Lt.
WEATHERWAX, ROBERT B.	Navigator Wounded	1st Lt.
GOFF, MAURICE L.	Bombardier	1st Lt.
SCOTT, RAYMOND E.	Radio Oper.	T/Sgt.
MOSELEY, WALTER H.	Eng./Top Turret	T/Sgt.
NUTTER, KEITH H.	Belly Gunner	S/Sgt.
ROSE, KENNETH W.	RW Gunner	Sgt.
LONDO, MILFORD E.	LW Gunner	S/Sgt.
NABORS, WILLIAM H.	Tail Turret	S/Sgt.

The following data comes from the MACR: “At 1042 this A/C #181 (Star Valley) was observed hit by enemy fighters. It flew on two or three minutes and went into a roll. The left wing came off between #1 and #2 engines, and the ship started to burn. Three parachutes were seen.

Lt. Perry wrote: “On the mission to Tours, we were jumped by Me 109s and we were shot up real bad and the co-pilot had the center of his left hand blown out by a cannon shell which blew up in the instrument panel. The navigator was slightly wounded. I was barely able to get the aircraft back across the Channel. I made a forced landing at a fighter field near Maidstone.”

Note: The fighter field was at West Malling, Kent.

Lt. Gasperoni later recovered, transferred to another base, and continued to fly by making ferrying supplies to our army in France.

Keith Nutter noted that he was chosen to fly as a substitute ball turret gunner on this mission. He wrote: "An FW 190 made an attack straight in on our nose. He turned over on his back just as he passed under our left wing, then started down. He then started flying straight up and I started firing straight down. He went down and with him a B-24 which had been flying on our left wing. Both of them seemed to hit the ground at approximately the same place and at about the same time.

"I always felt I was the one that hit the FW 190, but the waist gunner claimed he hit the fighter as he passed under our left wing. Being a sub on a strange crew, I made no mention of it.

"On the first pass, the FW put 20 mms into our left inboard engine and one explosive shell into the navigator's compartment. It also hit the B-24 flying on our left wing. Our navigator was hit in the back of the head (Weatherwax) with shrapnel and a portion of the projectile continued through the A-5 pilot and went through the left palm of the co-pilot (Gasperoni). He lost the middle finger of the left hand.

"On the trip back, we had one prop windmilling and I believe the other inboard prop was feathered. We made it to a Spitfire base somewhere in southern England. Ray Scott and myself ended up with a week's stay in a rest home in southern England."

8 February 1944

Watten, France

On this mission all aircraft returned but there was a casualty of a ground crewman after an emergency landing. A pilot was wounded in another incident.

66th SQUADRON:

66th Sq., #41-29208 D, Milliner	SHOO SHOO BABY	Returned
66th Squadron Crew:	No injuries	
MILLINER, WALKER T.	Pilot	Lt.
BENADOM, DALE F.	Co-pilot	Lt.
GRIMES, ARTHUR V.	Navigator	Lt.
CROWDER, J. A.	Bombardier	S/Sgt.
GRIFFIN, DENNIS P.	Radio Oper.	Sgt.
SMITH, BEAUFORD, R.	Eng./Top Turret	T/Sgt.
NABER, JULIUS V.	Belly Gunner	S/Sgt.
NELLUMS, FRED B.	RW Gunner	S/Sgt.
PASAVANTIS, PETER G.	LW Gunner	Sgt.
DAVES, JAMES F.	Tail Gun	S/Sgt.
Ground Crew (not 44th Bomb Group):		
CROSS, SGT. ASN 920444	Airfield controller Killed	Sgt.

Note: Our records do not include Sgt. Cross' first name or any additional details on this casualty.

Due to damage by enemy, Lt. Milliner ordered the crew to bail out near Manston, Kent. The pilot and co-pilot remained with the aircraft and made an emergency landing at Manston, Kent but lost control and hit the control wagon, killing Sgt. Cross, a ground controller. Both pilots reported to a court of inquiry at Dover, England on 10 February 1944.

It was over a month before the aircraft was ready for combat. All four engines were replaced.

68th Squadron Crew:

68th Sq., #42-100110, Hamlyn	NORTHERN LASS	Returned to base
68th Squadron Crew:		
HAMLIN, RAYMOND E.	Pilot Wounded	1st Lt.
ALTEMUS, WILLIAM B.	Co-pilot	Fl. Off.
BELLARD, HAROLD W.	Navigator	1st Lt.
STEADHAM, ROY J.	Bombardier	1st Lt.
SHELTON, JACK R.	Radio Oper.	T/Sgt.
MORTON, WILLIAM G.	Eng./Top Turret	T/Sgt.
MICKEY, JAMES D.	Belly Gunner	S/Sgt.
MAY, ROY P.	RW Gunner	S/Sgt.
GILBERT, ROBERT N.	LW Gunner	S/Sgt.
RUHL, ARTHUR C.	Tail Turret	S/Sgt.

Note: The following members of this crew were KIA on 8 April 1944: Altemus, Bellard, Steadham, Mickey, and Gilbert.

A return engagement to Watten, France was made today with 28 of the 44th dispatched (7 of them 67th). Major Jansen, 68th Squadron, was Lead Pilot. The run was made visually but with poor results. The flak was moderate heavy accurate, with some men in the group being injured. Enemy fighters were seen but they kept their distance because of the excellent fighter escort our heavies had. Return to base was at 1130 hours. Lt. Hamlyn, pilot of one of the 68th planes, sustained a serious facial flak wound, so it was necessary for his co-pilot Lt. Altemus and T/Sgt. Morton acting as co-pilot to bring the ship back safely.

Lt. Richard Hamlyn had part of his cheek blown away by an explosion of flak that burst on the flight deck of his aircraft. On the 12th, the Lt. was back from the hospital with a large scar on the side of his face. The medics did a nice piece of plastic surgery on a very nasty wound.

11 February 1944

Military Installations, Siracourt, France

One man was killed and another wounded on 1st Lt. Cary's aircraft, HEAVEN CAN WAIT II.

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #42-7507 X, Cary	HEAVEN CAN WAIT II	Returned to base
68th Squadron Crew:		
CARY, JAMES G.	Pilot	1st Lt.
LEE, ROBERT L.	Co-pilot	1st Lt.

13 February 1944

44th Bomb Group Roll of Honor and Casualties

CLARK, WARREN J.	Navigator	1st Lt.	
McCLENDON, SAMUEL L.	Bombardier	1st Lt.	
LONGAN, MYRON H. Jr.	Radio Oper.	T/Sgt.	Milton, Pennsylvania
MERCER, JAMES D.	Eng./Top Turret	T/Sgt.	Los Angeles California
TATE, THOMAS M.	Belly Gunner	S/Sgt.	Columbus, Mississippi
MYERS, RUDY S. Jr. ASN 18170066	RW Gunner KIA	S/Sgt.	Lafe, Arkansas
CONNORS, EDMUND F. ASN 32501858	LW Gunner Serious Knee Wound	S/Sgt.	Brooklyn, New York
CRANTZ, CHESTER F.	Tail Turret	S/Sgt.	Vulcan, Michigan

A few enemy aircraft were seen but no attacks were pressed home. Flak, however, was much heavier and more accurate than previously experienced on this target. All six of the 68th Squadron's ships were hit by flak, with two casualties resulting in Lt. James Cary's crew. S/Sgt. Rudy S. Myers was killed by flak that hit his neck and S/Sgt. Edmund F. Connors sustained a knee injury.

13 February 1944

Military Installations, Raye-Sur-Authie and Petit Bois Tillencourt, France

The bombing run was a visual attack and the results were quite good. Plenty of continuous accurate flak was encountered, with many of the Group's airplanes being hit. The 506th Squadron had one crewman hit and killed by flak on an aircraft piloted by Lt. Gail W. Larson. Two others on Larson's crew were slightly injured.

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #42-7535 U-Bar	PEEPSIGHT		Returned
506th Squadron Crew:			
LARSON, GAIL W. ASN T-10131	Pilot	2nd Lt.	Lynd, Minnesota
GOLUBOCK, RALPH ASN 0-742418	Co-pilot	2nd Lt.	
PUTNAM, HARRY H. ASN 0-747139	Navigator	2nd Lt.	
EBLER, JOSEPH A. ASN 0-676580	Bombardier	2nd Lt.	Newark, New Jersey
SMITH, MYRON L.	Radio Oper.	T/Sgt.	Youngstown, Ohio
DUNLOP, WALTER E. ASN 39458474	Eng./Top Turret	T/Sgt.	Seattle, Washington
TOLLE, JAMES D. ASN 19059067	Belly Gunner Slightly injured	S/Sgt.	Yakima, Washington

JOHN, GLENN G. ASN 38236097	RW Gunner KIA	S/Sgt.	Elm Springs, Arkansas
SCARBOROUGH, DALE M. ASN 37469480	LW Gunner Slightly injured	S/Sgt.	St. Paul, Nebraska
TRUONO, ALFONSE A. ASN 12152867	Tail Turret Slightly injured	S/Sgt.	

The damaged plane was landed at Hawkinge at 1600 with no flaps, no brakes or hydraulics after sustaining four hits by flak. The nose wheel collapsed on landing. One engine was feathered.

Ralph Golubock, the co-pilot, wrote: “The mission was called late in the afternoon on February 13th. I will always remember that date because it was my 13th mission. The mission was briefed around noon and all I had for lunch was a chocolate bar. We were to hit a target in the Pas de Calais area – a milk run. I believe that only the 14th combat wing flew this mission. After takeoff and the usual milling around during form up, we headed toward northern France.

“The mission was strictly routine until we were on our bomb run when we were badly hit by flak. The burst was just to our starboard and was level and visible. We immediately lost #3, which we feathered. There was also damage to #4, but we kept it running, but could not pull full power. Upon assessing battle damage, and being able to hold some sort of course, we headed toward England, gradually losing altitude. The gunners in the back began calling in to tell us of their casualties. We discovered that Sgt. John was badly hit at the right waist position. Several others received minor wounds.

“At this time, we felt that we could reach England all right, but we could never return to Shipdham. We were gradually losing altitude and had very little left when we hit the coast of England. We had to find a place to land at once. No thought was given to bailing out because of the wounded. When we were down to less than 1,000 feet, we suddenly saw a small grass fighter base.

“Gail immediately headed for the field while I tried to pump down the wheels and flaps. I got the wheels down but not the flaps. We were headed straight at the field at closer to 200 mph, when I noticed an RAF amphibian on the runway preparing to take off. Apparently, he saw us because he immediately cleared the runway. None too soon – we touched down at high speed and both Gail and I got on the brakes. With #3 out we had only one shot at the brakes, so we just locked them and eventually came to rest in a revetment used by the Spitfires on the base. We immediately evacuated the aircraft but Gail noticed that #4 engine was on fire. We grabbed a fire extinguisher as he went out the top hatch. We went out on the port wing onto the wall of the revetment and Gail began applying foam to #4. About that time, the British fire engines arrived and put out the fire.

“We then proceeded to open the rear hatch to check on the men in the rear. Unfortunately, Sgt. John was already dead. One of his legs was completely blown off. We spent the night at this air base called Hawkins. The next day we were taken to Manston and were flown home.”

Myron Smith wrote: “The raid was on the buzz bomb installations in the Pas de Calais area. We were hit with flak, which resulted in the right waist gunner, Glenn G. John, being killed. The left waist gunner [Scarborough] and tail gunner [Truono] were wounded. Our number one and four engines were out with the propeller on number four windmilling. The hydraulic system was shot out.

“We managed to make it back to the English Coast and landed the plane, PEEPSIGHT, on a grass Spitfire base at Hawkinge. This was the last combat mission for PEEPSIGHT. It was later repaired and used as a cargo plane. Our crew was picked up at Manston about four or five days later and flown back to Shipdham. I believe it was Jim Clements who flew us back. After this raid, I was grounded and subsequently worked in the Squadron Office as C.Q. and mail clerk.

20 February 1944

Ochersleben and Helmstedt, Germany

The weather was severely cold over all of Europe with snow covering the ground both at the target and on the base. Two targets of opportunity were hit because the primary at Halberstadt, which was scheduled for bombing by PFF equipment, malfunctioned. Slight but fairly accurate flak was encountered over the two targets, coupled with attacks by enemy aircraft, led to two of our planes being MIA. One each was lost by the 66th and 506th Squadrons.

66th SQUADRON:

66th Sq., #42-64166 A, Decker	BIG FAT BUTTERFLY		MACR #2449
66th Squadron Crew:	Entire crew KIA		
DECKER, DONALD R. ASN 0-204424	Pilot KIA	1st Lt.	Jamaica, New York
JORGENSEN, ROY G. ASN 0-679073	Co-pilot KIA	2nd Lt.	Cozard, Nebraska
LIDDELL, JAMES M. ASN 0-807917	Navigator KIA	2nd Lt.	Columbus, Ohio
GATENS, FREDERICK B. ASN 0-672946	Bombardier KIA	2nd Lt.	Brooklyn, New York
ELKIN, ALTON M. ASN 38132105	Engineer KIA, buried U.S.A.	T/Sgt.	Ft. Worth, Texas
NOWAK, ANDREW B. ASN 35326545	Radio Oper. KIA, buried U.S.A.	T/Sgt.	South Bend, Indiana
CROCKER, JOHN L. Jr. ASN 34430758	Ball Turret KIA	S/Sgt.	Charlotte, North Carolina
ALBINE, ROBERT L. ASN 13087450	RW Gunner KIA	S/Sgt.	Connellsville, Pennsylvania
BALCA, MICHAEL J. ASN 15070162	LW Gunner KIA	S/Sgt.	Akron, Ohio
BETHKE, ELMER J. ASN 16077154	Tail Turret KIA	S/Sgt.	Muscoda, Wisconsin

Note Decker and Albine were veterans of the 1 August 1943 Ploesti raid.

1st Lt. Donald R. Decker was the pilot of BIG FAT BUTTERFLY but little is told in the MACR about it. “#166 was last seen about one hour after bombs away – 1428 hour. One engine was smoking and it was with a formation below and behind the 44th BG’s.” Nothing more.

Only the engineer, Alton M. Elkin, and radio operator Andrew B. Nowak, were reported killed by the German officials during the war. The other eight were determined dead after the war in U.S.A.’s investigations. These eight were returned and buried in a common grave at: Grave 242,

Section I, National Cemetery, Louisville, Kentucky. These men were S/Sgt. Robert L. Albine, S/Sgt. Michael J. Balca, S/Sgt. Elmer J. Bethke, S/Sgt. John L. Crocker, Jr., 1st Lt. Donald R. Decker, 2nd Lt. Frederick B. Gatens, 2nd Lt. Roy G. Jorgensen, and 2nd Lt. James M. Liddell.

Note: Elkin, Nowak, Balca, and Bethke were on the crew of Lt. Bickerstaff when they crash-landed near Cromer on 13 Nov. 1943.

This aircraft crashed east of Koblenz and 40 miles west of the target, near Dierdorf and the village of Sessendorf. Three bodies were found in the aircraft at the crash site. One additional body was found in the tail section, which came down on the Kohl/Frankfurt Highway. This crewman could have been Bethke.

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #42-100373 Y, Rawson

MACR #2421

506th Squadron Crew:

RAWSON, FREDERICK H. ASN 0-802783	Pilot POW	2nd Lt.	Erie, Pennsylvania
LEWIS, JAMES R. ASN 0-684010	Co-pilot POW	2nd Lt.	San Angelo, Texas
JOHNSTON, WILLIAM P. ASN 0-738559	Navigator KIA, buried Margraten (H-12-9)	2nd Lt.	Kansas City, Missouri
RICHARDSON, WILLIAM G. ASN 0-752643	Bombardier POW	2nd Lt.	Portland, Maine
McCOY, RICHARD J. ASN 12165291	Engineer KIA, buried Margraten (L-14-16)	S/Sgt.	Jersey City, New Jersey
READER, GERALD E. ASN 16154446	Radio Oper. POW	S/Sgt.	Fond Du Lac, Wisconsin
WINFREE, JULIAN E. Jr. ASN 34431710	Ball Turret KIA	Sgt.	Greensboro, North Carolina
HOFFMAN, JOHN B. ASN 18063734	RW Gunner POW	Sgt.	Longview, Texas
SHULTZ, ROBERT E. ASN 33442877	LW Gunner KIA	Sgt.	Staunton, Virginia
WAPENSKY, RUSSELL A. ASN 13056108	Tail Turret KIA, buried Ardennes (D-21-17)	Sgt.	Laneford, Pennsylvania

The second aircraft and crew lost on 20 February was that flown by 2nd Lt. Frederick H. Rawson. The MACR states that, "At 1350 hours, A/C #373 was seen hit by flak, #4 engine was smoking. A/C fell back and became a straggler. Between 1405 and 1410 hours, the ship was attacked at least four times by one Me 109. No chutes observed."

S/Sgt. Gerald E. Reader, radio operator, was able to add his recollections, "We were on our first mission and were put in formation as Tail-end Charlies [in the first section]. Our target was Helmstedt. We got our bombs away and were leaving the target area when flak got one right engine. The rest of our formation was leaving when the Me 109s showed up. I shot flares to alert our fighter cover, but they were all busy. One Me 109 hit us in the tail and set that section on fire. Our tail gunner, Russ Wapensky, was burned. His chute, which was just outside of his turret, was damaged and partially burned.

“Co-pilot Lt. Lewis got up from his seat and motioned for us to get out. Engineer Dick McCoy then bailed out from the front. I don’t know what happened to him. Our waist gunners, Winfree and Schultz bailed out from the rear, followed by Sgt. Hoffman, ball turret gunner. Wapensky then came forward looking for a spare chute to replace his damaged one. Lt. Lewis got Wapensky on his back and jumped out, both hanging on to each other. But when the chute opened, Wapensky was torn loose and fell to his death. I, then, went out from the front, too. Both our navigator and bombardier were in the nose so I don’t know what happened to them or what took place there.

“Lt. Rawson, Lt. Lewis, Lt. Richardson, Sgt. Hoffman and myself are all that came down alive as far as I know. I don’t know if Winfree got out of the plane or not.

“We landed near Odessa, were taken to Bad Hamberg, then on to Frankfurt for interrogation, etc. However, our crew was not together as Hoffman went to the hospital and I didn’t see the others again. I ended up a POW at Heidakrug, East Prussia.” The bombardier, Lt. William Richardson adds even more, “I was not their regular bombardier – he was unable to fly this day and I was substituted from my regular crew. Our briefed target was Helmstedt, but the primary target for most of the 8th AF was Liepzig. Helmstedt, as I recall, was a diversionary target. We were supposed to fly over the target at 13,000 feet, and thereafter climb to 18,000 on the return journey.

“All went well until we reached our destination. There we encountered heavy anti-aircraft fire and at least one of our engines was knocked out. Any other damage caused by the flak I was not aware of. Our bombs were dropped. After passing over the target, the formation started their ascent to the new altitude. In our crippled condition, we were unable to keep up, and gradually fell behind, until we were all alone.

“Shortly after that, several enemy fighters moved in and shot the hell out of us. A FW 190 flew up, right in front of my turret, so close I could look right into the pilot’s face – moments you don’t forget! Had my guns been operating, I could have given him a bad time, but they were out – as was most everything else in our aircraft.

“I didn’t hear any bail out order, but was sure it was getting near that time. My intercom was out. I couldn’t open the door to the turret but the navigator (Lt. Johnston) opened it for me. Had he not done that, I would have been casualty #6. At this point, the B-24 was in a pretty violent attitude and heading down. Lt. Johnston went out through the nose wheel door and I followed. At that time I didn’t know the fate of the rest of the crew or if anyone was still on board.

“It was sort of open country and farmland where we came down. I landed in high brush and had hardly extricated myself when arms-bearing “natives” appeared and escorted me to a group several hundred yards away – Lts. Rawson and Lewis, a badly wounded ball turret gunner [Winfree], and one other crewman. The navigator Johnston was there, but dead as his chute was unopened!

“I have enclosed a copy of a letter prepared by Lt. Rawson recommending Lt. Lewis for a Silver Star. Outcome unknown.”

In part it states, “The rudder controls were shot out, the elevators jammed, the whole tail section set afire, and the tail gunner severely injured and his flying suit set afire. On the second pass, the left (waist) gunner was killed and the right gunner and ball turret gunners were severely injured.

The order to bail out was then given and the right waist gunner, ball turret gunner, navigator and bombardier parachuted out.

“As Lt. Lewis prepared to leave the aircraft, he noticed that the quick release mechanism of the pilot’s flak suit was jammed. He paused to tear off the flak suit of the pilot who was fighting to maintain control of the aircraft; he retrieved the pilot’s parachute from behind the armor plate and buckled it on him. As Lt. Lewis entered the bomb bay, he saw the wounded tail gunner on the catwalk. His suit was still on fire and his parachute had been riddled by 20-mm shells. Pausing again, Lt. Lewis dragged the injured tail gunner [Wapensky] onto his back and dived out the bomb bay. When the parachute opened, the tail gunner’s hold was loosened and he fell to the earth and was killed.”

66th SQUADRON:

66th Sq., #42-100285 J, Talbott

Crash-landing

66th Squadron Crew:

TALBOTT, DAVID R.	Pilot	Lt.
CLAUSEN, LEMOINE H.	Co-pilot	Lt.
GOLDMAN, ARTHUR	Navigator	Lt.
MORIARTY, CLIFFORD F.	Bombardier	Lt.
SWICK, RAYMOND E.	Radio Oper.	T/Sgt.
CLAUSEN, GEORGE A.	Eng./Top Turret	T/Sgt.
	Injured, hospitalized	
HADDOCH, SAMMY	Ball Turret	S/Sgt.
WERNING, ROBERT T.	RW Gunner	S/Sgt.
	Injured, hospitalized	
GASSER, HERMAN C.	LW Gunner	S/Sgt.
SYMPSON, CECIL H.	Tail Turret	S/Sgt.

Note: This aircraft was totally wrecked when it crash-landed near Ipswich, England. Lt. Talbott’s crew was lost later on 15 March, 1944 while on another mission. Lts. Goldman and Moriarty were KIA. Clausen and Werning were hospitalized after this crash and were not part of the crew when it was lost.

On the return from this mission of the 20th, one 66th Squadron aircraft crashed, luckily without loss of life. Sgt. Herman Gasser, waist gunner, briefly explained, “We were on the deck coming back over England. We lost power suddenly, hit three trees and crashed into a potato field. Our plane was totally wrecked.” Crash-landing site reported near Ipswich at Holbrook, Suffolk.

From the S-3 Narrative of Operations: “No fighter support was observed from the I.P. until after leaving the target area, where the group was joined by P-47s, who furnished excellent fighter escort for the remainder of the way out. One aircraft, #373 (Rawson), straggled after being hit by flak in the target area and was last seen to go into the cloud cover approximately 45 minutes after leaving the target area.

“Lead bombardier’s narrative [Joseph J. Young, Captain, Air Corps, Group Bombardier]: Bombing approach and run: The wing was north of the briefed course and no well-defined I.P. was seen due to snow on the ground. After the lead group dropped their bombs on a target of opportunity, a flare was fired and the I.P. code word was employed. It was impossible for this group to drop their bombs on the same target, so after a sharp right turn, the city of Oschersleben was picked for a target by this group. The bombing run was made on automatic pilot on a

heading of 160 degrees and was approximately 50 seconds long. There was no enemy opposition on the run. The rail junctions were used as an aiming point.

“The second and third sections dropped their bombs on the city of Helmstedt. After seeing the flare signals, the section lead bombardiers noticed that the group was on the briefed heading with a town ahead that resembled the briefed target. The bombing runs were made with manual pilot, on a heading of 60 degrees with no enemy interference to either section. Bombing was done by sections on individual section leader.

“Results of Bombing: Fires were seen in the center and edges of both targets. A large explosion was seen in Oschersleben with smoke rising several thousand feet into the air.”

The following account comes from an unidentified family member of one of the crew: “The crash site is exactly the same now as it was in 1944, apart from the hedge (removed) and the smashed pole that was replaced. The open field was about one and a half miles long and 400 yards wide. Lt. Talbott almost made this field. A few gallons of fuel more and he would have made this large opening where the damage to the plane could have been minimal.

“The B-24 clipped treetops as it came down, it then struck and smashed a telegraph pole before hitting the ground then slowing down to face the way it came in (out of fuel) in the open field.

“As the B-24 rapidly lost power and altitude shortly after crossing the English coast on return from bombing Helmstadt, eastern Germany, my father recalls hearing Dave Talbott, the pilot, shouting: “Find me a field! Find me a field!” He occasionally commented what a good pilot Dave Talbott was, often flying the four-engined bomber more like a fighter.”

George Clausen, the engineer, remembers being in the middle of the B-24s bomb bay with tree branches scraping along the underside of the barely flyable aircraft. Just as he reached the flight deck, they hit the ground and the top turret fell on his hips. He and Robert Werning (waist gunner), who was also badly injured, were taken to a nearby air base hospital (Raydon airfield, near Ipswich, 353rd Fighter Group). The other eight crew members were brought to “Woodlands” where they were cared for by the Rodwell family before being transported back to Shipdham airfield, Norfolk.

Ian Hawkins, who was five years old at the time, was a witness to this crash-landing: “In recent years I have learned from a variety of sources some of the missing details concerning Lt. Talbott’s crash-landing in February 20, 1944. I vividly recall going inside the wreckage of the two halves of the B-24 fuselage, sitting in the tail turret – the prospect (Plexiglas) was badly broken, seeing long belts of 50 caliber ammunition, and keeping one for a souvenir. Seeing and smelling the incredible number of thin plastic-coated (different colors) electric cables, connections going along the whole length of the fuselage; the oxygen bottles, etc. The wreckage of the B-24 was hauled away through my home village of Freston on low-loaders and taken to the huge wrecked aircraft dump at USAAF Woodbridge, via Ipswich.”

22 February 1944

Gotha, Germany

This Washington’s Birthday mission eventually had to be recalled due to the snow and severe weather conditions that hindered assembly as well as the formations as they were passing over Holland and approaching the German border.

T/Sgt. Kipnes, radio operator on Lt. Mercer's plane, stated, "Our element of three ships flew into a heavy cloudbank. When we came into the clear later, both of our wing ships were gone. We later heard that they were hit by eight FW 190s and went down..." Both planes were from the 67th Squadron.

67th SQUADRON:

67th Sq., #42-72865 F-Bar, Evans	F FOR FREDDIE		MACR #2420
67th Squadron Crew:			
EVANS, EARL A. ASN 0-677250	Pilot POW	2nd Lt.	Ft. Worth, Texas
SWANK, CLIFFORD W. ASN #0-807076	Co-pilot POW	2nd Lt.	Kansas City, Missouri
PINKUSSOHN, LEWIS A. ASN 0-673942	Navigator POW	2nd Lt.	New York City, New York
FLAUGH, HAROLD E. ASN 0-681534	Bombardier KIA, WOM Henri-Chapelle	2nd Lt.	Winterset, Iowa
DEAL, JOSEPH C. ASN 13156210	Engineer POW	S/Sgt.	Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania
JACKSON, MYRON G. ASN 35519315	Radio Oper. POW	S/Sgt.	Chagrin Falls, Ohio
SIMON, OSCAR ASN 35255212	Ball Turret POW	Sgt.	Evansville, Indiana
BRITT, JOHN O. ASN 12169672	RW Gunner POW	Sgt.	Buffalo, New York
WILD, EDWARD C. Jr. ASN 11040487	LW Gunner POW	Sgt.	Shelburne, New Hampshire
PUTNAM, THOMAS A. ASN 14138447	Tail Turret POW	S/Sgt.	Columbus, Georgia

2nd Lt. Clifford W. Swank, co-pilot of this aircraft, briefly explained, "Due to the heavy damage to the plane, (inflicted by these enemy fighters) we were forced to bail out. We landed near Wesel, Germany.

"We were all accounted for and uninjured except for our bombardier, Lt. Harold E. Flaugh, of Winterset, Iowa. No trace was ever found of him during or after the war! When I did get back home, I visited the parents of Lt. Flaugh [in Iowa in 1945]."

Mr. P. Pouwels, of Elshout, Netherlands sent me this information: "I made inquiries about Harold E. Flaugh. According to the information I received from the authorities of the U.S. Cemetery, Margraten, Flaugh is listed as MIA. His name is chiseled in a memorial wall on a U.S. cemetery in Henri Chapelle, Belgium. I am still searching for the exact location of the crash of B-24 #42-72865."

Note: The crash site was finally established to be in the Elshout area near Bokhoven, Belgium.

67th SQUADRON:

67th Sq., #42-100402 M-Bar, Fish			MACR #2422
67th Squadron Crew:			
FISH, GEORGE E. ASN 0-803799	Entire crew KIA, all on WOM, Cambridge		
	Pilot KIA, WOM Cambridge	2nd Lt.	St. Cloud, Minnesota

24 February 1944

44th Bomb Group Roll of Honor and Casualties

SHERIDAN, CHARLES M. ASN #0-401892	Co-pilot KIA, WOM Cambridge	2nd Lt.	Clarion, Pennsylvania
STAIB, HENRY T. ASN 0-808172	Navigator KIA, WOM Cambridge	2nd Lt.	Renova, Pennsylvania
JEFFS, ROBERT H. ASN 0-681994	Bombardier KIA, WOM Cambridge	2nd Lt.	Denver, Colorado
MAY, GORDON L. ASN 15102491	Engineer KIA, WOM Cambridge	S/Sgt.	Cannelton, Indiana
MASCI, PETER J. Jr. ASN 32635601	Radio Oper. KIA, WOM Cambridge	S/Sgt.	Middleton, New York
CORSILLI, GENE ASN 32466223	Ball Turret KIA, WOM Cambridge	Sgt.	Guttenburg, New Jersey
ROGERS, FRED B. ASN 37235533	RW Gunner KIA, WOM Cambridge	Sgt.	Carthage, Missouri
SWETLIK, WILLIAM M. ASN 16133615	LW Gunner KIA, WOM Cambridge	S/Sgt.	Eau Claire, Wisconsin
SZABO, PAUL A. Jr. ASN 36113560	Tail Turret KIA, WOM Cambridge	Sgt.	Dearborn, Michigan

The second aircraft lost on the 22nd was that piloted by Lt. George E. Fish. Almost nothing is recorded or known concerning this plane and crew. As S/Sgt. Kipnes stated above, this plane was the other wingman that disappeared in the heavy clouds and was not seen again. But unlike the plane above of Lt. Evans, there were no survivors. In fact, all ten men on board this plane are listed on the Wall of the Missing – not one crewman was ever found. It seems reasonable to assume that this airplane went down in the North Sea, either ditched or was shot down. This was only the third mission for this crew.

24 February 1944

Gotha, Germany

This was a very successful mission with excellent bombing results as the 44th BG led the 14th Combat Bomb Wing. T/Sgt. Kipnes made this evaluation: “Enemy fighters were with us all the way into and out of the target. We fought off at least 40 fighters. Attacking planes were Me 109s and FW 190s. But our formation was tight and few could break through.” However, the 44th BG did have two losses – one each by the 66th and 68th Squadrons.

66th SQUADRON:

66th SQUADRON:

66th Sq., #41-29148 B, Etheridge

MACR #2923

66th Squadron Crew:

ETHERIDGE, HAROLD E. ASN 0-799359	Pilot POW, injured	2nd Lt.	Woodleaf, North Carolina
LEWIS, WARD B. ASN 0-806471	Co-pilot POW	2nd Lt.	Kiowa, Kansas
BUECHSENSTEIN, JOHN L. ASN 0-739538	Navigator KIA, buried Lorraine (B-20-9)	2nd Lt.	Alliance, Nebraska

HALL, KENNETH R. ASN 0-671350	Bombardier POW	2nd Lt.	Yonkers, New York
AMBLER, JAMES S. ASN 39107032	Engineer POW	T/Sgt.	San Jose, California
NABLO, PAUL D. ASN 12207382	Radio Oper. POW	T/Sgt.	No. Tonawanda, New York
HAWKINS, SIDNEY E. Jr. ASN 14125350	Ball Turret POW, injured by Germans	S/Sgt.	Inman, South Carolina
STUBBS, ERSKINE H. ASN 34196076	RW Gunner POW, injured	S/Sgt.	Lumpkin, Georgia
BABBITT, BERTRAM T. ASN 12146313	LW Gunner POW	S/Sgt.	Brooklyn, New York
ROLAND, FRANK C. ASN 13154821	Tail Turret POW	S/Sgt.	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The MACR states in part, "At 1331 hours, A/C #148 was seen to be hit by enemy aircraft. It began to straggle and became a victim of concentrated attacks by the enemy. #4 engine was smoking and aircraft lagged farther behind, losing altitude. #4 and #2 engines burst into flames at 1334 hours and seven chutes opened. It crashed at 1354." The aircraft crashed 800 meters west of Dippach, 200 meters west of the Dippach/Simmershausen road, 20 kilometers east northeast of Fulda.

The MACR also included a statement made by the engineer, Sgt. Ambler, "All but one of us bailed out. About 5 minutes past the target, we got orders to bail out. Paul Nablo went out first, then Lewis, followed by me. Our plane hit the ground about 50 yards from us. The Germans said one man remained in the crashed plane in the nose section..."

Pilot Lt. Etheridge stated that, "While on the bomb run, at an altitude of about 20,000 feet, a few minutes before bombs away, the aircraft received considerable damage from antiaircraft fire. The two right engines were knocked out, the right horizontal stabilizer was badly damaged, and there was other undetermined damage in the bomb bay which prevented releasing the bombs by either normal or emergency systems when we passed over the target.

"Consequently, the remainder of the formation quickly pulled away from us as soon as they dropped their bombs. Almost immediately, we came under attack by about a dozen German aircraft. The crippled condition of our aircraft soon made it apparent that when enemy fighters began an attack, our best defense was to fire our longer range .50-caliber machine guns from as stable flight as I could maintain, until the enemy fighters were close enough to effectively fire their shorter range .303-caliber guns. At that moment we would take abrupt evasive action. This evasive action consisted of diving, banking, skidding, and slipping our aircraft in as violent and erratic manner as possible.

"These maneuvers were repeated for as long as we were under attack – two or three times with such violence that one or more bombs broke loose and clattered out of the bomb bay. I thought the aircraft was breaking up on these occasions.

With two engines inoperative, we were losing altitude rapidly while performing these maneuvers, and after passing over a low range of hills, we approached a higher range ahead which we could not clear. At this point I ordered the crew to bail out. We were still under fighter attack, and as the tail gunner, Sgt. Roland, was crawling forward to the waist to be in position to

bail out, he was thrown completely out of the plane through the open camera hatch when I made an abrupt diving, twisting turn.

“Normally, all of the crew members are belted down except the two waist gunner, who must stand beside an open window on either side of the plane and hold the butt of a .50 cal. gun, which is mounted on a post in the window. These two men are not belted in as they must stand and move around in order to fire the guns. Therefore, they were being thrown around like popcorn in a popper during my evasive maneuvers.

“After bailing out, I landed on the side of a mountain and soon saw Sgt. Stubbs, my waist gunner, lying behind a log about a hundred yards above me. I climbed up to where he was and asked if he was injured. He said he hadn’t been wounded but that he was afraid his neck or back was either cracked or broken because it hurt so badly. I asked if it was due to landing hard in the chute (I had fractured my right leg on landing because my chute had not fully opened and assumed the same thing might have happened to him.) But he said it had happened when he had struck the top of the aircraft with his head a couple of times while being thrown about.

“We were captured a few minutes later by armed citizens from a village nearby. They were quite abusive and made life miserable for Sgt. Stubbs because he could not raise his arms in surrender.

“The walk to the village over rough ground covered with several inches of snow, was obviously very painful for Stubbs. Each time he slipped or stumbled he could not refrain from exclaiming in agony. We had to stop several times to allow him to get himself together to go a little farther.

”After we got to the village, I was taken to the dispensary where my leg was splinted, and did not see Stubbs again until that night when we were locked up along with two others of our crew. During the night, he spoke of having stiffness and severe pains in his neck and back. Next morning we were taken to the city of Eisenach, and during the day we were sent to different POW camps.”

S/Sgt. Erskine H. Stubbs, this waist gunner, added, “The 24th of February, 1944 at times seems like only yesterday; at other times it is like a lifetime ago. There’s no way to forget it – only some parts of it.

“To the best of my knowledge, #3 engine propeller was running away and wouldn’t feather. #4 engine was on fire and the right tail section was almost gone. We were under very heavy fighter attacks. My position was right waist so I don’t know about the #1 and #2 engines. The fighters literally ate us up. I am sure our aircraft accounted for either 4 or 5 German fighters, so all was not lost in vain.

“Our navigator, Buechsenstein, was KIA but I never could get the details. The Germans had different stories. We don’t know if his parachute didn’t open, if he was strafed in his parachute, or was in the crash itself. The rest of the crew parachuted and were POWs for the remainder of the war. To my knowledge, the pilot and I were the only ones who were injured.”

T/Sgt. Paul Nablo confirmed statements made above, “I recall we had flak hits on two engines, one out and one running away that could not be feathered. Then fighters shot away the right vertical stabilizer, making it impossible for our pilot to keep the plane flying, so told us to get out. I was not wounded but received facial cuts from being thrown around on the flight deck – I was the radio operator.”

Konrad Rudolph, a German war historian from Homberg, West Germany, sent this information, “I have found an eyewitness to this crash in the Dippach-Simmershausen area. A woman, who at

that time was a sixteen year old girl, was at a camp for 'B.D.M.' (girls from the Hitlerjugend) in the Rhon-Hills. The plane crashed near her camp. She saw some parachutes coming down and ran to that crash area. Some German policemen and men from the 'Land-wacht' captured the airmen, and were rounding them up.

"However, one of the American airmen was very badly injured. A policeman said that perhaps when the airman jumped from the airplane, he was struck by a propeller or was thrown against the plane, (tail section, etc.) as he had one arm and one leg torn or sheared (almost) completely loose from his body, and was unconscious. One policeman suggested that they shoot him to end his suffering, but the Burgermeister from the village said 'No'. But this policeman still wanted to kill him as he said these "Terror-flyers" had bombed his home in Kassel and killed his family.

"While these two men disputed the airman's fate, another crewman came up, carrying his parachute. His presence apparently threatened the policeman, as he then left the wounded man. But in a few minutes this wounded airman died of his terrible injuries.

"The name of this witness is Mrs. Ludwig."

Sidney Hawkins wrote: "I landed in a tree and with little injuries. So I cut myself free from my chute and fell to the ground. As the ground was covered with snow, I assumed the snow would help break my fall. But there was little snow so I injured my back. I still suffer from that injury. Later, I was captured by German Brown Shirt kids who hit me in the face with a rifle butt, losing most of my teeth."

Harold Etheridge wrote: "Fields was ball gunner on my crew. On the mission before we were shot down (13 February 44). Fields' feet were frozen, frost bitten, etc. I took Fields to the hospital when we returned to base, so he wasn't on the crew when we were shot down. I didn't see Fields again. Another 44th POW gave me info on Fields."

Alfred McDonnell (on Jack Thames' crew) wrote: "Harold Etheridge and crew were flying on our right wing on that mission over Gothia, Germany when fighter plane came through and knocked them out. As they went down, we counted the chutes that came out and all ten made it. About two months later, we heard they were all taken prisoners of war. From my ball turret that morning, I counted 45 chutes in the air. I am sure there were more for we lost a number of planes that day."

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #41-24225 T, Bell	FLAK ALLEY		MACR # 2922
68th Squadron Crew:			
BELL, PHILLIP W. ASN 0-742832	Pilot POW	2nd Lt.	St. Joseph, Missouri
KING, JAMES L. ASN 0-681117	Co-pilot KIA	2nd Lt.	Parksville, Kentucky
SCHROEDER, JAMES A. ASN 0-678513	Navigator POW, repatriated	2nd Lt.	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
HALL, GEORGE W. ASN 0-686193	Bombardier POW, injured	2nd Lt.	Ann Arbor, Michigan
FREEBURGH, CHARLES H. ASN 14150973	Engineer POW	S/Sgt.	Philadelphia, Mississippi
MILILLO, ANTONIO ASN 31158071	Radio Oper. KIA, buried Ardennes (A-24-16)	S/Sgt.	Boston, Massachusetts

HAMMONTREE, JAMES A. ASN 14161472	Ball Turret KIA	Sgt.	Paiton, Georgia
HAYNES, WILEY W. Jr. ASN 34572318	RW Gunner KIA, buried Ardennes (A-21-9)	Sgt.	Gainsville, Georgia
SULLIVAN, KENNETH E. ASN 35562810	LW Gunner KIA	S/Sgt.	Hammond, Indiana
GLEASON, ROBERT J. ASN 13049367	Tail Turret KIA	Sgt.	Washington, Dist. of Col.

Note: This aircraft crashed near Pferdsdorf, Germany.

The MACR includes the following information: Just after the target this aircraft was caught in a prop wash and fell out of formation, with two props on one side running away. Enemy aircraft immediately concentrated their attacks on this plane and it began to straggle. Much of the damage to the aircraft was to the left side. Sgt. Kenneth Sullivan, left waist gunner, was seriously wounded as well. Sgt. Wiley Haynes was told to contact the others in the rear of the ship and then to bail out. This he did but he was so badly wounded that he died soon after landing.

About 1330 hours and 21,000 feet, five minutes flying time south of Gotha, crew bailed out. Six parachutes were seen to come out of this aircraft before it exploded. The pilot, Lt. Bell, knew of eight men bailing out, but only four of them survived. Lt. Bell said that he had been told that all of his men had jumped prior to his leaving the ship, but later was told that Sgts. Hammontree and Gleason, both from the rear of the plane, did not jump. However, in another portion of the MACR it states that both Gleason and Hammontree did bail out (or were blown out by the force of the explosion) but too soon as both men were dead before getting down to the ground. (The MACR reported that Gleason and Hammontree froze to death.

Lt. George W. Hall, bombardier, and Lt. Schroeder, navigator, bailed out of nose wheel door; Sgt. Charles H. Freeburg bailed out of bomb bay doors. James L. King, co-pilot, bailed out, but was wounded by a 20-mm shell and died a few minutes after hitting the ground. He had had three previous missions. Sgt. Sullivan was seriously injured, captured as soon as he hit the ground, was taken to a schoolhouse near Gotha, but died soon afterwards in a hospital. It was his second mission.

Radio operator Milillo was only slightly injured at the time that he bailed out, but his chute did not open or he failed to pull his ripcord soon enough. He died on the ground.

Lt. James A. Schroeder, navigator, was badly wounded, bailed out and was later repatriated by the Germans back to the U.S. about 25 September 1944.

Four from this crew were buried temporarily in the Pferdsdorf/Rhon Cemetery:: Lt. James L. King (grave #202), Sgt. Antonio Milillo (grave #203), Sgt. James A. Hammontree (grave #204), and Sgt. Wiley W. Haynes, Jr. (grave #205).

Their plane, the famous "Flak Alley", with 41 previous missions successfully completed, crashed in a small village south of Gotha, Germany.

Lt. Schroeder reported that he could not run due to seven holes in his back. Freeburgh tried to escape and the last glimpse Schroeder had of him he was running and his helmet flaps were flapping. Schroeder said that Hall, the bombardier, was wounded in both eyes, probably from shards of steel from exploding shells. He lost one eye, but the other was saved by a German doctor, who used magnets to remove slivers of steel from it. Lt. Hall died many years ago.

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

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

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

3 March 1944

Oranienburg, Germany

68th SQUADRON:

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

Returned to base

68th Squadron Crew (partial):

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

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

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

7 March 1944

Training Flight, Shipdham, England

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