
11 September 1944

Misburg, Germany

Two 67th Squadron crewmen were injured during this mission.

67th SQUADRON:

67th Sq., #42-110031, Spagnola	Injured crewmember
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67th Squadron Crew (partial):

PONDFIELD, JOHN J. ASN 13142294	LW Gunner Wounded by flak, not serious	Sgt.	Baltimore, Maryland
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There are no additional details on this this incident.

67th SQUADRON:

67th Sq., #42-99997, Hurst	Injured crewmember
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67th Squadron Crew (partial):

PORTER, RAYMOND W. ASN T-2607	Bombardier Plexiglass in eye	Flt Of.	San Luis Obispo California
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Lt. Porter said that, "I was on Frank Hurst's crew on the trip to Misburg (Hannover) on the 11th. We had just finished dropping our bombs when a piece of flak came through the plexiglass of the nose turret, shattering it and a piece of the glass entered my eye. I couldn't see then but didn't think it too serious. But we heard that the Group ahead of us in the formation [the 492nd] was being raked over by fighters and I had to let Carl Appelin my place in the turret to man the guns so we wouldn't meet the same fate. We later learned that this Group was nearly wiped out. I recovered later, with no permanent damage done."

13 September 1944

Schwabish-Hall Airfield, Germany

Two crewmen were injured in separate incidents during this mission.

66th SQUADRON:

66th Sq., #42-51234, Stevens	Injured crewmember
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66th Squadron Crew:

STEVENS, MAURICE M.	Pilot	Flight Officer	
CROSS, FINIS G.	Co-pilot	Flight Officer	
BISONS, GINO F.	Navigator	2nd Lt.	
GERASIMCZYK, STANLEY J.	Bombardier	Flight Officer	
RAVIS, HERBERT J.	Radio Oper.	Sgt.	
CHISMAN, ALBERT ASN 36671218	Eng./Top Turret Seriously injured	Sgt.	West Frankfort, Illinois
BRAMAN, DONALD S.	RW Gunner	Sgt.	
KENDLE, JACK F.	LW Gunner	Sgt.	
NILES, ROBERT C.	Tail Turret	Sgt.	

Very little information is available on Albert Chisman, except that he was injured while in a 66th Bomb Group B-24 piloted by Maurice Stevens. He was injured on his fifth mission and did not fly his next one until 26 October. He then went on to complete his tour of duty with 36 missions on 24 March 1945.

67th SQUADRON:

67th Sq., #42-95193, Holcomb Injured crewmember

67th Squadron Crew:

HOLCOMB, JAMES C.	Pilot	1st Lt.	
HERMAN, BERNARD. L.	Co-pilot	2nd Lt.	
SMITH, L. A.	Navigator	1st Lt.	
FISHER, BERNARD	Bombardier	1st Lt.	
RODRIGUEZ, JOSEPH R. ASN 12083655	Radio Oper. Seriously wounded	T/Sgt.	New York City New York
WHITING, CLAYTON C.	Eng./Top Turret	S/Sgt.	
GERBE, FRANK	RW Gunner	T/Sgt.	
MANSIR, EVERETT W.	LW Gunner	S/Sgt.	
RHODES, JOHN L.	Tail Turret	S/Sgt.	

Note: Lt. Herman was KIA on 18 October 1944.

T/Sgt. Rodriguez stated, “My diary shows that it was a Jet Aircraft airfield at Hall, Germany that we hit, and Major William Cameron, 67th’s Squadron’s C.O., was Command Pilot that day. Lt. Herring had been our first pilot, but he completed his tour and our co-pilot, Lt. James Holcomb was promoted to take his place that day. Our aircraft was #42-95193 I-Bar, THREE KISSES FOR LUCK, one which we had flown since our 19th mission – this was our 29th, all in the 67th.

“I had the distinct privilege of serving as radio operator on Capt. Charles (Chuck) S. Herring’s crew from its inception in December 1943 in March Field, California. On the day of the mission in question, then 1st Lt. Herring was not flying as he had finished his tour of 30 missions whereas the rest of us on his crew had only 29 missions. He had gone one jump on us due to the fact that he had flown his first mission as an observer on someone else’s crew – as a combat orientation mission. Our copilot, 1st Lt. James Holcomb, having checked out as a first pilot, was in command.

“We were carrying 500 lb. general-purpose bombs and flak over the target was reported to be heavy at the briefing that morning. We were hit by very heavy flak before we reached the target and lost our #2 engine – all fuel tanks hit and damage to our hydraulic system – I, myself, was wounded by flak through my left thigh and it was touch and go for awhile as to whether or not we would have to bail out. Since we were losing fuel and altitude, the order was given to lighten the ship and everything that could be moved and wasn’t bolted down, was thrown out.

“We were alone and vulnerable and a decision was made to try to make Switzerland, however, shortly after two P-38s responding to our distress calls joined us and escorted us to an airfield used by artillery spotters very close to the then front lines. We made an emergency landing there and I was taken on a stretcher, by ambulance, to a field hospital very close by after preliminary treatment at a first-aid station. My crewmembers came by that afternoon to visit me after I had

been operated on and left me all of their “C” rations, which I eventually traded off. They told me they had counted over 200 holes on the ship, which was left there at the artillery observer’s field. They then took off for Paris, which had been liberated only a few short weeks before. They promised to fly back and fire flares to advise me what my wife, Marie, who was pregnant with our first child, had delivered – red-red if a girl – blue-blue, if a boy.

“They spent close to a week in Paris before they were flown back to England. I spent about a week at the field hospital in a tent that I shared with eight men from a bomb disposal squad who had been injured while disposing of German butterfly bombs. We had constant visits from French farmers who brought us fruit and spirits. There seemed to be daily artillery duels between both sides as we could hear the rumbling of cannon fire in the distance.

“From this field hospital, I was sent by ambulance to a hospital in Paris where the signs were still printed in German and I wore German pajamas. I stayed at this hospital for about ten days, was then sent to a hospital near Cherbourg, and then by boat hospital (this vessel the “Nile” belonged to the king of Egypt and had been donated by him for this use) to a tremendous-sized hospital in Southampton, England from where I was discharged on the 14th of October. I was suppose to return to Stone, England, but I wasn’t going to take any chances on being re-assigned to some other outfit, so I took off on my own back to Shipdham to the 44th Bomb Group where the first sergeant at the 67th fixed it all up.”

Rodriguez returned to combat status and flew his next mission on 2 November, and completed his tour of 34 missions on 5 November 1944.

Frank Gerbe provided this account: “On our way to target area we flew over the Rhine River and got hit with a heavy concentration of flak. The first hit knocked out our #2 engine and ripped open our fuel cells. The next burst of flak hit our oxygen supply tanks and Rodriquez was wounded in the leg.

“Our vacuum gauges on #1 and #2 engines were hit. Gas was pouring into the bomb bays from the holes in the tanks. We literally fell from the sky, with a loss of 7,000 feet altitude. Holcomb was our pilot this day and we had a rookie copilot. Our air speed dropped to about 120 mph. Our #3 engine was hit as well as the fuel cells, which were leaking, #3 engine was sputtering and missing. Holcomb used the radio to inform the rest of the flight of our predicament.

“In a few minutes, two of the most beautiful P-38s came alongside and gave us close support and guidance to a friendly field. Bandits were reported in the area and you cannot imagine our feelings with those two P-38s on our wing tips. Little friends were what we called those two P-38s and they guided us toward an airfield in Laon, France.

“We started our approach for a landing and #3 engine cuts out. Then set the selector valves from #4 to #3 engine and started fuel pumps; #3 engine started right up again. That was not the end of our problems. As we got above the runway, we found that the Jerry’s had bombed it two nights ago. It was too late now to change our minds about landing.

“As we hit the runway, the nose wheel gear broke and the main landing gear on the left and tire were ripped up. Immediately, we cut all engines off and old I-193 rolled to a stop. Luckily, she didn’t catch fire. During this hectic ride, we had been throwing all extra weight, such as ammunition, flak suits, guns and etc. overboard, just to make the ship lighter.

“An ambulance took Rodriquez to a hospital. Later on we hitchhiked to the hospital to see Rodriquez. He was coming along okay. Then decided to head for Paris. Stayed overnight at Chauny, France and spent a while in Paris. We got good and drunk while in Paris and went sightseeing when we were not drinking.

“Flew I-193 on this mission and she has had it. We ain’t got her no more. She was shot up too badly and we had to abandon her. Our hearts were broken to lose our favorite, “THREE KISSES FOR LUCK,” but in our memories, she’ll always be part of us.” [Note: She was repaired and completed the war.]

18 September 1944

Low Level Supply Mission, Best, Holland

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #42-50596, Konstand

Injured crewmember

68th Squadron Crew:

KONSTAND, GUS	Pilot	Capt.	
ADAMS, LEWIS C.	Command Pilot	Lt. Col.	
OLIVER, GEORGE H.	Co-pilot	2nd Lt.	
PARKER, GEORGE J.	Navigator	2nd Lt.	
BAXTER, ROBERT C.	Navigator-GEE	1st Lt.	
LOFLIN, WILLIAM E. ASN 0-1996110	Bombardier Seriously injured	2nd Lt.	Huntington, West Virginia
LYBARGER, WILLIAM B.	Radio Oper.	T/Sgt.	
FIELDS, EDWIN D.	Eng./Top Turret	T/Sgt.	
DAVIS, ADDISON C.	RW Gunner	S/Sgt.	
GARRETT, HOWARD N.	LW Gunner	S/Sgt.	
STEPHANOVIC, REUBEN J.	Tail Turret	S/Sgt.	
CONROY, H. A.	Other		

Note: Six members of this crew were KIA on 28 December 1944: Konstand, Oliver, Parker, Loflin, Fields, and Stephanovic. Three others (Lybarger, Davis, and Garrett) survived and were taken prisoner.

Lt. Loflin had been a member of Capt. Konstand’s crew when they were transferred from the 492nd Bomb Group in mid-August 1944. He had completed many missions with that Group and was on his fourth mission with the 44th when wounded. According to the Interrogation Report for the Capt. Konstand’s Crew, 2nd Lt. Loflin was struck in the left buttocks. He was taken to the 52nd Field Medical Hospital for treatment. He returned to active duty on 23 December 1944 and was KIA on 28 December 1944.

William Lybarger’s wife Phyllis, provides some additional information on this mission: “You may be interested to know the ‘true’ story about what happened that day. Bill had always said he was ‘shot down’ twice and Davis put all the confusing pieces together for me. As you know, they were flying low to drop supplies and Loflin, the bombardier, was wounded in the buttocks and the plane landed near Brussels. Well, Loflin’s wound was not serious. What caused the plane to

land was that the two left engines had been shot out and since they were flying so low, they couldn't get any altitude to fly home, therefore, they had to land! They were lucky to be near an airport.

“They returned the next day in another plane. Three additional personnel, Lt. Col. L. C. Adams, 1st Lt. Robert C. Baxter, and H. Conroy were aboard that day as they thought it would be an easy flight to fly. Guess they were sorry they went! Anyway, it appears they must not have wanted it to appear on their records that they were ‘shot down,’ so it was not recorded that way. Since this happened the day after Brussels was liberated, that’s why those Belgium farmers were so glad to see Bill. He saw Hitler’s picture in ‘The Mannekin Pis’ fountain in Brussels.”

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #44-40167, Habedank	SIERRA BLANCA		Injured crewmembers
506th Squadron Crew:			
HABEDANK, RICHARD H.	Pilot	2nd Lt.	
DUPONT, ROBERT P. ASN 0-710907	Co-pilot Seriously injured	2nd Lt.	Jewett City, Connecticut
MARGOLIES, MURRAY G.	Navigator	Flt. Off.	
LAUGHLIN, WILLIAM E.	Bombardier	2nd Lt.	
SCHMIDT, ARTHUR J.	Radio Oper.	S/Sgt.	
URANIA, ALBERT J.	Eng./Top Turret	S/Sgt.	
MATTER, ELWOOD A. ASN 33176555	RW Gunner Seriously injured	Sgt.	Sunbury, Pennsylvania
WEATHLEY, J. C.	RW Gunner	Sgt.	
MOORE, DAVID	Tail Turret	Sgt.	
MILLER, C. M.	Other	Pvt.	

Both of these men were on the aircraft piloted by Lt. Richard H. Habedank and were wounded at about the same time. Sgt. Elwood A. Matter, assigned as top turret gunner normally on this crew, relates his story, “On this mission, my third, I was in the waist dropping supplies out of the ball turret opening. The turrets had been removed for this mission.

“As we approached the drop zone at about 400 feet, we encountered heavy small ammo fire. One of these shells exploded in the turret opening and I was struck in the left arm, face and scalp with the shell fragments. It put me in the hospital near Shipdham [231st Sta Hosp. at Wymondham] for about a month before I returned to duty [9 November 1944]. Our co-pilot, Lt. DuPont, was also wounded on this same mission by an exploding shell. His wounds were not as severe as mine and he returned to duty before I did.

“While I was in the hospital, my crew kept flying missions so I got behind. When they finished their tour of 30 missions, I was assigned to another crew (Captain Bunns) as a waist gunner. I flew on the March 24th 1945 re-supply low-level mission to ground troupes near Wesel, Germany under almost the exact same conditions and position and wondered if I’d be wounded again. But this time our nose turret gunner, Sgt. Truslow, was wounded, but happily, not very seriously and he recovered in a short time and soon returned to duty. This is the crew I flew home with in June

of 1945.” Matter completed his tour of duty on 20 April 1945. He received his Purple Heart from General Johnson.

28 September 1944

Kassel, Germany, Mission 229: Motor Works

One 68th Squadron aircraft was hit by flak and made an emergency landing in Belgium

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #42-52618, Dayball	CHIEF'S DELIGHT	Emergency landing
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This aircraft was also known as CHIEF WAPELLO

DAYBALL, JULIAN H.	Pilot	2nd Lt.
PHILLIPS, ROBERT L.	Co-pilot	Flt. Off.
DAVIS, RICHARD H.	Navigator	2nd Lt.
REINECKE, CALVIN C.	Bombardier	2nd Lt.
FINK, IVAN W.	Eng./Top Turret	Sgt.
SICARD, EDWARD P.	Radio Oper.	Sgt.
COUVILLION, WILBERT L.	RW Gunner	Sgt.
SMITH, MALCOLM R.	LW Gunner	Sgt.
SHEA, JOHN J.	Tail Turret	Sgt.

Note: Couvillion and Shea bailed out okay and joined the rest of the crew at the airfield. The Dayball crew was shot down on 18 October 1944. Dayball, Phillips, Davis, Fink, Sicard, Couvillion, Smith, and Shea were KIA.

Bob McGee, who had been on the Dayball crew, provided the following information on this mission: “September 28, 1944 was a mission (which I wasn’t on) to Kassel Tank Factory, plane number B-618, and the crew had bad luck. The bombing was on PFF. The plane had gotten a lot of anti-aircraft flak and they headed for the Brussels, Belgium airport. The pilot, Lt. Dayball, said anyone could bail out if they wanted to as he didn’t know if the landing would be a good one. One engine was out and two were losing oil.

I know Bill Couvillion was one who bailed out and John Shea was another. Bill told me he landed in a tree and when he started down, a man was there talking in French. Bill was from Louisiana and could also speak French. Bill met John at a crossroads. The plane landed okay. Dayball was a very good pilot. Bill said the stores had many flavors of ice cream and there were lots of expensive cameras for sale. They left the plane there and all of the crew came back to our base by ATC (air transport command).”

Less than one month later, the Dayball crew was shot down on the mission to Leverkusen, Germany.

30 September 1944

Hamm, Germany

The secondary target, Hamm Marshalling Yards, were attacked by the 44th BG with unobserved results due to the cloud cover. Bombing was accomplished by PFF method. This Group led the

14th Combat Bomb Wing and the 2nd Division. One 66th Squadron aircraft and crew was Missing In Action.

66th SQUADRON:

66th Sq., #44-10531 R+, Ledford	MY SAD ASS		MACR #9370
66th Squadron Crew:			
LEDFOORD, ARTHUR S. ASN 0-705401	Pilot POW	1st Lt.	Chattanooga, Tennessee
ARMSTRONG, HAROLD A. ASN 0-771649	Co-pilot POW	2nd Lt.	Pueblo, Colorado
TOMBLIN, JAMES N. ASN 0-722396	Navigator POW	2nd Lt.	Johnson City, Tennessee
PASCAL, RICHARD W. ASN 0-773438	Bombardier POW	2nd Lt.	Weston, Nebraska
WRIGHTS, WILLIAM H. Jr. ASN 34776118	Engineer POW	T/Sgt.	Clemmons, North Carolina
SHARP, EDWARD L. ASN 35606490	Radio Oper. POW	T/Sgt.	Mingo Junction, Ohio
WIENER, FREDERICK ASN 12121767	RW Gunner POW	S/Sgt.	Brooklyn, New York
BERTOLIO, PERVIS J. ASN 38358009	LW Gunner POW	S/Sgt.	Port Neches, Texas
STARR, HENRY P. ASN 13031489	Tail Turret KIA	S/Sgt.	Arlington, Virginia

The MACR includes these facts, “At 1324 hours, just after bombs away and at the target, this aircraft (#531 R+) was flying in #3 position in the low squadron and apparently was hit by flak. It was last observed at 1325 hours leaving the formation, dropping below, and apparently under control.”

1st Lt. Arthur S. Ledford sent additional information about this raid, “We saw no flak until after bombs away and then we were hit at least four times. #1 engine went out immediately and #3 was hit but still producing some power. However, it was burning and eventually burned through the side of the fuselage. We also took a hit around the waist and one near the tail, which got our tail gunner.

“After being hit, we lost power and speed, rapidly dropped behind the formation. We were able to hold to approximately 300 feet per minute descent and when we reached 17,000 feet, I told the waist gunners to go to the tail and check on Starr to see if he was alive. If so, they should tie him to a static line and throw him out, as it was evident that we must all bail out soon. They called back to report that the top of his head had been blown away and he couldn’t possibly be alive. So the decision was made to leave him with the plane.

“Approximately 35 minutes off the target, the fire burned into the plane and everybody left except the bombardier, Lt. Pascal, navigator Tomblin, and myself. Those two could not get out due to a malfunction of one of the nose wheel doors. When the plane eventually blew up, they were standing on the doors and were blown out into the air, where they pulled their cords and landed OK.

“After getting rid of all my gear (flak suit, helmet, oxygen mask, electric suit, headphones, etc), I jumped from the flight deck, through the fire there and through the bomb bay. I left at approximately 14,000 feet and pulled the cord at about 1,000 feet. A large piece of the fuselage floated down within 250 feet of where I landed. About another 200 feet away, one of the waist gunner’s jackets came down. Two of the engines fell in the yard of a house about 1/4 mile from where I hit the ground.

“Tomblin, Pascall and I were together in prison camp for the duration. The other crew members who had bailed out earlier, were captured in different places and were taken another direction.”

Radio operator Edward Sharp has written, but not published, a book about WW 2, but chose to send me only the following, “We left on pay-day, a beautiful day. Our target was Hamm – and your information is correct, we started sagging behind after feathering the outboard engine. (rather hastily, I thought) I had a splendid view from the upper turret. From there I could see that we were taking a lot of flak.

“Soon, our inboard engine was streaming smoke and occasionally belched fire. It was the first indication that we were going to bail out. I dropped to the flight deck where Bill Wrights, the engineer, was stretched out with his harness buckled and chute on. He was staring at the bomb bay. I followed his gaze while snapping up my harness and chute, noticing as he did, that the bays were filled with smoke and spraying gasoline. The bombs were all gone, thank goodness.

“I was attempting to tie my G.I. shoes to my harness when the explosion occurred. Bill ripped up the deck floor door and worked the handle to manually open the bay doors; then he leapt through the fire – and I was on his shoulders.

“When I had the opportunity, I checked the time to find it to be 1337 hours. I tried to stay sane by figuring my chances of reaching the Belgian border a few miles to the west.

“S/Sgt. Starr, our tail gunner, was killed and still on board. Sgts. Wiener and Bertolio later told me that Starr had a terrible head wound that was fatal. They could not get him out of the turret.

“We surviving enlisted men were later grouped together in Stalag Luft IV in Poland. After evacuating that camp to the Russians, we met our co-pilot Armstrong in the officer’s camp, Stalag Luft I, Barth. The unofficial name we gave our ship was ‘MY SAD ASS’ as it was our pilot’s favorite expression.”

67th SQUADRON:

67th Sq., #42-94846 L-Bar, Harris

Injured crewmember

67th Squadron Crew:

HARRIS, STEPHEN C.	Pilot	1st Lt.	
ZIEGLER, GEORGE G.	Co-pilot	2nd Lt.	
DEWITT, DELBERT J.	Navigator	2nd Lt.	
BULLINGER, WILLIAM M.	Bombardier	2nd Lt.	
PEEK, JOEL K.	Radio Oper.	T/Sgt.	
SIELING, HARRY N.	Eng./Top Turret	S/Sgt.	
VAN EYNDE, ROBERT J.	RW Gunner Seriously Injured	Sgt.	Chicago, Illinois
DORRISEY, WILLIAM	LW Gunner	Sgt.	

JEDLOWSKI, HAROLD F.

Tail Turret

Sgt.

Lt. Harris' aircraft was hit by flak in the target, seriously damaging both wings, forcing the pilots to be very cautious while limping back to base. Sgt. Van Eynde, right waist gunner, also was hit and injured seriously in his upper right arm during this same flak barrage. He was admitted to the hospital to recover. He had completed 10 missions prior to this one, but his injuries would not permit him to fly any additional missions.

7 October 1944

Kassel, Germany

The Group attacked the Tank Factory at Kassels with 37 aircraft. Flak at target was intense and accurate, with the 506th Squadron losing two planes and another was forced to land at Brussels, Belgium with the pilot seriously wounded.

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #42-50789 Bar-A, Salfen

LAKANOOKIE

MACR #9343

506th Squadron Crew:

SALFEN, WILLIAM S.
ASN 0-705812Pilot
POW

1st Lt.

O'Fallon,
MissouriIDEN, DONALD B.
ASN 0-767814Co-pilot
POW

2nd Lt.

Visalia,
CaliforniaVETTER, EDWARD F.
ASN 0-1108389Navigator
POW

2nd Lt.

Topeka,
KansasBAUMAN, MORTON
ASN 0-685421Bombardier
POW

1st Lt.

West New York,
New JerseyBAGGETT, CARNEY W. Jr.
ASN 34715099Engineer
POW

T/Sgt.

Clarksville,
TennesseeDOHERTY, ROBERT L.
ASN 13039292Radio Oper.
KIA

S/Sgt.

Grove City,
PennsylvaniaSUSZEK, LEO C.
ASN 36422846RW Gunner
POW/Injured

Sgt.

Detroit,
MichiganSINCLAIR, NORMAN L.
ASN 36803002LW Gunner
POW

Sgt.

West De Pere,
WisconsinBUCKLEY, FRANCIS X.
ASN 13124177Tail Turret
KIA

Sgt.

Troy,
New York

The MACR states that this aircraft, #789, was last seen in vicinity of Kassels at 1224 hours. #1 and #2 engines had been knocked out by flak and it fell out of formation, under control. It was last heard from at approximately 1239 hours calling on VHF for fighter support. It was believed to be trying for or heading toward friendly territory.

Lt. Donald B. Iden, co-pilot, sent the following information: "We had just closed the bomb bay doors after releasing bombs over Kassel when our plane, which was named LAKANOOKIE, took two bursts of flak. One hit the left wing and the other went into the tail section. The hit in the wing took out the #1 and #2 engines, so that made it impossible to keep a heading without complete cross-control of ailerons and rudders. Needless to say, loss of altitude was very rapid.

“We rode it down to 1,500 feet, at which time we bailed out and soon were captured. After Salfen and I bailed out, the aircraft entered a flat spin, crashed and burned.

“No, Leo Suszek was not an evadee – he was captured by the Germans as were the rest of us. But, somehow, he was badly injured on bailout. When we last saw him on the ground, he was unable to converse and appeared to be in extreme pain. I thought he had internal injuries of some kind. We gave him an injection of morphine before he was taken away.

“We were told that Robert Doherty’s parachute failed to open. Apparently Francis Buckley went down with the aircraft. I can only assume that he probably was unable to bail out, but for reasons unknown. Possibly the flak hit in the rear could have injured him or damaged his chute.

“Spent the rest of the duration at Barth, Germany – Stalag Luft #1. After the war, Suszek visited me two or three times before he headed for the V.A. Hospital in Tucson, Arizona. I have not heard from him since.”

The second 506th aircraft that failed to return was piloted by Homer E. Still and Francis C. Welborn.

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #44-40167 Bar-Y, Still	SIERRA BLANCA	MACR #9342
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506th Squadron Crew:

STILL, HOMER E. ASN 0-462673	Pilot POW	2nd Lt.	Jacksonville, Florida
WELBORN, FRANCIS C. ASN 0-828847	Co-pilot POW	2nd Lt.	Lexington, Kentucky
WILSON, JOHN E. ASN T-126388	Navigator POW	Flt Of.	Beeville, Texas
STRUNC, HENRY ASN 0-776824	Bombardier POW	2nd Lt.	Staple Hurst, Nebraska
WESSMAN, HELGE E. ASN 32432466	Engineer KIA	S/Sgt.	West Orange, New Jersey
LORD, JOHN B. ASN 16081465	Radio Oper. POW/BURNED	S/Sgt.	Maywood, Illinois
HIBBS, LEO R. ASN 35809558	Hatch Gun. KIA	Sgt.	Corydon, Indiana
WYANT, JOHN C. ASN 13169581	RW Gunner POW	Sgt.	Uniontown, Pennsylvania
DAHLIN, JOHN K. ASN 11067243	LW Gunner POW	Sgt.	Worcester, Massachusetts
BUHL, VERNON ASN 39621427	Tail Turret KIA	Sgt.	Whitehall, Montana

The MACR relates that aircraft #167 was last observed in target area at Kassel. Bombs were away at 1224 hours under heavy anti aircraft fire. This plane then dropped slightly behind the formation.

Sgt. John Dahlin made the statements that, “Our plane was hit by flak and set on fire. Seven of us bailed out. The plane broke into pieces soon afterwards. I met the other six men who had bailed out safely, but none of us ever again saw Sgt. Hibbs. Later, a German Major told me that three bodies were found in the crashed plane. He had a correct list of names of the missing crew members.”

Radio Operator John Lord sent a tape of his experiences, “September 1st was our first mission as a crew. The pilot, Still, and co-pilot Welborn had flown one other combat mission prior to this. But on our first mission, the tail hit a white fence at end of runway – I could see pieces of the fence fly! We [later] dropped our 1,000 pound bombs through the bomb bay doors. Not a very good way to start.

“On the 7 October mission to Kassels, being the newest crew, we got one of the oldest planes to fly. It was patched up, my radio table was broken off, no place to write. [Aircraft received from the 492nd Bomb Group when that Group was de-activated.]

“When we opened the bomb bay doors, I could see the flash of flak guns shooting at us. We had trouble with one engine losing power, finally had to feather it. Not then being able to keep up with the formation, we began to fall behind. Our pilot, Homer Still, asked John Wilson, navigator, for a heading to fly back over France.

“Another engine on the right side was lost, making two of them feathered on that side of the wing, and we were in deep trouble. About that time I heard a loud POP and then saw our co-pilot, Welborn, open the top hatch and climb out! When I turned around and looked into the bomb bay, I saw the reason for that exit. It was full of flames.

“How was I to get out? Normally I could have climbed up on the radio table and pulled myself up though that same top hatch, but the table was broken. I had my chest pack chute on but in a dilemma as what to do when the plane made my decision for me – it turned upside down. I then fell out of that open top hatch – well, almost out. My heated suit and intercom plugs were holding me tight. I quickly broke or tore them loose and fell free.

“I found myself in a head first position and slowly spinning so that I had little sense of falling. I guess that my altitude at that time to be about 17,000 feet. Slowly I saw the ground getting closer, pulled my ring and thankfully saw my chute blossom out. Looking down, I could see a round, burning area of incendiaries, so I pulled on some shroud lines and missed the fire, and landed in an open field. Then a large piece of the aircraft – the waist area – came down close to me. I suspect that the plane had exploded for that piece to hit like that.

“I had burns on my left hand and around my eyes. A young German lad of about 8 to 10 years old, helped me with my chute. Then German soldiers came running up, holding pistols on me. I had landed close to a Signal Corps practicing in the woods, unfortunately, with no possibility of evasion.

“They took me to a dispensary where I was bandaged on my hand and face. While I was there several teen-aged boys, who had been manning a flak gun nearby, came in to see me. They thought they had shot us down. Both Dahlin and Wyant had been shot at as they were coming down. I also learned that Welborn hit his head on something when he left through the top hatch, severely damaging his eye. I later got gangrene in my burned left hand, was treated by some

British doctors who had been captured earlier, but suffered no permanent damage – thanks to them.”

 Seriously wounded on this same mission to Kassel was 2nd Lt. John W. Jones, Jr.

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #42-50894 Bar-N, Jones			Returned
506th Squadron Crewman:			
JONES, JOHN W. ASN 0-764327	Pilot Seriously Wounded	2nd Lt.	Tucson, Arizona
HOLCOMBE, CLEMENT R.C. ASN 0-772376	Co-pilot Wounded	2nd Lt.	Michigan
WESTENHISER, JAMES T. ASN 0-712964	Navigator	2nd Lt.	
BAIER, EDWARD A. ASN 0-768980	Bombardier	2nd Lt.	
KIRKLAND, ROBERT E. ASN 34803237	Engineer Slight Wound	S/Sgt.	Coal Valley, Alabama
VAN EPPS, ELWOOD ASN 36815930	Radio Oper.	S/Sgt.	
SIMON, R. E. ASN 35679039	Ball Turret	Sgt.	
GARZA, RAUL ASN 38541707	RW Gunner	Sgt.	Port Lavaca, Texas
HAGGARD, ROBERT G. ASN 18202891	LW Gunner	Sgt.	Los Angeles, California
HAGE, MITRY K. ASN 38555766	Tail Turret	Sgt.	

Note: Sgt. Garza was KIA on 30 October 1944.

Aircraft #894 received a direct hit in the bomb bay and #1 engine, which had to be feathered. The aircraft headed for friendly territory and landed at Brussels. The pilot, Lt. Jones, had been hit in both legs, had his left leg amputated when treated at the 8th British Army Hospital.

2nd Lt. Clement R.C. Holcombe, co-pilot on this aircraft, was instrumental in making the safe emergency landing without a pilot. He states that, “The mission was to Kassel and the target was the Tiger Tank Factory. We were hit on the bomb run before dropping our bomb load. Lt. Jones was injured and I was hit in the back of my left shoulder, rendering my left arm useless.

“Sgt. Kirkland, engineer, also was hit, but fortunately his flak suit protected him from serious injury. The right wing fuel tanks were punctured and both #1 & #2 engines were damaged and lost normal power. The radio was damaged and I learned later that we were transmitting all right but could not receive. Adding to our problems was our compass which was malfunctioning and would not indicate correctly. #4 engine caught fire briefly, but it was blown out because we lost a few thousand feet in a hurry.

“When I finally got the plane straightened out, the formation was gone. I got Sgt. Kirkland to help Lt. Jones from his position and had him get into Jones’ seat to handle the throttles and help me with the rudder pedals. With my injured left arm I could not manipulate the throttles or other controls which were on my left side. The plane was ‘crabbing’ due to the uneven power output between the left and right sides, making straight flight most difficult.

“We salvoed our bombs to help hold altitude and tried to contact our ‘little friends’, but were not able to contact any of the fighters. Since Jones was hurt badly, and we were losing fuel steadily, I was afraid we might have to ditch if we continued towards England, and probably couldn’t get Jones out from a ditching situation.

“Lt. Westenhiser, navigator, found that Strip B-58, near Brussels, had very recently been taken from the Germans, so we decided to try to land there. With the compass screwed up, we just plain lucked out, finding it on the first pass.

“I followed a B-17 in on the final, (approach leg) but he did not make it, and crashed just short of the runway. There were bomb craters everywhere, but enough had been filled in to make a landing possible.

“With Sgt. Kirkland handling the throttles, I got the plane down OK. Jones and I were taken to the hospital. A day or two later, I was able to walk around with my arm in a sling. Our crew hitched a ride back to England in a C-54, but we hit bad weather and had to land near Dover. Next morning the C54 dropped us off right in front of the control tower!

“This was our seventh mission, but I spent some time in the hospital before going on to fly 23 more missions before returning to the States. Other than Lt. Jones, Raul Garza, who was our ball turret gunner, was the only other crewman who didn’t complete his tour. He went down over Germany while flying a make up mission.” [30 October 1944]

Lt. Holcombe was recommended for the Silver Star medal for his remarkably safe emergency landing under the most trying of conditions. But this modest pilot never mentioned this commendation in his letter.

Note: Sgt. Robert Eugene Kirkland’s son, Chuck Kirkland, wrote to say that his father had told him that the aircraft was named “Down the Hatch” and had a picture of a bomb dropping into a toilet on it. Chuck Kirkland reported that his father had died in January of 1994.

18 October 1944

Leverkusen, Germany

This Group sent 31 aircraft to attack the Chemical Works located at Leverkusen. Bombing was accomplished with G-H equipment; results unobserved due to clouds. Three aircraft did not return, due primarily to the severe weather conditions that existed over the continent. Squadrons incurring losses were the 67th and 68th.

67th SQUADRON:

67th Sq., #41-28944 D-Bar, Bakalo	FLYING GINNY	MACR #15421
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67th Squadron Crew:

BAKALO, MICHAEL ASN 0-699752	Pilot KIA	1st Lt.	New York City, New York
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TURNBULL, JOHN I. ASN 0-399733	Command Pilot KIA	Lt. Col.	Baltimore, Maryland
HERMAN, BERNARD L. ASN 0-817213	Co-pilot KIA	2nd Lt.	Baltimore, Maryland
BRADSHAW, EUGENE T. ASN 0-717169	Navigator KIA	1st Lt.	Warrensburg, Missouri
FOWLS, RALPH A. ASN 0-717050	Bombardier KIA	1st Lt.	Piketon, Ohio
HOLABAUGH, JOHN W. ASN 13110122	Engineer KIA	T/Sgt.	Tylersburg, Pennsylvania
STERN, JEROME J. ASN 16105797	Radio Oper. KIA	T/Sgt.	Brooklyn, New York
ZIEGLER, NORBERT J. ASN 17129592	Nose Turret KIA	S/Sgt.	Collyer, Kansas
ENCIMER, GEORGE J. ASN 16129729	RW Gunner Seriously injured, returned to U.S.	S/Sgt.	Chicago, Illinois
SCOTT, CECIL L. ASB 399100198	LW Gunner Seriously injured, returned to U.S.	S/Sgt.	Winnemucca, Nevada
LOPEZ, CHARLES R. ASN 37722472	Tail Turret KIA	S/Sgt.	Topeka, Kansas

Note: Lt. Col. Turnbull was originally from 492 Bomb Group, then later 44th Headquarters.

The MACR was not available but there is a statement from Sgt. George Encimer, right waist gunner on this crew. “Approximately seven miles from the assigned target, the radio operator, Jerome Stern called on the interphone to say that there was fire in the bomb bay. I, then, went there – forward and looked into the bay. Evidently the bombs had been salvoed by the bombardier, as the bay was empty.

“On the way back to the base there was a large cloud bank or front, building up to 28,000 feet that we could not get over. We were at 24,000 feet and proceeded to go through this bank of clouds. While still in the bank, we must have hit a prop wash (or collision). The engines were throttled back. About this time, it felt like a huge force was lifting the right wing. The aircraft went into a sharp bank to the left. It was at this time, I think, that Colonel Turnbull, the Command Pilot, said, ‘Center the needle! Center the needle!’

“I knelt on my knees and buckled the hook of my chest-type parachute to the harness. The aircraft then flipped over on its back. I fell and broke my arm. When I looked up, I saw the rear escape hatch, and the next thing I remember is being outside the ship. I pulled my ripcord and soon afterwards heard an explosion.

“Within moments I saw land beneath me. Cecil L. Scott, left waist gunner, landed approximately 30 feet away from me, but his chute hung up in a tree.

“The Canadians gave Scott a quart of blood and set my broken arm. We had landed approximately seven miles from Ghent, Belgium. Shortly after that, they put me on a hospital train back to the 231st hospital near Shipdham.

“The last aircraft we saw before going into that cloud bank was U-Bar, below us at five o’clock. I think that the pilot had trouble with the controls or control cables.”

George Encimer also stated that all other crew members were killed when this plane crashed 1 kilometer from Petegem, Deinze, Belgium. All watches stopped at 1307 hours. The dead were buried at the U. S. Army Cemetery, Flanders Field, Waregem, Belgium. It should be noted, too, that Colonel Turnbull was not killed immediately, but died two days later.

Lt. Col. John I. Turnbull, the Group Operations Officer, was Air Commander on the mission and aboard Lt. Bakalo's ship. Col. Turnbull was an All American lacrosse player in the Baltimore, Maryland area and was a member of the 1936 U.S. Olympic Team in the Olympic Games at Berlin. In his honor, an annual Turnbull Trophy is awarded, equivalent in lacrosse to the Heisman in football. He served with the 492nd Bomb Group immediately before his transfer to the 44th Bomb Group.

See Lt. Dayball's story below for related information.

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #42-50381 K, Dayball MACR #10140

68th Squadron Crew:	Entire Crew KIA		
DAYBALL, JULIAN H. ASN 0-701907	Pilot	1st Lt.	High Hill, Missouri
PHILLIPS, ROBERT L. ASN T-125025	Co-pilot	Flt Of.	Enumclaw. Washington
DAVIS, RICHARD H. ASN 0-723022	Navigator	2nd Lt.	Rockaway Park, New York
STEINKE, ARTHUR A. ASN 39204852	Nose Turret	S/Sgt.	Snohomish, Washington
FINK, IVAN W. ASN 33574486	Engineer	S/Sgt.	Altoona, Pennsylvania
SICARD, EDWARD P. ASN 31284222	Radio Oper.	Sgt.	Turner Falls, Massachusetts
COUVILLION, WILBERT L. ASN 38494335	RW Gunner	Sgt.	Baton Rouge, Louisiana
SMITH, MALCOLM R. ASN 33452262	LW Gunner	Sgt.	Washington, Dist. of Col.
BETTLEY, CONRAD R. Jr. ASN 11113894	Radar Obs.	S/Sgt	Worcester, Massachusetts
SHEA, JOHN J. ASN 37046013	Tail Turret	Sgt.	Dubuque, Iowa

[\[Where is Jefferson Barracks where several crew members on the 18 October 1944 mission were buried? Some look like they are buried in the same plot? Or is this a row?\]](#)

On the route out of the continent near the coast, a cloud layer building up to 28,000 feet caused the group to break the integrity of the formation. As described previously, the two aircraft collided. On 24 October, 1944, six days after the above two losses, official word was received as to the cause for the loss of two of the three aircraft MIA on the 18th.

“The flight surgeon's report stated that the aircraft piloted by Lts. Bakalo and Dayball, collided in mid-air during an electrical storm over Belgium. Both aircraft crashed, with one exploding; all

crew members were killed in action except Lt. Bakalo's two waist gunners, who bailed out safely. Twelve bodies were found in the two crashed Liberators.

The second 68th aircraft that failed to return on the 18th was piloted by 1st Lt. Edward C. Lehnhausen, brother to the commanding officer of the 68th Squadron.

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #42-50596 O, Lehnhausen	FLAK MAGNET		MACR #9654
68th Squadron Crew:	Entire crew KIA		
LEHNHAUSEN, EDWARD C. ASN 0-764355	Pilot KIA, buried Luxembourg (B-7-11)	1st Lt.	Peoria, Illinois
DOLAN, CHARLES Jr. ASN 0-825804	Co-pilot KIA, buried Margraten (B-3-32)	2nd Lt.	Reading, Pennsylvania
WITKIN, LEONARD ASN 0-701359	Navigator KIA	2nd Lt.	New York City, New York
DAVIS, BYRON C. ASN 34248774	Nose Turret KIA, buried Margraten (M-5-3)	Sgt.	Denver, Colorado
HAYNAM, RICHARD D. ASN 35610332	Engineer KIA, buried Luxembourg (I-7-10)	S/Sgt.	Canton, Ohio
FUXA, ERNEST C. ASN 18194853	Radio Oper. KIA, buried Margraten (B-12-12)	S/Sgt.	Bison, Oklahoma
YOUNG, WILLIAM C. ASN 36743059	RW Gunner KIA	Sgt.	Rockford, Illinois
ADAMS, CARL E. ASN 34735355	LW Gunner KIA	Sgt.	Maryville, Tennessee
GUNTER, NOAH ASN 14195404	Tail Turret KIA	Sgt.	Aiken, South Carolina

With no MACR available and little or no information in either the reporting of the 68th Squadron or the 44th Headquarters, it has taken many years to discover any data about the loss of this aircraft and crew.

This mission planning as briefed changed as soon as the Lead plane, E-806, piloted by Parks failed to take off. Colonel Turnbull transferred to D-944, piloted by Captain Bakalo and they led the formation. 1st Lt. Edward Lehnhausen, in O-596, had been shown to be in the last section, and on the right, behind Lt. Kelly. Also, there were several other aircraft that aborted, so the briefed positions were considerably changed.

Robert Lehnhausen, brother of Edward, told me that, "The 44th Bomb Group filled in a formation with another Group. It was three 'boxes' and the fourth squadron filled in. Edward was in the high, right section and Lt. Dayball was in the low left. Edward was on Lt. Kelly's wing and had a poor navigator who was on his 10th mission.

"When the formation approached that high weather front, they separated to avoid collisions. When Bakalo's aircraft turned over and went down, it is believed it crashed into Dayball's. But it is believed that Lehnhausen's ship became separated from all the others and was flying alone near Walcheren Island, just off the Netherlands coastline when they reached the North Sea.

The crewmembers were temporarily buried at various, rather scattered cemeteries. Bob Dimpfl checked, but learned nothing. Edward was buried in Luxemburg, while another was buried at Aachen – so the crew was scattered but no one knows why.”

The casualty report provides the following details: “[At 1330 h.] Flak batteries shot off the tail of the B-24 [B-24J 42-50596, FLAK MAGNET] which crashed near the casemates at Buttinge, 3 kilometers west of Middelburg on Walcheren Island, Holland. On return, the formation broke its integrity near Brussels where a cloud layer, building up to 28,000 ft. was encountered. Byron Davis’ body was found in the water near Buttinge. The island of Walcheren was inundated at that time, and only the higher lying parts (mostly centers) of the villages were still dry. The Liberator must have crashed on inundated territory, which may explain the loss of bodies.”

A witness named Mr. H. W. Bouwman (mayor of Grypskerke) reported: “The plane was heading towards Grypskerke (in a northern direction) then it circled back (south) seemingly looking for a place to land. It was spiraling down, gunning its engines trying to control itself when it suddenly lost control...spinning into the ground. The plane crashed at approximately 1,000 yards south southwest of the town of Buttinge in about five to six feet of water.

“The island where the plane crashed was flooded with water usually having about five feet of water, and at high tide, it would rise to ten feet. Therefore, most of the wreckage and the crewmembers, those who were pinned down, were submerged. During the period in which the water remained from the time of crash to about November or December of 1945, we recovered two American aircorp men who were floating around, near the location of the wreckage (about 600 feet away). One was Byron C. Davis, ASN 34248774, who was later buried in Grypskerke cemetery and the other, Ernest A. Fuxa, ASN 18134853, who was buried in Middleburg cemetery. Both were recovered one or two months after the crash. Davis was later disinterred on 13 September 1945 and Ernest Fuxa about the same time. I believe that they were both reinterred in the Margraten cemetery.

“After the flood was drained from the island, I had a chance to look the wreckage over. I saw the bones of some of the crewmen under the broken parts of the wing and fuselage (which was pretty well covered over with barnacles) and estimated that there were about five or six bodies located in the wreckage. These facts are, to the best of my knowledge, all of the information I can recall about the airplane crash that took place at the above-mentioned time and place.”

A Dutch historian who has done considerable research on 8th Air Force losses provided the following information regarding Edward Lehnhausen and crew: A/C 42-50596 WQ Flak Magnet passed over Walcheren Island at about 1330 hours on 18 October 1944. It received a direct hit of flak, lost the complete tail section, and crashed near Buttinge, Netherlands (on that same island). The entire crew was killed. They came down near Middelburg on Zeeland of Welcherin Zuid. The bodies were buried locally, near where they came down. Shortly after the war, teams of investigators came in, exhumed the bodies and moved them to the continent. But these teams did not work together; they took the bodies to various other temporary burial areas on the continent. Later, when our men (Air Force) went to investigate our lost men, they found the crew in various, widely separated cemeteries. This caused considerable confusion as our investigators could not understand why the men were buried so widely separated. Eventually this puzzle was cleared, but not for some time – years later.

Hans Hauterman and John Hey from Holland, who have been investigating this crash, do not believe that the guns on Walcheren Island were responsible for the shooting down of B-24J 42-50596. They also sent an extract of a diary kept by a young Dutchman who wrote the following: “On 18 October, a four-engined bomber came down. There were thunderstorms in that afternoon and I think it was hit by lightning. It may also be that it had already been hit and damaged over Germany; the guns on Walcheren did not fire then. It was a ‘Liberator’ and came down from a very high altitude, each time overturning what made a terrific noise. It seemed that it would crash near to me but drifted away and fell near Buttinge.”

Hauterman and John Hey also report that Walcheren has the shape of a saucer; with high dunes at the sea sides. The Germans had built extraordinary bunkers and installed heavy guns that protected the access to the mouth of the Scheldt River, which runs from Antwerp to the North Sea. Analyzing the burial details in the Casualty Report, they concluded that Dolan, Davis, and Fuxa were recovered and buried in Grijpskerke and Middelburg in October, December, and April. It has been recorded that Davis’ body was floating in the water and it is likely to accept that this was also valid for Dolan and Fuxa. Five crewmembers were recovered by a team of the Quartermaster-General that apparently had been attached to a grave Concentration Unit operating on the U.S. Military Cemetery at Luxembourg-Hamm. This team also recovered exhumed American bodies on other locations in the coastal area of western Holland. Most of the U.S. War Dead in Holland were concentrated into the military cemeteries at Margraten (Holland) and Neuville (Belgium).

Thanks to Mr John Hey, Air War Historian living in Holland, for his assistance in obtaining some of this data.

There was a third 68th Squadron aircraft that experienced considerable difficulty on this mission which crash-landed in Belgium.

68th SQUADRON:

68th Sq., #42-51234 Aircraft destroyed

68th Squadron Crew:	All survived	
NORRIS, CHARLES P.	Pilot	1st Lt.
ROUZE, EUGENE R.	Co-pilot	2nd Lt.
JOHNSON, DONALD	Navigator	2nd Lt.
WILKMAN, CHARLES P.	Bombardier	2nd Lt.
GARISTINA, UMBERT	Radio Oper.	S/Sgt.
TRIPP, HAROLD A.	Eng./Top Turret	S/Sgt.
CRESENTI, DIEGO F.	RW Gunner	S/Sgt.
RITTER, STEPHEN P.	LW Gunner	S/Sgt.
GRIMES, EDWIN R.	Tail Turret	S/Sgt.

[Will, there is a 66th Sq. aircraft by this number mentioned earlier: 66th Sq., #42-51234, Stevens [13 September 1944]. Are you sure this is right?

This aircraft experience mechanical difficulty – no manifold pressure on #3 engine. It dropped to 30 inches and remained that way. #4 engine had fluctuating power. They returned with the formation, coming back over Belgium. When they made a check of the fuel level, they found

only about 50 gallons remaining in each tank. After calling the Group's formation leader, they did a 180-degree turn, let down from 21,000 feet through dark clouds – and iced up. They utilized instruments to finally break out of clouds at 2,000 feet and over Brussels, Belgium. Heading northeast, they missed the field, did another 180-degree turn to get back.

Then, engines started to spit and sputter from lack of fuel, so they headed for an open field; bombs were salvoed, which blew out all windows in the aircraft, damaged the elevators so they failed to operate. #3 engine began burning and #2 smoked. The pilots used throttles to maneuver the nose up and down – they had rudders and ailerons. They went into a grassy meadow about 30 miles northeast of Brussels. (HentjeWesterloo) The nose wheel collapsed, the main gear held up but the ship split apart. The dashboard was shoved back into the pilots' laps, but only minor bruises and cuts from flying plexiglass resulted. The aircraft was completely wiped out.

Two mysteries remain with this aircraft. Records indicate that this was a 68th aircraft, but the account was included in the 66th Squadron's reports. The aircraft number listed in this report was #51234 L+ but no record can be found in the 44th Bomb Group official records of it.

[\[Will, see the earlier point about it being a 66th BG aircraft.\]](#)

30 October 1944

Hamburg, Germany

Due to weather conditions at the IP and interference by preceding Wings, our formation integrity was broken, forcing 19 aircraft to bomb the Hamburg Oil Refinery by PFF and eight others to attack Uterson, Germany. No enemy aircraft were encountered, flak at the target was heavy but inaccurate. One 506th Squadron aircraft did not return, with flak being suspected as the cause.

506th SQUADRON:

506th Sq., #44-10523 Bar-T, Bentcliff

MACR #10139

506th Squadron Crew:

BENTCLIFF, CLIFFORD J. ASN 0-815806	Pilot KIA	1st Lt.	Chicago, Illinois
GEMPEL, CHARLES L. ASN 0-704835	Co-pilot KIA, buried Ardennes (D-13-40)	1st Lt.	Toledo, Ohio
FISKUM, LOWELL A. ASN 0-713157	Navigator KIA	1st Lt.	Walhalla, North Dakota
CELENTANO, LOUIS S. ASN 0-703026	Bombardier KIA, buried Ardennes (D-11-34)	1st Lt.	Minong, Wisconsin
BAREFOOT, CHESTER L. ASN 0-1995910	Pilotage-N. KIA, buried Ardennes (D-35-9)	1st Lt.	Hollis, Oklahoma
GRIFFIN, LESTER A. ASN 34544294	Engineer POW	T/Sgt.	Coral Gables, Florida
MASCHMEYER, GENE E. ASN 38511707	Radio Oper. KIA	T/Sgt.	Oakland, California
FULLER, CLINT J. Jr. ASN 38451853	Top Turret POW	S/Sgt.	Malvern, Arkansas

CAPPS, RALPH W. ASN 34609307	RW Gunner. POW	S/Sgt.	Zirconia, North Carolina
GARZA, RAUL ASN 38541707	LW Gunner KIA, buried Ardennes (D-11-36)	Sgt.	Port Lavaca, Texas
DOWNEY, JOHN J. III ASN 12193464	Tail Turret KIA, buried Ardennes (D-37-14)	S/Sgt.	Jersey City, New Jersey

MACR #10139 states, in part, “Immediately after bombing, at 1318 hours, in vicinity of Hamburg, this aircraft went into a very steep bank. Heavy flak was encountered at this time. Aircraft came out of the 90-degree bank and was last observed flying apparently under control on 180-degree heading. Poor visibility, due to high clouds, made further sightings impossible. No chutes were seen.” (Wrong aircraft?)

Lester Griffin, engineer, said that three men survived Fuller, Capps, and himself. “We were a radar crew and flew only in bad weather. We were on our 23rd mission. The plane exploded, knocking or blowing me out, and I came down by parachute after regaining consciousness. I am writing this letter from the V.A. Hospital in Gainsville.”

Further information was not possible as Sgt. Griffin died.

[\[Will, this makes it seem like he died right after the war. True? Or did he die much later?\]](#)

Sgt. Clint Fuller sent other brief statements, “Bentcliff, Gempel, Fiskum, Barefoot, Celentano, Maschmeyer, Downey and a man of Mexican descent (Garza), went down with the plane. Ralph W. Capps and I bailed out over Hamburg, but I don’t know how Lester Griffin managed to get out.

“We flew into a heavy front while leading the high, right squadron. Soup was so thick that we had to fly on instruments. Someone crossed over in front of us, with the prop wash flipping us over, and the plane spun into the ground from approximately 28,000 feet.

“On the contrary, our plane did not explode – it hit the deck. Neither was it a radar ship. The radio operator, Maschmeyer, froze, apparently from shock, and would not bail out. I had to climb over him in order to get to the catwalk in the bomb bay. On this mission, I was riding the top turret and that is why I had to fight my way past the radio operator. Both Barefoot and Garza were new to our crew. Barefoot was riding the nose turret in order to complete the final mission of his tour. He was killed.

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

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