



NEWS

A publication of the Jimmy Doolittle Air & Space Museum Foundation

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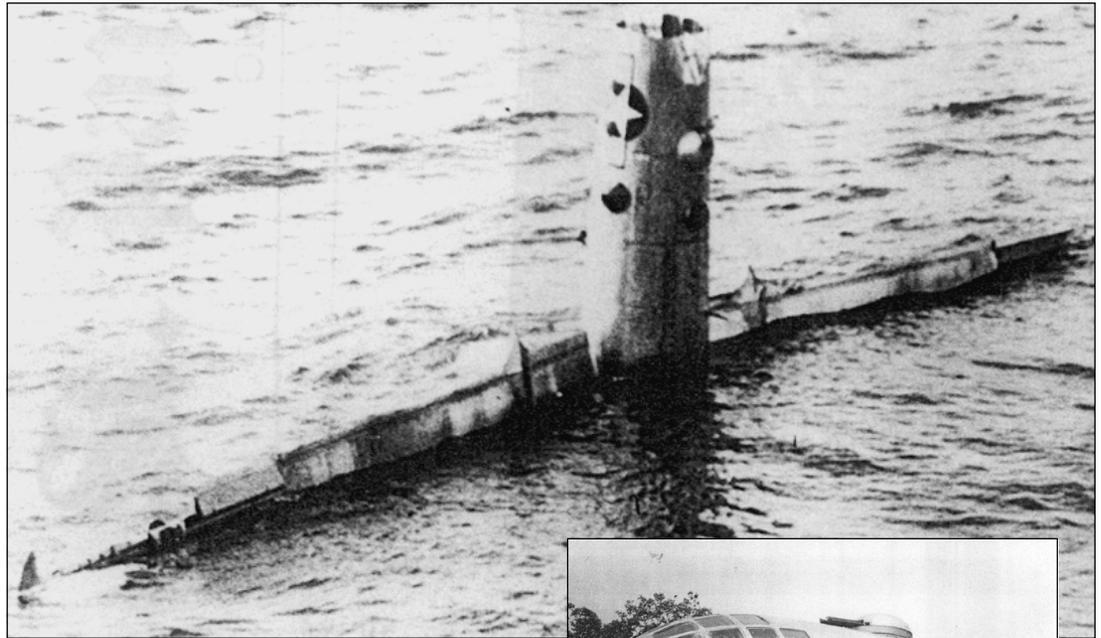
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St. Paul Pioneer Press, June 6, 1945: Photo of the Superfortress sinking into the ocean southwest of Guam on May 15, after being forced down on a mission in the Central Pacific.



Crapped Out

By Dr. Vic Durrance

PART I

Our bombing mission to Nagoya on May 14, 1945 began routinely enough. Sleepy-eyed crews stumbled into the briefing hut on Guam, stomachs vigorously protesting the morning injection of New Zealand mutton, dried eggs and dried potatoes. The briefing officers began with the usual information about possible anti-aircraft defenses, weather, and defensive fighter strength.

Our specific target, more than 1,500-miles away, was the Mitsubishi aircraft engine factory that was responsible for about half the aircraft engine production in Japan. The assigned bombing altitude was 7,000 feet, effective but still low enough to frighten aircrews almost witless. In March, two months earlier, General Curtis LeMay had ordered all bombing of Japan by B-29s to be done at low levels. These levels produced spectacular results, but we considered

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Comments and questions about the NEWS may be addressed to Editor, Jimmy Doolittle Air & Space Museum Foundation NEWS, PO Box 1565, Travis AFB, CA 94535

JIMMY DOOLITTLE AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM Mission Statement

The purpose of the Museum is to portray the history of Travis Air Force Base's contribution to the development of airlift in the Pacific.

It's primary objectives are:

- To provide and maintain an aviation and aerospace, educational, scientific, cultural, historical and inspirational facility for the general public.
- To provide to youth, students and scholars historical research facilities and inspirational exhibits.
- To serve as a meeting place and forum for aerospace oriented organizations and individuals for the benefit of all Northern California.

* In accordance with AFD 64-1, Air Force History and Museum Program.

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**TAM
coin
\$5**

*It's a collector's item now! A few of them are left.
Brass, red, white & blue...gorgeous!*

Jimmy Doolittle Air & Space Museum Gift Shop

Bldg. 80, Burgan Blvd.
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*The Museum Gift Shop
is now offering collectors coins
for the Travis Air Museum,
the 60th AW Director Staff
and the Solano County 150th year
anniversary. The Solano county
coins are available in bronze,
silver, or gold.*

Volunteers needed.

CURATOR'S CORNER



By Gary Leiser

Following the groundbreaking ceremony that was held last June, we have done our best to try to maintain the momentum for building the Jimmy Doolittle

Air and Space Museum. All of this work came to a sudden halt, at least briefly, as a result of the events on September 11. All of us became preoccupied with other things, other priorities. For a while the base was sealed tight; and a high state of security is still in effect. As a consequence, the museum has been almost deserted. We had only a few hundred visitors in September, for example, and all tours were cancelled. This state of affairs has been graphic evidence of the need to build a new facility on the edge of the base where it can be isolated from base operations but directly accessible to the public.

During this “quiet time,” we focused on housekeeping activities and seeing to paperwork that had long been avoided. I should add that we all deserted our posts to see President Bush when he passed through Travis in mid October. Meanwhile, **Msgt Joe Inocencio** was busy with a number of projects: adding mulch to the area around the gazebo, painting the historian’s office, managing our hazardous waste program, getting our electric Hyster forklift to work, and setting up a schedule with the base paint shop for painting our ugliest aircraft. There was no work on new exhibits. We assisted with preparing for the feasibility study for the new museum and polished the “plan” for official submission to the Air Force. I addressed several service organizations on our efforts. We had planned to host the biennial AMC Historians and Museum Conference in early November, but this has been postponed until next

March. **Mark Pollman** was out for a few weeks recovering from surgery, but he is now back running the office.

Nuts and Bolts: **Jim Martin** continued to inspect the aircraft several times a week. He also did some maintenance on both the B-52 and C-7 and helped build a storage area for some items currently in trailers. **Eric Schmidt** helped him with the C-7 and took over as maintenance chief pending **Ned Fall’s** recovery from a heart attack. **Joe Tattersall** made a rocket for the F-84 and repaired the throttle quadrant for the T-37. He was out briefly for thyroid surgery but has bounced back. **Carl Bodin** continued to work on restoring an engine pod for the C-123 and is almost finished. **Bill Lancaster** put in many hours building an office for the wing historian who will move to the museum following its completion. **Don Austin** devoted a number of hours to the C-124. And **Ben Reed** was busy with a number of tasks: painting the vertical stabilizer of the B-29 and touch-up painting on the C-119, cleaning out trailers in our storage area and building a storage area in the museum to house what could be salvaged from them, and sorting through, culling, and properly filing the photos in our archives—a big job.

Donations: During the past few months, the museum has received the following donations: five large-scale model aircraft (Spirit of St. Louis, Stearman, British SE5, Great Lakes Trainer, and Dauntless SBD-3) made by Harold Winslow; from Heidi Belden the uniform of Walter Bridgeman of the 367 Fighter Group, who was shot down over Germany in WWII and held as a POW; and from General Robertson, AMC/CC, his collection of 700 coins representing dozens of USAF and other US and foreign military units and organizations.

Campaign for the Jimmy Doolittle Air and Space Museum

Dear Fellow Members of the Museum,

*The December issue of the NEWS has traditionally announced our annual fund raising drive among the membership for the new museum. I am delighted to say that since we began this tradition about three years ago, we have raised about \$30,000, including recent contributions from the **Travis Chiefs' Group** in the name of **Brigadier General Kane**, from the **Mayor of Vacaville Dave Fleming's** portion of funds to be dispersed from the Renaissance Fair's gift to Vacaville charities, and a life membership for **Congressman Mike Thompson**. These funds are critical for laying the groundwork for the full-scale national fund drive that we hope to launch next year. As you know, some of these funds were used to pay for a model of the new museum and its surrounding area. This model, measuring 30" x 48", is important for helping people visualize the project and for planning purposes and generating publicity. This model was on prominent display during the ground-breaking ceremony that we held last June, again for publicity purposes, next to the proposed site for the new museum. Combined with the "Reaching for the Stars" luncheon, at which **Eileen Collins** was given a special award, the ground-breaking proved to be the perfect "launch vehicle" for the project.*



Since June we have worked to refine the plan for the new museum. It is now on its way through channels to the Secretary of the Air Force for final approval. This official "beddown" approval will give us the ability to plan the new museum on the designated site. Much of our momentum was slowed by the terrible events of September 11, when the Foundation, not to mention the museum and the base, were preoccupied with other things. We are slowly getting back to normal. Our next step will be to complete a feasibility study for the new museum. The Foundation has hired Campbell & Company to do this. We will provide Campbell with a list of potential donors, those who could make substantial gifts. Campbell will then discuss the project with them in order to gauge their support for it. Afterwards Campbell will provide us with a short list of people who would be highly likely to donate to the museum and then we can work to bring them on board. We would like to raise at least one or two millions dollars quickly and then use the income generated from that to hire a full-time fundraising staff. If any of you know of potential donors whose names we can pass on to Campbell, please send them to Dr. Leiser.

Meanwhile, this time of year, we request your continued financial support for the new museum. Such support is critical for covering our planning expenses. Without it, we would not have gotten this far. We are again offering premiums for donations. Donors of \$50 to \$100 will receive their choice of coin: "Reaching for the Stars," "Travis Air Museum," or "Jimmy Doolittle Air and Space Museum." Donors of more than \$100 will receive their choice of coin and a copy of the [History of Travis AFB](#). On behalf of the Foundation, thank you again for your help.

*Mike Peters, President
Jimmy Doolittle Air and Space Museum Foundation*

CRAPPED OUT CONTINUED

them to be suicide. Low levels also helped us avoid the jet stream. At high altitudes the head wind from the jet stream was so strong that it caused very high fuel consumption and the tail wind from the jet stream made our bombers so fast that our Norden bombsights could not compensate for the speed.

After our radio operator and navigator received specialized briefings, our pilot called for a truck. As we boarded it for a bone-shaking ride to North Field, I noticed that our radar operator was missing. I was then told that he was in the hospital having a cyst removed from his tailbone. The squadron radar operator took his place. There were two strangers in the truck with us, a captain who was the pilot of a newly arrived crew and his flight engineer. It was squadron policy that a new crew would send the pilot and his flight engineer along with an experienced crew to observe combat procedures and fuel conservation over the long flight to Japan and back.

As soon as we reached our aircraft, we began the usual pre-flight checks. The bombardier installed the bombsight, the radio operator checked his radio, the gunners, including myself the tail-gunner, checked and rechecked the guns and ammunition belts. Then we got into our positions and the pilot and copilot began engine-starting procedures. With all four engines running smoothly, we rolled out to the runway and made an uneventful take off. Then we all settled in for the long flight.

Our aircraft bore serial number 44-69773. Sporting members of the crew immediately invoked the name "Two Passes and a Crap," which was painted on the nose as two passes and a pair of dice showing a two and a one. This became our informal name. Officially we were "Black Jack 21." In addition this image, we also

had a picture of a wild-eyed cowboy with a six-shooter in each hand and a big Stetson on his head. This was a true designation of our pilot, Captain Senger, who was from North Dakota and was, indeed, a "wild cowboy." He had joined the RAF early in the war and had flown numerous missions over Germany, collecting a chest full of medals in the process. Senger was a superb pilot and did things with a B-29 that, when I recall them, still get my adrenaline running.

Our 39th Bomb Group formed up off the coast of Japan and wheeled in over Nagoya. All of our aircraft bombed the Mitsubishi engine factor. As we learned later, we scored well. Heading back out to sea, I looked forward and down to see Japanese soldiers running and then jumping into a pit in which was some sort of anti-aircraft cannon. The muzzle swung rapidly around and a burst of flak appeared close to our left wing tip, followed almost immediately by a second burst that was even closer. The third blast ripped into number one engine. From the tail I could see its propeller slow and then stop.

The loss of an engine, while troubling, was not especially serious, for we had flown back to Guam from two other missions on three engines. We flew much slower, of course, but we returned without difficulty. The navigator came on the intercom and asked Captain Senger if he wanted a course for Iwo Jima. Our orders had been to fly to Iwo if we had suffered any battle damage over Japan. Senger said no and instead asked for a course back to Guam, no doubt confident that we could reach it.

The hours passed. At one point the radio operator reported that he was picking up dance music from California, which he then plugged into the intercom for all of us to enjoy. The good music ended when the "One Meatball" song came

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CRAPPED OUT CONTINUED

through our headsets. About half way through the lyrics, the copilot told Senger that he was transferring fuel from the dead engine's tank to the tank of number 2. We resumed listening to "One Meatball," when suddenly the copilot shouted to Senger that the fuel pump had burned out. Our routine flight back to Guam came to an abrupt end.

Senger immediately ordered all of us to lighten the aircraft as much as possible. In the rear compartments we began to throw guns, ammunition, chairs, and radar equipment overboard. We jettisoned everything that was loose. As we threw out some of the radar equipment, I noticed that the radar officer was sitting motionless in his chair and staring straight ahead, oblivious to everything. I asked for his help twice, but received no response. Then I shook his shoulder, still no response. Finally, I kneeled in front of him, shook him again, and slapped him on each side of the face. He just sat very still staring straight ahead.

Despite our efforts to lighten the plane, we continued to lose altitude. Senger came on the intercom to tell us to get into our positions because we were going down. I scurried back to the tail. The last I saw of the radar operator he was still sitting motionless and staring at the side of the plane.

As we came down low over the water, we made a last effort to lighten the aircraft by trying to drop a 640-gallon auxiliary fuel tank that was carried in one of the bomb bays. But the drag from the open bomb bay doors was too great. We stopped flying and began to glide about 30 or 40 feet above the water. A few seconds later, we slammed into the ocean and stopped dead, instead of plowing along for a while under normal ditching conditions. The rapid deceleration gave the most terrible blow to my back that I have ever received. I was sitting backwards in

the tail, so I was slammed with incredible force into a sheet of armor plate that served as my backrest when I was in position. The force was so great that the imprint of the fabric from my flight suit stayed on my back for several days. I did not know it at the time, but one of my vertebra was partly crushed.

The plunge into the sea had ripped out the belly of the aircraft and broke off the tail at the bulkhead just aft of the side blisters. My escape hatch was a very small window. While I was struggling to get through, the tail began to sink. I kicked like a suddenly spurred horse as light began to fade above me in the water. I also inflated my Mae West and the sudden inflation pulled me free of the tail and I popped to the surface. I immediately inflated my one-man life raft and climbed in. The only sound I could hear was the splash of waves against the plane and the creaking of floating wreckage. I thought that all of my crewmembers had been killed and I was the only survivor.

The plane slowly moved to a nose down position because of the weight of the engines and the buoyancy of the empty gas tanks. Suddenly the radio operator came flying like a cork from a popgun from the broken end of the tunnel that connected the front and back compartments of the aircraft. He made a beautiful dive into the middle of the floating wreckage. I was sure that he would be badly cut, but he escaped without a scratch. About the same time, the left gunner surfaced next to my raft. He was not a pretty sight. A patch of skin and hair about the size of a man's hand was missing from over his right eye. His bare skull glistened in the afternoon sun. He gasped, "Help me, junior!" I fleetingly thought he might swamp my raft and I was prepared to "repel boarders" with my paddles, but instead grabbed him by the collar and hauled him into my lap. [See next issue for Part II.](#)

HISTORY TODAY



U.S. AIR FORCE

MEDIA ADVISORY

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Last updated Oct. 11, 2001

Timeline events reflect Travis support of deploying military personnel or civilian emergency responders to September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

Tuesday, Sept. 11

8:48 a.m. ET — American Airlines Flight 11 crashes into the north tower of World Trade Center in New York.

6:15 a.m. PT (approx.) — Travis begins implementing its highest security posture.

9:38 a.m. ET — American Airline Flight 77 crashes into the west side of the Pentagon in Washington, D.C.

Noon PT — A Travis C-5 departs to pick up three Army UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters in Arizona to transport them to support relief efforts on the East Coast.

6:30 p.m. PT — Travis launches an Air Force Reserve C-5 out of Westover Air Reserve Base, Mass., heading to New York to transport a Sacramento-based civilian Office of Emergency Services task force and their equipment. The urban search and rescue team has trained dogs and other capabilities to assist rescue efforts at the World Trade Center.

7 p.m. PT — A C-9 based out of Scott AFB, Ill., departs from Travis to the East Coast with three critical care air transport teams from Travis' David Grant Medical Center. CCATs

provide intensive care capability during air transport, essentially transforming cargo aircraft into an air ambulance.

8 p.m. PT — A Travis C-5 deploys to pick up portable hospital equipment from Texas to transport to the East Coast.

Wednesday, Sept. 12

1 p.m. PT (approx.) — Travis somewhat relaxes security posture to allow additional authorized personnel and more essential deliveries on base, but remains at a heightened state of alert.

6 p.m. PT — A Travis C-5 departs to pick up urban search and rescue personnel, vehicles and equipment in Colorado destined to assist humanitarian relief efforts in New York.

Thursday, Sept. 13

11:30 a.m. PT — Travis launches a C-141 aircraft from McChord AFB, Wash., today carrying computer equipment to Maryland to assist with ongoing humanitarian relief efforts.

11:55 a.m. PT — The base's main gate is closed for approximately 1_ hours when a military bomb dog alerts on a truck delivering frozen food to the base commissary. Responders establish a security cordon, which results in the evacuation of several facilities, including an on-base school. The main gate reopens and students go back to school after close inspection of the vehicle determines that the alert was a false alarm.

HISTORY TODAY CONTINUED

Friday, Sept. 14

7 a.m. PT Travis' David Grant Medical Center resumes seeing patients for routine medical appointments.

Saturday, Sept. 15

10 a.m. PT Thirty-four Air Force reservists from the 349th Air Mobility Wing depart on a Travis KC-10 bound for Dover AFB, Del. Thirty-two of the reservists are mortuary affairs specialists who have volunteered to assist in identifying and processing remains in the wake of the terrorist attack on the Pentagon. A chaplain and chaplain assistant have also volunteered to make the trip to provide comfort and counseling for the team. They are joined by 12 reservists from Beale AFB, Calif., and another 14 reservists from McChord AFB, Wash., all trained to provide some form of assistance to casualties and their families.

Wednesday, Sept. 19

11 a.m. PT — A Reserve C-141 from Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, departs Travis with five members and the equipment for a Menlo Park-based civilian FEMA task force that will swap out with search and rescue teams entering their second week of operations in New York.

1 p.m. PT — A Travis C-5 departs with the remaining 57 members of the Menlo Park FEMA task force.

Friday, Sept. 21

7:15 p.m. PT — Members of the Sacramento-based Office of Emergency Services urban search and rescue team that departed Travis Sept. 11 return here on a commercial 757.

Thursday, Sept. 27 — Twenty-two of the mortuary affairs specialists who deployed to Dover AFB, Del., Sept. 15 return to San Francisco International Airport.

Friday, Sept. 28

Midnight PT — A commercial 737 departs

Travis with 65 members of an Oakland-based search and rescue team and their 4 dogs. The team will swap out with other search and rescue teams continuing operations in New York. Travis also loaded a commercial DC-8 with the team's equipment that departed the base around 10 p.m. Sept. 27.

Wednesday, Oct. 3

11:30 a.m. PT — The remainder of the mortuary affairs specialists who deployed to Dover AFB, Del., Sept. 15 return to Sacramento International Airport.

Dateline: October 10, 2001

TRAVIS AIR FORCE BASE, Calif.

Travis AFB Master Sergeant helps critically injured soldier

Roy, a senior master sergeant with the 615th Air Mobility Operations Group here, has O-negative blood, which makes him a universal donor and an old hand at blood donation. The pint he gave Oct. 10, though, went right into the veins of an Army soldier, helping to save his life.

Roy was just one of several members of a deployed Tanker Airlift Control Element who went into action to help a soldier critically injured when he was crushed between a "humvee" and a water storage trailer.

The soldier was marshalling the vehicle when he lost his balance and fell between the vehicle and the trailer, according to Chris, the TALCE's operations officer, who is a first lieutenant. The vehicle driver, who could still see the driver's marshalling wands, continued to back up, accidentally pinning the soldier against the trailer.

As medics at the deployed location responded to stabilize the patient, the TALCE—which is responsible for turning bare-bones airfields into

working aerial ports—began looking for an aircraft to be used for a medical evacuation. They quickly identified a C-17 scheduled to arrive in approximately two hours.

“Anytime you’re dealing with anyone being injured, you work as quickly as possible,” said D-Mac, a technical sergeant and the TALCE’s ramp coordinator. “You know they have a family back home that is counting on you.”

When the patient’s condition worsened about an hour after the accident, the medics and deployed personnel team identified Roy, who was catching some much-needed sleep, as the best possible donor.

“Of course, I said yes,” Roy said. “It was something I could offer, and it was something he needed.”

With the help of Roy’s blood, the medics were able to stabilize the patient until the C-17 arrived, but the TALCE’s work wasn’t done yet. With aircraft engines running, the team had to unload the plane’s cargo and prepare it for the medevac—all in austere, near-freezing conditions that Laurie, a tech sergeant and noncommissioned officer in charge of the TALCE’s port operations, described as “‘Survivor’ times three.”

“They loaded him, shut the doors and took off,” said Jim, the lieutenant colonel who serves as the TALCE commander. “I believe we saved his life by being there.”

The C-17 left the airfield one hour after it landed, carrying the patient to Incirlik Air Base, Turkey. He was later airlifted to the military hospital in Germany where he is now recovering.

Asked how he felt being in a life-and-death situation, Gary, a tech sergeant and aircraft maintainer, said, “It doesn’t feel much different,

because we’re trained like we fight.”

The four squadrons of the 615th AMOG must be prepared to pack up and deploy at a moment’s notice. They are usually the first Air Force people on the ground to set up airfield operations capable of handling mobility aircraft. The group has played a significant role in most major military and humanitarian relief operations in recent years.

“It’s just a job that we do, and we are lucky to be the first ones called upon,” Gary said. One could guess that a bit of that luck rubbed off on a soldier in need, hurt but not alone somewhere in the cold night of Oct. 10.

RELEASE NO. 00-10-10

October 30, 2001

[Media Advisory](#)

Humanitarian rations bound for Afghanistan depart Travis Oct. 31

The first of three Air Force C-5’s transporting hundreds of thousands of humanitarian daily rations, which will be airdropped by other aircraft over Afghanistan, will depart Travis at 9 a.m. Oct. 31.

Between Oct. 31 and Nov. 2, more than 687 tons of HDR’s—500,000 individually packaged meals on 188 pallets weighing between 5,000 and 8,000 pounds each—will leave Travis destined for airfields overseas, where they will be loaded on C-17 aircraft to be airdropped in support of humanitarian relief efforts in Afghanistan.

These are the first shipments of HDRs to depart the Northern California base. To date, more than 1,000,000 HDRs have been airdropped over Afghanistan.

EUROPEAN COMBAT DIARY

By Lt. Col. James F. Grey

James F. Grey was a navigator on B-17s during World War II. Between June 22, 1944 and December 28, 1944 he flew 30 missions as part of the 381st Bomb Group. What follows below are extracts from his combat diary.

Mission 1: 28 June 1944; plane: Touch the Button Nell II; target: Reims, France (Oil dump and marshalling yards).

Very light flak about 10 minutes inside enemy coast, also light flak around Laon, France. One ship feathered #1 and aborted about 5 minutes from enemy coast. Bomb load consisted of two 2,000 lb G.P. bombs. On the return trip we had to land at Ashfield due to weather closed in at our base. When we landed the hydraulic system in left wheel went out and we called our base for a plane to come and pick us up. Yates came and got us in "Stage Door Canteen." Flying time for Mission #1 was 5 hours.

June 29: Took off at 0500, couldn't find our formation. Flew over the Wash at 28,000 for about 3 hours in a mixup of about 800 Forts and Libs. Flying time, 4 hours.

Mission 2: 4 July; plane: The Tomahawk Warrior; target: Tours, France (bridge).

Took off at 0430 to bomb a bridge at Tours, France. Continent covered by complete overcast. Couldn't find target so brought back our two 2,000 lb. bombs. On oxygen 6 hours. First mission that our whole crew flew together. Bond and Godfrey sick. One engine almost went out. Bobrof feathered #4 and left formation. Salvoed his bombs. Flying time, 5 hours.

Mission 5: 13 July; plane: Hell's Angel; target: Munich, Germany.

Target at Munich, Germany, city rail yards.

Heaviest flak I have seen yet. One piece hit our ship in the nose – scattered glass around but didn't hurt Mac or I. Fighter hit the 24s behind us. We had P-38s and P-47s for escort flying way out. Flying time, 9 hours.

Mission 7: 18 July; plane: Hell's Angel; target: Peenamunda, Germany near Keil (experimentation center).

Took off in our own ship (Hell's Angel) and blew an exhaust stack on takeoff so had to feather #2 and land and take acft #6115. Happened to be the ship we flew over from Mariette. Target was Peenamunda, an experimentation center and hydrogen peroxide factory. Excellent results, smoke from fires up to 15,000 feet. Very intense flak. Bomb load was 38 100 lb incendiaries. Flying time, 8 hours.

Mission 13: 4 August; plane: Hells' Angel; target: Peenamunda

Bomb load was five 1,000 lb. bombs. One ship caught fire and went down over the field area just after takeoff. We counted nine chutes and then watched the plan hit and blow up. After landing we found that there had been ten in the ship and tail gunner had gotten killed. Don't know who it was yet. Pretty disheartening to start a mission with. Flak heavy at target and also Danish coast. Very good bombing due to CAVU (ceiling and visibility unlimited) weather. Flying time, 9 hours.

Mission 15: 9 August; plane: In Like Errol; target: Paris, France (fuel dump).

Bomb load twenty 250s. Target was a fuel dump 85 miles south of Paris. We got flak holes all over the ship, several in wing and tail. One just missed McLaren and I got one in the nose almost under my table. Worst flak yet; ship is now in repair shop. Good bombing results; fires with smoke up to 15,000 feet. Flying time, 7 hours.

Mission 18: 24 August; plane: Hell's Angel; target: Leipzig (buzz bomb plant).

Bomb load five 1,000 lb. bombs. Target, buzz bomb plant south of Leipzig. We led a squadron. High squadron of the high group. The flak over Leipzig is the worst I've seen. Weather was good and we got a clear view of Hamburg, Bremen, Berlin, Hanover, Leipzig and Magdeburg. Saw one fighter blow up over Leipzig. Our objective playing around there was to draw out the new German jet propelled fighter. We saw none. But we passed over an airfield from which 20 unidentified fighters took off. They got the wing behind us. One waist gunner wounded by flak. We had no damage. Results – fair overshoot. Flying time, 9 hours and 30 minutes.

Mission 20: 27 August; plane: Minnie the Mermaid; target: Berlin (airstrip).

Bomb load ten 500 lb incendiaries. Target was an airfield six miles south of the center of Berlin. When we got halfway there we got ordered to take a target of opportunity due to weather and so bombed Enden Harbor, Germany. Just as the bomb bays opened the bomb bay motor caught fire and we had quite a time putting it out. Then the VHF radio caught fire and #1 engine started throwing oil. We had to drop out of formation and almost hit the lead ship's bombs. The worst luck we've had so far. A piece of flak came through the nose and made a hole the size of a baseball. Luckily it missed Mac and I. Flying time, 7 hours and 30 min-

utes.

Mission 22: 12 September; plane: Ship 990 PFF (path finder); target: Brux, Czechoslovakia.

Wing lead. Our toughest mission to lead so far, also my first encounter with enemy fighters. ME-109s; four of them flew so close that I could see the pilots plainly (a very good looking plane). No chance to shoot. Encountered them 10 miles north of Berlin. Total distance 1,300

miles. Altitude 28,000 feet. Flying time, 9 hours and 30 minutes.

Mission 23: 19 September; plane Ship #127; target: Hamm, Germany.

Flew Group lead with Demegalaski and Maj. Taylor. Target was Hamm in the Rhur Valley. Bomb load was two 2,000 lb. bombs. Flak very accurate. Our tail gunner got hit in the back but his flak suit stopped it. The piece went through two cans of ammunition before it hit him. Some stuff! Flying time, 7 hours.

Mission 30: 28 November; plane: Ship 196 PFF; target: Rhine (bridge).

Bomb load, two 2,000 lb bombs; two 1,000 lb bombs; 2 smoke markers. Target was a bridge across the Rhine halfway between Coblenz and Cologne. The mission was almost perfect. My assembly timing was perfect and I'm happy about it. We bombed G.H. due to 10/10 cloud cover (complete overcast). Weather was clear at 22,000 feet. Nice mission to finish up on. No flak, no fighters. Flying time, 6 hours. One combat tour complete – now home for a while.

Our toughest mission to lead so far, also my first encounter with enemy fighters. ME-109s; four of them flew so close that I could see the pilots plainly (a very good looking plane).

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*Operation Homecoming, 1973
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