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MISSIONS FLOWN BY THE 409TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (L)

Prior to the Group flying it's first combat mission, they suffered a battle casualty.

March 20, 1944: Major Carl W. Faust, Commanding Officer of the 643rd Bomb. Squadron flew as an observer with the neighboring 322nd Bomb Group to gain information regarding bombing under battle conditions. The aircraft, a Martin B-26 Marauder was shot down.

Lt. William (Ed) Scarbrough was also on this same mission.

Ed. Scarbrough had this to say: "The mission was led by Lt. Col. Erv Wurston, an old friend of mine from Anti-Submarine Patrol in Miami, Florida. Our target was a Robot Bomb Site near Calais, France. Although we were only over land about 10 minutes, I think I saw more flack that day than on any other mission I flew. Of course, all I was doing was sitting there useless and looking".

After that disaster, 9th Air Force canceled the wasteful use of experienced pilots as observers.

NO. DATE TARGET

1 13-4-4 Yurench-Bois (36 A/C)

V-I Rocket launch site (referred to as "No Ball" target)

This was the day for the 409ths first mission. The group was called upon to attack a "No-Ball" launching site in France, with the 416th Bomb Group.

Zero hour was 0830. Telephones were busy, battle orders drawn up, crews alerted, line crews were busy checking and rechecking everything. Trucks were moving people about. Everything was running at top speed.

Finally the crews all emerged and crowded into the briefing room. Capt. Bob Goyne conducted the briefing with the assistance of Lt. L. T. Underwood, a veteran of fifty missions with the 386th Bomb Group, a Martin B-26 outfit. The targets, routes, flak, colors of the day and last minute instructions were covered and the briefing dismissed.

The crews quickly moved to the

adjoining building, donned their flying gear and picked up their flak suits and parachutes. They hurried out to the waiting 6x6s that would drop off each crew at the hardstand where their plane was parked.

The maintenance crews were ready, anxiously waiting. The pressure was great on these men. They knew that everything had to be perfect or it could cause an aircraft to abort or worse.

2 18-4-44 Monceau- Sur-Sambre (38 A/C)

Col. Pender led this mission on a marshaling yard. Target badly missed.

3 19-4-44 Le Plouy Ferme (38 A/C)

Lt Colonel Crabtree led this mission. The day was hazy, landmarks are difficult to observe and a bomber pilot wonders whether or not the escort is up there. Skillful navigation took the ships right to the appointed spot and as luck would have it, that was the only place where visibility was good. The woods were plainly seen below, the target looked to Navigator/Bombardier, Lt. John Ertler, "like a GI shoe". This is one day Jerry got a good jolt as 130 Five hundred pounders crashed down upon him. As our A-20's wheeled and headed for home, many a pilot grinned as he looked down on one no-ball that was in bad shape now. It was our first blood, Nazi blood, and it felt good.

4 19-4-44 Tournehem

While crews were being interrogated on the previous mission, another warning order was received. It was another 'no-ball'

right at the southeastern edge of a rectangular shaped woods. The same battle order was out again but this time Col. Pender was in the lead ship replacing Col. Crabtree as pilot, with Lt. John Ertler remaining as the lead Bombardier/Navigator. Crews tired from sweating out interrogation hurried down to the mess hall for a bite to eat and rushed back up the hill to the crew room for briefing. Meanwhile the crews and ordnance men hustled around the dispersal area readying ships and reloading bomb racks for the afternoon.

Briefing over, pilots were out on the line to check their ships and follow up the A.M.'s good results. Soon 37 aircraft were off to meet the Spits at Dungeness. Weather was excellent, visibility left nothing to be desired and at 1816 hours, the first box was over Tournehem. As flak surprisingly enough failed to appear the boys went to work, especially the first box, and 31 tons of G. P. bombs tumbled out of eager bomb racks and smashed directly into the target. As tunnel gunner Bill O'Neal put it, "Boy we poured it right slap into 'em that time'. It was indeed a strike and on the following day this commendation was received from General Anderson:

"BOMBING BY ONE BOX YESTERDAY WAS RIGHT ON THE BUTTON. THIS WAS EXCELLENT NAVIGATION AND BOMBING. KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK."

ANDERSON

Another notable feature of the day's activity was that three times within 24 hours this outfit was over it's enemy's targets.

Colonel Pender's comment was, "Johnny's (Ertler) the boy. He did it." Johnny's reply was, "No Colonel, it's the teamwork that counts", and everyone agreed that there was satisfaction and credit for all.

5 20-4-44 Flixecourt Domart

Mission recalled due to weather.

6 20-4-44 Behen

No-ball target. Light flak. No damage

7 21-4-44 Bois Coquerie

Due to cloud cover the target was difficult to locate. Two attempts were made with poor results. Flak was heavy and fairly accurate. Tunnel gunner Sgt. Bill Perkins wrapped up the flak situation pretty well when he said, "Boy! That stuff was sure rough out there today. It seemed to come right in that hatch after me. I was spitting aluminum out of my teeth all the way back home."

Lt. Hicks of the 642nd made a forced landing in the Dover area after engine trouble developed over the target. It was one of those sweat trips, barely making it to southern England.

Lt. William Cargill had his hydraulic system shot out and a belly landing resulted on his return to base.

Lt. Eugene H. Salzman and S/Sgt. W. N. Houle received injuries over target.

15 a/c received category "A" damage and 2 category "B".

8 22-4-44 Marquenville

In clear weather two boxes of

nineteen took off to attack the assigned 'no-ball' with an escort of Spitfires. Our route was uncontested as the Bombers passed over the French coastline and flew well into France. But the stillness was deceitful as German anti-aircraft batteries seemed to lull us into the target area where they burst out with heavy guns that squirted great blue streaks of flame and split the heavens with deadly bursts catching both boxes full in their barrage. The first box, hounded by the hail of steel, flung 68 bombs below but these fell futilely south and east of the target.

Major Leo Hawel led the second box. His crew was Lt. James J. Breen as Bombardier-Navigator, S/Sgts. Earl Mc Ginnis and Robly H. Coons as Gunners.

As they turned onto the bomb run headed for the target they received heavy flack damage. One engine was knocked out and Major Hawel and Lt. Breen received injuries. Major Hawel headed his plane for the channel and was forced to settle the plane on the water. The plane sank almost immediately but all were successful in clearing the plane. As Major Hawel started to inflate his "Mae West" life preserver, he heard a hissing sound. Air was escaping from the jacket through holes made by the flak, so it was useless. Just at that moment another life preserver came floating by. He grabbed it and quickly put it on and it worked. Although all the crew managed to stay afloat, Lt. Breen and S/Sgt. McGinnis died before help arrived. S/Sgt. Coons was in

serious condition and died shortly after arriving at the hospital. Major Hawel was interned for treatment. He recovered to fly again.

15 a/c received category "A" damage and 1 category "B" and 1 category "E". (destroyed).

9 22-4-44 Bois D'Esquerdes - "No-Ball" Target (19A/C)

This was the first mission to be led by Colonel Stocking with Lt. Clement as Bombardier/Navigator. This mission called for 36 planes but because of battle damage to aircraft on previous mission, only 19 planes were available. Lt Kononick's plane suffered battle damage to hydraulic system causing plane to over run the strip. No injuries were suffered by the crew.

10 23-4-44 Vacqueriette - "No-Ball" target (20 A/C)

Bomber Command called for 36 aircraft to strike the target. Due to prior heavy battle damage and losses, only 20 aircraft were ready for the mission. Colonel Yearwood led the formation. Major Arthur Milow, as deputy lead, summed up the bombing results with the statement,, " I saw the bombs walk right across the NW tip of he target area." Strike photos later confirmed this statement.

11 25-4-44 Bois D'Esquerdes

Group returning from mission encountered heavy overcast over southern England. Capt. Carl Harrison, Sgt. Marshall Vogel and Sgt Joe Howell were all killed when their plane crashed and exploded. It is believed that Capt. Harrison pulled up sharply to avoid colliding with another aircraft, when his ship

stalled and went into a spin. As the weather had prevented the group from bombing the target, his ship was still heavily laden with the full bomb load returning them to base. The leader of the second box observed the aircraft in a spin just prior to the crash.

12 25-4-44 Point De Hoe (20 A/C)

The target was a coastal defense position near the Cherbourg peninsula, where the enemy was suspected of having set up a formidable array of heavy guns. Twenty ships took off in the quiet twilight to meet the R.A.F.'s protecting Spitfires and gain some measure of vengeance against the ill luck that had cursed us. A low haze hung over the channel as the formation swept over Brighton and made landfall as briefed. Turning right at the I. P. the Havocs found the landmarks they sought then whipped surely along. Before them white puffs of smoke billowed into the air where the 416th had bracketed the target.

It was our turn now and five hundred pounders poured right into the target as Red flames shot up and direct hits were made on 155mm guns which would never be used against Allied soldiers. Our comeback netted us an excellent and it suited us fine.

13 26-4-44 Louvain Marshaling Yard

The superstitious men were sweating this mission - number 13. Target was a key Belgium marshaling yard. Flak was weak and inaccurate. A second pass at target was necessary but on this second pass the Group dumped one hundred and fourteen of our best

Although the Group had no photo coverage, crew reports offer evidence of the results. Said Sgt. Ted Hiller tunnel gunner of "Dot for Dash", "The flak was inaccurate. It was white and fuzzy looking. I saw some bombs hit some buildings and trains and blue flames shot up a couple of hundred feet into the air." Lt. Richard L. Gates added, "There wasn't much flak but it was too much anyway. The bombs led right into the target. It was well hit." Said Lt. Larry W. Smith, "The bombs hit the S choke point and over. It was a good concentration." Lt. Tom Beckett added this comment, "I saw bombs burst all over the southern half of the target area."

3 a/c damaged, 2 category "A" and 1 category "B".

14 27-4-44 Monceau-Sur-Sambre

The morning mission was of no score as the weather was 10/10 over the target area. Major Lewis Stocking referring to the weather said, "it was as solid as a billiard table."

15 27-4-44 Arras (36 A/C)

Upon reaching landfall, the Group encountered weak and inaccurate flak puffing up in bright silvery clouds but causing no damage. However at the target area itself, Jerry got a grip on himself and sent the heavy stuff up, moderate with a fair degree of accuracy. Thirty planes bombed the primary, four failing as they did not see the leader drop and another being the victim of a malfunction.. The bombs fell short however. The first box piled their load up seven hundred and fifty yards southeast of the

target and the second box though coming closer still released their bombs prematurely and the concentration landed five hundred yards just in front of the choke point. One isolated burst did smash down on an overhead bridge a hundred and seventy five yards northeast of the aiming point while another stack landed near the bridge. The flak on the return was weak and badly aimed so that the main damage from the ground defenses came when the planes were over the target area.

Sgt. Richard Walters, tunnel gunner on "Norma" saw the damage this way, "Smoke poured from the bombed area. Explosions and fires started. They looked like flak gun flashes."

a/c category "A" and 3 category "B". damaged.

16 30-4-44 Beauvoir - "No Ball" target

Leading a new type 3 box formation was Major Arthur R. Milow with Lt. John T. Ertler Bombardier/Navigator. Mission was uneventful until target was in sight. Just after bombs were dropped 8 German ME-109s made a low frontal attack on the group. This was the A-20's most vulnerable blind area. They passed through the box uncontested with one A-20 receiving a bullet hole in elevator and one in vertical stabilizer. Another plane had bullet in right engine and what appeared to be 20mm shell holes on one side of fuselage just behind cockpit and in turret. Primers of these shells were recovered in the aircraft.

Two passes were made on the target with final excellent results.

Because of clever evasive action flak damage was negligible.

Shortly after the bomb run a near burst of flak pitched Lt. Paul Benson's A-20 about 40 feet above his formations altitude. It is unknown what the Gunners thought but for some reason they both departed the plane and their parachutes were seen to open. The Gunners were Sgt. Patrick G. Cahill and Sgt. Lionel G. Barbin.

After the mission when one gunner was asked why he didn't take a shot at the hostile fighters, he sadly shook his head and said, "How the hell are you 'gonna' shoot at something going 450 miles an hour?"

The third box got the heaviest dose from the anti-aircraft batteries. Said Lt. Charles A. Thomas, "Flak hit the left window and exploded across my chest. It sounded like a shot gun going off in my ear. My flak suit was cut to shreds, my leather jacket ripped, my throat mike cut so I couldn't talk to the crew and glass peppered my face. Luckily I wasn't hurt. I may never need that flak suit again in my life but it sure paid off that time." Said Lt. Bill Cook as he summed it all up "That sure was a long ride home."

18 a/c received category "A" damage and 7 category "B".

17 30-4-44 Busigny - Marshaling Yards (30 A/C)

The last mission of the month again had us working on the railroad and thirty-eight of our bombers took off late in the afternoon to pay Busigny marshaling yard a call. On this day however the procedure was reversed and F.O. 22-292 read,

"The 409th will lead." So at Sheerness the formation met the Spits and took the 416th in tow for the first time. Flak was negligible throughout the entire route. At St. Quentin the formation turned left as briefed and from that point the marshaling yard was clearly visible. Down the bomb run raced the Havocs at the usual 12,000 feet and thirty three ton of destruction plummeted down through space. Smoke and flames belched up all along the edge of the yard but unfortunately no direct concentration fell on the target. One stick of bombs did catch the main line at the north end of the yard where the tracks branch out in a great Y and undoubtedly severed it.

Returning from the mission, Lt. Albert Dunstan found his plane low on fuel. He dropped out of formation to refuel at Station 154.

The range of an A-20 was rather short at best. An extra pass at the target, a tail end Charlie in formation or a piece of flak through a fuel tank could cause a pilot to set on the edge of his seat with one eye on the fuel gauges and the other eye searching for the first airfield on the southern coast of England.

Lt. John Davis was relieved to get home, Said he, "I was sweating out my 13th mission today. I won't sweat anymore. Number twelve was the roughest. When the flak came up it was like riding on a corduroy road."

18 1-5-44 Montignies-Sur-Sambre

Mission was led by Col. Maxwell and Lt. Taugner, Bombardier/Navigator

and a second box was led by Capt. Wolf and Lt. Corey, Bombardier/Navigator. Target was a marshaling yard. All returned but the results were disappointing. Col. Maxwell failed to turn on the bomb master switch so the formation bombed off the deputy lead with poor results as shown by the strike photos. The second box returned to base with bombs, after losing the formation and failing to make rendezvous with the fighter escort.

19 1-5-44 Blanc Misseron

Target was locomotive repair works. 35 ships took off led by Col. Maxwell and Lt. Taugner, Bombardier/Navigator. A heavy ground haze cut visibility at the target to little more than a mile. Returning crews said that they did not think the target they bombed was the one for which they had been briefed. Strike photos showed bombs fell on an unidentified mill and railroad terminus four and a half miles from the assigned target.

20 2-5-44 Blanc Misseron

Group returned to the previous day's target. The first box being led by Col. Pender and Lt. Rafalow, Bombardier/Navigator and second box being led by Capt. Davis and Lt. Salzman, Bombardier/Navigator. They had no difficulty locating and identifying the target. The strike photos confirmed their reports of excellent bombing results.

21 7-5-44 Blanc Misseron

The locomotive repair works was once again the target. 37 planes were dispatched. Over the target

area there was 8 to 10/10 cloud cover. Flak encountered in target area. Planes returned to base without bombing.

8 planes received Category "A" damage and 2 planes received Category "B" damage.

22 7-5-44 Ailly Le Haut Clochen

A "no ball" target but once again turned back because of weather. Moderate flak encountered wounding S/ Sgt. G. E. King and Sgt. G. K. Klinge.

18 planes received category "A" damage and 4 planes received category "B" damage.

23 8-5-44 Aerschot

Target was a railroad siding. Again weather forced Group to return without bombing.

Accurate flak encountered. 4 planes received category "A" damage, 11 received category "B" damage.

24 8-5-44 Bellevue

Major Milow and Lt. Ertler, Bombardier/Navigator led the first box on a "no ball" target. Bombing was done in flights of six resulting in direct hits or near misses on the platform and rectangular buildings.

The second box led by Col. Stocking and Lt. Clement, Bombardier/Navigator, dropped their bombs south of the target area.

25 9-5-44 Aerschot

Target was a marshaling yard. 34 ships departed for that mission. Results were very disappointing.

Due to an error in navigation bombs were dropped on the town of Solesmes. The second box, not satisfied as to the identity of the target, did not bomb.

Flack encountered with 14 planes receiving category "A" damage and 7 received category "B" damage.

26 9-5-44 Bonnieres

A "no ball" target. First box was led Col. Maxwell and Lt. Taugner, Bombardier/Navigator, could not identify the target in time to bomb.

Plane piloted by Lt. Gordon Argyle received a direct hit as he was leading second box on second pass to the target. His crew consisted of Lt. Ralph Corey, Bombardier/Navigator and S/Sgt. William Oglesbee and S/Sgt. Louis Dirikson were his gunners. One parachute was observed. Of the 35 planes on the mission, 25 received flak damage.

1 airplane lost, 18 received category "A" damage and 7 received category "B" damage.

(note: L. Dirikson taken prisoner - refer to "Experiences" Chapter)

Colonel Yearwood was leading the third box and had just completed their bombing run when he was struck in the left eye. The optic nerve of the eye was severed. Never the less he kept control of his aircraft in spite of suffering great pain and at times unable to see. Lt. Merrill, his Bombardier-Navigator, gave him information and guidance to direct him back to England. A great display of teamwork was shown when he landed in southern England. It could

only be accomplished by an excellent veteran pilot with complete faith in his bombardier-navigator.

27 10-5-44 Tournai

Target was marshaling yard. 29 planes took off. First box was led by Major Powell and Lt. Saathoff, Bombardier/Navigator. They dropped their bombs on and around the passenger

station, with results described as poor.

The second box led by Capt. Huff and Lt. Lever, Bombardier/Navigator, got good results with bursts observed on loaded tracks in the target area.

Heavy flak encountered as they left the target area.

28 10-5-44 Aerschot

Weather prevented bombing the marshaling yard target with Group being called back to base.

29 11-5-44 Aerschot

Once again, weather prevented Group from reaching target.

30 12-5-44 Merville

A break in the weather, the Group targeted an airdrome. The leading combination teams of Milow-Ertler and Gustafson-McEvelly reported good bombing results, with burst in the dispersal areas and fuel and ammunition dumps-- reports which were borne out by the strike photos.

31 12-5-44 Bonnieres

When the second mission of this day was announced and the "no ball"

target at Bonnieres was revealed, the men knew what the flak story would be. They weren't mistaken. Intense and accurate heavy flak fire at the target damaged 25 of the 37 planes (22 category "A", 3 category "B") in the Group's formation, but this time they all bombed with results described as fair, and no plane were lost.

32 13-5-44 Maisoncelle

Another "no-ball " target. Visibility at the target was poor because of ground haze, so returning crews were not sure of their bombing results. The Huff-Lever and Dunbar-Gable

teams, which led the 37 ship formation sweated out the strike photos. When they came from the photo lab, they showed that hits had been scored on two skis, the two rectangular buildings and "E" building. Still later, when all the reports were in, the 409th was credited with suspension of the site.

33 15-5-44 Creil

Cloud cover prevented bombing of airdrome

34 19-5-44 Benerville

Target was Gun Emplacements. PPF mission with good to fair results.

35 20-5-44 Beauvais-Tille

Bombs once again had to be brought back because of inability to identify the airdrome target. Moderate to heavy flack encountered in target area. 13 planes receiving Category "A" damage and 2 receiving category "B" damage.

36 22-5-44 Evreus-Faville - Airfield (36 A/C)

This two box mission with Major Milow leading the first box and Capt. Dunbar leading the second box. The formation had dropped its bombs in a beautiful pattern on a hanger, workshops and taxi strip of the airdrome target. Conditions had been perfect at the target: good visibility, no flak, and the bomb bursts had looked very, very nice on Jerry's installations.

Major Milow and Capt. Dunbar were employing evasive action, but the stuff was accurate. Lt. Clarence P. Peck, Jr., flying number three in Capt. Dunbar's flight, received a direct hit and dropped out of formation with a wing on fire. When last seen the plane appeared to still be under control. One parachute was seen to open. Lt. Peck's Gunners were Sgt. Leonard Iaanson and Sgt. Jason Bugg. There was doubt the plane could make the coast. In the same flight, Lt. Bert Wheeler's plane's right fuel tank was riddled by flak and his right engine was knocked out. He headed for the Channel descending rapidly with one engine and a very vibrating plane. Upon reaching the French coast and down to almost 2000 feet, he ordered his Gunners (S/Sgt. Richard Thompson and S/Sgt. Jack Carne) to bail out and he soon followed. As Lt. Wheeler was parachuting toward the water he observed his plane strike the water and burst into flames. Escorting P-47s circling overhead signaled a British destroyer that was about two miles away. It seemed like a long time to the men in the water before the destroyer arrived, but the men were pulled aboard. The destroyer was a former U. S. Navy

ship dealt to the British through the lend lease program.

1 airplane lost, 10 received category "A" and 1 category "B".

37 24-5-44 Beaumont La Roger

Airfield bombed by three boxes. Results were fair to good.

38 24-5-44 Abbeville-Drucat

Airfield bombed by three boxes. Results were poor to good.

39 25-5-44 Monchy-Breton

Another airfield target. Only one box was able to bomb and its results were described as poor. The other box found the target obscured by clouds.

40 26-5-44 Beaumont Sur Oise

Airfield was the target. The first box was led by Major Milow and Lt. Ertler, Bombardier/Navigator, laid an excellent concentration of bombs on the target, scoring hits on shelters and fuel storage.

The second box, led by Capt. Gustafson and Lt. McEvilly, Bombardier/Navigator, also laid a fine pattern of bombs, but on gun emplacements and unidentified buildings 1600 feet from the M.P.I., results which were graded as poor.

41 27-5-44 Amiens - Marshaling Yards (38) A/C)

A high priority target; its destruction was necessary to help disrupt the German planes. They carried 152 bombs each weighing 500 pounds. The mission progressed as planned. The formation approached landfall at the designated place. Both boxes were soon under medium to heavy

anti-aircraft fire. This portion of France was possibly the most heavily defended area along the German occupied Channel coast. Hitler assumed that the invasion would occur in this area and held many of his top ranking fighting forces here. These units had daily practice with their deadly 88mm anti-aircraft guns as the U S Army Air Corp and the Royal Air Force hammered away at targets within their range.

As the two boxes of A-20s approached Formerie, France, the flak became intense and accurate. Four ships were hit in the time frame of 1338 to 1340 hours (2 Min). The plane flown by Capt. Leslie B. Huff with Lt. Ben. R. Lever, Bombardier/Navigator was the lead ship of the first box received damage knocking out one engine and left the formation. The deputy lead ship flown by Captain Leland F. Norton with Lt. Robert T. Taugner, Bombardier/Navigator with gunners S/Sgt. Paul Duran and S/Sgt. Julian H. Tate and No.3 aircraft flown by Lt. Raymond L. Gregg with gunners Sgt. Budde W. Tear and Pvt. Archie D. Graves, all of the same box received hits and crashed. Consequently, there were no bombardier/navigationers left in the first box. This necessitated the remainder to re-form on another box. Another plane left the formation on one engine landing at New Church. Some of the planes of the first box were able to join up with the second box. Others joined a formation of 416th Bomb Group planes that were bombing in the adjacent area. The second of planes ran into problems when another formation of planes forced them to turn off course. Two attempts were

made to bomb the target before the Group returned to Little Walden. Capt. Huff, nursed his ship back to the Channel on single engine, then he and Lt. Lever, his Bombardier/Navigator were forced to bail out. Lt. Lever experience great difficulty getting himself loose but once he did and escaped, Capt. Huff, who had been holding the plane under control for the benefit of Lt. Lever. Capt. Huff removed his flak suit, crawled to the catwalk of the blazing ship and jumped over the side. In so doing, the right side of his body struck the plane. He tried to pull the rip-cord with his right hand but it was impossible. He reached for the rip-cord with his left hand, pulled it, and the chute opened.

Air-Sea rescue brought Capt. Huff and Lt. Lever out of the channel and back to land. His gunners, S/Sgt .Gus E. Bubenzer and S/Sgt Fred H. Strickland had already bailed out over France.

(note: Refer to Bubenzer story in "Experiences" chapter)

Near the town of (EU) the formation was attacked by one lone FW-190. After encountering about 200 rounds of 50 cal. fire from A-20's, they broke off the attack and departed the area.

The report shows:

1 plane missing - hit by flak near Formerie, France.

2 planes destroyed - vicinity of Formerie, France.

1 aircraft - emergency landing at New Church - damage unknown.

16 planes with flak damage (14 category "A" & 2 "B").

136 Bombs returned to base.

First aircraft returned at 14:36 hours.

.Note: San Bernardino (Calif.) Army Air Base was renamed NORTON Army Air Base in memory of Lt. Leland F. Norton, a casualty on this mission. Lt. Norton was a member of the 640th Bombardment Squadron

42 27-5-44 Amiens - Marshaling Yards (35 A/C)

The 409th for the second time this day was ordered by Bomber Command to return to the Amiens target. About four and a half hours after the first plane returned from the first mission, the Group was in the air again. Minor repairs had been made, planes serviced, crews fed and briefed. Due to much battle damage and loss of planes, only 35 aircraft were serviceable for the second mission.

Taking off at 1903 hours, the lead ship piloted by Capt. Roger Dunbar, was hit by the last plane in a flight of P-51s passing over the field: both ships crashed and burst into flames. Capt. Dunbar, Lt. Norman Merrill, Bombardier-Navigator and Lt. William B. Jones Group photographic officer flying as tunnel gunner were killed in the crash. The sole survivor was the turret gunner S/Sgt. Angelo Mattei, who was badly burned. S/Sgt. Mattei was pulled from the burning plane by Mrs. Elizabeth Ann Everitt, housewife from nearby Phdale Wharf Farm and passing cyclist Sgt. John P. Hartman of the 78th Fighter Group. Both Mrs. Everitt and Sgt. Hartman were killed as they returned to the burning plane to attempt further rescue of other crew members when the plane exploded.

This tragic event orphaned this gallant mothers son, 4 year old Tony Everitt.

(The men of the 409th on the very next day established a Trust Fund for Tony with their generous giving of their hard earned money.)

The heroism of Sgt. Hartman was not forgotten by the 409th.

Sgt. Alvin McAbee, Cpl. Edward V. Sikora and Pfc. James Pasternak were commended by Col. Pender, for their display of bravery in removing Sgt. Mattei from the burning area and treating him for his injuries until a doctor arrived.

Lts. Thomas and Gable, deputy leaders of the first box took over the lead. The remaining 34 aircraft continued to take off, passing over their fallen comrades knowing only too well that chances for survival were very slim in a crash of this type. As the planes circled the field taking their respective places in the formation a tall column of smoke rose from the burning A-20. A prayer was all the help one could offer.

The formation turned south and began climbing for bombing altitude. The group soon was passing over the sheer white walls of the Channel making rendezvous with the fighter escorts. They identified themselves as "Little Friends" and quickly assumed their escort positions. They were the bombers guardian angels and greatly respected by the bomber crews for the gallant performance in giving protective cover for the formations.

The English Channel was a ribbon of blue separating two Warring nations, but the 409th used it over which to test fire its guns on each mission. With all the tragic events

of the day one sensed that everyone was determined to rearrange some real estate in the Amiens area.

As the formation approached landfall on the French coast the German Ack-Ack came out to meet us long before the planes were in range. The tracer shells arced in front of the planes and fell harmless into the Channel short of their target; seconds later they were slicing through the formations. Flak continued all the way to the target. This time the German Gunners chose to defend the marshaling yards by throwing up a barrage of anti-aircraft fire, which the Bombardier-Navigators estimated to be 6000 feet in width and 2000 feet high. It was so located that it would have to be penetrated by the formation before reaching the target.

The formation made its final turn onto the bomb run, pilots tightening the boxes to concentrate the bombs on the target. The bombardier-navigators gave last minute corrections to the pilots to bring the bomb sight to bear on the exact spot on the target. The bomb bay doors were opened, the pilots flipped the switches that armed the bombs and anxiously awaited the signal to release their bombs.

The first box dropped their bombs with fair results, the second box had good results. As the formation turned off the target a large column of smoke and debris rose from the marshaling yard. The exploding cordite from the ack-ack shells formed a dirty black cloud in the otherwise clear sky.

Three parachutes were seen in the

target area and it was reported that ground fire was directed at them as they descended. Two more parachutes were observed two miles north of target. Upon returning to base it was reported that one aircraft had ditched in the Channel and an Air Sea Rescue launch was proceeding in that direction. One dingy was observed just off the coast of Hastings.

The first box had bombed from 12,000 feet and the 2nd box bombed from 12,500 feet. The target had received 118 bombs of 500 pounds each.

43 28-5-44 Bruges St. Michiel - Chateau Ter Llinden, a Naval Headquarters

This was an extremely important target. It was part of an elaborate chain of RDF (Radar Direction Finding) Stations located all the way from Norway south to Spain. These stations were used to plot the courses of the American and British planes as they formed and headed for their objectives. This enabled the German Air Force to be able to shift their aircraft from one field to another to give them a better opportunity to intercept our forces. Thirty Four planes of the group attacked the target made up of three boxes. The first one led by Major Thomas Powell with Lt. Wilbert Saathoff as his Bombardier-Navigator, the second box led Lt. Davis with Lt. Salzman as his Bombardier-Navigator, the third box led by Capt. Joe May with Lt. Thomas Sammons as his Bombardier-Navigator.

The third box achieved the best results rating an "excellent" with good concentration of bursts on the buildings in and around the Main Point of Impact.

The R.D.F. Station no longer existed; thanks to the 409th.

44 28-5-44 Vacquerette

A "no ball" target with poor results.

45 29-5-44 Achiet

An airdrome was the target. The first box was led by Col. Stocking and Lt. Clement, Bombardier/Navigator. They got direct hits and near misses on an ammunition dump, taxi strips and the perimeter track at the southeast end of the field. The second box, led by Lt. Farr and Lt. Rafalow, Bombardier/Navigator got direct hits and near misses on four camouflaged revetments and the taxi strips serving them and a large unidentified building.

46 2-6-44 Campagne Les Hesdin

"No ball" target in the Calais area of France. Mission led by Major Art Milow and Lt. R "Moose" Ertler, Bombardier/Navigator. Flak was intense, accurate and heavy. Flight was able to blanket the area and get good hits. Lt. Marvin Thornton was injured while on the bomb run.

(Note - see "Experiences" chapter for Thornton's account of this mission)

47 3-6-44 Chartres A/D

Heavy intense flak encountered. 5 a/c received category "A" damage and 8 category "B".

48 4-6-44 Pointe De Hoe

Target was 'crossroad' to interrupt troop movement. 3 boxes with total of 42 a/c bombed but failed to hit target.

2 a/c received category "A" damage and 8 category "B".

D-Day- June 6, 1944

For the 409th and for thousands of other Americans stationed with Air Corps units in Britain, the entire complexion of the war was changed with H-hour. It was no longer confined to a series of aerial offensives against Hitler's European Fortress'.

The stage was being set for a drama whose curtain time was known only to the stage manager. Now the curtain was going up, this was the day which all activities had been directed. Now the objective had shifted from preparation for a hypothetical invasion to actual support of a very real one. Here at last was the war that could be followed on maps, whose progress could be plotted with battle lines and bomb lines. One only had to listen to the comments in mess halls, in barracks, crew rooms and operations room, to sense the new purpose D-Day brought the 409th. You heard it in the remarks of a cook, mixing meat loaf in one of the kitchens for noon chow, "Now we are getting somewhere. Now we can get his thing over with and go home".

What was it actually like that D-Day morning? Most of the men who helped prepare the Groups first D-Day mission, and even more of the men who flew it say that they will never forget any part of it. But those who have and those who weren't there, have the graphic description written by a Yank Staff Correspondent, Sgt. Walter Peters, who flew with the Group that day

Inside the Hut, Sgt, Peters wrote, 'In a small ante-room a little group of men stood before the large maps of France on the wall. Outside the room a white helmeted MP with an air of great importance, watched carefully to see that nobody but authorized persons could enter. For many days now he had been standing guard in that same position, the same look on his face, the same scrutinizing eyes. Prior to this particular morning, only the Colonel and his immediate staff members had been allowed to enter the room. Now there were the Colonel, his staff, the box leaders and their deputies; men who were to lead the group over the target in support of the ground troops invading France.

"Well, Gentlemen," said the Colonel, "this is it". Colonel Preston P. Pender of Hendersonville, N. C., the Commanding Officer of the 409th, didn't elaborate any further. To the men around him it was quite obvious what he meant. "The Huns", said a Lt. Colonel., "are expected to rush troops here (pointing to a spot on the map) and we have got to attack these crossroads at exactly ___hours." A Major spoke up and said "that doesn't give us more than half hour for take-off." "Yes," said the Lt. Colonel, "maybe 35 minutes at the most. Bomber command says you will fly at___feet."

For this particular phase of the air operations, all of the aircraft taking part was given a special identification. Three white bands were painted around the aft section of the fuselage and around the wings. The allied aircraft were easily identified by the ground forces and saved many lives from being lost as victims of Allied guns.

49 6-6-44 Valognes - Railroad junction (54 A/C)

The mission was to be made up of three boxes of 18 planes each. The first box to be led by Colonel Lewis Stocking with Lt. E. A. Clements as his Bombardier-Navigator, and S/Sgt. Robert A. Needham and S/Sgt. James J. Crippen, gunners. The second box to be led by Lt.

Gates with Lt. John Bauer as his Bombardier-Navigator, the third box to be led by Major Art Milow with Lt. J. T. Ertler as his Bombardier-Navigator.

Sgt. Peters, the Yank correspondent went on the mission riding in the tunnel of the 'Avenger' piloted by Lt. Tommy Farr. As they were leaving the coast of England, Sgt. Peters reported, 'a few minutes later top Turret Gunner S/Sgt. Neicy Clopton's voice came over the intercom again, but this time it was high pitched with excitement. We were over the English Channel where it was quite obvious that there was a war going on. "My god," he yelled, "just look at all those ships down there.' It was a sight never to be forgotten. The navies of the world seemed to be concentrated in the Channel that day. For miles you could see ships, like spots of pepper in a light soup. There were ships passing like traffic on Times Square on a pre-holiday week-end. Those heading back to England seemed to be traveling faster than the others, perhaps because they had already unloaded their cargo.' Major Milow said he could actually see men standing side by side in the ships headed for the beaches.

"Now we were over the French coast. Peering through binoculars I could see no signs of life anywhere. There were the little French farm houses and long white roads without traffic. We passed over the flooded section, then over enemy land again. Just at the tip of the peninsula there were great columns had bombed, the planes we had met returning to England. Our planes were taking evasive action, Jerry

was shooting flak at us, two big black bursts just off to our left. Pieces of which flew all over the sky, cutting like a razor. We were enjoying a Holiday went down.'

Some of the men that flew that day may detect some flaws in Yank's reporting but the account does help those who didn't fly to visualize the scenes and share the experience. The weather was bad; 8/10 cloud cover at the target, forcing all three boxes to make a second bomb run. The first box went down to 3,000 feet for the second run and encountered intense heavy flak. Lt. R. T. Winn's plane, flying deputy lead, was hit and crashed in the target area. Lt. M. A. Walek was Lt. Winn's Bombardier-Navigator, he bailed out and survived. Lt. Winn's gunners were S/Sgt. John Shary and Sgt. Vernon V. Reich. The 2nd and 3rd boxes made their runs from 10,000 feet.

From the diary of Lt. William Holmes (642nd squadron)

"As we came within sight of land which was the Cherbourg Peninsula, we were at 9,000 feet. The first two boxes went in OK. As we arrived, cloud cover had moved in at about 4,000 feet. As we approached landfall the lead ship with Colonel Stocking and bombardier-navigator Lt. Ed. Clement could see we would be unable to see the target and make any kind of effective bomb run. So we made a long sweeping turn and slow let down to 3,000 feet just under the cloud cover. Orders for this mission was to hit the target no matter what altitude. For us to go in at 3,000 feet is almost a

suicide one for us. As we hit land fall all hell broke loose. I never seen so much ground fire in my life. Lt. Rex Winn on my upper got a direct hit and went down in flames. I saw his tunnel gunner get out all afire. He never had a chance. Two other 'chutes' were seen so we hope they are OK.

We were so low we could actually see the German gunners firing at us. With all the enemy fire, the bomb run seemed like eternity. It was so rough I thought Ed might have to reset his bomb sight and make another pass but he hung in there and we got bombs away. Things got so rough I knew if I did not make some kind of move on my own I would not survive this mission. We were just a few feet under the cloud cover so the second I released my bomb load I pulled back as hard as I could on the wheel and sent the plane into the overcast. Most of the flight did the same thing. First time we ever broke formation. This was a do or die decision. Had we not made that move many of us would not be here to tell about it.

The overcast was about 500 feet thick and I came out very quick. The enemy fire had stopped. I made a slight left turn at about 5,000 feet and headed for the English Channel and looking for any of our other planes. About two minutes later Lt. Jerry Autin, a fellow pilot pulled up along side and gave me the "ole wipe the sweat of the brow signal". I looked his plane over and could see many flack holes and the whole rear part of his rudder was shattered and waving in the breeze like a flag. We soon joined up with others from the

flight and got back into formation with what was left of it and headed for home base. Every ship in our squadron suffered battle damage. I had 54 holes in my plane".

50 6-6-44 Albencourt - Marshaling Yards

This was the second mission for the day. The weather in the afternoon was even worse than it had been in the morning, with the second box being unable to find the target. Ten planes of the first box got separated from the leader in heavy clouds enroute to the target. Lt. Richard Bills and Lt. Mc Evilly, deputy leaders took over the lead when Colonel Stocking's radio went out. With seven ships, weather forced them to go in at low altitude but they found and bombed the target, encountering intense flak and small arms fire. All aircraft suffered heavy damage, one aircraft lost an engine over the target but made it back to P-47 base on the southern coast. In addition to Lt. Bills, the other planes reaching the target were piloted by Lt. John Koons, Lt. George Hicks, Lt. Werner Tanner, Lt. Tom Kirkpatrick and Lt. John Waltman.

6 a/c received category "A" damage and 2 catagory "B".

(Refer to Chapter "EXPERIENCES" for Lt. Bill's account of the mission and Our Longest Day by S/Sgt. Don Morrow)

GENERAL SPAATZ COMMENDATION:

IXBC SU-449-A REQUEST YOU BRING THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE TO THE ATTENTION OF ALL MEMBERS OF YOUR COMMAND. THE RECEIPT OF THIS MESSAGE IS A SOURCE OF GREAT PRIDE AND PLEASURE TO ME. I THANK EACH OF YOU FOR THE EFFORTS WHICH MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO RECEIVE SUCH A COMMENDATION.

MESSAGE RECEIVED FROM COMMANDING GENERAL, NINTH AIR FORCE.

IT IS WITH DEEP PRIDE AND PLEASURE THAT I FORWARD THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE FROM GENERAL SPAATZ QUOTE OPERATIONS IN FRANCE AND ITALY HAVE REACHED A STAGE WHERE IT IS POSSIBLE VERY DEFINITELY TO SEE THE AIR CONTRIBUTION AND I WISH TO COMMEND THE PERSONNEL OF ALL US AIR FORCES UNDER MY COMMAND FOR THE SUPERIOR PERFORMANCE WHICH WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR A LARGE PORTION OF THE ALLIED SUCCESS OF THE CONTINENT. THE WHOLE PICTURE INDICATES A DEGREE OF COORDINATION WHICH NEVER COULD HAVE BEEN ATTAINED WITHOUT THE WHOLEHEARTED AND UNTIRING SUPPORT OF EVERY UNIT AND EVERY INDIVIDUAL WHETHER ON COMBAT STATUS OR GROUND DUTY. THE EFFICIENCY OFTEN EXHIBITED BY OUR FORCES DURING THIS WAR HAS AGAIN BEEN PROVEN BY THE NINTH AIR FORCE. BUILDING UP FROM A VERY SMALL BOMBER FORCE A FEW SHORT MONTHS AGO, IT EMERGED ON D DAY WITH THE GREATEST EFFICIENCY AND LEAST CASUALTIES OF ANY PREVIOUS OPERATION OF THIS NATURE. THE OPERATIONS OF THE NINTH BOMBER COMMAND HAVE BEEN EXTREMELY SUCCESSFUL AND THE FIGHTER OPERATIONS HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT WITH EFFICIENCY AND DETERMINATION THAT IS PARTICULARLY COMMENDABLE. IN ADDITION TO THE ABOVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND AT LEAST EQUAL TO THEM IN IMPORTANCE IS THE SUPERIOR WORK OF OUR GROUND CREWS AND OTHER PERSONNEL WHOSE UNSPECTACULAR WORK BEHIND THE SCENES MAKES POSSIBLE ALL COMBAT OPERATIONS. THEIR WORK, HAVING LITTLE PERSONAL COMPENSATION SUCH AS COMES FROM DIRECT PARTICIPATION IN COMBAT ACTION, IS ALL THE MORE COMMENDABLE FOR THAT REASON, AND I WANT THEM TO KNOW THAT THE IMPORTANCE IS RECOGNIZED. GOOD TEAM WORK, SPLENDID SPIRIT AND SUPERIOR PREPAREDNESS WERE SHOWN IN THE SUPPORT GIVEN TO EACH OTHER AND TO ALL OTHER PARTICIPANTS IN THE LANDINGS. EVEN THOUGH WEATHER CONDITIONS WERE ADVERSE TO FLYING AT THE SPECIFIC TIME OF THE LANDINGS. STILL THIS WAS NOT ALLOWED TO INTERFERE WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE MAIN EFFORT. I WISH THAT YOU WOULD PASS ON TO ALL OF YOUR PERSONNEL MY SINCERE APPRECIATION AND CONGRATULATION FOR A JOB WELL DONE AND STILL BEING DONE WITH ENERGY AND DEVOTION TO DUTY THAT WILL MAKE NOT MERELY AIR HISTORY, BUT AN ENORMOUS CONTRIBUTION TO FINAL VICTORY. UNQUOTE SIGNED BRERETON.

ANDERSON

51 7-6-44 Foret DeCerisy - Highway crossroad

Three boxes led by)1) Major Art. Milow -Lt. J. T. Ertler, (2) Capt. Joe May-Lt. Thomas Sammons, (3) Lt. Tommy Farr-Lt. Rafalow had excellent results in their bombing.

52 7-6-44 Valognes - Railroad Junction

The teams of Major Milow-Lt. J. T. Ertler and Capt. Joe May-Lt. Thomas Sammons providing leadership for the second time this day led two boxes in an attack on the target with fair results.

7 a/c received category "A" damage.

53 8-6-44 Perriers - Railroad Junction (42 A/C)

Lt. Davis and Lt. Salzman led this mission with excellent results.

54 10-6-44 St. Saveur-Brd. - Bridge

Three boxes were dispatched but only one was able to bomb the target. It was led by Lt. Cotter and Lt. Himmel. They had excellent results.

55 11-6-44 Aunay-Sur-Odon

Shortly after take-off, two planes of the 641st Squadron collided in mid-air. One plane piloted by Lt. Armistead and his Gunners S/Sgt. Holiday and Sgt. Donnelly were killed. The other plane piloted by Lt. Beckett made a crash landing and survived along with Gunner Sgt. Edgmon. The other gunner, Sgt. Pendleton bailed out as the plane descended but he was too close to the ground and was killed on impact.

Weather prevented the mission from being completed.

56 12-6-44 Aunay-Sur-Odon

The teams of Milow-Ertler, Gustafson-McEvelly and Higgins-Cordson led a three box formation with excellent success. A commendation from Bomber Command Commanding Officer General Anderson was received.

57 13-6-44 St. Jacques

Marshaling yard target. Mission led by Lt. Davis and Lt. Salzman, Bombardier/Navigator.

They found target but was covered

by 10/10 cloud, so they bombed a casual target, a railroad junction at Tribehou, with good results.

58 13-6-44 Canisy-Rd.-

Railroad junction target found but obscured by clouds. 1st box bombed a target of opportunity with fair results. 2nd box did not bomb. 3rd box bombed the secondary target with poor results.

59 14-6-44 Mezidon

Weather was good, for a change, but malfunction of the bomb sight caused poor bombing at the target, a marshaling yard. The formation made several passes at the target.

60 14-6-44 Flers

A railroad junction was bombed with fair results. One Me-109 attacked made one pass at the formation before being chased by our P-47's. Gunner fired shots but doesn't believe he hit the enemy aircraft although he said he saw his tracer bullets all around the plane.

61 15-6-44 Conde-Sur-Noireau

Six flights were dispatched against a railroad junction. One flight led by Lt. Sargent and Lt. Olshak, Bombardier/Navigator, got excellent results.

5 a/c received category "A" damage and 1 category "B"/

62 15-6-44 Foret D'Andaine

Two boxes, led by Col. Stocking and Lt. Clements, Bombardier/Navigator, and Lt. Oates and Lt. Bauer Bombardier/Navigator, did excellent area bombing.

63 17-6-44 La Loupe

Target was a large oil storage terminal. Mission led by Joe May with Tom Sammons as bombardier-navigator. Group got excellent strikes and bomb pattern on target.

64 18-6-44 Foret De Conches

Weather prevented bombing of the target.

65 21-6-44 Montgueil

Pathfinder mission. Results unobserved because of cloud cover.

66 22-6-44 Ligescourt

Pathfinder mission. Results unobserved because of cloud cover.

67 22-6-44 La Mare a Canards

Pathfinder mission. Cameras recorded poor results.

The 640th Squadron lost a plane and one of its pilots, Lt. Paul G. Benson. Lost engine while forming up over England. Gunners, S/Sgt.'s Holland and Henshaw survived.

68 23-6-44 Bientgues

Cameras recorded excellent results,

69 24-6-44 Zadausques

Rocket installation. Heavy flak.

70 24-6-44 Bruz

Fuel storage dumps and ammunition depot. Mission led by the Davis-Salzman team.

One a/c lost an engine and made an emergency landing in France.

71 30-6-44 Conde Sur Vire

Weather prevented bombing petrol rail-head.

72 30-6-44 Thury Harcourt

Pathfinder mission. Bombed highway intersection.

73 5-7-44 Chateau De Frohen - "No Ball" target

A pathfinder led mission was dispatched late in the day. It turned out to be one to be remembered. The target was in the Pas de Calais area often referred to by crews as "pop corn alley". No flak was experienced on the way to the target, perhaps because of 10/10 cloud cover. On the way out a break in the clouds disclosed that the pathfinder had brought them directly over Oisemont. The resultant flak, accurate and intense, was no surprise to anyone. The lead ship of the first box of 16 aircraft piloted by Colonel Stocking received a direct hit in the bomb bay, and the left engine cut out. With a fire raging in the bomb bay the ship dropped out of formation and headed for the coast. The intercom was made inoperative preventing any communication between crews. Once over the Channel the Gunners, Sgt. Dvorak and Sgt Robert Needham bailed out. With failing engines the plane barely reached the English coast, where the Colonel was forced to land on a grass fighter strip. Neither he nor his Bombardier-Navigator Lt. Clements were injured despite the failure of the brakes. The plane proceeded through a fence and across a ditch that wiped off the landing gear and stopped against some trees. Sgt. Dvorak, the Tunnel Gunner, was

picked up in the Channel after drifting for five hours in his dinghy. It was his first mission. The turret gunner, Sgt. Needham was listed as 'missing in action'.

Meanwhile, over Oisemont the lead ship of the second box had received a severe hit by flak wounding the Bombardier-Navigator and knocking out one engine. Lt. Gates nursed the aircraft back to an emergency strip on the southern coast of England. Upon landing, Sgt. Norris ran in search of an ambulance, while the pilot tried to contact help on the radio. Sgt. Heath removed Lt. Bauer from the nose of the plane and applied first aid, which the doctors declared saved his life.

Of the 32 planes that flew the mission, 20 suffered battle damage.

74 6-7-44 Alencon R. R.

Six railroad bridges were bombed in flights of six. One flight led by Major Gustafson and Lt. McEvelly got good results. The others got poor and gross results or no photographic coverage.

75 7-7-44 Fontaine Le Pin

This mission was in close support of the ground forces: troops and equipment in woods south of Caen. Bombing was done by boxes. One box led by Capt. Davis with Lt. Salzman as Bombardier/Navigator. The other box was led by Major Milow with Lt. Ertler as Bombardier/Navigator. Both boxes produced satisfactory results.

76 8-7-44 Caen - Railroad junction

Target was a German Headquarter

and Garrison. May- Sammons team put another "Right down the chimney". They were the only flight to bomb. Drifting smoke changed the appearance of the target area made the aiming point impossible for most of the bombardiers to identify.

77 8-7-44 Rennes

The bombardiers were unable to identify the hard to spot primary target, a fuel depot. One flight, led by Lt. Sargent with Lt. Olshak, got good results in an attack on the secondary, a road embankment and bridge at Combourg.

78 9-7-44 Rennes -

Target was a Standard Oil Company Refinery.

A plane flown by Lt. Armstrong with gunners Sgt. Assaro and Sgt. Hill received a direct hit by flak and went down in flames with no parachutes observed.

This mission consisted of two flights. One led by the team of Major Milow and Lt. J. T. Ertler, Bombardier-Navigator attacked the primary target with good results. The other flight by Capt. Davis and Lt. Salzman, Bombardier-Navigator had good results attacking the secondary target.

79 11-7-44 Foret D'Andaine

Pathfinder led mission attacking a fuel dump. 10/10 overcast prevented observation of results.

80 17-7-44 Bruz

This was another fuel dump target. The bombardiers found the target area so badly mutilated that it was impossible for most of them to pick

up the aiming point, although all six flights made two passes at the target. Only the flight led by the Thomas-Thomas team bombed the primary with fair results; the other flights dropped their bombs on the secondary, the Montfort railroad bridge, and casual targets, railroad lines and junctions in the vicinity.

81 18-7-44 Demouville - Close support targets

This mission was in support of the British 2nd Army. The mission was part of a combined air and ground attack in which eleven Groups of IX Bomber Command took part, along with the RAF heavies. One thousand heavies of the Eighth Air Force, ten fighter bomber groups of the IX Tactical Air Command and 40 squadrons from the 83rd and 84th Wings. Immediately after the bombardment three armored divisions and three infantry divisions launched an attack southeast of Caen. They drove a salient approximately ten miles wide into the enemy held territory.

82 19-7-44 St. Hilaire Du Harcourt

This was a Pathfinder mission. Target was a railroad bridge that was an important facility for the enemy's efforts to transport

reinforcements to and around St. Lo.

83 20-7-44 Senonches (Tanks)

Cloud cover obscured both primary and secondary targets which was a large fuel storage. All ships returned with their bombs.

84 23-7-44 Laigle (RR Bridge)

Target was a railroad bridge. The mission was led by a Pathfinder

plane. Comments of returning pilots and bombardiers indicated that this was the most satisfactory experience with Pathfinder thus far. Crews favor PPF missions when the equipment is functioning smoothly -- they have learned that they mean less likelihood of encountering flak.

85 24-7-44 St. Giles (Troops)

Crews on the battle order were briefed for what turned out to be the most fateful bombardment of the battle of Normandy. Details of that briefing were of such importance, personnel of the entire base was restricted that night and till noon of the following day in order to safeguard them. It was an area bombing assignment closely coordinated with other groups in support of the 1st US Army southwest of St. Lo. The target was a rectangular area 8/10th miles east to west and 5/10th miles north to south with the town of St. Giles in the center. The carpet bombardment was scheduled to precede a breakthrough by armored forces and the infantry.

86 25-7-44 Chateau de Tertu

Mission called for two boxes, the first box to be led by the team of Major Milow and Lt. J. T. Ertler and the second box to be led by the team of Capt. Davis and Lt. Salzman. The formation bombed at 9750 feet because of clouds at 10,00 feet. Both boxes achieved good results as verified by strike photos.

87 26-7-44 Marigny

Intended target was a strong-point seven miles west of St. Lo, but 10/10 cloud at the target

prevented an attack.

88 30-7-44 Caumont (B) Trp Conc.

This mission was the first time the 409th had carried fragmentation bombs. The mission was executed satisfactorily but not without a loss. On returning to base Lt. Watson came in to land but had to pull up and go around. Visibility was very poor. A formation of B-26s appeared just south of the field flying low. Lt. Watson apparently saw them too late. With planes under him and to his right he appeared to make a desperate hard turn to the left. With his landing gear beginning to extend down and speed dissipating prior to his abrupt turn, the plane apparently stalled sending it downward causing it to crash. Lt. Watson, S/Sgt. Webb and Sgt. Helland lost their lives.

89 31-7-44 La Croiselle - Railroad bridge

This was a PPF mission. On take-off the planes had to climb up through a heavy overcast before forming up. One plane flown by Capt. Adams caught prop wash while climbing in the overcast and spun in, crashing on a golf course a mile from Cambridge. Capt. Adams managed to bail out but his crew consisting of Lt. Robert P. Briffett, Bombardier-Navigator and Gunners S/Sgt. George E. Mattingly and S/Sgt. Stephen Mc Dowell were killed.

90 1-8-44 Epone- Mezier

Targets were railroad and communications lines hampering the enemy retreat

91 2-8-44 Epone-Mezier

More timely blows to the enemy to seal the blockade of troops and supplies. Important railway junctions were devastated and crippled enemy transportation by tangling tracks 20 miles from Paris.

92 3-8-44 Mantes-Gassicourt

Target was a temporary bridge which had been constructed after the main rail span there had been destroyed in a recent bombing attack. Direct hits cut the tracks and blasted away portions of embankment causing considerable damage.

Lt. Carl Turner was killed when he made a violent maneuver to avoid a P-51 pretending to be attacking him, causing him to lose control and crash.

93 5-8-44 La Puisaye #1

94 5-8-44 La Puisaye #2

95 6-8-44 Beauvais M/Y

Two crews were forced down in Friendly territory in France. They were Lt. Leon R. Robinson; S/Sgt. Dempsey Clotfelter; S/Sgt. Benjamin E. Moja; Lt. John K. Bonnell; Sgt. Lawrence E. Rowland and Sgt. Richard W. Morrison.

96 6-8-44 Foret D'Andaine

(Refer to Chapter "EXPERIENCES" - Broweleit "Milk Run")

97 7-8-44 La Luda

Target was enemy ammunition dump. May-Sammons team led the mission and the group accomplishing excellent strikes.

98 8-8-44 Fisme-Bridge

99 8-8-44 St. Malo / St. Serran - 150MM Guns - Bridge - Railroad

The Group was called upon to bomb a battery of 150MM Guns just north of St. Malo Harbor. The guns were reported as delaying the occupation of the city where the Germans threatened to make a new Stalingrad. The forces on the ground capitalized in spectacular fashion on breaking up enemy resistance, but our bombs had powerful effect in bridge busting assaults on rail spans leaving Germans trapped on important roadways. A very short distance separated the opposing armies, thus extreme care had to be exercised that no bombs fell short.

One box led by Capt. Dick Bills with bombardier-navigator McEvelly made good hits and bomb pattern as shown by strike photos.

100 9-8-44 Chauny - Railroad Bridge

Mission had the purpose of disrupting transportation of supplies to German troops.

On this day the 409th completed their 100th Mission. This accomplishment was historical. The Group was the first in the European Theater to fly this number of missions in less than four months.

101 11-8-44 Beauon RR Bridge

Major Leo Hawel, Jr. Commanding Officer of the 641st Squadron flew his first combat mission since his crash in April.

102 11-8-44 Ille de Cezembre

A Pathfinder mission attacking batteries of 150mm guns and barracks

immediately north of St. Malo harbor which were reported to be

delaying the occupation of the city, where Germans threatened to make a new "Stalingrad".

103 12-8-44 T-895110 to U-01002

104 13-8-44 Q-522874 crossroad

105 13-8-44 Beauto (Bridge)

Excellent results in hitting bridge and several hundred feet of rail line leading to the bridge.

106 14-8-44 Frevent RR Junction

A triangular railroad junction. Excellent results in destroying the junction and a ridge going over the junction. Successfully blocked all traffic going in any direction.

107 16-8-44 Foret de Roumare

Target was an ammunition dump near Rouen, France

108 17-8-44 Pont Audemer

Target was highway bridge but did not bomb due to PFF failure.

109 17-8-44 Appeville Road Bridge

PFF mission. Poor results.

110 18-8-44 Beaumont

Targets were rail bridge and ammunition dumps. Concentration was cutting the rail lines at Verberie Junction over which supplies and reinforcements were reported moving to the French capital. 25 tons of bombs were dropped on this target, just 25 miles north of Paris. RAF Spitfires flew cover for the Group. All bombers returned despite heavy flak that the enemy threw up, damaging sixteen of our aircraft with no losses.

111 25-8-44 Brest - Gun Emplacements

This seaport town had stubbornly staged a last ditch battle for three weeks, depriving the Allies of the use of this much needed port. The assault of our aircraft were coordinated with sea and land bombardments. The area was strongly defended by heavy and light coastal gun emplacements. This was a long mission making it necessary to land in southern England to refuel before returning to base.

Upon arriving back at base, strike photos were reviewed and showed the bombardier-navigators did an excellent job.

112 26-8-44 Fournival Bois de Mt.

The 409th was determined to cut Von Kluge's armored forces who were retreating and battered. Fuel supplies for tanks and equipment were the recipient of the bombs of the 409th. Excellent to gross results.

113 27-8-44 Rouen

A concentration of vehicles were attacked. The continued hammering of the Germany's retreating 7th Army was continued using heavy load of high explosive and frag-bombs.

Results good to poor.

114 27-8-44 Boulgone Boursin - Navigational Beam Station

The Group successfully destroyed this navigational station. The station was used by the enemy to control movements and establish automatic contact with fighters of the Luftwaffe operating over

France. The Royal Air Force escorted the Group flying Spitfires.

115 30-8-44 Dieppe

A target in close support of American ground forces, a storage point located at Arques la Batgaille-Rouxmesail was just five miles southeast of Dieppe, where our armies were spearheading the assault north of Seine River. This oil storage depot was established during the last war, being operated by private concerns during peacetime and taken over by German forces when they occupied France.

Fuel at this point was of great importance to the Germans, in either opposing Allied advances or withdrawing their motorized equipment in face of assault. Our bombers were given area cover by RAF Spitfires, encountering no enemy opposition from anti-aircraft or fighters.

116 3-9-44 Brest (Gun Empl)

This raid was the result of a 11th hour request by Gen. Omar Bradley for aerial aid in the freeing of this Atlantic harbor for use by Allied forces...the prize of the hour. No flak was reported, nor was the German fighter-arm active during this operation. Smoke and clouds prevented accurate interpretation of results. We battered port defenses though weather prevented some of our group from bombing. This continued the thrust following Gen. Eisenhower's orders to keep bombing Brest until it was crushed or surrendered.

2nd Box led by Major Milow with Lt. Jack Hoppes as Bombardier-

Navigator. This was the first mission for this team.

117 5-9-44 Brest (Gun Empl)

Bombardier misidentified target. Bombed 1900 yards southwest of target with fine results.

118 6-9-44 Brest (Gun Empl)

Mission led by Major Milow with Lt. Jack Hoppes as Bombardier-Navigator

In spite of bad weather, the Group dropped Anti Personnel bombs with "delayed" action fuses from 5,000 feet with good results. Bombs were dropped on enemy gun positions, concrete underground shelters and dumps. Thirty six of the thirty eight aircraft dispatched bombed the primary target. The besieged German garrison at Brest it is reported, is acting under a direct order by Hitler to hold the prize Atlantic port for another four months...and it really took punishment from our Havocs.

119 6-9-44 Brest (Gun Empl)

Rain and clouds prevented long Bomb run. Results fair to poor. Mission led by Col. Ford & Lt. Ertler as bombardier / navigator.

120 11-9-44 Metz (Gun Empl)

From the diary of Lt. William Holmes.

"We were hit by heavy flak on the way in to the target. The lead ship was damaged and knocked out, so pal Charlie Hunton and Procknow B/N did the honors of leading us to the target and back out. They did an excellent job with good hits and the evasive action on the way out kept us out of a lot of trouble. A good lead pilot with evasive action

skills can avoid a lot of bad flak, and Charlie did just that. It was a long flight. It was 4 1/2 hours".

121 11-9-44 Metz (Old Fort)

The German defenses bore the brunt of another day of successful assault. The focal points of the attack of the 409th included a 'star' shaped old French fort at Metz, which was heavily fortified, along with strong-points at Landremont. Our bomb-bursts started just inside one of the star points in the fort, extending through the middle and across to the other side. The star-shaped fortification was left burning and not twinkling. Good results were also recorded in the attack at Landremont. It was served by a fine first class highway. Boxed like a parallelogram, jugged with strong fortifications it presented a terrific obstacle to the ground forces but it's vulnerability was exposed from the air as bombs burst inside the wall and smoke could be seen boiling up from the entire area .Flak was weak and inaccurate.

122 12-9-44 Klange

Target was the gun emplacements at Klange, and though the leader aborted due to flak, the balance of the aircraft unleashed its full weight against the concrete enemy fortifications. The guns and fortification was holding up the advance of our Third army in the sector and removing them would lessen the chance of a remnant of the German 19th Army from moving up from the southwest to reinforce these positions.

This was the first mission to cross

the aerial frontier and drop clusters of bombs on the soil of Germany

123 19-9-44 Eschweiler - Marshaling yards

Another request from the ground forces for the purpose of interrupting the

Germans source of supplies.

Weather was quite bad but made target OK but could not get back to the base. They landed at an auxiliary base and stayed over night. The weather cleared and they flew back in the morning. Bombing results were excellent.

124 26-9-44 Foret de Parroy (1st Mission flown from A-48)

Did not bomb due to weather.

125 27-9-44 Foret de Parroy

Did not bomb due to weather.

126 29-9-44 Bitburg - Marshaling Yards

First Box led by Major Art Milow with Lt. Jack Hoppes as Bombardier-Navigator.

2nd Box led by Major Joe May with Lt. Thomas Sammons as

Bombardier/Navigator. Results rated as excellent.

This was the third mission to be flown from a base in France. The 409th

penetrated into Germany for the first time. The Group was successful in

obtaining a perfect strike on the marshaling yards and warehouse. Reserves of the German troops and vital communication veins from the

heart of the enemy's Trier Sector were battered heavily by the Havocs. Our bombs were in support of General Hodge's First Army. The rail-yard and warehouse which was located just southwest of town was left ablaze as the freight cars of five trains fell in the smoldering wreckage. Describing the attack, Lt. James F. Goodman of Kansas City, Kansas, related, "Our bombs hit right on the tracks and in a fraction of a second I saw a train blow up".

127 29-9-44 Bingen - Supply Depot and Rail-yard

This was the second mission of the day. The target was Sixty miles inside the German-Luxembourg border. This was the deepest penetration to that date by any 9th Air Force A-20s. The marshaling yard, situated on the bank of the Rhine River was an important junction of rail lines leading to strong points at Metz.

One aircraft, 5I-J with Lt. Marion Hightower, pilot, S/Sgt. Earl O. Salmon, and Sgt. James M. Tuchel, gunners, was hit with HFF over the target area. It was reported by several crewmen to have crashed and exploded about three miles southeast of Kirchberg: No parachutes were observed.

Another aircraft flown by Lt. William Holmes, was severely damaged by flak and crash landed at base destroying the aircraft. None of the crew were injured.

Two gunners were injured by flak on the mission; S/Sgt. Robert Wilson in 5I-N, and S/Sgt. Ray Melton in D6-H.

No time during the month of September was the Group attacked

by the Luftwaffe.

Sgt. James M. Tuchel survived and taken Prisoner of War.

Note: Lt. Hightower did parachute and became a Prisoner Of War. He was confined to Stalagluft 1 at Barth, Germany, and remained there until the end of the war.

128 3-10-44 Ubach

Wrong target attacked

129 6-10-44 Duren - Barracks

This was a close support mission to aid the 1st Army. Military installations were our targets for the purpose of cutting off supplies. This mission drew heavy flak with eleven aircraft receiving damage but no planes were lost. At least 4 buildings destroyed and 7 badly damaged.

Lt. Bonnell's aircraft had the hydraulic system shot out and crash landed the aircraft at A-55. No one was injured.

130 7-10-44 Trier M/Y & Warehouses

6 warehouses completely destroyed, 4 heavily damaged. Rail line received direct hit rendering marshaling yard only partially able to function.

Light flak encountered with 11 planes receiving category "A" damage.

131 8-10-44 Julich - Strong point in the Siegfried Line.

Target was the town of Julich. This attack interrupted and seriously damaged rail junctions and highways of importance northeast of Aachen. We struck at the opportune time when the enemy was

rushing troops and reinforcements to a widespread area in Germany and Holland. We made a determined effort to isolate the Julich area, environ to the western front. B/N Lt. McEvelly described the bombing of Julich as, "Fires ringed the town and there was a heavy concentration of smoke rising from the center. I saw one large building collapse from a direct hit". The target was heavily defended and the 409th absorbed much damage with several ships limping back towards friendly territory.

Lt. Kononiks aircraft received two heavy hits by flak, knocking out one engine and nearly demolishing the horizontal stabilizer, causing the plane to vibrate badly.

He feathered the propeller of the knocked out engine and proceeded to bomb the target. He managed the damaged aircraft back to the nearest Allied emergency strip for a landing

Lt. Danner, flying Deputy lead received a direct hit on the nose and left engine. The burst blew the nose completely off. Lt. Danner jettisoned their bombs and dropped out of formation and headed for friendly territory. Losing altitude fast and over friendly territory he ordered the gunners to bail out. He stayed with the plane down to 900 feet when he also bailed out. All landed safely.

The same burst that hit Lt. Danner blew out the window of Lt. William Holmes plane splattering his face with plexiglass. A piece of flak (he saved it) hit the armor back plate and glazed off through his parachute and into his shoulder. Dazed and his face bleeding and

shoulder injured he wasn't sure how badly he was hurt. He called his crew to inform them of the situation and instructed them that if the plane appeared to be out of control to bail out immediately. In spite of Lt. Holmes injuries he stuck with the formation and proceeded to make a second pass at the target. This was necessary as the same burst that Lt. Danner and Lt. Holmes received their damage from also tilted the lead ships bomb sight gyro.

Lt. Holmes had his airspeed gauge knocked out and his hydraulic lines damaged which meant a landing with no brakes. He radioed for assistance with K. G. Morrison answering his call. Morrison escorted Holmes into the traffic pattern for a successful landing. A piece of flak was removed from Lt. Holmes shoulder and he was cleared to fly again in a couple of days.

Lt. Hinds had an engine failure shortly after takeoff and made a single engine landing back at the base.

S/Sgt. Carl S. Hart, Injured during return flight home from target.

132 11-10-44 Camp de Bitche

Replacement Center. Weak accurate flak encountered. Lt. Sellers landed at Romilly due to battle damage and fuel shortage.

6 a/c received category "A" damage and 1 category "B".

133 12-10-44 Camp de Bitche

Mission led by Major Joe May with Lt. Thomas Sammons as

Bombardier-Navigator.

Bombs fell among barracks housing German replacement troops in France destined for Metz battle areas. Photos showed good concentration blanketing buildings.

Lt. Charles Hunton led the second flight of the second box. About fifteen (15) minutes before reaching the target, inter-phone trouble developed. Lt. Hunton discovered he could transmit but not receive so established blinker communication with the rest of the crew. Approaching the target area an accurate burst of heavy flak struck his aircraft, knocking out both engines and severing the aileron control cables. To lighten the load he jettisoned his bombs in an open field. He immediately headed for friendly territory. Using the inter-phone and blinker communication, Lt. Hunton informed his bombardier and gunners of the necessity of bailing out within the next few minutes. He ordered the bombardier to bail out, then the tunnel and turret gunners. Using blinker communications the other crew members acknowledge receipt of Lt. Hunton's orders. After the others had bailed out. Lt. Hunton abandoned his aircraft at an altitude of about 250 feet. He landed in a tree with a partially opened chute which spared him any major injuries. All members of the crew landed safely.

1 airplane lost, 12 received category "A" damage and 3 category "B".

134 13-10-44 Venlo - Railroad Bridge

Target was a railroad bridge. The bridge and surrounding area was a place the Germans were attempting

a drive in a form of a wedge cutting three divisions of British Second Army salient to the north.

Captain Roy Turnquist, his Bombardier-Navigator F/O Martin Korzeniowski and gunners S/Sgts. Joe Cikota and Stanley Uroda, all received special recognition for their effort in leading the flight that successfully bombed the railroad bridge.

Visibility was so poor four passes were made before the target could be identified.

11 planes received category "A" damage and 8 planes received category "B" damage.

Lt. Hinds had a tire blow out on take-off, causing the plane to crash into an ambulance. Pvt. De Maurop, the driver of the ambulance, was seriously injured.

135 17-10-44 Euskirchen

Mission led by Pathfinder plane. Target was a bridge that was a key link in a supply chain on Seigfried Line defense. Clouds prevented visual observance of bomb results. The bridge spanned the Erft River just thirty miles southeast of Aachen.

Lt. Marshall de Bisschop landed at Reims with one engine out.

1363 0-10-44 Heusdon

Mission led by the team of Major Art Milow and Lt. Jack Hoppes. Results rated as excellent.

Target was a road bridge crossing over the Maas River which served our enemy front line troops for

both supply and escape.

Lt. Warren Decker and S/Sgt. Paul Ryker were killed in action when their plane crashed near St. Quentin. S/Sgt. Earl Cantrell managed to bail out and survived.

137 2-11-44 Trier/Pfafzel RR Bridge

Led by A Pathfinder plane, the approach to the railroad bridge spanning the Moselle River, just 2 miles N.E. of Trier was destroyed. Visual reports tell of bombs smashing the approach to the east.

S/Sgt. Floyd I. Ater was wounded in action over Trier.

13 planes received category "A" damage and 6 received category "B".

138 4-11-44 Trier Ord. Depot.

Mission of 38 planes led by the team of Major Art Milow and Lt. Jack Hoppes. Adverse weather conditions continued to blanket targets, but it did not stop our A-20's from releasing bombs on the Ordnance depot at Trier. Attacking the targets and dealing blows to damage the supply centers feeding German panzers. The group returned safely, results unobserved.

Lt. Cohen developed engine trouble and landed at A69.

Following day the target was visited by a Reconnaissance plane and reported the Depot destroyed.

139 4-11-44 Hahlrath-Erschweiler - Gun Positions.

Did not bomb due to weather conditions.

9 planes received category "A" and

1 plane received category "B" damage.

140 5-11-44 Homburg

Target was Ordnance depot. The target was served by two rail lines some two miles west of the town. Weather made PFF essential and bombing results were undetermined. Intent of mission was to damage the lines feeding supplies to the Luxembourg front hindering the 3rd Army's push to the Rhine.

141 11-11 44 Sinzig

Target was the railroad bridge over the Ahr River, 30 miles from Cologne.

Purpose of mission was to decrease enemy mobility.

6 unidentified aircraft approached to within 2 miles of the formation from 2 o'clock position and departing at 4 o'clock position. They emitted short vapor trails close in and were believed to be Jet propelled.

No casualties or battle damage was recorded and results were unobserved.

142 18-11-44 Durwiss

A strong point that was holding up the advance of our troops. Bombing was to be on pathfinder B-26's. Formation was two boxes of 15, with each box preceded by a B-26, and the entire formation preceded by 3 window aircraft.

The lead bombardier in Box 1 identified the target and Box 1 bombed on its own sight. The lead bombardier in Box II did not identify the target and Box II

dropped on its pathfinder.

The first box had excellent results but the second box was unobserved.

143 19-11-44 Zornhoff - Warehouse

Mission led by Major Art Milow with Lt. Jack Hoppes as Bombardier-Navigator

Targets were warehouses a half mile northeast of town. This was a three box mission with flights of six attacking targets. Direct hits were scored as shown by photo coverage. The attack against the enemy was devastating. Congratulatory teletype was received from General Vandenberg, Commanding General of the 9th Air Force, through General Anderson and channels for the success of this operation.

For unknown reasons, Headquarters did not relay the Congratulatory Teletype to the crews.

Congratulating Teletype (copied)

JES JPO JKI V JEA JEA o/21 P P

FROMCG97TH COMBAT BOMB WING 21/1200A

TO409TH BOMB GROUP (L)

410TH BOMB GROUP (L)

416TH BOMB GROUP (L)

SECRET QXX BT

97CBW N-190-A THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE HAS BEEN RECEIVED FROM 9 TH BOMBARDMENT DIVISION (M):

"I AM HAPPY TO PASS ON TO WING COMMANDERS THE CONGRATULATIONS OF GENERAL VANDENBERG FOR THE EXCELLENT MISSIONS ON THE MORNING OF 19 NOVEMBER. PLEASE PASS TO GROUP COMMANDERS THE CONGRATULATIONS OF GENERAL VANDENBERG AS WELL AS MY OWN FOR THE EXCELLENT EXECUTION OF ATTACKS WHICH PROVED OF REAL VALUE TO AIDING THE ADVANCES OF THE ARMIES, (SIGNED ANDERSON."

IT IS A DISTINCT PLEASURE TO TRANSMIT THIS MESSAGE FROM HIGHER HEADQUARTERS IN RECOGNITION OF JOBS WELL DONE.

BACKUS

144 19-11-44 Baal

Target was the road and rail junction lying just 19 miles northeast of Aachen. Weather threatened all day and closed in early with many aircraft having difficulty in returning.

Lt. Walter T. Conner with crew members Sgt. Dwight T. Van Name and Sgt. Harold E. Nelson were shot down over target.

Capt. Martin was hit in the eye by flak and was forced to land at airfield A-93. The injury was not too serious, however, and he and his crew returned to the base a few days later.

1 plane lost, 12 received category "A" damage and 8 received category "B" damage.

145 25-11-44 Landau

Target was Landau Ordnance arsenal. Lead Bombardier/Navigator, Lt. Michael A. McEvelly, described the attack, "The ammunition stores were located in a form of 'V' railroad

tracks just at the edge of town. As we turned from the target I saw smoke rise from what looked like a direct hit. Then bright flashes appeared as ammunition exploded". At this front artillery action was close and real war was going on below.

Due to bad weather, one crew was lost. Crew consisted of Lt. William V. Benton, Cpl. Marvin D. Riggs and Cpl. P. A. Iannasso. They crashed at Moissy, France. Returning from this mission Lt. Robert L. Wheeler ordered his gunners, Sgt. Ballter and Cpl. Shevlin to bail out. Both gunners landed safely. Lt. Wheeler then landed safely at the 416th airfield.

On the 25th of this month, twelve pilots and eight gunners flew to England in A-20's to ferry A-26's back. They were weathered in till the 29th. Shortly after takeoff, Lt. Kenneth E. Hubbard and Lt. Norman E. Zuber crashed in mid-air, killing both pilots and Cpl. Guys, a crew chief.

146 26-11-44 Homburg

This was a two box mission attacking railroad yards to be led by a Pathfinder B-26 for each box. This was a sad morning. The Pathfinder planes had to arrive from another base. The first Pathfinder flew into our base in the dark at 5:30 A.M.. The Pathfinder undershot the runway and crashed into power lines killing all the crew but two gunners. The second Pathfinder plane which was scheduled to lead the second box landed OK. Mission got under way

with the Pathfinder leading both boxes. Mission did not encounter any flak but the weather was plenty troublesome.

147 28-11-44 Merken

Target was the fortified village of Merken four miles northwest of Duren. It was part of the Siegfried Line defenses. Orders read to destroy the town. A fine woven carpet of bombs were laid on the German village as ordered and when work was completed the town was as ruttled as Aachen. Moderate to intense, mostly inaccurate HFF was experienced in the turn off the target. 3 aircraft suffered category "A" damage and 1 received category "B".

148 29-11-44 Landau Supply Depot

Bombs dropped off pathfinder plane as target covered by clouds.

One aircraft piloted by Lt. Bullock lost power on left engine but continued to target. Returning toward base, the right engine cut out and he left the formation and a few moments later the entire crew bailed out. All landed safely and picked up by ground forces.

149 15-12-44 Dreiborn Def. Vill.

This was the first A-26 mission. Early missions were led by A-20J's as glass nose A-26's were not yet available.

The mission was led by a B-26 Pathfinder plane. The intended target was a village defended by the Germans. The primary target was not bombed. A secondary target seventeen miles southeast of the one briefed was attacked.

150 18-12-44 Harperscheid Def.

The Germans began to feel the effect of the heavier bomb loads of the A-26's. The German infantry was stopped in their attempt to destroy dams and flood valleys when the A-26's poured bomb load after bomb load of explosives on their positions led by pathfinder aircraft in the largest battle effort by the 9th Bomber Division.

151 23-12-44 Saarburg

This was the biggest aerial battle of the 9th Bomber Divisions Bombers. The 409th attacked Saarburg Rail-bridge. The A-26 formation demolished this highway and rail bridge which spanned the Saar River just 10 miles south of Trier. This bridge, is known to have fallen into the river. Due to weather conditions at home base, formation was diverted to Chartres, France, where they spent the night, returning home the next morning.

152 25-12-44 Munstereifell

The target was a rail communications center. This was part of an aerial offensive to halt Von Runstedt's drive across Belgium. Weak, accurate HFF at the target and weak to moderate, fairly accurate HFF on course from Malmedy to Dahlen to Tondorf was encountered. Lt. Robb's plane hit by flak knocking out one engine. Cpl. John Yaremko was wounded by flak.

15 planes sustained category "A" damage and 11 category "B" damage.

153 27-12-44 Eller

An excellent rating was achieved when the 409th bombed the bridge spanning the Mosselle River. The main effort was to delay troop movements and supplies.

154 1-1-45 Pronsfeld Road Junction

Bombing from an altitude of 13,000 feet on their own sight through 7 to 9/10 cloud cover the 37 aircraft dropped 95 - 1000 pound bombs and 12 - 500 pounds bombs. The visual bombing was accomplished after PFF failure. The briefed aiming point was not visible, however the lead bombardier-navigator selected a visual building after making three passes. Buildings and roadways at the western edge of the town were smashed. Damage assessment was rather difficult because of cloud cover but lead bombardier-navigator 1st Lt. Michael Mc Evilly, reported "The only remaining building stood out like a sore thumb'.

Weak, accurate HFF at target causing 9 aircraft to receive category "A" damage and 5 aircraft received category "B" damage.

155 2-1-45 Simmern

Attacking the railroad bridge at Simmern, Germany, approximately 25 miles south of Koblenz, Invader crews reported enemy smoke screen preventing visual observation of attack results. The bombing was done in flights from 9000 to 10,800 feet. Weak inaccurate heavy flak greeted the

formation on run into target. No losses or casualties.

2 planes received category "A" damage.

156 5-1-45 Simmern

Another trip to the Simmern railroad bridge. Flying a round trip of some 748 miles, the A-26 Invaders coordinated plans with the U. S. First Army, continuing the supply line assault at the rail objective. The target was about two miles southwest of the city. No enemy encounters nor casualties were reported though weak inaccurate heavy flak was hurled at the Group.

157 11-1-45 Simmern

Once again the Group returned to the railroad bridge on a Pathfinder mission.

This was an important target. It was being used in the transportation of many reinforcements, however results of the attack were labeled unsatisfactory. All bombs fell in dispersed pattern west of the town of Kirn. Majority of bombs fell in timber lands and open fields some 41 miles east of the bomb line. Group did have success in attacking secondary targets of roadways west and southwest of Kirn. All aircraft returned safely through sub-zero temperatures.

158 14-1-45 Bitburg

Fighting snow covered runways on take-off and landing the Invaders hit the Bitburg Communication Center just 17 miles north of Trier. The formation struck blows at important check points of the

Germans. Weak and accurate heavy flak was experienced in the target area.

One A-26, D-6-M, piloted by Lt. Allard, crash landed at A-69 after heavy flak claimed one engine. The gunner was slightly injured in the process of landing. Weather forced the entire formation to land at A-68.

Formation returned to base at a late hour when the weather improved.

11 planes had category "A" damage, 1 had category "B" and 1 category

159 16-1-45Sinzig

Weather cleared on the Western Front, allowing the briefed PFF formation to bomb visually after equipment failure of the Pathfinder plane. Though this bridgehead received damage it was again in use and servicing the enemy well in the shuttle process of their supplies and other reinforcements to Nazi front line. The bridge spanned the Ahr River which was a tributary of the Rhine River, approximately 14 miles southeast of Bonn. It was declared to be one of the best operational days for several months. Weather was CAVU. As the PFF equipment failed, Box 1 left it when course was not maintained, bombing a visual I. P.. The second Box proceeded on as briefed to the target. Weak inaccurate flak was experienced after leaving Luxembourg. All aircraft returned with no personal casualties. The target was shared with the 416th Bomb Group. Over 130 tons of bombs were cautiously planted on the double-deck span. Declaration

of bomb bursts cutting the rail lines were made as matter of record.

5 a/c received category "A" damage and 2 category "B".

160 21-1-45 Erskirchen

The isolation of western battle area supplies was accomplished when 41 aircraft struck the railroad bridge at Erskirchen. A Pathfinder plane was the lead in each box. However the first box bombed visually and scored an excellent, making the attack by individual flights. The second box ran into 10/10 cloud cover at the target area and followed the Pathfinder plane, dropping their bombs. S/Sgt. Robert T. Harris was wounded when flak struck his forehead. He was a gunner in the lead ship. No other personnel was injured.

161 22-1-45 Simmern

Enemy's use of the secondary railroad bridge southwest of Simmern was attacked by the Group. On two previous occasions with Pathfinder planes leading, the Group had visited this rail structure. While the bridge carried only a single track it's importance was due to potential usage by the Germans in supplying their forward line, since most mainline services had been seriously impaired. All bombed according to briefed plans, dropping destructive weights of both 1000 and 500 pound bombs on the target. Results were unobserved due to 7/10 cloud cover. No encounters or personal casualties. This mission covered 615 air miles.

162 22- 1-45 Road Convoy-Vianden

A second mission for the day was brewing. As those scheduled to fly appeared for briefing there appeared to them that something different was in the works, and it was. They were briefed for a strafing attack. It was a low level operation against German Motor Vehicles that were in retreat near the city of Vianden. Locations were not known for the 'proowler' down-to-deck level assignment before take-off. Rendezvous was to be with P-51's near Luxembourg at 8000feet and then it was "follow the leader". Diving on the target, the first element followed the escort down to 2000 feet reaching a speed in the descent of 385 MPH. Cloud closed in on the fighter and it was lost from the formation. No attack was made but it gave the light bomber pilots and crew a keen lesson in tactics and observation for a job soon to be accomplished. Moderate flak reported.

163 23- 1-45 Road Convoy-Vianden

This mission called for an enemy motor convoy to be destroyed. On short notice the versatile A-26 Invaders struck blows at tree top level in a strafing attack on the immobilized transports located on an east-west roadway between Dazburg and Arzfeld. This area was just inside the Nazi border east of Clervauz, Belgium.

Barrett.

With Lt. Robb was S/Sgt. Clarence E. Allen and S/Sgt. Millard A. Pressman.

Plane flow

Six A-26s were dispatched on the bombing and low level strafing sweep, carrying M-81

fragmentation bombs and maximum ammunition load. The battle plan called for the A-26s to rendezvous with P-51 fighters which would be charting the way to the target and lead the attack. The A-26 would drop to the deck and attempt to operate as a fighter aircraft. After dropping their fragmentation bombs on the long lines of Nazi vehicles, they swooped back down to strafe the target.

As the crews zeroed in on their targets they were met with intensive heavy ground fire causing the loss of planes flown by Capt. Richard K. Bills, Capt. Mark L. Robb, Lt. Kenneth D. Wood and Lt. Henry M. Simons

With Capt. Bills was Lt. Michael McEvilly and Sgt. William K. Jones.

With Lt. Wood was Cpl. Kenneth R. Seay and Cpl. James J. Stygles.

With Lt. Simons was S/Sgt. Henry L. Westbrook and Cpl. James n by Lt. William H. Rochell took terrific punishment. He lost one engine and had no elevator or aileron controls except the use of the trim tabs, but managed to keep airborne long enough to reach a 9th TAC fighter strip in Luxembourg for an emergency landing. He did not strafe.

Lt. Arden Connick with gunners Sgt. Marshall Steele, Jr. and Sgt. James "Tex" Clark were attacking when their plane was heavily damaged and crash landed barely inside friendly territory about seven miles west of Bastogne.

(Refer to Chapter "Experiences" Low Level Mission by Lt. Connickj)

Sgt. John H. Cartwright, Jr. a regular member of Capt. Bills crew and

scheduled to fly on this scheduled mission was about to board when he was replaced by a navigator.

From Air Force Historical Center (on micro film)

409TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (L)

MISSION NO. 163

23 JANUARY 1945

This mission was scheduled on short notice as a low-level bombing and strafing attack on an enemy motor transport immobilized on an east-west road between Dasburg and Arzfeld, just inside the German border and just east of Clervaux, Belgium. 6 x A-26's were dispatched, each carrying 20 x 260 lb M-81 frags and a maximum load of ammunition. All crewmen were volunteers. The flight was ordered to rendezvous at Luxembourg with a fighter which would lead them to the target. The first a/c took off at 1137.

Rendezvous with the fighter was made as briefed. At fighter rendezvous the flight took up its attack formation of three elements of two a/c each as follows:

First element: leading, Capt. Bills D6-J

Wingman, Lt. Wood 7G-G

Second element: leading, Lt. Robb D6-R

Wingman, Lt. Simon 7G-L

Third element leading, Lt. Rocholl W5-F

Wingman, Lt. Connick 5 I-B

The fighter led the flight to the target area, then led it from west to east at 6,000 feet on a course parallel to and north of the target road, and then made a 180 degree right turn and led it back from east to west at 5,000 feet on a course parallel to and north of the target road. The various a/c of the flight then made diving turns to attack the target. TOT was between 1305 and 1310.

Only two of the 6 a/c in the flight, W5-F and 5I-B forming the third element are definitely accounted for. The crews of these a/c reported as follows:

W5-F (Lt. Rocholl): About the middle of the west-east run north of the road, Lt. Rocholl saw that the second element was lagging more than 30 seconds, the briefed interval, behind the first element. W5-F then proceeded west to a point just north of the west end of the target road and made a left-hand diving turn to attack. In this turn the a/c was hit by a LFF shell which badly damaged the left wing and aileron. By increasing power on the left engine and giving the a/c full right rudder, the pilot regained directional stability and dropped his bombs from 3,000 feet, the bombs training across the road intersection at VK-870623, one mile E. of Dasburg; results were unobserved. The a/c being too badly damaged, Lt. Rocholl did not attempt to strafe but veered off to the right and proceeded to A-97 (Luxembourg), landing at 1320. The a/c had suffered Category B battle damage but there were no casualties among the crew. Lt. Rocholl reported that as he was in his attack dive he saw an A-26 on the deck, receive a direct hit in its left gas tank, which exploded; the A-26 left wing then dipped and the wing-tip caught the ground and the a/c pin-wheeled into Olmacheid (VK-015538), where it exploded and burned.

5I-B (Lt. Connick): When W5-F made its 180 degree turn, Lt. Connick thought that it was turning into the target to attack. His turn was therefore a 90 degree diving right turn into the target road. He dropped his bombs from

between 2,000 and 3,000 feet, the bombs falling at approximately VK-898649, 1/2 mile E. of Daleiden; results were unobserved. 5I-B then went down to the deck and made a strafing pass from about VK-870623 to VK-855630 against troops and motor traffic on the Dasburg-Arzfeld road. At the end of this pass, Lt. Connick turned left down the course of a small stream, and at about VK-874613 strafed troops and a small building, believed to be fortified, on a hillside. Immediately after this pass the a/c received LFF hits which badly damaged the rudder and set the left engine on fire; the pilot feathered the left prop; took up a northerly heading and strafed Daleiden, (VK-890645). During and between these strafing passes, the turret gunner had been strafing motor transport, troops and miscellaneous other targets. 5I-B then, with its left engine still burning and its right engine now damaged, and with only a few rounds left in its forward-firing guns and its lower turret guns completely out of ammunition, took up a westerly heading and proceeded to friendly territory where it crash-landed and burned at VP-450570, seven miles WSW of Bastogne. Lt. Connick received a broken nose in the crash; the other crewmen were uninjured. The crew of 5I-B claim 5 trucks destroyed (2 blown up and 3 left burning) and at least 2 more trucks damaged (visible strikes observed); it also claims damage inflicted upon a light flak position, a fortified house and a column of troops. Lt. Connick reported that as he was diving to attack, he momentarily saw two A-26's ahead of him on the deck, and that one of them was hit and burst into flames in the air and crashed and burned at approximately VK-920650, 1/2 mile SE of Irrhausen; he believes this to have been a different a/c from that reported as lost by Lt. Rocholl.

Except as aforesaid, there is no information concerning the other 4 a/c, and it is not known whether any of them bombed or strafed. All were last seen in the target area and all are missing and considered lost. At least one, and probably two of them were seen to crash and burn in the target area.

Moderate LFF, mostly inaccurate, and some inaccurate HFF was encountered on the two runs north of the target, the LFF becoming intense and accurate on the diving turn into the target and during most of the time spent strafing.

As a result of the mission, 5 a/c were lost and one a/c sustained battle damage, and one crewman was injured and 12 are missing as follows:

A/c lost: D6-J, D6-R, 5I-B, 7G-G and 7G-L.

A/c damaged: W5-F

Injured: 2nd Lt. Arden D. Connick O-761710, Pilot 5I-B

Missing: Capt. Richard K. Bills O-498034, Pilot D6-J

1st Lt. Michael W. McEvelly O-748013, Navig. D6-J

1st Lt. Mark L. Robb O-745782, Pilot D6-R

1st Lt. Henry M. Simon O-752452, Pilot 7G-L

2nd Lt. Kenneth D. Wood O-762507, Pilot 7G-G

S/Sgt. Clarence E. Allen 34782865, Gunner D6-R

Sgt. William K. Jones 13062493, Gunner D6-J

S/Sgt. Henry L. Westbrook 18159057, Gunner 7G-L

Cpl. Arthur Barrett 12130977, Gunner 7G-L

Cpl. Kenneth R. Seay 33524676 ,Gunner 7G-G

Cpl. James J. Stygles 31162806 ,Gunner 7G-G

S/Sgt. Millard Pressman 34507829, Gunner D6-R

164 24- 1-45 Pronsfeld - Road Junction

The Group was back to flying at their normal medium altitude. This day the target was a road junction however it was not attacked. The lead Bombardier-Navigators Lt. Tom Sammons was wounded by flak on the second pass. With his eyes filled with blood, siting was impossible. Bombardier-navigator of second box could not identify definitely the target. One A-26 flying in 4th position was lost as result of flak west of Dahnen. One parachute was observed. The damaged plane was flown by Lt. Richard G. Strombon with gunners Sgt. Edward M. Gladding and Sgt. Arthur E. Bartesavich. They did not survive.

165 25- 1-45 Hillesheim Road Junction

On a road-blocking tour the 409th created a bottleneck of motor transports on a constant retreat from the Von Rondstedt's salient. Much damage was inflicted on three road junction in the city, just 17 miles east of the bomb line. One A-26 flown by Lt. Robert Downing received a direct hit by flak in the bomb bay causing the aircraft to explode and crash. One parachute was seen floating earthward at about 2000 feet.

The Luftwuffe fighters were unseen, however batteries with intense flak power was very alert in enemy area. Most of the enemy armor was located south in the Eriel Sector. Enemy divisions thinly spaced without armored support

were hard pressed to the north in the Cologne area. This road communication center was of great importance by way of supplying and reinforcing in both directions. Excellent results were reported.

Lt. Mercer bellied in at A55 due to hydraulic failure. 10 a/c received category "A" damage and 7 category "B".

166 28- 1-45 Kaiserlautern RR Bridge

Cutting rail line to maintain interdiction on those leading west from the Rhine River, the target was the six-tract bridge-span on the edge of Kaiserlautern, Germany, 50 miles east of the bomb line. A rail link to Cologne, Frankfurt area, the rail bridge served the German supply chain which was striking at our 7th Army in the Alsace sector. Results unobserved due to weather conditions.

Only one box went to the target as the second element was scrubbed as the first box became airborne. Lt. Sargent crash landed due to flak damage. No injuries to crew.

167 29- 1-45 Ahrweiler Supply

Target was a communication and supply center. Target was 14 miles south of Bonn, Germany. This was a Pathfinder mission as target had 10/10 cloud cover. No fighter attacks were made on the Group. Results went unobserved.

168 1-2-45 Gemund, Germany

This was a defended village. Solid overcast at 8000 feet. Bombs dropped at 12,500 feet. Target was

ten minutes over the bomb line. No flak encountered.

169 2-2-45 Euskirshen Supply Center

Captain Charles A. Hunton, Jr., Bombardier/Navigator Lt. Lyle R. Procknow, S/Sgt. James R. Odom and S/Sgt Warren Harvey were reported Missing in Action, as a result of heavy enemy anti-aircraft fire southwest of Erfiel, Germany.

One parachute was observed. (Lt. Procknow parachuted and became a P. O. W.)

George Hicks returned to base on one engine after having the other one shot up.

Leeper made a single engine landing at another base.

Lt. Nelson and crew (S/Sgts. William R. Price & Henry Mudrow) bailed out over our lines.

S/Sgts. Charles K. Kelley & Stanley Clark were wounded.

Francis L. Smith crashed landed at Louvain, Belgium after his gunners Sgt. Walters and Sgt. Helphestine bailed out. All escaped injury.

(Note - See "Experience" chapter for Lt. Smith's account of mission)

170 3-2-45 Berg-Gladbach

Target consisted of buildings which stored spare parts and house the repair of spare parts and sub-assembly parts. These parts are for motor transports and tanks, both of foreign and German types. The facilities were believed to be the only one of its kind on the Western front. A top priority target.

Moderate flak encountered at the bomb line.

171 6-2-45 Berg Gladbach

This was a vehicle parts warehouse near Cologne. Solid overcast at 9000 feet. Bombs dropped from 13,500 feet. Weak inaccurate flak

172 8-2-45 Euskirchen

173 9-2-45 Kempton Communication Center

174 10-2-45 Grevenbreich

A major supply and communication center. A priority target.

175 13-2-45 Unna (1st Mission flown from A-70)

Target was Ordnance Depot. Plane flown by Lt. William C. Mercer, Jr. with gunners S/Sgt Lyman J. Saunders and Sgt. Richard Fox, received a direct hit and crashed. One parachute was observed.

176 14-2-45 Geldern Supply & Communications

An ammunition dump was bombed. Flak was heavy and accurate at the target. Plane flown by Lt. Braucher received a hit in the nose. A piece of flak struck S/Sgt. A. Meshishnek at the left eye removing his eyebrow. The piece of flak cut the strap on his flak helmet and continued on and ruptured a hydraulic line to the bomb bay doors. They landed safely at their home base (A-70).

177 14-2-45 Rheinbach

Another defended village. Bombs dropped from 12,500 feet. Weak inaccurate flak.

178 16-2-45 Unna Ordnance Depot

Heavy accurate flak encountered northwest of Unna. Plane flown by Lt.

Richmond D. Scott, received direct

hits, setting plane on fire. With Lt. Scott as gunners S/Sgt. Ralph Cox and Sgt. Gerald Corle.

(Note - see Chapter "Experiences" for Lt. Scott account of this mission)

Plane flown by Lt. William Wahl with gunners, Sgt. William P. Price and Sgt. Henry G. Muldrow were also casualties on the mission.

179 19-2-45 Weisbaden

This was a vehicle storage depot. Solid overcast at 8000 feet. Bombs dropped from 13,500 feet. Moderate inaccurate flak with approximately 100 bursts below. As the Group crossed the bomb-line east of the Remagen bridgehead, Major Leo Hawel's aircraft received a direct hit causing severe damage. Major Hawel and Lt. Raymond M. Cole, Bombardier/Navigator, received minor wounds. S/Sgt. Truell O. Dillard, turret gunner, received serious wounds on the lower and upper parts of his legs. S/Sgt. Eugene M. Nelson, Jr., was uninjured and was able to render first aid to Sgt. Dillard.

180 21-2-45 Geldern Road Bridge & Gelnhauen Motor Transport Depot

Target consisted of 6 barracks, 8 motor transport sheds, one large workshop and one large storage building.

Lt. Gene B. Murphy, and gunners Sgt. Thomas P. Harrison and Sgt. Clifford G. Baker, were shot down by enemy flak five miles northwest of Halle, Germany. No parachutes were seen.

181 22-2-45 Lage - Railroad Bridge

182 22-2-45 Lauterecken

Target was a railroad bridge. This was a visual run dropping bombs from 10,500 feet. Following bomb drops, flights dropped to the deck for 25 minutes strafing targets of opportunity.

183 23-2-45 Mannheim Rd. Junction

184 24-2-45 Viersen Communications

185 25-2-45 Gravenbreich

Railroad marshaling yard. This was a visual run encountering moderate accurate flak.

S/Sgt. Roy Davis Jr., gunner with Lt. Kaye G. Morrison was seriously injured as the Group attacked the marshaling yard at Gravenbreich. He died February 27, 1944 at Soissons General Hospital, Soissons, France.

186 25-2-45 Rheindahleini Road Junction

187 26-2-45 Sindorf Road Junction

Another defended village. Solid overcast. Two passes at target. No flak.

188 27-2-45 Avrweiller Railroad Bridge

Target area had low flying clouds making sighting of target quite difficult. Intense flak was encountered. Group made three passes before dropping bombs.

Lt. William Deane encountered difficulties on return flight making it necessary to crash land at an emergency field.

(Note - see "Experience" Chapter for Deane's account of mission)

189 28-2-45 Unna Ordnance Depot

190 1-3-45 Giessen - Ordnance supply Depot

191 2-3-45 serlohn

Vehicle parts warehouse and repair depot. Solid overcast. Bombs dropped from 14,000 feet. Over the bomb line one hour and ten minutes.

No flak.

192 2-3-45 Weisbaden RR Bridge

193 3-3-45 Wiessen (Wiesbaden-Frankfurt area)

Ammunition depot. Solid overcast. Bombs dropped from 14,000 feet.

No flak.

194 3-3-45 Weisbaden - Ordnance Depot

195 4-3-45 Huls - Marshaling yard

196 5-3-45 Marburg

Railroad marshaling yard. Solid overcast.. Bombs dropped from 13,000 feet.

No flak.

197 5-3-45 Kreuztal - Marshaling yard

2nd Lt. Lynn G. Sleight had radio failure. Landed last under murky conditions.

198 6-3-45 Recklinghausen

Solid overcast. Weak to moderate inaccurate flak.

199 8-3-45 Geistingen - Marshaling Yard

200 9-3-45 Dotzheim (Weisbaden)

This target was an Ordnance Depot. Solid overcast.

The Group bombed with Fragmentation bombs.

Weak inaccurate flak.

201 9-3-45 Dorsten

202 10-3-45 Dillenburg - Marshaling Yard

203 11-3-45 Lippe

An Alfalfa field used by the German Luftwaffe targeting American troops crossing the Rhine at the Remagen Bridgehead.

204 11-3-45 Wulfen

Ammunition dump. Solid overcast

205 12-3-45 Arnsburg - Marshaling Yard

206 12-3-45 Geske - Marshaling Yard

207 14-3-45 Hamm

Bridge on Sieg River. Visual with six runs at low level.

208 15-3-45 Pirmasens

209 16-3-45 Kaiserslautern - Railroad Bridge

210 17-3-45 Dillenburg - Marshaling Yard

211 18-3-45 Wetzler

212 18-3-45 Kreuztal

Solid overcast. No flak

213A 19-3-45 Nassau

213B 19-3-45 Lage

214 19-3-45 Schwelm

Target was buildings used for storage and processing ammunition. Target very important to prevent supplies reaching the Ruhr.

215 20-3-45 Giesecks - Marshaling Yard

216 21-3-45 Dulmen - Communication Center

Lt. Thomas R. Sammons gave the following account of the loss of Lt. Joe Cotton and crew; "My pilot was Major Joe May, we generally flew as a lead crew. Lt. Joe Cotton, 642nd pilot and his bombardier/navigator were being broken in as a lead crew on this

mission. Joe May and I were flying deputy lead to be sure the inexperienced crew did 't get into much trouble. It was prearranged that should the bombardier/navigator have a problem he would wave his handkerchief and we would take over the lead. They seemed to be doing fine, but just before the I. P. he waved his handkerchief and we took over the lead and Joe Cotton took the deputy lead slot. We turned at the I. P. opened our bomb bay doors and just at that time a shell went through Joe Cotton's plane severing the wing. No one was seen leaving the plane". The A-26 aircraft was D6-L. With Lt. Cotton was Lt. Lynn Hadfield Bombardier/Navigator and Gunners Sgt. Vernon L. Hamilton and Sgt. John Kalausick

Also lost on this mission was S/Sgt. Loring Lord and S/ Sgt. Don E. Nord, an infantryman on this mission as an observer.

217 21-3-45 Haltern - Ammunition Depot

Center of town was the target

Visual mission with moderate inaccurate flak.

218 22-3-45 Gross Reken

Lt. Joe Paquin's gunner hurt by flak just as bombay doors were opened. Paquin salvoed his bomb load and hurried back to home for medical care for his gunner.

219 22-3-45 Nyverdal

220 23-3-45 Borken

221 23-3-45 Haltern

Followed Pathfinder plane to target. Visual at target. Light

inaccurate flak.

222A 24-3-45 Essen vicinity

Target was Road Junction and Anti-aircraft positions. Visual at target. Moderate inaccurate flak. Some aircraft damage.

Lt. Robert E. Warren (642nd) received major damage to stabilizer and additional flak holes to his aircraft. Managed to return safely.

222B 24-3-45 Kuhlman

223 24-3-45 Kolbe

Railroad bridge north of Frankfurt. Visual run with weak inaccurate flak.

224 25-3-45 Altenkirchen

Anti-aircraft positions. Visual run at 8,000 feet. Moderate accurate flak.

225 25-3-45 Altenkirchen Westeburg

226 26-3-45 Germunden

227 28-3-45 Ebrach (secondary)

228 28-3-45 Gottingen - Depot and Barracks

229 31-3-45 Wurzburg

Railroad marshaling yard. Visual run with weak inaccurate flak.

Lt. Jerome D. Harding lost an engine as the Group approached the target. He feathered the propeller and proceeded to drop his bomb on the target. En-route back toward base, the engine caught fire. Lt. Harding ordered his gunner, Sgt. Jesse E. Kirby to bail out while they were over Belgium. Lt. Harding then crashed landed his plane on Belgium soil. No injuries were

suffered.

230 31-3-45 Marienburg

231 3-4-45 Holzminden

Railroad marshaling yard. 8/10
cloud cover. Weak inaccurate flak.

232 4-4-45 Crailsheim

A Luftwaffe training field. 10/10
cloud cover.

No flak.

233 7-4-45 Northeim

Railroad marshaling yard. 7/10
cloud cover. Visual run. Bombs
dropped at 5,500 feet. No flak.

234 8-4-45 Munchen Bernsdorf

Oil Dump. Visual Run. No flak.

235 8-4-45 Sonderhausen

Communication center. Visual run.
No flack

236 9-4-45 Amberg-Kummersbruck

Ordnance Depot. Visual run. No
flak.

237 9-4-45 Saalfeld

Railroad marshaling yard. Visual run.
No flak.

238 10-4-45 Fger Viaduct

239 10-4-45 Stassfort

240 11-4-45 Maumburg

Ammunition depot. No flak.

241 11-4-45 Zwickau

242 12-4-45 Kempton (Northeast of Lake Constance near Swiss Border)

Ordnance depot. Solid overcast

with rain and fog. No flak

243 15-4-45 Ulm

Railroad marshaling yard. Solid overcast. No flak.

244 16-4-45 Zerbst

F/O John (Frank) Bell with S/Sgt. Milton (Shawnee) Stewart as gunner received a direct hit on the right wing at the engine severing the wing. Both parachuted to safety and were taken prisoner.

Marvin Thornton wrote of his war time experiences and the following was extracted from them.

"Approximately 2 weeks before the end of the war in Europe, I was on a mission where we were bombing a target on the east side of the Elbe River, near Magdeburg. The bomb line at this time, had moved up to the west side of the River and the Germans were still holding along the eastern bank. "Due to the position of the sun & haze in the target area, we did not pick up the target on the first pass & had to make a second run. We had experienced light flak during the first pass and had expected to turn off target, toward friendly territory as we came around for our second run. Instead, when we broke off target, we made our turn over enemy territory & for the entire second pass, the approach was under heavy flak. Our first approach must have alerted those German gunners, because on the second pass they were really loaded for bear!" was flying number 6 position, directly behind FRANK BELL, who was flying number 3. As we approached the target on our second run, with the bomb bay doors open, BELL got a direct hit, outboard of his number 1 engine. That wing just dissolved! Pieces of debris went flying in every direction, all we could do was fly through the pieces". "BELL's A-26, went up in a wing over, to the left & out of the formation, the bombs still in the bomb bay. The aircraft was visually observed to impact the ground. No chutes were seen".

Minor injuries were suffered by S/Sgt. Fred Woods and S/Sgt. Richard S. Blair.

245 16-4-45 Kempton Ordnance Depot

Ordnance depot. Visual run. No flak.

246 17-4-45 Magdeburg (Berlin area)

Anti aircraft positions. Visual run. No Flak.

247 17-4-45 Tubinjen

248 18-4-45 Neuburg - Oil Dump

249 18-4-45 Fallkenburg

250 19-4-45 Ulm

Railroad marshaling yard. Visual run.
No flak.

251 20-4-45 Deggendorf Oil Depot

Lost on this mission were Lt. Roy L. Brown, Lt. Robert H. Armstrong, F/O Robert M. Haverly and S/Sgt. James W. York.

Lt. Robert S. Stevenson was unable to lower his main landing gear and was forced to make a 'belly' landing. No injuries and plane was repairable.

252 20-4-45 Wittenburg M/Y

Railroad marshaling yard. Visual run.
Intense accurate flak.

Capt. De Witt C. Flint and gunner Sgt. Edward L. Kerpec were shot down over target. The airplane was seen to crash and no parachutes were seen. (Capt. Flint confirmed killed in action)

Considerable flak damage done to Lt. Robert Warren's plane.

Unknown at the time but F/O John F. (Frank) Bell was a prisoner in the building complex of this large railroad facility during the night of the 19th and morning of the 20th. The night was spent in a bomb shelter as the U. S. Army was shelling the facility all that night. Bell was transported to a German airfield about 20 miles north of Wittenburg in mid morning of the 20th. The 409th bombed Wittenburg that afternoon. (Wittenburg was also the home of a large Singer Sewing Machine factory).

253 24-4-45 Landau A/F

Luftwaffe airfield. Solid overcast.
No flak

254 25-4-45 Freilassing Ordnance Depot

255 26-4-45 Plattling Landing Ground

Luftwaffe airfield. 6/10 cloud
cover. No flak.

256 1-5-45 Stod Ammunition Dump

257 3-5-45 Stod Ammunition Dump

Last mission of the 409th Bomb
Group (L). Mission led by Capt.
Charles F. Williamson with Lt. Lou
Vander Loop as
Bombardier/Navigator.