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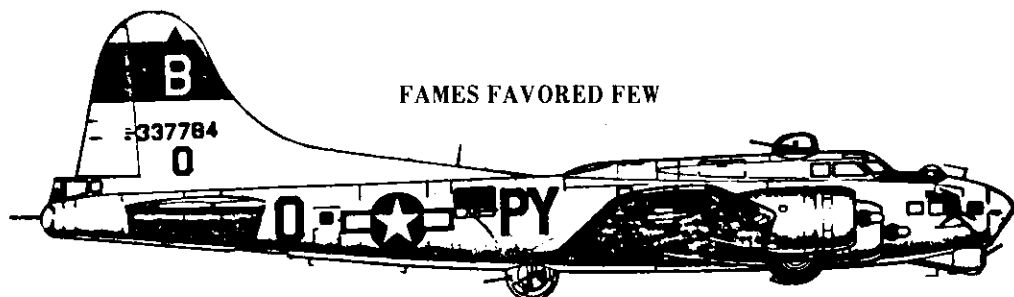
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92nd Bombardment Group NEWS



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LETTER 1

MARCH 1982

HALBERSTADT-OSCHERSLEBEN

11 January 1944

At 2050 hours on 10 January 1944, 92nd Group Operations received bomb loading directions from 40th Combat Wing Hq. by teletype for a mission the following day. A maximum load of 500 pound G.P. bombs was ordered. Almost four hours later at 0047 hours in the early morning of 11 January 1944 a field order from Combat Wing chattered out of the teletype machine at Group Ops. Thus commenced one of the 92nd's more unusual but highly important missions. It could well be said that this mission operated under Murphy's law: if anything can go wrong, it will!

It was from this coded field order that the operations Officer Lt. Col. Robert Keck, first learned of the target. Primary target was the Junkers Flugzeugbau Aircraft Manufacturing plant at Halberstadt, Germany. Secondary target was another Junkers' plant in the vicinity of Halberstadt. Both targets were deep in enemy-defended territory and well inside the enemy's homeland. The distance from Halberstadt to Berlin was barely 135 miles to the northeast. The portent was a rough mission!

Seven of the Group's aircraft, including one spare, were directed to fly with the high squadron of a 40th Combat Wing composite, lead group, led by the 306th Bomb Group. Twenty aircraft, including spares, were scheduled to constitute the 92nd Group effort, as the low Group of the 40th Combat Wing. The 40th was scheduled to be the last wing in the planned 8th Air Force bomber stream.

Briefing was set for 0500 hours and take-off for the main group effort at 0807 hours. Two aircraft as scheduled for participation with the composite group took off at 0800 and 0801 hours and successfully joined the composite group. But no sooner had these aircraft taken off that a taxi accident between two B-17's delayed further take-offs on the single serviceable runway until 0854 when the remaining aircraft managed commencement of take-off, 47 minutes later.

Of the seven aircraft scheduled to fly with the composite group, two proceeded as planned; one took off late and joined the composite group just as it left the English Coast; two aircraft crashed together in the taxi accident and failed to take off; one became stuck in the mud during taxiing and failed to take off; and one aircraft failed to rendezvous with the composite group but found and flew with the main 92nd formation.

Of the main group effort, twenty aircraft took off 47 minutes late. One of these was unable to locate the group formation and after three hours of enroute search, returned to base. Nineteen aircraft assembled over the base and managed to join the combat Wing just after leaving the English Coast at Lowestoft at 1010 hours. Entering the enemy coast, one aircraft developed

supercharger malfunction and left the formation to return to base.

The Combat Wing proceeded across the enemy coast between Amsterdam and The Hague and over 10/10 cloud cover in multi-layers. Just after entering the enemy coast a Bomber Command mission recall signal based on bad weather reports, was flashed to all concerned but was not received or heard by any of the 40th and 1st Combat Wings of the 1st Air Division bomber force. As a result, these aircraft continued in alone, not aware that a large part of the scheduled bomber effort was not with them.

The Wing followed the planned route to the I.P. at Goslar on the west edge of the Harz Mountains, arriving there at 1147 hours at 19,000 feet. Upon reaching Goslar, the cloud cover terminated and visual bombing conditions prevailed to the eastward in the direction of the primary target, which could be plainly seen.

Acting on the visual bombing flare signal from the Combat Wing leader, the 92nd Group took its normal visual bombing interval and prepared to commence its bomb run, following the lead group. Suddenly, the Wing lead group (306th) made a sharp left turn to the north, which resulted in the 92nd Group leader interpreting this move as a decision by the Wing Leader to attack the secondary target. Accordingly, the 92nd Group Leader turned to follow the Wing Leader. Within three minutes the 306th Group made a second, sudden, sharp turn to the southeast in the direction of Halberstadt to be followed by a third sudden turn within the next two minutes back to the northeast in the direction of Oschersleben. At this point the 92nd Group lead bombardier tried to pick up the aiming point of the primary target, but he was too close, the run was too short, and he could not synchronize in time. The Group thus passed directly over the primary target without being able to bomb. The track over the target put Oschersleben immediately ahead and a decision was then made to attack Oschersleben as a target of opportunity. The lead bombardier quickly picked up his aiming point on the center of the town and in 40 seconds completed a successful bomb run. Bombs were dropped heading 30 degrees magnetic at 1200 hours from 19,000 feet with reported good results.

Leaving the target the 306th Group could not be identified or located, and the 92nd Group was only able to contact and rally with two other groups being led by the 381st Bomb Group as the First Combat Wing formation. Complete and heavy cloud cover extended from west of the Harz Mountains continuously to

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Halberstadt-Oschersleben

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England where, under zero-zero weather conditions, all aircraft returning landed at other bases except for the Group lead aircraft which located and managed to land at home base at 1518 hours.

Of the two 92nd Group aircraft lost on the mission, both reached the target and dropped their bombs. One, piloted by First Lt. William B. Lock, went down near the Dutch border on the way home. The second Lt. Joseph A. Tryens went down through the clouds within seven minutes of the first. Both had suffered battle damage from fighter attacks and one exploded before entering the clouds. A total of seven chutes were seen to open from these aircraft.

Being abroad in daylight, well into Germany and on their own after not receiving the recall signal which had returned most of the 8th Air Force effort to home bases, was cause enough for the 92nd and other remaining groups involved to receive determined and concentrated attention by both anti-aircraft and fighter defense forces during the approach to and departure from the target area. In spite of good to fair P-51 escort assistance, enemy aircraft began to swarm around the bomber formations soon after leaving the continental cloud cover west of Golsar. This concentrated effort continued to the immediate vicinity of the target area, where, due to intense flak by barrage and pointed firing the enemy fighters moved away from the bomber formations, only to reappear and resume attack after leaving the target.

The heavy weight of attack by enemy aircraft continued for 75-100 miles to westward of the target. The enemy used every tactic at his disposal, attacking from around the clock and from high, level and low. Twin engine and single engine aircraft of all types participated. Aerial bombing of the formation was attempted. Several crews observed an unmarked B-17 to fly along some distance from our formations until the enemy coast was reached when it disappeared. As a result of the determined and savage attacks by enemy aircraft and by flak, First Division bombers suffered a total of 42 B-17's lost, two of which were from the 92nd. Sixteen 92nd aircraft returning suffered battle damage rated major to moderate.

Besides the two missing aircraft, four crew members were wounded. S/Sgt. Floyd W. Anthony, left waist gunner on O'Shea's aircraft got a flak hole in the hand but carried on and destroyed an enemy aircraft. S/Sgt. Harvey J. Keil suffered a flak wound in his left leg. Lt. Raymond Wild, pilot, was wounded in the arm and Lt. Arthur Roth his bombardier was wounded in the right leg by three .30 calibre slugs.

The magnificent effort made this day contributed in strong measure toward accomplishing the strategic goal of reducing enemy aircraft production to well below attrition rates. For the heroism, gallantry, and intrepidity displayed by the First Air Division, the Presidential Citation was awarded to Division Groups participating on this, to say the least, a most unusual and difficult mission.

Editor's Note: This mission appears in the "Route As Briefed" on pages 69 & 70.

REUNION UPDATE

Our reunion will be held in Spokane, Washington - September 9, 10, 11, 12, 1982 - Ridpath Hotel and Motor Inn.

Please send your reunion checks and request for a hotel reservation card to: Edward A. Braun, 9007 Guthrie, St. Louis, MO 63134. All reunion checks should be made payable to **92nd Bomb Group Reunion**. Amount \$70.00 per person or \$140.00 per couple. The reunion price **does not** include the cost of your hotel room.

Reunion checks must be sent to Edward A. Braun by August 20,

1982. **NO CASH OR CHECKS WILL BE ACCEPTED IN SPOKANE AT THE REUNION.** The reasons for this decision are as follows: We must inform Fairchild Air Force Base the number that will be attending the scheduled activities there so they can make their plans accordingly. Ridpath Hotel and Motor Inn must be guaranteed the number attending all activities there. The Reunion Committee wishes to pay all expenses incurred by the Group before leaving Spokane. This means that all checks and money due from members attending must be in our hands and have cleared the bank before reunion time. Also, your committee does not wish to be responsible for any group money while traveling. Please cooperate.

Please bring your cameras if you wish to have pictures as a remembrance of the reunion. We have not contracted for a photographer at the reunion because we have tried to keep the cost of our package at a reasonable amount.

We have been informed by the Spokane Convention Bureau that the 92nd Bombardment Wing of Fairchild Air Force Base is working on collaborating a 40th Anniversary Reunion with the City of Spokane in conjunction with our reunion. Come join us for a good time.

Please refer to the June Newsletter for the reunion program and all details.

REUNION CHECKS MUST BE SENT TO EDWARD A. BRAUN BY AUGUST 20, 1982. THIS IS ALSO THE DATE GUARANTEED HOTEL RESERVATIONS CLOSE.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT & CONDITION AS OF DECEMBER 31, 1981

Receipts:

Dues 1981	\$1990.00	
Dues 1982	260.00	
*Donations	2521.67	
Route as Briefed	594.00	
Tie Tacs	140.00	
Interest	181.93	
		\$6687.60

Disbursements:

Postage/UPS	\$ 483.87	
Printing/Supplies	3158.98	
Refunds (RAB)	8.50	
		\$3651.35

Cash On Hand 12-31-80

Savings Acct.	\$1354.41	
Checking Acct.	634.51	
		\$1988.92

Cash On Hand 12-31-81

Savings Acct.	\$4136.34	
Checking Acct.	888.83	
		\$5025.17

*Includes receipts from 1980 Reunion (Dayton) received in 2/81.

Outstanding liabilities on 31 December 81 consisted of \$775.00 for the printing of the December 81 issue.

SECRETARY-TREASURER'S COMMENT

Were it not for the extra revenue generated by the Dayton Reunion we would have drawn down our reserves (Savings Account) seriously in 1981. Since the issuance of our December 81 Newsletter, the financial picture appears to be improving. As of 1 March we have had 146 dues responses and 44 donations. Including those who sent in their dues in advance, the total thus far in 1982 is 172. This is about as fast a start as we have had with the exception of the two years we plugged to finance our Memorial.