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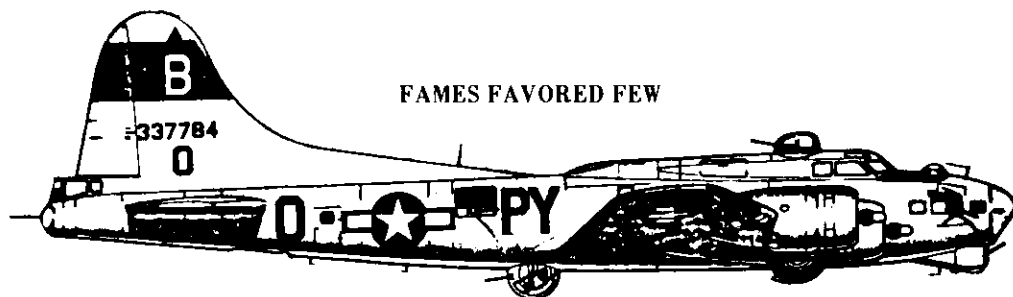
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# 92nd Bombardment Group NEWS



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## MISSION REPORT

### Ludwigshaven - January 7, 1944

By: Perry Brunham

In the March, 1984, issue of the NEWS, William E. Thomas relates the bird's eye view his crew had of the Ludwigshaven mission of September 5, 1944. It was their "worst in 35", he said.

Altogether 92nd crews "visited" Ludwigshaven on four separate occasions. The first was on December 30, 1943. The remaining three were all flown in 1944 on January 7th and on September 5th and 8th.

The combined strategic importance of the mammoth I. G. Farben Industrie chemical plant and works stretching for almost a mile along the Rhine river and the adjoining and associated rail yards and choke points made repeated visits by 8th Air Force personnel a most worthwhile endeavor.

The chronology of the four 92nd missions reflect the work-a-day, practical side of strategic warfare. The raid on December 30th of 1943 was followed by photo recon which indicated that significant operational functions of the huge chemical complex had not been adequately blitzed. Bombing had been attempted through obscuring cloud cover with uncertain results. However flak had been light and friendly fighters were most effective in fending off enemy aircraft attacks. No 92nd aircraft were lost.

Eight days later on January 7th of 1944 a second mission to Ludwigshaven was laid on which returned without losses but largely unobserved results due again to cloud cover. Demon weather, had our wizard, Ralph Kernan, in retreat.

By September 5th of 1944, and priorities for targeting being what they were, a third mission to Ludwigshaven went up on the board. That was Bill Thomas' mission. By this time what was left of I. G. Farben Industrie was of absolutely critical importance to the Reich's effort to stay in the war, now some three disheartening months after the successful ground invasion of "Festung Europa" by Allied forces.

Ever reliable aerial recon again indicated that the degree of disabling damage strived for at I. G. Farben was insufficient to avoid rapid, effective, functional repairs by Albert Speer's incomparable "Todt Organization". So three days later the 92nd's fourth trip to Ludwigshaven took place. This time results were cumulatively sufficient to require no further attention to this once magnificent industrial complex. On the other hand, desperate, defensive flak and fighter attacks during the last two missions made the December, 1943 and January 1944 raids look like "milk runs".

Take the January 7th mission, for example. Lousy weather over Blighty during take-off and assembly. Cloud breaks over Europe were predicted to be sufficiently probable so that the tremendous effort could be said to be worth it. How did it go? Let's see.

At 0808 hours in the black of an English winter morning 92nd B-17s started to roll down the main runway at Podington. Assembly was difficult due to dense clouds and heavy contrails. By 1019 hours 40th Combat Wing rendezvous was made at 20,000 feet departing the English Coast. No others of the scheduled combat wings could be seen. Proceeding alone the 40th crossed into enemy airspace on route to the target. It was only then that Third Air Division Combat Wings could be seen. They drew in on parallel course with First Air Division forces to get under the friendly fighter umbrella.

At the I.P., due to solid undercast, a PFF (pathfinder) aircraft was signalled to take the lead for the bomb run. Bombs were dropped on the PFF lead aircraft flares from 25,000 feet with results believed to be good. Observers reported a considerable mushroom of blue-white smoke to come boiling up through the undercast as the 40th Combat Wing left the target area.

Flak became intense and accurate during the seven-minute bomb run but friendly fighter support from P-38s and P-47s was excellent and although ME 109s and FW 190s were observed in the target area in some strength about two miles away, none of them were able to attack the 92nd Group formation. Only two ME 109s penetrated close enough to make a single pass at the low group of the combat wing. One B-17 from another group was observed to be hit by flak, circle out of control and explode before disappearing in to cloud cover. No other losses were observed.

The return to base was uneventful except for occasional flak bursts en route and all aircraft returned with no casualties.

Was it worth it? By all standards the answer has to be, yes. The exclusive "Ace" up the 8th Air Force sleeve at that time was the PFF "Micky" radar equipment in the lead aircraft over the target. The state of the art then permitted only relatively rough definition of ground detail and moderately accurate ranging. Yet a trained bombardier, after studying radar pictures previously obtained of the target or "manufactured" for a mission from analysis of actual ground features and relative "echo strength" of these features, could identify even an aiming point

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## MISSION REPORT *continued on page 1*

in so large a target as that of I. G. Farben at Ludwigshaven. He was aided in his "scope" interpretation not only by comparison with another "picture" but by stark, contrasty features such as the large Rhine river along one whole side of the plant and by the large rail complex in and around the plant which provided strong radar returns. Then there was the associated, substantial city near by for further relationship identification.

This raid turned out to be a good PFF result for the period and occasioned heavy damage to the plant. I. G. Farben was not attacked again until September 5th, nine months later.

And that's the way it was during the winter of 1943-1944 when our airmen, no matter how intrepid, really needed an edge - even an "Ace" up the sleeve - against a tough, determined and skillful adversary. The 92nd was there, doing the job and proud to have a "milk run" like Ludwigshaven of January 7th, 1944, engraved on the record.

**Editors Note:** The following was extracted from the mission report

### 92nd Bomb Group Formation (OVER TARGET) LEAD 407 SQ

Sewall  
1180

Crockett (482nd)  
PFF 970

PFF (482nd)  
398

Miles  
1175

Clayton  
1387

Smyrl  
0052

#### LOW 325 SQ

Barnes  
1503

#### HIGH 327 SQ

Erganian  
1250

McDonald    Lansford  
7934        9758

Kincheloe    O'Shea  
0638        8025

Hardin  
1564

Walsh  
1411

Riley        Robinson  
9851        9770

Koss        - - - - -  
1326

**Notes:** Krizan (4799) flew with 305th Gp

#### A/C 42-31326—NOT SORTIE

The crew of this aircraft was unable to find the Group formation and returned to this station.

#### A/C 42-31326—NOT SORTIE

Was not dispatched. After 2:15 hours of flight at 20,000 ft the number 2 engine began to throw an excessive amount of oil from the breather tube. The prop could not be feathered at this altitude, but was later feathered at a lower altitude. Aircraft returned to this station.

#### A/C 42-30716—NOT SORTIE

Was not dispatched. The number 1 supercharger ran away on take off and continued to do spasmodically until the aircraft reached an altitude of 15,000 ft after 1.30 hours of flight. The aircraft returned to this station.

#### A/C 42-31494—NOT SORTIE

Was dispatched. After 2:30 hours of flight at 22,000 ft the number 3 supercharger began to fluctuate badly as the aircraft was attempting to gain altitude. The aircraft returned to this station.

#### A/C 42-30623—NOT SORTIE

Was not dispatched. This aircraft took off with the Group formation, but turned back at 1000 hours when no openings were available in the formation.

## SECRETARY'S COLUMN

This edition is being sent to the press early in order to get it in your hands before the Reunion. I have just talked to Charles Kelly, the reunion chairman, and he advises that reservations are mounting and to remind those who have indicated you will attend but have not sent in your Hotel reservations that September 15th is the deadline for the reduced rates.

This is the first edition that has the expanded new portion. We have gone to eight pages of copy and inserted an extra four pages in the center for pictures. I should be able to catch up on the backlog of pictures on hand and Publish more of the letters received.

Every quarter we pick up new people many of whom never heard of the organization, yet in their letters indicate that they maintain contact with their crew members or buddies and apparently the organization is never mentioned. If you have a buddy or crew member you are corresponding with let them know we exist. Many of these new people will be in attendance at Shreveport.

We are down to our last 20 copies of the "Route As Briefed". If you want additional copies, better hurry. We also have the Triangle B tie-tacs. They will be available at the Reunion as will the B-17 tacs.

Keep the stories coming in and if there are any more pictures out there send them in for publication and indicate if you want them returned or put in the Archives.

## UK MEMORIAL NEWS

The inscription to be placed in the church will read as follows. This may or may not be the final draft as there are a few more formalities to go through before final approval.

*In Thanksgiving And In Memory Of  
"Fames Favored Few"  
The 92nd Bombardment Group Of The  
Unites States 8th Air Force  
1943 to 1945  
In The Cause Of Peace And Freedom.  
The Group Flew 308 Missions,  
274 From Podington Airfield.  
This Organ Was Restored By The  
92nd Bombardment Group Memorial Corporation  
In The Hope That The Voice Of This Instrument  
Will Speak For Them—The Living And The Dead—to  
The People Of Podington Each Time It Is Played.*

DEDICATED MAY 1985

SEE YOU ALL IN SHREVEPORT — TAKE CARE

After  
air wa  
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Germ.  
pleas  
cycle  
sweat  
scarec  
learn  
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