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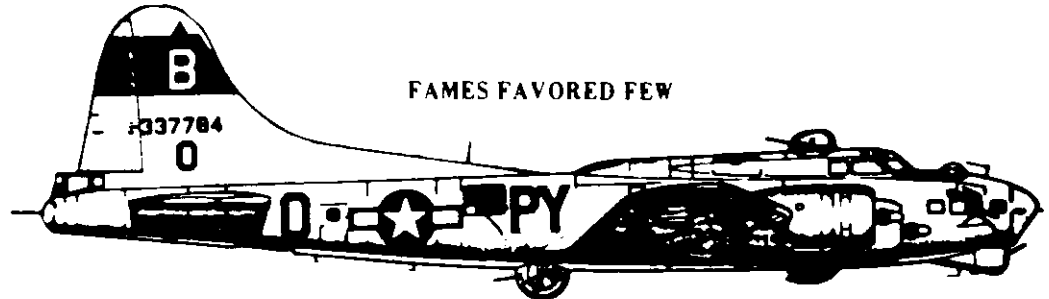
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92nd Bombardment Group NEWS



JUNE 1989

MISSION REPORT AUGUST 1944

On August 24 (1944) at Merseburg, August 25 (1944) at Peenemunde and August 26 (1944) at Gelsenkirchen the group flew its most difficult and hazardous missions of the month. The jet-propelled ME-163 was encountered in force at Mersburg; the flak was heavy and accurate at Peenemunde and Gilsenkirchen. Four aircraft were lost at Peenemunde, one at Merseburg, and battle damage was particularly heavy. Captain Frederick T. Prasse of the 325th squadron, Assistant Group Operations Officer, flew as co-pilot in the lead aircraft over Merseburg and was wounded in the hip when a burst of flak struck the ship on the bomb run.

Out of the Merseburg mission came one of the group's greatest stories of collective fortitude, skill and courage. The aircraft piloted by 2nd Lt. John Bosko of the 327th squadron was struck directly in the open bomb-bay by a flak burst while on the bomb run. Miraculously, the bombs did not explode. The burst tore out the right side of the bomb-bay, reduced the radio room to a shambles, punched a gaping hole in the fuselage and severed aileron and elevator controls. Sgt. Gordon V. Wescott, the ball turret gunner, was fatally wounded and died a few minutes later.

The aircraft fell out of control and in Lt. Bosko's words "wallowed through the air, losing about 2000 feet a minute". The hydraulic system caught fire about 45 seconds after the ship had been hit and the fluid spread over the floor of the fuselage and the catwalk in the bomb-bay. S/Sgt. Peter W. LaFluer, the engineer, used up the fire extinguisher in attempting to put out the blaze and when the extinguisher ran dry, tore out with his bare hands the flaming insulation from the walls of the bomb-bay.

Five bombs remained in the shattered bomb-bay and there was a high probability of imminent explosion;
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COLONEL WILSON WELCOMES OUR P.O.W.'S BACK HOME

HEADQUARTERS
NINETY SECOND BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)
ARMY AIR FORCES APO 557

13 MAY, 1945

We believe that you'll want to know about some of the things that have happened to, and been accomplished by, your Group since you've been gone. Below, we've noted some of the highlights, the important operations, command changes, station changes, etc.

This material is for your personal file only and must not be sent through the mails. In the 33 months the 92nd Group has been in England, an enviable record has been made. Many times during the period since you went down, we have thought about you, needed you, wanted you to share our triumphs.

The victory in Europe is every organization's victory and it is every man's victory. You can well be proud of your Group; certainly your Group is proud of you.

James W. Wilson
Colonel, Army AC,
Commanding.

At the war's end, the 92nd Bombardment Group was the oldest Group continually in England. The 92nd arrived in August, 1942 (having been the first Group to successfully fly the Atlantic non-stop in formation) and flew it's first combat mission on Sept 6, 1942. It's 310th and last mission came on April 25, 1945, when Lt. Col. William H. Nelson, Group Executive, led the 1st Division in an attack on the Skoda plant at Pilsen, Czechoslovakia.

The 92nd Group has had 4 Commanding Officers; Col. James S. Sutton (from 1 April 1942 to 1 May 1943); Lt. Continued on page 3

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arming wires had been torn out and the vanes were slowly turning and one bomb was fully armed. S/Sgt. Jerome E. Charbonneau, the bombardier, had at one time served as chief of his squadron's armament section. His knowledge of high explosives served him well. Working perilously on the slippery, burning catwalk, Sgt. Charbonneau removed the live nose fuse from the armed bomb and directed Sgt. Charles M. Garrison and S/Sgt. Bishop E. Ingraham, waist gunner and radio operator respectively, in dealing with the tail fuses and the spinning vanes. Rendered harmless, the bombs were pried loose with a screw driver.

In the meantime, the aircraft had steadily lost altitude. Exercising the greatest skill and determination, Lt. Bosko and his co-pilot 2nd Lt. Curt H. Koehnert, brought the crippled plane across enemy territory. Halfway across the English Channel one of the gas tanks went dry, and the engine supplied by it coughed and went dead. Five minutes later another engine failed. Over the nearest available airfield, Lt. Bosko ordered a bail-out, then safely landed one of the most badly-damaged aircraft in 92nd Group history.

Col. William C. Reid, Group CO, figured prominently in the mission to Gelsenkirchen, August 26. Flying as command pilot in the lead aircraft and directing the entire air division over the target, Col. Reid was painfully injured in the leg when a flak burst exploded against the side of his ship. Receiving first aid in the radio room, Col. Reid returned to his position and directed the formation safely home. Before landing at the base it was discovered that the hydraulic system had been so badly damaged as to render the brakes useless. Col. Reid, recalling articles in the Stars and Stripes of aircraft braked to a halt by the trailing of open parachutes from the waist, determined to try the expedient. The chutes billowed out of the waist and radio room hatches and although swerving slightly off the runway, the plane came safely to a stop.

Of the nine aircraft lost during the month, the 325th and 326th Squadrons suffered the most severely with three each; the 407th Squadron lost two, and the 327th Squadron lost one.

Awards made during the month included 76 DFC's, of which 75 were for the completion of missions, 11 Bronze Stars, 7 Purple Hearts and 207 Air Medals. Oak Leaf Clusters presented were: 1 to the DFC, 1 to the Purple Heart and 480 to the Air Medal.

Ninety Second Bombardment Group (H) AAF
Office of the Operations Officer
APO #557
25 August 1944

Subject: Report on Planning and Execution of 184th Mission, 24 August 1944, Merseburg, Germany.

To : Commanding Officer, 92nd Bombardment Group (H) AAF, APO 557.

1. Comment on Planning and Execution.

a. The bomb loading for this operation was received from Headquarters 40th Combat Wing by Capt. Hamilton at 0150 hours, 24 August 1944. The order called for

thirty-four (34) B-17s to be loaded with 10 x 500 lb. GP bombs, each with 1/10 sec. nose fuse and 1/40 sec. tail fuse, and 2 PPF aircraft.

b. The Field Order was received from Headquarters, 1st Bomb Division by Capt. Hamilton at 0220 hours, 24 August 1944. Flight plans and details of the mission were completed, briefing being set at 0400 hours and take-off time at 0655 hours.

2. General Narrative.

a. Thirty Five (35) aircraft, including two (2) PPF a/c of the 92nd Group took off beginning at 0655 hours for the assembly on the Honeybourne Buncher. These aircraft formed for the high, lead and low groups of the 40th "B" Combat Wing and assembled at 9000, 8000, and 7000 feet respectively. The wing departed the Buncher on time and flew the briefed route over England, entering the enemy coast one (1) minute early. The route to the IP was flown as ordered. The wing was under constant fighter attack from the IP to the target with the main concentration on the lead Group. The lead ship of the lead group was damaged by fighters and flak just prior to bombs away, causing malfunction of it's bombing equipment and resulting in the jettisoning of it's bombs just short of the target followed by the remainder of the group. The low group attacked the the primary target visually at 1211 hours from 23,500 feet on a magnetic heading of 250 degrees with good results. The high group attacked the primary target visually at 1211 1/2 hours from 26,300 feet on a magnetic heading of 243 degrees. After the target, the lead group failed to rally with the high and low groups but returned along the briefed route and reached base at 1521 hours. Two (2) aircraft landed away from base due to battle damage.

b. Heavy, accurate flak was encountered in the target area.

c. Strong enemy fighter opposition was encountered in the vicinity of the target.

d. Fighter support was good.

3. Aircraft Not Attacking

a. A/C 42-97870 did not take off. Pilot reported that the fuselage was filled with smoke and fumes of burning rubber.

4. Aircraft Lost

a. A/C 42-31771 was seen to go down from enemy aircraft attack at 1205 hours, just prior to target. No. 4 engine of this A/C was on fire. No chutes were seen.

Fames Favored Few

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