

# MY LIFE IN THE SERVICE — A DIARY

## by Maurice Page (326 BS)

*This is the third in a series of diaries that have been sent in to our archives. Each diary contains the personality of the individual and from each we get a different perspective of the events of the time and how they were perceived at the time by the individual. Some individuals covered the dramatic while others recorded events and experiences in a matter of fact way; nevertheless all accounts of this type are important as they are eyewitness accounts and reveal many facets of the emotions and events of the period. This diary, by Maurice Page a Bombardier in the 326th, covers the period October 1944 to the end of the war.*

June 30, 1944—Married in the base chapel at Childress, Texas. We had our party that night as a combination wedding and graduation affair.

July 1, 1944—Graduate from advanced bombardier school and was commissioned a 2nd Lt. at Childress Army Air Field. Jinny and I left for home immediately after the ceremonies. We began our honeymoon trip. Stayed in Oklahoma City that night.

Oct. 28, 1944—Left the states for the European Theatre of Operations from Hunter Field, Savannah, Georgia.



**326 BS** — (bottom l. to r.) John Jarzab, Waist Gunner; Len Sanders, Engineer; Joe Sessions, Tail Gunner; Steve Marto, Gunner. (top l. to r.) Maurice Page, Bombardier; Jim Payne, Navigator; John Peterson, Copilot; C. Smith, Pilot.

Nov. 12, 1944—Arrived at APO 557 92nd Bomb Group, 326th Bomb Squadron. My first impression was that the fields look exactly as I had seen them in the movies, spread out midst English homes and countryside. The people live on the base as if no field existed. Was assigned to barracks called "the wind tunnel". The fellows were all nice. The first night we got our first flak lecture by the fellows who were drunk. One fellow named Ashley gave us the most trouble.

Nov. 26, 1944 (Sunday) Mission 1—The target was Misberg in central Germany-east of Hannover. We encountered moderate and very accurate flak. The leader of my squadron was hit. This being my first mission I had no fear of the flak because I had no appreciation of it. It was hard to explain. I was a toggler and I felt helpless as far as knowing what to do etc. We had three (3) flak holes. No enemy fighters or bandits. Carried 20x250 lb GP.

Nov. 30, 1944 (Thursday) Mission 2—Target Merseburg. I knew from talk by the fellows that this was the roughest target in Germany. I knew what I was heading for. This target was visual with a cloud over the target. I never saw such a sight. Never dreamed they could cover the sky so much. (Flak) Didn't see how we could get through it. We did. 8th lost forty three (43) planes that day. Ashley went down today. He was always afraid of

Merseburg. Carried 20x250 lb GP. No bandits.

Dec. 3, 1944 (Monday) Mission 3—Target was Kassel. Flew with Smitty for the first time. This was an easy mission due to 10/10 coverage in clouds. No flak, no bandits. 10x500 GP, 2x500 IB

Dec. 9, 1944 (Saturday) Mission 4—Another easy mission with Smitty. Target Stuttgart. No Flak, no bandits. Temperature -55 c. Flew as bombardier. 6x500 GP, 4x500 IB

Dec. 15, 1944 (Friday) Mission 5—Target Kassel. PFF mission with little flak. Flew as bombardier with Smitty.

Dec. 18, 1944 (Tuesday) Mission 6—Target Kaiserslautern. Tactical-PFF

Dec. 23, 1944 (Saturday) Mission 7—Target Ehrang. Tactical visual target.

Dec. 30, 1944 (Saturday) Mission 8—Target Balluy. PFF

Dec. 31, 1944 (Sunday) Mission 9—Target Kordel. GH Target

Jan. 2, 1945 (Tuesday) Mission 10—Target Bitburg. Visual target today

Jan. 16, 1945 (Saturday) Mission 11—Target Koln(Cologne) Flew as bombardier navigator. PFF

Jan. 21, 1945 (Sunday) Mission 12—Target Pforzheim. Flew as bombardier. Visual

Jan. 29, 1945 (Monday) Mission 13—Target Coblenz. Flew lead in high squadron. PFF

Feb. 16, 1945 (Friday) Mission 14—Target Munster. Flew as deputy lead in low squadron. PFF

Feb. 19, 1945 (Monday) Mission 15—Target Bochum

Feb. 24, 1945 (Saturday) Mission 16—Target Hamburg. Flew as navigator today. This was an uneventful mission except at target where moderate to intense flak was encountered. I did not look out but kept busy. Flew with Smitty. Target was PFF. 12x500 GP.

Feb. 27, 1945 (Tuesday) Mission 17—Target Sagenhausen. This was a red letter day for me. I finally used the sight over Germany. We had to abort and so I picked a target of opportunity. I hit the middle of the city and it looked beautiful. Aimed at the marshaling yards but due to loss of altitude and airspeed, hit short. Flew with Lt. Combs. 6x500 GP, 4x500 IB. No Flak, or fighters encountered.

March 1, 1945 (Thursday) Mission 18—Target Reutlingen. Flew as Navigator. I enjoyed this mission a lot because the target was visual and no flak was encountered. We did a 360 over target for second run. Was able to spot target from IP and that was good. Saw the groups bombs ahead of us hit and also ours. The marshaling yard was hit adequately but our MPI was missed. Lt Neece. Mission was 10 hours long. 10x500 GP, 2x500 IB.

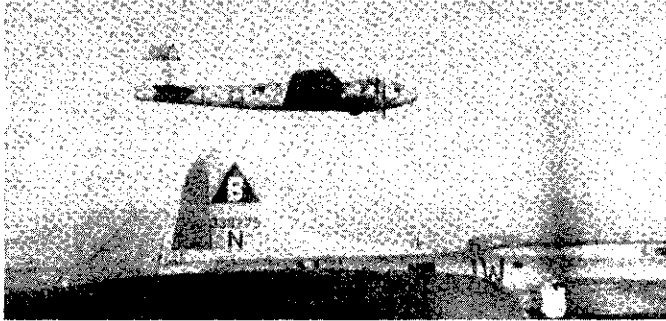
March 7, 1945 (Wednesday) Mission 19—Target Dortmund. Flew as bombardier in lead ship of high element. I thought this would be an easy mission but was scared plenty when all of a sudden flak burst right in front of us. One piece cracked the plexiglass nose to my left, and I heard it sing and one hit underneath me but the chin turret stopped it. Lt. Ordway. Was glad to get out of happy valley that day. Cloud coverage but they could track us visually on the ground. 10x55 GP, 2x500 IB

March 10, 1945 (Saturday) Mission 20—Target Dortmund. Flew as navigator for Lt. Lawler. It was an easy mission due to cloud coverage. Kept an excellent log. Had a rough time landing. 25x200 GP, 2x500 IP. Only ten (10) to go. It looks as little more like it but still a long ways to go.

March 12, 1945 (Monday) Mission 21—Target Swinemunde. Flew as deputy lead in high squadron with Lt. Erpelding. He finished today as did Smitty. Flew in a Mickey ship and this target was an important one. Mickey went out. The target was supposed to hold German shipping plus the pocket battleship Graf Spee. Target was 10/10 covered with clouds. Saw huge smoke clouds coming up through clouds and it made the

regular clouds look black. This was a ten (10) hour mission but enjoyed it. Meager and ineffective flak. No fighter opposition. One aircraft went to Sweden. 5x1000 GP.

March 18, 1945 (Sunday) Mission 22—Target Berlin—Flew as deputy lead in high squadron with Lt. Sheehy. We had no flux-gate or AFCE. It would have been rough if we'd taken over. I sweated this out all the way to the IP. This mission was the biggest daylight raid Berlin had. After returning safe and sound I was glad I had gone. We had the whole book thrown at us. At briefing I wondered how it would be. It was PFF right up to our IP and then it broke visual with about 2/10 cloud coverage. We had more trouble from contrails than anything else. The groups preceding us left clouds in their wake due to the persistency of the contrails I could count seven (7) groups at once and I never saw so many fighters—they really gave us cover.



*Ferrying troops on Green Project.*

From the IP in to the target everything began to happen. Ships were everywhere. Things were happening so fast that I did not do much sight seeing. I picked the target up and it had been hit beautifully. The flak was all over the place. I never saw such big stuff and only at Merseburg so much of it. We were to the right of course, we would have gone right through a barrage that was tracking us right down the run but just a little left. The lead Bombardier did not have time to synchronize on the IP so we did a 180 over Berlin and dropped our bombs on a town. They sure scattered over a wide area. After bombs away, I looked around and saw three (3) ships at once that were on fire. None were out of control but were heading for Russia. The Russian lines were only ten (10) minutes away. I saw one fellow bail out but no chute opened. He probably delayed his jump. One fellow saw nine (9) chutes from another ship. There were ships scattered all over flying above. Enemy fighters were picking them up. Bandits were reported in the area at the IP. We saw our first enemy fighter directly after the target. They picked him up at four o'clock and he went around to twelve o'clock and I saw him disappear in the distance. I wanted him to come within range so I could shoot at him. My guns were working good. The enemy was a twin engine jet job resembling a JU-88 in the distance. Payne saw a FW-190. Our number five man lagged behind because he had two engines out and a jet made two passes at him. After leaving Berlin we received flak over a few areas but it was not too close. The trip home was SOP. Our P-51's picked us up again and it is a grand sight seeing them watching over us. I don't know if I was scared or not. I wasn't shaking but I was thinking. Things happened so fast, I would just as soon leave those targets alone. After landing we found out that our low squadron (407) had been hit hard. They had at least five (5) men wounded that I know of and a couple were serious. It sure feels good to sit in my chair once more. We carried 12x100 GP's and 8x500 IB.

March 24, 1945 (Saturday)—Today marked the biggest air offensive in history. Planes were going out all day long. The 8th Air Force sent out three (3) groups numbering 2000 heavy bombers and 850 fighters. Did not fly today but Pete did. There was perfect visibility. Pete flew today and said there was smoke bombs and planes everywhere. This was a support for the cross-

ing of the Rhine in force by the British and American armies.

March 28, 1945 (Wednesday) Mission 23—Target Berlin. Rode with Pete today as navigator and as lead in high element of low squadron. This was really a tough one due to bad weather. We assembled over France and I navigated over and also came home alone from Belgium. We got separated from the formation three times but found them every time. Did a lot of work and learned a lot. Flak was moderate this time due to cloud coverage. Was sure glad it was cloudy. Also had a bombsight in case of an abort. No bandits.

March 30, 1945 (Friday) Mission 24—Target Bremen. I flew as navigator with Peter in No. 4 slot in high squadron. This was a nice mission in that we had breakfast at 0630 hours. I did a good job navigating. The Target was visual. I picked it out early and the town looked beautiful way below. Results were excellent although bridge was not hit. Flak was moderate and accurate sometimes. No bandits. Fighter coverage was excellent. Brought ship home alone from channel. Carried 2x2000 GP, 4x500 IB. Disney today.

March 31, 1945 (Saturday) Mission 25—Target Halle. I flew as bombardier with Lt. Hammond in No. 1 lead squadron, low element. I was really sweating the target at briefing because we were briefed for a visual run on Lutkensdorf near Merseburg. This could have been very rough. Went over the Remagan bridge today and it was a impressive sight. Saw Coblenz-Bonn and Koln. I could see a lot of bridges that were demolished. They had several pontoon bridges up. Mission was PFF. Moderate flak. Carried 14x500 GP's.

April 3, 1945 (Tuesday) Mission 26—Target Kiel. Today I flew as deputy bombardier in low squadron with Lt. Einig. I really sweated this one out because Kiel is a rough target. Due to 10/10 coverage there was meager flak. Got up at 1230 hours and later we were moved up seven (7) hours. Took off at 1345 and returned at 2130. Really was tired. Got to bed at 2400. Carried 12x500 GP.

April 4, 1945 (Wednesday) Mission 27—Target Hamburg. Flew as deputy lead on a disney mission with Lt. Beebee and \_\_\_\_\_ . This was a very rough one at briefing due to altitude and intense flak expected but due to 10/10 coverage the flak was moderate. This was a nice mission but only got one hours sleep last night. Got me up at 0100. Pete now has one to go. Carried 2x4500 rockets.



*92nd ferrying troops to Casablanca from Istres, France.*

April 5, 1945 (Thursday) Mission 28—Target Ingolstadt. Today I flew with Lt. Mendes in high squadron. Got up at 0200 again! Today was Pete's last mission but due to very bad weather he and three others in squadron couldn't find formation. Very hazardous flying today due to the clouds. Bombed visually at 15000 ft. with excellent results. No flak. One stray ship was attacked by two jet jobs. One fighter was shot down in target area. Mission lasted 11 hours. Carried 34x150 GP, 2x500 IB, and 1 smoke bomb.

April 16, 1945 (Monday) Mission 29—Target Plattling. Today I flew as group deputy lead with Lt. Watts and Capt. Scott in a PFF ship. Payne finished today. This was a nice mission except it was nine and a half hours long. Almost had to take over. Saw a lot of Germany. I could see fires burning everywhere at and behind the front lines due to our troops. Captain Spillman also finished today and hit the MPI. Carried 12x500 GP, 2x smoke.

April 25, 1945 (Wednesday) Mission 30—Target Pilsen. I flew as deputy high with Lt. Westley. We had a nice mission for climb out. We bombed at 22500 ft. The town being in Czech, the British warned them that we were going to bomb them in the morning. They warned the people to stay away. They were waiting for us. We had to bomb visually so we had to make three (3) runs before sighting the target. There was no flak on the first run but on the next two we had intense flak. Saw one ship ahead go down in flames. On the last run four bursts lifted the ship us. I could feel the bursts. On the ground I counted twelve (12) flak holes in the ship. Two were quite large. We lost one ship in the group which blew up over the target—one whole crew. Lt. Deegan finished today. It was a very rough raid and one I am glad to look back on. Carried 12x500 GP, 1 smoke.

May 8, 1945 (Tuesday)—VE DAY! NO MORE MISSIONS. I never thought I would be able to write this.

June 4, 1945 (Monday)—Today my son was born in St. Luke's Hospital in Utica, NY. This is a great day for me because it marks the beginning of my family.

July 3, 1945 (Wednesday)—Left England for Istres, France to a dust ridden place with only Tents to live in and only nature to contend with.

August 1, 1945—Made athletic instructor of the 92nd Bomb Group. Softball league started with 14 teams.



*Colonel Wilson and his softball team.*

August 14, 1945—War with Japan is at an end!

Oct. 13, 1945—Orders arrived today relieving me of duty so that I can report to 94th Group in England for eventual return to the zone of interior. This is a happy day. I cleared the field today and am all packed, ready to go.

Oct. 14, 1945—Made the trip from Istres to Bury St. Edmunds in a B-17-832 with Ash, Cline and Bastian. Had a lot of trouble finding the field due to cloud coverage and severe ground haze. Said goodbye to Kelly, May, Nelson, Sherman and all the fellows. Took my last ride in 275631.

Nov. 19, 1945—Received good old American currency for British pounds. We were briefed on departure times and train schedules. We are definitely leaving for the Queen Mary on Tuesday and sail on Thursday sometime. Am all packed and ready to go.

Nov. 20, 1945—Left 94th at 2115 hours for train in Bury St. Edmunds. It was foggy but otherwise nice and warm and a lush evening. Train pulled out of Bury for Southampton at 2250. Four of us rode in one compartment. Went to sleep cuddled up in under my coat dreaming of beautiful Ginny, Rickey and home.



*Pass to London, 1945 — Captain Scott, Jim Payne, Maurice Page.*

Nov. 21, 1945—Arrived in Southampton at 0610 in the morning. It was raining. Saw the Queen Mary for the first time and I couldn't believe it was so large. We boarded immediately and went to my stateroom M-130 on main deck-blue area. There were fifteen (15) fellows in one room, but we manage to sleep. It is a beautiful ship. Its too bad the war had to convert her into a troop transport. We roamed around all day. Saw the aircraft carrier Enterprise come in to dock.

Nov. 22, 1945—We sailed at 1240. At last we are going home. The ship is pointed directly to New York and it does between 30 and 35 knots. It plows through the seas like a veteran. Pulled a four (4) hour tour as duty officer between 1230 and 1630. Meals are served twice each day-morning and evening. I am eating in "C" shift at 0900 and 1900. Had a seven (7) course Thanksgiving dinner-Wonderful.

Nov. 23, 1945—Today is our second day at sea. Had boat drill for the first time. Where all the men came from that went up on deck, I don't know. Nothing much happened. We travelled 662 miles our first 24 hours. There is a storm beginning to form so we have some bad weather ahead.

Nov. 24, 1945—The seas are rough today with a strong wind making the waves high. A lot of men are seasick but as yet no symptoms for me.

Nov. 27, 1945—Saw the Statue of Liberty at 0945 and docked at 1115. Disembarked at 1300. Arrived at Camp Kilmer at 1700. Had a lush steak dinner and then called Ginny. It is wonderful being back in the good old USA and the feeling I am home to stay.

Nov. 29, 1945—Left Camp Kilmer at 1530 and arrived at Ft. Dix at 1800. We did nothing at all but wait. We are supposed to meet the liaison officer tomorrow and should be out in four days.

*Page went into the service as a Pvt. at Jefferson Barracks, MO, thence to Columbia, MO, SAAC San Antonio, TX, Ellington Field, TX, Childress Field, TX, Tampa, FL, RTU Avon Park, FL, Hunter Field, GA, Podington, UK and Istres, FR. He was promoted to 1st Lt. March 23, 1945.*

(Photos courtesy Maurice Page)