

MISSION 13 MAY 1944, STETTIN, GERMANY

Previous issues of the newsletter have mentioned our intention of obtaining mission reports. Out of curiosity I purchased four from the archives to see how much data was in them and in what form. Naturally I chose those that had a significance from my personal point of view for starters. This report concerns my first mission on 13 May 1944, which started for Poznan, Poland, but bombed the secondary Stettin, a PFF target.

The mission was listed as Stettin with only a passing reference that it originally was planned for Poznan.

I can remember reading the ALERT SHEET on the bulletin board the afternoon of 12 May noting I was flying with Lt. Coury in the number four slot lead squadron. It is needless to relate all the questions which pop into one's mind at this time.

Upon being awakened for the mission I remember the gripe of an individual a few bunks down that this was his fourth straight max gas load-2780. After a quick breakfast the next event was the 0600 mission briefing. All the questions of the previous day plus a thousand more popped into my head while waiting for the briefing to begin and the white curtain to be parted and reveal the mission.

Surprise - At curtain time the string marking the route to the target never seemed to end as the curtain slowly opened - it seemed that the string end and the curtain stopped almost simultaneously but there it was Poznan - 11½ hours total flying time and you could hear the murmur throughout the room. The chatter on the way to Personal Equipment ranged from how many would ditch to the groans of pushing the throttles for over 11 hours and the exposure time to flak and fighters.

The mission called for P-51's to go in ahead of the bomber stream to scout the weather. If the target was not visible the aircraft would turn north for Stettin. At the IP we turned for Stettin.

As for the mission - We took off at 0930 hours with 10 500 lb. GP bombs and assembled over the Podington Buncher at 3000 ft. Our low and high group were from the 384 and 381 Groups and our wing was designated 40th Combat Wing "B".

The route followed over England was as planned except for altitude. Due to persistent clouds at the briefed altitude we were forced to climb above them. During the climb one aircraft became separated and the spare filled in. We departed the coast at 1110 hours at 8400 feet instead of the briefed altitude of 6000 ft. McKennon and Winget were in the lead in PFF 658 with Jake Fullilove as deputy lead in PFF 637. Ace Winget was assigned Air Commander with call sign "SMOKESTACK LEADER".

We followed the briefed route and entered the enemy coast at 1309 hours at 15,000 feet. Enroute to the Primary IP the cloud cover was 8/10 and hence it was impossible to bomb the primary target Poznan visually - we swung north for Stettin. A PFF bomb run of 317° was made on Stettin but the last 25 seconds was visual and the bombs were dropped visually in Combat Wing Formation at 1519 hours from 23,000 feet through 8/10 cloud layer. Crews and aircraft on the mission were as follows:

DIAGRAM A

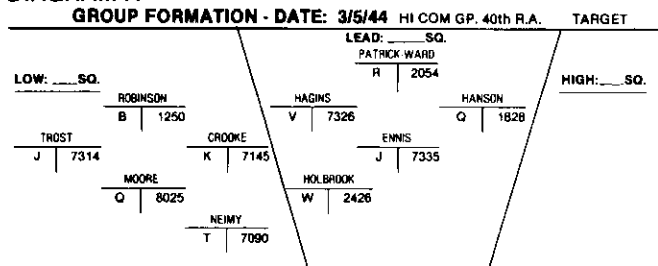
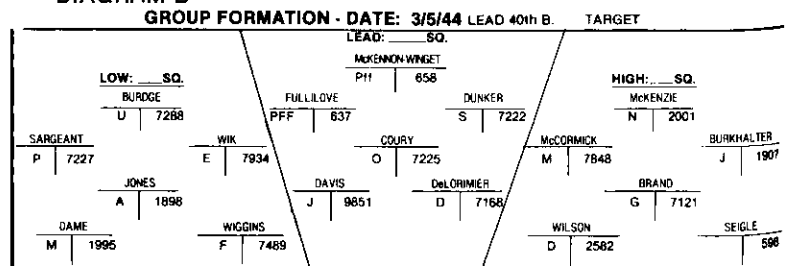


DIAGRAM B



Of the sixteen (16) B-17's, two (2) PFF aircraft, and the three (3) spares that took off from the 92nd to fly as Lead Group of the 40 CW "B", seventeen (17) B-17's, the two (2) PFF, attacked the PFF target, Stettin. The aircraft 42-107090 that became separated on assembly piloted by Neimy attacked with the 92nd Bomb Group, High Composite Group in the 40 CW "A" which was composed of 12 aircraft and assembled over Mount Farms Buncher at 4000 ft. The High Squadron of this Group consisted of aircraft from 306th. This group crossed the enemy coast at 1307 hours at 13,200 feet. They also attacked the PFF target Stettin in Combat Wing Formation. The lead aircraft of the 92nd dropped its bombs (M-47A) IB's) at 1517 hours on the Combat Wing "A" leader at 24,500 feet on a heading of 285°. For crews and aircraft on the mission see Diagram B:

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Of the 12 aircraft and 3 spares assigned to the High Composite Group, 9 attacked the target, plus one from the 40th Combat Wing "B". The three spares returned and aircraft 42-107071 aborted due to the number two prop control cable being burned into from chafing on the main power lead to the battery disconnect solenoids. Two aircraft No. 42-31326 and 42-31765 returned early before becoming dispatched as they were unable to locate the group after passing through the cloud layer.

Combat Wing "B" after bombing began descent at 1548 hours and enemy coast was departed at 1645 hours at 12,000 feet. The English Coast was crossed at Cromer at 2,500 feet. Base was reached at 1923 hours.

High Composite Group departed enemy coast at 1645 hours at 13,900 feet and reached English Coast at 1859 hours at 2,500 feet.

Bombing results were reported by crews as good as seen through a small break in the clouds. Many bursts were observed in Marshalling Yards.

The High Group of 40th "A" CBW reported seeing about 75 enemy aircraft - all single engine. One JU-88 reported. The majority of the aircraft were seen in the area 40 miles N. of Berlin at 1415 hours and devoted their activity to the CBW following ours. Attacks consisted of two passes and lasted about 10 minutes. One B-17 knocked out on the first attack and three on the second. Enemy aircraft were first observed in a mass flying to the right and slightly higher than the rear CBW. Attacks then developed from two o'clock high, although a small diversionary force was seen making attacks from five o'clock level. Our formations were not attacked. FW-190's reported painted black and silver to resemble P-47's. One observer believes some of these fighters may have come from Putnitz and Ribnitz since he observed aircraft taking off from these fields as our aircraft passed over them.

The 40 CBW "B" reported 50 to 60 enemy aircraft were seen at 1413 hours in the vicinity of DEMMIN. The Low Group of this CBW bore the brunt of the attack (384 BG). Two FW-190's attacked knocking out two fortresses by utilizing a TAIL ATTACK. The second attack was a head-on attack by the entire force and two more B-17's were knocked out. Our formation reported only two attacks on our group, one a five o'clock level effort and another a seven o'clock high attack by an FW-190. Both attacks were pressed home to about 300 yards. We lost no aircraft.

Enroute to the target flak was encountered at Flensburg and Koppkln. Flak was characterized as meager and inaccurate. Bursts were black and white and continuously pointed. Also smoke and flak boats off shore in the Baltic at 5436-1002E directed moderately inaccurate continuously pointed fire. At Stettin the flak encountered was moderate black but inaccurately continuously pointed.

Other observations reported at debriefing consisted of a Balloon Barrage and heavy smoke screen at Eckernforder. This smoke screen came from generators in boats 1000 yards in the bay and drifted over the harbor and city - 25 to 30 seaplanes were observed in Saaler Bay - a newly constructed airdrome was observed at 5513-0917E with several two-mile-long runways - a very large military concentration was observed by the lead ship at 5453-0857E. The concentration covered an area approximately 1 by 3 miles and was filled with all kinds of material - bombs, fuel, tanks, vehicles in great numbers. Attempts at complete camouflage were observed but details beneath were revealed by use of binoculars.

Comments on the fighter support rendered were judged as very good except for a period of ten minutes 40 miles north of Berlin where 60 - 70 enemy aircraft attacked the low group (384th). Ten chutes were observed to come from each of two of the aircraft. Four aircraft were lost - all 384th.

THIS MISSION REPORT contributed by Sheldon Kirsner

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ARTIST FOUND

Perry Burnham volunteered to paint our four insignias. We are looking forward to seeing them at the reunion. Thanks for the offer.

Curt Kohnert sent us his original 327th patch. This has been forwarded to Perry to be copied and it will then be returned to Curt. Does anyone else have any of the other original squadron patches? If so, please send them to the Secretary. We have color photos but the original patches are more desirable.