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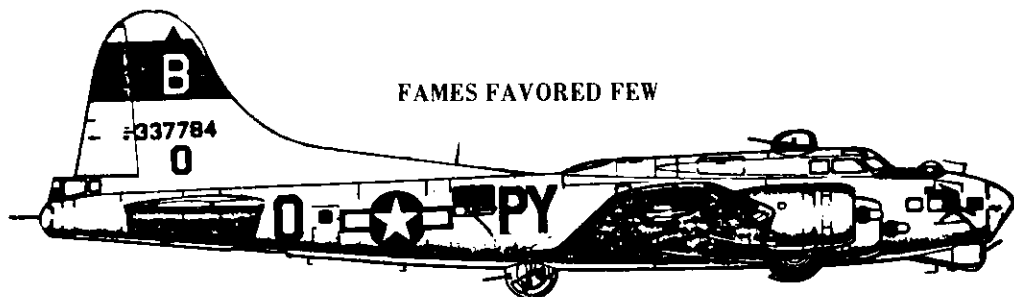
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92nd Bombardment Group NEWS



FAMES FAVORED FEW

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LETTER 2

JUNE 1984

OUR TOUR OF OPERATIONS IN THE ETO Dec. 11, 1943 to April 11, 1944

In the continual search for material to publish, lightning occasionally strikes and that rare piece of history surfaces. Such is the case when a packet of photos and material furnished by Glenn Ellis of the 326 BS arrived in the mail. Glenn was the flight engineer and top turret gunner on Capt. Frederick Wenger's crew, November 43 thru April 44. Enclosed in this packet was the mission log typed by Capt. Wenger (now B/Gen Retd) at the time he was flying the missions, photos of personnel, aircraft operations, etc. Glenn's letter provides some interesting anecdotes as well as his motivation for furnishing the data. I understand from my conversation with Glenn that this packet of documented history is but a part of his cache of 92nd history. Glenn is a consultant in the Aircraft Accident Investigation field in Arkansas and Texas and is a strong booster of the 8th AF Historical Society.

Glenn's cover letter revealed his deep feelings for "Fritz" (Capt Wenger). To quote him, "This man personally saved my life on one mission, and his superb pilot skills probably saved my life many more times. On one mission—I can't recall the exact mission—Wenger noticed my top turret had stopped its usual continuous motion, which he knew was always the way Glenn Ellis operated. He gave me a call and I didn't respond. He came back to the turret, shook my leg, no response, he released my seat belt and lifted me down from the turret. Noticing I was "blue" as indigo, he immediately placed his oxygen mask on my face until I returned to life. I shall always have the deepest of gratitude for this man and for his alertness, and the saving of my life. You may recall we lost a number of crew members due to oxygen failures, three tail gunners in the same B-17 on three different missions before maintenance found the defect."

Much of the log is matter of fact and sparse, but how many of us had the presence of mind to keep a log. Here is Fritz Wenger's log:

12/11/43 EMDEN: First flight since we left the states and the whole crew flew it together. Rather unusual since an experienced pilot generally flies the new crew on their first mission. Had moderate flak and no fighters. Mission accomplished. Alt 26,500, A/C F 494, 42 incendiaries. Six hours.

12/20/43 BREMEN: — 44 deg C, Alt 26,000, 42 incendiaries, Flak heavy, few fighters. Two (2) Ju88s right under our nose—20 mm in front of us. One hole in chin turret. Saw first B-17 in flames, also saw plane ditch. Seven hours. (Ed note: 92nd lost one aircraft, eight aborted.)

12/22/43 OSNABRUCKEN: 12 500#, light flak, lots of fighters. Rohlff shot the tail off a ME 109. — 40 deg C at 24,000 ft. A/C J

799. Six hours, ten minutes. (Ed note: Rohlff was Bombar-dier—one aircraft lost.)

12/30/43 LUDWIGSHAVEN: PFF, 42 incendiaries, flak, few fighters. Saw one shot down over France by a Spit. 10/10 clouds. A/C H 975. Eight hours, five minutes. (Ed note: Target Farben Chemical Plant.)

1/4/44 KIEL: Started for Kiel again. Ran into Locks ship on take off and clipped off his tail. Lock's ship had blown a tire and left runway. Damaged our wing section. Very lucky no one was hurt. (Ellis notes that 20 guys beat Jessie Owen's speed on foot to mid-field.)

1/11/44 OSCHERSLEBEN: 12 500#. Roughest yet. All kinds of German fighters from target to the Dutch coast. Continuous attacks for over an hour and a half with other intermittent ones. Hundreds of the SOB's. Saw lots of them shot down and saw bombers going down in smoke. Four blew up near us. Lost our roommate Lock. Saw his ship blow up. (Doc got back OK. He visited the base about the middle of March.) We felt tough about Doc because it was his twenty-fourth. We blew hell out of what we hit, but we did not hit the briefed target. No fighter escort. Got six small holes in the ship. Flak moderate but close. They threw everything at us 20mm, 30 cal, rockets, wire bombs, FW 190's, ME 109 & 210's, JU 87, 88, 188 and 189's. We landed at Bungay after trying to make the base but found it weathered in with ground fog and rain so thick it was like flying in a cloud. Could not see the ground fifty feet above it. Grounded at Bungay for two days and had an enjoyable time. Reports say we lost 60 bombers on that one. It was really hell for awhile. A/C R 362 one of the best ships we have ever flown so far. Incidentally this ship went down on its 31st mission when we were on our last one. Seven hours, twenty minutes. (Ed note: Two aircraft lost. Recall had been sent out but message not received. Division's Forts were jumped by over 200 fighters. Division lost 42 aircraft.

1/21/44 BELLEVUE, FRANCE: Milk run. No bombs dropped due to cloud cover. Flak moderate but at a distance. No fighters. Made three runs on the target and came home with load of 12 500#. Alt 14,000. A/C H 975. Four hours.

1/29/44 FRANKFURT: PFF, moderate flak, six JU 87's and a few 109 and 190's. The JU 87 shot rockets at us. Not too rough. Short of gas and landed at a P-51 base, refueled and came home. Rohlff flew formation with two P-47's on way home. Alt 24,500. — 34 deg C. Eight hours, forty minutes. (Ed note: one aircraft lost.)

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Our Tour of Operations in the ETO

Continued from page 1

2/3/44 WILHEMSHAVEN: PFF—Visibility poor with thick contrails. Lost #2 engine over target. Came home alone. Thought #2 was going to shake the place apart. Shook so hard the wheels and flaps came down. Had a strong head wind and it took us four and a half hours to get home with #2 prop windmilling all the way. Mat proved himself again to be one of the best navigators in the ETO. H 975 good ole girl she brought us back again. She now is 31 missions. Eight hours, thirty minutes.

2/4/44 FRANKFURT: PFF—no fighters. We led the Division—in fact, the whole show. Flak before IP most accurate. Lost a Fort before the target in the low group. Flak after target was intense and accurate and we were really scared. Excellent fighter cover. Hit heavy flak again at Dunkirk. Damn those ignorant navigators, they snafued today. 12 500#. Alt 26,000. —44 deg C and cold. Roughest flak yet. Think they must have post graduate gunners from Kiel there. A/C K 958. Seven hours. (Ed note: Two aircraft lost.)

2/5/44 CHATEAUDUN, FRANCE: No fighters but accurate moderate flak. Really pasted the target. Alt 16,000. 12 500#. A/C K 958. Five hours forty minutes.

2/6/44 NANCY-ESSEY, FRANCE: Fourth mission in a row. If they keep this up we might get home for Noelle's birthday. Surely hope so. No bombs dropped due to cloud cover and being in France. Excellent fighter cover and very moderate and inaccurate flak. A/C K 958. 15,000 ft. Six hours forty-five minutes.

2/20/44 LEIPZIG: Target was aircraft components factory—visual and very good results. Few fighters, accurate moderate flak. Hit us, hit Jensen and we lost him. Very sorry to lose him because he was a fine fellow and had a darn good crew. First mission for us in "BUTCH." Flew wonderfully but slightly tail heavy. Found that gunners had twice the regular amount of ammo in the tail. Alt 19,000. Eight hours forty minutes.

2/21/44 LIPPSTADT: Hit airdrome approximately ten miles south of Lingen. Scattered flak and few fighters. Head on attacks by 210's. One crashed into McEvoy's left wing. It was his first mission with his own crew. Rohlff got a possible on 2nd attack by 210's from two o'clock. He certainly made the chin turret rattle. Took some evasive action and how. Good fighter escort except at this point. Alt 19,000. A/C K 958. Really sore this morning since McLaughlin took "Butch" on air sea rescue mission and we had to fly K 958. Count on group ops officer's to SNAFU you. Seven hours. (Ed note: Two aircraft lost.)

2/24/44 SCHWEINFURT: Target Ball Bearing Factory. Moderate flak at target. Hit target fairly good. Before the target we got fighter attacks head on. 1st attack by 22 of the SOB's, 2nd attack by 25 of them, and more scattered attacks by two to nine. Saw three forts go down in flames. They knocked out our high squadron. We were leading the low squadron and the remaining two ships of their high squadron joined us and the lead squadron. Fighters pressed their attacks very close and the 20mm bursts were so thick out ahead that it seemed there would be no getting by. Crew claimed four fighters that night at interrogation. Ellis, Rohlff, Brunson and Tranowski. Nine hours. (Ed note: Five aircraft lost.)

Think I know what Brunson means when he says those 20mm are winking at him. On getting home we couldn't get the wheels down. Spent 45 minutes getting the ball turret dropped. Crash landed with no damage to anyone but "Butch." Colonel Reid congratulated me on the landing. Damn glad to be on Terra Firma again. The crew was marvelous and were as calm as could be. They claimed it was my smoothest landing.

(Ed note: Glen Ellis furnishes a very interesting anecdote to the log. (See photo titled 'Crashed Landing' dated 2/24/44.) Glen recalls that upon return to Podington, they circled the field several times in an effort to extend the landing gear (right main). *I had applied enough force to the hand crank that I twisted the*

shaft between the crank and the right main gear box. This force had twisted the shaft into two pieces thus making it impossible for the gear to come down. If we landed with the left main and tail wheel down, destruction of the right wing would occur. If we landed all gear up forces on the ball turret would destroy the fuselage. So, George Tornowski (Ball turret), Lt Wenger, and myself decided the proper effort was to unbolt the ball turret and let it fall away and land wheels up. This we did and it resulted in minimum damage to this nearly new B-17G. After the landing and soon after the photo, our maintenance Crew Chief John Dupis said, "YOU SOB'S, PLUS #?—, I'VE BEEN OVER HERE MORE THAN TWO YEARS AND HAVE ALWAYS HAD TO CREW AN OLD 'E' OR 'F' MODEL. HAD TO WORK MY TAIL OFF TO KEEP THEM FLYING. I GET MY FIRST NEW 'G' TO CREW AND YA'LL TEAR IT UP ON ITS THIRD MISSION." I said, "Sgt Dupis, look at that German 20mm hole in the right wing. When you get it up on the gear, you will probably find that 20mm FW 190 cannon shell cause caused this gear up landing. Get her up on the gear with the maintenance nylon balloon bags, take her to the hangar and give up four new props, a new set of flaps and a ball turret and we'll fly it to Germany again." He did make the repairs, we did fly it again on 4/24/44. This B-17G S/N 42-31921 crash landed in Dubendorf, Switzerland. It was being flown by Lt Rosenfeld. (See Vol. V, letter 4 dated March 81.)*

2/28/44 TARGET #42, FRANCE (PAS DE CALAIS) No fighters and little flak. Hit target fair. 5/10 overcast and we made five runs over the target. Hit by flak over Dieppe. One big hole in right wing and four small ones in left wing. All ok, lots of fighter support. A/C K 958. 15000 ft. Four hours forty-five minutes. (Ed note: This may be a record for runs over target.)

3/2/44 FRANKFURT: No fighters, lots of flak along the route. Moderate over the target. Very good fighter escort. PFF—42 incendiaries. 25,600 ft. H 975. Eight hours thirty minutes. (Ed note: Two aircraft lost.)

3/4/44 Started for Berlin but turned back due to weather. Hit either Bonn or Coblenz. No fighters and moderate flak over target—South end of Happy Valley. Miserable flying conditions. Heavy contrails and haze. Impossible to get above it. Had to fly very close formation in order to always be able to see lead ship. 42 incendiaries. 23,500 ft. —52 deg C and that's cold! A/C F 489 and its got rough engines. Six hours thirty minutes.

3/16/44 AUGSBURG: PFF—No fighters and flak in spots enroute. Very good fighter escort. Saw the Alps in the distance. Damn long haul. All OK—38 Frag bombs. 19,000 ft. A/C A 898 a honey of a ship to fly. Eight hours thirty minutes. (Ed note: one aircraft lost.)

3/18/44 LECHFIELD: Hit air field dead center. No fighter and moderate flak at target. Left wing hit. One piece came through the nose and hit Rohlff on the noggin but fortunately he had just put on his tin helmet. Saw the Alps again. Very pretty country—much like the Black Hills. Saw three Forts go to Switzerland with P-38 escort. One of them was from our group. He had two engines out and called our group on VHF and gave instructions about wiring his wife and where he had left his money in his room. A/C A 898. Alt 24,600 ft. 10 500#. Eight hours thirty minutes. (Note in ink says Ellis got first chance to fly formation over enemy territory—Didn't do bad either.)

3/22/44 BERLIN: PFF—No fighters, heavy flak at Target. Undercast most of the trip. A long haul but not as rough as expected. 10 500#. A/C A 898. Nine hours ten minutes.

3/23/44 HERBERN: Bombs scattered all over hell. Visual with 9/10 overcast and we were 15 minutes early to target. No fighter escort for 30 minutes. On bombing run flak was heavy and ac-

curate as hell. Rockets from ground too. We were leading the low squadron and 200 109's and 190's showed up and there was hell to pay. Attacks from every corner. The attacks were pressed to suicidal range—some of them to 100 feet. Four of the ships in our squadron went down. Our interphone, oxygen system from the Radio back were shot out. Ship was riddled with 20mm. One hit the radio gun dead center. Was Southward ever surprised. We can thank the Good Lord that we are home again. About as rough a one as we have been on. Flak and fighters at the same time is as Rohlff says "too damn much." Most unusual for Jerry to attack through his own flak especially when it was so heavy. We claimed five fighters this time. Got credit for two, Ellis and Brunson were the dead-eye Dicks. Think part of the trouble was that we had a lot of new crews in the group and the gunners were taken by surprise. This was one time when I wished the instrument panel was twice as big and thick as it is. I was really scared and could hardly believe the plane was still flying. Was continually amazed to find the controls still functioning and the engines working perfectly. Funny, but even though we were pretty well shot up, no damage was done to the engines. Jerry used P-51 and P-47 marked with US markings on top of the wings and German on the underside. Thankful to still be around. Cold—42 incendiaries. 21,000 ft. Target covered 7/10 to 10/10. Bombed on PP with sky markers. A/C A 898. Six hours thirty minutes. (Ed note: Five aircraft lost.)

3/26/44 "NO BALL," FRANCE: Nice short haul. Fair results. Moderate accurate flak. Two small holes. A/C J 907—a honey of a ship—the squadron deputy lead. Three hours fifteen minutes.

3/27/44 LA ROCHELLE, FRANCE: Visual good results. Little tired. Moderate Flak at the target. No fighters. 21,500 ft. Nice trip and could see much of the ground on the trip. Flew Deputy lead for the Group. A/C J 907, Rohlff flew with Price.

3/28/44 DIJON, FRANCE: Our first bonus mission. Led the low squadron. No flak at the target and had fine group formation while over the target. the rest of the time it looked pretty bad. Good thing Jerry was not around. We would surely have caught hell. Yipee, two more to go and then home we hope. J 907 caught a lot of flak on the Dutch coast going in. Knocked out #3 supercharger. Fortunately the waste gate went closed so we had plenty of power. Alt 19,000 ft—Tired.

4/10/44 BRUSSELS: Target—Evere airdrome. 2nd bonus mission. Led the high squadron and found it twice as easy to lead as the low. Ole Daniel Boone was down there really firing the flak at the target. No damage but he was putting it on both sides of us. One more to go. No fighters and excellent support. Alt 21,500 ft. —30 deg C. A/C O 536.

4/11/44 STETTIN: This is the last one. Primary South east of Berlin about 50 miles. Cloud cover obscured it and we went by the east side of Berlin to Stettin on the Baltic Sea. Had fighter attacks from the vicinity of Brunswick to the Primary. Fortunately the prey pressed their attacks on the low group and high group and left us alone. First group attacking had 50 planes, next time 11, so think our gunners got some. They knocked out one of our squadrons with the exception of one ship. Rough. Flak at secondary was the most accurate of any and burst closer to us than on any other mission. You could not only see it burst but hear it as well. Good ole Forts how they can take it. Lost #2 engine over the Baltic not far from Sweden however, "Butch" got us home. This was the longest haul yet, over eleven hours in the air. Fighter escort was good after leaving the secondary. All's well that ends well. "Butch" 15,000 ft and no heater. Even Belongia said that this one was rough, so it must have been. (Note in ink: Ellis shot up Me 109—Harry said he saw him hit the ground and blow up.) Eleven hours. (Ed Note: 8 aircraft lost—most so far on one mission.)

This is presented a "TRUE STORY" of typical flight crew. Your

Secretary is in possession of another log which is also a rare insight into the events and observations and reactions of a flight crew. The only problem with this log is its length. It may have to be run in serial form or published as a booklet. Stay tuned, there will be a lot more coming in future issues.

UK MEMORIAL STATUS

Our Project is proceeding according to plan; however, the Committee reports that the contractor ran into an unforeseen problem. The base upon which the instrument rested was found to be structurally damaged due to an infestation of "death watch beetles." We have agreed to provide the additional funding necessary to correct the problem (approx. \$1000). The UK folks have been advised. Upon receipt of our letter we received the following letter from Mr. Austin Lloyd, Churchwarden.

Dear Mr. Kirsner,

Thank you for your letter and for the wonderful news that the Group are prepared to underwrite the extra costing. It was a great disappointment to me to find that we had to spend our very limited resources on yet further work and thus have to come back to you to "come to the rescue." I am aware that this means extra effort on the part of the Group and extra sacrifice, but I am sure that in the long run this will be well worth it. The parishioners of S. Mary the Virgin, Podington, were delighted when they heard the news and the Parish Church Council send their greetings and their thanks.

I have discussed the question of the transfer of the money with John Hadfield and he has agreed to mastermind this with you. Since we are now approaching the completion of the major part of the work, it may well be that Mr. Shaftoe will ask for some money to be paid. I quite agree with you that the problem of exchange rate is not an easy one to answer, but John Hadfield has agreed to take this on.

I did not think that when we embarked on the major restoration work of the interior that we would ever be able to reach the stage of restoring the organ. It is almost always the last item to be thought of on the basis that it is functioning, albeit at a poor level. The argument usually is spend it on something else. However, America has again come to the rescue and made the interior restoration an end in sight. Immediately the work has been completed, and that will now be quite soon, John Hadfield I am sure will photograph the instrument and will send you copies.

On behalf of the parish, may I thank you and the Group for your concern and hard work, and bless you.

Yours sincerely,

Austin Lloyd
Churchwarden
S. Mary the Virgin, Podington

The Secretary has also made arrangements for a briefing by the Travel Agency chosen to conduct the '85 trip to the UK for the dedication. All aspects of the proposed trip will be covered as well as side trips to the continent by individuals or groups desiring such an extension.

DECEASED

We regret to announce the passing of the 92nd BG members. Our sincere sympathy is extended to the family and friends of each.

- Clifford O'Bar (CA) Feb. 21, 1984 by Son
- 407 — Dwight C. Chenoweth (TX)
- Neil Shavers (WA) by Roy Morris
- 325 — C. Richard Berry (OH) Jan. 13, 1984 by wife
Flew 15 missions in "Buzz Buggy"
- 446 — Edward A. Fischer (OH) Feb. 15, 1984 by wife
- 325 — Bonjour, Fred M. (MI) Unknown. Mail returned
- 405 — Thomas E. Keefe III (AZ) Oct. 1983 by John Madson