

Dedicated to the Memory of

TECH. SGT.

CHANCY ALBERT FINFROCK

RADIOMAN/GUNNER

on

B-17 'Flying Fortresses'

The European Campaign - World War II



350th Squadron * 100th Bomb Group

3rd Air Division

13th Combat Wing

of the



8th Army Air Force



The '*Bloody Hundredth*' - Operating out of
Thorpe Abbotts Air Base, Station 139
a tiny hamlet, twenty miles south of Norwich,
near Diss, County Norfolk (East Anglia), England



An impromptu interview
conducted at the home of Chan's eldest brother,
Larry Finfrock, my father, of Dallas, Texas –
19 Dec 1998

Taped and compiled by Chan's nephew,
Randy Finfrock of Tulsa, Oklahoma

INTRODUCTION

Uncle Chan had made a long drive on short notice from Venice, Florida to spend a couple of days with his oldest brother (my father) Larry, who had experienced a heart attack the day after Thanksgiving. It was a big surprise for Dad, who had no idea he was coming. The weekend before Christmas is the time that my siblings and I get together in Dallas at Mom's and Dad's to celebrate. So, it was great timing to have Uncle Chan visit with all the clan in Texas in December, 1998. It had been a long time since we had seen him in person.

On Friday evening the 18th while sitting around the fireplace, I casually asked Mom, Dad and Uncle Chan about 'the war years' (one of the questions being: "Where were you when Pearl Harbor was attacked and what do you remember?") and soon found that Uncle Chan seemed to be comfortable relating stories about his experiences as a B-17 radio operator/gunner. To my surprise he opened up, and not only that, talked quite freely for maybe an hour. I hastily took some notes, and we retired for the evening.



SILHOUETTE OF AIRMAN & B-17 FLYING FORTRESS

[from the collection of the 100th Bomb Group]

Knowing Uncle Chan to be an early riser, I got up sooner than normal myself so that I could ask if he would mind continuing our talk. He was agreeable and I called my sister Diana who provided a cassette tape recorder to capture Chan's memories. This record is for the most part centered around this 'impromptu interview' which is not entirely chronological and is somewhat disjointed due to the fact that family members were coming into my parents home throughout, but we just kept taping through all the greetings and introductions.

Before getting down to business, Uncle Chan did not hesitate to remind us that this all happened 55-years ago (as if it were a disclaimer for anything that he might forget while being questioned). In the course of the 'interview', I attempted to ask specific questions only when he seemed to be slowing down on a particular subject. I was personally pleased (as a lover of history, geography and family history) with the detail that he was able to share. To me, it was remarkable.

The following was typed verbatim from the recorded interview with my Uncle,

TECH. SGT.

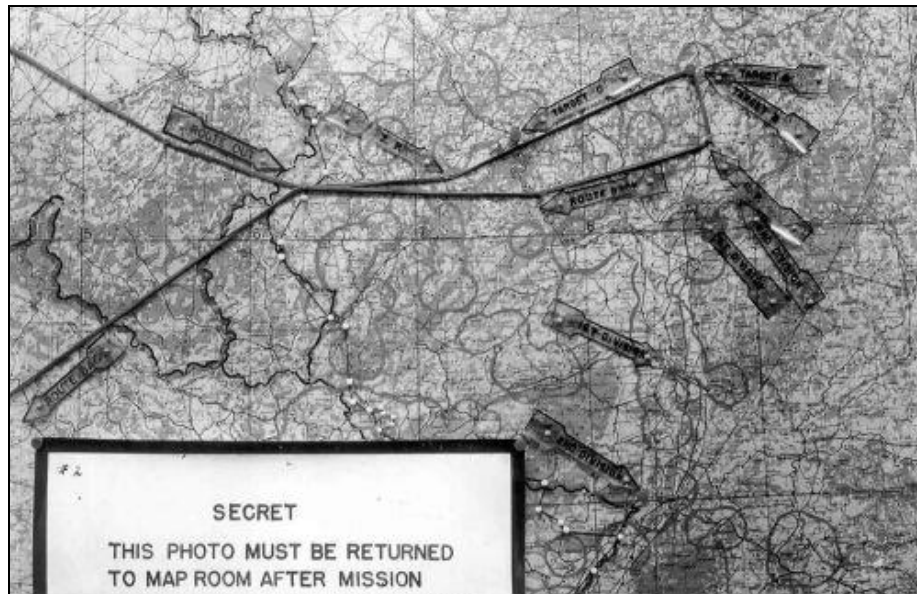
CHANCY ALBERT FINFROCK

Born: 19 Mar 1925, Urbana, IL

Died: 2 Sep 2002, Urbana, IL

®: Yesterday, I was interested in your story about how the bombers had gotten arranged and how it took so many hours to assemble for a flight... if you could tell a little more about what took place at the base? [*Before replying, Uncle Chan joked*]: “Weren’t you listenin’ yesterday?”

©: Well, at the base, they’d come in at 2 or 3 in the morning and shake you and say, ‘You’re on a mission today!’. So, we’d get up and go down and get breakfast and get ready for the briefing. So, we’d get up... I mean that was a shock... you know when the door would open to the barracks, there’d be maybe six crews in there, so you don’t know which ones would be called... they’d wake you up of course (are they gonna shake my bed or shake his bed or whatever)...then anyhow, you’d get up and get dressed and go down to get a breakfast. Then you’d go to briefing. They’d brief you about the mission. They’d show you on a map where you’re going; how many fighter planes to expect; how many anti-aircraft to expect; what the wind direction was, the wind speed, whether you’d be against or with the wind, what height you were going to fly at; how many planes were gonna be going. And, there’d be maybe another mission or two going to other parts of (Europe); some of them were to just throw them [*the German’s*] off the scent of the regular bombing run.



100TH BOMB GROUP MISSION BRIEFING MAP
SHOWING ROUTES “OUT & BACK” – WITH TARGET LOCATIONS

[from the collection of the 100th Bomb Group]

© And then, we'd go there... *[to the briefing]*... everybody would be sitting there, all the crews, and they'd pull a big screen back and you'd see the map, and the line where you were going in, from England into Germany; and what route you'd take. And then, of course they had briefings for the pilots separate, and navigators separate, and bombardiers separate, and radio operators separate... after the general briefing. There we'd get our 'flimsy' as they called it, which was the code we'd just use one day... and it'd be on rice paper, in case you'd get shot down, you were supposed to swallow it. It was a one-day code; they changed it every mission. So, they'd never have problems with anyone decoding it.

®: So, was that code just given to the radio operator of the lead ship?

©: No, all the operators had it. The other operators were for emergency purposes only. The lead operator did all the radio operations for the particular bomb group. And, if your lead plane was lead of the ... you see, you had 3 squadron's, and there was a lead plane for each squadron and then, if your lead plane was the one picked for the lead of the bomb group that day, then you did *[the radio ops]* for the whole bomb group, not the other two squadrons. Then, when you were in a lead plane for a bomb group, sometimes you were the lead plane for the 'Wing'... and then you went into the divisions - there were 3 divisions. I think the 1st and 3rd were B-17's. The 2nd division was B-24's. And, I was in the 3rd division... in the 13th bomb wing, I believe it was.

®: And, was that part of the 100th bombardment group?

©: Well, the 100th Bomb Group was... see, there was three of those *[bomb]* groups in a wing, and then 3 or 4 wings in a ... oh, I don't know... I can't remember now... so many wings in a division... so, anyway there were close to 70, 80, or 90 bomb bases in northeast England in a place called 'the Wash', around Norwich and places like that.

Then, we'd go get our flight equipment, air masks, flight suits, parachutes, emergency stuff, your pistol, and all that stuff that you picked up, and then you would get on a truck and go out to the flight line to the plane. And there you had to 'Pre-Flight', get your guns and put it all in. Of course, the ground crew had already put bombs in and ammunition. We'd clean the guns before we'd go. Then, you'd wait for the time to take off, that was anywhere from 5am to 5:30am.

®: So, it would take a good 2-3 hours in preparation before you were ready to go?

©: Oh, yeah. Then you'd get in and they'd shoot the flares to start your engines and then they'd get them in a line and the bombers would start taxiing around the perimeter toward the runway



'SQUARE D' B-17, TAXIING AT THORPE ABBOTTS AIRBASE
[Used with permission from Patricia E. Mullaney]

they were gonna take off on... and they'd be in a long line, something like 36 bombers in a row, and all their motors going, and they'd take off every so many seconds. The take off was the scariest part ... cause you were so loaded with bombs and fuel, and the weight you know was sometimes... well... occasionally, somebody didn't make it.

®: You mentioned yesterday that one of them skidded off the runway...what happened?

©: Well, one of them got up in the air and then crashed into the 'bomb dump'. So, there were bombs exploding for days. [see page 81]

®: What is a bomb dump?

©: That's where they kept the bombs that they were gonna arm your ships with. That was a dump; that's what they called it... the area where they 'stored' the bombs.

®: I wonder why would they put a bomb dump at the end of the runway?

©: Well, it wasn't right at the end, the plane flew a little bit and then it crashed. Probably the guy didn't even know where it was. I never knew where it was until it started exploding; you know it was a big airbase.

®: What was the name of the base?



FROM THE TOWER AT THORPE ABBOTTS AIRBASE

[Taken by Pat Mullaney,during a visit in Oct 2003]

©: Thorpe Abbots, about 20-miles from Norwich, about 10 miles from Diss, the closest town. Thorpe Abbots itself was just a little village, a little crossway with about four straw thatched roofs; it was a farming area. And it was some 90-miles NE of London. And, then, we'd get in the planes and take off...and then we'd have to assemble by squadron (the 12 planes in your squadron) as you're climbing. There were twelve B-17's in a squadron. And three squadrons in the 100th bomb group that flew on a day; the 4th squadron alternated and stayed down.

So, then you assembled in your bomb group as you were going off over what they called a 'buncher beacon'... you'd fly over this beacon cause they had to separate all these guys all over England, cause there were maybe 1000 or up to 2000 planes...most of 'em [missions] were 200 or 300... so that's a lot of bombers... and sometimes it was foggy, and they'd collide up in the fog, or clouds sometime – that's happened too.

Then you went from the bomb group to the wing...where you had several groups together, and that had to assemble over a different beacon, and then you'd have to get into the line of the division, which was the 3rd air division... and then there'd be a lot of bombers in that division. Suppose you went on a thousand-plane mission, there'd have to at least be a minimum of 333 bombers in each division.

So, you had to get into your division, and then the divisions had to line up. It all had to be coordinated by time...you just didn't take off and go over there. We may assemble early, or we may assemble late. Because bombers would be going off [for hours]...and, as I said, I'd been on missions ... I'd be going over the channel and into the French coast, when the planes that started the bomb raid would be coming back... maybe an hour or two or three ahead of us... if you were near the end of the line.

®: That really used up a lot of fuel didn't it?

©: Oh sure, you had all your weight then and you were climbing to altitude then. That was where most of your energy was used. Then from there you headed off to your target, and if your target was covered you had an alternate target you were supposed to go to.



CONTRAILS OF B-17'S IN FORMATION AT ALTITUDE

[from the collection of the 100th Bomb Group]

We always liked the tailwind rather than the headwind. The ground speed changed a whole lot you know. So if you got a good tailwind, the old bomber went a lot faster, at least over the ground. And if you had a headwind, you practically stood still it seemed like on some of those

planes. We didn't even know about jet currents, at least the crewmen didn't...and I don't think they knew a whole lot about jet currents; they knew about currents.

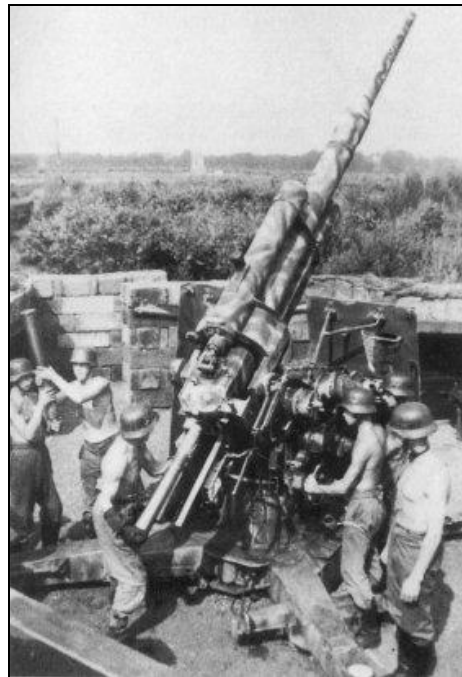
So, we usually bombed around noon or 1 o'clock depending on how far it was, then we'd get back about 5:30pm.

®: Once you completed a bombing run, did you just make a U-turn back?

©: Well, they had you turn depending on how you went in and how you came back. You didn't just go straight in, you avoided areas that had heavy flak.

®: Did you constantly get reports?

©: Well they knew that. That was part of the briefing. They just build up intelligence over time and they'd say, okay, you'll go in here and steer by this big city, and then cut over there, dodgin' the big... and of course they knew where the fighter bases were when they took off... they'd tell you how many fighters you could expect; how many flak guns you could expect.



FLAK GUN - THE EXCELLENT "ACHT-ACHT" EIGHT EIGHT

[Source: 'Air Defenses of WWII Website' - <http://www.ww2guide.com/flak.shtml>]

®: What type of opposition generally did you see on a mission?

©: It varied...

®: And, on every mission did you always get shot at?

©: Oh sure. You always got flak.

®: So, it wasn't like you had any free rides, so to speak?

©: Well, see the worse flak of course, was over the target when they knew where you were goin'. And, they'd use the radar or whatever they had to get your height and they would set the anti-aircraft shells to explode at that height; they knew when you were gettin' close to the target; they knew where you were going then...they knew where the factories were, railroads, whatever it was [*that you wanted to bomb*].

So, they would just aim all the anti-aircraft to explode over the target. So, you had to go into it; you'd see it exploding ahead of you. But you had to go over it. They [*the Germans*] weren't going to shoot out here, and over here and over there.

®: Could you vary your altitude?

©: No. No, no, no, no, no, no...

®: So, they were pretty much locked into you at that point?



LOOKING OUT FRONT BLISTER TO BOMBARDIER/TOGGLEIER POSITION
FROM RESTORED B-17 RE-NAMED 'NINE-O-NINE' - WINGS OF FREEDOM TOUR

[Source: [photo by Randy Finrock 10/25/2005, Tulsa, OK](#)]

©: So, uh, it was just luck after that... And then later on, when we had fighter escort, the fighters would just take off, leave us, and go around the flak, and meet us on the other side. They didn't have to go through it.

Of course, we were tickled to death to have them. That's when we started having a lot less [*bombers*] shot down, when we had good fighter control. They [*Germans*] used to just wait until the fighters couldn't go any farther and then they'd pounce on you.

(DF): Did you do exclusively daytime or nighttime missions?

©: Yeah, all daytime. Except when I was a lead crew, and we didn't go on a mission, we had other jobs as lead crew other than missions. We had to go out for weather. We'd go off maybe at midnight or 1 o'clock in the morning and fly out over the North Sea or the English Channel

and check the weather and report back. That was the best evidence they had of what the weather was at places.

Maybe even go over the land, and that's when we got shot at by the British... about as much as the German's when we were out by ourselves, cause they shot anything that flew over anything else. Made us so mad. But, as they say, they didn't much hit anything.

®: You said they were bad shots?

©: Oh, I don't know what I said... I guess they were. It just made you nervous and made you mad that your allies were shootin' *[at you]*...

(DF): How did they make the determination of who did nighttime versus daytime bombing?

©: The British did the nighttime. We did precision bombing, and they did blanket bombing. They would take off... well; they just... they just couldn't do it. I mean, they tried it, I think early, and they just lost too many *[planes]*. We did too at first!

But, they would take off and they'd fly in at a target as individual planes, and they would come in from this way, this way; that way, that way *[gesturing]* ... different altitudes. And they'd usually send in what they called a 'pathfinder bomber', well we... our lead crew was a pathfinder too.



LEAD PLANE'S SIGNAL FOR: "BOMBS AWAY"

[from the collection of the 100th Bomb Group]

©: The head bombardier dropped smoke bombs to indicate that he was dropping his bombs, you know what I mean – they could tell the lead plane - and then all the others did was just toggle their bombs at the same time.

But, they used flares to light the target up and then, as they dropped bombs, of course they used a lot of incendiary stuff, they could see where the target was. But they didn't do precision bombing, they just dropped bombs. They didn't care if they hit houses, or people, or what... and uh, so that's the way they did *[it]*.

And, then the Germans developed night fighters, and you had to have the escalation of all this stuff *[to combat the new technology]*.

Then, later on in the war, we had what they called ‘window’... these silver strips that (the radio operator had to do that on certain missions); we’d drop out these silver strips by the thousands, each plane, and that would confuse their radar, see? Don’t know how effective it was, but anyhow... we did anything that sounded good, and everybody liked.

So then... if a plane... well, we used to see planes just exploding in a ball of fire you know, and that was it...just like instantaneous ...all that gas and stuff, when they got hit directly...well, the whole wings were all gas tanks, or the bombs [*exploded*], or whatever.



UNDER ATTACK – NOTE ENEMY AIRCRAFT IN PURSUIT AT 6-O’CLOCK

[from the collection of the 100th Bomb Group]

©: Then they’d get picked off by the fighter planes if they started laggin’ behind...and out of formation. Then, we’d get home at night, and assess [*the damage*] ...

[Note: Some interruptions here in the taping, with people coming in and out of the room] ...

®: Would you like to do some a little later? If you get a chance, I’d love to hear some more?

©: I dunno... I got you over there and dropped the bombs and back... (Ha-ha)... what else can I ... you don’t want me to tell you about battle stories about how we... barracks parties, and stuff like that down in London do you? That was the good part...

(CM): That sounds like more fun than bombin’ things!

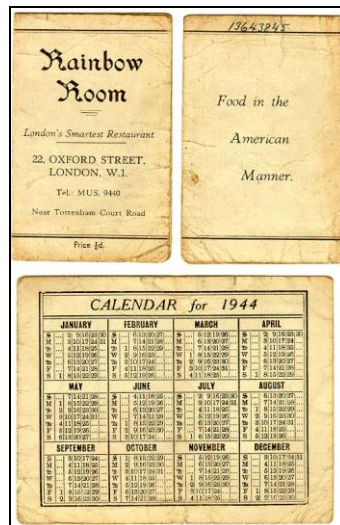
(DCF): Really! The barracks part... we need to be hearin’ about ...

©: I can’t tell you guys about that! [*rather sheepishly*] ... [*All laughing*]

(DCF): Is that going to ruin our impression about who you really are to us?

©: Well, I was... I was... I was young enough at the time I wasn't as bad as most of 'em... I believed all the films they showed me!! (Ha-ha)... [All laughing]

But, I 'member one day down in London I found myself in a park neckin' with some girl in the park, and I don't know how I got there! (Ha-ha-ha)



"RAINBOW ROOM" RESTAURANT IN LONDON
[Used with permission from Patricia E. Mullaney]

©: You had a lot of hormones in those days, I guess.

®: Well, before everybody gets in here, just a couple questions? One thing I was wondering, what was your service ID number, your unit and group name and your rank?

©: My service ID: 3675-4556. Unit Name: 350th squadron. Group Name: 100th Bomb Group. 13th Bomb Wing. 3rd Air Division. Technical Sgt, lead radio operator.



MAY 1945 CALENDAR – ‘13TH COMBAT WING’

[from the collection of the 100th Bomb Group]

®: Did you have any nicknames given to yourself or to your unit, or your squadron?

©: No, well... ‘The Bloody Hundredth’, because we lost more than any other bomb group. When we got done with the war, we got what they called a ‘Lucky Bastard Certificate’, cause we survived!

®: Oh my gosh...I guess so!

©: Yeah... I had that. [*The Lucky Bastard Certificate*]. I don’t know where that is either now... it’s gone...all that stuff disappeared.

®: Just briefly, you’ve described your activity in getting ready, going over and bombing. Your particular position in the B-17 was called a radioman/gunner?



THE RADIO OPERATOR'S STATION ON B-17 FLYING FORTRESS

[from the collection of the 100th Bomb Group]

©: Radioman. Well, after I was lead crew, I didn’t have a gun. Originally, the first few missions... [*before I was lead crew*]... but that was kind of a very ineffective gun, out of the top of the radio room, a single gun, that was just more for... well, you couldn’t hardly ever see anything out there. But anyhow... And, later on, when we got this ‘Mickey’, they called it... this radar bombing, then they put the ‘Mickey Operator’ in the lead plane so you could ‘see’ through the clouds, and he was on the other side of the radio room from me.

®: So, they added a man to the crew?

©: Yeah, to lead crews. You had uh... that’s what they called a ‘Mickey Operator’. And, that was radar, and you could look on a screen and see the shape of the land or rivers. It wasn’t good radar...but it was used in the last 3 or 4 months or so... so that was in there too [*in the B-17*]. So, that was actually after we were lead crew.

®: You mentioned one of your duties as Radio Operator was to check after the bombardier said 'bomb's away'.



**"PHOTO PROBABLY TAKEN FROM THE RADIO ROOM
WITH DOOR OPEN & SHOOTING THROUGH THE BOMB BAY"**
[from the collection of the 100th Bomb Group]

©: Well, after the bombs were dropped, I had to get up and open the bomb-bay door, cause I was the handy-man there... to look in to see if any of the bombs hung up. Sometimes a bomb hung up and didn't get out of the plane.



STEP FROM RADIO ROOM TO BOMB BAY CATWALK
WINGS OF FREEDOM TOUR

[Source: [photo by Randy Finrock 10/25/2005, Tulsa, OK](#)]

©: Well, you wouldn't wanna not look, and land on a runway and jar it loose and blow the whole place up!

(Dad): Oh, oh man!

©: I remember once we had to kick one off-out, ... two or three of us had to get it... kind of scary, being up 30,000 ft and lookin' out and you were just on a little old narrow rail out in the

bomb-room trying to push a 500-lb bomb out. But, you didn't want that on there, so you had a pretty good incentive.

®: And you mentioned - that other time - where you happened to get up and check once, and...



STEP FROM BOMB BAY CATWALK BACK INTO RADIO ROOM

WINGS OF FREEDOM TOUR

[Source: [photo by Randy Finrock 10/25/2005, Tulsa, OK](#)]

©: Well, yeah... one mission, it was... you see, that lasted maybe 5-10 seconds out of the whole mission, gettin' up...*[from my seat]*... that's when a shell came right up through the floor and through my radio table where my legs were and right out the top of the plane.



RADIO ROOM - LEG SPACE BETWEEN SEAT & TABLE - DOORWAY TO BOMB BAY

WINGS OF FREEDOM TOUR

[Source: [photo by Randy Finrock 10/25/2005, Tulsa, OK](#)]

©: And, then I got wounded once, but that hit the edge of my flak suit, so... but I was drawin' compensation for that for a few years after the war. So, and then, we got ... some missions we had 2 or 300 holes in the plane when we got home.

®: That's incredible!

©: So, its just like pushin' ... shootin' bullets through tissue paper – that aluminum you know.

®: It was very thin wasn't it?

©: Oh, my garsh yes, like a pie pan thin. And it was just where they happened to hit. They could hit your air supply, hydraulic supply, hit engines... I think it was what hit our engines when we bailed out that time.

®: That time the engine caught fire, is that what you think happened?

©: Yeah, we had anti-aircraft fire over the French coast, when there were still German's on the French coast and it hit our plane and on the way in, it caught fire, and we had to bail out at the Belgium/French border, uh around Luxembourg. I used to have the name of the city where we went into. And, as I told you that day when I picked up my parachute, it was kinda loose, and said 'Well I never use this thing anyway', and I had to push it back in there... and didn't think anything more about it until they said: "We're on fire, bail out"... and I thought about that. And, I had to put that on. And then I had to go...

®: Did you have to do a radio call right before leaving?

©: Well, yeah, I sent out a radio call where we were – not too long a call! (Ha- ha!!)

®: I didn't think you'd have much time...

©: No, because the others still in formation would see us and could advise. And, well I tried to jump out the door, and the slipstream pushed me in... I wasn't too eager to jump out I guess. So, I took a runnin' jump the next time and pulled my ripcord just about too soon, just missed the tail. It took about... I timed myself goin' down... took between 10 and 15 minutes to get down. And, this was February [[1945](#)].

(SF): I was gonna say, wasn't that awful cold?

©: Sure, it was -60 to -70 below up there, you had to wear heated suits.



ELECTRIC FLYING SUIT
WOODMAN INSTITUTE, DOVER, NH

HEATED FLYING SUIT

[Used with permission from Patricia E. Mullaney]

®: You were at about what ...26,---... [guessing at the altitude]

©: 28,000 ft at that time, yeah. I lit in a ... this was just at the end of the Battle of the Bulge and there were a lot of German's around and they were dumpin' guys in American uniforms [into the area], so everybody was suspicious of everybody. But, anyhow, I lit in a forest there, it was winter, and I saw all these trees comin' up... with no leaves on 'em you know, and I crashed through there, and I didn't have the slightest idea where I was, naturally. And, my chute hung up, and I pulled that down to hide it. And, they had fire lanes in these forests... I found a fire lane... and I peeked around and looked out, and didn't see anything, and so I went back in.

A little later I looked out again and I saw some men down where there was a crossroad, about probably ¼ mile or ½ mile down. And, they had guns on a couple of my crewmen. And, they were civilians, but they were... I found out subsequently... they were French Underground.

Finfrock 'Chutes To Earth, Trekks Back From 'Missing'

Why Mr. and Mrs. Chancy L. Finfrock, 407 West Elm street, Urbana, recently received a cablegram reading "Disregard all messages from the War department," was explained in a letter Thursday from their son, Technical Sergeant Chancy Finfrock, radioman and gunner on a B-17 bomber at a base somewhere in England.

"Our plane caught fire in one of the engines," Sergeant Finfrock writes. "We did everything in our power to put it out but to no avail. An explosion—a small one—blew the cowl off the engine and then the fire really got going. The pilot ... told us to bail out.

"What gripes me is that just before we jumped I had my eversharp in my hand, and when I saw it, I said to myself, 'What do I want that for now?' So I threw it on the floor. I still regret it ... You can't get them over here.

"Also, just before I jumped ... it came to me ... that that morning I had found part of my 'chute coming out and had tucked it back in. That sort of worried me, because then I wondered if the thing would open up — that's important, you know, when you're 15,000 feet up, but it worked ...

'Fun' Floating Down

"It was rather fun and a strange experience floating down, but there were a couple of times when I was a little scared and had to call on God to get me out. Right at first I started swinging badly, and a little later the wind started to buckle the 'chute.

"... I didn't have any sensation of falling until I was about 500 feet from the ground ... and I was coming down right smack in the middle of a big forest. The next instant I hit the ground ... not too hard either, because the 'chute had dragged down through the trees and had broken my fall a lot. You could never have seen a more thankful guy in your life.

"... The first person I saw was a Frenchman with only one hand, and a rifle under his arm. Back further were about 10 other men, also with guns ... I wasn't bothered because they had already found out who we were ... I

MAP 16 1945

guest these men were F. F. L. French Underground.

"On the way out we came across our navigator, so that made four of us ... (After a four mile walk to the house of the one-armed man) he invited us into his house and sent his daughter for some le pain and des aufs—to you, bread and eggs.

Village Turns Out

"At the village the whole population turned out and followed us to the edge of town. I was talking a little French to some of the kids. At the edge of town, they all wanted to shake hands and kiss us goodbye.

"We finally got to another place, where there was an American M.P. headquarters, where we stayed all night ...

"To make a long story short, we went from there to a B-26 base, and then went to another place where we spent the night, and got back to our post last night ... And here I am tonight on a pass in London.

"When we got back to the base, our beds had been given to another crew, our clothes had all been collected by supply, and they had already sent a telegram saying we were missing in action.

"I feel like I had been through the mill the last few days. I hear we don't get credit for that mission either. Everyone acted magnificently through the whole ordeal, with God's help. I guess that experience makes us all members of the Caterpillar club."

HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER ARTICLE, 16 MARCH 1945
[From the Archives of the Urbana Free Library; Urbana, Illinois]

©: So, I didn't think too much of that; so kept kinda peekin' out, then all of a sudden I saw 'em pattin' 'em on the back and shakin' their hands, so I figured well uh, okay, now I'll come out!

And, so I went down there, and then we had ... I remember he had home-made wine... he gave us some home-made wine, and I was a-wigglin' for miles, walking along there... powerful stuff! And, we had to walk through some villages, and I've got a ring still that some girl took off her hand and gave me. It had that... "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" on it.

[Note: 'Liberte, Egalite & Fraternite' in French was used on several items of jewelry such as rings, pendants and pins during WWII. Some were patented early in the war by Victor Silson. They were created to signify French Resistance Solidarity.

Source: www.rubylane.com/shops/thecuriosityshop/ilist/Jewelry:Collectible:Vintage:1940-1949].

®: Did she give it in appreciation?

©: I guess! And, I wore it on my bracelet, my identification bracelet, for a long time. And, we went into... finally... we walked for hours, and we finally got to this crossroads where there was this 'strong-point', where you know we were guarding the crossroads from the enemy. I remember we went in there and they had a dance that night. We brought our parachute along. And, all the women wanted the silk parachute for pantaloons! They couldn't get any silk, you know. And, so, I gave them that [*the parachute*], and that was... made a big deal.

I remember going in the john, and sittin' there...and the wall was about as high as this [*pointing to the arms on a chair about 2 feet tall*], and all of a sudden three women came in there...and, I'm sittin' on the john! They'd come in there and go up to the mirror, and pull up their skirts, and pull down their thing, and I'm sittin' there... [*a little hesitant*]... really couldn't go then!

®: I guess not!

©: But, that's just the way they did it over there. I mean, that wall didn't hide nothin'!

(SF): When my parents were in Italy [*after the war*], my mother said that it was nothing to see a man just going over and just doing it on wall.

©: In Europe they had little troughs; out in the churches they had troughs. I didn't get comfortable doing that. So, then they had a dance that night, and so on and so forth, and then I remember we had to get on a truck and bouncing over all those cobblestone roads.



RUE GAMBETA IN METZ (LORRAINE), N.E. FRANCE – NOTE THE COBBLESTONE

[from 1st Air Division Photographs – Courtesy Johnny Vigneault]

©: I don't know, we finally were there about 3-4 days I guess. Then, I flew back to England in a C3 cargo plane, those two motor jobs. They didn't give you parachutes; felt kinda naked without a parachute. And we got back there [*to the base*] and they'd already carried all our stuff out like we were dead. Then, we got to go on a week's ____ splash down on the Isle of Wight.

®: How did you communicate behind enemy lines? And, how did they find you? The Free French took you to a community?

©: Well, when a plane was shot down and you had parachutes comin' down, they could follow you where you were goin'. The enemy could trace you there, or friends ... it happened to be that the French Underground were there. German's were droppin' people in American uniforms during the Battle of the Bulge, so they were very suspicious of those kinda guys until they determined that we were the real thing, I guess. It was an experience.

I remember the old parachute started collapsing one time, that scared the hell out of me; the wind just blew and caught it sideways and I thought it was collapsing probably – enough to make me nervous. Yeah, its... seems like a dream when I tell about it; that was 55 years ago. It was '44, and this is '98. So, it'll be 55 years this next March [*1999*].



**LESLIE H. DAWSON'S 350TH SQUADRON CREW
JOINED THE 100TH BOMB GROUP ON 5 OCT 1944**

[from the collection of the 100th Bomb Group]

[Note: On 5 Oct 1944, the 1141st Quartermaster's Log reads: "Today seemed to be the worst yet for the V-2 or Buzz Bombs...explosions at 0130, 1100, 1615 and 2000 hours."]

®: Did you have any other missions after that?

©: Well then, after the war, we had some ... maybe some even more interesting missions.

[\[Inserting E-Mail from Photo-Archivist/Historian at 100th Bomb Group \]:](#)

MPFaley@aol.com

Wednesday, November 27, 2002 4:36 AM

Hi Randy,

Thanks, now here is the mission List for Chancy. There were more mistakes than I first thought based on what Scott gave me. Some targets and dates he gave me were off by a day in the February list of missions. This is the correct one. Please pass this onto Scott and even Pat if she wants it. Charlie, please add this mission list to Lt. Dawson Crew page. [[on the 100th Bomb Group Website](#)]

Thanks, Mike

- 100th Bomb Group Photo Archives & Bomb Group Historian

MISSIONS OF T/SGT CHANCY FINFROCK ... (mpf 2002)

1. 26/10/44-Thur HANOVER - Hanomag Military Vehicle Plant (secondary), 432 B-17's
2. 02/11/44-Thur MERSEBURG – Oil Depot, 223
3. 05/11/44-Sun LUDWIGSHAFEN – Marshalling Yard, Industrial Area, 454
4. 06/11/44-Mon NEUMUNSTER – Aviation Industry, Marshalling yard, 262
5. 16/11/44-Thur AACHEN – Front Lines E. of Aachen, 1,243
6. 21/11/44-Tue OSNABRUCK – Marshalling Yard (secondary target), 402
7. 26/11/44-Sun HAMM – Marshalling Yard, 381

LEAD CREW TRAINING

8. 09/02/45-Fri WEIMAR – Munitions Industry (secondary), 311
9. 15/02/45-Thur COTTBUS – Marshalling Yard (secondary), 435
10. 19/02/45-Mon OSNABRUCK – Marshalling Yard, 196
11. 20/02/45-Tue NURNBERG – Main RR Station * *had to bail out due to flak damage* *
12. 02/03/45-Fri DRESDEN – Oil Plant (secondary), 406
13. 03/03/45-Sat BRUNSWICK – Miag Munitions Plant, 61 (of 453)
14. 04/03/45-Sun ULM – Military Vehicle Plant & Ordnance Depot, 223 (of 373)
15. 07/03/45-Wed SIEGEN – Marshalling Yards (secondary), 113 (of 344)
16. 08/03/45-Thur GIESSEN – Marshalling Yards (secondary), 69 (of 526)
17. 15/03/45-Thur ORANIENBURG – German Army HQ & Marshalling, 1,353
18. 18/03/45-Sun BERLIN – Railway Stations & Tank Plants, 1,329
19. 24/03/45-Sat STEENWIJK – German Airfield at Steenwijk, 527
20. 31/03/45-Sat ZEITZ – Synthetic Oil Refinery, 229 (of 1,348)

FLAK LEAVE

21. 15/04/45-Sun ROYAN – Ground Installations & Flak Batteries, 833 (of 1,348)
22. 17/04/45-Tue AUSSIG – Rail Junction & Station, 86 (of 410)
23. 20/04/45-Fri ORANIENBURG (N. of BERLIN) – Marshalling Yards, 82 (of 319)

CHOWHOUND MISSIONS

- NA 03/05/45-Thur BERGEN – Food Drop (739.1 Tons) in the Netherlands, 399
- NA 05/05/45-Sat AMSTERDAM – Food Drop (744.5 Tons) at Schipol Airfield, 403

[Target details above are added from: www.usaaf.net/chron/44 . 'COMBAT CHRONOLOGY OF THE US ARMY AIR FORCES' - European Theatre / Strategic Operations / Eighth Air Force]

[The number of B-17's flown on each mission follows target detail. 1st number is how many hit the listed target; when a 2nd number is shown, this is how many B-17's were in the total mission contingent which split to other targets. Missions noted above were only one of several that would have flown from various bomb groups of the Eighth Air Force on that given day.]



STRIKE PHOTO – WEIMAR

[from the collection of the 100th Bomb Group]

Lt. Leslie Dawson Crew - Mission #8

09 February 1945

[This was the first mission for the crew after “Lead Crew Training”. Although the primary targets for six forces were oil plants, this secondary target hit the Weimar munitions industry.]

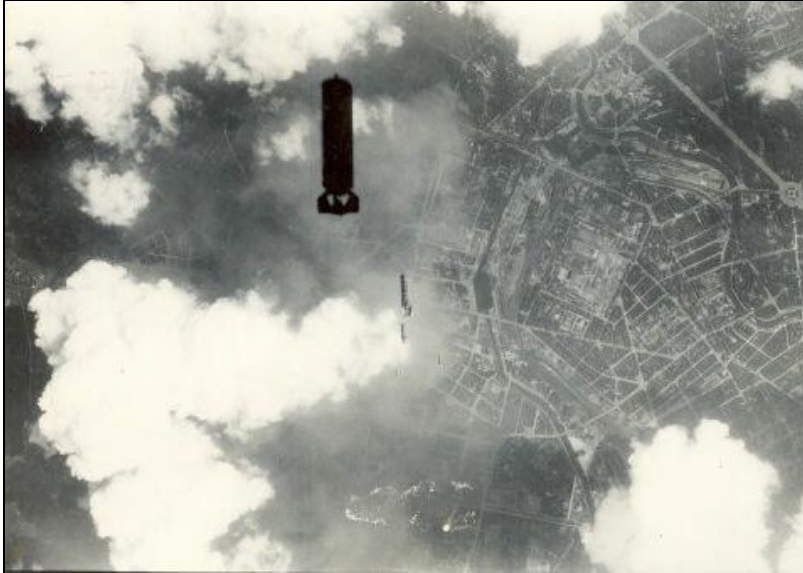


STRIKE PHOTO – ORANIENBURG

[from the collection of the 100th Bomb Group]

Lt. Leslie Dawson Crew - Mission #17
15 March 1945

[Target was the German Army Headquarters and Marshalling Yard. 833 fighters flew as escorts for the B-17's (P-51's and P-47's). There was a loss of 9 bombers and 4 fighters.]

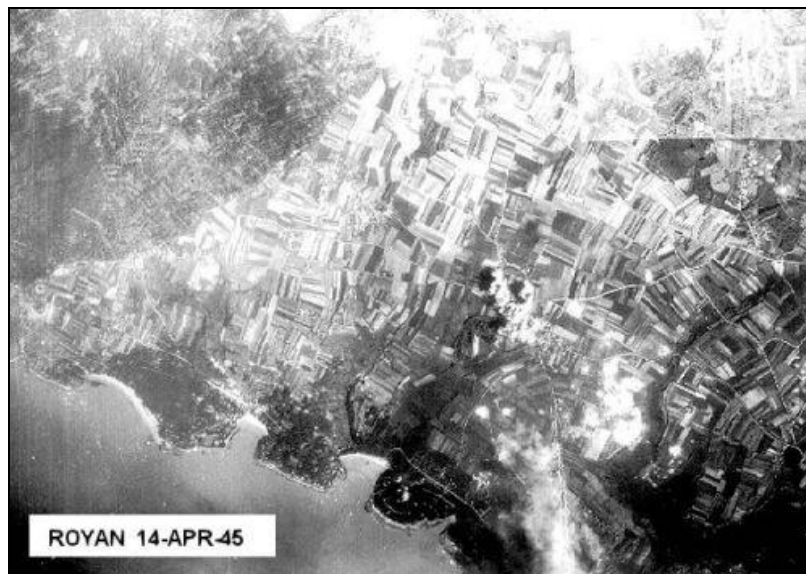


STRIKE PHOTO – BERLIN

[from the collection of the 100th Bomb Group]

Lt. Leslie Dawson Crew - Mission #18
18 March 1945

[Several primary targets this day were Railway Stations and Tank Plants in the Berlin area. "The Luftwaffe makes it's most concentrated and successful attacks with Me 262's to date."]



STRIKE PHOTO – ROYAN, FRANCE

[from the collection of the 100th Bomb Group]

Lt. Leslie Dawson Crew - Mission #21
15 April 1945

[Note: Used experimental 'gas jelly bombs'. Photo taken the day prior to this mission.]

More on the **ROYAN, FRANCE** mission:

"... unescorted bombers visually attacked strongpoints on the French Atlantic coast; with two forces making the sole operational employment of napalm bomb by the Eighth AF against German ground installations (pillboxes, gunpits, tank trenches, and heavy gun emplacements); the results are negligible and HQ recommends its discontinuance against this type of target."

[Source: 'COMBAT CHRONOLOGY OF THE US ARMY AIR FORCES'

<http://www.usaaf.net/chron/45/apr45.htm>]

"I do remember Royan and the P-51 wing tanks. They had jelly like material in them and I got to see it because the ground crew didn't put the filling plug back in it. Looked like Jello. They used arming wire and tape to attach it to the P-51 wing tank. We never knew the result of that. Two missions were dropped on some Germans that were holding out in France. The bomb doors were left open and one bomb fell out over friendly territory. A guy named Sweeds was the Toggler and didn't have his visit set correct. Needless to say he was demoted."

[Source: LETTER FROM GAYLE 'TEX' LEONARD, 26 DECEMBER 2004

Mr. Leonard of Ft. Worth, Texas had served with Chancy Finfrock in the 350th Squadron.
They were on several missions together and this was in reply to questions asked.]

©: We dropped food to the people in Holland, you know they flooded all of that out there and they didn't have anything to eat. We'd fly in at level of the church steeples to drop food. And, of course the people knew we were doin' this later on, and you'd see guys on bicycles pedaling



"FOOD DROP MISSIONS OVER HOLLAND IN 1945"

"I found this photo on an antic market in the Hague a while ago." - Courtesy Mr. Heijink

[Source: <http://users.interstroom.nl/~heijink/welkom1.html>]

along the road trying to see where they were going to drop it. And uh, that was kind of interesting. You could see the bomb damage [*coming in low to the ground like that*].

MAY 1ST: 'CHOWHOUND' BEGINS THE FIRST DAY FOR THE AMERICANS

The English had flown two days without incidents when the Americans joined in. The Americans could have been considered latecomers in this operation. This was of course not without a reason.

The airfields of the Eighth Air force were located closer to the East coast than the airfields of Bomber Command. Ground fog had forced the Americans to wait until the first of May, before they could join the RAF's efforts to help the Dutch civilians.



The Americans started operation Chowhound with almost four hundred B-17's, which doubled the amount of food dropped on one day.

It didn't matter much to the American pilots that their English colleagues had preceded them the two days before. When they boarded their Flying Fortresses at daybreak on the first of May, most of them did not know that they were not the first to test the Allied-German truce that had finally been signed on the 30th of May. Even if they had known that the Germans had not fired

on the English, this would still be no guarantee that they would behave in the same way towards the Americans.

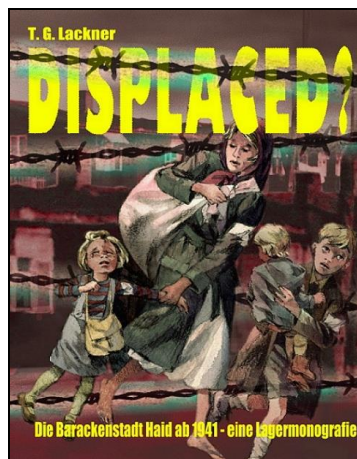
The first day truly was an exciting day for all the American Bomber crews. Many things were new to them, the low altitude, the slow speed and the cargo, enough elements to give you the shivers even if you considered yourself a veteran, after having flown twenty, or thirty combat-missions in enemy territory.



Welcome on the website concerning the Food drop missions over Holland in 1945

[Source: <http://users.interstroom.nl/~heijink/chowhound.html>]

©: And then we flew down to Africa and landed there, and saw a little of that part of the area... and later on, we picked up what they called 'displaced persons' down in Austria – people that were slave laborers and stuff like that... and, I didn't know what they were at that time.



**BOOKJACKET FOR "THE DISPLACED", BY T.G. LACKNER, HISTORIAN
ABOUT DP CAMP HAID /ANSFELDEN IN AUSTRIA**

[from: www.dpcamps.org]

©: Anyhow, they'd come out there, and they'd de-louse 'em before they'd get on the plane, the powder they'd shoot in there; they smelled like the dickens... and, they looked like walking skeletons. I was wondering, 'What are we picking up here?' ... you know?

[Note: "The rapid collapse of the German Army in Austria in May 1945 found the quadripartite powers somewhat unprepared for the complex public health problems. In the first days of the occupation, the major task facing the U.S. Army was that of halting, under conditions of extreme filth, malnutrition, and starvation, the spread of serious communicable diseases by disease-infested victims of Nazi oppression among a civilian population that was both demoralized and confused. In addition to the indigenous population....estimated at somewhat more than 1 million inhabitants, there were an estimated 700,000 displaced persons and refugees, including about 80,000 concentration camp inmates of five large camps, 200,000 displaced Austrian refugees, and 250,000 disarmed enemy forces (prisoners of war). "

Source: DISPLACED PERSONS - DP CAMPS IN AUSTRIA, A-C

Colonel Charles J. Farinacci, MC (Ret.): www.dpcamps.org/dpcamps/austriaA-C.html]



DISPLACED PERSONS – PHOTO PROBABLY TAKEN BY A GERMAN SOLDIER

[from: www.dpcamps.org]

©: And, I remember one lady come up, and she said, "We didn't always look like this", and she brought out a picture when she was all dolled up in a dress, and showed me. And, of course, they crowded 'em in the plane; that plane was like a cattle car. They had a lot of them in the radio room there. And they had stuff ... they were full of lice.

®: Was that a cargo plane?

©: No, it was B-17's, they used the bombers...and we took 'em up to Orly [[airport](#)] in Paris. We picked up people down in... around Munich. And, I remember there was an airbase down there, and we saw a lot of those rocket planes and some of their jet planes were wrecked around there...and, we took them up to France.

There were millions of people displaced then at that time, and we had the transportation you know...and uh, we did that... it was an interesting experience. I didn't know anything about those people at that time [*what they had gone through*].

[Note: "Louse-borne diseases can be associated with high incidence of disease and death, especially epidemic typhus and relapsing fever, which can be fatal in up to 40% of patients. The diseases are mostly prevalent in people living in poverty and overcrowded conditions, for example, homeless people and those involved in war situations. "

Source: CDC (CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL & PREVENTION) – “Human Pathogens in Body and Head Lice” – www.cdc.gov/ncidod/EID/vol8no12/02-0111.htm]

(MF): Was that before VE day, or after?

©: No, that was after. No, we wouldn't be landing down there [if the German's were still at war with us]. Well, you know they pushed the Germans out of some of those places earlier...I can't remember... I would think that it must have been after VE day. I think before VE day, we dropped food into Holland... cause they were starvin' and it was all flooded you know, but they... the fighting was going further inland at that time, so we weren't in any danger.

And, then I bombed Cünimündi [*Peenemünde*] once, that's where they made the rockets originally... that was way up north. I remember lookin' out the bomb bay, lookin' down there... and all the water, and seein' the place - we knew what that was - we were briefed on that - what it was... where all the V-1's and V-2's were being made. I saw... we used to see the V-1's flying over the airbase, those things ... and they'd shoot at those with anti-aircraft and fighters.



'V-1 ROCKET' – AT THE MUNICH DEUTSCHES MUSEUM

[Source: <http://stevetimko.tripod.com/munichdeutschemuseumv1rocket.jpg> – Courtesy Timko]

©: The V-2's though, were the true rockets – they went up and down and you didn't even see them, they just landed you know. The others [*V-1's*], you could hear it putt-puttin' along... and see 'em. You could even see 'em startin' to drop when they cut 'em off.

Well, John you know [*another brother of Chan and Larry: John Henry Finfrock*], when they were in the B-24's in South Dakota, one of his first jobs was to look for these balloons comin' in from... paper balloons... comin' in from Japan. You know they sent over thousands of 'em. They'd come over and try to drop incendiary bombs on the forests of the West Coast, and farms. And, a lot of 'em got over; did you ever read that? They came all over the West Coast.

(MF): I never knew anybody ever entered our air space during the War?

©: Well, these were balloons, and they sent 'em over. They floated across from Japan, clear across the Pacific Ocean, and they were timed... took about, they did it in about 3 – 4 – 5 days... with those trade winds I guess, wasn't too long, 5-days? Then, they were triggered to drop the bombs at a certain time – it was fantastic. I read something about that again not too long ago. So, you know, there was a lot of things tried and done at that time...well, they kept it quiet from the Americans you know. I mean, I heard about it first time talkin' to John! I read quite an article on that not too long ago. You could look that up on your computer probably?

®: So those V-1 and V-2 were rockets? Or, how would you describe them?

©: Well, the V-2 was the original true rocket. That's what [Werner] Von Braun invented you know, and they brought him over here to work on our space things. The other rocket was a jet-propelled thing, a little bomb with two little wings on it, and a high tail with a jet engine out the back. They sent quite a few of those over England. This was more like a jet plane, the V-1... the V-2 was the true rocket. They had to send the V-1 off of a rail that shot up, you know.



‘V-2 REPLICA’ LOCATED AT THE PEENEMUNDE MUSEUM, GERMANY

[Source: ‘A-4/V-2 Resource Site’, devoted to the V-2, or Aggregat 4, the first long range ballistic missile to see active combat use. It hurled 1-ton warheads 50 mi. high & 100’s of miles downrange to its target. ”

<http://www.v2rocket.com/start/others/peene-museum.html>]

©: The V-2 just took off like a rocket takes off here you know – up in the air – with guidance, but they weren’t too accurate, but... well, they shot rockets at us in our bomb formations. We’d see smoke coming up... but, they weren’t perfected too well then, thank goodness... and, you could see ‘em zig-zaggin’ coming up, you know.

®: So, out of your bombing runs, do you think that particular one [*where the rockets were being manufactured*] was one of the more strategic runs? From a standpoint of what was most important... what you really didn’t want to miss?

©: Oh, they were all strategic. The roughest ones, or the ones that were perfected the most, were the oil plants. That was what really did ‘em in finally. They had to start makin’ oil... out of wheat, and everything else... and of course, when they lost their oil supply down in Russia, the Ukraine and that area... And, so we bombed those [*oil refineries*], and of course, that’s what ran their tanks and their planes and so, they finally just kind of ran out of fuel. And, we’d bomb railroad centers... you know where their transportation and stuff... and bridges and dams.

One of the interesting ones, we bombed ships in the harbor of France. We used gas jelly bombs; rather than bombs, we dropped gas jelly. That was one of the spookiest ones, because they used airdrop tanks and they filled them full of gas jel... and, the fumes... even a spark could set them off; I didn’t even want to use my radio, you know? And, that was kind of spooky. I was tickled

to death when they got rid of those things. They dropped 'em on the ships, and I guess, the gas gel would ... supposedly it would burn 'em up in the ship... it was kind of an experiment.

We usually used high explosive bombs for factories, airplane and ball bearing factories...

®: A lot of the 500-lb bombs?

©: 2000-lb bombs were about the biggest. Well, the British had some bigger ones that called for certain things... but, so that's uh ... you know when you talk, you start thinkin' about more things...



B-17 FORMATION IN THE CLOUDS

[Source: Courtesy of 463rd Bomb Group, 15th AAF - <http://www.463rd.com/flights.htm>]

®: I'm curious about what you think was the shortest mission and what was the longest mission [*that you flew on*]?

©: Well, the shortest one was on the French Coast – that was kinda considered what you called a 'milk run'. That's when you have a quick drop and there wasn't much anti-aircraft fire there.

®: I'd heard from some people in Romania that we had bombed the oil fields in Ploiesti also, now was that B-17's, or was that from a different ...it would have been too far...[*geographically speaking to make an air strike in Romania from a base in England*]...

©: That was from Italy, and that was B-24's, Liberator Bombers... that's the kind John [*Finfrock*] flew in, but he of course... he was in the South Pacific. That was a mixed up raid, a screwed up raid.

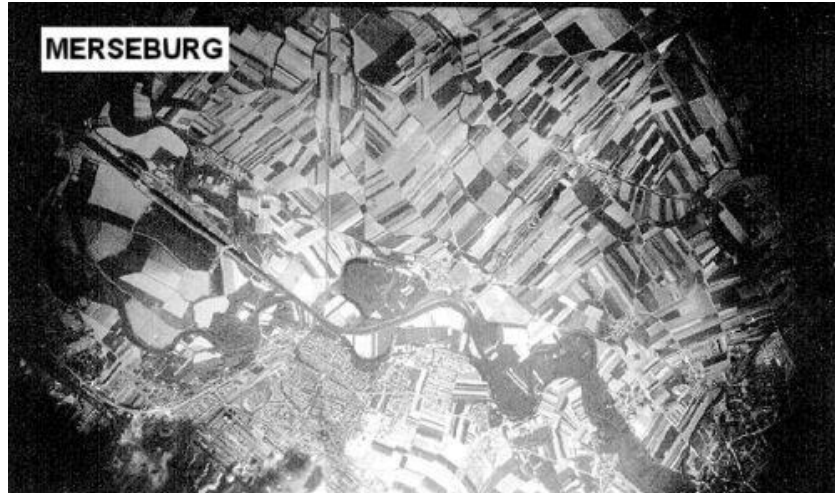
®: How's that?

©: Oh, there were a lot of reasons. The lead plane led 'em the wrong way once, and they bombed other things... and at the low altitude – I mean, you could read all about that, I wasn't there, but I read about that. So, they had to come back and do it all over again. And, they lost a

lot of planes coming in at the low altitude; they tried low altitude bombing. Those big bombers weren't good for that; they could get shot down too easily.

But, the oil refineries seemed to be well protected, cause that was their lifeblood. You never knew what it was going to be like till you got there... and back.

®: And, the longest one [*mission*] ?



STRIKE PHOTO – MERSEBURG

“A DEADLY OIL TARGET” – THE 2ND MISSION FOR THE DAWSON CREW
[from the collection of the 100th Bomb Group]

©: Oh, it was clear on the other side of Berlin. I think Merseburg was over there... that was one of the oil refineries... and factories. And, Kospus was in that area... and we bombed Berlin a couple of three times, and of course that was a heavily defended target being the capitol.

©: Most of them [*bombing runs*] were in the Ruhr Valley where the plants were... and, then Dresden, which was kind of an infamous one... wrecked the best of the city, but that was mostly the British, with their incendiary bombs. And, we came in and bombed too then.

(MF): Dresden's the one that's talked about because it wasn't strategic militarily. They just did it for the psychological effect?

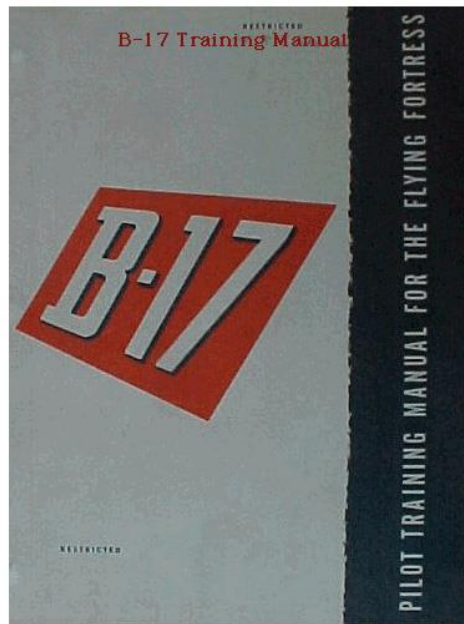
©: Yeah, they got sandwiched I think we bombed some railroads there, but the damage had already been done. I think there was something like... nearly 100,000 people killed.

The British did that all the time – indiscriminate bombing. They just went over and bombed, and as I say, they bombed at night, and each plane was an individual raid.

They'd come in at a town... come in at a target... all different altitudes and from all different directions... sending in pathfinders first to drop flares where the target was and then these planes comin' in at night would see where the flares went, and they'd just drop 'around' there. They were after cities and people. And, that's why they called him 'Bomber Smith', the guy that... even the British didn't even award him any awards after the war because he was killin' so many civilians, you know.

®: Going back to your training, you mentioned yesterday when we were talking briefly [*but not being recorded*] ... where were you, and how long were you in the training phases?

©: Well, I got in the service about 10-days after I graduated from Hi-School. I first went up to Chanute Air Force Base, a bunch of guys... we wanted to be pilots.



B-17 PILOT'S TRAINING MANUAL

PILOT'S TRAINING MANUAL

[Used with permission from Patricia E. Mullaney]

©: I went up and I passed all the tests real well, and then it came to the colorblind test and I flunked it! And, they said you'll never fly. So, anyhow I waited and then volunteered to go right after high school. So, I went and I was inactive duty from about, I guess the 15th, 16th or 17th of June, and then went active duty July-1st.

My induction center was at Battle Creek, Michigan, Ft. Custer. And we were there 3-4 days, and were put on a troop train and didn't have any idea where we were going. So that morning I woke up and I looked out and there was a lot of ships being built, big ships... and uh, I said "Where in the heck are we, on the coast?"... I mean, we just left Michigan the last evening? And, I found out we were at Evansville, Indiana where they were building ocean going ships right on the Ohio River and then they'd transport them down the Mississippi River going out. So we found that out. I was on the old 'L&N', the Louisville and Nashville Railroad.

Then, we kept headin' south, but we didn't have very high priority, we were shuttled over to the side all the time. Finally we got down to Biloxi, Mississippi, Keesler Field, and that was my basic training. And, I was there for about 2-1/2 months. I gained 30 some pounds.

®: Was that pretty intense training would you say?

©: Yeah, it was intense training, but uh... I'd been in athletics all my life, and I was 130-lbs when I got out of high school, and when I got out of there, I was 165-lbs! That food that we ate and stuff like that. And, we had classes all morning, and in the afternoon we had two hours of drill and two hours of PT [*physical training*] in that hot Mississippi sun... in a drained swamp!

So, at the end of that [*PT*], they would race us... I'd say... about ¼ mile or ½ mile across the sand ... and the winner got a milkshake. Well, I was a quarter-miler; I won every damn milkshake... (Ha-ha-ha)... and that's where I think I caught all the weight.



TALL AVOCADO-GREEN MILKSHAKE GLASS

[Source: from <http://cgi.ebay.com/ws/eBayISAPI.dll>]

©: I remember one night, we were out there ... you remember Biloxi...

(Dad): Oh, yeah!

©: But, you wouldn't know where Back Bay was... we were in a place called Back Bay... a drained swamp, and we had to stand guard duty out there as part of our training. And I was always afraid of the damn snakes cause I remember in the daytime a lady... there was one house where that lady would kill a snake, and she'd hold it up and show you! Boy, I didn't like...

Anyhow, we were out one night, and I was always worried about snakes, and a pack of wild dogs kinda started surrounding me, and attacked me, and oh God, that scared the hell out of me. I called the other guards, and finally we ran them off. That was kind of the worst fear I have ever had, they were kind of like surrounding me like I was fresh meat.

I went back there a few years later and now there's nice brick homes in there, and all the Generals and Colonels and Majors and everybody live back there. A fancy place. It was kind of a crummy town, Biloxi at that time, and old army town. I think I got off the base only a couple of times in 2-1/2 months.

Then I went from there to Sioux Falls, South Dakota for 6 months of radio school, or 5 months...



**CPL. CHANCY A. FINFROCK & OLDER BROTHER LARRY
AT RADIO SCHOOL – SIOUX FALLS, SOUTH DAKOTA**

[from the personal photo collection of Larry Finfrock – copied from a Kodachrome slide]

(Dad): See, that's where Mama and I met Chan! We went up there to visit him.

©: Yeah, I was up there long enough to [*have some visitors*] ...yeah... and Mom and Bob [*the youngest of the four Finfrock brothers*] came out there to visit me...

- END OF TAPE RECORDING, SIDE ONE -

**THE CASSETTE TAPE WAS NOT TURNED OVER TO SIDE 2 QUICKLY ENOUGH
AND SOME OF THE INTERVIEW AT THIS POINT UNFORTUNATELY WENT
UNRECORDED; THE BELOW DETAILS WERE SHARED LATER BY LETTER.
[From Uncle Chan to Nephew Randy Finfrock]**

**THIS WAS AN ATTEMPT TO FILL-IN SOME OF THE INFORMATION THAT WAS NOT
RECORDED (DETAILS ABOUT HIS TRAINING STATESIDE, AND TO TELL OF THE
ROUTE TAKEN TO ENGLAND VIA THE NORTHEAST & OVER THE ATLANTIC).**

BELOW WAS TYPED VERBATIM FROM CHAN'S LETTER DATED, 01 Mar 1999 :

“ Dear Randy,

After radio school I was sent to Yuma, Arizona for gunnery school. That was about April, May and June of 1944. We lived in tents. Very hot in the daytime and cold at night, being in the

desert. There were 500 students in the class and I finished in the top five. We shot all kinds of guns. The thing I most enjoyed was shooting skeet on a running truck around a course with clay pigeons flying out at us from all angles and heights. You couldn't buy that type of fun.

We shot shotguns, rifle training guns, machine guns 50 caliber like cannons. Air to air target shooting at targets towed behind planes. I remember one incident where a student shot down the tow plane. We also had air to ground strafing of targets. This was over a hot desert at low altitude and was therefore extremely bumpy flying, so many students got deathly sick and threw up. So one of the big problems was the smell of the planes when you got in them in the mornings, so everyone started getting sick again.

From Yuma, Arizona we went to Rapid City, South Dakota for overseas combat training. That's where we met all the new crewmembers and trained together as a complete crew. We went to our schools there, me Radio, etc. We learned formation flying, grouping in squadrons, and groups and various things we needed to know for combat. We were there till August, when I got my first leave to Urbana. It was 10 days. It was the only leave I got while the war was on. Was home about 6 days because of crowded train traffic during the war.

When I got back from leave, we went to Lincoln, Nebraska to assemble with other bombers to fly over to England. We flew from Nebraska to Bangor, Maine. From there to Goose Bay, Labrador then up to Greenland over night and then on into the British Isles. I was so interested to observe the British Isles from the air that I forgot to wind in my 200-foot long trailing radio antenna. The first I knew about it was when the tower called our plane and informed me about it in no uncertain terms.

I'll reply later about service to the country at that time.



Love,
Chan ”

ENCLOSED WITH ABOVE March 1st LETTER WAS THE FOLLOWING NOTE:

“I thought you might be interested in a copy of a picture that appeared in the ***History of Champaign, Illinois*** in 1993. It shows Joan, Myself and Mom at the Illinois Central Station where I was met on VJ-Day. - Chan ” -

[*PHOTOCOPY of a page from this book shows a close up of Joan Hill (soon to be Mrs. Joan Finfrock), Chan Finfrock, and Grace Belle (Dallenbach) Finfrock*]



CAPTION (UNDER PHOTO OF JOAN, CHAN AND GRACE) :
"HUGS WERE VERY MUCH IN ORDER AS LOVED ONES WERE TOGETHER AGAIN AFTER A LONG ABSENCE."



"At last the war was ended, the men and women of Champaign who had served so courageously were able to come home again. As captured in these photographs, downtown was the scene of the wildest, most exuberant celebration ever."

- CONTINUING... (SIDE 2 OF THE CASSETTE RECORDING) -

...upon arriving at the B-17 bomber base in England :

©: ... and, I went to my barracks; the whole barracks had been wiped out the day before... five (5) crews... and I thought, “My God, I’m never gonna get out of this place”, you know.



350TH BOMB SQUADRON PATCH
[from the collection of the 100th Bomb Group]

I got there just when things started gettin’ a little bit better. But, I thought, “My God, send my stuff home, I’m never gonna get home.” It’s not good morale to come into a base...a barracks, when they’ve all been lost in a raid the day before! And, anyhow, I got lucky.

(MF): Chan, did I hear you say that you are colorblind?

©: Yeah...

(Dad): Oh yeah!

(MF): Both of you?

(Dad): Yeah!

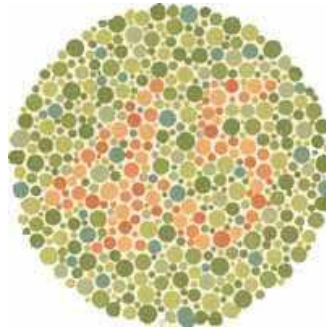
©: Well, I tell you... the test, you know... they said I’d never fly in the Air Force when I was up at Chanute [*an Air Force Base in Illinois, north of Chan’s hometown*], but they started losin’ so many people in the 8th Air Force...they needed... when they need guys, the service has a good way of gettin’ ‘em. So I went to Keesler Field in basic training... see it was the Army then... so I was in the Air Force branch of the Army.

©: So I got out on this big parade field, and there was a couple of guys sittin’ at a card table about 200 feet away, and a line of guys ahead of me - that long [*gesturing*] - and probably behind me too; I just remember lookin’ ahead... and they had 5 balls of yarn on that card table - red, white, blue and two tan ones. And, when the guy came up to the table, they said pick out the red, white and blue one.

Well, first of all, you could see the guy ahead of you doin’ it, and second of all, any fool could tell red, white and blue from two of the same color...(Ha-ha)... the flag was red, white and blue!

If you flunked that, they'd have probably put you in the guardhouse! (Ha-ha, Ha-ha-ha). So that's how... that's the Army way.

(MF): So, that's how you got by that?



SPOT TEST FOR COLOR BLINDNESS

ONE WITH NORMAL COLOR VISION WOULD SEE THE NUMBER ' 45 ' WITHIN THE SPOTS;
SOMEONE THAT IS RED-GREEN COLOR BLIND HOWEVER, WOULD ONLY SEE SPOTS.

[Source: from 'Omni-Know Site' on Color Blindness, <http://www.toledo-bend.com/colorblind/Ishihara.html>]

©: Well, I got by it... and, you couldn't get by it, I don't think! Those spot tests though, I could never do.

(MF): Everyone in our family heard Papa Frock waked up one night saying: "Chan's in trouble."

(Dad): I knew when he was shot down!

(MF): So what happened?

©: Well, he said he put some 'evidence' in a lock box, or somethin'?

(Dad): I still got 'the Chiclets'; still in there. [*This event had impacted him so that Dad kept the little Chiclets gum box in his safe deposit box! See the rest of the story in the addenda, page 54*]

(MF): So you got shot down one time?

©: Yeah, yeah...

(Dad): Oh, yeah... I knew it!

©: Well, I was tellin' about that before you came in. Well, we got hit by anti-aircraft fire goin' into France; on the French coast: there was still some German's on the coast and anti-aricraft batteries that they by-passed... and when we got to the French-Luxembourg border, about that time, our plane... apparently [*anti-aircraft fire*] hit the gas line, and around the hot engines, the plane caught fire.

We were about 28,000 feet at the time, and well, it just kept growin'... and when your plane caught fire with nearly 33,000 gallons of high-octane gas, and a bomb load, you didn't stay in 'em long, you know what I mean... they blew up... I'd seen planes blow up... [*in that condition*]

(MF): So you were up at 28,000 feet?

©: Yeah...

(Dad): Get the heck out of here!

©: So, well... he [*the pilot, Lt. Dawson*] dove once to try to put it out and it wouldn't go out... it just fanned it worse...so he said bail out...and, uh... So, as I've said ...well, you'll have to hear that tape... I don't wanna repeat all that again. Anyhow, I got my parachute on, which was fallin' apart that mornin' when I picked it up in the barracks. I just stuck it back in...



WWII PARATROOPER PARACHUTE

THE BOTTOM OF THE PARACHUTE IS AN OPEN CIRCLE TO LET THE AIR GO THROUGH.
THE 28 INDIVIDUALLY NUMBERED STRINGS ALL MEET AT THE CENTER OF THE OPENING.

[Source: http://www.quanonline.com/military/military_reference/german/parachute.html]

I'd been on several missions... didn't think anything of it. First thing I thought about: "I wonder if that parachutes gonna work"? So, I had to jump. Some of 'em jumped out the bomb-bay, and some of 'em jumped out the front hatch, some of 'em jumped out the back door on the fuselage... that's where I jumped out.



RIGHT SIDE FUSELAGE DOOR – CHAN'S EXIT

WINGS OF FREEDOM TOUR

[Source: [photo by Randy Finrock 10/25/2005, Tulsa, OK](#)]

©: Jumped out the first time, and the wind threw me back in...couldn't jump out. And boy, that really panicked me. I didn't try too hard I s'pose (giggle) the first (time). So, then I jumped out real quick and pulled the ripcord too quick and just about hit the tail with that. But, I was getting' so frantic at that time cause I wanted to get out before it blew up!

And, as I said, I timed it and it took me close to 15 minutes to get down in that parachute. I lit in a forest.

®: It's a lot like Papa Frock, timing things, right?

(MF): Boy, you were way up there!

(Dad): Oh yeah!

©: Oh yeah, well about 5 miles nearly. And, it was like, you know... probably -50 to -60 below zero when you jumped out.

(MF): Could'a fell for a ways and been better off, huh?



TYPICAL WWII CANOPY, LESS A FEW PANELS

[Source: Photo from Ronald Helwig (B Co., 1st ABG, 1960-62),
ENS Gary W. Hardy, II, WWII Reenactor. <http://currahee.hispeed.com/jump2002wwii.htm>]

©: Well, you know, that was my first parachute jump, they didn't tell you how to parachute, and I was going to make damned sure...

®: ...it opened

(Dad): (Ha-ha)

©: Well, first thing I wanted to get out and under a parachute. You didn't really think. Most ... a lot of people did that. Well, when paratroopers jumped out, they were tied to a static line, so it was automatic. And, the static line was just beyond the tail. I heard a lot of guys who had to bail out say they just missed the tail... some of 'em got hung up on the tail. So, then the French Underground picked me up and I told 'em all that, and I don't wanna go through all that again [*Chan had already related this earlier in the tape to other family members*]. It was interesting!

(MF): How long did it take you to get back to the Allied forces?

©: Several days. They sent a telegram to my parents that I was missin' in action. And, you know, they didn't know where we were for 2-3 days... cause we were out in no-man's land, it was during the Battle of the Bulge.

(Dad): See, and that's when I was coming from Oklahoma to Michigan, up to Urbana, and I knew, that you...(looking at Chan and with a broken voice trailing off in a tearful recollection)... you were okay! I just knew it!! [*See addenda, page 54, for the "ESP experience"*]

©: But, anyhoo... boy, we're getting' a crowd in here... (lots of background noise and clattering with everyone gathering in the adjoining room near the kitchen).

(Dad): Yeah...

©: Well, one of the most memorable things ... I was in the 100th bomb group, and I came back and I didn't hear from the 100th bomb group for 45-years! But, when I was leavin' England, they assigned me to a different bomb group, I was gonna go into B-29's in Japan.

See, I was headin' for Japan then. And, I was on the Queen Elizabeth in the middle of the ocean when they dropped the Atomic Bomb! Well, we didn't know what the hell the Atomic Bomb was either... nobody ever heard of it, you know what I mean...but, it sounded real bad! .And I thought: "I hope somebody don't drop it on our ship out here!" (Ha-ha)... We were... anyhow... so, that was a memorable thing going back [to the states]... and when we got to New York, we pulled into the Hudson or East River, I don't know which one... uh, probably the Hudson River, and that's just after that B-25 bomber rammed into the Empire State Building, and we could still see the smoke comin' from that.



THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING PLANE CRASH

B-25 BOMBER HITS 78TH FLOOR – 28 JULY 1945

Photo by Ernie Sisto / New York Times

[Source: www.evesmaq.com/empirestatecrash.htm]

(MF): I never heard about that!

©: Oh yeah. A B-25 bomber in a cloud, ran into the... I don't know... the 70, 80, 90th floor of the Empire State Building...probably the 70th floor... and it started quite a fire and a lot of disturbance, and there was still smoke comin' from that when we came in the ship there.

®: Oh that happened right when you were comin' into the harbor?

©: No, days before, but there was still a lotta smoke comin' from... you know, that was the tallest building in the world, and they didn't really have fire things like they have now... they

had to fight that fire up at the top floors for awhile...and, uh... so, there was still smoke... I don't know... but it didn't happen long before [*we came into the harbor*]... but, I remember that.

Then we went into Ft. Deven's, NJ, and then from there I went to Ft. Sheridan, IL. And from Ft. Sheridan, I got a 30-day leave to Urbana. And then from there, after the 30-day leave, I had enough points to get out, and they sent me to San Antonio... all the airbases down there... Kelly Field, and SAC, and all those bases. And we were there 2-3 weeks, and they sent me over to Shreveport, and I was finally mustered out at Shreveport.

®: You said you had enough points to get out? What, how did they rate you... did you have... by missions... ?

©: Well, yeah...points... well, you gotta remember, there were 13 million guys in the service, – and they all wanted... wanted out... you know!! So they assigned points...

(Dad): Every dang one of 'em! [*all, lighthearted laughter in background*]

©: So, they assigned points based on, length of service... a lot of guys had a lot more length... I went in about 3... a little under 3 years... But then, I was in combat for about a year – and you got points...heavily... points for combat troops. And uh, I can't remember what all the criteria was, but you had to have so many points, and I had that.

®: How many missions did you fly all total?



LINED UP ON MAIN RUNWAY AT WAR'S END, MOSTLY PFF AIRCRAFT
THORPE ABBOTTS MUSEUM COLLECTION

[Source: www.100thbg.com/mainmenu/base/images06/3]

©: Well, 26 official missions, but I flew probably as many unofficial missions; you know, weather missions out over... which you got shot at once in a while... but they didn't count. But, they probably... goin' on those kind of missions probably had a lot to do with me gettin' through.

©: You know, I didn't have to fly as many combat missions in a row... cause we flew other kinds of missions. And, we had to take training... we had to train crews... where we took a lot of training flights with the new crews comin' in, and stuff like that.

®: Were you really disappointed when they told you that you were color blind, and that you couldn't ever be a pilot?

©: Oh, I was... and well, gosh... you gotta [*understand*]... WW-II was different than any time we've ever had in the history of the country that I've been around... it was unique. It was unique. Everybody...(a slight pause)... felt like they had to be in the war. I mean that.

(Dad): Sure... You see, I volunteered over at the University [*University of Illinois*]. And, the first thing they said was: "You're too short!"

©: Well, then they got you [*brother, Larry*] into mining, with a geology degree you got into...

(Dad): I got deferred...

©: ... strategic ... yeah...

®: ...with the 'War Manpower Commission' [*first serving as a geologist in Montana in the Chromium mines (Mouat Mine was one) to supply the war effort with critical raw materials; and later with the TVA in Bristol, Virginia at the South Holston Dam and Fontana Dam sites*]

(Dad): Yeah, the 'War Manpower Commission'...

[Note: "The War Manpower Commission was established within the Office for Emergency Management by an executive order of April 18, 1942, to 'formulate plans and programs and establish basic national policies to assure the most effective mobilization and maximum utilization of the nation's manpower in the prosecution of the war'."]

Source: http://www.archives.gov/research_room/arc/topics/wwii.html#docs]



"UNITED WE WIN" POSTER

PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEXANDER LIBERMAN, 1943

*Printed by the Government Printing Office for the War Manpower Commission
NARA Still Picture Branch (NWDNS-44-PA-370)*

[Source: www.archives.gov/exhibit_hall/powers_of_persuasion/unity/we_win/unity.html]

®: I know I was talking with my Mom a couple months ago about, uh... WW-II and how she felt about it, because she was about... well she was your age...

©: Yeah...

®: You were both born in the same year? [*mother and Uncle Chan born in 1925*]

©: Sure.

®: But, you know... she saw many of her friends from school go off to war, and she said, “But, you know, everybody... ”... just like what you said... “Everybody wanted to” [serve] at that time...

©: Oh...

(Dad): Sure...

®: ...it was the patriotic...

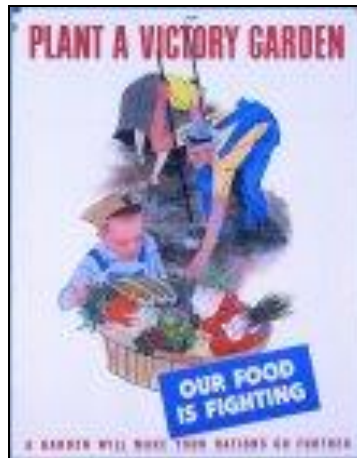
(Dad): ...that was the thing to do...

©: Everybody was in the war... civilians and everything else. I mean they...

(Dad): First time, I was too short...

©: ...everybody had ‘Victory gardens’...and all that.

[Note: “Because commercially canned goods were rationed, the Victory Garden became an indispensable source of food for the home front. The Victory Garden was a household activity during the war and one of the most well received of all home front chores.”]



VICTORY GARDEN POSTER, 1943 (28 X 22")

ARTIST UNKNOWN. OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION POSTER, NO. 34

[Source: www.nh.gov/ww2/ww18.html]

(Dad): ...and, then I was color blind... *[as if trying to justify that he had tried diligently to get into several of the armed forces, but was denied entry each time]*

©: ... and war rationing... you know, they had rationing of everything... *[so that everything possible went toward the war effort]*...

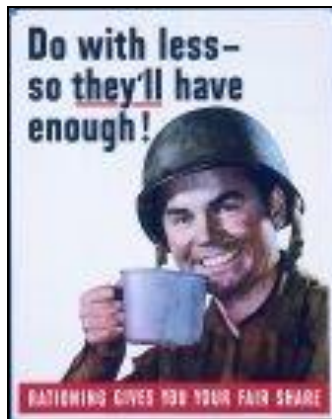
®: Yeah, Mom and Dad told me about the shoe rations... and then the uh...

©: Oh, you name it...

®: ...sugar rationing...

©: Gas rationing was the biggest one.

[Note: During the last three years of WWII, Americans needed ration stamps to purchase products such as meat, cheese, canned goods, sugar, butter, shoes and gasoline. A typical allocation of sugar was 12 ounces per week. Auto validation stamps permitted three gallons of gas a week. One pair of shoes a year was the norm between February 1943 and October 1945.]

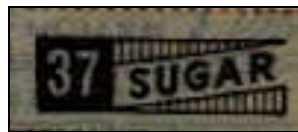


DO WITH LESS SO THEY'LL HAVE ENOUGH, 1943 (28 X 22")

ARTIST UNKNOWN. OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION POSTER, NO. 37

[Source: www.nh.gov/ww2/ww12.html]

(Dad): I'd send Mom and Dad my [ration] stamp that I'd get every month... for sugar. I'd send it to them... 5-lbs.



SAMPLE SUGAR RATIONING STAMP

[Source: www.quanonline.com/military/military_reference/american/war_ration.html]

®: Because, they needed it for the family?

(Dad): Right, and they'd make me some cookies and send 'em [to me]...

®: That was a good deal!

©: What'd they... did they feed you separately then, where you worked?

(Dad): I was in Woodward, Oklahoma then.

© Well, I mean, you just sent the sugar stamp only [*back home*]?

(Dad): Yeah. I had to have food stamps...

©: Well, where did you eat, in restaurants, or what?

(Dad): In restaurants... [*you could see him begin to reflect on those days*]

©: So, you didn't need a rationing stamp?

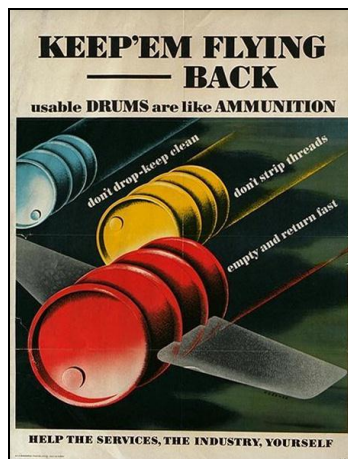
(Dad): I'd walk in, and they said: "Larry's here!" [*reminiscing*] They knew what I wanted!

®: That's neat!

©: Yeah, garsh... even for awhile after the war, you had bald tires... you know what I mean?

(Dad): Right!

©: And, then they invented those 're-treads'. I think that was about the last tire I had back in the war. But, I didn't notice rationing; course I was in the service, and didn't have it. But, even when I was at home... for a year or two... that was my parent's job (laugh) to worry about the rationing. So, I didn't get into that part too much.



KEEP 'EM FLYING BACK, 1943 (68 X 54 CM.)

ARTIST, HENRY KOERNER. OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT POSTER, USGPO.

[Source: Northwestern Univ. Library, www.library.northwestern.edu/otcgi/digilib/llscgi60]

©: Oh yeah, there were some scrap metal drives.

(Dad): Oh yeah...



SCRAP AND SALVAGE DEPOT, BUTTE, MONTANA
RUSSELL LEE, PHOTOGRAPHER – PUBL: OCT 1942
[Source: *Transfer*; FSA-OWI, 1944 – Library of Congress]

©: ...all the pots and pans, and they'd tear down iron fences, and raid all the junkyards, you know... all that metal was used.

(Dad): A lot of it went to Japan.

©: Well no, I'm talking about after the war started.

(Dad): Oh...

©: A lot of it was dropped on Japan... but, before that, it went to Japan by ship. But after that [*the war starting up*] they stopped it...

So, I was going to be trained on B-29's when they dropped the... [*the atomic bomb*]... well, I got home in Urbana-Champaign on 'VJ Day'. I was in Chicago, there was a big celebration... I came from Ft. Sheridan north into Chicago down to the train ... and that place was wild.

Then, I got into Urbana-Champaign, at the train station, and they were still celebratin' there. And uh... I guess you've never seen... there's a book, a history of Champaign-Urbana...and there's a picture in there... somebody gave me a copy of that book, and there was a picture of uh... at the train station on 'VJ Day' of Mom, and JoAn and me, and I was gettin' off of the train... and uh... I never knew the picture was ever taken! Nor, did anybody else. [*see Page-33*]

But, when they put that book together that picture was in there, and I was lookin' through it, and I said: "Boy, that looks familiar"... and, it was ME, and my WIFE TO BE and GRANDMA [*Chan's mother*]... all happy smiles on our faces.

And, I was showin' that to friends of mine, and I'd say: "I'm in there."... and I'd give 'em it, and show 'em that page and, there were other pictures of the end of the war on there [*3 photos on the same page*] ... and I'd say: "Now, pick me out!" There was just 3 of us on there, two women and me, and nobody ever found it!

There were big group pictures of soldiers and stuff; they were lookin' all through that, in the street and in the cars, and all that... so, it's in that book, Champaign history book, and then I got a later one of Urbana. Mom's in there a couple of times, even when she was in the University... and Aunt Mamie. I've got it at home. It was just an edition for town, you know. But, it's kinda interestin'.



**TECH. SGT. CHANCY A. FINROCK, HOME FROM EUROPE
IN THE BACKYARD OF HIS PARENT'S HOME IN URBANA, ILLINOIS**

[from the personal photo collection of Larry Finrock – copied from a Kodachrome slide]

®: That's neat! Do you still keep up with any of the people that were on your crews? And, do you ever hear from them... Christmas cards...?

©: Oh, uh... I saw that guy in 1991 or '92, or '93, at Jordan, Mississippi...and, a couple of years ago. The co-pilot ... after we bailed out, the co-pilot we never saw any more... he didn't make it... He didn't make the lead crew. And, uh... He called one night, a couple of years ago. And, I called a couple or three of my *[fellow]* crewmen... a couple of times, but they were old men; they sounded like old men. (Ha-ha).

So, I just never was that close to... on the crew anyhow. My friends... I had other friends... they were just a couple of guys from... one of 'em... one of 'em and me used to get in fights all the time... a big guy from Milwaukee. Obviously, we didn't like each other. (Ha-ha-ha).

®: I guess not!

©: Oh, I mean, I'd go to London with 'em and stuff like that. But, I never buddied with 'em. There were other people in other crews that I'd spend more time with.

®: Do you think part of that is also the reason that you mentioned that you got re-assigned officially to this other group, that you never really served with...?

©: Well, I presume my whole crew got re-assigned at the same time. And, we knew we were goin' to Japan, and goin' in to train on B-29's; well obviously, the 100th bomb group wouldn't have been there. So, apparently this other bomb group that I got in, was assigned a B-29... I don't know... I never did really look into... I just told them: "I was never in your bomb group!"

Then, of course, my records left the 100th Bomb Group, and when they started their thing [*"Splasher Six" Newsletter*], they didn't have records of it.



100TH BOMB GROUP FOUNDATION'S NEWSLETTER

CINDY GOODMAN, EDITOR

[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com/index.htm>]

So, I ended up knowin' more about that other bomb group, the history of it... cause I read 'em... their magazines... for 30-years or so.

©: Then, of course, when I found out about it, I got the 100th bomb group [*newsletter*], and now they got too old and they can't write 'em anymore... so, they don't have 'em anymore. Kids and grandchildren took it over for awhile.

®: They don't get together anymore as far as the 100th Bomb Group?

©: Well, I don't know ... all the letters just stopped all of a sudden. I joined and had a lifetime membership, so I presumed that if they had a publication I'd be gettin' it, but I haven't gotten it now for about 3 or 4 years. Well, the guy that did it for 30-40 years, he quit and when he quit, somebody's daughter took it up for awhile, but I don't think she continued it.

®: Well that's fascinating. Well, thanks for sharing all that! That's going to be fun ... I'm sure our guys will enjoy listening to this...

©: Oh, you're welcome.

(DM): You were on a B-17? [*having just come into the room; everyone arriving for Christmas*]

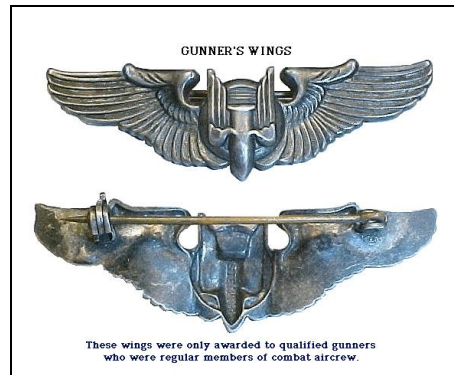
©: Yeah.

(DM): My grandfather was a B-17 pilot. He was shot down over Italy... prisoner of war in Stalag 17.

©: Yeah... yeah, I was shot down, but I didn't get caught.

(DM): Where did you do your flight training?

©: What do you mean, on regular flights...well, I was a radio operator. But I did my Overseas Training – well, gunnery school was my first in a bomber, in a B-17... and later on we went up to Rapid City, South Dakota for our Overseas Training.



GUNNER'S WINGS

[Used with permission from Patricia E. Mullaney]

(DM): And, you flew I guess... '8th' out of England?

©: Yeah, 8th Air Force.

(DM): Okay, he was '12th' out of North Africa.

©: Yeah... well I went down to North Africa once... I think after the war... went down to Morocco. It was interesting too. Yeah, I was telling Randy, he was asking about that Ploiesti raid, and they came out of Italy.

(DM): Yeah.

©: B-24's though... they were B-24's that raided Ploiesti.

(CT): Uncle Chan, when you were shot down, how did you get back? *[most everyone, as they came in to gather for Christmas with the family, seemed to ask Uncle Chan the same question!]*

©: Walked! (Ha-ha)

(CT): Was the underground working with you? Did they...

©: Well, they picked us up, yeah... finally... I mean, they didn't know who we were...and we didn't know who they were...so there was a lot of jockeying around... I just told about it on there *[the tape recording earlier]* ... Kind of a long story, but... anyhow...

I got my chute out of the trees and went over to where they had fire lanes in the forest. Found a fire lane, fortunately pretty close to one, or I wouldn't have even known to look for one. I looked

out and didn't see anything. And, I know the first thing is that people can see parachutes coming down; and if they want you, they go where the parachutes came down... so I kinda hid out. And, I kept lookin' out, and later on I looked down and I saw some guys with guns on a couple of my crewmen down there where two fire lanes crossed, and said to myself: "Well, that doesn't look too hot". So, I ducked back in... and was peeking around... I was like a ¼ mile or ½ mile away; couldn't see things real well... and then all of a sudden, I saw them pattin' 'em on the back and shakin' their hands so I said: 'Well, that looks better! So, maybe I'll go down there?' (Ha-ha). So, I went down there and it was the French Underground that lived in the forest.

And, so they... we... walked for 3-4 hours, or 5... I don't know. It was hot, 'cause I was in my flight suit, walkin' in my flight boots and we walked to a village; and I was tellin' Randy, we went through one of them where the whole village came out, like a parade.

And, some girl gave me a diamond... not a diamond... a gold ring, that said: what is the three words with the "equality, fraternity"... I don't know. I've still got it; I wore it too... through the whole...[war]

And, just passin' through town, I had my parachute... and all the women wanted the parachute silks for: "Pantaloons, pantaloons!" [they would call out]. Anyhow, we got to a place, to a 'strong-point', where the army had put artillery on the road there... so we stayed there that night and they had a big dance for us. That's where we shared the parachute, and all the women got the parachute.

[Note: Supplies were limited during the war. "Women made their own bras from paper patterns or magazine guidelines for making bra and French knicker sets. The fabric they used was sometimes parachute silk, parachute nylon or old satin wedding dresses".

Source: www.fashion-era.com]

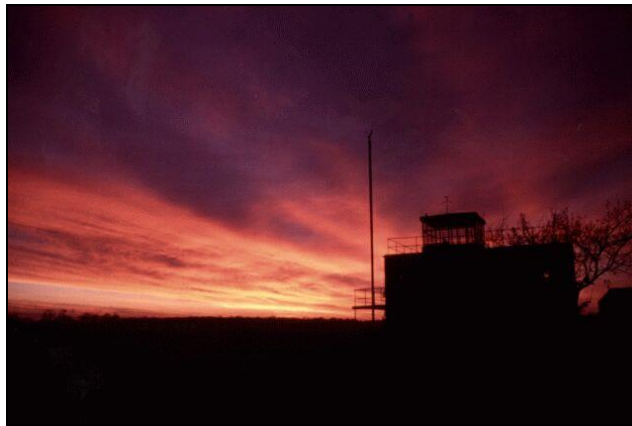
And, I was tellin' 'em, I went into the john there, and I was sittin' in the john... I hadn't been goin' since like 4:30 in the morning... and they had a little wall about this high around it [Chan motioned with his hand, palm facing down and horizontal to the floor, and just about level with the arm of the chair that he was sitting in – indicating around 2 feet tall], and nobody was in there...kinda relaxed you know... and all of a sudden 3 girls come in.

And, the john, you're sittin' on there - tryin' to go you know, and boy, that tightened me up real quick! And they went over to the sink and the mirror, and they were pullin' their skirts up and their blouses down, actin' like I 'wudden' even in there, you know. Well, then I found out that that's what they did over there, you know... finally! But that was a different culture. But, I remember that very well.

(CT): I'll bet you do.

©: And, then we went out to the dance. It was a big shindig for a little village.

And, then we... I don't know. We finally took an army truck and went for miles to an airbase; a medium bomber base I guess it was– and picked up a C-3 transport to get back – but that was like a week later.



'BACK HOME' AT THORPE ABBOTTS , STATION 139 - CONTROL TOWER

[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com/mainmenus/base/images/sunset.jpg>]

©: And, as I say, our barracks had been cleaned out - and all our clothes - and everything else! They didn't even know where we were for a few days.

(CT): Thank God you made it back.

©: Yeah.

(Dad): Yep!

(CT): Well, I'd always heard about the shooting down and Daddy knowing when you were shot down and knowing you were all right, but I'd never heard how you got back.

(Dad): Oh yeah! French Underground.

©: Just... just uh, through a series of things...

(Dad): Yep.

(DM): Do you keep up with your reunions?

©: Well, as I was tellin', at the end of the war, I was assigned [*re-assigned to another bomb grouping July 1945*] ... I knew I was goin' to the Pacific to train on B-29's cause the Japanese war was still on, see?

And, then when I was in the middle of the ocean, on the Queen Elizabeth, they dropped the atomic bombs on Japan. Well, we didn't know what they heck they were, but we heard what they did! [*We were thinking:*] Boy, I hope they don't drop something like that on this ship; there were 18,000 soldiers on it.

Anyhow, when I got home and got into NY, and finally Ft. Devens and back to Ft. Sheridan, when I was comin' down to Urbana, VJ day was started that day.

©: So, I saw all the celebrations in Chicago, and saw them all down in Champaign-Urbana, the day I came in [*by train*].



TECH. SGT. CHANCY A. FINROCK

A RETURN TO NORMALCY IN URBANA, ILLINOIS

[from the personal photo collection of Larry Finrock – copied from a Kodachrome slide]

(DM): Well, my grandfather trained at Parks Air College in Cahokia, Illinois.

©: Oh yeah, yeah... Cahokia... I've heard of Parks.

(DM): He was a flight instructor at Maxwell AFB. Did you fight in Korea?

©: No, didn't fight in Korea. Lot of my friends were... that stayed in, or stayed in reserves. They were called up, and lot of them made a career of it, after two wars. They figure, I got this much time in...

(DM): He joined the air corps in like 1938, so he was actually a career...

©: Oh, he was a lot older than I was... that's why he was an instructor, probably.

(DM): That's neat though, I've never met anybody else that's been on B-17's. He got shot down over Italy, and then got captured by angry Italian farmers whose village he had just bombed. So, they shot him!

©: Well, you know, some of the most dangerous people were civilians... and the Gestapo... SS, the Vermacht... the regular army wasn't that bad.

(DM): Once he got taken by the Germans, he said he was fine. It was the Italians that treated him so...

©: Yeah, well boy, they became your friends real quick once they... once we invaded and took it over, you'd think they were the best friends in the world, the Italians then. They... it's just like you saved France twice and now they don't stand up for you ever. You know France... but uh...

(Dad): Well, when are we gonna eat??

©: Are you hungry already?

(DCF): Mom's at the grocery store right now; we're eating shortly.

©: Mom's at the grocery store gettin' food to eat?? (Ha-Ha!!)

(Dad): Good night!! [*can't believe they had to go get MORE food*]

©: (Ha-Ha)... I know, there's plenty of food...

(DM): They're getting pimento cheese spread for the bread.

©: Well, there's bread here coming out our tutu; I understand Randy said we've got a lot of it...

(Dad): Well, pretty soon I'm going to have to start eatin' something.

©: Well, there's probably candies and cookies, and...

(Dad): No, I've cheated enough...

©: Whad'da you want? Maybe I can snag you something...

[And, so it was that the tape had to be stopped as everyone's tastebuds were primed and ready for the annual family Christmas dinner at Larry & Lois Finfrock's home in Dallas, Texas.]

END OF TAPED INTERVIEW

TECH. SGT.
CHANCY ALBERT FINFROCK

350th Squadron
100th Bomb Group (H)
Station 139, Thorpe Abbotts
3rd Air Division
13th Combat Wing
8th Air Force
USAAF Oct 1944 – Aug 1945



List of Names mentioned in this cassette tape recording
and their relationship to the interviewee:

© **Interviewee:** Tech. Sgt. Chancy Albert “Chan” Finfrock, of Venice, Florida (at the time of the interview), and a native of Urbana, Illinois.

® **Interviewer:** Lawrence Randall “Randy” Finfrock, nephew of Tulsa, Oklahoma (and, son of Larry & Lois Finfrock)

Others, in order of appearance during the taping:

(DF): David Wayne Finfrock, nephew, of Arlington, Texas (and son of Larry & Lois Finfrock)

(DCF): Diana Claire (Finfrock) Farrar, niece, of Carrollton, Texas (and daughter of Larry & Lois Finfrock)

(Dad): Lawrence Johnson “Larry” Finfrock, brother, of Dallas, Texas

(CM): Courtney Beth (Masser) Mayer, grand-niece of San Antonio, Texas (Carol’s daughter)

(MFS): Marilyn Grace (Finfrock) Stratmann, niece, of Weatherford, Texas (and daughter of Larry & Lois Finfrock)

(T): Randy Toombs, nephew, of Ft. Worth, Texas; (Carol’s husband)

(SF): Shari Finfrock, niece (David Finfrock’s wife)

(MF): Mike Farrar, nephew (Diana’s husband)

(DM): David Mayer, grand-nephew; Carol's son-in-law

(CT): Carol Virginia (Finfrock) Toombs, niece (and daughter of Larry Finfrock)

**TECH. SGT.
CHANCY ALBERT FINFROCK**

*** ADDENDA TO THE INTERVIEW ***

"I KNEW IT!" THE 'E.S.P. EXPERIENCE' OF CHAN'S BROTHER LARRY & THE BOX OF CHICLETS GUM

[from: recollections of my father, Larry Finfrock]

page 54

STATESIDE CREW PHOTO – RAPID CITY, S.D.

55

page

[from: John Lechleiter, orig. Co-Pilot on Dawson crew. Aug 1944; 'Overseas Combat Trng.']

FURLOUGH GRANTED – CREW E-46 AFTER 'OVERSEAS TRAINING', 25 AUG 1944

page 56

[from: Pat Mullaney, dau-in-law of Dick Mullaney Waist Gunner; furlough orders]

RECALLING SHARED BOMBING MISSIONS, BY 350TH SQUADRON'S 'TEX' LEONARD

page 57

[from: E-mail letter from Gayle Leonard dated 26 Dec 2004]

DETAILS ON SHARED MISSIONS AS RECORDED BY VARIOUS B-17 VETERANS OF 8TH

AAF page 58-87

[most from: 100th Bomb Group website & individual records and interviews]

V-E DAY AT THORPE ABBOTTS AIRBASE & THE 'CHOW HOUND' MISSIONS

88-92

page

LATE APRIL AND EARLY MAY 1945

[most data from: 100th Bomb Group website & Food Drop Missions]

TRANSITION FROM FOOD DROP MISSIONS TO SUPPORT MISSIONS TO AUSTRIA AND CASABLANCA;

PICKING UP DISPLACED PERSONS. LATE MAY AND JUNE 1945

page 93-95

[most data from: 100th Bomb Group website]

TRIBUTE PAGE TO THE WWII GENERATION. 'MAY YOUR DAYS BE MERRY & BRIGHT' AND MAY ALL YOUR CHRISTMASES BE WHITE.'

page 96

[photos from: 100th Bomb Group website]

*** AFTERWARDS / PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ***

EXCERPTS FROM A LETTER FROM WILLIAM A. CARLETON (351ST SQ ENGR OFFICER)...
IN REPLY TO AN ENGLISH SCHOLBOY'S QUESTIONS ABOUT THE 100TH BOMB GROUP.

Add #1

[from: 100th Bomb Group website & Office of War Information Photo Collection]

SOME OF WHAT THE FRENCH ENDURED. FRENCH RESISTANCE DURING WWII

Add #2

[from: Miquelon.org]

EXCERPTS FROM – 'FRANCE 1944, A VIEW FROM THE GROUND'

Add

#3

[from: WWII Memories of War.com]

FREEDOM ISN'T FREE – CALL A VETERAN TODAY AND TELL THEM THANK YOU !

Add #4

[from: Photo of officer in a phone booth from the 100th Bomb Group website]

"I KNEW IT!"

(SEE PAGES 35 & 38)

THE 'ESP' EXPERIENCE OF BROTHER LARRY FINROCK

[story as told by my father, Larry Finrock]

CHAN



(FEB 1945)



LARRY

On the occasion of Chan's plane catching fire and the Dawson crew bailing out over the French and Luxembourg border inbound to the target of Nurnburg on 20 Feb 1945, Chan's older brother Larry was mysteriously awakened on the other side of the world in Woodward, Oklahoma. Larry somehow 'knew' that Chan had been shot down, but at the same time 'knew' that he was okay.

It was not long after this event that Larry was driving from his workplace in western Oklahoma to a new job in Michigan. In between was his home town Urbana, Illinois so he planned to visit for awhile with his parents, Chancy and Grace Finrock before continuing on. Larry had not told them of his 'dream' since he did not want to alarm them unnecessarily. And, for all he knew, maybe it was just a bad dream; as he would think often of the real danger that his younger brother was facing regularly as Chan flew as a radioman/gunner on B-17's from his base in England on daylight bombing missions over Germany.

While Larry was still in Urbana, his parents received a Western Union notice from the War Department reporting that Chan was 'missing in action'. They of course feared the worst. Grace had already lost her brother, Henry Dallenbach, in October of 1918 during WWI in the Argonne Forest, so her fears must have been multiplied from having already experienced his tragic loss.

Larry then told his parents of 'his experience' (which today is known widely as "E.S.P" or Extra-Sensory Perception) and assured them the best way that he could, that he truly felt that Chan was okay.

Surely enough, the very next day, his parents received a second telegram from the War Department. It was short and sweet and advised: "*Disregard previous message.*"

THE LITTLE BOX OF CHICLETS GUM

(FROM PAGE 35 OF THE INTERVIEW)

When this E.S.P experience was brought up in the course of the interview with Uncle Chan, he recalled that his brother Larry had "put some evidence in a lock box, or something." This remark of course requires further explanation, which was not covered in detail in the interview.



Chan was referring to the 'box of Chiclets gum' that had resided on Larry's night stand next to his bed in Woodward, Oklahoma. This happened to be the first thing that Larry saw after awakening from his remarkable dream. This visual contact made such an impression on him that he kept the little box of Chiclets gum for the rest of his life. It was so important as a memento and a reminder of this incredible event that Larry always kept it at the bank in a safe deposit box. 'Evidence' that miracles do happen!

STATESIDE CREW PHOTO

The *below comments on this 'Stateside Crew Photo' were e-mailed 20 May 2004 from John Lechleiter (original Co-Pilot on Dawson's crew). Photo was likely taken in the Summer of 1944 at Rapid City, SD - "Overseas Combat Training". [Randy Finfrock, nephew of Chan]*

Lechjohn@aol.com

E-Mail Message

05/20/04 04:59 PM

Would bet that picture was made at Rapid City S.D. where we first trained as a crew and got to know each other. Yes, I can very well match names with faces and will do soon. At 81 I still get around good but been retired some 18 months now and getting lazy and a bad procrastinator. jhl



Lechjohn@aol.com

E-Mail Message

05/20/04 05:19 PM

TOP - Left to Right

Ralph Kitkowski	John Lechleiter	Leslie Dawson	James Nichols	James Pivonka	John Silva
Ball Turret	Co-Pilot	Pilot	Engr.	Nav.	Bomb.

BOTTOM - Left to Right

Chan Finrock	Pete Morisco	Jay Henion	Dick Mullaney
Radio Opr.	Top Turret/Engr	Tail Gunner	Waist Gunner

"Nichols liked the bottle too much, was a good guy, but Dawson dropped him and gave job to Morisco. Pivonka trained with us but was dropped later at the Bomb Group, and long since before we left England have lost contact with him. All have passed on but Pete and me."

Chat later, jhl time for the news

[This Crew Photo was sent by Randy Finrock to John H. Lechleiter for identification]

A FURLOUGH IS GRANTED AT THE COMPLETION OF "OVERSEAS COMBAT TRAINING"

R E S T R I C T E D
HEADQUARTERS
Rapid City Army Air Base

SPECIAL ORDER)
NUMBER 237)

E X T R A C T

Rapid City, South Dakota
25 August 1944

3. Furlough for a period of ten days including travel time effective 25 August 1944 is granted following named EM, *[enlisted men]* Combat Crew Detachment.

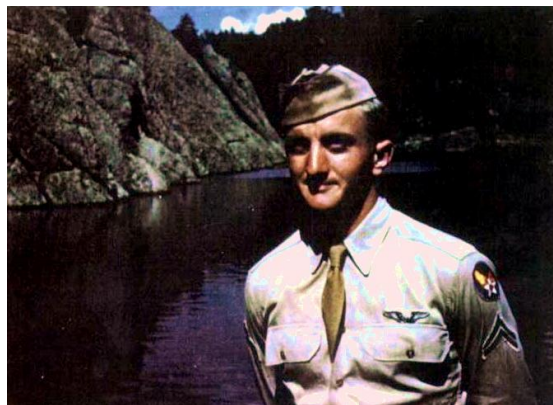
EM will report to the Commandant of Crews before 2359, 4 September 1944. EM will be last rationed to include 24 August 1944. Auth: AR 615-275 and para. 4 a Sec IV WD Cir 163, 1944.

[ABOVE WAS TRANSCRIBED FROM THE HEADER PAGE OF THE FURLOUGH ORDERS]

Par 3 SO 237 dt 25 August 1944, RC		Em - furlough - conti.	
2-16	Cpl	Nichols, James C	3734 Brown Rd, Overland, Mo
	Cpl	Finfrock, Chancy A	407 West Elm St., Urbana, Ill
	Cpl	Ritkowski, Ralph R	827 N. Hayes Ave., Milwaukee, Wisc
	Cpl	Menion, Jay L	3 Spaulding Pl., Ossining, N.Y.
	Cpl	Morisco, Peter A	2158 Crotona Ave., Bronx, N.Y.
	Cpl	Mullaney, Richard J	144 Myrtle Ave., Portsmouth, N.H.
	Cpl	Finfrock, Chancy A	443 West Capitol St., Salt Lake

By order of Colonel BEEZ:
OFFICIAL: *J R Moquin*
J R MOQUIN
CWO, USA
Adjutant

The six (6) enlisted men above trained together as 'Crew E-46' to go overseas. These were Chancy Finfrock's crewmates when they left the states for England.



CPL. FINFROCK ON LEAVE

[Copy from Kodachrome slide, provided Nov 2003 by Chancy Scott Finfrock, Chan's son]

On arrival at the airbase, it was learned that the crews had been reduced from ten (10) man crews to nine (9) man crews, with one of the waist gunners being re-assigned to other crews. Dick Mullaney unfortunately had to go.

RECALLING SHARED BOMBING MISSIONS

E-MAIL LETTER REC'D FROM S/SGT. TOGGLEIER, WILLIAM GAYLE 'TEX'
LEONARD
OF FORT WORTH, TEXAS - 26 DECEMBER 2004

<GLJOYCE@msn.com>

12/26/04 11:29 AM

To: <randy.finfrock@lindebocpp.com>
cc:
Subject: WW11

DEAR RANDY, I AM SORRY I HAVE BEEN SO LONG ANSWERING YOU ABOUT THE MISSIONS YOUR UNCLE AND I WERE ON DURING THE WAR. I REMEMBER HIM VERY WELL.

THE MISSION WE FLEW OVER COTTBUS WAS TO BOMB THE TOWN, WE ACCIDENTALLY HIT AN AMUNITION TRAIN BUT DIDN'T KNOW IT UNTIL WE GOT BACK TO THE BASE. I DO REMEMBER THAT THE CONCUSSION WAS SO BAD THAT IT ROCKED THE WHOLE FORMATION AND WE WERE FLYING AT 25,000 FT. I WAS ON THAT MISSION THREE TIMES, THE FLACK WAS SO BAD, THE GIRLS WERE SHOOTING 88 MILLIMETERS AT US.

I DO REMEMBER ROYAN AND THE p-51 WING TANKS. THEY HAD JELLY LIKE MATERIAL IN THEM AND I GOT TO SEE IT BECAUSE THE GROUND CREW DIDN'T PUT THE FILLING PLUG BACK IN. IT LOOKED LIKE JELLO, IT WAS AS WE CALLED IT NIGGER RIGGED. THEY USED ARMING WIRE AND TAPE TO ATTACH IT TO THE P51 WING TANK, WE NEVER KNEW THE RESULT OF THAT. TWO MISSIONS WERE DROPPED ON SOME GERMANS THAT WERE HOLDING OUT IN FRANCE THE BOMB DOORS WERE LEFT OPEN AND ONE BOMB FELL OUT OVER FRIENDLY TERRITORY. A GUY NAMED SWEEDS WAS THE TOGGLIER AND DIDN'T HAVE HIS VISIT SET CORRECT NEEDLESS TO SAY HE WAS DEMOTED.

I FLEW TEN MISSIONS. BOB GILBERT MADE LEAD CREW AND THE CO-PILOT, ME THE TOGGLIER, WAIST GUNNER WENT TO ANOTHER CREW. I FLEW 15 MISSIONS WITH PLANK.

I CAME HOME ON THE QUEEN ELIZABETH IN AUGUST SO YOUR UNCLE AND I WERE ON THE SAME SHIP. THEY SAID THERE WAS 16,000 MEN ON THAT SHIP. WE HEARD ABOUT THE ATOMIC BOMB ON OUR WAY HOME AND OF COURSE NOBODY KNEW WHAT IT WAS.

I GOT OUT ON OCT 14th, 1945. I HOPE THIS MAKES SENSE TO YOU AND IF THERE IS ANYTHING ELSE I CAN HELP YOU WITH LET ME KNOW. GAYLE "TEX" LEONARD



Gayle Leonard

100th Bomb Group – 350th Squadron

**MORE DETAILS ON THE BOMBING MISSIONS OF
RADIOMAN, TECH. SGT. CHANCY ALBERT FINFROCK
AS RECORDED BY OTHER B-17 VETERANS OF THE 8TH ARMY AIR FORCE**

Oct 26, 1944 (#1)

Below from the diary of Maj. Marvin Bowman, 100th BG/350th S-2 (Intelligence) Officer, who briefed flight crews before missions [by Paul West & Jan Riddling, 100th Bomb Group Historian]

Three Groups found the primary target, Merseburg (oil) covered by clouds, and went on to bomb the secondary target, HANNOVER. PFF results unobserved - no losses.

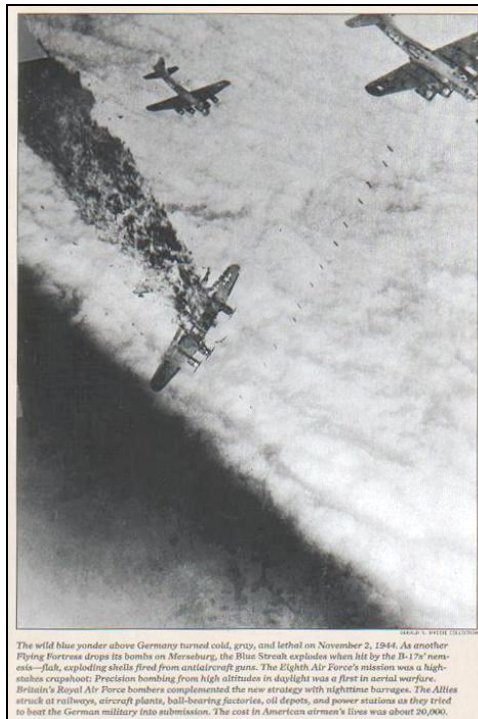
Nov 02, 1944 (#2)

Below from the diary of Maj. Marvin Bowman, 100th BG/350th S-2 (Intelligence) Officer

MERSEBURG today. Flak very heavy. 1 tail gunner killed. Bombing by PFF-no observed results.

Below from 100th BG/350th S/Sgt. Pete Morisco, TTE, Dawson Crew; account of 1 May 2005:

Although it was bad around Berlin, the worst mission with flak was when we went to the oilfield at Merseburg. The flak was so thick you thought you could get out and walk on it. You could actually hear the shrapnel hitting the plane. They were hitting high and low and we ended up with a lot of holes in the plane. Nothing really serious for us. The Ball Turret Gunner got hit with a piece of shrapnel. With this being our 2nd mission, I never thought we'd stay around that long [*to make 25-30 missions*]. It was really terrible and we lost many crews that day. We all got religion, and had our doubts of ever getting back home.



GERALD R. MASSIE PHOTO IN "NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC", MAR 1994

Caption: The wild blue yonder above Germany turned cold, gray and lethal on November 2, 1944.

As another Flying Fortress drops its bombs on Merseburg, the Blue Streak explodes when hit by the B-17's nemesis – Flak, exploding shells fired from anti-aircraft guns.

[Source: <http://www.cloudnet.com/jfb/merseburg.html>]

Below from records of Lt. James Adair, of the 100th BG/349th sq.

Reported this mission as one of the 3 worst they were on out of a total of 35. The refinery was heavily protected by flak guns brought in by rail. Witnessed one of our planes go down in flames.

Below from the diary of John J. Briol, Ball Turret Gunner of the 457th BG.

Our target for today was Merseburg. There was very little flak over the target, but there were enemy fighters galore. I was blasting away at the nearest one as he was coming up on us. I saw his prop and cowling go flying away and part of his wing tip go sailing behind him. The ship

behind him, I think I damaged. Our tail gunner was also on him. He turned away smoking. One fortress exploded behind us, a man was thrown through the side. I think we lost nine fortresses...

Below from 100th BG/350th 1st Lt. Thomas I. Anderson crew; letter 31 Oct 1993 by Lewis Herron, TG

Intelligence reported that there were 1,000 88-mm guns around the synthetic oil plant, which was our target. On November 2, 1944 the Third Division lost 40 planes over Merseburg and when we went back on November 30, 1944, the division lost 56 planes. As I recall this was all due to anti-aircraft fire and not from enemy fighters. Our crew flew three missions to Merseberg, Germany, which was the most heavily defended target in Europe.

Nov 05, 1944 (#3)

Below from the diary of Maj. Marvin Bowman, 100th BG/350th S-2 (Intelligence) Officer

Target-**LUDWIGSHAFEN** - flak still intense there. Three crewmen wounded and nearly every plane damaged. Lt. Clark forced to land at Brussels and Lt. Hopkins went down - believed and hoped to be in friendly territory. Most of our other planes landed at the 390th base due to the strong crosswinds here. The bombing was pretty good although it was by PFF.

Nov 06, 1944 (#4)

Below from the diary of Maj. Marvin Bowman, 100th BG/350th S-2 (Intelligence) Officer

Target-Air Depot at **NEUMUNSTER**. Some planes dropped visually and hit the MPI - others used PFF and hit the town. All returned safely.



RETURNING ON RUNWAY #10 AT THORPE ABBOTTS

[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com.jpg>]

Below from 100th BG/418th 2nd Lt. Donald A. Jones Lead Crew, Mission Diary of Art Juhlin, Nav.

Target was a large hanger and repair depots at an airfield just outside of Neumunster. Went over target at 23,000' and had a little trouble picking up target due to 8/10 cloud coverage. Leading the low group we were the only ones to succeed in hitting the target. Encountered meager flak at the target. Enemy fighters were in the area but didn't attack our groups. Time of flight was 7 hours. Flew ship #696 (PFF-Pathfinder) and led the low group.

Nov 16, 1944 (#5)

Below from the diary of Maj. Marvin Bowman, 100th BG/350th S-2 (Intelligence) Officer

Target-**AACHEN**. On the 16th, flew ground support Micro-H mission. Appeared fairly successful. Weather closed in and crews had a terrible time landing. 95th BG was diverted. Took the 100th BG nearly two hours to land. Lt. Kranph's crew missing.

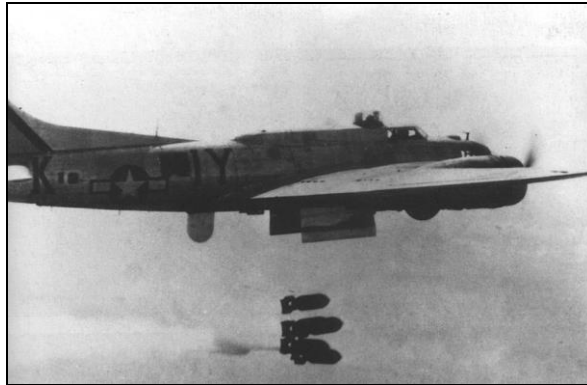
Below from 100th BG/418th 2nd Lt. Donald A. Jones Lead Crew, Mission Diary of Art Juhlin, Nav.

Mission #14, German Lines. Target was the German lines just 10 miles Northeast of Aachen. Immediately after our bombing, General Hoolges men were to begin their big ground offensive. Bombing was done through a 10/10 undercast using the new micro H beam. Our biggest worry was the fear of dropping on our own troops who were in the immediate area waiting to move in. Went over target at 21,400', flack was moderate and the first two groups over the target silenced most of the guns. Arrived back at base and found the ceiling to be 300' and visibility 900 yards. Circled field for 2 hours before making an instrument letdown and landing. Time of flight was 8:40 hours. Flew ship 379 (PFF-Pathfinder) and led the low group.

Nov 21, 1944 (#6)

Below from the diary of Maj. Marvin Bowman, 100th BG/350th S-2 (Intelligence) Officer

Group set out for our "bete noir" – Merseburg, with 12x500 GP's aboard. Ended up bombing **OSNABRUCK** by PFF as clouds built up to 30,000 feet over Merseburg. All back safely - several aborts. Lt. Sharrard landed in France without incident - there were no injuries.



TYPICAL PFF-PATHFINDER BOMBER WITH 'H2X RADAR'

[Source: http://www.aeronautics.ru/archive/wwii/photos/gallery_005/B-17%20pathfinderH2X%20radar.jpg]

Nov 26, 1944 (#7)

Below from the diary of Maj. Marvin Bowman, 100th BG/350th S-2 (Intelligence) Officer

Fair weather. Group took off at 0800 hours for **HAMM**, with Bielfeld as the secondary. Bombed with H2X - Results generally poor.

Feb 09, 1945 (#8)

Below from 100th BG/351st Laurence J. Lazzari Crew (1st mission), brief accounts by G.G. Greenwood, Co-Pilot, and also from 351st Nav. Leon Schwartz's account on the Herman F. Streich Crew:

Target-**WEIMAR**, Armament Works. Target Visibility near zero. 10 GP's. No Hits. ME-163 Rocket Plane went straight up in front of our squadron. This was our initiation into air battle and it scared the hell out of all of us. Bohlen oil refinery was the primary target. 7+20 hours.

Below from the diary of Maj. Marvin Bowman, 100th BG/350th S-2 (Intelligence) Officer

Briefed target: Bohlen. . . Thirty-eight aircraft including three PFF departed T. A. at 0820-0847 hours. The 100th flew as the 13th "B" Group which was the 3rd Division's fourth group. All but three aircraft bombed and there were no losses. Lead Bombardier: "The secondary target was attacked under orders from the Division Leader. 100th "A" was north of course prior to the IP and had to ease to the right to make the briefed IP good. Even so the IP was overshoot by two miles.

Cloud cover was 9/10 and an H2X run was used. Bombardier and Mickey worked in close harmony. At the six mile check the target became visible and the bombardier was able to take over, making the visual corrections before bombs away. No flak or enemy fighters were encountered on the run. Target was bombed in squadron formation with a 30 seconds interval between squadrons. There was no traffic interference at all; sighting was made for both rate and course. Eleven aircraft bombed this target with unobserved results. Altitude was 25,000 feet.

Feb 15, 1945 (#9)

Below from 100th BG/350th Robt. K. Gilbert Crew; account by Gayle Leonard, Toggleier, 26 Dec 2004

Target-**COTTBUS**. The mission we flew over Cottbus was to bomb the town; we accidentally hit an ammunition train but didn't know it until we got back to the base. I do remember that the concussion was so bad that it rocked the whole formation - and we were flying at 25,000 feet. I was on that mission three times. The flak was so bad; the girls were shooting 88 millimeters [*anti-aircraft shells*] at us.



2ND LT. ROBERT K. GILBERT CREW
S/SGT. WILLIAM GAYLE 'TEX' LEONARD, (BOTTOM 2ND FROM LEFT)

[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com.jpg>]

Below from 100th BG/351st Laurence J. Lazzari Crew, by G.G. Greenwood, Co-Pilot and 351st Nav. Leon Schwartz's account on the Herman F. Streich Crew:

Cottbus was a key rail center, 8 miles from the Polish border... one of the longest missions. 10x500 lb bombs. Max bomb load. No hits, not much flak. No fighters. Locomotive works and marshalling yard. Ruhland oil refinery was the primary target. I and many other crewmembers reported seeing a huge red glow come up from the target area... we were convinced we hit something big, like a munitions dump or munitions transport. 8+50 hrs.

Below from 100th BG/418th 2nd Lt. Donald A. Jones Lead Crew, Mission Diary of Art Juhlin, Nav.

Mission #27, Cottbus. Primary target was the synthetic plant at Bohlen, which was one of the largest and most important in Germany. Due to weather, were unable to bomb it and continued onto the town of Cottbus, making this one of our deepest penetrations. The purpose of our bombing was to aid the Russians who were only twelve miles away by disrupting communications leading to Berlin.

We bombed by instrument and thru a patch in the clouds saw a terrific flash of flame where our bombs hit, followed by great big brown pillars of smoke reaching to 10,000'. The bombs must

have hit some explosive dump as the explosion rocked our entire formation which was flying at 24,000'. Had a long ride home, passing over the Russian lines and Czechoslovakia on the way out. Time of flight was 0900 hours. Flew ship #220 (PFF-Pathfinder a/c) and led the 13th "A" combat Wing.

Below from 100th BG/350th S/Sgt. Pete Morisco, TTE, Dawson Crew; account of 1 May 2005:

They blew up one of the cars in the yard that must have been loaded with ammunition, I don't know exactly what it was, but it went up like a ... it raised us up about 5 or 6 feet... the plane you know... the concussion from the blast.



**FOUR OF 2ND LT. LESLIE DAWSON CREW
(L-R) DAWSON, MORISCO, KITKOWSKI & LECHLEITER**

[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com.jpg>]

We usually flew about 25 or 26,000 ft. It depended on the weather. It must have been more than just one carload, cause it really, really moved us.

Below from the diary of Maj. Marvin Bowman, 100th BG/350th S-2 (Intelligence) Officer

Target: Bohlen. 38 aircraft including 3 PFF departed T.A. 0725-0750 hours. The 100th led the 13th Wing which was the 4th wing in the 3rd Div. All aircraft attacked target with no losses. The briefed course was closely followed across the Channel. The IP was overshoot approximately 16 miles to the east, caused mainly by preceding groups overshooting the IP.

The Radar Navigator in the High Squadron had picked up Ruhland, instead of COTTBUS, and proceeded to make a run on it. After being notified by the navigator that he was on the wrong target, the Mickey Operator picked up the Secondary and made a run on that after correcting to the right behind the "A" and "C" Squadrons. The primary target was completely overcast so the secondary was attacked.

The bomb run was about 50 miles long and strong headwinds were encountered. The run was completely H2X all the way and the Mickey Operator gave the bombardier a check at 11 miles and additional checks every mile until the four mile point was reached. No traffic interference was encountered on the run. Altitude was 23,300 feet.

Feb 19, 1945 (#10)

Below from 100th BG/351st Laurence J. Lazzari Crew, by G.G. Greenwood, Co-Pilot and from 351st Nav. Leon Schwartz's account on the Herman F. Streich Crew:

Target-**OSNABRUCK**, marshalling yards. 12x500 lb GP's. No hits, a lot of flak. No Fighters. One jet job. Did some verifiable damage. 6+15 hrs.

Below from 100th BG/418th 2nd Lt. Donald A. Jones Lead Crew, Mission Diary of Art Juhlin, Nav.

Mission #28, Munster. Primary target was the railway marshalling yards at Osnabruck, but due to the Captain Mouse Beacons fading out on the bomb run we bombed Munster instead. Time of flight 0600 Hrs. Went over target at 24,000' and encountered severe flak.

Pieces of flak were popping all thru the ship; we expected it to blow any minute. A hit in the waist sprayed flak splinters in the eyes of our waist gunner. Due to our interphone being knocked out those of us in the front of the ship were in the dark as to what was happening back there.

Feb 20, 1945 (#11)

Below from the Combat Chronology of the US Army Air Forces", Feb 1945, Strategic Operations.

(8th Air Force): 3 missions flown. Mission 836: 1,264 bombers & 726 fighters are dispatched to hit the main station and marshalling yard at **NURNBERG**, Germany; the target is bombed visually and using H2X radar; they claim 49-1-21 Luftwaffe aircraft; 5 B-17s and 7 fighters are lost.

Below from 100th BG/350th S/Sgt. Pete Morisco, TTE, Dawson Crew; account of 01 May 2005:

One thing I think that... what I say wouldn't involve your uncle directly, because I was in the front of the ship and he [[Chan Finfrock, Radioman](#)] was in the middle of the ship... but we got hit... and



**PETE MORISCO
SILVA**



JOHN

LOOKING FWD TO RADIO ROOM & BOMB BAY FROM RWG & BTG POSITION WINGS OF FREEDOM TOUR

[Source: [photo by Randy Finfrock 10/25/2005, Tulsa, OK](#)]

the plane caught fire... the engine... #4 engine... and the fire extinguisher didn't work. We all were told to bail out. We went to the hatch, and I banged the hatch out and ... I laugh when I think of this... I wasn't laughing then... but I'm laughing now... Silva, the bombardier, he says: 'Oh, I forgot my hat', and he ran back and got it!

And, we went [out]... and then I met him on the ground. Soon as he jumped out of the ship though, the hat went off. He jumped before I did, but ... it's just something that I'll never forget cause when I got on the ground I ribbed the hell out of him – and, you know that's not right, cause I'm only a Sergeant and he's a Lieutenant.

But, I tell you, we had a pretty close crew. The officers were always... they treated us like people, not like... I don't know what you want to call it... you know like we were their servants or anything. When we were in Dakota [[Rapid City, SD for training](#)], the women – the officer's

women made a dinner for us and it was very nice. It was just before we went overseas. I don't remember the exact date. Everything is kind of... I'm eighty-four years old now, and things get a little shady if you know what I'm saying.

We all flew over as a crew. Lechleiter, your Uncle Chan, myself and the rest of the crew. When we got to England, they had reduced the crews from 10 to 9. Mullaney [a *waist gunner*] was low man on the totem pole and he had to go.



SGT. RICHARD J. "DICK" MULLANEY
SPARE GUNNER – ORIGINALLY ON THE LESLIE DAWSON CREW

[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com.jpg>]

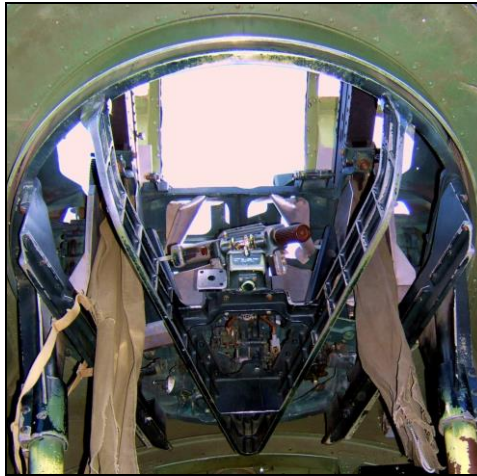
That made me feel bad, cause he was like my kid brother. In the service you don't ask why or when or what. That's just one of the things we had to put up with.

Soon after, they made us a lead crew. He and I remained friends, cause even though we were on different crews, he'd come over to my barracks and ask me about something – or to hold his money cause he was spending it too fast.

After all we were pretty close. You are pretty close when you are flying – especially when somebody's shooting at you. Jay Henion and I were best of friends. He and I did the whole nine yards together. He lived in Ossining, about an hours drive from here [*Elmwood Park, NJ*]. He in fact, was the best man at my wedding.

I'm trying to remember the guys name - we had one bad apple and they got rid of him. He was always drunk and always dirty and he was always late. He used to scare me. Dawson dropped him [*James Nichols, TTE*] and gave the job to me. I felt bad about that you know cause I don't like to see anybody lose anything, but he asked for it. He was completely unreliable – and in combat, he'd say the most ridiculous things.

He was in the top turret and he started to scream over the intercom 'I got hit in my head – I got hit in my head' ...



**LOOKING UP INTO TOP TURRET/ENGINEER (TTE) POSITION
WINGS OF FREEDOM TOUR**

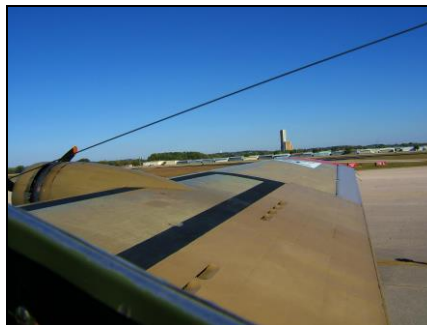
[Source: [photo by Randy Finrock 10/25/2005, Tulsa, OK](#)]

... and, of course Lechleiter [the *Co-Pilot*] had to go and check him, and he wasn't hit in the head at all - it was a little hole in the turret, but it was nowhere near him – and he just went bananas, you know, crazy – so that's another reason they got rid of him.

I'm trying to remember now, I think we only had him with us for about 4 or 5 missions. Because when we went down, if that was the 7th mission – we were the lead crew by then. Lechleiter was in the tail then, they made him the tailgunner. At that time they had a practice of assigning another pilot, a Command Pilot, to the Lead Crews. And that day that we flew, he... that man...I've never seen anybody in my life freeze up like he did when he saw the fire.



LEFT



RIGHT

**VIEWS OF RADIO ROOM AND #4 ENGINE FROM RIGHT SIDE WINDOW
FLAMES WERE TRAILING DOWN THE FUSELAGE – CHAN HAD SEEN PLANES IN THAT
CONDITION BLOW UP**

{ B-17 FROM WINGS OF FREEDOM TOUR }

[Source: [photo by Randy Finrock 10/25/2005, Tulsa, OK](#)]

I can't remember the man's name – so it doesn't make any difference – so I'll tell you. He was sitting in the co-pilot's seat. And, it was my job to stand between the two seats and read off the mileage... not the mileage, the speed - and check the engines if they were running alright and all that kind of stuff, and every once in a while I'd climb down from the turret and I'd check between the two seats to see if everything was going alright. Of course, we weren't over enemy territory yet, just heading toward it... and uh, when the fire broke out, the pilot [*Lt. Dawson*] says to the Command Pilot: 'Hit the fire extinguisher switch.' And, he just sat there! He just sat there!

And, I got down and went over and hit the switch and it didn't work anyway. He just sat there – he didn't say a word. And, I tell ya' – when it was time to bail out, he was the first one gone. I

think he must have been on one mission too many, even though he was a Colonel usually that don't happen to people with experience.

After Dawson called me and said: 'Pete hit the switch', and as best as I recall, he tried to bank the plane so that the wind would hit that engine more and maybe would put it out... but, it just seemed to be getting worse. So, Dawson said to us: 'It's time to go boys. Bail out'.



**"2ND LT. LESLIE H. DAWSON – 100TH BOMB GROUP"
350TH SQUADRON, LEAD PILOT**

And, we all went to our positions; we put on our chutes. You know, we didn't carry them all the time. We had parachutes that were buckled onto a harness on our chest. And, we walked over to the hatch – it was a hatch right below the pilot's seat. You went down a big step and it was a hatch there. I kicked it out and the Navigator went out, and Silva [*the Bombardier*] and myself.

And, Dawson – I didn't notice, but he told me later on, that when he went to pick up his chute, it was spilled. So he had to take the chute and put it on and hold it with both his hands and when he jumped, then he removed his arms and it went out. We were all very, very lucky.

Lechleiter broke his ankle when he landed. I busted up my cartilages in my knee. But, I was lucky. I told the doctor, 'Just put an Ace Bandage on it, and I'm fine'. I was afraid that... I tell you the truth... I dreaded the thought that if I went to the hospital that when I came back I'd have to fly with strangers. That didn't make me scared, but very nervous. Cause some of those crews, they had guys that they thought everything was a big joke, or they liked to go out and get drunk, you know what I mean? And, one was enough for me. We'd had one on our crew that was like that... so, I didn't wanna fly with a gang of 'em.

On the way down, it was quiet. It was twilight, cause it wasn't completely light yet. We took off early that morning. We usually didn't take off before daylight, but this time for some reason or other, like I said, you didn't ask why – you just did as you were told.



**CANVAS OXYGEN MASK BAG
WINGS OF FREEDOM TOUR**

[Source: [photo by Randy Finrock 10/25/2005, Tulsa, OK](#)]

I know we were on oxygen, so we were definitely over 10,000 ft but still climbing, so I don't know exactly how high we were. I never saw the plane after bailing out, but on the way down I heard it blow up; the plane was loaded with 500-lb bombs. It finally blew up – I heard it blow up.

There was a great big lake under me and I thought for sure I was going to end up in the middle of it. So, I kept spilling my chute out so I could move to the right. Anyway, I missed that fine, but then when I got going down, my chute got caught on a tree and I hit the tree with my knee and it banged the hell outta me. So, I landed too hard. And then, I bundled up my suit. I hid it. And, I started to walk on the road there, and I saw a Frenchman so I figured maybe we were safe. I was by myself at that time and about 3 or 4 minutes later, Henion come walkin' over to me.



JAY HENION, TAIL GUNNER

He had two bottles of wine in his arms. The people down there where he landed gave him the wine. And, we were lookin' for – and he was looking for us – the rest of the crew - and we all got together in this farmhouse.

We all were there; all except the Command Pilot. He disappeared. I never saw him again. Never saw that man again. Nobody seems to know what happened to him. We knew his name then of course, but don't remember it now. Only once; he flew with us only this one time.

Most of the time we had our Commander flying with us, 'cause he was a lead pilot also. And, he was a real joker. He had one of these mustaches, these handlebars, and it used to take him 5 minutes to put the mask on. He kept having to pat that thing down.



**LT. COL. DAVID LYSTER – COMMANDER OF THE 350TH SQ.
NICKNAME 'HANDLEBAR HANK' – WAS ASSIGNED TO THE 100TH BG ON 12 SEP 1944**

[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com.jpg>]

And, I thought to myself: 'He's a grown man, and he's taking a chance on choking to death over that mustache'... but, he kept it. He kept it through... the last time I saw him he had it! He was the 350th Squadron Commander. I don't remember his name. I'm very bad with names.

I had everything written down, and my grand-daughter's got all my paraphernalia and she's supposed to be putting it together and making a book for the rest of the family.

I don't know the name or serial number of the plane [*that was lost on that Nurnberg mission*]. I might have it, but don't think so, because we never flew the same plane. We didn't always fly the same plane. They kept shifting us around because we had to have – the plane – we had to have a plane with radar on it... you know, the radar ball? The plane had a 'Mickey Operator'. He was new, and an officer, and he flew with us – I think that was maybe the second time he flew with us when we bailed out.

[One of many significant changes for a lead crew was a requirement to fly 'Pathfinder-Equipped' B-17's. Pathfinder was a radar device (with an original code cover name 'Mickey Mouse' - later shortened to Mickey), which enabled the Eighth Air Force to look through the cloud cover.

Pathfinder-Equipped B-17's flew the lead position in a combat formation with the other bombers in the formation dropping on the lead crew's bomb release. Smoke bombs were used to mark the release point for the trailing formations.

The 'Mickey' was located in a dome underneath the B-17, and replaced the ball turret. The 'Mickey Operator' was located in the radio compartment along with the radio operator, and the radioman's gun (which was not a very effective one anyway) was removed.]

**ABOVE FROM A DESCRIPTION OF EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF LEAD CREWS
'THE MIGHTY EIGHTH', P. 76**

After we all got together there at the farmhouse, I don't know how they knew it... but this truck with American soldiers came by can picked us up and took us to another base. It took us 7 days to get back to England. By trucks they kept moving us around France, getting us closer to the channel, and they finally put us on a cargo plane and we flew home. I don't know why they didn't just take us to an airport and fly us – but it took us 7 days to get home.

We were considered 'Missing in Action' during this week and I'd written down on my instructions to notify my brother – cause I didn't want my mother to see anything like that – cause she was sick as it was with me being in the service. But my brother got it, and soon as we got back to the base, I sent another telegram home telling I was okay.

After Lechleiter left the crew [*due to his breaking his ankle*] they never gave us another officer to replace him. Our regular tailgunner ended up taking his place, flying his regular position.



JOHN LECHLEITER, CO-PILOT

You know that was ridiculous what they did [*having Co-Pilots assume the position of the tailgunner on a lead crew with a Command Pilot on board*]; the tailgunner, he's been flying

missions in that position and he was looking around all the time - and he knew what was going on, and he could have given them any kind of information that they wanted... but, they said it had to be a Lieutenant.

But, after 'Lich' left, we never got another one! So, you figure that one out, I can't. All together I think we flew 24 missions. They didn't count that one that we went down [to Nurnberg]. Actually, that was the worse one!

Below from 100th BG/350th Lt. John Lechleiter, Co-Pilot/TG-Dawson Crew; accounts: Apr & Dec 2005:

We had to bail out with #3 engine on fire as I recall. Don't really know what all did happen. I have to put the combat out of my mind to keep it from haunting me in every day life. I was Co-Pilot but flying as the 'Fire Control Officer' in the Tail Gunner position. This had been instituted after we went to being a lead crew, and a new Operations Officer flew in my place as the 'Command Pilot'.

Dawson was still in command of our own plane though. I was one of the last out and remember delaying pulling the rip cord and counted some seven chutes above me. Will detail later, but broke my ankle and was taken to police station but never saw the crew again till I got back to base after a hospital stay of 6 or 7 weeks in England.

Below from the diary of Maj. Marvin Bowman, 100th BG/350th S-2 (Intelligence) Officer

Target: Nurnberg. Thirty-eight aircraft including three PFF departed T. A. at 0855-0925 hours. The 100th flew as the 13th Wing's "B" Group, which was the eleventh group in the 3rd Division Line. A/C 42-337521 returned early due to the loss of No #2 engine. A/C 44-48613 returned early due to the loss of No #1 engine. A/C 43-46297 returned early due to losing the formation, and PFF aircraft 44-9400 did not attack due to flak hits. There were no losses.

At mid channel the group was in excellent Wing order at the briefed altitude of 7,000 feet and on course. Here layers of stratus clouds were encountered and a climb was established to get above the weather. The Group remained as much as possible in Wing order throughout the climb. The briefed course was paralleled six miles south to CP#3. Here the Group was at 22,000 feet, and at 1231 was 12 minutes early and five miles south of course.

Below from 100th BG/350th James M. Harbison Crew; accounts by S/Sgt. Harvey K. Wingard:

Harbison is our new pilot. A cocky guy, nothing seemed to worry him. Target – Marshalling Yards, NURNBURG. Load 6x500 Demolition Bombs, 4x500 M17 Incendiary. 5/10 cloud coverage. Tracking flak, one large hole by tail wheel. Bombed 27,000 ft. Very cold mission, -59 deg. F. Got flak crossing Rhine. [Harbison, bottom – 3rd from left]



LT. JAMES M. HARBISON (WHEN WITH THE 'HONG KONG' WILSON CREW)

[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com.jpg>]

Below from the mission report of Lt Merrill E. Jensen Crew, 100th BG/351st:

Reported light flak at the front lines.

Below from the diary of T/Sgt George W. Forsyth, TTE/Gunner on Petska's 398BG/602nd crew.

Today flew our 24th mission. Bombed the city of Nurnberg. Flak over the target was moderate & accurate. At the front line we got some more flak; light & accurate. Number one oil tank hit and lost about half the oil. Got two holes. On oxygen 4 hrs. 6x500lb G.P., 6x500lb I.P. 8+45 hrs.

Below from 100th BG/349th Lt. Paul Valentine, CP (Formation Officer) of Joseph King crew.

Many flak guns guarding the target; several German fighter airfields near our route to the target. Our squadron was group lead. In this position, our plane is equipped with Mickey, a through the clouds bombsight. The target is Nurnberg. Meteorology guaranteed a beautiful clear day.



LT. PAUL VALENTINE

Below from mission log of S/Sgt Donald L. Forsman, BTG on 34th BG/7th Sq., Plane: "No Gum Chum"

Very bad contrails and clouds. After we lost the engine, we ducked into the clouds and came home. Flak was very close to us coming across the bomb line. We sweated out the engine and weather. Group was going to Nurnberg, but we hit a railroad and highway. We lost an engine over France, but crossed the bomb line and dropped our bombs on a target of opportunity.

Mar 02, 1945 (#12)

Below from 100th BG/351st Laurence J. Lazzari Crew, brief accounts by G.G. Greenwood, Co-Pilot:

Target-**DRESDEN**. 20x250 lb GP's. Primary target Ruhland. Caught 3 flak bursts of flak at Zuider Zee. Question: Could we travel the 400 miles to Dresden in 1+30 hrs flying at 150 mph indicated? Answer: We could assuming that we were flying at 23,000 ft with an OAT (outside air temperature) of -30 deg. F. and with a 50 mph tailwind. German fighters were after us, but were fought off by our escort. A long 9+00 hours.

Below from mission log of S/Sgt Donald L. Forsman, BTG on 34th BG/7th Sq., Plane: "No Gum Chum"

We were hit by fighters (ME 109 & FW 190) just before the I.P. Six 109's made a frontal attack on our group. MacTaggers was hit and dropped behind.



GERMAN FW-190A WITH AERIAL MORTARS

[Source: http://www.aeronautics.ru/archive/wwii/photos/gallery_005/B-17%20pathfinderH2X%20radar.jpg]

About 40 enemy aircraft hit formation. I had some hits on a 109 coming in from 11 o'clock low, below the open bomb bay doors. I saw some API hits on him. Did great for the first time to see fighters. Our group lost no planes. M-Mike came back minus the ball turret. We saw 3 B-17's from the group in front of us go down. Two of them blew up. Terrible sight to see.

Below letter from William A. Carleton, in reply to an English schoolboy's questions about the 100th:

I have included two pictures which might be considered somewhat historic and which were taken over Berlin on March 2, 1945. The bomb burst can be seen in the lower center. The reason this is a historic picture is that the 100th Bombardment Group was the first Group in the American Air Corps to have bombers over Berlin. Like many things in war, this was a rather dubious honor brought about by a series of mistakes.

General Doolittle had been the first American crew over Tokyo, and then later on the first bombing mission over Rome. He wanted to complete his career by also being the first over Berlin. The mission had gone forward on March 2nd and the bomber train was extended over Europe when the mission was scrubbed due to bad weather.

The 100th Bomb Group did not receive the message to return to base however, and went on in and bombed Berlin without General Doolittle. Of course, no one could say anything too much but it did take a little bit of the snap out of the General's salute of congratulations.

Below from the diary of Maj. Marvin Bowman, 100th BG/350th S-2 (Intelligence) Officer

Target was Ruhland but 24 aircraft bombed the primary with the remainder attacking Dresden. 38 aircraft including 3 PFF departed T.A. 13th Wing's "B" Group echeloned to the right - in excellent formation til mid-channel, upon the Navigator's insistence, the Group crossed over and echeloned upwind to the left. Route to CP #3 was 4 mi. south of course - subject to flak defenses at Zwolle. Considerable easing was encountered from this point to the IP. This point was short 3 mi. to the northeast and an H2X run in group formation was made on the secondary.

Mar 03, 1945 (#13)

Below from 100th BG/350th James M. Harbison Crew; accounts by Staff Sgt. Harvey K. Wingard:

Target-**BRUNSWICK** Tank Works. Little Flak, but accurate. Group attacked by ME-262's (jet jobs). Lost a bomber to a fighter and one to flak. 3/10 cloud coverage. Bombed visual. Load: 8x500 demolition, and 6x250 lb demolition bombs.

Below from S/Sgt. Thomas W. Booze. TG, 100th BG/418th with Lt. Morasco in the "Miss Conduct":

"Lead ship hit by jets and blew up."



“MESSERSCHMITT 262”

[Source: <http://www.stormbirds.com/recon/index.htm>]

Below from Pilot Eugene T. Jensen of the 100th BG/349th squadron, who wrote his recollections in Jan 1997 of his “First Encounter with the ME-262”:

The development and deployment of a super fighter by the German Air Force had been rumored but air crew had not been briefed on the profile or performance characteristics of the air craft.

So it was on March 3rd, 1945, that the 100th Bomb Group was chosen to lead the entire 8th Air Force, perhaps 1,000 bombers, on a mission to destroy a remaining truck/tank factory.

My squadron, the 349th, was to fly the lead in the 100th, and three of us were to fly well ahead of the bombers stream to spread “chaff” (metalized strips) that confused anti-aircraft radar. At the briefing we were told it was essential that we deploy the chaff. It was predicted we would be a prime target for the German Air Force, so we were to have an escort squadron of P-51 fighters.

It was a beautiful day! Clear, frigid and not a cloud in sight. There was only one P-51 in sight and it was far away, unusual for an escort aircraft. Behind us the 8th Air Force bomber stream stretched for miles. As we watched ‘our lone P-51’, it evolved into an aircraft unlike anything we had ever seen. There was no propeller!

As we watched, it made a tight high-speed circle, coming in from behind our little formation of three bombers. It became evident that we were to have a new and unpleasant experience. The pilots of the three aircraft abandoned the “chaff” formation and pulled in close together to give us maximum firepower, wingtips only a few feet apart.

Our gunners were fooled by the speed of the aircraft, and despite our massed firepower, we did no apparent damage. The jet flew through our already tight formation so close that we could see the pilot, the rivets in the aircraft skin and the 200mm cannon firing. The wing of our lead aircraft was cut free from the rest of the aircraft almost as if by a giant chain saw, and the aircraft began it’s lethal tumble to earth. We saw no parachutes.

We were then over the target, our supply of chaff had been over-boarded, and I thought it prudent to seek the relative safety of the main bomber stream. Unfortunately, this maneuver brought us under the lead formation just as their bomb bay doors opened ...



LOOKING FORWARD INTO THE BOMB BAY WINGS OF FREEDOM TOUR

[Source: [photo by Randy Finfrock 10/25/2005, Tulsa, OK](#)]

... which meant we were only seconds from bomb release. It was quite clear that we were in the wrong place at exactly the wrong time. We avoided the rain of bombs by seconds. Seconds that seemed like hours.

When we returned to base we were interviewed by an Air Force General. I had never seen, let alone talked to a General-Grade Officer. I had the impression that we were one of the first air crews to experience combat with a jet aircraft.

As a First Lieutenant, I think I was more frightened by the General than the jet fighter.

Below from the diary of Maj. Marvin Bowman, 100th BG/350th S-2 (Intelligence) Officer

Tactical Reports: The target was Braunsehweig (Brunswick), Germany. (Bussing-Naationale Automobil Gesellschaft. The 100th's Colonel John Wallace, flying with the Gerald Brown crew, led the 3rd Air Division to Brunswick, Germany.

On this mission there were six 100th planes, lead by Lt. Jack Thrasher, assigned to carry chaff in hopes of rendering German radar less effective. A/C #44--8220 flew by Lt. Thrasher was the only aircraft the 100th lost on the mission. They were attacked by a lone ME-262, starting an uncontrollable fire in one wing.



MAJ. MARVIN S. 'RED' BOWMAN GROUP 'S-2' INTELLIGENCE OFFICER - BRIEFED AND INTERROGATED CREWS HIS 'BOWMAN DIARY' PORTRAYS LIFE AT THORPE ABBOTTS

[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com.jpg>]

EYEWITNESS: "A/C 44-8220 was attacked by one of six jets E/A [*enemy aircraft*] which made a pass at the formation at 1018 hours over the target just before bombs away. The #1 engine was hit and burst into flames. Bomb bay doors were closed and the aircraft slid away to the left. The left wing crumpled and the aircraft flipped over on it's back and exploded. The fuselage broke at the waist door and both wings fell away. One chute was seen to leave the aircraft before it exploded. Later four (4) others were counted. Pilot was seen in cockpit 30 seconds prior to the explosion."

> Below from an 8th AF Tactics Report #15, filed after accounts of "The Attacks on the 3rd Air Div." on 10 Apr 1945 (5 weeks after this group to Brunswick had been attacked by ME-262's):

- 1. Me 262 seem to be attacking at slower and slower speeds, probably to simplify their own sighting problems. This gives gunners a better opportunity to exploit the longer effective range of their caliber .50's.*
- 2. The Jets like to make their attacks during the bomb run or shortly after the bombs away, while the squadrons are in trail.*
- 3. Me 262s are showing an increasing tendency to pick on stragglers or on bombers slightly out of formation.*
- 4. There have been several previous reports of conventional fighters attacking from the nose while Jets are delivering their customary tail attacks. Search of the forward zones cannot be abandoned during a tail attack.*

Mar 04, 1945 (#14)

Below from 100th BG/350th James M. Harbison Crew; accounts by Staff Sgt. Harvey K. Wingard:

Target-**ULM** rail yards. Little Flak. Weather was worst enemy. Very heavy contrails and clouds. Bombed by instruments.

Below from 100th BG/418th 2nd Lt. Donald A. Jones Lead Crew, Mission Diary of Art Juhlin, Nav.

Mission #30, Ulm. Our primary target was a jet propelled factory about 35 miles Northeast of Ulm, but due to adverse weather we hit the railway marshalling yard at Ulm instead. The weather was too bad for forming over England so we assembled the group over a buncher in France.



**FIVE OF THE D.A. JONES CREW
ART JUHLIN KEPT A MISSION DIARY**

[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com.jpg>]

We got quite a scare while crossing the channel. Some crazy fools began test firing and tracer bullets were flashing all around us in the darkness. Went over target at 22,900' and bombed used H2X. Target was flak free, but we had to fly thru some very bad weather. Time of the Flight was

0820 hours. Flew ship #009 ('This Will Kill You'-Pathfinder A/C, with Lt. Col. David "Handlebar Hank" Lyster as command Pilot), and led the 13th combat wing.

Below from the diary of Maj. Marvin Bowman, 100th BG/350th S-2 (Intelligence) Officer

The Tactical Report from the 13th WG Hdqtrs: Target was Braumanhein, but due to weather in the area, the attack was made on the railroad marshaling yards north and south of Ulm, Germany. All but one 100th Aircraft attacked the target and there were no losses.

Kodak Red (8th AF weather Service) reported the Primary 10/10 overcast and the decision to attack the Secondary using PFF was made. This mission completed the tour of five members of the Donald A. Jones crew: Donald A. Jones, pilot; Grant A. Fuller, co-pilot; Arthur H. Juhlin, navigator; Alfred F. Marcello, engineer; Sam L. Foushee, waist gunner. This crew was a lead crew almost from the start of their combat tour.

Mar 07, 1945 (#15)

Below from 100th BG/350th James M. Harbison Crew; accounts by Staff Sgt. Harvey K. Wingard:

Target-**SIEGEN** Marshalling Yards. Moderate Flak. Bombed by instruments. Load: 6x500 (high explosives), and 6 M-17 Incendiary.

Below from the diary of Maj. Marvin Bowman, 100th BG/350th S-2 (Intelligence) Officer

The assigned target was Dattelin, but weather conditions forced the Group to bomb the Secondary, marshaling yards at Siegen. All but two aircraft attacked, one received sortie credit, and there were no losses.

Tactical Report from HQ 13 CBW. Target: Siegen, – Secondary 13 Group - 100th A, B, C Navigation: Since the lead aircraft had faulty H2X equipment [*the "Mickey" system of Pathfinder Navigation*], the High Squadron assumed the lead at mid-channel and maintained the lead the remainder of the mission. After CP #2, the route was flown approximately as briefed to the IP. Previously a decision had been made to bomb the Secondary because Micro-H reception was very poor. Faulty planning of the route forced 13C to go from the IP over the Primary target and through an extensive flak area in order to reach the proposed IP for the Secondary.

Bombing 100th "A" Squadron: Unable to bomb the Primary because of no beacon reception. Secondary attacked. The maneuver at the IP made by the 100th "B" and "A" in formation. The RN took over and proceeded to set up course. The target was picked up on the Radar scope at 25 miles. The Bombardier was clutched in at 10 miles and all subsequent rate checks of 7, 6, and 5 miles were very good. Bombs were released on a true heading of 100°. C-1 auto-pilot was used on the bomb run. This narrative also applies to the 100th "B".

Mar 08, 1945 (#16)

Below from 100th BG/351st Laurence J. Lazzari Crew, accounts by G.G. Greenwood, Co-Pilot:

Target-**GIESSEN**. At 21,000 ft. 14x500 lb GP's. Marshalling yard. Some flak, one hole through the elevator. No fighters. 7+30 hours.

Below from the diary of Maj. Marvin Bowman, 100th BG/350th S-2 (Intelligence) Officer

Tactical Report from HQ 13 CBW. Target: Langendreer and Giessen, Germany -- Primary Landendreer - Secondary Giessen. Thirty-five plus three PFF aircraft were dispatched and all attacked. There were no losses. 13 Group - 100th A, B, C Squadrons

Navigation: On the Channel crossing the 13B Group began climbing too early and was compelled to "S" turn slightly in to order not to overrun the 13A Group. At CP #2, reached 2

minutes early, the Groups were had attained the proper interval. 13A vectored to the south, and continued inside of the Pre-IP and IP.

The beacon course was intercepted about 15 miles south of the IP. 100th "A" and "C" had strong beacon reception while "B" had none at all. The low element of the Lead Squadron lagged about 400 yards behind on the bomb run and interfaced with 100th "C". This caused the 100th "C" to pull away from the target and hold it's bombs.

They went on to attack Giessen, while "A" and "B" delayed in the Giessen area waiting for "C" to complete the sighting. On the withdrawal the lead was assumed by 100th "B" and after skirting the flak defenses at Weisbaden, the remainder of the route was uneventful.

Mar 15, 1945 (#17)

Below from 100th BG/350th James M. Harbison Crew; accounts by Staff Sgt. Harvey K. Wingard:

Target-**ORANIENBURG** was primary. (Secondary-Wittenberg, Marshalling Yards. Accurate Flak. Got 5 holes in our plane. A number were wounded in our group. Dropped time bombs, set to go off from 1 to 48 hours. Purpose was to tie up transportation in the yards).



TARGET – ORANIENBURG - 15 MAR 1945 FROM 390TH BOMB GROUP

[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com.jpg>]

Below from the diary of Maj. Marvin Bowman, 100th BG/350th S-2 (Intelligence) Officer

The 100th attacked the marshaling yards at Oranienburg with the locomotive depots near Wittenburg as the secondary. Thirty-four and 4 PFF aircraft were dispatched. All attacked and there were no losses. Bombing results were reported as poor.

The navigational log states the 13th A of which the 100th was a part off, was four to six miles north of briefed course while crossing the North Sea, but reached Control Point #2 on course and one minute early. The briefed route was closely followed to CP #3, which was reached two minutes early at 19,000 feet. The turning point at the Pre - IP was overshoot slightly to the east in order to echelon to the left and pick up a good interval for the visual run on the primary target. The IP was made good and individual visual runs were started on the primary target. 100th A attacked the LRT [last resort target]. The greater part of the 100th planes attacked the marshaling yards at Wittenburg. This was the last mission for the Sidney Johnson crew

Below from the diary of 381st BG/Medical Detachment, Sta. 167, Ridgewell.

Thirty seven aircraft led by Capt Carpenter took off at 10:00 hrs and bombed the marshaling yards at ORANIENBURG. These yards handle all traffic from the port of Stettin and were a high priority target. Bombing was visual from 23,500 ft and photos showed excellent results. Flak over target was meager and inaccurate.

However, upon withdrawal, near Wittenburg, considerable flak was encountered. Lt. Carpenter's ship received a direct hit in the waist and damage. He was unable to keep up with the formation and fell back. Was able to land at an RAF Emergency Landing Ground, at Woodbridge, Suffolk.

On landing, the gear collapsed causing unrepairable damage to the aircraft. The waist gunner, S/Sgt Walter Ahl was killed over the target with severe flak wound in the chest, and two others were wounded.

Below from mission log of S/Sgt Donald L. Forsman, BTG on 34th BG/7th Sq., Plane: "No Gum Chum"

Flak moderate and inaccurate. There was some that were too close for comfort, but as close as we are to completing our tour, anything is too close! Three missions to go – sweating it out! 12x500 lb Delayed Fuse Bombs. Hit the railroad yard; weather was clear for a change.

Mar 18, 1945 (#18)

Below from 100th BG/351st Laurence J. Lazzari Crew, accounts by G.G. Greenwood, Co-Pilot:

Target-**BERLIN**. 25,489 ft. Apparently Greenwood was so shook up after this mission, he forgot to record the bomb load on his bomb tag? Lots of flak, accurate. Four ME-262's got a few of our boys. They were terrible looking things. Deadly. The 100th lost 4 planes today.



2ND LT. LAURENCE J. LAZZARI
INSPECTING MID-AIR COLLISION DAMAGE

[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com.jpg>]

Lazzari and Greenwood saw 2 Rapid City classmates go down, Rollie King and Merrill Jensen. Duke Gwin's crew, nearing their last mission, went down. While on the bomb run and after the ME-262's shot up the squadron, Lazzari was flying alone, or at least a good distance from the rest of the squadron. Flew back to Thorpe Abbots solo. Everyone on the crew agrees that this was one of the roughest missions that they flew. 7+35 hours.

Below from 100th BG/350th S/Sgt. Pete Morisco, TTE, Dawson Crew; account of 1 May 2005:

We went to **BERLIN** twice I think. I always thought there was so many planes in the air over Berlin that we were going to crash, you know what I mean. There were wave upon wave of bombers over there.

I may not be explaining this correctly, but when we hit the target, you have to make a – not a U-turn – but a wide turn to head home. There were always so many planes there that I was always saying: 'Holy mackerel, how are we going to get through this – but we did'. The flak was bad, but the worst one was that oil depot at Merseburg, back on our second mission.

Below from Lt. Ernest T. Gilbert's 100th BG/351st crew; Bom. Lt. John Frascatore:

We were flying auxiliary lead below and behind the lead ship in the low squadron. We were suddenly jumped by enemy planes – four or more jets included. In no time at all, we lost our leader as well as three other planes (Swain, Jensen, King, Gwin).



2ND LT. ERNEST T. GILBERT CREW
GILBERT, STANDING 3RD FROM LEFT; FRASCATORE (ON HIS LEFT)

[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com.jpg>]

A jet (ME 262) was on our tail trying to finish us off but fortunately our tail Gunner, Doug Wright shot him down instead. Naturally our low formation as well as a good part of the group had scattered badly. At that point, our pilot Tracey Gilbert assumed leadership and flew straight & level permitting the others to form on our plane. The planes soon regrouped and no further losses were experienced

Below from the diary of Maj. Marvin Bowman, 100th BG/350th S-2 (Intelligence) Officer

The 351st's Colonel Harry F. Cruver, recognized as the best flight leader in the Group, led the 100th on its final attack on Berlin. The Luftwaffe, employing ME-262 jet fighters for the most part, hotly contested this large attack. It was the heaviest assault by the 8th Air Force of the war, 1329 heavy bomber and the 100th lost four planes. Intelligence Narratives indicate enemy aircraft concentrated on the Low Squadron, with one pass being made at the High Squadron.

The Group flew as 13-B in the 13th CBW [combat wing] where six to ten ME-262's and possibly two ME-410's concentrated their attack. It was reported by Colonel Cruver that most attacks came from 5 to 7 o'clock low to level, using contrails and cloud banks as cover. The Intelligence narrative adds that the first attack was made by four ME-262's that came from 5 o'clock, slightly low, and out of the contrails. Three were echelon right and other was slightly ahead and below this element.

The formation was similar to that used by P-51's. The lead or low plane came straight in on the #4 of the low element of the Low Squadron and peeled to the left after closing to point blank range. This A/C #521 was damaged by this attack and fell back. The other three enemy fighters appeared to go for the Low Squadron Lead. One broke away to the left when 75 yard back, one of the other broke to the right and the third came into the formation broke toward ten o'clock and down. The lead B-17 and its left wing A/C were both set on fire by this attack.

A few minutes later the same type attack was repeated by three ME-262's from 0630 level. On this attack the enemy aircraft were spaced farther apart and all of them broke down and to the left when about 75 yards from the Low Squadron trail elements. The entire tail section appeared to be shot off our A/C #861 after bombs away. Then two enemy jet fighters made a pass at our High Squadron from 6 o'clock level but broke away when fired on about 800 yards out. About the same time two enemy aircraft that some gunner thought were ME-410's attacked our A/C #521. It was about 2000 yards behind and below the formation. The aircraft went down after this attack.

The attacks began at 1106 hours near 52° 39"N & 10° 28'E and continued until 1130 hours over Falkenberg. There were three attacks on the formation and two on stragglers within a period of twenty-five minutes. The pilots appeared to the crews to be skilled and aggressive.

The 100th claimed 2 shot down, 2 probable [hits], and 2 damaged.

DATE: 18 March 1945. TARGET: Berlin. The four losses are as follows:

- > 43-37521 "Skyways Chariot", 351st Sq., 1st Lt. Rollie King.
- > 43-38861 "Heavenly Days", 351st Sq., 2nd Lt. Edward Gwin. (Crew joined 100th on 5 Oct 44).
- > 44-8717, 418th Sq., Capt. Roger Swain, Cmd. Pilot. (Crew joined the 100th on 24 Dec 44).
- > 44-6295, 351st Sq., Lt. Merrill Jensen. (Crew joined the 100th on 21 Jan 45).

Below from statement by Rollie King, made on 19 Sep 1945 in Los Angeles, CA.

"I was the pilot of a B-17 type aircraft in which S/Sgt Robert G. Mitchell was ball-turret gunner, and that on 17 March 1945 we proceeded on a regularly assigned bombardment mission over Berlin. That on said date, S/Sgt Mitchell was acting as ball turret gunner. After bombs away on the target, we received numerous fighter passes. The first fighter pass knocked out our vertical stabilizer and the tail turret, killing the tail Gunner.



1ST LT. ROLLIE C. KING CREW

[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com.jpg>]

On the next fighter pass we received a great deal of damage to the plane and practically all of the controls were knocked out. I called back and had the radio operator check the crew members, however I did not receive a reply as to their condition.

On the third fighter pass we received a burst near the front which knocked out all of our controls and put the plane into a violent spin. I ascertained that I was going to be unable to get the plane out of the said spin due to the lack of control and I told everybody to bail out.

S/Sgt Gitlin, waist gunner, checked the ball turret gunner and he had previously checked for the tail gunner. I saw Sgt. Gitlin going out by himself and inasmuch as S/Sgt Robert Mitchell was a very close friend of his, I do not believe he would have bailed out if he could have in any way helped Sgt Mitchell. I have never seen Sgt. Gitlin since that time, nor have I heard what happened to him, and I do not know whether or not his chute opened when he bailed out. I have never heard regarding S/Sgt Mitchell, and I do not know whether or not his chute opened, or whether he bailed out, prior to Sgt Gitlin. As soon as I bailed out the ship exploded." Rollie C. King, 1st Lt., Air Corps

[EYEWITNESS: "A/C 43-37521 was attacked by an ME 262 at 1109 hours, 5240N, 1200E and the left stabilizer broke off. A/C last seen going down into contrails under control with E/A making another attack."]

Below from Lt. Edward P. 'Duke' Gwin's 100th BG/351st crew; CP Donald H. Reichel:

This was our 31st, and final mission although we didn't know it that morning. Berlin was our target. Our C.O. (Commanding Officer), Major Harry F. Cruver, was leading the group that day

and the Gwin crew was in the high flight. Ed Gwin and I always took turns flying, thirty (30) minutes of flying and thirty minutes to relax.

I had just taken over the controls when someone yelled 'Bandits'. I saw tracers going past our plane. I remember thinking "watch it guys, don't hit us." Suddenly the nose of the plane came up and it shuddered; it then 'mushed' and fell off on the right wing. I gave it full left rudder and aileron, but the controls were gone. I then cut both left engines and put full power on the two right ones which kept us from going into a tight spin by bringing the right wing up somewhat. I looked at Gwin and he said, "Let's go," and motioned with his hand to get out.



**2ND LT. EDWARD P. GWIN, PILOT
KIA, 18 MARCH 1945**

[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com.jpg>]

I got out of my seat and grabbed my chute. I looked back and saw Herb Hamann, the engineer, was out of the top turret. He was feeling for his chute. Bob Landino, the navigator and Dave Ackerman, the toggler were already by the hatch.

I looked up at Gwin and he had his chute in his hand ready to put on. Just then Landino opened the hatch and he and Ackerman bailed out. Hamann was all set to go by then and he poked me in the back. Since I was in his way, I bailed out and he bailed out right after me.

Gwin was right behind him. Why he didn't get out I don't know. The only thing I can figure is that he went back in the plane to check on the rest of the crew. We were going down too fast for him to have time to do that. We were already below 10,000 feet when I bailed out.

Below from Lt. Edward P. 'Duke' Gwin's 100th BG/351st crew; TG Joseph M. Griego:

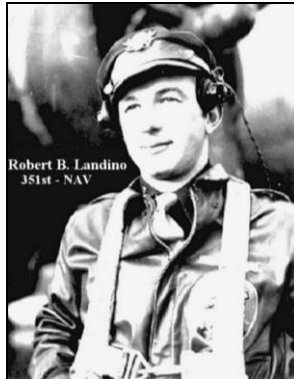
Upon reaching the IP on March 18, 1945 mission to Berlin, we were attacked by ME-262's. They approached from 3 o'clock high. Suddenly everything got very quiet and I couldn't hear the planes engines. I turned around and saw that the tail section had been shot off, and I was floating down alone. I had to shed my flak vest, get my chute from beneath my guns, snap it on, and head for the exit, which was now the gaping hole created by the tail separation from the rest of the fuselage.

After I cleared the tail I pulled the rip cord but my chute failed to open. I had to rip off the cover and pull it out like a sheet. It finally opened and I had just enough time to choose a patch of forest between three villages. I chose the forest patch to come down in because I had heard the villagers were mistreating captured airmen.

My canopy got caught in the tree tops and I was hanging forty (40) feet off the ground, and unable to get down. I was suspended between two trees, and couldn't reach either one. I hung there until soldiers from the Wehrmacht sent one of their group up to pull me over to one of the trees. Upon reaching the ground, I was stripped and searched. I was then marched into a village where I was placed in a little garage where the rest of the survivors of our crew were being held.

Below from Lt. Edward P. 'Duke' Gwin's 100th BG/351st crew; Nav. Robert B. Landino:

As Navigator in B-17 #338861, Sweet Nancy, it was my 31st mission. The target was Berlin. There were about 1200 bombers up that day. A smooth flight until we neared Salzwedel (Germany) at about 11:15 AM, when all hell broke loose. We peeled off in what seemed like a flat spiral or spin. We were at about 28,000 feet.



2ND LT. ROBERT B. LANDINO
351ST NAVIGATOR – GWIN'S CREW

[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com.jpg>]

I immediately went to the hatch below the pilot. Realizing we were too high to bail out I returned to my Navigator's position where I watched the altimeter until we were down to 10,000 feet. I then went to the escape hatch which I opened and rolled out. As my chute opened, the plane passed over me. I was between two layers of clouds. As I descended, I saw other chutes. I finally broke through the lower clouds and could see I would land in a plowed field.

As I landed, there was a farmer waiting for me with a rifle aimed at me. As I pulled my chute together I noticed that it had fifty (50) to one hundred (100) holes in it. The farmer did not seem hostile to me, but he locked me in a chicken coop until two Luftwaffe officers got me and marched me off to a small building. They asked me if I was hungry, and I said, "Yes." They gave me a plate of stew.

I was put into a small room with no windows, and was interrogated by a German officer who spoke with a British accent. He said that he had gone to college at Oxford, England. After that I was taken to another building and reunited with the rest of the crew. The next day we were put into a truck and transported to Stendal. I remember walking through the town to a train station. Enroute the German soldiers had to protect us from the civilians who swore at us, and called us every filthy cuss word in the English language.

Below from Lt. Edward P. 'Duke' Gwin's 100th BG/351st crew; WG, Norman Heilbuth:

One minute we were sailing along smoothly, and then there was a big explosion, and our tail was gone. An ME-262 had shot it off between Joe Griego, the Tail Gunner, and myself. I thought for sure Joe had bought it. I had my chute in the spent cartridge bag, and when we went into the spin it fell out and slipped along the floor. I started after it fearing it was going to fall out of the plane where the tail had been shot off. Thankfully it slid until it hit the housing for the tail wheel. I grabbed it and snapped it onto my harness.

I pulled the red door handle and immediately the door was gone. I tried to get out but got caught half in and half out by the slip stream. I got my foot behind the door casing and got myself back into the plane. The next time I threw myself through the open door. By that time we were so close to the ground that I broke my ankle upon landing.

A French slave worker working on the farm got to me first. I gave him my .45, figuring they weren't going to shoot me with my own gun. Soldiers and the farmer whose farm I landed on, came up and told me to pick up my chute, and we headed into town. I took about three steps and the pain in my foot was so great, that I sat down and told them I couldn't walk. The farmer went over to a nearby tree, cut off a limb, trimmed it, and gave it to me for a crutch and carried my chute.

When we got into town I saw our tailgunner Joe Griego and was really happy to see he had made it down OK. After they got the six of us who survived together, they asked our names. When they heard Heilbuth, Reichel, Hamann and Ackerman, one of the soldiers said, "Ach du lieber, how come you're fighting us with German names like that?"

Below from statements in the MACR [Missing Aircraft Report] by Capt. Swain:

On the 18 Mar 44 (Berlin) mission Capt Roger L. Swain was flying as Command Pilot and became a POW. F/O [flight officer] Summer H. Woodrow, a Radar Navigator, flew instead of Norbert Dougherty and became a POW. Bill E. Thompson, the regular CP [co-pilot] flew in the TG position for this mission.

See Thompson Memo for a description of the attack, his bail out and POW experiences. . . [100th BG Paul West, ed.]



1ST LT. PAUL E. DEWEERDT CREW

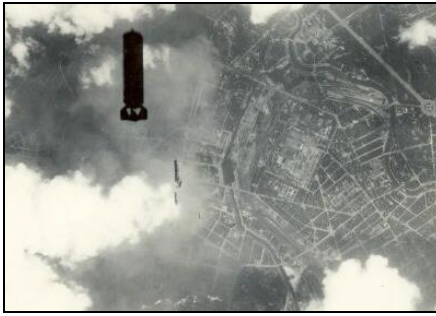
BACK ROW: THOMPSON, 2ND FROM LEFT & DEWEERDT, 3RD FROM LEFT

[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com.jpg>]

After Capt. Swain bailed out, Kolling took over his seat - DeWeerd thought Kolling to be in dazed condition and would not bail out. Aircraft was probably hit again and went into a spin and DeWeerd got out some way. (May have been blown out in an explosion). DeWeerd was later shown Kolling's wallet by the Germans and told that a body was found in the co-pilot's seat.

Below from Lt. Merrill E. Jensen's 100th BG/351st crew; Nav. Richard Scroxtan:

This crew flying its 14th mission, took off for Berlin 18 Mar 1945. In a letter of Nov. 1983 Richard Scroxtan relates what occurred:



BERLIN, 18 MAR 1945

FLOWN AT 26,000 FEET

[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com.jpg>]

We were in the #3 position slightly behind and below the element lead. As we neared the target of Berlin, the sky was clear, but we were leaving heavy contrails. There had been no warning of bandits when our tail gunner opened fire. Four ME-262's came in hidden by the contrails and hit four of us. I had one quick glance, just off our left wingtip which was then 5 feet too short. Our element lead was also hit and turned directly into us. We turned in formation and he slipped below us.

No one bailed out of our plane partly because several chutes were destroyed. In addition to our wingtip damage, engine #4 prop was hit resulting in severe vibrations. Other hits on #2 and #3 made it clear that we were no longer a part of the formation. I gave the pilot a heading of due East and we crossed the Oder River front line at 9,000 ft (down from 33,000). At 2,000 ft we were able to maintain altitude and picked an open field.

Mar 24, 1945 (#19)

Below from 100th BG/351st Laurence J. Lazzari Crew, accounts by G.G. Greenwood, Co-Pilot:

Target-**STEENWIJK, HOLLAND**. Airfield. 0923 Hours. 14,230 feet. 38 ea 150 lb GP's. No flak, no fighters. Hit an airfield. 4-3/4 hours.

Below from the diary of Maj. Marvin Bowman, 100th BG/350th S-2 (Intelligence) Officer

This was one of the few 'two missions days' for the 100th. It was also the day Allied forces crossed the Rhine river.



DESTROYED BRIDGE ON THE RHINE RIVER

FROM AN EARLIER MISSION – LT. PAUL VALENTINE COLLECTION

[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com.jpg>]

On the 0600 mission Major John Gibbons, who came to the Group ten months earlier as a 2nd Lt., led 34 100th planes and 4 PFF aircraft in attacks on the airfield at Havelte in the Netherlands. All of the aircraft attacked and there were no losses. The returned at 1030 hours.

Shortly after noon, Colonel Jack Wallace, destined to become the Group Commander two and half months later, led the A, B, C, & D Squadrons of the 100th as well as the 13th Combat Wing in an attack on the airfield at Ziegenhain, Germany. All 34 of the 100th aircraft and 4 PFF ones attacked the target and there were no losses although most of the crews were exhausted.

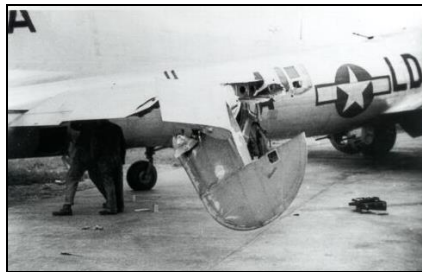
Mar 31, 1945 (#20)

Below from 100th BG/350th James M. Harbison Crew; accounts by Staff Sgt. Harvey K. Wingard:

Target-**ZEITZ** Oil Refinery. 170 guns around target. Accurate, tracking flak. Big Stuff. Group lost one bomber, several shot up pretty bad. We got 5 holes. Visual bombing. 32x250 lb GP. Flew low and looked over the much bombed and shelled city of Aachen.

Below from 100th BG/418th, Lt. Morasco in the "Miss Conduct" S/Sgt. Thomas Booze, TG wrote:

"Visual, and rough as hell."



**MISS CONDUCT, A/C 33-8525 - LD-A
SHOWING FLAK DAMAGE**

[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com.jpg>]

Below from the diary of Maj. Marvin Bowman, 100th BG/350th S-2 (Intelligence) Officer

The 100th took off in four groups for the synthetic oil plants at Zeitz as the primary and Bad Berken as the secondary. The Group lost one plane piloted by Lt. Arthur G. Larsen, there was one survivor, the Tail Gunner S/Sgt John E. Kaiser.



**ARTHUR G. LARSEN CREW, A/C 44-6470
PHOTO ON 31 MAR 1945, AFTER FLAK TOOK OFF THE #3 ENGINE**

[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com.jpg>]

EYEWITNESS: " A/C 44-6470 was hit by flak immediately after bombs away. #3 engine was knocked loose and dropped off the wing. The A/C nosed up then leveled off and started for the undercast in a steep glide. At the Rally Point, pilot made a 180 degree turn and headed back toward Russia.

He was heard over VHF saying that #4 prop was running away and that he would attempt to reach the Russian lines. The A/C was under control and there was no fire. One chute was seen to leave the A/C. Allied fighters were escorting A/C."

STATEMENT OF S/SGT. JOHN E. KAISER, JR. 18243028. The following information was received by Captain Charles W. Terry, Station 139 Prisoner of War Officer on interrogation of S/Sgt. Kaiser 24 April 1945. S/Sgt Kaiser, since this date has returned to the Zone of Interior.



JOHN E. KAISER, JR.
WHILE HE WAS ON THE JOHN A. CARROLL CREW

[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com.jpg>]

S/Sgt Kaiser was flying as tail gunner and states that his A/C was hit twice. After the first hit it remained in level flight and the engineer called on inter-phone to ask if he was all right. There were noises from the front that sounded like pieces of the plane were ripping away. When it was hit again a few seconds later, the A/C started down in a steep glide. He fastened on his chute and called over the interphone but no one answered. He looked back into the waist but could see nothing because of smoke.

The A/C was vibrating badly so he decided to get out. His clothing hung on the handle of the escape hatch and he was trapped there for about 30 seconds. He tried to climb back into the A/C but was weak from lack of oxygen and could not, so he pulled himself up as far as possible and let go. This freed him from the plane so he opened his chute. He floated across the German Air Field located at 5059 N, 1231 E. As he floated east over the woods, he noticed hundreds of E/A dispersed there. He landed in an open field east of the woods unconscious. When he came to, he saw several soldiers (Luftwaffe) approaching, so he stood up with his hands over his head.

After being captured and brought to a Prisoner of War Camp at Weimer he was interrogated by a German Officer. The interrogator asked him the names of the members of his crew. He gave him their last names and was told that his crew had crashed a few miles away and all had been killed. As proof he produced a basket containing the dog tags, bill folds, watches, and other personal property of the men. Sgt. Kaiser was allowed to look through this equipment and when he found the wedding ring of his Pilot, 1st Lt Arthur G. Larson, Jr. he asked the interrogator if he would not allow him to take it to Lt. Larsen's wife. He replied "sure" and gave it to him.

Tactical Report from 13th CBW. 100th Group - 100A, B, C, and D Squadrons. Target: Zietz and Bad Berka (Erfurt), Germany - Primary and Secondary. Aircraft Airborne: 34 plus 4 PFF. All aircraft attacked and there were no losses.

Navigation: Enroute to Control Point #3, 13A was forced to parallel course 8-10 miles to the south because an unidentified group was echelon to the left. The route from Control Point #3 was closely followed until shortly before the IP. At this point the Wing fanned out and peeled off on individual runs on the primary target. 100A did not release its bombs on the primary and attacked the secondary. Weather: 8 to 10/10 undercast in the target area.

Bombing: 100B- The Radar Navigator assisted in setting up course at the beginning of the run. The 1st priority target was attacked by the method of Grid Bombing because very extensive smoke screens covered the target area. Three miles from the RL (Release Line), however, the target outline could be seen, but the M. P. I could not be identified. H2X equipment operated satisfactorily. PI reports no bomb bursts visible, but according to computations based upon the bomb trajectory chart, the bombs probably fell in fields 7500' east (right) of the assigned MPI.

Apr 15, 1945 (#21)

Below from 100th BG/350th log; 1st Lt. Billy M. Bittle, Nav. & Reuben W. 'Rick' Eriskson, ROG

Target-**ROYAN**. Mission #27 – Gun installations – Visual - New type incendiary bombs. Jellied gasoline in fiber type gas tanks. Tanks leaked, heavy fumes in radio room. After landing was informed it was "experimental" - NOW THEY TELL US!"



**1ST LT. BILLY M. BITTLE, NAV.
OF 1ST LT. GEORGE S. FOWLER CREW**

[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com.jpg>]

Bombed with incendiary, which was jellied gasoline put into fighter auxiliary (paper) gas tanks. They leaked and scared everyone. Flying time: 8-hrs, 10-min.

Below from 100th BG/350th 2nd Lt. Gerald A. Plank Crew; acct by Gayle Leonard, 26 Dec 2004

I do remember Royan and the P51 wing tanks. They had jelly like material in them and I got to see it because the ground crew didn't put the filling plug back in. It looked like jello. They used arming wire and tape to attach it to the P-51 wing tank. We never knew the result of that.



**WILLIAM GAYLE 'TEX' LEONARD
QUILT MADE BY MRS. RUSSELL MADSDEN, WIFE OF FELLOW CREW MEMBER**

[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com.jpg>]

Below from 100th BG/350th log, 2nd Lt. Raymond E. Blohm, Commanders Crew Log & Diary

Gun emplacements at Royan with experimental fire bomb. Jell leaked in the bomb bay. Passed over Eiffel Tower on the way down, and over London (1000' bad weather) on the way back.

Below from the diary of Maj. Marvin Bowman, 100th BG/350th S-2 (Intelligence) Officer

The 100th left at 0535 returning to Royan, the French having requested the Eighth "to knock out the fortifications and barracks area on the north east side." [same as the previous day's target, whose mission was in response to a direct request from the ground troops to knock out the naval guns guarding the estuary entrance to Bordeaux at Royan, France.] No flak, no fighters.

At the briefing on the 15th, the bombardiers were informed, "that the planes had been loaded with six 650 pound new type incendiaries, which were to be released from 15,000 feet." They were also instructed: "Under no condition salvo the load. . . No bombs were to be brought back. . . "

James Lantz explains: "Again we went to Royan, where we dropped in conjunction with the French ground forces who were going to try and take the place. On the way down we passed over Paris and the Eiffel Tower. After Bombs Away we could see the French artillery open up on the ground below us. The way back brought us over Rheims and we saw the famous cathedral." The results ranged from 'very good to poor', depending on the squadron.

Back in England in the evening a Memorial Service was held in Brockdish church, in honor of the late President. '... the Post flag continued to fly at half staff and would remain so for thirty days.

[On Friday April 13th, Vernon Sheedy had written in his diary: "We received word that President Roosevelt had died. Quite a shock for all the soldiers. Meeting of the Enlisted Men's Council regarding the 300 Mission Party. On news of the President's death, "the Post flag was dropped to half staff. In the evening, the men observed a five minute period of silence in his memory... "]

Apr 17, 1945 (#22)

Target-**AUSSIG**, Czechoslovakia. Railyards.

Below from the diary of Maj. Marvin Bowman, 100th BG/350th S-2 (Intelligence) Officer

The 100th was assigned the marshaling yards at Aussig, where the rail junction and station 'was hit with good to excellent results.'

James Lantz recalls: "Took off at 10 a.m. and formed at 3000 feet over Buncher 28. We bombed from 20,000 feet in heavy clouds. Just before the Initial Point we ran into some flak from Brux and one of our fighter escorts, from the 357th, received a direct hit and blew up with a burst of orange flame. The boys saw another P-51 and a B-17 go down. Because of the heavy mist we made three runs on the target ... "



THORPE ABBOTTS RUNWAY, FROM FINAL APPROACH

[Photo courtesy of Phil Robbs, 100th BG Site]

Apr 20, 1945 (#23)

Target-**ORANIENBURG** (North of Berlin). The 100th's Final Combat Mission.

Below from the diary of Maj. Marvin Bowman, 100th BG/350th S-2 (Intelligence) Officer

The 100th took off at 0600 and headed for Oranienburg, where at 1015 and from 22,500 feet, twenty-nine planes released ten 500 pound bombs on the marshaling yards with good results.

Billy Bittle notes: *"Bombed suburb of Berlin, just north of the center (Oranienburg). Visual target. Flak (155 mm) was to left. Last mission to get sortie credit for. Flying time: 7 hours, 45 minutes."*



THORPE ABBOTS RUNWAY – NEARING TOUCHDOWN

[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com.jpg>]

**THE WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL
50 YEARS LATER**

Established to honor the 16 million who served in the armed forces of the U.S., the more than 400,000 who died, and all who supported the war effort from home. Symbolic of the defining event of the 20th Century, the memorial is a monument to the spirit, sacrifice, and commitment of the American people.



The memorial opened to the public on April 29, 2004 and was dedicated one month later on May 29. It is located on 17th St., between Constitution and Independence Avenues, and is flanked by the Washington Monument to the east and the Lincoln Memorial to the west. The memorial is operated by the National Park Service and open to visitors 24 hours a day, seven days a week. For more information about visiting the memorial, accessibility, parking, directions, special events and other details, please visit the National Park Service Web site at www.nps.gov/nwwm or call the Park Service at (202) 619-7222.

VE DAY AT THORPE ABBOTTS - AND CHOW HOUND MISSIONS

*Below from 'Most Memorable Mission' by S/Sgt. Marion 'Buck' Calton, TG,
Capt. Lee S. Jacob's Crew - 100th BG/418th*

"The last mission in which I was involved was the city of Aussig. After that, there were simply no viable targets left to bomb---Patton's tanks were racing toward the Elbe River and the Russian forces were at the gates of Berlin.

Days later we were surprised to observe that our planes were being modified in a strange way --- trap doors were being installed in the bomb bays. These doors were hinged on one side and attached to bomb release shackles on the other. We didn't understand the purpose of these changes; but, we did realize that, for us, the war was over.



CAPT. LEE S. JACOB'S CREW ON VE DAY
'BUCK' CALTON, TG (TOP, FAR RIGHT)
[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com.jpg>]

A few days later we gathered for a mission briefing. We were told that the Germans still controlled portions of the coast of Holland and that in preparation of their withdrawal, dikes had been blown resulting in extensive flooding of that low country. Because of that flooding, many of the Dutch people were stranded and, in certain areas, near starvation. The purpose of our mission was to fly in, very low, and drop food - flour, beans, canned goods and other staples to the Dutch people.

We were also told that Allied Supreme Headquarters was attempting to contact German Headquarters to request safe passage into that air space. However, no answer was received. So, another message was sent stating that this was a mercy mission and requesting that the Germans not fire on these planes. We were understandably nervous as we flew over the coast and the German gun emplacements. We saw no anti-aircraft fire so Ike's [[Gen. Eisenhower's](#)] message must have been received.

The flight was quite exhilarating since we were at an altitude of 300 feet or less. It felt as if we were leap-frogging over higher islands of land and it seemed we were looking into the upper stories of the taller buildings. We dropped the food at the designated point and headed home.

A day or so later we flew a second "Chow Run" mission. This time the Dutch people were expecting us and could be seen streaming in from all directions carrying bags and boxes or pulling small carts or wagons.

The scene was so clearly visible to us at that low altitude. And also, clearly visible, was the message, spelled out on the ground, in flowers - "Thank You Boys".

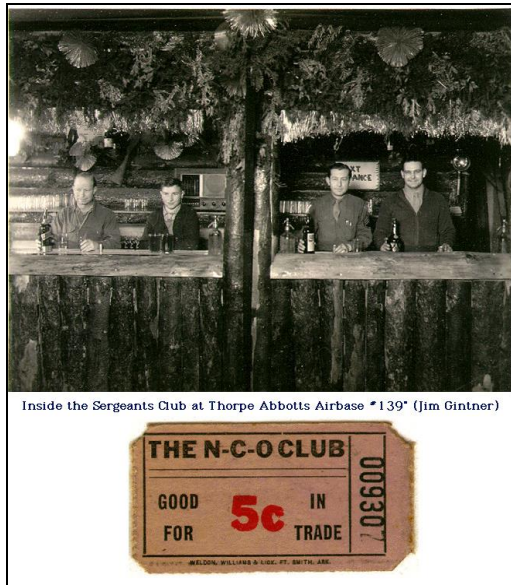
I doubt there were many dry eyes as we dropped the food and headed back out over the Zuider Zee for home."

[From 'Splasher Six' - Volume 34, Spr. 2003, No.1 - Cindy Goodman, Editor]

TRANSITION FROM BOMBING MISSIONS TO FOOD DROP MISSIONS LATE APRIL AND EARLY MAY 1945

Below from the diary of Maj. Marvin Bowman, 100th BG/350th S-2 (Intelligence) Officer

On **Apr 23rd** the crews were briefed on a railway intersection at Buchen. As on the 21st, the mission was scrubbed. (On the 22nd there was no mission planned). Then the truth suddenly dawned—there was no place to go. For the men of the Hundredth, the bombing was over.



THE N-C-O OR SERGEANT'S CLUB
[Jim Gintner collection, by Pat Mullaney]

Several hours later, a convoy wound its way into Thorpe Abbots, and the trucks were unloaded in the ordnance area. The load consisted of strange, cylindrically-shaped metal containers. In a few brief courses, the armorers and ordnance men were taught how to load the containers into the bomb bays.

On **Apr 24th** the crews then flew a number of test flights over the Field, releasing their loads over the runways from a very low altitude.

On **Apr 25th**, the containers were loaded with food and supplies. At the same time, the men were officially informed: The civilian population of Occupied Holland, particularly in the cities, is suffering from lack of food as a result of their isolation and occupation by enemy troops, and deaths are occurring at the rate of several thousand per day.

In order to alleviate famine conditions, this Air Force and the R. A. F. have been ordered to drop food supplies in the vicinity of the larger cities West and Southwest of the Zuider Zee. A truce with the German forces occupying this portion of Holland is being made in order that our Air Force may fly unmolested at required low altitudes through defended areas.

All crews will be cautioned against committing a hostile act of any kind while over Holland. Second runs are not authorized if aircraft are being fired upon from the ground. All aircraft are cautioned to stay south of a line running east and west from the Den Helder. The truce does not extend north of this line.

Allen Glaskin recalls: *"We were to drop food and supplies to the Dutch directly southeast of Amsterdam. . . Mission scrubbed. Jerry [the Germans] refused to sign the flak truce. RAF and the rest of the Eighth going to bomb Hitler's hideout at Berchtesgaden."*

On **Apr 28th**, the crews were alerted for a Chowhound drop, but the mission was scrubbed. The rest of the day, continued as it began, with lots of snow.

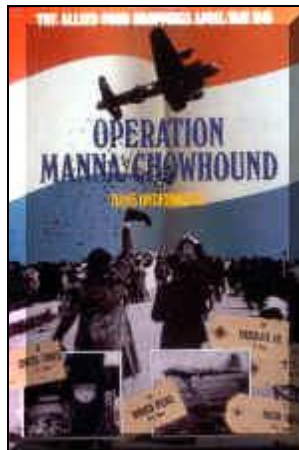
The Stars and Stripes reported: *"Peace rumors sweep the world as Himmler surrender offer disclosed. Mussolini 'was executed.'"*

On **Apr 29th**, Vernon Sheedy notes: *"Cold all day, wind blowing. Rumors flying around here fast and thick—going home, etc "*

On **Apr 30th**, No air operations – *"Pay Day. Lots of snow this morning—approximately two inches. The English do not seem to like us to have so much snow in April" . . . adds Veron Sheedy.*

On **May 1st**, after bad weather had grounded the ships three times, the Hundredth set out for Walkenburg, where bombardiers Alfred Paterno, Arthur Zemske and Herman Calvert, dropped the parachute containers on the large white crosses which were used to mark the target, and where thirty-seven of the Group's forty planes dispatched, released 71.7 tons of supplies.

Luckily the Nazis did not interfere. It seemed that General Eisenhower's message, sent to the German commander notifying him that any interference with the dropping operations would result in the guilty parties being treated as violators of the rules of warfare, had taken effect.



THE FOOD DROPS

*Caption: A piece of WWII history which is little known, but well documented.
The Royal Air Force mission code name-Manna, from the Bible-Food from Heaven.
The 8th Air Force mission code name was "Chowhound".*

[Source: www.390th.org/museum/gallery]

Billy Bittle recalls: *"Hague (Holland)—Dropped food on airfield at 400 feet. Truce with Germans, so we weren't fired on. Had specific corridor and altitude to fly. Saw lots of Germans in the squares. Dutch people on rooftops were waving American and Dutch flags. People were running onto the airfield while the planes were dropping cases of "C" Rations."*

In all, 392 B-17's released 776 tons of supplies over four objectives. As the missions were not considered combat sorties, a number of ground personnel also went along, to help push out the sacks and boxes. During the day, it was announced that Hitler was dead. The 'Red Flag flew over Berlin's Reichstag.

On **May 2nd**, forty of the Group's planes were dispatched to Schiphol, where thirty-nine released 76.7 tons of supplies.

Billy Bittle writes: *"I vividly remember this drop, as we were literally skimming the terrain, and pulling up to miss buildings and smokestacks. We also had the first fresh fruit we'd seen in months—oranges.*

Thinking about the Dutch people and their austerity diets, I filled my flight jacket with oranges and dropped them over Amsterdam to the people waving flags. I always regretted not having a camera on that trip, because we could clearly see the faces, waves and happiness of the people.

We could also see the German troops standing in formation in the streets. We were flying single file, and the drop zone was an open field outside Amsterdam. The area was lined with people who began running onto the field after the first plane dropped its cargo. "

May 03, 1945 (Finrock Mission# NA, 3hr – 45min, with 1 landing)

Chowhound Mission – **BERGEN**.

Below from the diary of Maj. Marvin Bowman, 100th BG/350th S-2 (Intelligence) Officer

Twenty of the Group's planes made their way to Bergen and released 37.7 tons of supplies. A further twenty-one dropped the same amount on Hilversum.

Allen Glaskin flew with the latter and notes: *"Same restrictions applied, with nothing to go after 1155. Salvo load—British supplies in reinforced burlap sacks from 400 feet. Take off 0930. Estimated Time of Return 1248. No opposition expected.*

Forty enemy planes in area protecting shipping so take guns. Soup's on at 1130. Great sight to see people jumping for joy upon seeing us so low."



"FOOD AWAY"

[Photo courtesy of Phil Robbs, 100th BG Site]

On **May 4th**, the scheduled mission was scrubbed due to miserable weather, 10/10 clouds. The ceiling was zero over the Channel and parts of Holland.

During the evening, it was announced that Field Marshall Montgomery had, or was going to accept the German surrender at Luneburg.

May 05, 1945 (Finrock Mission# NA, 3hr - 10min, with 1 landing)

Chowhound Mission – **AMSTERDAM** at the Schipol Airfield.

Below from the diary of Maj. Marvin Bowman, 100th BG/350th S-2 (Intelligence) Officer

21 of the Group's planes released 37.7 tons of supplies over Bergen airfield. 20 more made their way to Hilversum, where 16 dropped 30 tons - 4 dropped 7.4 tons on Baarn.

Allen Glaskin writes: *"Each ship departed over Southwold at thirty second intervals and flew singly to target area."*

Germans surrendered today in Holland—and everywhere we flew over, we saw Dutch flags, on every farm, house and field. Never saw such deliriously happy people. We buzzed a few towns (at around 150 feet) and people waved and jumped for joy all over the place.

On **May 6th**, Eighteen of the Group's planes released 33.9 tons of supplies over Bergen. Nineteen were dispatched to Hilversum, where they dropped 32.1 tons.

On **May 7th**, on his return from a chowhound mission, Lt. Glaskin adds: *"Something big up as they collected our pistols and ammunition upon landing. . . Just heard (9 pm) that V-E day (Victory in Europe) is to be announced tomorrow at 3 p.m."* And, Vernon Sheedy wrote: *"Peace rumors all day. Base Headquarters put out a Restriction for all at noon today. No one can leave the Base unless authorized by the C.O."]*

On **May 8th**, VE-Day, Billy Bittle writes: *"We picked up thirty French who had been in a German Prisoner of War Camp. It was a pitiful sight to see how tattered and emaciated they were. Our crew consisted of pilot, co-pilot, navigator, flight engineer and radio operator, and we all gave them what gum, candy, etc. , we had. All the ex-POW's had to be deloused."*

Lots of German aircraft on field, but we didn't dare remove any souvenirs because the Germans had booby trapped them before retreating. Delivered POW's to Chartres (south west of Paris)."

James Lantz writes: *"Got off at 0430 and flew at 1,000 feet over France, Germany and Czechoslovakia.. Along the way we could see the remains of quite a few B-17's that had been shot down. The German airfield where we landed was quite good with smooth runways and huge hangars. (Joseph) Drottter in landing, just before us, had collapsed a landing gear so we had to go around a couple of times."*

We parked the ship and got out and there were thirty French POW's waiting for us. On the way back, we flew over Paris and let them get a glimpse of the Eiffel Tower. We landed at Chartres, where they were hurried out into the waiting trucks."

Lieutenant Drottter's aircraft, "The Latest Rumor" (A/C# 42-97126), was soon pulled clear of the runway by attaching it to a tank, leaving her only fit for salvage. In its time at Thorpe Abbots, the engineers had replaced fifteen engines.

On **May 9th**, the men were "Restricted from traveling on trains, except for a twenty mile limit" in the morning. This officially ended the 100th's Combat Tour in the European Theater of Operations in World War II.

There remained a few months of moving the remaining aircraft either to the Zone of Interior or assigning them to other units in theater and of course the rotating back to the United States of its personnel. [Paul West, ed.]

TRANSITION FROM FOOD DROP MISSIONS TO SUPPORT MISSIONS LATE MAY AND JUNE 1945

Below letter fm William A. Carleton, in reply to an English schoolboy's questions about the 100th:

"When victory came, the 100th was assigned many mundane chores, such as flying French POW's out of Austria to Paris; transferring troops from the UK to Casablanca, where they went on to the China-Burma-India Theater; acting as moving vans for fighter groups going to Germany; establishing bases at Stuttgart which we kept until October 1945, and flying food drops into Holland.



WILLIAM CARLETON – 351ST ENGINEERING OFFICER

[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com.jpg>]

All these things were important, but the food drops into Holland meant the most. The people there were starving and Germans had promised us a corridor to fly across the country unmolested at low level. We loaded up our food in the bomb bays and came across Amsterdam at roof top level. I remember a little boy looking up and trying to race us on his bicycle.

As we approached the target area, the Dutch had arranged stones to say "thank you" in large letters just as we crossed the field. There were planes ahead of us who had made drops and people were running across the target area to get food, unmindful of the fact that they could be knocked to Kingdom Come with a can of spam..."

May 20, 1945 (Finrock Mission# NA. 9hrs - 5min, with 3 landings)

Below from 100th BG/350th S/Sgt. Pete Morisco, TTE, Dawson Crew; account of 1 May 2005:

A Mission picking up displaced persons in AUSTRIA. These people were slave labor; mostly French [POW's] and we had to pick them up and take them back to France. They would put boards over the Bombay doors. They were nailed and chained of course; they were screwed and chained [into place], not just layin' there. And these people had to stay in the Bomb Bay. Of course, there was no room in there.

Most of them were families. Whole families. They had little children... maybe seven, eight years old... they were dressed in rags more or less. You know, they were... it was a shambles. We had chocolate; we gave the kids chocolate. We didn't have much [*on board*].

When we flew, they used to give us a couple of bars of chocolate and a couple of sticks of gum. Well, we gave them to the kids cause they looked hungry. And, they sure ate it up!

I couldn't communicate with them. They were speaking French or some foreign language and I could only speak English. So, we more or less with signs told them what to do or what not to do. But, they were so happy to be going back home... they were on Cloud Nine. They must have been treated very, very badly.

Below from 100th BG/350th log, 2nd Lt. Raymond E. Blohm, Commanders Crew Log & Diary

Went to HERSCHING, AUSTRIA (10 mile S.W. Line) where we picked up 30 French P.W. [prisoner's of war]. Flew in some supplies, and then loaded the P.W. and flew them to Laon, France (A-70) and returned to base. Hit thunderstorm over channel, pretty rough. Lost 5000' elevation with power on full, before pulling out approximately 1000' above the water.

Jun 03, 1945 (Finrock Mission# NA, 9hrs – 35min, with 3 landings)

Below from 100th BG/350th log, 2nd Lt. Raymond E. Blohm, ommanders Crew Log & Diary

P.W. [Prisoner of War] Run – to HERSCHING, AUSTRIA to a base (A-48), 3 miles South of Paris, French civilians. Nearly hit a man on take off at Hersching, as he ran across the runway.

Jun 09, 1945 (Finrock Mission# NA, 9hrs – 40min, with 2 landings)

A mission delivering supplies to CASABLANCA, (French Morocco), North Africa. Referred to by other crews as 'Green Support Missions' (supporting troops).

Below from 100th BG/350th S/Sgt. Pete Morisco, TTE, Dawson Crew; account of 1 May 2005:

After the war, we flew into Casablanca. We had to deliver supplies and we brought them there and we landed in this field, and we had to sleep in tents of course and it was very primitive. And, then we took a walk.

Your uncle and I took a walk, and here was this big field – and you couldn't see the ground. All you saw was aeroplanes! B-17's, hundreds and hundreds of 17's, and P-47's and P-51's... and, I said to myself: 'Holy mackerel, why were we flying that broken down '17', with all these planes here?' And, after that, well like I said, that was the only time we got a bad plane... that one time when the mechanisms didn't work.

They were there [*airplanes on the field in Casablanca*] to re-supply England as we went down. You know, it was nothing to lose 50 bombers on a mission. And, it sounds like nothing, but there were at least 10 people in each of those planes. I mean... we never had a shortage... there was always plenty of planes. That's how we won the war. [*The war effort back home, stateside*].



"FAMOUS POSTER OF ROSIE THE RIVETER"

[created by J. Howard Miller, produced by Westinghouse for the War Production Coordinating Committee. Credit National Archives]

If these people back here didn't do their job and get all that stuff to us, we would have never won the war. Even in the end, Germany was a tough, tough enemy. They didn't give up too easily.

Below from 100th BG/350th log, 2nd Lt. Raymond E. Blohm, Commanders Crew Log & Diary

June 9th -10th, Ferry Trip to HERSCHING, AUSTRIA; pick up American P.W. and ferry them to CASABLANCA.

Lost #3 engine over Spain, but cleared the mountains okay. P.W.s [*prisoners of war*] in bomb bay got very excited when we feathered #3 prop. About one hour out of Casablanca, #2 engine started to smoke, so we feathered it also.

Had plenty of altitude to descend gradually to the airport; landed okay. Had to leave plane #7514 at Casablanca. (Stayed at Fort Lyautey over, and flew another plane back to base).

Jun 10, 1945 (Finrock Mission# NA, 8hrs – 30min, with 1 landing)

Below from 100th BG/350th log, 2nd Lt. Raymond E. Blohm, Commanders Crew Log & Diary

June 10, Last leg of Ferry Trip - returning from CASABLANCA.



" AIRFIELD AT CASABLANCA – JULY 1945 "

[taken by Lt. Col. G.E. Goodwin - Collection at the Indiana State Library]



FORMATIONS OF B-17'S AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE

[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com.jpg>]

**“MAY YOUR DAYS BE MERRY AND BRIGHT;
MAY ALL YOUR CHRISTMASES BE WHITE”**



THORPE ABBOTTS IN WINTER

[Source: <http://www.100thbg.com.jpg>]



The price "Our Greatest Generation" paid for our liberty was not cheap

... belief in the magic of the "merry and bright" Christmas season, longing for the havens of home and hearth. Today, the song endures not just as an icon of the national Christmas celebration but as a symbol of the values and strivings of the World War II generation.

http://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/Hymns_and_Carols/white_christmas.htm