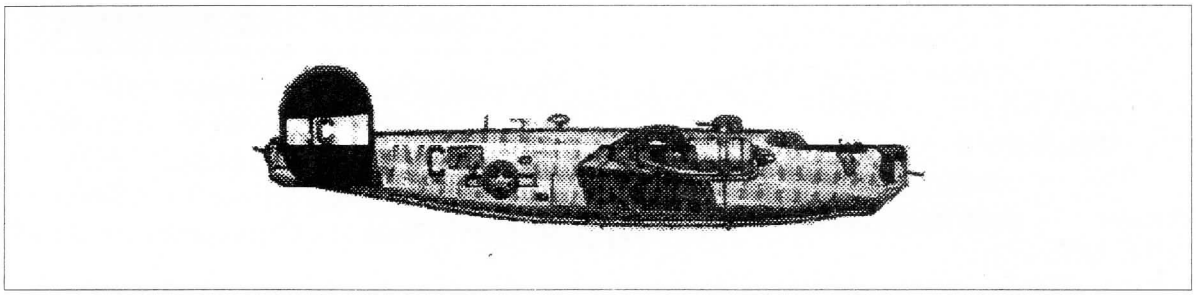
THE KASSEL MISSION CHRONICLES NEWSLETTER

SPRING / SUMMER 1997



Welcome, One and All!

AT THE 52ND ANNIVERSARY Meeting of the Kassel Mission at the U.S. Air Force Museum last September, we promised the members of KMMA that we would issue two newsletters in 1997. Here is our first newsletter edition. If you like it, let us know! We plan to print your fall edition in November.

KMMA TO TAKE PART IN MIDWEST/EAST REUNION

Next September 24th through 28th, the 2nd Air Division Midwest/East Regional Reunion will be held at Harrisburg/Hershey, Pennsylvania. On the 53rd Anniversary of the Kassel Mission, Saturday Afternoon, September 27th, KMMA will hold its last meeting. At that time KMMA's gavel will be passed to the Kassel Mission Historical Society President Doug Collar. KMMA will be dissolved at the end of 1997, and all funds in the KMMA account will be turned over to KMHS. Our sons and daughters in the Historical Society will continue the work of KMMA, with an Advisory Board of Kassel Mission Veterans.

The Reunion promises to be an outstanding event. 445th veteran Ray Souders has lined up a great schedule. For the first 47 Early Birds arriving Wednesday night, Ray has planned a deluxe coach ride Thursday morning to **GETTYSBURG** and a full day's tour conducted by the best Civil War guide in America. John Heiser is an expert historian of **CIVIL WAR BATTLEFIELDS**, an avid World War II History buff, and currently Facilities Manager for the Gettysburg Battlefield National Park. Registration Day is Thursday, and a Welcome Reception is scheduled Thursday evening.

Friday's optional features include another excursion to Gettysburg for those who couldn't make it Thursday. Or, choose a trip to **Lancaster and Strasburg**, with its excellent

(Continued on page 3)

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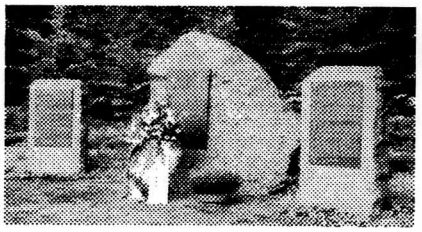
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ORGANIZATION CHARTER AND PURPOSES

THE KASSEL MISSION MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION was incorporated in the State of Michigan 16 May 1989 as a non-profit corporation, and was certified as a Federal Income Tax-exempt 501(c)(19) Veterans' Organization 29 Jan 1990.

Purposes of the Kassel Mission Memorial Association are:

1. To perpetuate and promote the memory and history of the Kassel Mission of 27 September 1944 by the 445th Bomb Group of the 8th Army Air Force, 2nd Bomb Division, 2nd Combat Wing.

2. To fund and dedicate one or more memorials to the Kassel Mission at appropriate locations.

3. To publish and promote books, articles, and video productions about the Kassel Mission and the 445th Bomb Group, Tibenham, England, in World War II.

THIS NEWSLETTER IS PUBLISHED twice annually for the information and benefit of members of the Kassel Mission Memorial Association. Membership in the organization is $7 per calendar year for both regular (veterans and their spouses) or associate members. Applicants who paid dues in the fall of 1996 are paid up through December 31, 1997. Deadline for submission of material for the Fall/Winter Edition is October 1st. All material will be kept by the editor unless marked "Return to Sender When Finished."

(Continued from page 1)
tourist railroad and the Pennsylvania RR Museum, and an Amish community tour. Reception and dinner follows Friday night. Saturday morning you will be treated to a trip to nearby **Hershey's Chocolate World**. The KMMA/KMHS Meeting is Saturday afternoon, previewing **"PRIDE OF THE NATION"**, the **new Kassel Mission Documentary**, which Joe Dzenowagis hopes to have completed by the meeting date.

"...a very enjoyable and enlightening Dayton Reunion..."

The **UNITED STATES AIR FORCE BAND** will provide entertainment after the Reunion Dinner on Saturday night. Truly a spectacular line-up that we hope most of you can attend! For information and reservations write: Ray F. Souders, Jr., 431 Lewisberry Road, New Cumberland, PA 17070.

KASSEL MISSION VETERANS TO BE HONORED BY 2ND AIR DIVISION IN 1998

Kassel Mission survivors have been invited to be honored at the 1998 Second Air Division Convention at Oak Ridge Resort near Chicago. We hope all of you Kassel Mission veterans will join us for this event! At this year's National Second Air Division Association Convention from May 23-26, 1997, in Irvine, California, veterans of the first Ploesti Mission veterans will be featured.

DAYTON REGIONAL 2ND AIR DIVISION/KMMA/445TH REUNION SUCCESSFUL

AS REPORTED BY KMMA Vice President/Historian George Collar in the 2nd Air Division Spring 1997 "Journal", the 52nd Anniversary Commemoration of the Kassel Mission was held on September 27, 1996, at the Air Force Museum, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. 225 people participated in the activities, which included an Early Bird Bus to the AF Museum from the Dayton Marriott for 50 veterans and families who wanted to crawl through the "Strawberry Bitch", a fine example of our combat bombers.

Thanks to all of you who expressed your appreciation for the Anniversary Meeting. Following are some of the remarks:

Orville and Pearl Baker: "a very enjoyable and enlightening Dayton Reunion..."

Paul Dickerson: "Thank you for a most outstanding Reunion...I deeply appreciated the invitation and the opportunity to share at the Reunion. So many shared so much about their beliefs, their time in the service and their experiences. I especially enjoyed sharing with the POW's. I spent a considerable amount of time with Walter Hein and really enjoyed it....I came away from the Reunion renewed and invigorated...."

Don Myers: "thank you for a wonderful Reunion..."



Scene at the Trade Winds Reception Room, Dayton Marriott, on Thursday afternoon, 26 September 1996. Facing camera at left is Ray Lemons, using his hands like a good airman, to describe the attack! Right center, in plaid shirt facing camera, George Collar hurries to join the discussion. (*Don Myers photo*)

Alice & Harry Tachovsky: "would like to express our deep appreciation for a fabulous KMMA and 445th BG Reunion in Dayton, Ohio....."

Fred McConnell (389th BG): "truly a pleasure to be just a small part of the 2nd Air Division-Kassel Mission Reunion in Dayton...excellent festivities, yet a sober reminder of that fateful mission. I was especially pleased to learn of the heartfelt cooperation of the German people and German pilots who flew that day. You all have put together a very fitting memorial for all the 8th AF veterans to honor..."

Kay Brainard Hutchins: "Brother Bill and I fully enjoyed attending the 445th Reunion...that get-together around the pool really topped off the Reunion..I'm sorry more people didn't know about it...it was worth losing the sleep!..."

Gene George: "The Reunion was great...for some time I had been looking forward to visiting the Dayton Museum, which proved to be far beyond all expectations. One could ...spend three weeks there and still not see it all..."

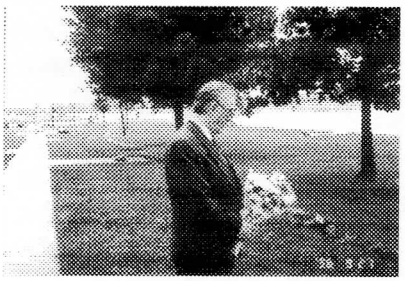
Margaret Schaffer: "I just wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed the 52nd Anniversary of the Kassel Mission. Many thanks to ... all who made this event possible..."



One of the 50 Early Birds at the AF Museum's B-24 Friday morning, 27 September 1996. (*Don Meyers*)

The B-24D serial number 42-72843 on display flew combat missions from North Africa in 1943-44 with the 512th Bomb Squadron, 376th Bomb Group. It was flown to the US Air Force Musem in May 1959.

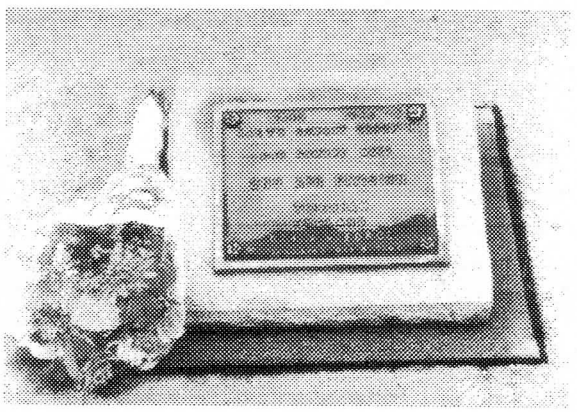
Walter Hein: "Thank you again for the invitation to Dayton...I have never received such class treatment from the moment I checked in until I departed, thanks to you and the 445th membership. Their enthusiasm and cordiality and friendliness made this a memorable weekend that I shall never forget. I spent, as many other on both sides, the best years of my life during the war, and you can easily imagine my emotion to see the old planes at the museum. Flying is what brought us together. As a fighter pilot I consider as my brothers, all flyers of the United States Air Force. So, with you and all members of the 445th BG I feel at home...."



Luftwaffe Pilot Veteran Walter Hein pauses above the 445th Plaque at the USAF Museum Memorial Garden on Friday, 27 September 1996 at about 11 AM EDT. *(Steve Tieber photo)*



Walter Hein places the Bouquet honoring the fallen 445th Airmen in the AF Memorial Garden. The Kassel Mission Battle took place about 1000 hours Double British Summer Time on 27 September 52 years earlier. *(Steve Tieber)*



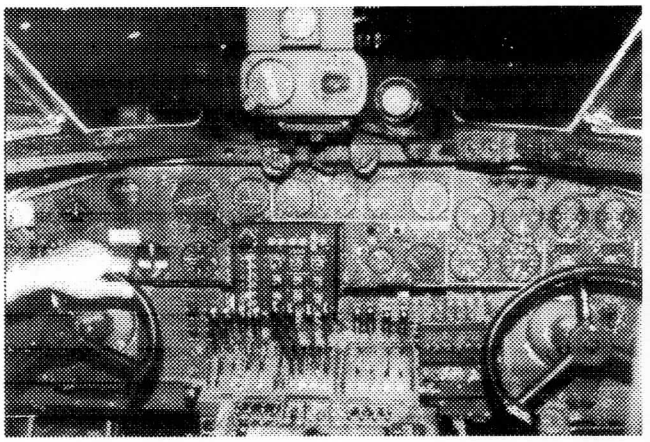
445th Plaque in the USAF Memorial Garden, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio on 27 September 1996. *(Steve Tieber photo)*

"B-24 LIBERATOR; A MAN'S AIRPLANE"

—by William Carigan—from ***Aerospace Historian***, March, 1988

WHATEVER ELSE IT IS, the B-24 Liberator is a man's airplane, sternly unforgiving and demanding, sometimes super human strength, always requiring considerable muscle. Heavy on the controls, the airplane tires the strongest teams of pilots on long missions. With an engine feathered, the airplane requires constant pressure on the opposite rudder pedal, in addition to full trim tab. If the feathered engine is an outboard, number one or number four, the required push by the pilot is startlingly more. When you are, say five hours from the nearest friendly base, the prospect is dismaying. Holding the pressure steadily on the rudder pedal for half an hour to forty-five minutes sets the best-conditioned pilot's leg to trembling with fatigue...When no strength remains in either leg, our exhausted airplane driver should wake

up Leroy (the copilot), if that flap-jockey is operative. When the copilot is unable to help, the desperate pilot resorts to a last-ditch measure. He reduces power on the opposite outboard engine



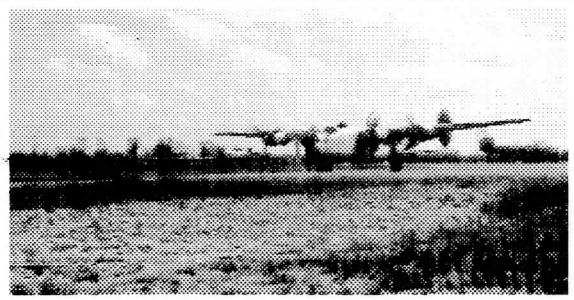
Control panel of the B-24, "Strawberry Bitch", during the Early Bird crawl-through Friday morning. *(Don Myers photo)*

Not an ideal procedure. When the aircraft commander reduces power, he further reduces his already low airspeed. He is still three or more hours from the nearest runway and by slowing down has extended the remaining flying time by perhaps another half hour. It is already a bad day, and the wearer of silver wings wonders why he ever took up flying.

Though the pilot usually dislikes the idea, he has the crew lift the inoperative copilot from his seat and replaces him with the flight engineer, who helps. Ah!

With luck, the aircraft is now at low-enough altitude for the pilot to remove his oxygen mask, smoke if he has 'em, and reflect on the glamour of his calling, meanwhile administering morphine to those who need it. But don't relax too much. Here come the unfriendly fighters, a revolting development that forces the effort at getting back into formation-any friendly formation-and which means the pilot must get back to work.

But, assuming luck, friendly fighters, a lighter airplane, and the lovely, blue Adriatic (*Editor's Note—8th AF airmen, read: "White Cliffs of Dover"*) ahead, the pilot begins to believe that home is reachable. If he reaches that runway, he'll probably drink his mission drink in one gulp, tell a wild story at interrogation (now called debriefing), and fly another day.



B-24 lines up for takeoff at Tibenham, while other Liberators in the background wait on taxi strip for their turn.
With full bomb load and 2,700 gallons of gas, the Pratt & Whitney engines would have to be revved to the red line with full, high RPM, while the pilot kept the brakes on. The house at the end of Runway 21 was always looming at us. *(445th BG photo)*

***Editor's Note**: The above was excerpted from the Introduction of the book, **AD LIB: Flying the B-24 Liberator in World War II,** by the late William E. Carigan, Jr. who flew 50 missions as a copilot with the 15th AF. Carigan returned to ZOI to become a B-24 instructor pilot at Smyrna AFB, Tennessee, then became a B-17 instructor. Doug Collar made me aware of the book, and the writer covers all of the myriad of check-lists for every possible situation that the B-24 Liberator could fly in, with ironic and humorous remarks added by the author. Publisher: Sunflower University Press, P.O. Box 1009, Manhattan, KS 66502.*



Captain Bill Dewey in 1945.

FROM THE COCKPIT

By William R. Dewey, Editor

AS I LOOK BACK AT THE TREMENDOUS enthusiasm and interest expressed during last September's Dayton '96 Reunion, my only regret is that the program could not have been enjoyed by more Americans. Such an outpouring of appreciation for the combat veterans who put their lives on the line for their country flying those "B-crash-dash 24's" was wonderful to observe and receive.

"...patriotism and love of country have become old fashioned..."

It seems that patriotism and love for country have become old-fashioned. Today our Airmen are serving in all parts of the world under increasing control of a world government. The mainstream media downplays the history of our country and the eternal principles so many of us fought for. The military that protects America is mocked and constantly criticized, rarely praised and honored.

I have a deep conviction that this United States of America is the greatest nation in the history of the world. Why? Because of beautiful geography, a large land mass, with almost unlimited natural resources, nice people, material abundance?

No, it is the Declaration of Independence that the Founding Fathers gave us, and incorporated into the original Constitution, that sets this nation apart from all others.

In the Declaration, for the first time in history, man declared that his divine rights came not from a king, a dictator, a premier, a president, a supreme court, a congress or a parliament. According to the Declaration, we are "endowed by our creator with inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." The Founding Fathers gave us a Constitution embracing these principles, under which government is the servant, not the master, of the people.

I sincerely believe that the Declaration and the original Constitution make this nation worth fighting for, and I pray that we, the people, will never allow the sovereignty of the United States to be subordinated to a world government, with American soldiers fighting in UN blue helmets under a banner other than the Stars and Stripes.

What has all of this patriotism got to do with the Kassel Mission? ***Everything!*** The reasons so many brave Americans fought and died 27 September 1944 was for the United States of America and what it stands for: individual freedom. God bless America, and God bless all the military veterans that fought for her ideals

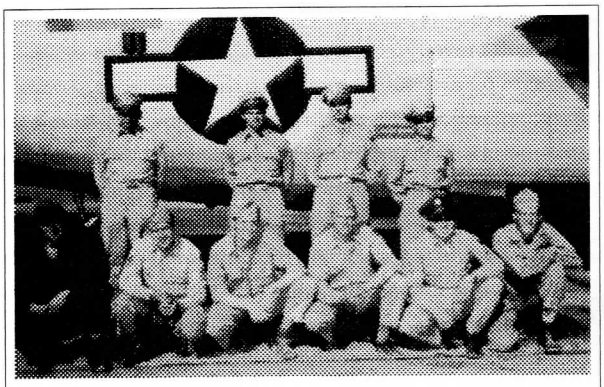
in past wars, and God bless those fine servicemen who now serve her in our armed forces!

THE SAGA OF "TERRIBLE TERRY'S TERROR"

by Staff Sergeant Thomas G. Spera, Photo Observer on 700th BS B-24 42-94810 piloted by 1st Lt. William F. Hunter of Essex Junction, VT, on 27 September 1944.

(Mary Beth Barnard sent this report to George Collar, who deciphered it and submitted it for the record)

WE WERE ONE OF TEN CREWS out of thirty-five to get through a bitter battle fought recently in the air, four miles above Kassel, Germany. It all happened after we had dropped our bombs. Up until that time, I had chalked up the mission as a 'milk run'.



Crew of 1st Lt William F. Hunter
(Courtesy Margaret Schaffer)

Then, suddenly, all hell broke loose, and the interphone was busy with urgent voices calling out formations of Focke-Wulf 190's. From my station in the waist, I could see the air full of exploding shells being lobbed at us. Then they came in, right through our formation. In less time than it takes to tell, the sky was full of debris from exploding ships.

The leading Liberator, on fire from nose to tail, came swinging toward us like a severely wounded animal, then peeled away as if to pick a spot away from us to die. The next bomber moved up in its place. Then we were hit ourselves. A 20-mm shell tore though the bomb bay, ripping off the doors and severing fuel lines. Two fires started simultaneously in the bay. What strange mystery of fate kept us from exploding, I'll never be able to fathom. The engineer, Technical Sergeant Robert N. Ratchford, Gastonia, NC, threw off his parachute, grabbed a fire extinguisher, and put both fires out before the 100-octane gas had been ignited. Then he attended to the leaks from which fuel was pouring out like water from a fire hydrant. Gasoline had saturated the three of us in the ship's waist, and we all had a difficult time moving about. The two waist gunners were slipping and sliding as they sighted their guns. A large bubble of gasoline accumulated on the camera hatch, blown in by the slipstream outside.

Things were happening so fast that it's hard for me to relate the events in any form of sequence. A Liberator with engines on fire on the left wing came up below us to explode after it reach our level. A human form fell out of the orange colored ball of fire. As he fell through space with parachute or harness, he reached up as if to grasp at something.

In our ship, a bullet from a Focke-Wulf probably saved my life. My oxygen mask had become disconnected, and before I realized it, I was losing consciousness. A 20-mm shell came through the waist above the head of Waist gunner Staff Sgt. Joseph M. Selser, Germantown, PA, and caused Staff Sgt. Robert J. Cannon, Detroit, Michigan, to look around from his position at the right waist gun, notice my trouble, and connect the oxygen line again.

I gained consciousness to find the battle con-

tinuing. Seconds seemed like hours, minutes like days. Enemy fighters came rolling through the formation so close that one could almost see the color of the fighter pilot's eyes. One FW, who seemed to hang by his propeller only a few yards off our left wing, was riddled by fire from our top turret guns, manned by Staff Sgt. Robert W. Sarber, Pittsburgh, PA. Another kill was made by Staff Sgt. Fred C. Schaffer, Jr., Pittsburgh.

"One wave of fighters followed another..."

One wave of fighters followed another, until after six minutes, the attacks ceased as suddenly as they had started. Where there had been four squadrons of bombers before, now ten ships were all we could see. Those who could, closed in as if for company on the three-hour flight back to England. (We later learned that three of them landed in France, three crash landed in England, and only four made it back to the home field, where those on the ground waited in vain for planes to find their way back.)

In spite of the loss of our engine, our ship managed to keep in contact with the others for a while. When the navigator, 2nd Lt. Robert H. Kaems, Tulsa, OK, informed us that we had reached friendly lines, the sickening feeling relaxed its hold in the pit of my stomach, but left a muddy taste in my mouth. It proved impossible to stay with the other bombers for long, and an escort of P-51 Mustangs picked us up in answer to a call from Technical Sgt. Jake S. Monzingo, Minden, LA, the radio operator. We were approaching a landing field in northern France when the second engine on our left wing cut out , and a third engine spit and sputtered. Those of us in the waist rushed to crash landing positions in the nick of time.

Loss of a second engine made it impossible to reach the landing strip, and our pilot, 1st Lt. William F. Hunter, cleared a clump of trees by inches, clipped a set of high tension wires, and brought the ship down on a potato patch, skillfully jumping several ditches, only to have one wheel catch in a hole, buckle, and dig the right wheel into the ground. We all took a severe bouncing, but our only casualty was a cut hand for the bombardier, 2nd Lt. George E. Smith, Chicago.

Civilians from a nearby town were hesitant at first, but once they recognized us as Americans, stopped at nothing to make us comfortable. We were invited to their homes to wash and eat. Hot coffee and gifts of beer, champagne, and wine were presented to us. Elderly folks brought us fruit and gave it to their youngsters, urging them to offer it to us.



Terrible Terry's Terror crash at Willems, France, 27 September 1944.
(Courtesy Margaret Schaffer)

The friendly welcome was marred only by the disappearance of my aerial camera, with pictures of the battle. The French police and the crowd that gathered set out in pursuit of it, succeeded in retrieving it from a man who claimed it had been given him as a souvenir. He was promptly handcuffed and led away as the crowd jeered "Boche" at him, and made

motions as if to cut his throat.

Toward evening, we were on our way to an RAF base, leaving "Terrible Terry's Terror" under guard of English soldiers. Weariness had dulled our realization of the day's tragedy. We left France still marveling at finding ourselves alive.

***George Collar's Note**: Lt. Hunter was awarded the DFC for his actions that day. Everyone mentioned in the above report is now deceased. Thomas Spera, the author, and Staff Sgt. Schaffer, died in the mid 1980's. All the rest were killed on a raid to Germany on 9 March 1945, after being transferred to the 389th BG. They are buried in the Allied Cemetery at Margraten in The Netherlands.*

REACTION TO A TRAGEDY

Those of us who survived the Kassel Raid of 27 September 1944, and became prisoners of war, often wondered what the reaction of those at our home base of Tibenham was, when so many of their friends did not return. The following letter from the late James Old, (R/O on Captain Mainhood's crew of 703 BS) was sent to me and describes the reaction to the tragedy which struck the 445th BG that day. George M. Collar, 702 BS.

Jim Old
11220 S.W. Cindy Street
Beaverton, OR 97005
March 11, 1991

Dear George,

ENCLOSED ARE THE THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS I had on the day of the Kassel Raid. I put these thoughts down several years ago and filed it with other papers and photos. I kept it as I wrote it then, and probably could have added more after the "The Kassel Mission Reports". Over the years I have been in close contact with our flight engineer, Marlin Gandt, and his records show that we flew #579 more than any other aircraft, so I assume the #579 was "Clay Pidgeon", an old war weary, painted B-24-H. If that is correct, it was flown on the Kassel Raid by Lt. Oliver Elder in the 703 BS, and the Kassel Report shows it was shot down, and he was KIA. A gunner from the hut next door *(1)* returned from one of the crash landings, and he saw it go down off his wing. He had forgotten our crew (Mainhood's) was finished, and thought our crew had gone down. He said a few minutes of combat seemed like forever.



T/SGT. James Old. Beaverton, OR. R/O Lt. Mainhead's crew. *(Courtesy Julie Peace)*

Wish I had more information on that day, but I was not one for writing down or keeping a diary. After I went to the CBI, I lost contact with most of the guys, and until about four years ago didn't even know that there was a 2nd AD Association.

My time in the USAAF after training was a tour of duty with the 8th AF, 703 BS, 445th BG as a radio operator. After we finished in September, 1944, was assigned as a R/O flying

out of Misamaria (Asam Valley), India, into China and Burma in C-46's.

The above is not intended as a self proclamation, but to make a point of what I am about to say. In spite of the above, one day that has been with me, one day that left its indelible mark, and still haunts me, is a day that I did not fly. **That day was 27 September 1944.**

Near the end of September of '44, our plane, *Clay Pidgeon,* set down upon returning from what was the last mission for four of our crew, including myself. It was so hard to believe, we were done, it was a feeling which is hard to describe. It was as though the weight of the world had suddenly been lifted from our shoulders. This was 26 September 1944 *(2)*.

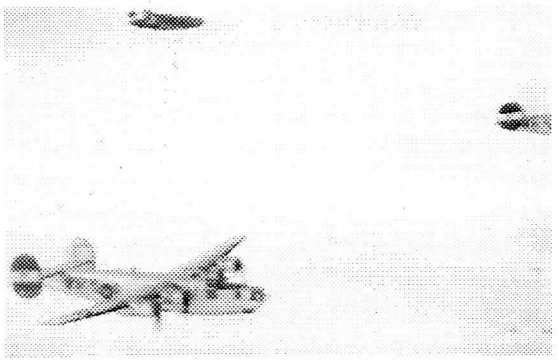
"...Wipeout!...The group had disappeared!..."

The following day, with no tap or shrug on my shoulder, I slept in, along with our engineer, Gandt. We were done! The three gunners on our crew who still had one or two missions to complete were called out. Later that morning they returned, bitching. They had an abort. *(3)* They wanted the remaining missions to be over, and felt they had missed a cinch ride to a place called Kassel, Germany.

Morning went to afternoon, the group was operational. The roar from above, signaled the return. Groups from nearby fields set down. Then things grew quiet, so far, no return of the 445th. No sweat. More silence. Last off the target? Headwinds? Weather over the channel? Still no peel off of the group. No sweat, things have been improving, the group was OK.

More time, more silence, except for an occasional plane (actually four planes made it back to Tibenham). The gut feeling that something was wrong. Then, from the line came the word, ***wipe out***! It couldn't be, more rumors, 25 out of 35, 28 of 36, crash landings on the coast. By late afternoon we knew a tragedy had taken place, as the huts in the area stood empty. **The group had disappeared!**

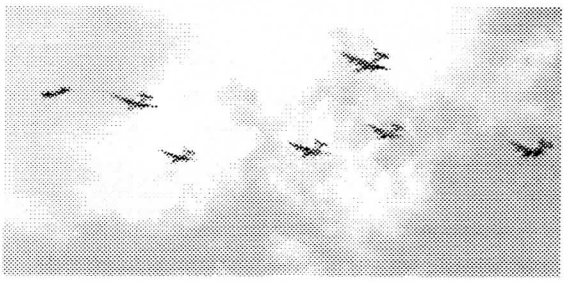
Early that evening, it seemed the base was in a vacuum, empty hard stands, crew chiefs with grim faces, a near empty flight mess, no action at the Red Cross Club. No games of touch football in the fields behind the huts, no poker or dice games, no shouts, **no nothing.** When I passed the chapel, I wondered how many had stopped in that morning for prayers or absolution. Most of all the Nissen huts were either empty or almost empty.



445th group at "Bombs away" over a target somewhere in Germany. *(445th BG photo)*

As I lay on my bunk that night and thanked the Guy upstairs that our crew had been spared this day, I thought of our crew, and our great pilot, John Mainhood. I thought of our original copilot who had been transferred a while back to another crew, and was shot down and assumed KIA. Thought of our occasional waist gunner, Tom, who was in a Flak House, trying to put

his life together. Most of all, I thought and prayed for the guys who went to Kassel that day.



445th group peeling off for landing over Tibenham *(445th BG photo)*

Thank you for taking the time to write to me, and I want you to know how good it feels to have heard personally from a guy who survived to make it back. As I said in my notes, **that day** has never left my thoughts.

All the best,

Jim

FOOTNOTES

(1) Could have been a gunner from Lt. Mercer's crew.

(2) Mission to Hamm.

(3) This must have been Lt. Schneider's plane, which was the only 703 BS to abort.

(4) Excerpt from Jim Old to George Collar dated 15 June 1995, further explains this:

About 150 to 200 radio operators, all combat veterans, were sent to fly the hump in March, 1945, until the end of the war. Some flew beyond that. The majority were from the 8th AF with some from the 15th and other combat units.

The base I flew out of had ten R/O's from the 8th and a few from the 15th. We spent all our time together, an ignored everyone else. We were close knit, and missed the comradeship and spirit of our old bomber units.

We had a lot of respect for our pilots and copilots and line personnel, but little for the attitude of the command. We all wanted to join the 14th AF in China, but they wouldn't let us. Why we were not all busted, I don't know, as we never took off our 8th AF patches. I logged about 500 hours of "hump time", and was sent home on points after I got myself grounded. Very few people knew about **The 8th AF Eastern Command.**

James E. Old
22 October 22 1921—1 August 1996

MORE REACTION AT THE TIBENHAM AIR BASE

James R. Wedemann
P.O. Box 711
Joshua Tree, CA 92252
November 9, 1991

Gentlemen:

ENCLOSED IS MY CHECK. Please send me a copy of "The Kassel Mission Reports".

I learned of this publication from an article in the "Bulletin Board" of the 2nd Air Division Journal, which I picked up while visiting the B-24-J when it was at Brackett Field, San Dimas, CA

Until I saw that article, I had come to believe that the mission was purged from the record. I had never seen anything about it. Nor have I ever talked to anyone who knew of it. **But I know it happened—I was there!** Not flying combat that day, we were a lead crew and had to "practice" that day.

I still get a lump in my throat when I remember seeing only 4 aircraft come home.

Thank you and God bless,

James R. Wedemann
T/Sgt. ASN 13144787
445th BG, 701 BS

"A MILK RUN"

Virgil E. Trombly
20 Clark St.
Norwood, NY 13668
December 18, 1990

Dear sir:

ENCLOSED FIND CHECK to cover cost of "the Kassel Mission Reports". How well I remember that terrible day in 1944. I and my crew had been in the 445th a short time, though I had completed my practice missions over England and was flying combat mission by that time. **I can still see our C.O. standing up in the control tower, looking for his group.** The planes that did come in (4, I think) were all firing red flares. We were aware of the heavy losses before any had returned.

...I can still see our C.O. looking for his group...

What remains in my mind was the **flight on the following day**. As I recall, we had a maximum effort mission, (11 planes), and **right back to Kassel**. The **silence** that hit when they announced that mission will always remain with me.

As it turned out, it was a "milk run" with fighter protection that wouldn't quit. I probably flew as tight a formation that day as on any of my 32 missions!

With warm regards,

Virgil E. Trombly

"We would have been last instead of the 445th!"

Norman J. Putnam
2115 Glenmont Drive NW
Canton, OH 44708

I was on Channel "C" as fighter coordinator for the 453rd from Old Buckenham. If you hadn't missed the "I.P." and gotten out of line, we would have been last in line instead of the 445th!

Norm

"DAY OF ATONEMENT"

(Author Unknown)

IRA WEINSTEIN STOOD ON TIP-TOES to shave his chin; Ira Weinstein was barely five feet tall, and proud of every inch. He was proud of his silver bar, and of his reputation for being the hottest nose-turret navigator in the squadron. As he screwed his mouth to one side, he talked to the impertinent, lather-covered reflection in the mirror.



Ira Weinstein today.
(Chicago Tribune photo)

"If you're going to get some religion, you little

bastard", he mused, "if you're going to get some religion, now's as good a time as any."

"Well," asked the reflection, "so what?"

"So what about Atonement Day services tonight, in Norwich?"

"Oh, all right," said the reflection. "But I hate to atone for something I had a lot of fun doing."

"At ease," ordered Lieutenant Weinstein, with some feeling.

It was Tuesday, September 26th, the Day of Atonement. After a cold ride in a weapons carrier, First Lieutenant Ira Weinstein led a small and disorderly platoon of worshippers to the Norwich Corn Hall a few minutes before six o'clock in the evening. The services were to be held early, because it was impossible to black out the glass roof of the drafty stock exchange. The hall was crowded with Americans in uniform—privates and captains, lieutenants and sergeants. Mechanics and pilots and ordnance men and intelligence officers had all dropped their work to renew a ceremony that was maybe thousands of years older than Christ.

"There must be over five hundred G.I.s and officers here," said Weinstein, impressed.

The buzz of conversation suddenly subsided as the young chaplain cleared his throat in front of a scratchy microphone. A WAC lit seven candles. The service began.

Afterwards, Weinstein turned cheerfully to another officer. "Now that I've atoned for those seventy-seven sins," he said, "I can be bad until this time next year. I wonder if I have to fly tomorrow." He phoned the base, and found that he did. "Damn," he muttered. "Well, I guess this was as good a time as any to get some religion."

...Krivik crawled back into the burning, exploding wreckage...

Ira Weinstein flew the next day, September 27th, 1944. He did not come back. He flew in a ten-ship squadron, in which all the men and all the planes were from the 702nd. One ship returned. The rest were shot down by German fighters.



Ira Weinstein as a P.O.W.
(Courtesy Ira Weinstein)

For almost five months the combat men of the 702nd had not seen a German fighter. The Gotha disaster was history; that happened in February. For the men who stayed behind, the story was unbelievable.

Thirty five planes had reached the target—everyone knew that. These four battered B-24s

limping back to the field in a ragged formation—surely the others must be following them. Surely...

It was true. Only four of the Group's original thirty five planes returned to the field; three crashed on the Continent. And three crashed in England.



"Sweetest Rose of Texas", one of four survivors of the Kassel Mission, landing at Tibenham. *(445th BG photo)*

Krivik crashed in England. Krivik—the only man from the 702nd who returned. He told how the Group had been separated from the main bomber stream, and had gone too far into Germany. The fighter escort stayed with the rest of the Wing, which was flying the briefed course. He told how, suddenly, out of nowhere, more than a hundred German fighters tore through the formation from behind, blazing away with their cannon.

He saw one B-24 after another spin down out of his Squadron, some on fire and some wildly out of control. 20-mm shells had wounded three of his gunners, shattered one of his engines, and damaged two more. Over England he lost one of the damaged engines; over Tibenham, he saw another crippled plane on the runway he had intended to use, and he turned away to head for another airfield. He told of losing a third engine, and of the crash.

...He saw one B-24 after another spin down...some on fire...some wildly out of control...

But Lieutenant Stanley E. Krivik, once a New Jersey football star, did not tell what he did after the crash. He did not mention the fact that, after being thrown through the Plexiglas pilot's canopy and lying stunned on the ground in front of the plane, he had picked himself up and crawled back into the burning, exploding wreckage, to pull three of his crew members out. The copilot was unconscious, and strapped to his seat; never mind, Krivik pulled him out, seat and all. He hauled out the radio operator, who was pinned under his own radio equipment on the flight deck. Exploding machine gun bullets did not keep Krivik from tugging at the crinkled metal to free the engineer. Krivik did not tell about all this, but his radio operator and his engineer did. And Krivik was awarded the Soldier's Medal.

But he knew that all the medals in the War Department could not replace his navigator,

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FIRST CLASS MAIL

DELIVER TO:

(Continued from page 15)

who was killed in the crash. He knew that all the pompous citations invented by Division Headquarters could not bring back Miner, or Donald, or Brent, or Sollien; Virgil Chima would not be back to keep his date with that little blonde telephonist at the Norwich exchange; Sollien would not be sitting at the piano that night, his fingers wandering through "Begin the Beguine", with strange grace and feeling. Ira Weinstein would not be back to write his wife that she was prettier than any girl he had seen in England; he would not be peering over the edge of the bar, shouting for a beer at the top of his lungs because the bartender could hardly see him.

"ENEMY REACTION TO ONE GROUP WAS INTENSE," said the official teletype. "25 AIRCRAFT WERE LOST TO THIS ATTACK." That, and nothing more. There was no room in the official teletype for Sollien's peculiar talent, for Chima's laughing black eyes, for Ira Weinstain's sudden burst of religion. These was no room for the great emptiness.

Editor's Note: The above article was submitted by Ira Weinstein, who secured it from the archives. No author's name was indicated on the original paperwork.

NOTICE

This will be your last newsletter if you have not joined KMMA as a Regular or Associate Member. Send your $7 check made out to KMMA in order to receive your membership card and the Fall / Winter "Kassel Mission Chronicles Newsletter". See page 2 for details.