

VI. 6

Target BERLIN.

May 7, 1944.

After a long rest, due to bad weather, we got Big B again. 3-1000 lb bombs and 5-500 lb incendiaries. They really laid down a flak barrage today. The sky was solid black with it but our group did not lose a ship. The weather kept the enemy fighters down. But the flak made up for them. Berlin sure is a wreck and I never saw as many airplanes in one place in my life. Time 9 hours.

VII 7

May 8, 1944.

Sottervost France.

Hit rocket installation with 3-1600 lb full armor piercing bombs. They used tracking flak and got one of our B 17s. Group ahead of us was shot to pieces. This place has the most accurate flak in the world, according to the older boys. No fighters. Time 4 hrs 30 minutes.

VIII. 8

May 11, 1944.

Trier Germany.

Target was rail road marshalling yard. We really wiped it out. Took 6-1000 lbbers. We evaded the flak but were hit directly by Me 109s. They got three of our B 17s. Lt. Asa Bomberger got it above us and Johnny Stiff our ball turret gunner probably got the Me 109 that got him. It went down smoking into the clouds. They also hit us from underneath, gunner held them off. Boy those fighters scare hell out of me. Time 6 hrs.

IX 9

May 12 1944.

Merseburg Germany.

Target. Chemical works. We carried 38-100 lb demolition bombs and really wiped it out. Saw rockets fired at us from the ground for the first time. Sky black with flak, boy they must have a lot of guns down there. Saw one enemy fighter, however we had P 38s & P 47s for escort. Time 8 hrs and 30 minutes.

X 10

May 13, 1944.

Stettin Germany.

Target was Naval Experimental Station. Not much flak but we were really hit by fighters regardless of our escort. Me 109s got three B 17s right next to us. They showered us with 20 mm cannon shells. Boy those German fighters arnt' afraid of any thing, boweled right through our formation but we really threw the lead at them. Saw 5- P 51s tackle 35-109s and a helluva dog fight. Am dead tired- time 10 hrs and 35 minutes. Boy I will never forget this one Me 109s got three B 17s right next to us.

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The city itself was our objective, carried 42-100 lb incendiaries. Flak plenty heavy as usual. We must have started many a raging fire with all those incendiaries right in the city. City overcast however and we were in that and missed the majority of the flak-boy and I guess glad. Not to bad a mission saw one B 17 drop out hit by flak. No fighters.

Target BUNTLIN.

May 19, 1944.

XI ||

Barthucken Germany.

May 23, 1944.

Carried 12-500 pounders to a marshalling yard target. Was a heavy overcast and we bombed P.F.F. No flak as we were in first guess we slipped up on them today. Was Jack's 13th raid and he was sweating it out. Hope our 13 th is as easy. Time 6 hrs 55 minutes.

XIII. B

Berlin Germany.

May 26, 1944.

Well this is the thirteenth, over with. Lord only knows how. It was to be a 12 B but was really the 13th and now. Carried 42-100 lb incendiaries. It was overcast 13 th and almost our last. We really caught hell. Think the Germans were laying for us. Through God we are still alive. We lost ten ships today and there are a lot of empty beds in our barracks tonight. Doc Savage and I got up late today and ate breakfast this am and Doc will never be back. He was flying Capt Schumate and he and Van Geane ran together over the target and exploded. Believe Gease was hit by fighter and killed first but we will never know. It all happened so fast. Hard to realize that Gease, Doc, Geasibo, O'Neil and Steep are not coming back again. We all played cards last night and Gease showed us some new pictures of his son and was going to name his ship for him, Terrible Terry. The fighters really tore us to pieces today. He had plenty of fighter escort but the Hun put plenty up too. Ships went down like flies all around us. Formations were torn to shreds and single ships were all over the sky. Our wing leader screamed up and we dropped our bombs about 15 miles from the city. We went through that hell of a flak however as the rest of the groups were following us. That mistake of our lead bombardier saved us because as soon as we dropped our bombs we got a direct talk explosion right under our belly it blew us out alone from the formation about 400 ft. It killed our bomber with holes and cut the gas line from # 1 tank and in our left wing. Our left wing tilted with gasolene and it ran all over the plane and into the bombay. We called the group C.O. and told him our predicament and that we were leaving the formation as we expected to blow up any minute. A lot of the fellows said back up and not to worry you will make it. We flew alone back to the base 3 1/2 hours of expecting death any minute. The crew was as brave as any 8 men could ever be. It is a wonder the fighters did not get us out there alone. Time 9 hours.

XIV. 14

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Sarreguemines France. May 25, 1944.

Carried 10-500 lb bombs to a marshalling yard. Destroyed target, not to much flak. We only got about twelve holes in our ship. Sure as gold they gave us an easy one today- my nerves are almost gone from yesterday. I feel that I am on borrowed time anyway now. No fighters. Time 7 hrs 15 minutes.

XV. 15

STILL CENSORED.

~~COGOGG~~

~~XXXXXX~~

XXII 17

May 30 1944.

Halberstadt Germany.

Carried 10 -500 lb bombs. Very little bad flak and the fighters hit groups on both side of us but never made a pass at us. Tight formation really has its merits. Best bombing formation I have ever seen all of our bombs in a 1000 ft circle. Really wiped that plant out nothing left of it at all. Time 7 hrs 30 minutes.

~~XXXXXX~~ XVI. 16

May 29, 1944. Schneidemuhl Poland.

Carried 12-100 lb Incendiaries, and missed the target. We had a twenty minute running fight 7- Me 109s, shot two of them down and the did not get any of our group. No escort. We fell behind the Wing doing a 360 degree turn over the target. No 2 prop ran away and so we salvaged our bombs and got back in close formation when the fighters hit us. Boy that is the scariest I have been in my life. Those dam fighters are hell. That is the first time we had to fight them off alone. Our boys really poured out the 50 cal slugs. Used almost all of our ammunition sure glad the Me's ran out first. I felt like the devil anyway, have a deep chest cold, temperture and a very bad case of hay fever too. Guess I should go to the Doc, but must stick it out and get these raids over with while my nerves are still all ok. Time 10 hrs & 20 minutes, to long.

XVIII. 18

June 2 1944. Pas De Calais France.

12-500 lbs on rocket instalations. Very easy mission P.F.F. no flak and no fighters could stand about 12 more like this one. Short too, 4 hrs 25 minutes.

Cologne Germany. May 28, 1944.

Carried 2-2000 lb Grapeshot as we initiated this type of bombing for first time in U.S. Air History. We really used the glide bombs successfully. Plenty of flak (Happy Valley) but we let the bombs away 25 miles from the target and didn't get near it. Really wonderful to see those P 38s appearing. Bombs take off in formation for the city. Boy it was really burning when we left. Destroyed the Cologne Cathedral however it couldn't be helped. Time 6 hours.

XLII 23

June 13, 1944

St Andre de L.E.

Carried 18--250lb bombs and hit another airfield. Destroyed it completely. Our first mission as a squadron leader. All the boys on our wings said we did ~~work~~ swell and lead them very well. Weather was awful, we got wings full of ice going up and air speed indicator froze. Thought once we would have to bail out but luck was still with us. We came home right on the ground, we led low squadron and had to dodge church steeples and radio towers. Ceiling was 300 ft and visibility 1500 yds, with terrific rain storm. The sky was full of planes and the air discipline was more wonderful than you can imagine. That low flying is really dangerous. Time was 6 hours.

XXIV. 24

June 14, 1944.

Calomnier France.

Carried 48-100 lb bombs and smashed an airfield. We got lead low squadron again and didn't get too much flak. Saw flak get two B-17s in group ahead of us. The Luftwaffe was up in terrific force but hit groups behind us. Heard our friendly escort calling for help. There were more enemy fighters up than they could handle. Boy, I am glad they did not hit our group.

Time 6 hrs 25 minutes.

XXV 25

June 16 1944.

Laon France.

Carried 12-500 lbs to hit an airfield. Poorly lead mission ,
lead bombardier made two runs and didn't bomb. Finally bombed
a small rail road yard. Really a lousy mission. God must be
with us we lead high ~~and~~ ~~over~~ ~~the~~ ~~target~~ and McHugh lead
our low squadron. He was shot down by flak on our second run
over the target. It was his 30th and last mission both ways.
McHugh really put up a game fight to try and bring his crew
back. He dove straight down three times to try and blow out
the fire in his left wing but could'nt do it. He was flying
level above the clouds and we saw four ~~xxxx~~ chutes get out.
Last we saw of him was when he went in clouds still level
with left wing burned off up to # 1 engine. Every one was
shot up by flak we only had five holes however. Boy we are
really sweating now. 6 hrs 25 minutes.

June 19, 1944.

26

Zudausque France.

Carried 12-500 lbs on a very easy mission. Hit ramp used by
for buzz-bombs to hit London. Hit target and had very light
flak. Only a few bursts very low. No enemy fighters.
Time 5 hrs 30 minutes.

June 10, 1945. Various France. Dropped 42-100 lbs on an airfield, quite a few delayed action bombs among them. We are really trying to clean out the Luftwaffe. Guess that will save our troops some murderous strafing. Time 6 hrs 55 minutes

XXII 22

June 8 1944. Orleans France. Enemy 109s and 190s attacked us today but a 52s and spitfires drove them off. Saw one 52 get on the tail of a 190 and blow him to hell. Dropped 6-1000 lbs on a marshalling yard, stopping more enemy movement. Generally filled with a stream of bombs. Saw battalions firing broadsides at "leave" and all along the coast. Saw tanks and guns firing all along the coastal area. Time 7 hrs 45 minutes.

Orleans France.

June 8 1944.

XXI 21

June 7 1944. Balise France. Very little accurate flak and no fighters. Guess they were down strafing the troops. Saw towns burning near the beach. Target R.H. Marshall's yard. Really knocked it out too. Guess that will stop a lot of Jerry supply trains. Time 5 hrs 45 minutes.

June 7 1944. Balise France.

XX. 20

We hit the coast right in front of ground troops. Knocking out gun emplacements of the enemy. Hope our flares were synchronized and we did not drop on any of our troops. Thousands of planes (all types) in the sky. Thousands of ships in the channel / bad weather almost 10/10 coverage. Only had glimpses of battle through holes in the clouds. Carried two external 1000 lbs and 10-500 lbs. Had to bring 1-1000 lbs back as it would not release. Ground crew knocked it off with a score driver when we landed, after removing the fuse. Sure makes you uneasy landing with one of those babies - Now. Time 5 hrs 45 minutes.

Arromanches France.

19

D. DAY

June 6, 1944.

XXXXXX

July 4, 1944. 30

St Andre France.

Well I can really celebrate the 4 th of July from now on . Flew the crew on our last mission as I st Pilot. Had a new Co-pilot named Beckwith and new navigator and enlisted nose gunner. Was really nervous, we hit flak over Caen and it was rough- got only one hole near tail gunner. Really sweated on the bomb run but got very little flak. Sure did enjoy making that last Combat landing- it was good too. Thank God I am through and alive. Time 6 hours.

June 20, 1944.

Hamburg Germany.

XXVII 74

Carried 12-500 lbs to hit the oil refinery and storage at Hamburg. Excellent results, flames from target shot 10,000 ft. Flak worst that I have ever seen, much worse than Berlin ever was. Grew all nervous and very jumpy. Don't see how we ever got through it, sky was black with it, got holes in No. 2 gas tank and No. 4 supercharger. Numerous small holes in the wings. Time 8 hours.

June 27, 1944.

Bremen Germany.

XXVIII 28

Hit another synthetic oil plant and completely destroyed it. This was our roughest one yet as flak was concerned. Would never be able to find words to describe it. We had over 250 flak holes in our ship, were hit directly by four bursts almost at once. Two engines full of it. Nose, tail and waist full of it holes. Armor plate behind instrument panel kept Jack and I from being torn up by big chunks. All left wing tanks were hit. Left wing looked like a sieve. Gas ran everywhere. Gas and oil filled up left wing, lucky again it did not fire or explode. Boy, I am really sweating this out, dodge flak in my sleep all night. None of us can sleep to amount to any thing. Time 7 hrs 25 minutes. P.S. had to rebuild the ship we brought back completely.

June 25 1944.

Toulouse France.

XXIX 29

Target an airfield 30 miles from Spain. Got a good look at and front but the Jerry's threw every thing but kitchen stove at us. When we passed over at 15,000 ft. they knocked engines out on six ports and two of ours went down from it. Flak not to bad at Target. Jack was really sweating however, it's his, Hells and McGees last mission. Wish it was mine too. My nerves are shot to hell. Jack and I both dead with fatigue. I dozed off and he got vertigo and we almost crashed into the Atlantic coming back. He just pulled out at 300 ft above water. We were on instruments and both of us on Benzadrine tablets to keep us awake. Flew two hours on instruments. Almost ran out of gas again. (11 hour flight) had only 25 gallons in each tank and had trouble finding hole in clouds to let down through. Landed at R.A.F. base near Lands End (Luggates Bottom) Thank God I have only one more. 11 hours.

Asa H. Hoke



Asa H. Hoke
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~~2~~
JAN. 8th 2003

MR. Joe Pennington
127 Chiswick Cir.
JACKSON, MISS 39211

Dear MR. Pennington;

Re: your letter 1-2-03

Sorry - I don't have any photos of Jack - but I do have a combat diary that I kept of our missions.

Am enclosing a copy of the diary for your information - hope it will prove interesting -

Please excuse handwriting - I had a stroke 17th 20th 2002 & left side is still paralyzed & ~~not~~ Daley is enclosing your

letter due to death of our son, Tim, on ~~1-21-02~~ ¹⁻⁶⁻⁰³

we had two sons - lost one on 1-21-02. one was 51 yrs old & other 53 years old.

you grandfather and I were close friends - we flew 30 combat missions over France - Germany - side-by-side (250 combat hours)

Best Regards -

Asa H. Hoke
P.S. Thanks for pictures of crew & Jack & I.

Lt Asa H. Hoke. E.T.O July 27, 1944 CO Pilot B-17 Flying Fortress
A.C. O 818677.

(1).
April 25, 1944. Landsburg, Germany.

My first raid, crews too, except Jack, his second, Target Air Field
ten miles from Munich. 10-500 lb bombs, time 9 hours 15 minutes.
Was fascinated by so many forts in the air. Black was very heavy.
We missed most of it luckily, group on our right caught hell, saw
eight B-17s explode. Group on our right flew to loose, however group
on our left was hit heavily by Me 109s saw three go down from fighters.
Flak is fascinating.

(2).
April 26, 1944. Metz France.

Target Air Field. 12 - 500 lbs Time 8 hours 35 minutes.

Not a difficult mission, very little flak, no fighters, hit us. Plastered
target well. Almost ran out of gas on way home. Threw everything out of plane
possible. Called "Barksey" and landed at a small Air Sea Rescue Field
Shoreham by the Sea" # 2 & # 3 gas tanks were entirely dry - sure was afraid
we would have to ditch. Hope we get more gas on next mission that was to
close.

April 27, 1944. Toul France.

Easy mission no fighters as we had P 51s & P 47s as escort all the way.
We evaded all the flak and knocked the airfield all to hell. Carried
12-500 lbs. Saw five of our forts go down hit by flak. One blew up
directly in front of us. Hope the next one is as easy. Time 6 hrs 15 minutes.

(4)

April 28, 1944. Berlin Germany.

This one was really tough. Carried 3-1000 lbs and 4-500 lb incendiaries.
Saw two B 17s go down by flak and one by fighter. On the way home saw
Me 109s get four B 24s straggled below us. Boy we will never struggle.
Flak over city was like a black cloud could have gotten out and walked
on it. Don't see how they missed us. They sure tried to keep us from
bombing the city. Time 9 hrs 15 minutes.

5

May 1, 1944. Montdidier France.

Carried 12-500 lb semi armor piercing bombs. Target was airfield. Heavily
destroyed it. Easy mission quite a change from last one. No flak, no
fighters. Bill Schuster, old high school buddy, was lead bombardier.
Time 8 hrs 40 minutes.

VI

May 7 1944. ~~Frankfurt~~ Berlin.