

#10 MUNSTER

Today we went back to Munster. Our primary target was an oil refinery at Geisonkerchen, but since it was overcast we went to the secondary and dropped over 18-250 pounders G.P. P.F.F. on the yards at Munster. I like these late briefing, it's better for your sleep and you feel more like a days work. We had Renne III-113. Its a lousy plane and we were a bit apprehensive.

We got off O.K. - formed and headed out, we flew #2 in the high element of the low box - a good position, I like it - bombing alt was 8,000'(?), it was 50° below zero. We had heated suit troubles. On the bomb run, we fell behind. Our #3 turbo was out and all 3 of the others were acting up. After some rack malfunctions. We finally got our bombs out.

Coming home we had a terrific trouble with clear ice and frost on the windows. Chuck landed today. He did a good job. The mission was not too bad. We were in clouds over the target so we saw little flak. Francis lead - he is a true R.O.F.

#11 NERSEBURG (NOV.)

Well we've had it. I have never before been so close to death. Johnny flew with us - Carroll was Logglear. Peter was D.N.I.F.

with a cold. We went after oil refineries at Merseburg but missed it when our Mickey went out taking us forty miles off course. Flak wasn't bad but we picked up fighters five minutes off the target. At first the white puffs mixed with the black flak - later I realized they were 20 mm explosions. They knocked down 9 out of our group. Harrison and Guptil among them. There is hope that they may be P.W.'s.

We took off O.K. with a load of delayed action bombs - 18-250 lbs. We assembled at low altitude having a little trouble getting into division formation.

At the Belgium coast, we very nearly aborted because #1 ran away (prop governor out) but we decided to keep going - we climbed on 3 engines, held No. 1 engine back with trottle. Kept in formation. Those poor engines, after bombs away, we boosted to 2500-46" and kept it up for 2 hours. F.W. 190's hit us in groups of 9 wave after wave. We flew in lead box. They almost wiped out the low box then hit us. Harlan blew one up. Boudreau got one for sure, it crashed out of control into a 17 just ahead and I watched Brown knock the prop and spinner off an F.W. 190 flying off our wing tip - raking our lead plane. Harlan's guns jammed and Soder was really fine in fixing them. We all were proud of him. It was pretty bad there was no sport to it when they go after you, you don't have a chance. Forty fighters on 1 or 2 planes at a time, well it's suicide. We have no right to be here tonight. The Lord was

very good to us today. I never needed Him so badly as that day. Til today, I knew I'd get back O.K., but now I realize that it's really a game of chance, if they hit you, your number is up.

Finally, we socked it into one terrific formation, maybe 30 planes. The box formation was the best I've ever been in - the boys were really good and then the fighters stood out of range, waiting for stragglers. We worked those poor engines to death but we stayed in. There was a formation of four ships flying to the left of us. The fighters made one pass, knocked off two, made another and got the remaining two. So you see our getting out of formation would have meant our lives. After getting to the Channel, we feathered No. 1 and left formation. The engine should have been feathered before but that would have drawn the attention of the fighters.

Back to England, safe one more for a few hours.

#12 METZ, FRANCE (NOV. 9)

Well, I could use a few more like this one. After a 4:00 a.m. briefing, we were over the target by 9:30, dropped our 6-1000 # G.P. on German strong points in the front lines. Saw no flak or fighters, we were only in enemy territory for 10 minutes.

We were to try out the new Micro H. bombing today. A localizer

throws a beam 90° across our route. This and a line of friendly flax over the lines identifies the front, friendly from enemy territory. We formed at 16,500 almost in the dark and it was really rough. Then we flew south out of England across the channel and thru France right into the sun. It just about tears your eyes out. We dropped from 23,600 on what we're almost positive was the front line (enemy). We had a rack malfunction in the left bay and Peter finally helped Carroll get them out - 90 seconds late.

The whole 8th Air Force was in there blasting a war for Patton's 3rd Army.

We had a good ship, kept up very well. I hope we hit the target and didn't hit any Yanks. We felt good to think we were helping our pals like Porter on the ground.

### #13 MERSEBERG

Oh my back No. 13 and I find out we are heading back for Merseburg. The last time there, we only lost nine ships.

Major Syptak leading - our position was 7th in a division line of 12 - so we figured it should not be too bad.

We assembled at 10,000 feet and flew through beautiful weather to the Continent. We had trouble getting into the division

line - got shuffled doing it. We flew in the high element of the lead box. Everything finally got into shop - line formed, plane running smoothly - a million beautiful P-51s. We headed for the oil refinery at Merseburg.

At 24,500, 8 minutes from the I.P. we ran into a thick white haze. We went down to 20,500 feet and at the I.P. got into a shuffle with Polebrook. Our high element got lost so we climbed to thirty thousand and headed back with a six ship formation. When Harlan called out fighters coming in at six o'clock, we got rid of our bombs to keep in formation. The bombs were of no use to us because we had a solid undercast and no equipment to bomb blind. Had a little trouble with Peter - told him to get rid of the bombs and he started to argue. I had to order the sun of a gun. As long as I am first pilot, I do whatever is the best interest of the crew. With bombs gone, we kept a good formation. The F.W. 90 came in at six but did not attack, they simply dove into the clouds and never appeared again. We all were afraid they would radio our position and have the whole G.A.F. after us. If they had just 2 or 3 more ships they could of torn us to pieces. They had navigation trouble in the lead ship but managed through blinker between ships to get straightened out.

#14 MERSEBERG

Back to our old target and no enemy fighters, unbelievable.

We got up for a 5:00 a.m. briefing and after a  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour delay in engine time, we got started - assemble at 9,000. Again we flew #3 high element of the low squadron.

Our climb was alright - got in the division line but didn't get to bombing alt. (25,000) til we were well into Germany. The formation was awfully strung out but they closed it up beautifully. Even Gurgess held our element right in there. Our 3 squadrons were stacked right together. The groups were at 1 minute intervals, we were 3rd in the division line. Because everything was so compact, those fighters covered us perfectly. I saw more P-51s today than in all my other missions combined. A very beautiful sight.

We turned on I.P., made a good bomb run. There was kind of a mix-up at bombs away, but it was pretty good. We should have hit it today - we went right through a terrific wall of flak - it didn't seem possible to get thru it but we went in it - found only moderate bursts. Let's hope those 10-500 #G.P.s got that oil plant.

We kept up at altitude to get over weather - let down on the Channel. We left the formation and came in alone - low on gas. Peter did a beautiful job of navigating us home on a beam from his G. Box. The visibility was lousy just scrapping over high tension wires, trees, etc. Despite a diversion message, I flew back to our base and landed.

#15 MISBURGH

Misburgh sounds like Mersburg and it almost was. The flak was intense and we had a whale of a fighter scare - we hit an oil plant.

We took off and formed O.K., flew #3 off McCall's wing in the low section. The division line again was darned good (very close). The only bad thing it meant was prop wash. Nearing the target (just past Hanover) we were advised of fighters in the area. After getting hit once, that is bad news. We came in on the target on a P.F.F. run, tho it was visual the whole bomb run. Jerry had a smoke screen around the plant so we only got a visusl assist.

Over the bomb release line, there was a lot of flak - tracking flak, it followed us everywhere. After bombs away, maybe you don't think we didn't use evasive action. That stuff is really dangerous. We got back into a good formation and started home. Over V.H.F. we heard a group calling for help. They were hit by about 100 enemy fighters. That meant most of the group was knocked down.

The trip back was alright, just a little flak at the Dutch coast.

#16 MISBURGH

Didn't expect to be going back here today but it turned out to be alright. We flew W-831 our own plane on its 3rd mission got its first hole in the chin turret. After a 1 hour delay, we took off flying #2 in the low element. Pike flew as our Navigator. Peter is D.N.I.F. We had a bit of an accident when Carroll let off several rounds from the chin turret. He's so careful - it was just an unfortunate accident with a touch of carelessness. Let's hope they are not too rough on him.

We headed out for Germany, had a bad time getting into division line and the high squadron was "S-ing" badly. We had very good fighter support - we had been briefed on 750 German fighters. Fighter protection was good and division formation was tops. We went to 27,000 to drop our 12-500 #G.P.s on the oil refinery at Misburgh 10 miles west of Hannover. Coming out over the Dutch coast the "Mad Dutchman" shot at us again very light flak but accurate.

We were C-channel monitor today. Very interesting to listen to the conversation between Big Friend and Little Friend with G.A.F. as powerful as the beginning of the war, we wonder why we are not attacked more often - possible oil and gas - increased fighter protection - lack of pilots. Someday they will come up and it will be terrific.

P.S. - Oil lock in #4. Relay stuck - drained all power from



batteries, burned all generators fuse 200 gallons fuel in No. 4 could not be transferred.

#17 KASSEL

Well, we had to finish this trip back from Germany in a truck. It was the funniest thing. Took off - formed - flew to the target, dropped our bombs P.F.F. on a rail-yard. On the way back, 20 minutes from the Belgium border, #4 oil pressure all of a sudden went down to zero - so we feathered it. Then 10 minutes later, the interphone died out, after that the whole electrical system. At first we thought it was the inverters but they were O.K. Brownie and Soder checked every fuse in the place, no go - it was just out.

All our electrical gages went out. We dropped down below the clouds in Belgium - 3,000 ft. and Peter did pilotage over Antwerp. We were sweating out low fuel and what was worse, the gas gage (electrical) was out. So we flew the Channel and decided to go into the first B17 base. You'll never know how close we came to setting down just outside Antwerp.

After looking all over, we found Ridgewell - 20 miles from Camnbridge, so we went into there. Had to crank down wheels, then the flaps on the approach. As we passed over the field, we fired Yellow Yellow flares (signal of mechanical failure), then on the final approach, we fired flares again. I had  $\frac{1}{2}$

flaps cranked down so in case of a go away we would not stall out. The hydraulic pressure pump was out so I hit the end of the runway and had Chuck work the manual pump. An ambulance was waiting for us, but no one was wounded. That night they flew us to Molesworth where Glatton had a truck waiting for us. Eventually we got back to our field. Home Sweet Home.

#18 MERSEBERG

On the third anniversary of Pearl Harbor, we dropped 20-250 #G.P.s on the Leuna Synthetic oil refinery just south of Merseberg. Mickey said he had a good picture on his screen. We didn't fly our ship today, its still down at Idgewell being fixed - Flew F-161, coldest ship on the field.

After an hour delay, we took off and formed on the King's Cliff bunker. Got into the division line without much trouble - had an easy position today, number two of the high element off Brown. The weather briefing was awful - we ran into clouds at all levels. The fighters gave us beautiful protection today.

It was a fast trip in due to the tail wind. V.H.F was unusually quiet. At the I.P. we turned in well and dropped our bombs. I swung wide after bombs away doing violent evasive action. The tracking flak scared hell out of us. Harlan, Boudreau and Carroll all calling it for me. They were using mostly 105 M.M. (whitepuffs). They really chased us accurately and with a heck

of a lot. We got a burst that knocked out all of the instrument lines going to number one engine but it still ran perfectly. Then a big hole in the nose about a yard away. Really could hear it go through the ship. The trip back was alright - enough gas and everything. We did sweat out No. 1 but it took us back. It was awfully cold -50° at 26,500. Got our usual five bursts from the "Mad Dutchman". At the English coast, we left formation because of a camera. The frost on the windows made flying very difficult. At times, I had to "S" to see in front of me. Finally made the field and landed safely. Not a bad landing, so the crew thought anyhow.

#### #21 CLACION PLUS

Today we flew high element lead. If we've ever been in a mess up affair, this was it. Plan "A" was an attack on a front line German airport - Plan "B" attack on the Marshalling yards at Koblenz. The fog that morning was terrific. I guess you could see about half way down the runway. About the seventh ship to take off got off the runway and could not get enough speed up but pulled the ship off the ground at the edge of the field over the railroad tracks and he crashed into the ground. Somehow everyone but two got clear of the ship and it exploded. We stood by for 5½ hours hoping for the fog to clear up. The sandwiches they brought out to us were horrible but we ate them anyhow. At 2:00 p.m. we took off on a mysterious mission. The takeoff was sort of rough, I had to open my storm window

to see the runway. Just about half the length could be seen. Throttles were pushed wide open and down we went. Up to 120 I watched the sides of the runway then glued my eyes to the instrument panel and pulled the ship off the ground. Funny feeling, to fly over a freshly wrecked ship. At about two thousand, we broke out into the clear. The sun was shining very brightly above the fog. Formed at nine thousand feet and headed for Dunkerque, then suddenly in the middle of the channel we dropped our bombs. 75 tons of 100 #G.P. 38 per ship. The fog was still at Glatton, so they diverted us to Eye where we spent a very miserable Christmas. The enlisted men slept in a barracks with some cooks and bakers. At twelve o'clock p.m., they got us a delicious meal plus stealing a roasted turkey which we ate walking down the street and made sandwiches at the hut.

#22 GEROLSTEEN

This was a close support attack on the rail lines Runstadt is using for his counter offensive. Got up real early and spent an extra long station time sweeping off the wings and getting windows and antennae cleaned off. After a one hour delay, we got off O.K. formed at 10,000 feet. The bomb run was visual and very long picking up some scattered accurate flak. We were supposed to have hit a railroad junction. The rails were hit four miles north of assigned M.P.I. but was seriously damaged.

Made a good landing in terrific haze. The Navigator found the field with his G.Box the point is to keep part of the field or surrounding area in sight - called the tower who in turn have flares set off 500 and 1500 feet from the end of the runway. Then the point is to fly in the general direction of the landing runway. At about six hundred feet, and as you pass over the edge of the landing field do a tight 360° descending turn as you roll out line up with the two flares. The only way then is to hit the inner marker at about two fifty feet. Many times I have not been able to see the runway until after passing the inner marker. Going so fast its only a matter of seconds before the runway is under the ship. Oh - More fun.

~~22~~  
#23 BINGEN

Another tactical support mission and we certainly wiped out the target. The photos show all three boxes with 60% of their bombs in the 500 feet circle - that is good bombing. The high and lead squadrons flew beautiful formation but the low was bad. 175 mph climb strung us out and the element leads lagged badly. We dropped 18-250 #G.P.s and 2 M-17I.B.s from 21,000 feet. We picked up a good deal of scattered accurate flak right in the formation. On the way back we saw many small railroad yards being plastered. While Chuck was flying, I remember watching the smoke markers from another group. A long thin line of smoke. It had just about gone out of sight when I saw the bombs land in and about a small town. Even from our

altitude, the explosions could be seen very clearly. The whole town became covered with smoke. The ground was covered with snow that make the strikes very clear. Those people really know that war is hell. The chances are just about everyone in that town was killed.---Just like wiping out Hebron.

~~#23~~ ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

#24 KREFIELD

In the Ruhr Valley - 8 minutes from Dusseldorf, - Visual - Bombardier missed - Mac was Air Commander - just missed Dusseldorf flak. Got two holes in the tail which came very close to Harlan. One of the main formers stopped it.

This is the last mission covered by my notes. I do not know if this was the end of my writing or if the notes were lost.

Lloyd

THE FOLLOWING WAS TAKEN FROM THE DIARY OF CHARLES KELLER

#34 SIEGER---JAN. 29th, 1945 - 6:40

Well, Lloyd finished up today - for which, Hooray!!! He'd really been sweating out these last few. I'm really glad for that guy - they just don't come any better - and I rate him among the best pilots I've ever flown with. He controls that monster bird absolutely!!!

Actually, the mission was a genuine milkbottle. We formed at 7,000, crossed the North Sea, in past Holland, straight south beside the Rubt - and out just south of Cologne. We didn't see a single, solitary burst of flak the whole trip!!! (No fighters, either). We dropped our 12 500 #G.P.s G-H (10/1. Group formation was kind of messed up at bombs away - but I hope the pattern was still O.K. We were after marshalling yds.

Our major trouble today came from the formation. We led the high element of the low squadron. The low Sq. lead flew tucked up in under the head box beautifully -- BUT TOO CLOSE. It came so close to being the finest box lead I've seen - but as it was, it was miserable. There was no room for our high element to slip in between the low lead and the lead box's Low low. So we were orphans -- blew a bomb run position, line abreast, most of the time - except on the bomb run where we moved in

position to the right of the low lead-- and went the whole run directly in trail of the lead. The propwash was terrific. Not to be forgotten was Molesworth - we shuffled the deck with them twice. Boy, that's an awful sensation.

Well, we live thru it all and I guess it's O.K. - but I don't like dangerous formations. The return was S.O.P. and we left formation (also S.O.P.) at the coast. We (Lloyd did) buzzed home between 2-300 and ended up by pulling a beautiful buzz job--210 mph across the field at 10 ft. The chandelle at the end carried us right into the pattern. Then Lloyd made a nice landing too.

Well, that leaves 9 of us to go!! Sure hope we all end upon targets like this one.