

U.S. Army Air Corp, B-17 Engineer and Top Turret Gunner, Asn. 33721705, 8th Air Force, 390th Bomber Group (Heavy), 571st Squadron. Commanding Officer, George W. Von Arb. Called "Pop" because he was the oldest. Other crew members: Pilot, 1st Lt. Leonard B. Welton, Jr. O-825031; Co-Pilot, 2nd Lt. Walter H. Weinberg O-714799; Navigator, 2nd Lt. James C. Smith O-2064349; Bombardier, F/O Meyer Rothschild T-5434; ROG, Cpl John W. Cox 34727527; AG, Cpl Robert A. Kelly 32942080; AROG, Cpl Stanley F. Ostrowski 32436032; TG, Cpl Blair L. Weamer Jr. 14078583.

[Flight training: July to Sept 1944 at Avon Park, Florida on B-17; Oct 1944 at Hunter Field, Georgia on B-17G. Rated for engineer and radio operator. Training Group: Squad 51 Flight E. Crew Number: FD-AA-29. Operations Order 27Oct1944: The squadron left the U.S for England from Dow Airfield, Bangor, Maine.]

[The American airfield was at Framlingham, east of London, England. Flight training was conducted daily, weather and aircraft availability permitting. New crews arrived from the U.S. and replaced men lost in combat or sent home after their tour of 35 combat missions. The number of training missions varied according to the ability and experience of each crew. Pilots were given special training in combat formation flying.¹]

Dec. 2	4 hrs.	
Dec. 5	3:30	Flew in Cabin in the Sky.
Dec. 8	3:30	
Dec. 9	4:15	C.I.T.S.

Feb. 10- Two practice missions today 4- hrs.
 2- hrs.

2-15-45 - 3 hrs. alt. ch.

COMBAT MISSIONS

1. Zellhausen Dec. 24. 44

Bomb load 3800

Gas load 2500

Flak, moderate but very accurate.

Time- 8:15

Four flak holes in right wing. Saw one B-17 go down. Plenty of snow in Germany. 35 degrees C. An all out effort. One of the largest formations ever put in the air.

[The "Battle of the Bulge" fly-over was a maximum effort supporting ground forces in the Ardennes Forrest as they resisted a last ditch effort by the Germans to regain the offensive. Bad weather grounded Allied air support for 7 days. It cleared on Dec. 24 and 1400 B-17 Flying Fortresses and 624 B-24 Liberators were sent to disable the airfield at Zellhausen, about 125 miles from the land battle. The mission took 8 hours because of the distance to the target and the number of planes in the formation. P-51 fighters joined the bombers over the Dutch coast. The formation flew over the battlefield at 15,000 ft to encourage the troops and a B-17 left the formation after being hit and losing an engine. The Zellhausen airfield was bombed by B-17 squadrons approaching on 3 levels. Denzel Martin's B-17 was part of the 13th Wing A Lead Group in the high squadron at 22,700 ft. At the start of the bomb run, Lt. Welton put the plane on autopilot and handed it over to Lt. Rothschild, the bombardier. At 2.19 bombs were released and pictures of the bomb bursts on the ground were taken. Some flak was encountered, but minimal damage. The disabled B-17 made it back to base on 3 engines but 2 B-17s were shot down before reaching the target. At Zellhausen 2 dispersal areas and a hangar were badly damaged and the runways were disabled.³]

2. Target- Koblenz Dec. 28

Bomb load 18. 250- 4500

Gas load 2400

Temperature- 44 degrees C.

Time- 6:15

No flak. 10/10 coverage. Contrails were beautiful. Fighter support very good. No enemy aircraft encountered.

3. Target- Frankfurt Dec. 29

Bomb load- 20- 250

Gas load- 2800

Temperature- 44 degrees C.

Time- 5:50

Flak- moderate. Weather- clear. Two amplifiers [?] went out over target- caught in prop. wash.- one to remember. - short in hydraulic motor - caught fire.

["Prop wash" in formation flying is turbulence from the propellers and wing tips of leading planes.]

4. Target- Kassel Dec. 30

Bomb Load- 10-500- 2M17 inc.

Gas Load- 2500
Temperature- 45. degrees C.
Time- 7:15
Weather 10/10 coverage

Climbed 9,700 feet before coming through soup. Flak was moderate and inaccurate but plenty of it. No ships lost. One ship lost in take off. Had to cut line in order to drain Tokis [?] tanks. Gas was very low.

1945

5. Target- Unknown [*Kusel*] Jan. 6. 45

Bomb Load- 12- 500
Gas Load 2500
Temp. - 41 C

10/10 coverage. Flak moderate and VERY accurate. 6 holes in ship. 4 in nose. 2 in wing. Right rough mission. Landed at another base. Field socked in. Bomb altitude 22000 ft.

[“Flak” was bursting shells from radar aimed German anti-aircraft artillery. Pilots avoided known “flak” areas. German radar was fooled by “chaff”, narrow strips of stiff aluminum foil dropped by lead bombers. It floated slowly to the ground and caused anti-aircraft shells to burst well below the formation.³]

6. Target- Cologne- bridge Jan. 10

Propaganda leaflets
Gas load - 2500
Temp- -51C.
Alt. 2700 ft.
Time 5:40

Visual and clouds. Flak- Heavy and fairly accurate. Barely missed tail gunner. Large hole in stabilizer. Rough mission. Contrails dense. VERY cold. WON AIR MEDAL. Snow.

7. Target- Doren [*Derben*] Jan. 14

We bombed. **Mildorf**

Bomb Load - 12-500
Gas Load- 2800
Alt. 22,500
Temp. -41C.
Time 7 hours.

Flak- accurate. We aborted. Feathered #3 engine. Very rough mission but not for us. They were hit by fighters. Squadron lost seven ships. Visual run. Flak tracked us along shore.

[Operations and Intelligence sections were on call around the clock. Some missions were scrubbed on the ground or recalled after the formations had left England for Germany.¹]

8. Target- Hamburg- oil [refinery] Jan. 17

Bomb Load- 12-500 - G.P.

Gas Load- 2500
Alt. 26,000
Time 7:20
Temp -43C

Flak was very accurate and tracking. More flak than I've seen on any mission. Visual run. Hope I don't see many like this one. One ship went down. No fighters seen but were in area. (My birthday). Rec Xmas Pkg.

9. Target- Duisburg- bridge [rail bridge] Jan. 28

Bomb Load. 6- 1,000 - GP
Gas Load 2500
Alt. 27,000
Temp. C49-
Time 07:30

Flak moderate and tracking. Visual run. One hit in stabilizer. Turret frosted. No ships lost. Snow storms. Cox got shots today but not in the arm. Lt. Welton made 1st Lt. Passed out cigars.

10. Target - Kassell- U Boat Jan. 29

Bomb Load- 12-500 NAN [?] Bombs
Gas Load- 2600
alt. - 27000
Temp - -51C Time 7 hrs.

Visual run. Flak moderate and inaccurate. Fighter support. Excellent.

[Bomber crews called their fighter escort "Our Little Friends". Early in the War they could not go all the way to the target but turned back to refuel and join bombers on the return trip. After external fuel tanks were developed, fighter range was extended. As more fighters became available, relays protected bombers throughout their missions. Fighter pilots were regarded as heroes.²]

11. Target- Wesel [bridge] Feb. 2. 45

Bomb Load - 12-500
Gas Load 2500
Alt. 26,000
Temp. 44C
Time 7 hrs.

No flak. Heavy undercast. P.F.F. run. Sure was a milk run.

12. Target- BERLIN BIG B. Feb. 3 [communications]

Gas Load- 2800 topped.
Bomb Load- 10-500
Alt. 27,600
Temp. -45C Time- 8:15

Visual run. Flak- Moderate and plenty of it. Really sweat this one out. Saw two ships go down. Fighter support was beautiful. Saw no enemy fighters but they were in our area. History was made today. 1100 fighters. Almost an all out effort. Plenty of prop wash.

[Berlin was consider a "deep penetration" target. Special attention was given to weather conditions because planes were expected to return low on gas.¹]

13. Target- Weimar- tank factory Feb. 9

Gas Load- 2800
Bomb Load- 10-500 G.P.
Alt. 26,000
Temp. -44C Time 8 hrs.

Very heavy overcast. No flak. Saw about six bursts. Fighter support very good. Saw jet job. No time to fire. New copilot was from Baltimore. First mission. Copilot almost passed out from lack of oxygen. Lucky 13

14. Target- Plauen [Cheb, Czechoslovakia-airfield?] Feb. 14 45

Bomb Load- 10-500
Gas Load- 2800
Alt. 24,000
Temp. -34C
Time 8:30

Cloud coverage. No flak at target but had plenty on way back over lines and plenty of it. Rough. Accurate and tracking. One ship shot in two. One chute seen. No enemy planes seen but were in area. Too close for comfort. Very tired. Sorry Honey, no letter tonight.

15. Target- Frankfurt Feb. 17 45

Turbo. Supercharger factory.
Bomb Load- 10-500 - G.P.
Gas Load 2800
Temp. -39C
Time- 6 hrs. Alt. 24,000

Cloud coverage. Flak moderate and inaccurate. Saw B-17 go down in Channel with engine on fire. Exploded. Three chutes seen. Knew crew. Awful flying weather- clouds and rain. No enemy planes seen. Received letter from Reeves.

16. Target- Osnabruck Marshaling yards Feb. 19 45

Bomb Load - 10-500 G.P.
Gas Load - 2500
Time - 6:30
Alt. 24,500 Temp -31C

Flak- light and very inaccurate. Sure made me laugh to see the Huns shooting where we weren't. Nice mission. 10/10 coverage.

17. Target- Leipzig - M. Yards Feb. 27 45

Bomb Load- 6-500 - 6M17

Gas 2800 - Alt. 28,000

Time 8 hrs. Temp. -36C

Flak- moderate and very inaccurate. Made me laugh again. 10/10 coverage. We sure sweat this one out. Supposed to be a rough target. Would have been if wasn't 10/10. Nice mission, but too long. Fighter support very good. No enemy planes. Cox on D.N.I.F [*Duty Not Including Flying*] again. Sorry My Love, too tired to write tonight.

18. Target- Kassel- M. Yards. Feb. 28 45

Bomb Load- 14-500 G.P.

Gas load- 2500 - Alt. 27,500

Time - 7:30 Temp 35C

Flak- moderate and fairly inaccurate. Plenty of it. Saw some red flack for the first time. Expected fighters but did not appear. Fighter support excellent. 10/10 coverage again thanl Ex. [?] Saw the Swiss Alps and the Danube River. Sure was beautiful. Snow on Alps. They extended above clouds.

19. Target- Ulm- M. Yards March 1 45

Bomb Load. 8-500 G.P. + 5 Inc.

Gas Load- 2500 Alt. 22,000

Time - 8 hrs. Temp. -36C

No flak over target. Saw few burst coming back over lines. No enemy fighter seen. Fighter support very good. 10/10 coverage over target only. Had a run away prop. Nice milk run. Just like practice mission but get tired on such long runs. Had a party tonight and didn't get to write to my dear sweet wife.

20. Target- Hereford [Brunswick?]- M. Y. Mar. 3

Bomb Load - 8- 500 Alt. 25,000

Temp. - 49 C Time 7:30

Flak - moderate, rather accurate and tracking. Partially visual run. No enemy fighters seen but were in area. Fighter support good. Not a bad mission. Have a cold. Had trouble clearing right ear. Going to hit the sack early again as we are on the battle order for tomorrow.

21. Target- Frankfurt- Turbo S. March 9 45

B. Load- 14- 100 G.P. 8 Inc.

Gas. 2500 Alt. 22,500

Temp. -46C Time 7 hrs

Flak- moderate to intense. Barrage and tracking. Visual runs. As much flak as I've seen on any mission. Don't care for these targets at all. Saw one B-17 go down. Engine on fire. Plane broke apart. I saw three men bale out but seven were reported. Lot of stragglers. No enemy planes seen. Fighter support good. Hoping for a milk run tomorrow.

22. Target- Dortmund- M. Y. Mar. 10 45

B. Load- 42-100 G.P. 2- M17
Gas Load. 2400 - Alt. 25,000
Temp. 36- C Time 7 hrs.

Flak- very little for a change. None over our target but saw some at others. 10/10 coverage.
Thanks again. No enemy fighters seen but were in area. Sure was a nice mission. I'll take a few more like this one. Live round fell from other plane and hit our #2 engine. Didn't explode.
Fighter support fair. 10/10 tomorrow I hope.

23. Target- Hamburg- M.Y. Mar. 11 45

B. Load. 20-250 G.P.
Gas Load- 2400 - Alt. 26,500
Temp. -34C. Time 7 hrs.

Flak- moderate to intense- Tracking but inaccurate. 10/10 cloud coverage. Thanks again. Could have been a rough mission but turned out fine. Ruf. flew as radio operator. Last mission. He was very happy. Sure can't blame him. Fighter support was excellent. Thousand P-51. Not on battle order tomorrow. Sure was beautiful flying today.

24. Target- Jena- Factory Mar. 19 45

B. Load 12- 500 G.P.
Gas Load- 2800
Time 8 hrs Alt. 25,500

Flak- Nill. Saw just a few burst. Very bad flying weather. Contrails dense and persistent. Group formed over France. No enemy planes seen but were in the area. Fighter support good. Milk run and hope for the same tomorrow. Lts. Weinberg and Smith were promoted to 1st Lt.

25. Target- Zeitz- Oil [refinery] Mar. 31

B. Load. 24- 250 G.P.
Gas- 2600 - Temp. -40C
Alt. 25,600 Time 7:30

Flak- moderate to heavy. Tracking. Partially visual runs. We had 2 hits in R. wing and 1 in nose. Just missed Lt. Smith. Hit in ammo box of chin turret. Inc. Flak. Fairly rough mission. A little too rough for comfort. Enemy fighter in area. Right tired tonight only 2 hours sleep.

26. Target- Kiel - Ship yards [U Boats] Apr. 4

Bomb Load - 6- 1000 G.P.
Gas- 2400 Temp. -39C
Alt. 25,000 Time 6:30

Flak- Nill on our target but saw plenty off to our right. Flew in an old plane. Sure was mad as everything went wrong. Had to crank bomb bay door closed, one stayed opened. Had trouble releasing bombs. All in all a good mission. Fighter support good. No enemy planes seen.

27. Target - Leipzig- M.Y. Apr. 6

Bomb Load. 34- ? G.P. 2- Inc.

Gas- 2700 Alt. 25,800
Temp - 43C Time. 8:30

Flak- Nil on our target. Saw some to our left on another target. Beautiful 10/10 coverage. Formed formation in France. Contrails beautiful. 10/10 there and back. Milk run. Hope for same tomorrow. Fighter support excellent. No enemy planes seen.

28. Target- New Munster- M.Y. A.N.A. Apr. 7

Bomb Load- 6-1000 G.P.
Gas Load - 2500 Temp -28C
Alt. 15,000 Time 7:30

Flak - Nill. None in fact. Saw a few burst over lines. Sure got a thrill today. Took a shot at a jet plane but missed I guess. Ha ha. Hit 1 plane and wing caught fire. Saw 8 parachutes come out. Plane was right over. Was a little scared for a while. Fighter support excellent but let the jet slip through. Exciting day. Visual run.

[Denzel Martin was using the Martin Turret. Source: His copy of the "Aerial Gunner's Log for Martin Turret" prepared by the Dept. of Training, Buckingham Army Air Field, Fort Myers, Florida, Jan. 1944)

29. Target- Burg [Neumunster?]- Air Field Apr. 10

Bomb Load - 12-500 G.P.
Gas Load 2600 Temp -18C.
Alt. 20,000 Time 8 hrs.

Flak- moderate and tracking. We were told no flak at target but got fooled. Visual run. Sure plastered airfield. Bandits in area. ME262 shot down by our lower element. I didn't see it. Saw two B-17 go down. Great day for the 8th A.F. 350 enemy fighters bagged. Sure hit airfields. A1 job.

["Bandits" was the term used for enemy fighters. Bombing runs ended about here. Denzel Martin's flight records show that most of his later missions were flown in a B-17G.]

30. Target- Gironde [Royan?]- France No date. [Apr. 14 or 16, 1945]

Bomb Load. 2-2000, 2-1000
Gas 2800 Time 7:30
Alt. 15,000 Temp- Hot

No flak. Sure was a milk run. No escort. No planes lost. Flew over St. Lo. City. Sure was a mess only a few buildings standing.

31. Food mission- Holland No date.

32. Food mission- Holland. No date.

33. June 24 - 45

Received telegram from Dot [sister-in-law Dorothy Rogers Martin]. 6 lb. baby boy. So glad

Evy [*Evelyn*] and Bob O.K. One of the happiest days of my life. Born June 20 - 45. 5:43 A.M. Sam Feleccia [*Sgt. 390th Bomb Group 36689260*] was first to shake my hand. Was so tickled I know I had tears in my eyes. Who wouldn't be. Evy did it again bless her heart. I love her so much.

[Denzel Martin and his wife, Evelyn, lived at 6013 Cedonia Ave., in the Overlea neighborhood of Baltimore City. Robert was their first child.]

34. May 8 - 45

Germany throws in the towel. Was expecting it any day. We all took it very calmly. Sure am proud to be one of the 8th Air Force. Now I am certain of returning to my dear sweet wife. Thank God.

35. No date

I hope and pray the Lord permits me to complete these 35 missions. Amen.

36. No date

Now I pray the Lord permits me to complete 36 missions. Had this extra mission tacked on for returning with bomb load. We would have done it again.

[25 June 1945 -Sgt. Martin was transferred to the 95th Bomb Group.]

MISSIONS ABORTED

Jan 23- [1945] Neuss- Marshalling Yard

#1 engine failed. Landed with full bomb load. Soup 22,000 ft. Contrails very dense. Time 3:40.

[Everyone came down to the flight line to watch aircraft return from missions. They often arrived with engines out, holes in wings and tail, and stuck landing gears. Occasionally a plane landed with hung up bombs that were not dropped on the target in the Channel. The tower gave them special landing instructions. British fire departments and American ambulances were waiting.¹]

Apr 9- [1945] Munich- Airfield

New bombardier flew with us and pulled the wrong pins from bombs. Armed bombs so we dropped them in the Channel. Sure sweat this out. More than any mission I do believe. Think we will have to fly extra mission. Lt. Welton asked crew if we wanted to go or return. A1 fellow. 3 hrs.

March 21-28

Went to rest home. Sure had a wonderful time. Just like a dream.

[Special Order #77 Dated March 19, 1945: Enlisted men, including Denzel Martin, were sent to Walhampton House (1 mile from Lymington, Hampshire), for 7 days and arrived on March 21, 1945. Officers were sent to Eynsham Hall, 3 miles from Handborough, Oxfordshire.]

PRACTICE MISSIONS (Cont'd.)

March 2- Flew 3 officers to Edinburgh Scotland. Nice ride but didn't feel like flying today. No rest. Scotland is a very beautiful country. Time 4:45. Also, good looking girls. Ha. Ha.

March 4- 45 [1945]

Practice Mission 3:15

Sixth day in a row I have flown. Had 10 hours sleep last night and didn't mind too much. I flew in lower ball and tail for a change. Checking out new crews. Enemy fighters were over our field last night.

March 5-

Slow timed- 072 Time 4 hrs. I didn't fly but was put on loading list by pilot.

March 6-

Flew formation practice over France. Wonderful peel off and landing. Lt. Welton sure is a good pilot and a swell fellow. Time 4:30 Sure getting plenty of flying time. Too much.

March 12-

Practice Mission - Flew with Lt. Cochran. Time 2:15

March 13-

Practice Mission- New formation. France. Time 5:20 Flew over London.

March 14-

Instrument Time - 1 hr.

Our ship 09.72 went down today. Like losing a friend. 831 also went down. Mid-air collision. Hanover. That's all I can say. 972 flew left wing of crew in our Hut.

[Denzel Martin was promoted to Technical Sgt. 23 March 1945]

March 29 - Practice mission - 3 hrs.

March 30- Checked out new crew. 3:30.

March 5- Slow timed "Cabin in the Sky". Flew over Rest Home that officers stayed at. I flew plane. Pilot covered up instruments and made me fly without them. Sure had a good time. Countryside beautiful. Time 2 hrs.

April 15-

Flew to Preswick, Scotland with Col. Walters and Maj. _sb _ry [?]. Nice Trip. Time 4:30

April 25- Practice mission. Formation. Lt. Klar. Time 3:45

May 2 - 45 [1945]

Flew supplies to Hague- Holland. Sure was glad to be on this trip. People were waving from housetops. Land all flooded. Alt. 350 ft. Horses and cows stampeded. People were waving everything from tablecloths to bloomers. Time 3 hrs.

May 3- Dropped food to the Dutch again. Time 3:30.

May 27- Navigation check. Flew over water and France. 1,000 ft over France. Took some pictures of bombed town. Weather poor. Time 6:15.

[End of Diary]

[25 June 1945 -Sgt. Martin was transferred to the 95th Bomb Group.]

This document was transcribed in October 1993 from Denzel Martin's original diary by his niece, Kathleen Martin Brown, 2400 Island Branch Rd., White Hall Md. 21161. Minor changes to format and spelling have been made. Illegible words are followed by [?]. Comments are in italics and brackets. The original diary is in the possession of Sgt. Martin's daughter, Jane Martin Lawler, 11555 Glenarm Rd., Glen Arm, Md. 21057.

References from 390th Bomb Group Web Site

1. Marshall B. Shore, Lt. Col., USAF retired.
2. Joseph A. Moller, Commander 390th Bomb Group
3. Martin K. Presswood, Pilot, 570th Squadron

Unreferenced information in comments is from original documents in the possession of Jane Martin Lawler.

Discharge Information and Awards

Denzel Martin was honorably discharged on 22 Sept 1945 at the AAF Overseas Replacement Depot with specialties in Air Gunnery and Flight Maintenance. Missions were in the Rhineland, Ardennes, and Central Europe. He was never wounded. He left England 2 Aug 1945 and arrived back in U.S. 11 Aug 1945.

General Order #61: He was awarded the Air Medal with 4 Oak Leaf Clusters and 3 Bronze Stars for meritorious achievement with "courage, coolness, and skill" under heavy bombardment. Signed by Major Gen. Partridge.

Diploma- Member of "Moller's Maulers" Bombing College.

Participation Certificate- 390th Bomb Group

Genealogy Notes

Denzel Dale Martin was born Jan. 17, 1914 in Preston Co., W.Va. His parents were Oliver Harrison Martin (b. 7/7/1861 Preston Co., W.Va.) and Lulu Ellen Turner (b. 2/13/1883 Preston Co., W.Va.). He married Evelyn Connor (b. 4/28/1921) in Baltimore City, Md. and raised three children (Robert, John, Jane). He died in October 1985 in Baltimore City.

Information sent to 390th Bomb Group Memorial Museum, 6000 East Valencia Rd., Tucson, Arizona 85706.



B-17 Bomber Crew of "The Cabin in the Sky", 1942

U.S. 8th Air Force, 390th Bomber Group, 571st Squad

Pilot: Leonard B. Welton, Jr. Crew: Lt. Meyer Rothchild, Lt. Walter H. Weinberg, Lt. James C. Smith, Sgt. Robert A. Kelly, **T. Sgt. Denzel D. Martin (back right)**, Sgt. John W. Cox, Sgt. Blair L. Weimer, Sgt. Stanley F. Ostrowski