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387th BG /558th SQ  
Combat Mission Record

26 May 1944

My first mission. Hit the target (Airfield) at Chartes. Bombing poor - flak light. Saw a ship hit by flak and saw some bail out. Ship exploded when it hit.

27 May 1944

Ran two missions today. First was railroad bridge at Rouen - Light flak. On the way home were surprised by a very accurate flak battery. Piece went through cowling a head of me. It hit a stringer which slowed it down - lucky for me! Sending it home as my first. Bombing was very good.

Second Mission 27 May 1944

Same target in the same vicinity. Still riding in the lead flight - hot spot! Flak very accurate on the bomb run. Burst caught us and a piece went through the nose and caught Peterson our bombardier. Tore up the side of his face - bleeding badly he dropped his bombs and closed the bomb bay before he came back. Good show! I stopped the bleeding and bandaged him up - gave him morphine. He's really got nerve! He'll be O.K. Bombing poor due to flak.

First Mission 29 May 1944

Target a rail bridge South of Rouen and on the North West edge of Paris. It was rough as the devil! The ship ahead of us caught a shell in the left wing and flipped over on its back and disappeared. Just like that. It just missed us as we cut sharply away. A piece of the ship caught the ship on our left and damaged the vertical fin. It broke our bombing run and so we had to head back without dropping our bombs. At one time there were two bursts below us and one right ahead of us. Sure can't say how we weren't hit. Ship lost - Capt. Harmon - on the day before his 14 day leave, 51 missions. He said that he would not fly over 50 missions.

Second Mission 29 May 1944

Went to Antwerp today. We thought it would be rough as hell but it was a milk run compared to the others. Lots of flak but very inaccurate. Target a engine house - not to good results. This makes my fifth mission in three days. It entitles me the Air Medal.

31 May 1944

Target a bridge in France. No sail through because as we entered France the weather headed us back. As we circled back we came to close to Le Harve and got about 20 odd shells lobbed up at us. I've been in Belgium, Holland and France so far.

2 June 1944

Seventh mission today. We botched it though. As we turned in on the bomb run I noticed the the bomb bay of the ship ahead of us was half opened so we called him and started to

take the lead but the flight started to turn away. We should have gone on in by ourselves but orders are orders.

6 June 1944

After 3 days of inactivity and rumor today it came out. This is "D" Day! We were in the middle of a poker game at 0100 when the Captain came in and said briefing at 0200. When we got there the Colonel said "This is the day you've been waiting for!" We bombed some gun emplacements on the beach head at Cherbourg. It was a magnificent sight, the harbor was full of ships bombarding the shore. We ran into a hornets nest as we had to go in at 4000' because of the weather. The 20mm stuff was shooting up all around us. It is even worse than Flak because you can see the tracers all the way up. They got two ships in the group a head of us. I saw three chutes get away from one before it exploded in mid air. We weren't hit. Our bombs formed a good concentration. This was my eighth mission.

8 June 1944

Went on what we call a "Milk Run". That means no opposition and no flak. Those are the ones we like. We bombed a junction of three railroads and a highway. Our job now is to keep reserves from moving up. The weather has been very poor. It has hampered us from giving best support. It forces us to go in at minimum altitude and that's suicide. The harbor North of Cherbourg is filled with craft of all kinds. They are still fighting in Caen. This is no pushover. Mission No. 9.

10 June 1944

My first abortion. We were five minutes from the field when our right engine started cutting out so we had to return. Had a lot of trouble on the take off today. Two ships had started on the runway and then had to stop. When the boys came back (it was one of those damned low-level jobs). There wasn't one that wasn't hit. We lost no ships but there were two or three wounded. At long last they have decided on no more low level work. Good! So far I only have 9 missions. Still trying for that 1st cluster to my Air Medal.

14 June 1944

Two today. Milk runs it so turned out. We made three passes at one target. Gave all of the time in the world to the Luftwaffe to join us. Total 11 missions.

20 June 1944

Should have been a milk run but we had green navigator and he stooged us right over some flak. No one hurt although it was a hot for a minute. We were after a "No-ball". This makes twelve.

30 June 1944

After ages - I at last get to run (12-B) 13th mission. I had three dry runs to make before we finally got off the ground, and then it was 10/10 over the target and when we made our third run the Leader decided we wouldn't be able to drop. As we had delayed action

bombs aboard we had to salvo in the "ditch". Our right engine cut out for a while on the way back. Not much flak - one ship ahead of us got 42 holes. We weren't touched.

Second Mission 30 June 1944

No. 14 on the Pathfinder. No flak but we sweat out those damn 15 minute runs on IP.

5 July 1944

CAEN! That word alone caused a lot of the boys to sweat, however, in our case we had a bit of bad luck. We were No. 2 in the high flight and I was monitoring Channel "B" (Fighters) so when our flight leader decided to abort we knew nothing of it until he made an almost 180 degree turn. We dropped way back by this dumb move. You've no idea how timing affects a deal like that. We poured on the heat and got to Caen just in time to watch the others go in. They weren't tracking, they just threw up a barrage. Not a ship was down. Good Show! This makes my 15th and my second cluster.

6 July 1944

Took the longest trip yet, 150 miles inland and below Paris. Sweated out the gas but no flak or fighters. Good Deal!

Second Mission 6 July 1944

Went over to Belgium. Bombed an old Bastille thought to be HQ of the Pilotless planes. No flak at target but weren't able to drop due to bombarding error. Got flak going in and coming out but no one hurt. They were tracking our flight on the way in but fortunately they were a little ahead of us. The Radio man found a piece of flak in the wing. This makes No. 17.

7 July 1944

A late P.M. mission. Took off at 0200. It was 10/10 over the target (just South of Caen) in the late dusk the gun flashes were all visible. It really was pretty. Light inaccurate flak, came back at 1500' because of weather - rough trip in all.

9 July 1944

Went to bridge just N.W. of Paris. Light flak, about 5 salvos of a 4 gun battery. We were flying window - 8/10 cover. Weren't able to bomb. This makes 19 Missions.

12 July 1944

Went to Nantes - long and deep penetration, 4 hours and 15 minutes trip on 4 hour 30 minutes of gas. Heavy flak but inaccurate, picked up a couple of holes. Had to land a auxiliary field due to gas and weather. It was Limey and has Spits and Mosquitoes. Sure doesn't hurt to see those little jobs. This makes 20 missions (3rd Oak Leaf Cluster).

16 July 1944

Milk Run. We hit a fuel and ammo dump. No flak, made a very nice fire.

18 July 1944

Worked on the bomb line with our troops South East of Caen. Very heavy accurate flak. Caught one in the nose that nearly got the bombardier. Hit his shell belt and knocked out two rounds and knocked three big holes in the glass. Piece of flak hit his suit and scraped a hole in it. Had some bad luck in that on the way back one of the boys in the flight above us had caught one in the wing. About 10 miles from home at 3000' his engine caught on fire and conked out and when the ship flipped over the wing buckled and he spun down. The clouds were at 2000' and he disappeared through them. Those boys (Weyell and Grand) have been here in the hut with us since we got here. They were good boys. They had about 54 missions.

23 July 1944

Flew a Pathfinder onto a bridge North East St. Bernay. No flak at all. Milk Run.

25 July 1944

Gave troop support to our boys at St. Lo. Kinda funny as we all expected flak and there wasn't a bit. I flew with Hank as Henderson didn't want to fly with Rlyander on his 13th - what a deal! This makes 24.

28 July 1944

Went on PFF to causeway. Milk run. 25 and 4th Leaf Cluster.

Second Mission 28 July 1944

Went a little further in to an Ammo dump. Good hits and some fire, caught some mobile flak on way in, not too rough but one lone piece missed me by about two feet and smashed the Nav., window. This makes my 26th.

30 July 1944

PFF - milk run. Heavy clouds. Troop support on an enemy strong point. 27th Mission.

1 August 1944

Went in quite deep, East of Chartres, expected fighters but never any. Good Deal! No flak. Good bombing except our flight, we dropped in a bank and went off to one side (No. 28)

4 August 1944

Took off in a blinding rain and thunder shower - rough take off and just cleared trees at end of runway. Went to same target as above but there was a 12000' thunderhead over the target so we couldn't drop. Coming out we stooged over some flak and got a couple of holes in the nose. They caught the 2nd 18 pretty bad, several wounded. No excuse for it either. Just bad navigation. This makes 29.

5 August 1944

Went in to Orne River north of Nantes. No flak. Bridge target. Not too good results because of haze. Rumor has it we start on night missions soon. No good. This makes No. 30 and entitles me to a Silver Cluster.

11 August 1944

They've been flying us twice a day, once at night to get ready for night missions. This isn't too good but what the hell! I had a regular mission today, to the Southeast edge of Paris. Couldn't drop because of clouds. Flak going in and at the target and on the way out, no damage. We ran out of gas just before we got out but transferred O.K. (while dogging flak). This makes my 31st. mission.

14 August 1944

Just call me Minister of Propaganda. We went down to the edge of the Brest Peninsula and dropped Propaganda bombs. No flak. Good Deal. 32. It had to happen - last night we were 50' off the end of the runway and the left engine cut out. Some show!

15 August 1944

Hit a bridge on the N.W. edge of Paris. Bad flak area but most of us got thru easily - Low flight caught it - we (lead box) over shot target and couldn't drop. Don Morris (Palo Alto boy) got his hydraulics shot out and when he came back and used his emergency to put wheels down his right main stuck so the crew bailed out as he circled the field and he headed it out to the ditch and got out himself. Everyone got out O.K. This is 33.

16 August 1944

Started for bridge N.W. of Paris but just got over the enemy coast and it closed in so we had to turn back no one was mad as it was the center of fighters. No. 34.

26 August 1944

After 10 days of inactivity we took on a mission our hydraulic in the nose wheel went out as we took off. We had to go back and land but we grabbed another ship and tried to catch our formation - however we couldn't, but we tacked onto another one going in to the same target (397th). However, they went into enemy territory about 5 minutes and then decided to abort - no escort. I guess it just wasn't our day - we get a mission out of it however. No. 35.

5 September 1944

Well, in France for a week and this is our first mission. Went to Brest. Enemy strong points, no flak. We lost a crew however, Galmish and Gleason. Engine cut out on take off and they couldn't get back to the field. No. 36.

6 September 1944

Same target. "Ike" says that we need that port! Brest and Leharve are the only two targets we can bomb from here. About 10 bursts of 37mm. flak - no damage. Clouds covered the target, couldn't drop. No. 37.

10 September 1944

Went to Nancy - 4 hour trip - no flak. Bombed troop concentrations. Flew with Box Leader. No. 37.

12 September 1944

Went north of Luxembourg - bombed a strong point. 4 hour trip - clouded at target a couldn't drop. Couldn't make second run on account of gas. Had about 30 gal., in each tank on landing. No. 39.

#### Second Mission 12 September 1944

Went to Nancy again. Target clear and got good results. No flak. Flew with Shaney. I'm filling in with anyone at anytime to try and get my missions in. This makes No. 40.

#### 1 October 1944

At our new base at Chateaudun. I fly my first mission since 9/12/44. Medium flak but no damage. Strong point on Siegfried Line. No 41.

#### 3 October 1944

Went to an ammunition dump just Southwest of Aachen, just over Siegfried Line. Clouds covered target 10/10, couldn't drop. Colonel flew with us. They are trying a breakthrough and we can't help at all. Just seems as if the weather is always in their favor. No. 42.

#### 8 October 1944

To a small bridge about 50 miles into Germany. Couldn't bomb because of clouds, so dropped on a secondary. A marshalling yard. Good results. No flak but another group below us sure caught it. I look forward to being very busy this month - its now or never. No. 43.

#### 12 October 1944

Near Strasbourg. Bombed a area used for tank repair. Caught flak going in at target our flight got separated and made three runs on target. Dropped on third run - good bombing and took off for home. No fighter escort and only four of us. Caught flak at bombline and two direct hits knocked out lead. We took lead and came on home. Prcs was in lead ship but we saw 5 to 7 chutes so he may be O.K. We were still in German occupied France so he and the rest stand a good chance to evade. This is No. 44. (We picked up a few holes ourselves.)

#### 14 October 1944

Target was a Railroad bridge, 10/10 at target and couldn't drop, light inaccurate flak. Flew for Hicks today. This makes 45.

#### 9 November 1944

At long last (after a seven day leave) we flew from our new base. Heavy clouds and very cold. Flew through overcast that iced up our windshield - 25 degree C at 14,000' in the cockpit. Couldn't get to target so had to return to base. Target was troop concentration near Dieuse. No. 46.

#### 19 November 1944

Flew to support Patton's drive. Tried at 10,500', 7,000' and finally went in under clouds at 6,000. Got some flak but no hits. Good bombing. This makes No. 47.

21 November 1944

Flew lead with Joe Johnson - PFF mission - cold as the devil! PFF screwed up and couldn't drop. Very light flak due to cloud cover. No. 48.

2 December 1944

On the bomb line - moderate flak, box lead had a malfunction and his bombs hung up. We weren't hit. This makes 49. (I got some good pictures of the flak).

5 December 1944

Went to Ulmen North of "Happy Valley". They tracked us over the bomblines and we picked up a couple of holes. Went on in to target on PFF but couldn't drop. Bombed an alternate target. This is No. 50.

6 December 1944

Target on bomblines - Flew with Leighty - PFF - couldn't drop. No. 4 man went on single engine and stooged over target, flak caught No. 5 man in bomb bay and broke the ship in two. We lost "Duke" Winsor and Hulsey - Good boys. This makes 51.

9 December 1944

Went on the PFF with Kovar - cold as the devil - one ship cracked up on take off, blew tire. On coming back (we couldn't bomb) a ship slipped in on the runway and caught fire. While the rescue crews were taking the fellows out a bomb exploded and caught 25 or 30 men.

Second Mission 9 December 1944

Flew with Newell - milk run - solid overcast - no flak - cold as the devil.

15 December 1944

Flew way into Germany with Fallon. His 3rd mission 1st pilot - He's a good kid. We were really sweating this one out for fighters but it turned out to be a milk run. No flak. No fighters. No. 54.

23 December 1944

Well it had to happen. We were hit by fighters today. Since the Boche push they have put up their airplanes in strength. Dick and I were flying lead of the second box when they hit us. They knocked out our complete Low flight. Flak followed us all the way in and out. Our bombardier, Jim Benton, was hit by flak. A nasty cut over his eye. However he refused medical aid until we were out of danger. Our tail gunner claims a probable. In spite of his guns jamming he kept them off of our tail. All the crew acted just the way I knew they would. They are the best. This is No. 55. (Someone screwed up on the fighter rendezvous).

25 December 1944

Went to a town just over the bomb line, Cavu and lots of flak. Flew with Major Sheen - we picked up a few holes. Bombing was good. This makes 56.

Second Mission 25 December 1944

Kovar didn't want to fly so I worked a deal and flew in his place. Good bombing but same as above - continuous flak. We picked up about five or six holes. (Made two runs on both targets). This makes No. 57. Merry Christmas. P.S. After we came back from above the visibility was very poor and we had to make three passes to get in. Two ships didn't make it and caught on fire and their bombs blew up. No personnel lost this time.

27 December 1944

Flew with Fallon to a bridge. Had to circle fighter rendezvous as there were 115 "Bandits" reported in the area. Bombed O.K. knocked it out. Milk run - no flak or fighters. This makes No. 58.

1 January 1944

Flew with Gaugh - Deputy lead. Went clear in with PFF - Target a bridge. We bombed on PFF although it wasn't over .3 coverage - and then missed! There was no excuse for this failure. This is No. 59.

2 January 1944

(This is 5 January 1945) I just got back from above mission. Milk run - some very light flak, Excellent bombing results on the bridge. Diverted to A-64 because of weather - landed at field and rediverted to A-58 (Norm's field). Made a very (on the deck run) to it through the snow storm but got in O.K. Weathered in for two days - What a break! Had a fine visit with Kid Allen. This makes No. 60.

28 January 1944

After a long lay-off I finally got in the Air again. Flew with Captain Brown. Solid overcast and dropped on PFF. No Flak. This is No. 61.

29 January 1944

Flew with Gaugh - PFF mission - slight and inaccurate flak. Good cloud cover. This is No. 62.

Addendum by Mike Smith: Rich Ainsworth told me that he had graduated from all fighter pilot schools, number three in his class. One day soon after graduation the CO called a formation. The CO called out names starting with "A", Ainsworth was called and sent to fly B26s as a co-pilot. The transfer upset Rich very much but there was nothing he could do. He was assigned to an excellent pilot, Dick Gunn, who turned out to be a Squadron and Group flight leader. Once in combat Rich flew as many missions as he could as quickly as he could, offering to fly back up for other pilots (see 15 December 1944) and co-pilots who could not fly for illness or other reasons. Feeling let down because his was moved from fighter planes to bombers, all he wanted to do was fly his 65 missions and get out. This story was confirmed by Clyde Harkins, a long time friend. Rich was an outstanding man assisting people who asked questions on the b26.com message board since 1999.