

## 303rd BG

### General narrative

SUBJECT: 41<sup>st</sup> Combat wing "A" group, lead squadron leader's narrative of combat mission flown 24 December 1944.

TO: Commanding general, 41<sup>st</sup> combat wing, APO 557, U.S. Army

1. We took off from Bassingbourn in a PFF-GH A/C with 13 regular A/C to fly lead squadron of the 41<sup>st</sup> combat wing "A" group. Assembly was made over Harrington buncher at 10,000 feet with all A/C making assembly. We departed the buncher in group formation on time on course. Combat wing assembly was made as briefed. The route over England was as briefed and without incident. We departed control point #1 a minute late. The continent was crossed seven minutes late slightly south of course to avoid prop wash of preceding groups we made our I.P. good with perfect visibility for the bomb run. Our AFCE worked well on the bomb run. Bombs were away at 1448 ½ hours from 22,000 feet, indicated altitude on a magnetic heading of 76 degrees. Group rally was made off the target and we maintained this position to the English coast. We came back to splasher 16 at which time we were notified to divert to Snetterton Heath. All 14 A/C landed there with us.

2. No enemy fighters were identified. Friendly fighter support was good.

3. Meager and inaccurate flak was encountered on the route to the target.

SUBJECT: 41<sup>st</sup> Combat wing "A" group, low squadron leader's narrative of combat mission flown 24 December 1944

TO: Commanding officer, 303<sup>rd</sup> bombardment group (H), APO 557, U.S. Army

1. We took off from Bassingbourn in a PFF-GH A/C with 13 regular A/C to fly low squadron of the 41<sup>st</sup> combat wing "A" group. Assembly was made at 9,000 feet over the Harrington buncher with all A/C making assembly. We departed the buncher in group formation which position was maintained to the I.P. We took bombing interval 5 minutes before the I.P. Our AFCE worked well on the bomb run. Bombs were away in good visibility at 1450 hours from 21,400 feet indicated altitude on a magnetic heading of 76 degrees. We made group rally shortly after the target and stayed in formation until the English coast was crossed. We received our diversion message while over splasher 16 so we led the squadron to Snetterton Heath. 13 A/C landed there, and the 14<sup>th</sup> A/C which returned early landed at Ridgewell.

2. We saw 2 enemy fighters one of which was shot down.

3. Meager flak was encountered as we crossed the enemy lines.

SUBJECT: Narrative report of mission - 24 December 1944.

TO: Commanding officer, AAF station 107, APO 557, U.S. Army

1. Forty-two A/C from this group were dispatched this date to attack the landing ground at Merzhausen, near Frankfurt, Germany. There was no secondary or past resort target specified, but the field order stated that A/C or formations becoming separated from their units should attack the Lutsel M/Y in Koblenz, Germany. These A/C flew as the "A" group in the 41<sup>st</sup> combat wing and were led by Lt. Col. William S. Raper. In addition

two A/C flew with the 92<sup>nd</sup> group with crews from that group, four A/C flew with 96<sup>th</sup> group, three with crews from that group and one with a mixed crew, and two A/C flew with the 388<sup>th</sup> group with crews from this group. The field order had directed that all available A/C and crews should fly on the mission.

2. Seven A/C took off this station, thirty-five from Bassingbourn, two from Poddington, four from Snetterton heath, and two from Knettishall. As the base was closed in on return, the A/C had to be diverted to Snetterton Heath. One of the A/C flying with the 92<sup>nd</sup> group is missing, but there were no casualties among personnel from this group.

3. Two A/C returned early, A/C 42-97949, Lt. Gebrecht, 358<sup>th</sup> squadron, and A/C 43-38645, Lt Weaver, 359<sup>th</sup> squadron, both due to mechanical difficulties.

4. Forty A/C dropped a total of 1446 x 100 G.P. bombs on Merzhauzen A/F with excellent results. The six A/C flying with the 3<sup>rd</sup> division dropped a total of 168 x 100 G.P. bombs on Darmstadt A/F.

5. A few E/A were seen, but there were no attacks on this group. Some meager and fairly accurate A/A gunfire was encountered over the battle lines and in the Rhine river area. One A/C sustained major battle damage and four minor damage.

6. Weather was CAVU in the target area, but ground fog at base on return forced a diversion of the A/C to Snetterton Heath.

7. Friendly fighter support was good.