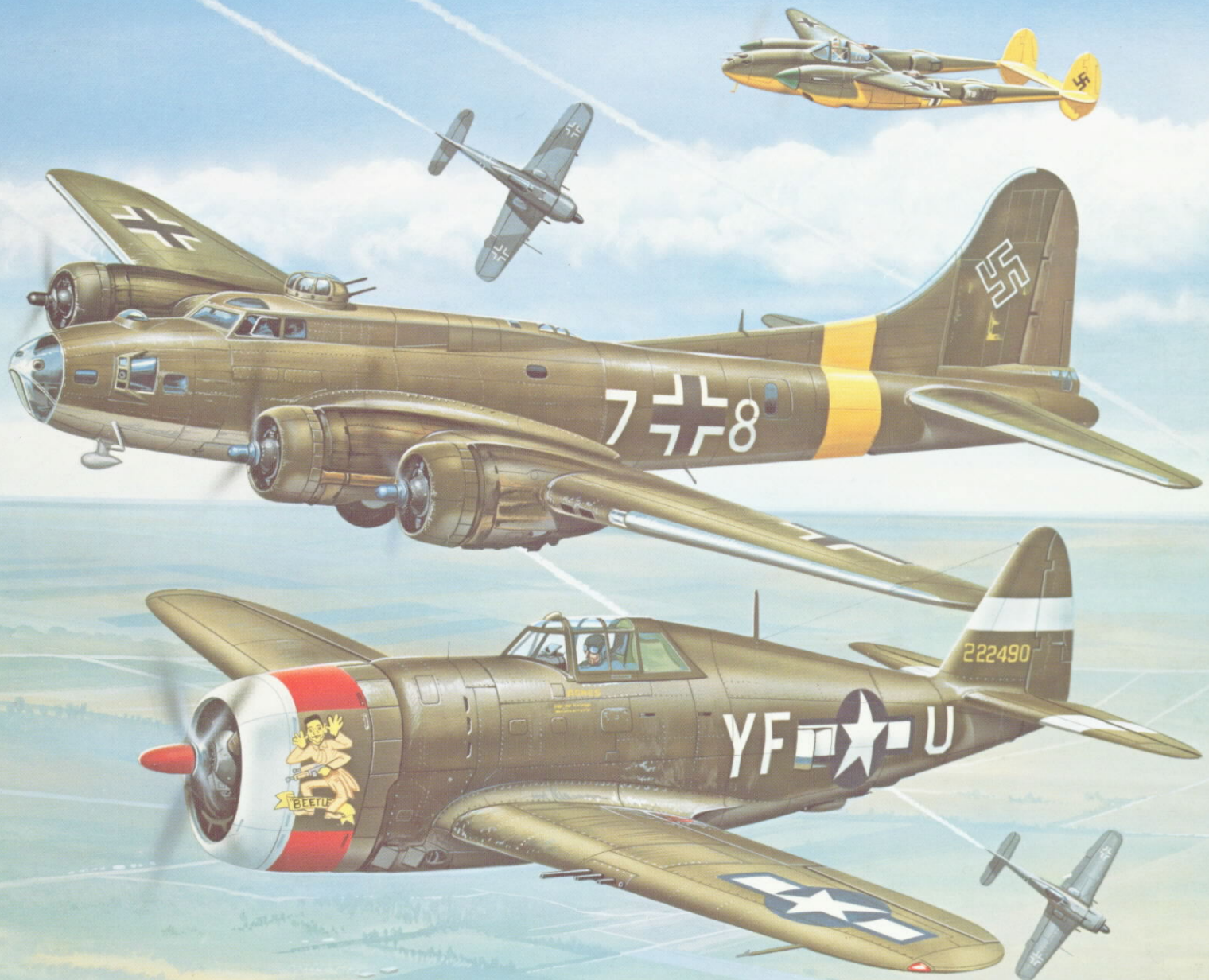


STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND

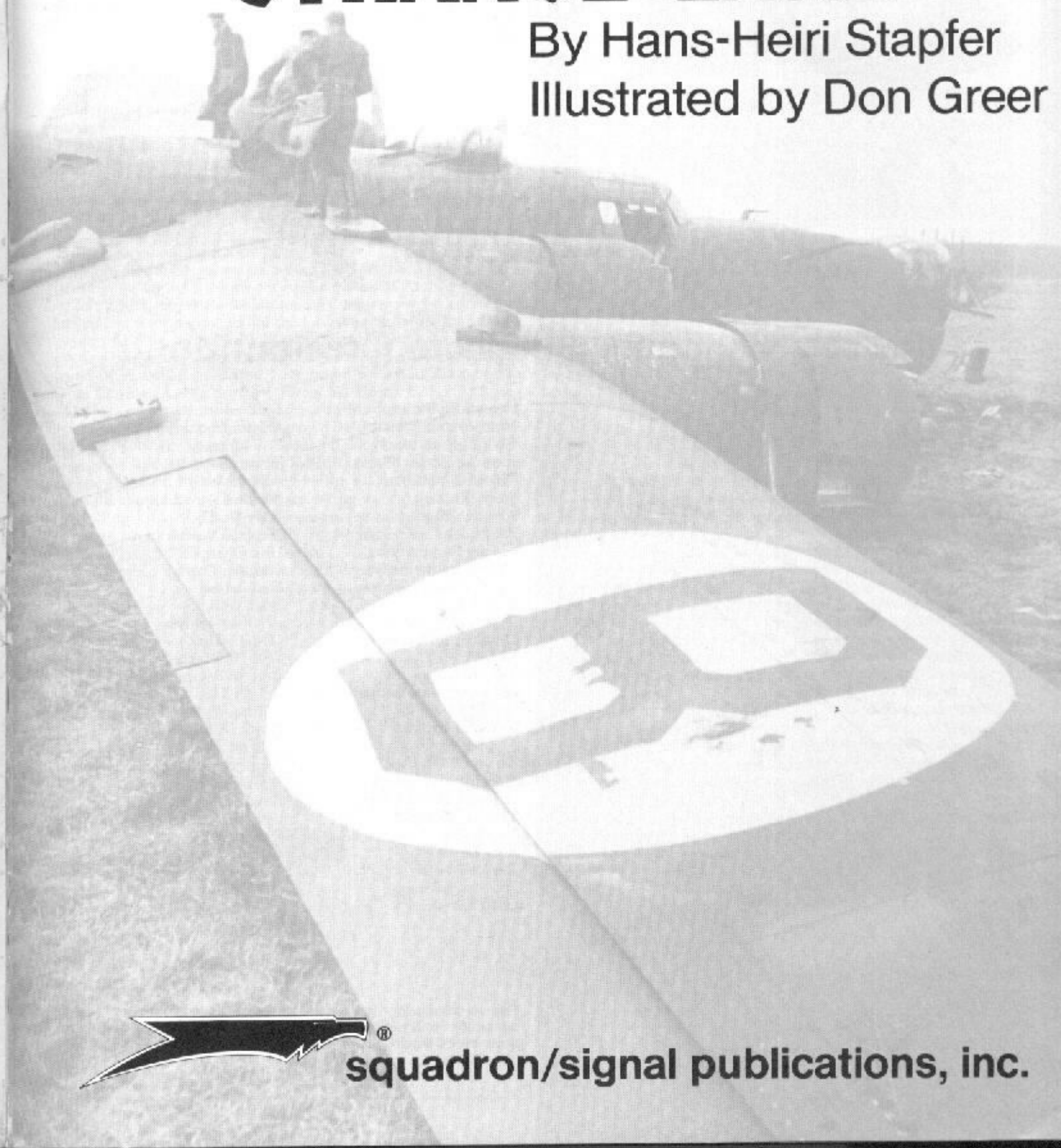
By Hans-Heiri Stapfer



squadron/signal publications, inc.

STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND

By Hans-Heiri Stapfer
Illustrated by Don Greer



squadron/signal publications, inc.



Cover: Lt Roach's P-47D "BEETLE" in formation with B-17F 7+8 and P-38G T9+XB are 'attacked' by Fw 190s during an airshow at the Luftwaffe Test and Research Center at Rechlin in late 1943.

Foreword

During the Second World War over 11,000 American aircraft were posted missing in action over Europe. While the majority of these were destroyed, a small number were captured and flown by the *Luftwaffe*. During the forty-two years since the end of World War II many rumors, myths and claims have arisen concerning Germany's use of these captured aircraft. While a number of books have been written on the subject, a touch of mystery still exists. The purpose of this book is dispel some of the mystery, replacing rumors, myths, and claims with facts.

After more than ten years of extensive research, I have concluded that the *Luftwaffe* never operated captured aircraft with false markings in combat. Despite rumors to the contrary, it is unlikely that German piloted P-51 Mustangs or P-47 Thunderbolts ever engaged American flown aircraft. The only documented incident of an enemy operated American fighter destroying an American bomber occurred during the summer of 1943, when a captured P-38 Lightning, flown by a *Regia Aeronautica* pilot, shot down a B-17. The P-38 was, however, in full *Regia Aeronautica* insignia and markings at the time of the incident.

The *Luftwaffe*, like all air forces, thoroughly tested captured enemy aircraft. After initial testing, a number were allocated to training units in the Reich. These units evaluated each aircraft, using them to develop new tactics, and train *Luftwaffe* fighter pilots in the most successful methods of combating each type. Some units, however, used captured aircraft for intelligence missions, such as dropping agents behind Allied lines.

There remain many unanswered questions that may never be resolved, since many historical documents were destroyed during the War or have become lost over the years. I would be very interested in hearing from anyone with information on American aircraft in Germany, and *Luftwaffe* operations of captured Allied aircraft.

Hans-Heiri Stapfer
Horgen, Switzerland
1988

COPYRIGHT © 1988 SQUADRON/SIGNAL PUBLICATIONS, INC.

1115 CROWLEY DRIVE CARROLLTON, TEXAS 75011-5010

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means electrical, mechanical or otherwise, without written permission of the publisher.

ISBN 0-89747-198-9

If you have any photographs of the aircraft, armor, soldiers or ships of any nation, particularly wartime snapshots, why not share them with us and help make Squadron/Signal's books all the more interesting and complete in the future. Any photograph sent to us will be copied and the original returned. The donor will be fully credited for any photos used. Please send them to:

Squadron/Signal Publications, Inc.,
1115 Crowley Drive
Carrollton, TX 75011-5010.

Dedication

To Frank J. Bonz of the 94th Bomb Group and Robert N. Stone of the 389th Bomb Group.

Photo Credits:

Giorgio Apostolo
Nino Arena
Charles R. Batdorf
Bavarian Motor Works (BMW)
Walter C. Beckham
Steve Birdsall
Allan G. Blue
Paul Bodot
Boeing Company
Bundesarchiv Freiburg
Bundesarchiv Koblenz
H. Dekker
Deutsche Fotothek Dresden
Dutch War Archives
ECPA
Esbjerg Kommune
Hermann Gammellgard
Roberto Gentili
Manfred Griehl
Mal Harper
Chester B. Hackett
Hoechst Firmenarchiv
Imperial War Museum
Thomas Kohstall
Volker Koos
Karl Kossler
Krauss-Maffei
Herbert Kruse
Gino Kunzle

Lufthansa
Martin Marietta Baltimore
Bob Menweg
Werner Mörath
Alfred Muser
National Air and Space Museum
Tony North
Heinz J. Nowarra
Hans Obert
Günther Ott
Ned Palmer
Peter Petrick
Posma Archives
Georg Punka
Willy Radinger
Bart M. Rijnhout
Robert T. Ritter
William F. Roach
Royal Danish Air Force
Alberto Salvati
Hansfried Schliephake
H.J. Schurman
Ray L. Shewfelt
Peter W. Stahl
Robert D. Stewart
Harold Werner
Thomas E. Willis
Zentralbild

This wartime cartoon treated the problem of escape from Germany in a rather light hearted manner, however, the majority of aircrews shot down over Germany spent long months in German POW camps. (Nos-talgic Notes)

Acknowledgements

This book would have been impossible without the assistance of a number of people and organizations. First I must thank the aircrews of the aircraft described in the following pages. These crews provided me with the events surrounding their last mission. For many, this was still a difficult subject to talk about. Many had lost friends and comrades in combat over occupied Europe and a number of them had spent long periods in German POW camps. Reliving their experiences was often far from pleasant, bringing back memories that haunt anyone who was once in a Nazi POW camp.

My thanks to Mal Harper, nose gunner on *Sunshine*; Robert T. Ritter, engineer on *SHADY LADY*; Spencer K. Osterberg, pilot of *Miss Quachita*; Chester H. Hackett, Commander of the 715th Squadron, 448th Bomb Group; Bill Waggoner, pilot and Woodrow Smith, nose gunner of the *Liberator* that became *Luftwaffe CL+XZ*; John R. Turner, pilot of B-17 41-28641, better known as *Luftwaffe +KB*; Ned Palmer, pilot of *Down and Go*; Calvin F. Ford, navigator on *Fightin' Pappy*; George H. Lymburn, pilot of *God Bless Our Ship*; Ted MacDonald, pilot, Charles Baidorf, waist gunner and William J. Valiquira, ball turret gunner, on *Sleepy Time Gal*; Walter C. Beckham, the Eighth Air Force's leading Ace before he was caught by flak at Ostheim; William E. Roach, pilot of *BEEFLE*; and Max Quakenbush, pilot of *Phyllis Marie*; Robert D. Stewart, waist gunner, and William Clyatt, navigator on 'S' for Sugar.

Many Bomb Group organizations and historians helped by furnishing background information. The National Archives and the Albert F. Simpson Historical Research Center provided a great deal of detailed information, as did the following individuals and companies: Al Blue, Tony North, Ray L. Shewfelt, Robert C. Strobell, Horace Waggoner, Victor Tannehill, Trevor J. Allen, Harry E. Slater, James R. Brown, Ken Everett, Richard Gibson, Earl Zimmerman, Rom Blaylock, Leroy Engdahl, Elmer W. Clarey, Robert Menweg, Howard S. Hameline, Al Howrey, Bud Markel, F.C. O'Bannon, Richard Downey, Joe Simons, Harold Helstrom, Richard H. Lewis, William Robertie, Don Olds, Campbell C. Brigran, James P. Scott, George W. Elder, Steve Birdsall, Roger Freeman, Al Lloyd, Bryan Philpott, Martin Bowman, Steve Shellin, Dana Bell, P.L. Lackey, Harry S. Gann, Leroy A. Nitschke, Norman Malayney, Lloyd E. West, Edgar C. Miller, Martin Marietta Baltimore, Geoffrey J. Thomas, Frank L. Betz, Stewart Evans, Robert Foose, Luis Franco, Ian Hawkins, William Donald, Archie DeFante, Frank Marshall, Eric Munday, John T. Williams, Frank Halm, Paul Manning,

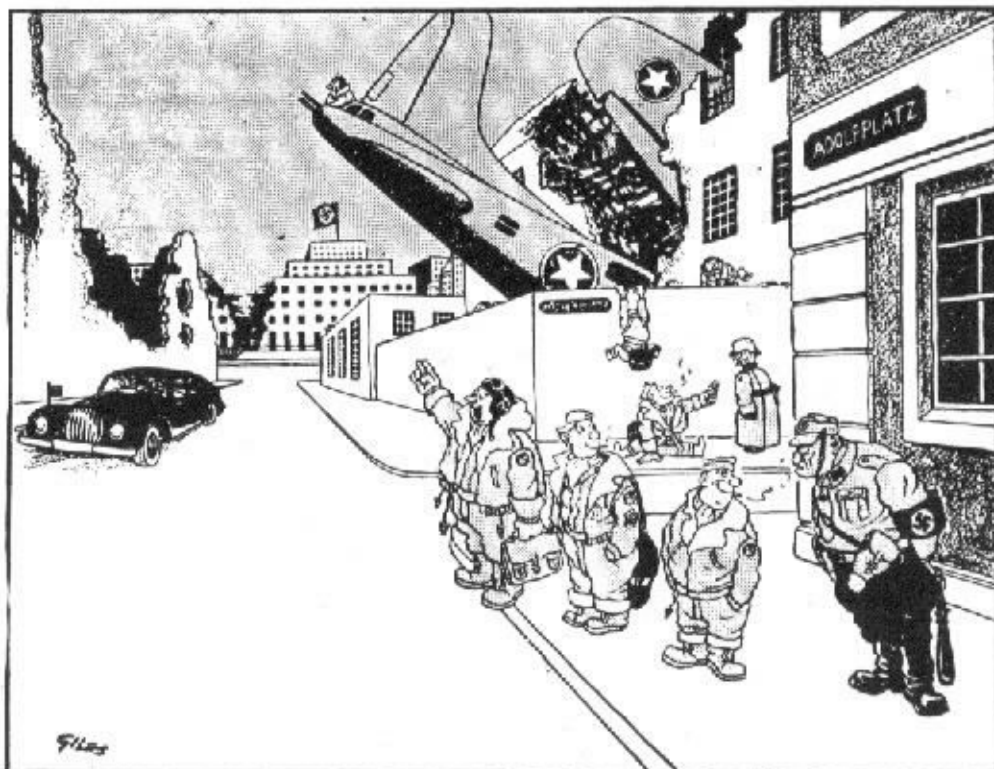
Robert Stone, Frank Bonz, Leonard E. Rose, Fairchild Republic Company, Boeing Company, Lockheed Company, Andy Anderson, Walter C. Byrne and Bob McGuire.

Many friends and *Luftwaffe* researchers provided me the photos that made this book possible. German pilots and anti-aircraft personnel shared their experiences with me and helped insure the accuracy of the book. I owe them all a sincere *Danke Schön, Freunde!* I must acknowledge Peter W. Stahl, KG 200 pilot and chief of 'Com-mando Olga'; Herr Haupt and Herr Nilges who assisted me in photographic research at the Bundesarchiv Koblenz, as did Herr Albinus at the Bundesarchiv Freiburg in Breisgau. Thomas E. Willis, the expert on foreign aircraft in *Luftwaffe* service provided invaluable help. Karl Kossler loaned a number of photos from his large collection, as did Willy Radinger, an Me 163 pilot, Peter Petrick and Heinz J. Nowarra.

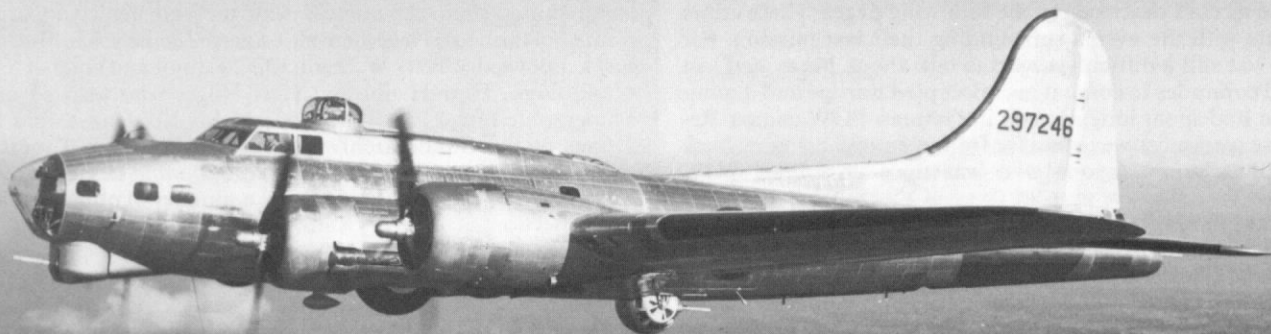
Other information, documents and dates came from the following: Volker Koos, Paul Bezouska, Christoph Regel, Rainer Haufschild, Werner Bittner of Lufthansa Archives, Herr Ranz Swissair Archives, Gunther Ott, Alfred Muser, Gino Kunzle, Manfred Griebel, Peter G. Horner, Hanfried Schliephake, Peter Schiller, Helmut Schnatz, Harald Werner, V. Wilckens, C. Meijer, Hans-Joachim Mau, Joop Wenstedt, Werner Eckel, Werner Held, Herbert Kruse, Franz Kurowski, Piet Brouwer, H. Dekker, John Woods, Roberto Gentili, Sandro Longhini, Carlo Lucchini, Nino Arena, Alberto Salvati, Hans Grimminger, Royal Danish Air Force, Esbjerg Kommune, H.E. Jensen of Flyvestation Værløse, John von der Mass, Henk Wilson, Roger Anthoine, Muzeum Miasta Gdyni, Paul Bodot, Bart M. Rijnhout, Lubomir Caletka, Jean Roba, Netherlands State Institute For War Documentation, Georg Punka, Thomas Kohstall, Christian Hoby, Martin Kyburz, Christoph Stuker, Zdenek Hurt, and the German Fighter Association. Last but not least I owe a thank you to Nicholas Waters III who edited by English into Americanese.

A special thanks must go to my Mom and my friends for understanding that I could not spend as much time with them as I would have liked, and my thanks for understanding go to Chris, Sami, Alfie, Pete, Urs, Savi, Tom, Fusi, Christoph, Fido Frederick, Thomas Reto, Silvia—Mein, Seelisches Zerwürfnis, Christa, Regula, and Werni, I will see you all at the next party! I know that I have forgotten to mention many others that helped make this book a reality, and for this I am truly sorry.

Hans-Heiri Stapfer
Horgen, Switzerland
February 1988



The Air War Over Europe



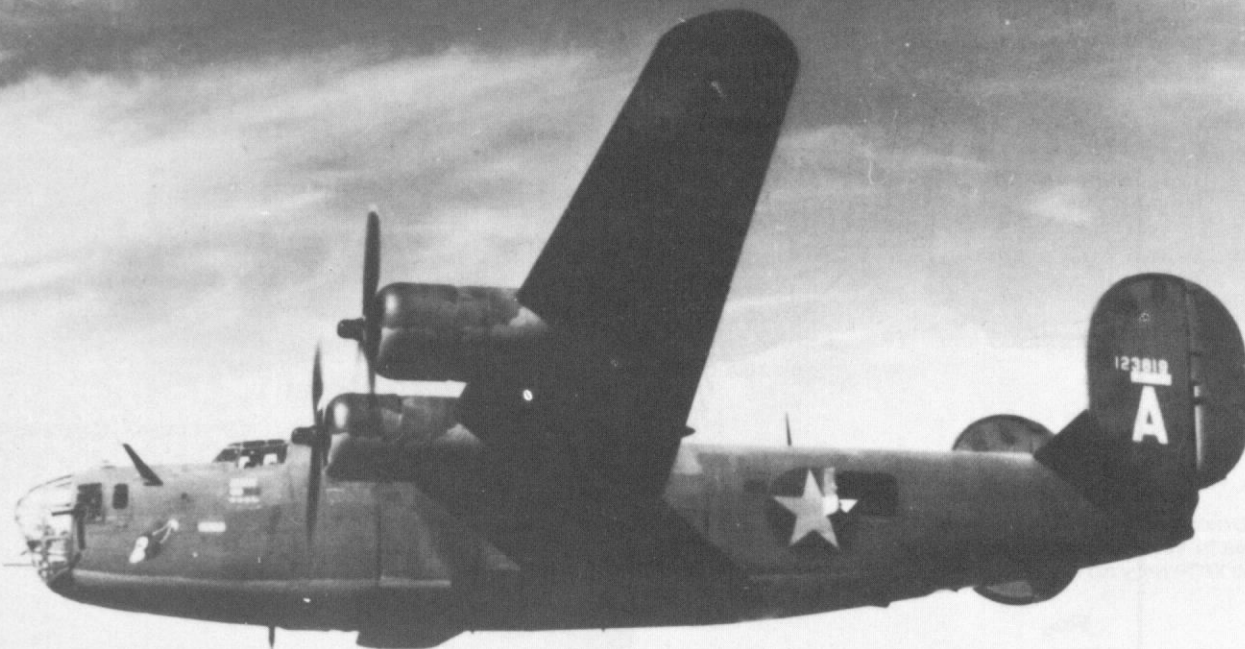
Until the United States entered the Second World War, the burden of The Strategic Bombing of Germany had fallen on England's Royal Air Force Bomber Command. The enormous losses suffered by Bomber Command during the early stages of the war led British planners to shift from daylight bombing to night bombing. Night bombing meant that some targets could not be struck with the precision needed to guarantee a lasting interruption of war production. During the short summer nights a number of strategic targets in Southern Germany and Northern Italy could not be reached from England during the hours of darkness and therefore could not be bombed at all.

The United States Army Air Force (USAAF) Eighth Bomber Command was established in England on 28 January 1942 and immediately began planning a campaign of strategic daylight precision bombing of German industrial targets. USAAF planners felt that the heavily armed four-engined Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress and Consolidated B-24 Liberator bombers were capable of protect-

A Boeing B-17G-45-BO Flying Fortress (42-97246) later assigned to the 91st Bomb Group was lost on 29 March 1944, — on its first combat mission over Germany. The 91st Bomb Group suffered more losses than any other Group assigned to Eighth Bomber Command. (Boeing)

ing themselves over German occupied Europe in daylight without fighter escorts. On 17 August 1942, twelve Boeing B-17s from the 97th Bomb Group flew the first Eighth Bomber Command raid against occupied Europe. The target was the Rouen-Sotteville marshalling yard in France. The mission was a success and all aircraft returned safely to England. This was the modest beginning of what would become the Combined Strategic Bombing Campaign against Hitler's *Festung Europa* (Fortress Europe).

RUGGER BUGGY, a B-24D-5-CO (41-23819) flown by Major James E. O'Brien was lost on 14 May 1943 over Kiel. The 44th Bomb Group, "The Flying Eightballs", lost a total of 153 Liberators in combat over Europe, more than any other B-24 group. (Tony North)



The USAAF Ninth Air Force was formed in the deserts of North Africa during June of 1942 to assist the British against the *Deutsches Afrika Korps* (DAK). On 12 June 1942, thirteen B-24Ds of the 'Halpro' Detachment flew the first Ninth Bomber Command mission against Europe, attacking the Ploesti oil refineries in Romania. On 2 July the B-24s were joined by B-17Es of the 9th Bomb Squadron in an attack on German installations around Tobruk.

The Desert Air Force grew steadily and by August P-40 fighters, B-24D heavy bombers, and B-25 Mitchell medium bombers were in action, bombing Rommel's strong points, and targets in Sicily, Greece and Italy. After fifteen months of operations in the Desert, the Ninth Air Force was transferred to England, being replaced in North Africa by the Twelfth Air Force.

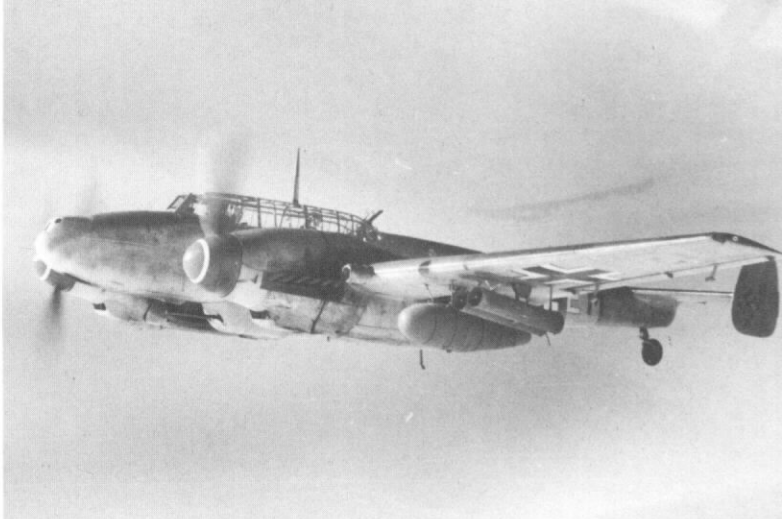
The Twelfth Air Force first saw action on 7 November 1942, during *Operation Torch*, the Invasion of North Africa. The fledgling Twelfth drew heavily on the growing resources of the Eighth Air Force in England. B-17s, P-38s and Spitfires from seven different groups were sent to North Africa, followed by B-25 and B-26 medium bomber Groups. The 97th Bomb Group, which had pioneered operations in Europe, flew its first raid in its new theater of operations on 16 November, against targets at Bizerte. On 1 November 1943, another reorganization transferred six heavy bomber groups and three P-38 Lightning Fighter Groups to the Fifteenth Air Force, the last numbered US Air Force established in the European Theater of Operations (ETO). The Twelfth then became the tactical component in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations (MTO), equipped with B-25 Mitchell and B-26 Marauder medium bombers and C-47 Skytrain transports.

The Fifteenth Air Force began operations against targets in Italy during early November, followed by a raid on the Messerschmitt Werke at Wiener-Neustadt near Vienna, Austria. During mid-November, the Fifteenth moved to airfields in Southern Italy, becoming the first American Command to fly missions against Axis targets from the European continent.

The Eighth Air Force in England had continued to build strength and operational experience concentrating on targets in France and the Low Countries. On 27 January 1943 Eighth Bomber Command flew its first mission against Nazi Germany when fifty-five B-17s bombed their secondary target — Wilhelmshaven. The precision daylight attacks on German heavy industry, refineries, aircraft plants, and the German transportation system played havoc on the Germans, but the Americans paid a high price; more than 400 heavy bomber were lost over occupied Europe during the first year of operations. A serious concern for Eighth Bomber Command was the lack of fighter escort. German fighter defenses had proven far stronger than believed and the theory that bombers could defend themselves against determined fighter attacks had finally been abandoned. Bad weather and fighter attacks broke apart the tight combat box formations and once separated, the bombers became easy prey for the *Luftwaffe*. The *Luftwaffe*'s primary fighters, the single-engined Messerschmitt Bf 109, Focke Wulf Fw 190, and twin-engined Messerschmitt Bf 110 *Zerstörer* and Me 410 *Hornisse* wreaked havoc among the formations of Fortresses and Liberators; flak was a constant danger and even if an aircraft survived a hit, by either flak or fighters, the damage would often take days or even weeks to repair. Even with the USAAF's extensive supply and maintenance system the numbers of aircraft needed or a maximum effort mission was hard to maintain.

The summer of 1943, was the peak of *Luftwaffe* fighter strength — the glory days. Eighth Air Force missions to Schweinfurt, Regensburg, Stuttgart and Oschersleben cost the Eighth staggering numbers of bombers and crews. These battles, however, had cost the *Luftwaffe* the cream of their experienced pilots. These pilots were replaced by young inexperienced pilots, some of which went into action fresh from flight training. The Germans were constantly able to replace their hardware losses, but the lack of experienced pilots became an increasingly critical factor as the air war progressed.

The Americans steadily grew in strength, assigning new Groups to both the Strategic and Tactical Forces in Europe. During 1944, the long legged North American P-51D Mustang was introduced into



The cumbersome but heavily armed Messerschmitt Bf 110G-2/R-6 *Zerstörer* was deadly against unescorted USAAF bomber formations over the Reich. When high performance escort fighters began accompanying the bombers deep into Germany, the *Zerstörer Geschwadern* (Destroyer Units) began suffering enormous losses. (Heinz J. Nowarra)



The Messerschmitt Bf 109G remained the mainstay of the *Luftwaffe* throughout the war. A late model Bf 109G-14 of JG 3 taxis out for an interception mission during late Summer of 1944. By 1944 the 'Gustav' was completely outclassed by the North American P-51D Mustang, the Eighth Air Force's primary escort fighter. (Heinz J. Nowarra)



A Focke Wulf Fw 190A-3 with the *Tazewurm* insignia of II Gruppe, JG 1 on the cowling prepares for a sortie during the Spring of 1942. American gunners often misidentified the radial engine Fw 190 and radial engine P-47 Thunderbolt. White identification stripes were added to the wings and tail surfaces of Thunderbolts so gunners would not fire on their own escorts. (Heinz J. Nowarra)



88MM Flak batteries along the coast line were the first line of German ground based air defenses. German anti-aircraft guns remained a serious threat throughout the war. Even if a bomber survived a flak hit, the damage usually required extensive repairs, reducing the number of bombers available for the next mission over Germany. (Heinz J. Nowarra)



Flakhelfers (Anti-aircraft gun assistants) were usually fifteen and sixteen year old high school students. *Flakhelfer's* were first used action in February of 1943, and by VE Day, some 200,000 were in service with the *Luftwaffe* and *Kriegsmarine*. Every teenager in action on the home front released a soldier for duty on the front lines. (Willy Radinger)

combat, providing the bombers with an escort fighter capable of accompanying them over their entire route.

Like an aerial sledgehammer the Strategic Bombing Campaign pounded the Nazi War Machine to pulp, destroying vital oil depots and hydro-chemical plants, until Germany slowly ran out of fuel. Fighters often sat idle on German airfields — their fuel tanks dry.

Dresden, more than any other German city, has come to represent the destruction wrought by the Allied bombing campaign. Thousands were killed by the fire storms that swept through Dresden after the combined RAF/USAAF raid. The RAF raided Dresden the night of 12/13 February 1945 and the USAAF raided the city the following afternoon. (Deutsche Fotothek Dresden)





The Targets

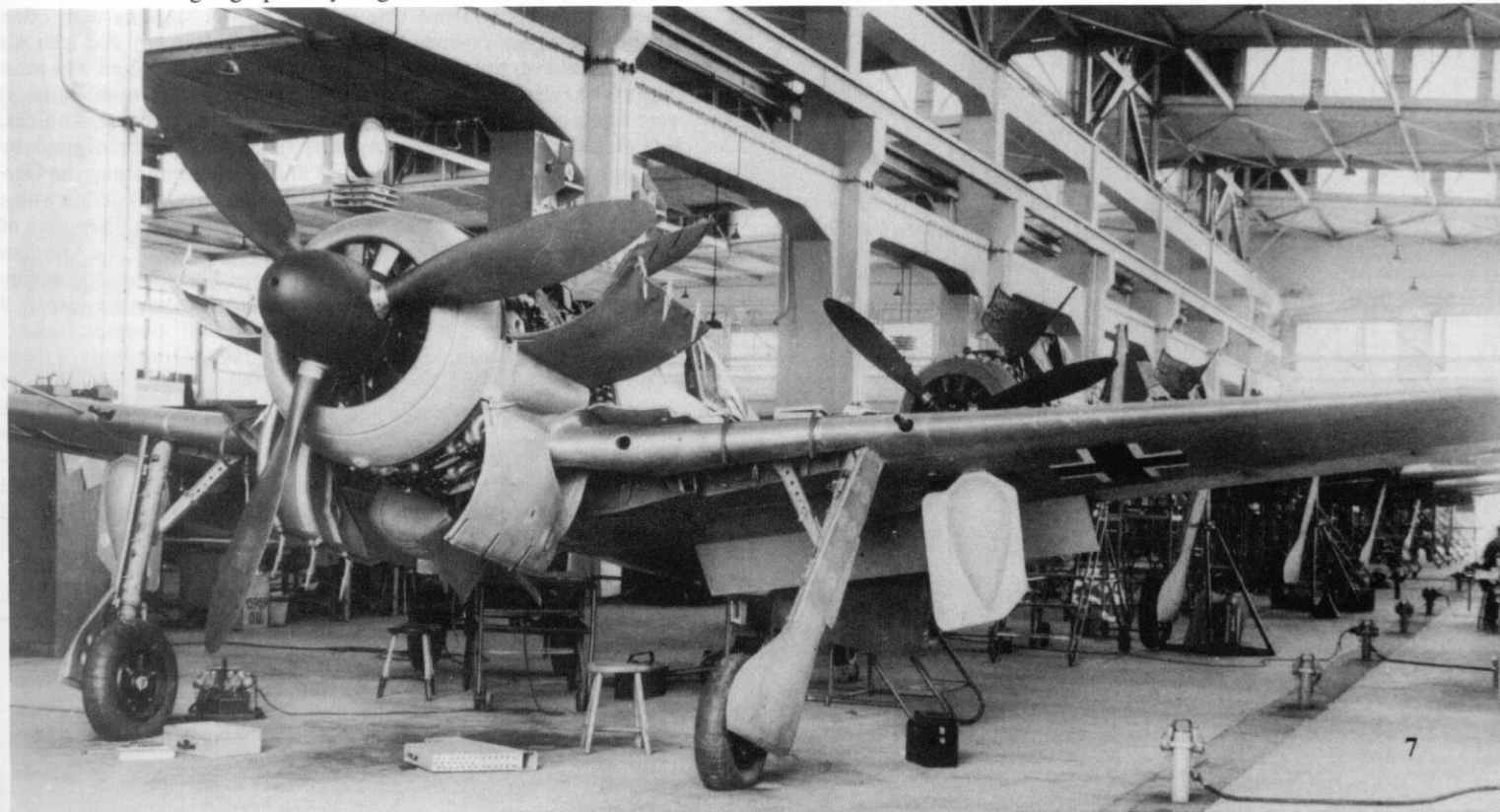
The goal of the Royal Air Force and USAAF Combined Strategic Bombing Campaign was the destruction of the German industrial base and the dislocation of the civilian population. Heavy industry, aircraft production, oil, and petrochemical facilities in the Third Reich were the primary targets. It was felt that destruction of these industries, together with disruption of the German transportation system, would bring about Germany's collapse. The Germans placed a number of important plants deep in the Reich, heavily defended by flak and fighters. Attacks against such important industrial facilities such as the oil refineries at Ploesti, the IG-Farbenindustrie Hydrogenate Plants at Merseburg and Pölit, as well as fighter production centers at Regensburg and Oschersleben always resulted in heavy losses on both sides. During the early stages of the bombing campaign, German fighters proved to be the worst enemy of the American bombers. As a result, both the Eighth and Fifteenth Air Forces flew a number of raids specifically targeted against the fighter aircraft production plants at Augsburg, Wiener-Neustadt, Leipzig, Kassel, Bremen, Gotenhafen, Danzig, and Marienburg. Daimler-Benz and BMW engines for the fighters were built at Stuttgart, Munich-Allach, Steyr, Berlin-Spandau, and Brunswick with these factories becoming high priority targets.

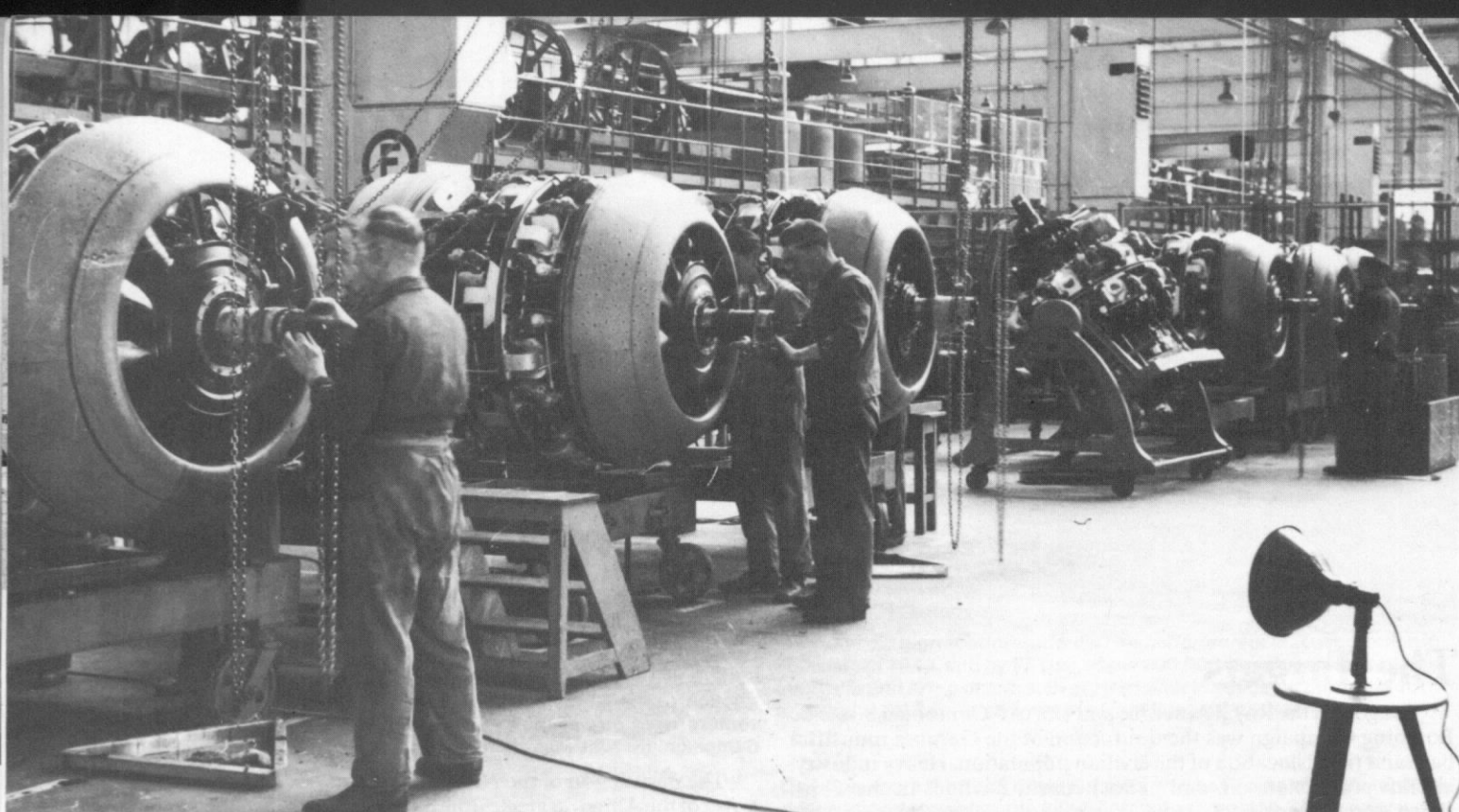
These Type BR 52 locomotives await delivery to the *Deutsche Reichsbahn*. Some 6,575 locomotives were built during the Second World War. Destruction of the German railway network and locomotive production centers were one of the priorities of the Allied Combined Bombing Campaign. (Krauss-Maffei Archives)

The destruction of the Nazi oil industry was another important target of the Allied Strategic Bombing Campaign. After the outbreak of World War II, Romania became the sole supplier of crude oil to the Third Reich. Long before Adolf Hitler had come to power, the IG Farbenindustrie established a Hydrogentue-Plant that transformed pit coal into synthetic fuel. A number of such plants supplied both the *Wehrmacht* and *Luftwaffe* with fuel, including Hydrierwerke at Pölit, Braunkohle-Benzin AG at Böhlen, BASF at Ludwigshafen-Oppau, Sudetenländische Treibstoffwerke AG at Brux in Czechoslovakia, and the Oberschlesische Hydrierwerke AG at Blechhammer. Destruction of these targets was considered imperative.

The U-Boat pens on the French coast at La Pallice, Brest, and La Rochelle were early high priority targets in the bombing campaign. The *Kriegsmarine* U-Boat force had been highly successful in its

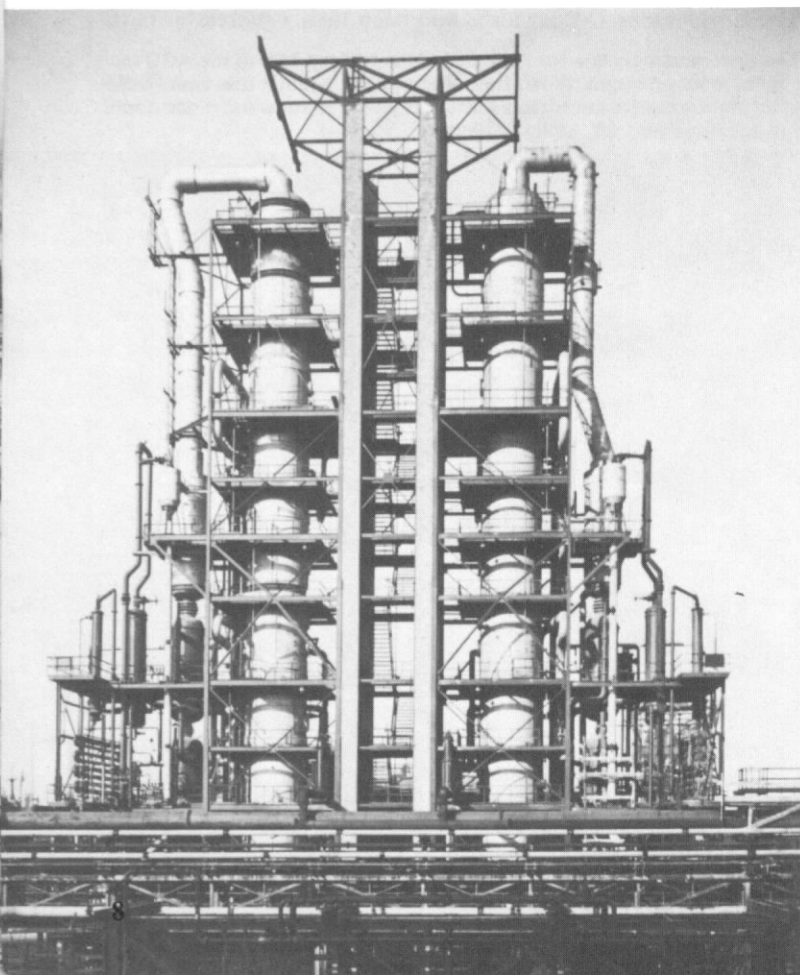
The final assembly line for Focke Wulf Fw 190 fighters at the AGO factory at Oschersleben. Allied bombing attacks against this vast Focke Wulf plant would reduce it to a gutted, roofless storage and repair depot for damaged aircraft. (Willy Radinger)





BMW 801 radial engines used to power the Fw 190 fighter are undergoing final assembly at the Bavarian Motor Works at Munich-Allach. Such plants became high priority targets when the commander of the USAAF, General H.H. Arnold ordered the Eighth Air Force to "...Destroy the enemy air force, wherever you find them, in air, on the ground and in the factories...". (Bavarian Motor Works)

The Leuna-Werk synthetic oil production center at Merseburg refined coal into liquid fuels and lubricants for the *Luftwaffe* and *Wehrmacht*. The destruction of synthetic oil centers was one of the most important goals of the Combined Bombing Campaign. (Firmenarchiv Hoechst)



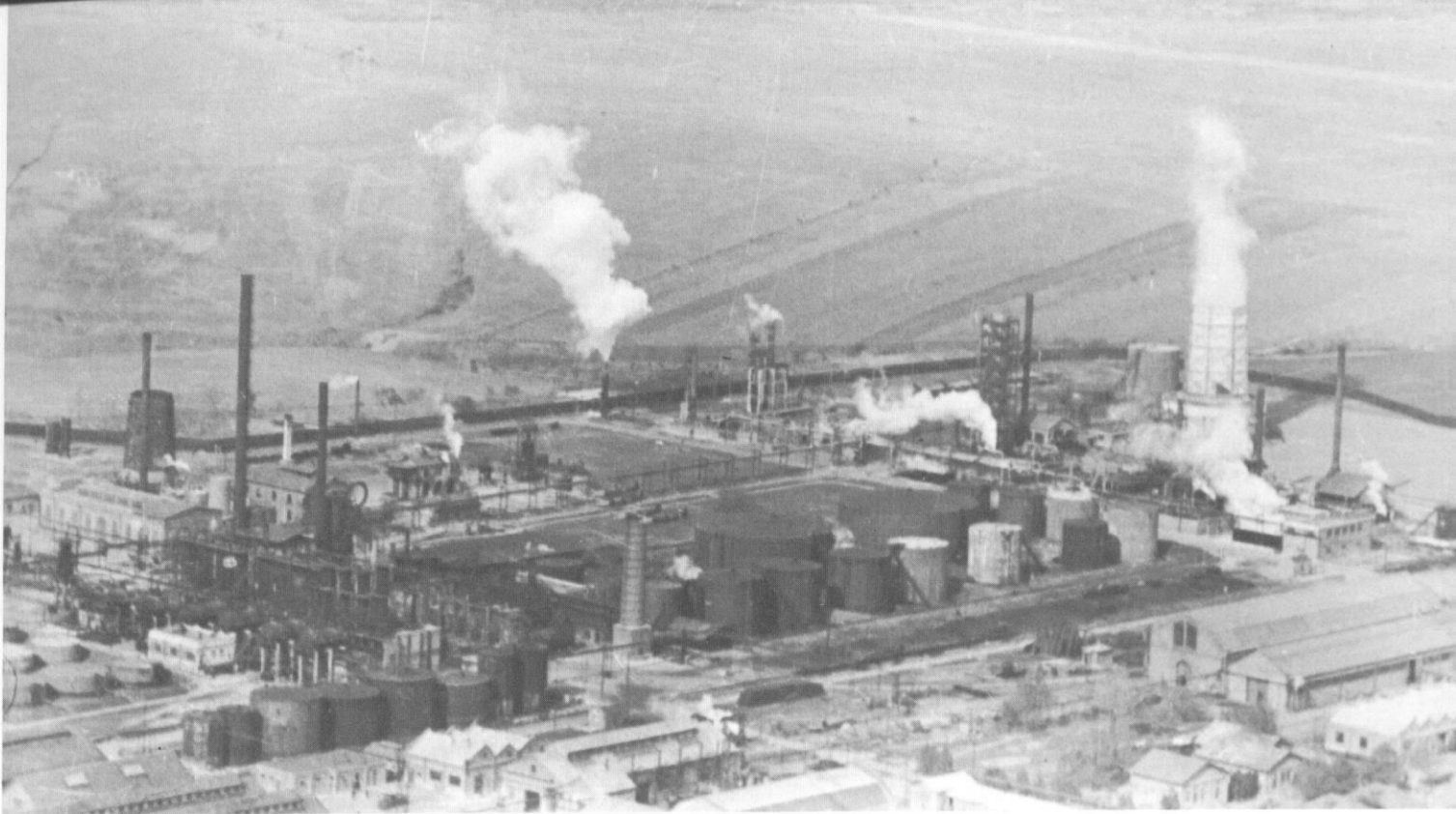
attacks on British and American convoys causing great losses in ships and supplies. The German submarine production centers at Kiel, Vegesack, Lübeck and Danzig were also on the target lists of both the USAAF and RAF during 1943.

German heavy industry produced a never ending flow of tanks, vehicles, locomotives and guns for the German war machine and Allied forces placed a high priority on halting or at least interrupting this production. Factories producing 'Panther' and 'Tiger' tanks were attacked at Brunswick, Brandenburg, Munich, Nürnberg, Mannheim, and Essen. The German railroad industry also came in for its share of attention and the locomotive production centers for the *Kriegslokomotive Baureihe 42* and *Baureihe 52* at Kassel, Berlin, and Chrzanow were bombed repeatedly.

The disruption of the German transportation system played an important role in Allied planning. Strategic bridges and railway junctions were attacked regularly and seriously hampered German efforts to re-supply front line units. Railway stations were often selected as targets of opportunity by the both the 8th and 15th Air Forces whenever the primary target could not be bombed. The most important railway junctions of the *Reichsbahn* (German Railway) were at Hamm, Münster, Saarbrücken, Belfort, Munich, Koblenz, Kassel, Bolzano and Angers. By early 1945 the shipment of goods by rail had become nearly impossible and movement along the German road network by day was extremely dangerous. Together with a critical lack of fuel and Allied ground advances, the disruption of the transportation system hastened the collapse of the German army. Faced with industrial ruin and steadily advancing enemy armies on all fronts, Nazi Germany was forced to surrender on 9 May 1945.

The bombing campaign had cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of civilians. The price Americans paid to liberate Europe of the inhuman Nazi oppression was enormous. The Eighth Air Force alone reported 43,742 airmen killed or missing in action. The four numbered American Air Forces in Europe lost more than 11,000 aircraft over enemy territory. The performance of the tactical and strategic American air forces in Europe would never again be equalled in modern warfare, and no other country did more to bring Hitler's tyranny to an end than did the American Air Forces.

The following pages illustrate what happened to some of those, both men and machines, who did not return from their last mission.



After the outbreak of World War II, the Rumanian oil wells and refineries at Ploesti became increasingly important. The USAAF launched its first attack on Ploesti on 12 June 1942, and over the next three years, at least twenty-seven missions would be flown by the USAAF and RAF against this vital target. (ECPA)

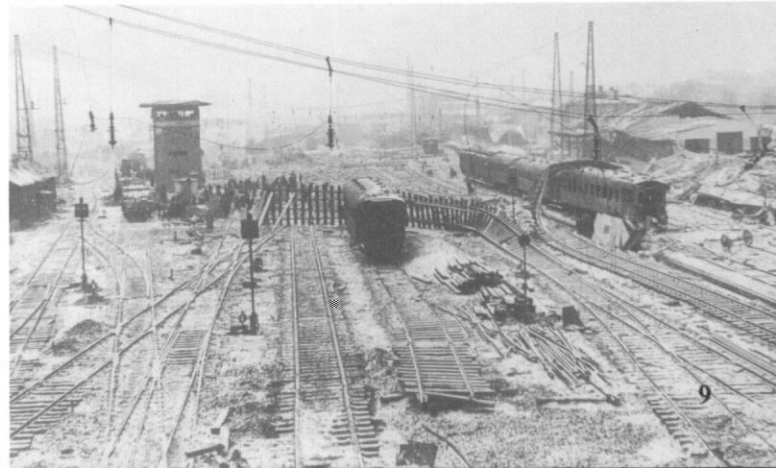
(Right) A German type VII U-Boat leaves its hardened shelter at La Rochelle, France. During the Summer of 1942 Eighth Bomber Command launched a number of attacks against the submarine bases at La Rochelle, La Pallice, and Brest. (Bundesarchiv)



German heavy industry produced a staggering number of tanks and guns for the German War Machine. This *Panzerkampfwagen VI* 'Tiger' is undergoing final assembly at one of the factories dedicated to armor production. These industrial centers were also prime targets for Allied heavy bombers. (Bundesarchiv)



The Augsburg marshalling yard was virtually destroyed after a raid by 15th Air Forces bombers on 27 February 1945. The systematic bombing of railway junctions severely hampered the movement of men and material to the front lines. By early 1945 the German transportation network had nearly collapsed. (Willy Radinger)





Wulf Hound

Wulf Hound, a B-17F-27-BO (41-24585 PU*B) Flying Fortress, assigned to the 303rd Bomb Group had the dubious honor of becoming the first American bomber captured intact by the *Luftwaffe*. **Wulf Hound** provided the Germans with a wealth of invaluable information on the capabilities, defensive armament, and vulnerability of the *Terrorbomber*, as Nazi propaganda labeled the Flying Fortress.

In the early morning of 12 December 1942, the 1st Bomb Wing of the Eighth Air Force dispatched seventy-eight Boeing B-17s to bomb the *Luftwaffe* servicing base at Romilly-sur-Seine, some sixty miles east of Paris. Based at Molesworth, Huntingdonshire the 303rd Bomb Group, known as the 'Hell's Angels', furnished twenty B-17s for the mission. The 303rd, under the command of COL James H. Wallace, while it had received its baptism of fire almost a month earlier, still lacked hard combat experience. The 303rd in its five missions between 17 November and 12 December had suffered only one combat loss.

After formation assembly, the boxes of bombers headed for France, but the weather steadily worsened and a number of the bombers turned back. Seventeen B-17s, including seven from 'Hell's Angels' continued on to the secondary target, the Rouen-Sotteville marshalling yards. Over Beauvais the formation was attacked by at

Wulf Hound, the first B-17 captured intact by the *Luftwaffe* during a display of captured Allied aircraft at Larz airfield on 12 June 1943. The B-17F-27-BO was assigned the *Stammkennzeichen* DL+XC. (Peter Petrick)

least thirty enemy fighters that continued to harass the bombers all the way to the target. At 1239 the formation unloaded forty tons of bombs on Rouen. One 303rd Bomb Group Fortress was shot down in flames, but the crew managed to bail out, becoming POWs for the rest of the war.

LT Paul Flickinger's **Wulf Hound** sustained major damage and was seen to drop out of formation. It steadily lost height and disappeared into clouds. The remaining B-17s returned safely to England, but eleven of the Fortresses had suffered damage which once again showed the vulnerability of a small formation alone over enemy territory.

LT Flickinger was in serious trouble with his fatally stricken B-17. Alone and disoriented the Fortress was intercepted by a Messerschmitt Bf 110 of *Nachtjagdgeschwader 1* over the Lower Rhine area of the Netherlands. The crew realizing that surrender was the only way to escape destruction lowered their landing gear and the fighter guided **Wulf Hound** to Leeuwarden airfield in the Netherlands.

Wulf Hound toured *Luftwaffe* fighter bases in France to acquaint fighter pilots with the B-17. The White individual aircraft letter 'B' on the tail is faintly visible although overpainted with Dark Green. (Bart M Rijnhout)





(Above) The captured B-17 was tested at the *Luftwaffe* Test and Evaluation Center at Rechlin. *Wulf Hound* retained its USAAF camouflage scheme of Olive Drab over Neutral Gray during test flights at Rechlin. (Heinz J. Nowarra)

The Fortress soon had its American stars replaced by German national insignia and the B-17 was given the *Luftwaffe Stammkennzeichen* (side code) DL+XC. Temporary repairs to *Wulf Hound's* battle damage were completed and on 14 December a German crew flew the B-17, escorted by two Bf 110 fighters, to the German Test and Experimental Center at Rechlin. *Luftwaffe* fighter bases and flak units along the flight route were informed of the flight, but despite these precautions, the Fortress was fired on, receiving minor damage.

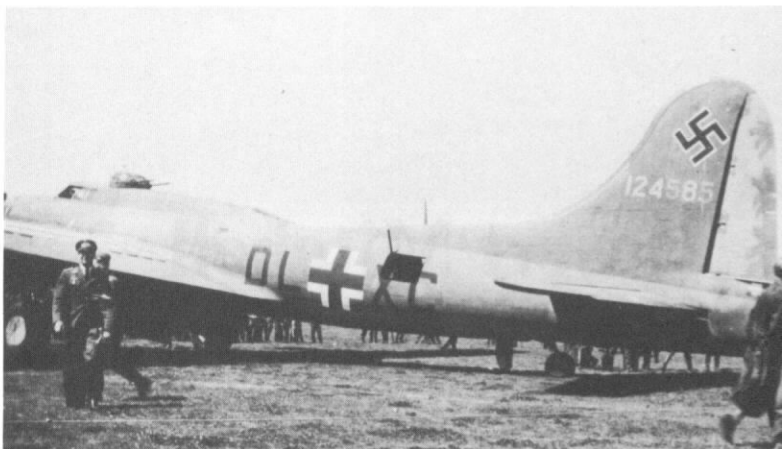
For the next three months, German engineers carefully inspected every system on the B-17 and a number of *Luftwaffe* pilots began studying the aircraft in preparation for a test program to determine the Fortress's flight characteristics. The first flight, under the control of *Flugzeugführer* Bottcher took place on 17 March 1943. On 15 April *Flugzeugführer* Huber and three other pilots conducted another test/training flight. In early May, *Wulf Hound* was transferred to Department E 2 (E for Erprobung/Test) for a series of high altitude tests, with the first being carried out on 4 May by pilot Hirschberg. Between trials at Rechlin, *Wulf Hound* was assigned to various fighter groups in France and Germany to help develop fighter tactics for use against the Flying Fortress.

In July of 1943, the Fortress was equipped with glider towing equipment and was used as a tow aircraft during the DFS 230 combat glider program at Rechlin. The first flight with a DFS 230 under tow was made on 16 June, and was followed by a program of at least five additional flights lasting until early August. For a short time during July, the B-17 was assigned to Rechlin's Department E 3 for the installation of special test equipment. Department E 3, under the command of Otto Cuno, conducted performance tests of the B-17's engines and superchargers.

Wulf Hound remained at Rechlin until September of 1943. The Fortress had provided the Germans with volumes of information on the performance, operation, strengths, and weaknesses of the B-17. Details of its advance construction were studied and some aspects were later adopted by German engineers, influencing their own pro-



(Above) When *Wulf Hound* arrived at a fighter base the aircraft quickly gathered a crowd of curious *Luftwaffe* personnel. The white stripes on the engine cowling and propeller tips were added while at Rechlin. (Heinz J. Nowarra)

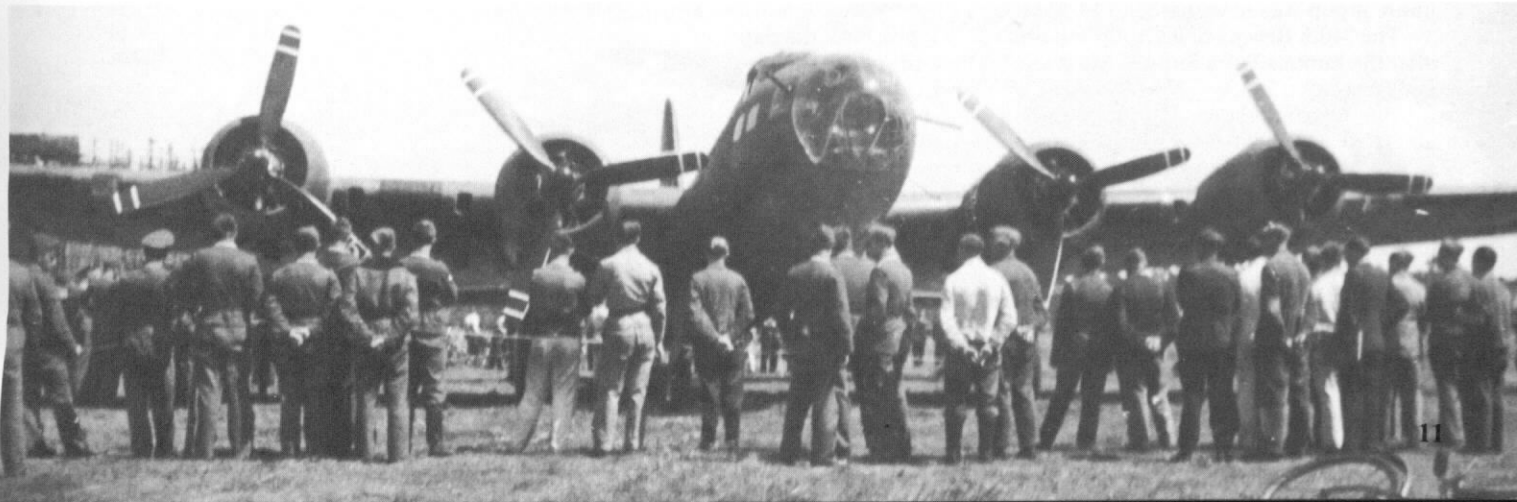


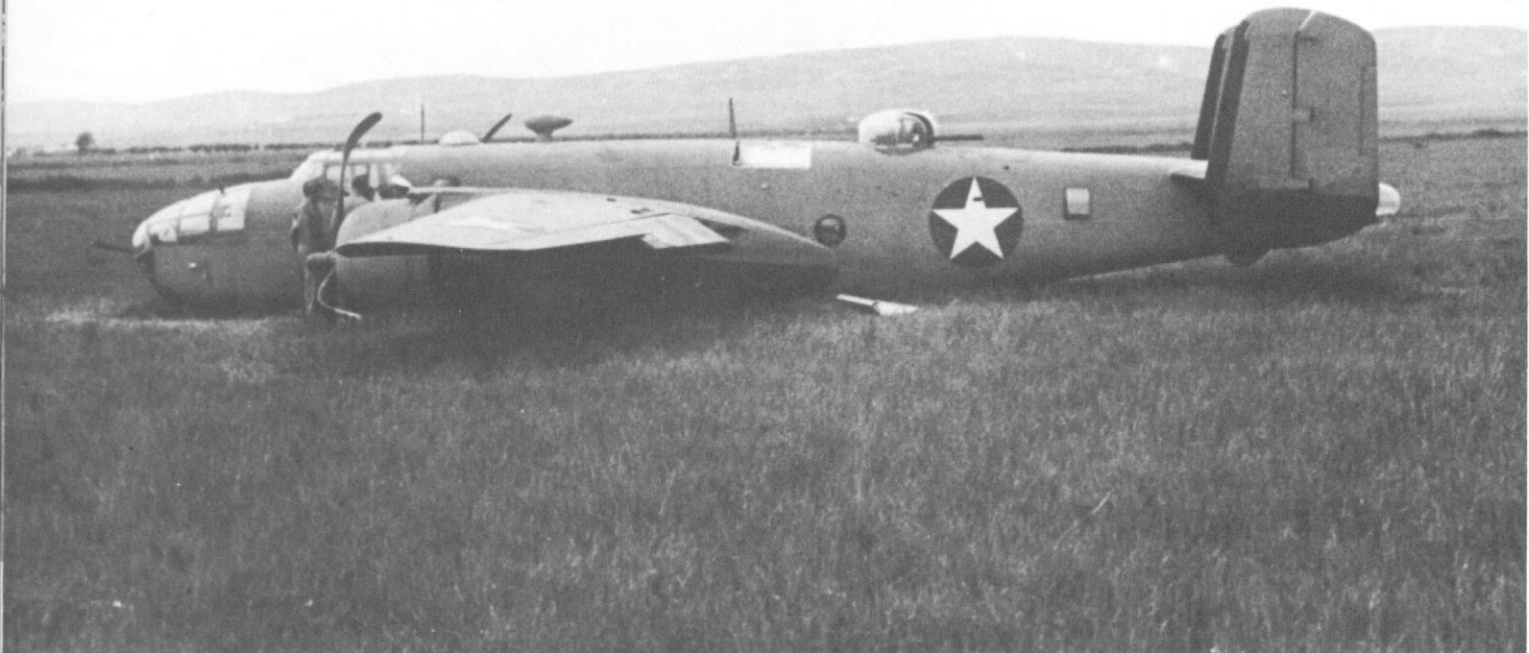
The Fortress was a featured aircraft during a display of captured enemy aircraft at Lärz airfield on 12 June 1943. For the display the waist guns were installed, however, on transfer flights over Germany the guns were usually removed. Three months later *Wulf Hound* was transferred to *Kampfgeschwader* 200. (Peter Petrick)

duction techniques. Thousands of pages of technical reports were written on *Wulf Hound* and by late summer of 1943 the Germans may have had a more intimate knowledge of the B-17 than many of the aircraft's designers at Boeing.

On 11 September 1943 *Wulf Hound* departed Rechlin for Rangsdorf, home base of KG 200, one of the most mysterious *Luftwaffe* units of the Second World War. At Rangsdorf, the Fortress received new equipment, a night camouflage scheme and a KG 200 side code (beginning with A3+). With her assignment to KG 200, records on *Wulf Hound's* later service are lost, but it is believed that she was among four B-17s used by KG 200 for training and clandestine missions between May and June of 1944.

Luftwaffe personnel attending the Lärz airshow showed a great deal of interest in the Flying Fortress. The Lärz display also featured a number of other Allied aircraft, such as the B-24 Liberator, P-47 Thunderbolt, P-51 Mustang, P-38 Lightning, RAF Lancaster, Mosquito, Typhoon, and Spitfire. (Peter Petrick)





Desert Mitchell

Although the Germans captured a small number of North American B-25 Mitchell medium bombers, it is believed the *Luftwaffe* never possessed a flyable example of the Mitchell. German engineers conducted extensive research on parts salvaged from non-flyable aircraft both at RLM Berlin-Adlershof and at the Test and Experimental Center at Rechlin.

During the later stages of the North African campaign, the US Ninth Air Force had two B-25 Mitchell bomber groups assigned, the 12th and the 340th Bomb Groups. The 340th had been assigned in late March of 1943 and was the last combat unit to join the Ninth Air Force. The 9th supported the British Eighth Army pursuing the remnants of the retreating *Deutsches Afrika Korps*. The retreating Germans were cut off and trapped in the northeast corner of Tunisia. In a desperate attempt to break out of the Allied trap, Rommel counter-attacked Allied positions along the entire front line on 6 March 1943. The German attack failed, with a loss of over fifty German tanks. Rommel was recalled to Germany being replaced by *Generaloberst* Jürgen von Arnim. With Rommel gone, it was just a question of time before the Axis armies finally collapsed in North Africa.

The 340th Bomb Group, under the command of COL William C. Mills, arrived at Heliopolis Air Base, Cairo during March of 1943. A number of the Group's B-25Cs were sent to the forward air field at El Assa to gain operational experience with the already well established 12th Bomb Group, and on 31 March 1943 the 340th flew its first mission. Two aircraft were initially reported lost, although one B-25 returned safely after having landed at a forward fighter base for fuel. Aircraft and crews of the 340th continued to rotate forward to fly missions alongside the 12th Bomb Group until mid-April, when the entire group was re-assigned to El Assa.

The 340th flew its first Group mission on 19 April 1943, the day after the famous Palm Sunday Massacre*. The Group lost one aircraft that day, a B-25C-5-NA (42-53426), which bellied in after reporting engine trouble near Djedeida airfield on the Medjerda-River, about fifteen miles west of Tunis. The air crew had thought the field was in Allied hands, however, a German counter-attack, had forced the British to abandon the area a few days earlier. The Mitchell had bellied in on a field firmly in German hands.

The Desert Pink Mitchell quickly came to the attention of *Luftzeugstab* 108 (*trop*), a salvage group charged with collecting crashed *Luftwaffe* aircraft in the desert. Usually the salvage group brought these aircraft to Djedeida airfield where they were either repaired or cannibalized for usable parts.

This B-25C-5-NA (42-53426) crash landed at Djedeida airfield, Tunisia on 19 April 1943. The Desert Pink Mitchell's serial number were painted out on the tail, however, the *Luftwaffe* inspectors of *Luftzeug-Stab* 108 (*trop*) were able to obtain the serial number and other important information from the manufacturers data plates installed in the fuselage. (Bundesarchiv)

As a security precaution, the 340th Group had overpainted the serial numbers on the tails of their B-25s, but the Germans soon discovered the manufacturers data plate installed in the fuselage. The data plates revealed that the Mitchell was powered by two Wright Cyclone double row R-2600-13 engines, serial numbers 42-47431 and 42-47437, and had been built in 1942. Apart from bent propellers, the Mitchell had sustained only superficial damage to the fuselage underside and was considered to be repairable.

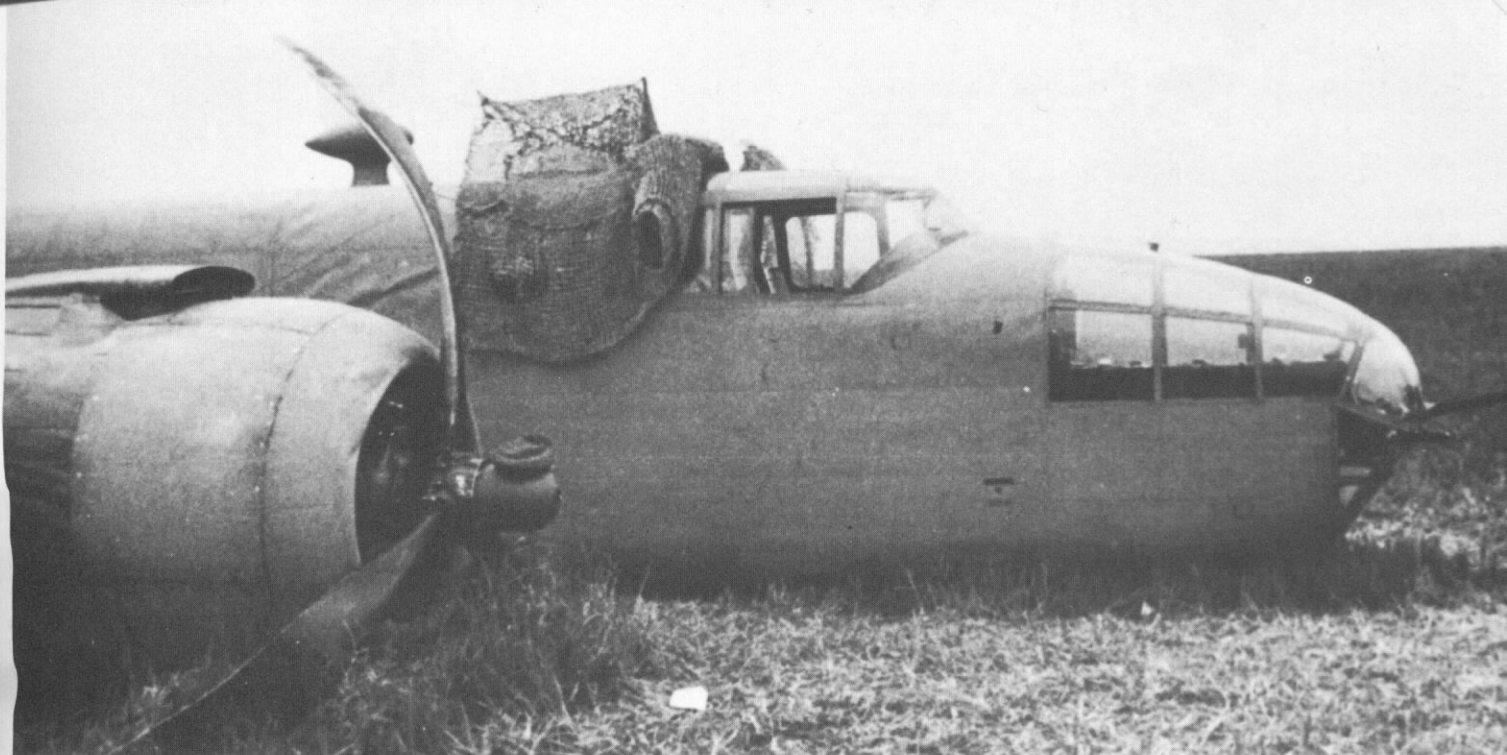
Luftzeugstab 108's report of 25 April 1943 included the following details: "...According to the Manufacturer Plate this is the latest version of the Mitchell bomber, built in 1942. The aircraft is in very good condition and only saw little use. The Fabrication Plates are still attached to the bomb racks. The crew included six men, pilot, co-pilot, observer, bombardier, radio operator and gunner. The co-pilot also served as the flight engineer..."

The rapid pace of the Allied advance in Tunisia prevented the *Luftwaffe* from repairing the Mitchell and shipping it to Europe.

*On 18 April Allied fighters caught a force of sixty-five Ju 52s, escorted by sixteen Bf 109s and five Bf 110s, off Cape Bon, Tunisia. During the running fight, twenty-four transports, nine Bf 109s and one Bf 110 were destroyed. Two days later Allied fighters destroyed another sixteen Ju 52s along with eighteen Me 323 Gigants. During the *Luftwaffe* aerial resupply effort a total of 400 Ju 52, SM 82 and Me 323s were lost.

B-25Cs of the 488th Bomb Squadron, 340th Bomb Group in formation over North Africa during the Summer of 1943. The identification code carried on the tail identified the squadron by the number while the letter was the individual aircraft identification within the Squadron. (Giorgio Apostolo)

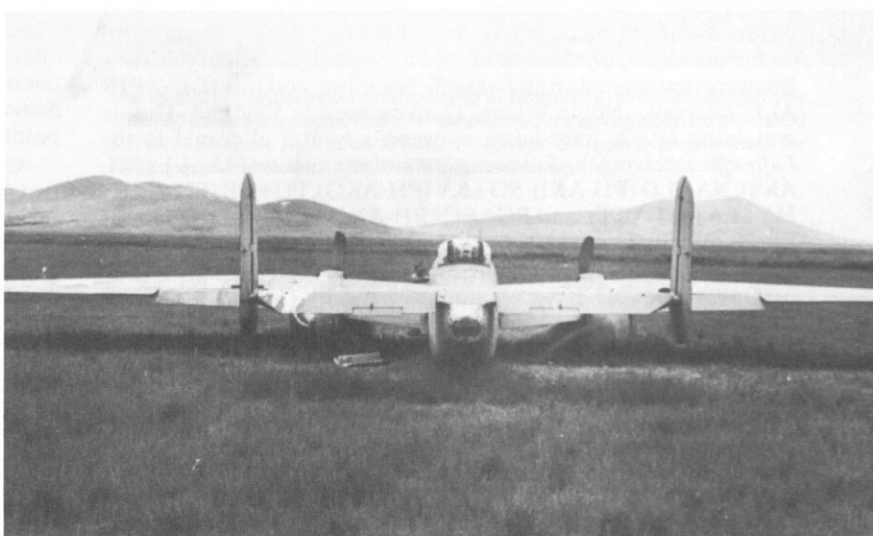




This B-25C Mitchell made a perfect wheels up landing at Djedeida airfield after suffering engine trouble. The B-25 was thoroughly inspected by *Luftwaffe* personnel and apart from the bent propellers and minor damage to the fuselage underside, they reported that the Mitchell could be repaired. (Bundesarchiv)

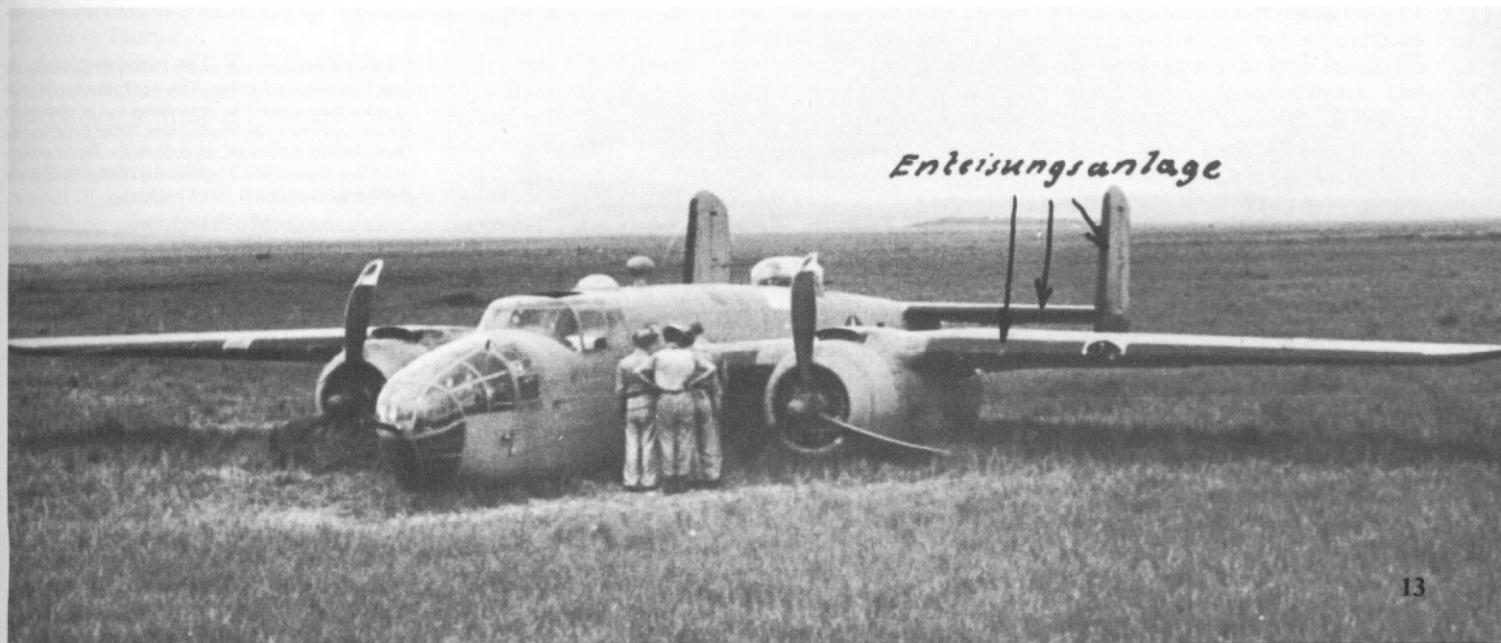
aircraft was abandoned by *Luftzeugstab* 108 as British and American troops closed in on Djedeida. On 6 May the US 34th Division liberated the airfield and were surprised to find the B-25C among the wrecks of *Luftwaffe* aircraft. The remnants of Axis forces in Africa, some 266,000 German and Italian troops, were trapped in a steadily shrinking perimeter on the Cap Bon Peninsula and at 1145 on 13 May, surrendered to the Allies. The War in North Africa was over.

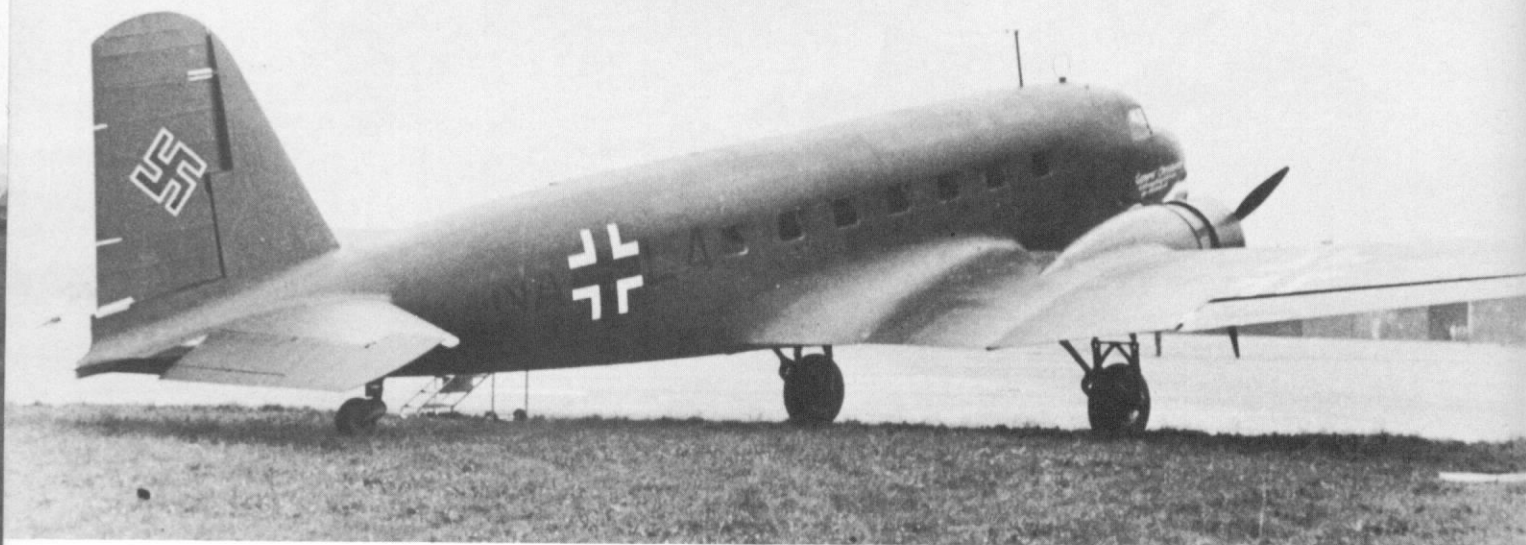
The 340th Bomb Group transferred to the 12th Air Force in August of 1943, and would spend the remainder of the the war at Paestum, Italy flying missions against the Axis transportation system in Italy and Germany.



Flugzeugstab 108 (trop) intended to prepare the Mitchell for shipment to Europe for further evaluation, however, the rapid advance of Allied troops in Tunisia forced the Germans to abandon the Mitchell when they retreated from Djedeida. (Bundesarchiv)

On 6 May 1943 troops from the 34th Division liberated Djedeida and re-captured the B-25C. Although the Germans were able to study a number of crashed Mitchells, it is believed that this was only potentially flyable example of the B-25 ever captured by the *Luftwaffe*. (Bundesarchiv)





General Christiansen

When *Wehrmacht* troops reached Schiphol Airport on 16 May 1940, they discovered six intact KLM Airlines Douglas DC-2 transports. These were the survivors of eighteen KLM Fokker-built DC-2s that had been based at the field. Five had been written off in earlier accidents, one had been sold to Sweden in January of 1940, five were destroyed during *Luftwaffe* bombing, and one (DC-2 PH-ALE 'Edelvalk' Noble Valcon) had escaped to England. The six remaining DC-2s were taken as war-booty and allocated to the *Luftwaffe*, receiving the following *Stammkennzeichen*: NA+LF (PH-AKS), NA+LD (PH-AKI), SG+KV (PH-AKQ), PC+EB (PH-AKR), NA+LA (PH-AKT), and PC+EC (PH-AKJ). A lack of spare parts for the aircraft, however, led to a decision to transfer the aircraft to Deutsche Lufthansa during the Summer of 1940.

One of the DC-2s was commandeered by *General der Flieger* Christiansen, Commander of the German forces in the Netherlands for use as his personal transport.* The DC-2-115-H (serial 1366) was

The *Luftwaffe* operated a number of ex-KLM Douglas DC-2s for a short period during 1940. NA+LA later became the first Douglas aircraft lost when the aircraft crash landed at Lammershagen near Bielefeld on 9 August 1940. The Lufthansa pilot was tried and sentenced by a *Luftwaffe* Field Law Court for destruction of Reich property. (Lufthansa)

General der Flieger Christiansen, commander of German Forces in the Netherlands, used this captured KLM Douglas DC-2 as his personal transport. Within two months, the lack of spare parts forced the General give up his prize and the aircraft was transferred to the German civil airline, Lufthansa. (Lufthansa)

the twenty-sixth DC-2 assembled by the Anthony Fokker Company. The aircraft had been purchased by KLM on 7 May 1935, given the civil registration PH-AKT, and named 'Toekan' (Toucan). When commandeered by General Christiansen, the aircraft received the *Stammkennzeichen* on NA+LA and the new owners name and title was painted on the nose.

General Christiansen was forced to give up his personal DC-2 two months later when the shortage of spare parts made it impossible to maintain the transport in a safe flyable condition. NA+LA entered service with Lufthansa as D-AJAW on 23 July 1940. The airline established a special courier service with the six DC-2s for the *Reichsluftfahrt Ministerium* (RLM - Air Ministry), called *Flugbereitschaft Tempelhof*. Since most of the flights were carried out over areas prohibited to civilian flight, the DC-2s retained their *Luftwaffe* markings in addition to their civil registrations.

During one such courier flight, an unfortunate *Lufthansa* pilot crashed landed NA+LA at Lammershagen near Bielefeld on 9 August 1940. This was the first loss of a German operated DC-2 and, even though he was a civilian, the pilot was tried by a *Luftwaffe* Field Law Court for destruction of Reich property.

Two of the DC-2s survived the war. D-AJAW was found at Berlin-Tempelhof and was scraped by US forces in July of 1945. D-AEAN surrendered to the RAF at Flensburg near the Danish border in May of 1945.

*General Christiansen is widely known for deporting the male inhabitants of the Dutch town of Putten to a German concentration camp. The deportation was in reprisal for the townspeople's cooperation with Allied forces during Operation Market Garden, the airborne landings at Arnhem on 17 September 1944. The failure of Market Garden cost the lives of over 10,000 Dutch civilians.





Martin B-26's are parked on the ramp at Baltimore, prior to being fitted with propellers and armament. These Marauders would soon be delivered to new US Army Air Force Medium Bomb Groups being formed for deployment overseas. (Martin Marietta Baltimore)

Delivery To The Wrong Address

During July of 1942, the United States Army Air Force set into motion plans to establish three Martin B-26 Marauder Bomb Groups in North Africa. The 17th, 319th and 320th Bomb Groups would ferry their Marauders via Labrador and Greenland to England. Upon their arrival in England the three Groups would operate as part of the Eighth Air Force to gain combat experience before taking part in OPERATION TORCH, the Invasion of North Africa.

Several serious training accidents delayed the Marauder's overseas movement. These training problems were compounded by the Marauder's demanding handling characteristics and the relative inexperience of the pilots. Within a month, the 320th Bomb Group at MacDill had reported the loss of fifteen B-26s in training crashes, coining the phrase, "One a day in Tampa Bay". The B-26 quickly gained the reputation as a 'killer' and was nicknamed 'The Widow Maker', a reputation the Marauder never really lost, despite its highly successful combat career with one of the lowest combat loss records in Europe.

In September of 1942, COL Charles T. Phillips and MAJ Grover C. Brown flew the first Marauder to England via the North Atlantic Ferry Route, arriving at Honington, East Anglia on 15 September. The flight was a test to determine if B-26s could be delivered to England over the Northern Ferry Route. After COL Phillips successful flight, the 319th Bomb Group begun its journey to England on 21 September, but the Marauder's jinx was to continue. One crew was lost on departure from Baer Field, Indiana and another two were killed in enroute crashes. The Marauders were grossly overloaded (36,500 pounds) with fuel and aircraft parts, which contributed to the fatal accidents.

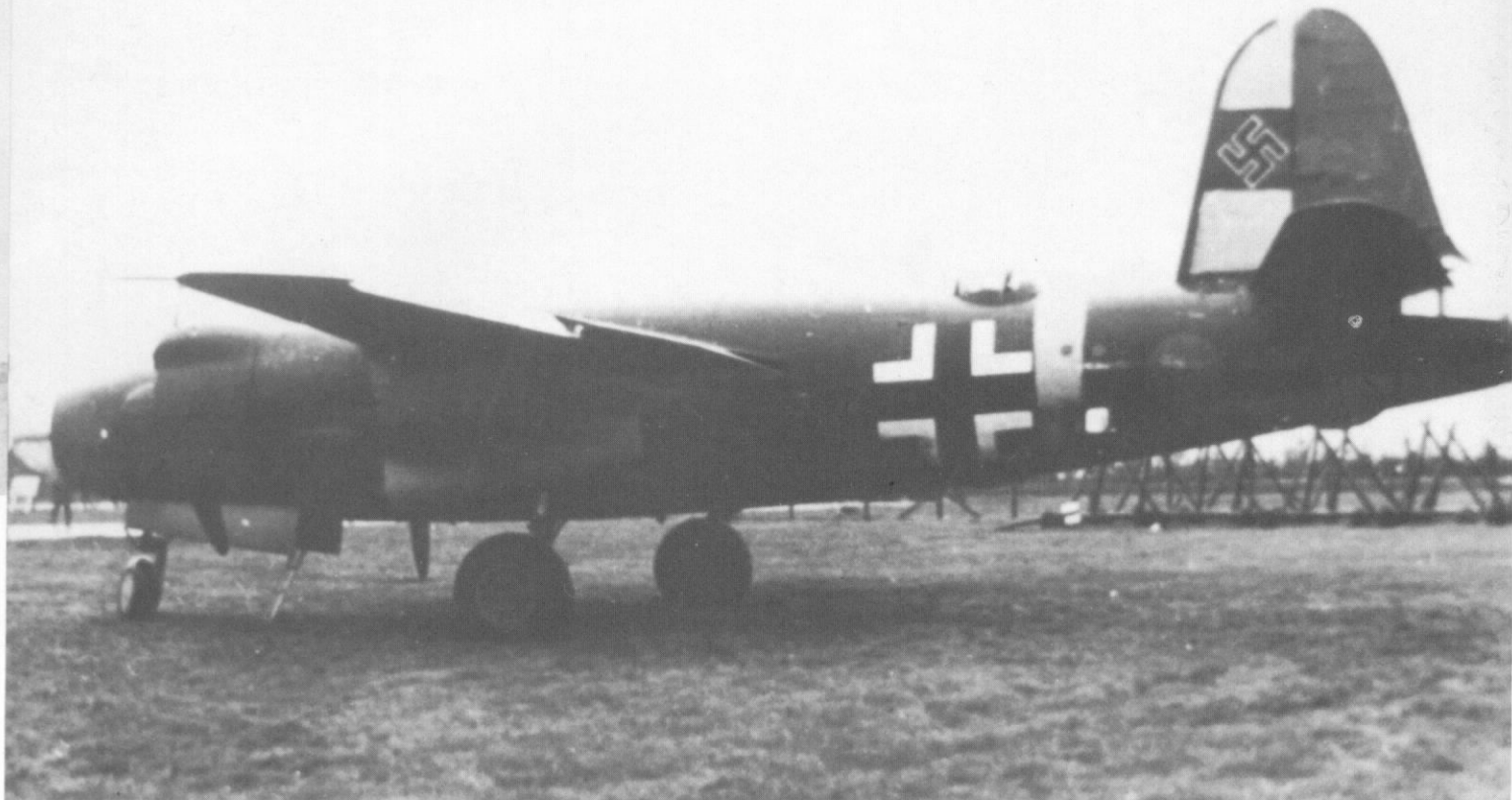
At Presque Isle, Maine and Goose Bay, New Foundland the gunners were left behind, and the guns and other items were removed from the aircraft in an effort to reduce weight. Harsh Winter weather and low clouds continued to plague the flight and on the leg from Bluie West, Greenland to Iceland, two Marauders disappeared without a trace. The first 319th Bomb Group aircraft finally reached Scotland on 3 October and continued to Horsham St. Faith, England.

Of the fifty-seven aircraft that departed the United States only thirty-four completed the ferry flight. As a result, the USAAF decided that further deliveries of twin engine aircraft to the War Zone would be accomplished via the South Atlantic Ferry Route; a longer route, but one without the dangers of the harsh weather found on the northern route.

One of the Marauders that failed to reach Horsham was LT Clarence C. Wall's B-26B (41-17790) of the 437th Squadron. LT Wall and his crew left Iceland on 3 October and headed for Scotland as a winter overcast closed in. Unable to visually navigate, they became lost in the low clouds. The navigator picked up a radio homing signal, which they thought originated in Scotland and the pilot promptly followed the beacon. The Marauder crew unwittingly overflew Scotland, the Southern part of England, and headed out over the North Sea towards continental Europe.

Over the North Sea the fuel transfer system on the Marauder malfunctioned causing an engine to fail from fuel starvation. On one engine and with enough fuel for five minutes of flying time, LT Wall decided to belly land his aircraft on a strip of beach he spotted thru a hole in the overcast. He quickly let down through the clouds and successfully crash landed the Marauder on the beach. Unknowingly, LT Wall had landed on the Dutch island of Noord Beveland, the smallest of five islands located off the Dutch coast near Rotterdam. The surprised crew quickly learned from the local *Wehrmacht* that they had landed in enemy held territory. The luckless crew had been trapped by a false homing signal transmitted by the German Signal Corps. The German trap had worked and LT Wall and his crew spent the remainder of the war in a German POW camp. They had earned the dubious honor of presenting the *Luftwaffe* with a nearly intact Marauder before the B-26 was committed to combat over *Festung Europa*.

German salvage specialists found the aircraft to be particularly interesting since it was the first Marauder they had ever seen. They carefully dismantled the B-26 for shipment to the *Luftwaffe* air base at Gilze-Rijen where the minor damage to the fuselage was repaired. The propellers, however, had been badly damaged in the crash landing and there were no suitable replacements available. The lack of



replacement propellers kept the aircraft grounded at Gilze-Rijen until early 1943, when the *Luftwaffe* finally succeeded in obtaining a pair of B-26 propellers. The aircraft was ferried to Rechlin and trials with the Marauder were begun in June. A month later, one of the aircraft's generators failed and a German built unit was fitted on the bomber as a replacement. A number of *Luftwaffe* test pilots, including Hans Werner Lerche were involved in the test program and they reported the same handling difficulties that had faced Allied pilots on their first introduction to the B-26.

The *Luftwaffe* pilots soon discovered that the short wing span of the Marauder resulted in high landing speeds. The grass runway at Rechlin proved to be too short for the Marauder and, after several test flights, the remainder of the test program was moved to Lärz airfield which had a longer, hard surfaced runway. During the summer of 1943, a malfunctioning propeller pitch control nearly ended the career of the *Luftwaffe's* Marauder, but the pilot was able to recover

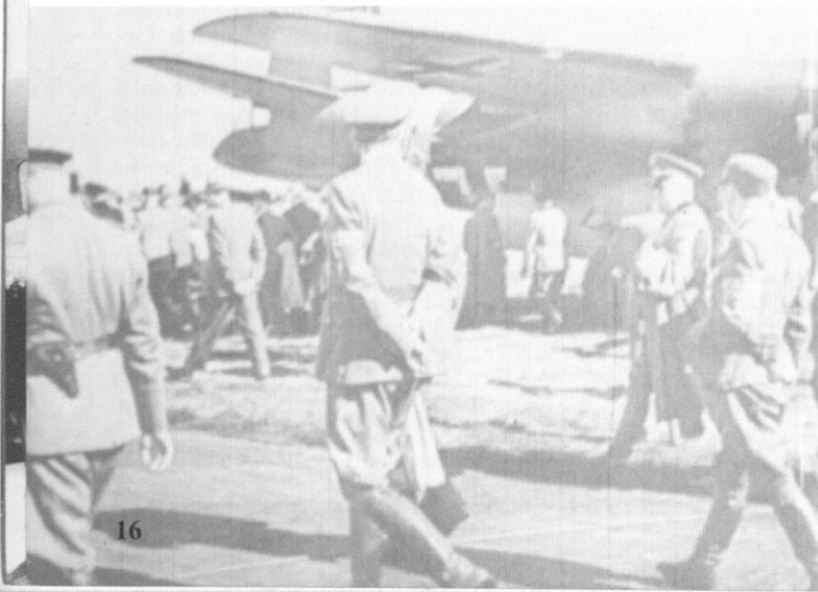
The captured Martin B-26B Marauder was left in Olive Drab over Neutral Gray with *Luftwaffe* insignia being added along with Yellow experimental identification colors. The American Star in a Blue surround can be seen over painted at the rear of the fuselage. (Thomas E. Willis)

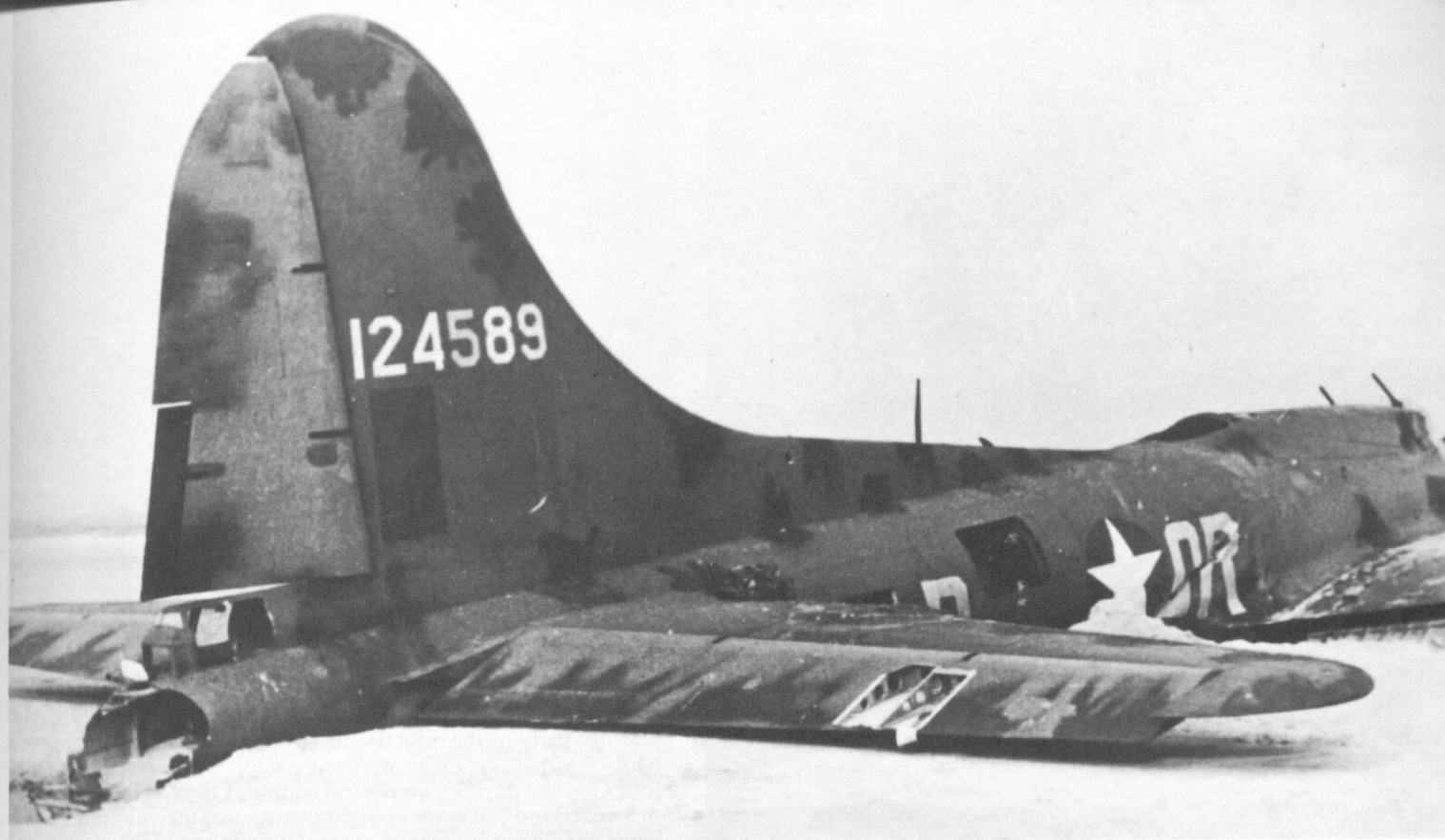
control and land the aircraft safely. On 2 November the Marauder took part in an exhibition of latest *Luftwaffe* innovations and captured aircraft at Rechlin. Shortly after this exhibit, all references to the Marauder in Rechlin's records ceased. It is believed the B-26B was either destroyed while on a test flight or during one of the numerous Allied bombing raids on Rechlin.

41-17790 was the sole Marauder flown in *Luftwaffe* colors, but another, nearly intact B-26 was closely examined and later dismantled at Berlin-Adlershof. This second B-26 is believed to have been used as a source of spare parts to keep 41-17790 flyable.

LT Clarence C Wall had crash landed his B-26B on the Dutch Island of Noord Beveland after being lured off course by a false German radio beacon. The Marauder was repaired and later displayed at Larz airfield on 26 November 1943 as part of a exhibition of captured Allied aircraft. (Alberto Salvati)

Both the Marauder's propellers were damaged when LT Wall crash landed and the aircraft remained grounded at Gilze Rijen airfield until a pair of suitable replacement propellers were obtained. The aircraft was flown to the Rechlin Test Center in June of 1943. (Alberto Salvati)





Berge-Bataillone (Salvage Units)

The massive Allied air raids over Germany and occupied Europe created a huge logistical problem for the *Luftwaffe*; how to remove and make use of the tons of aircraft wreckage scattered over the European landscape, since every heavy bomber provided approximately 35,000 pounds of potentially useful salvage. As the air war became increasingly savage more and more aircraft were shot down over Europe, it became obvious that special salvage units were needed.

These units, known as *Berge-Bataillone* (Salvage Battalions), were under the operational control of the *Luftwaffe*. Their mission was to investigate each crash site, evaluate the salvage potential, and ship it to the proper destination. The majority of aircraft that crashed were completely destroyed and usable only as scrap metal. The salvage of this scrap metal was a time consuming undertaking, demanding men, vehicles, and equipment. Because gasoline was strictly rationed, the wreckage was usually transported by truck to the nearest railway station where it was loaded onto railway cars for transportation to the nearest salvage yard. To transport the wreckage of a heavy bomber, at least three railway cars were usually required. Depending on the location of the crash site and personnel available, clean up, shipment to the rail yard, and loading could take as long as three days. As Allied raids increased in size and frequency, these *Berge-Bataillones* were kept extremely busy.

The *Berge-Bataillones* were organized into *Kompanie* (companies) and *Bergetrupps* (salvage unit). Usually, a *Trupp* was assigned to investigate the crash site and salvage the aircraft. A *Trupp* normally consisted of fifteen soldiers led by three Corporals. The work of the *Trupp* was often hampered by a lack of fuel and a shortage of railway cars. *Bergetrupps* worked under the most austere conditions, without proper salvage tools and often in distant, inaccessible areas of Germany and the occupied countries.

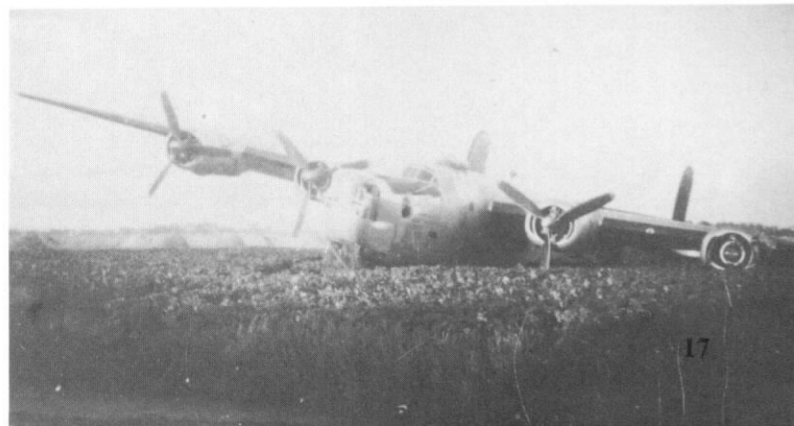
At every crash site the *Bergetrupp* prepared a four part salvage report that would be sent to several different *Luftwaffe* commands.

Texas Bronco, a Boeing B-17F-27-BO of the 91st Bomb Group was shot down on a raid to Emden, Germany on 4 February 1943. The bomber crashed landed on the beach at Terschelling and was later dismantled and taken to the *Luftwaffe* scrap yard at Utrecht, Holland. (Zentralbild)



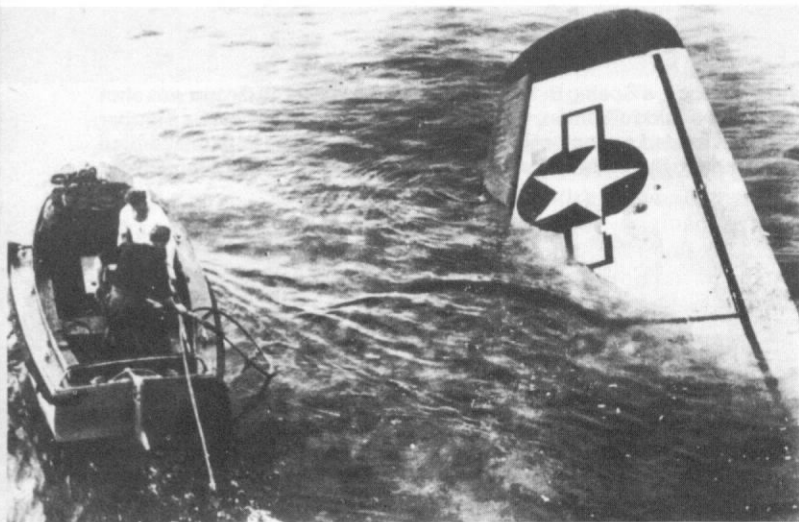
A *Luftwaffe* salvage team inspects a burned out P-51 Mustang at a crash site in the Reich. The Mustang's wreckage will be transported by truck to the nearest railway station for shipment to a scrap yard. (Thomas E. Willis)

This B-24 Liberator of the 712th Bomb Squadron, 448th Bomb Group, crash landed near Alkmaar, Holland on the way home from Bernburg, Germany on 29 June 1944. The intact propellers would be a welcome addition to the *Luftwaffe* spare parts inventory. (J.H. Schurman)





This B-24J-50-CO (42-73507) of the 328th Bomb Squadron, 93rd Bomb Group was shot down on 30 January 1944. The Liberator was beyond repair and the aircraft was scraped after its engines, propellers and instruments were salvaged to provide spare parts for other *Luftwaffe* B-24s. (Thomas E. Willis)



German fishermen inspect the sunken wreckage of a Boeing B-17 in the Baltic Sea during the late Summer of 1944. The Red wing tips indicate the Fortress had been assigned to either the 91st, 381st or 398th Bomb Groups. (Thomas E. Willis)

Luftwaffe personnel inspect a B-17F-50-DL (42-3353) of the 96th Bomb Group. A number of B-17s crash landed with apparent minor damage, but close inspection often revealed that on landing the belly turret would usually collapse inward severely warping the rear fuselage causing structural damage. (Don Henry)



Most aircraft were considered to be completely destroyed, with no value for further research, however, occasionally an aircraft crash landed in good condition. This usually happened for one of several reasons; perhaps the pilot decided to crash land in order to save a badly wounded crewman who was unable to bail out. Others mistook German territory for neutral countries such as Sweden, Spain or Switzerland and made no attempt to destroy their aircraft. In such cases, the *Luftwaffe* demanded careful handling of the aircraft and its equipment.

In the event that the airframe was not repairable, hard to obtain items, such as engines and propellers were carefully salvaged. These were sent to the *Beutepark* (Captured Item Depot) for storage and possible use as spare parts for captured flyable aircraft. New or unique items of equipment were sent to Rechlin or the *Deutsche Versuchsanstalt für Luftfahrt* (DVL) at Berlin-Adlershof for further investigation. The DVL carefully examined and tested each new item of equipment found on crashed Allied aircraft. German engineers dismantled fighter and bomber aircraft to study construction techniques, comparing Allied construction standards with those of the German aircraft industry. Other intact items, primarily engines, were assigned to Technical Colleges as instructional aids. Tires were sent to the tire storage facilities at the W. Heidik factory at Neuenhagen. Parachutes were sent to the Textilwerke Henking K.G. at Seifhennersdorf. Salvaged fuel was stored in fuel dumps at Nienburg, Derben, Neuburg, and Dülmen. The German aircraft industry was also supplied with captured material and Junkers used two salvaged B-24 main landing gear assemblies for the Ju 287 V1 experimental jet bomber prototype.

The *Luftwaffe* salvaged any usable aircraft parts to supply their 'captured fighter rebuild program' with spare parts. A repair center *PISONYA* a Douglas A-20 Havoc broke its back when it crashed landed in North Africa. The Havoc was quickly stripped of usable equipment such as guns, and instruments to make sure they did not fall into the hands of the Partisans. (George Punka)





A *Bergetrupp* inspect the wreckage of B-17F of the 401st Bomb Group. Ammunition and unexploded bombs presented a real danger to salvage troops and care had to be taken to ensure all explosives were rendered safe. It usually took between two and four days to clean up each heavy bomber crash site. (Thomas E. Willis)

for the restoration of Allied fighter aircraft was established at Götingen and all usable parts salvaged from fighter crash sites were shipped there from all German occupied areas. A number of flyable Mustangs, Thunderbolts and other Allied fighters were rebuilt and put to *Luftwaffe* use.

Waco and Horsa gliders were high interest items and carefully investigated at the *Deutsche Forschungsanstalt für Segelflugzeuge* (German Research Institute for Gliders) at Darmstadt-Griesenheim. Other Allied aircraft were rebuilt at Dusseldorf, Staaken, Wiener-Neustadt, and Kastrup. Salvaged engines were overhauled and stored at the *Beutepark 5 der Luftwaffe* at Paris-Nanterre, from which engines were supplied as needed to units operating captured equipment.

A secret *Luftwaffe* order (Number 03743 of 14 July 1944) issued by *Luftgau-Kommando XI* stated that after *Luftwaffe* aircraft, B-17s with damage of less than 80% had the highest priority for salvage and repair. B-17s were normally repaired by personnel at Rechlin.

Most downed American aircraft, even those with only minor damage, were usually scrapped as soon as the salvage teams had finished cannibalizing the aircraft of all usable equipment. The salvage work was hurried since an intact aircraft would soon draw the attention of prowling Allied fighters. A number of repairable Allied aircraft were destroyed by strafing attacks before they could be successfully recovered. In addition to the recovery of Allied aircraft, the *Berge-Bataillone* were also responsible for salvage of downed *Luftwaffe* aircraft.

German and Hungarian officers inspect a fuselage of a Boeing B-17F at the DLV research center at Berlin-Adlershof. Germany exchanged information on Allied aircraft with other members of the Axis as well as her allies. (Thomas E. Willis)



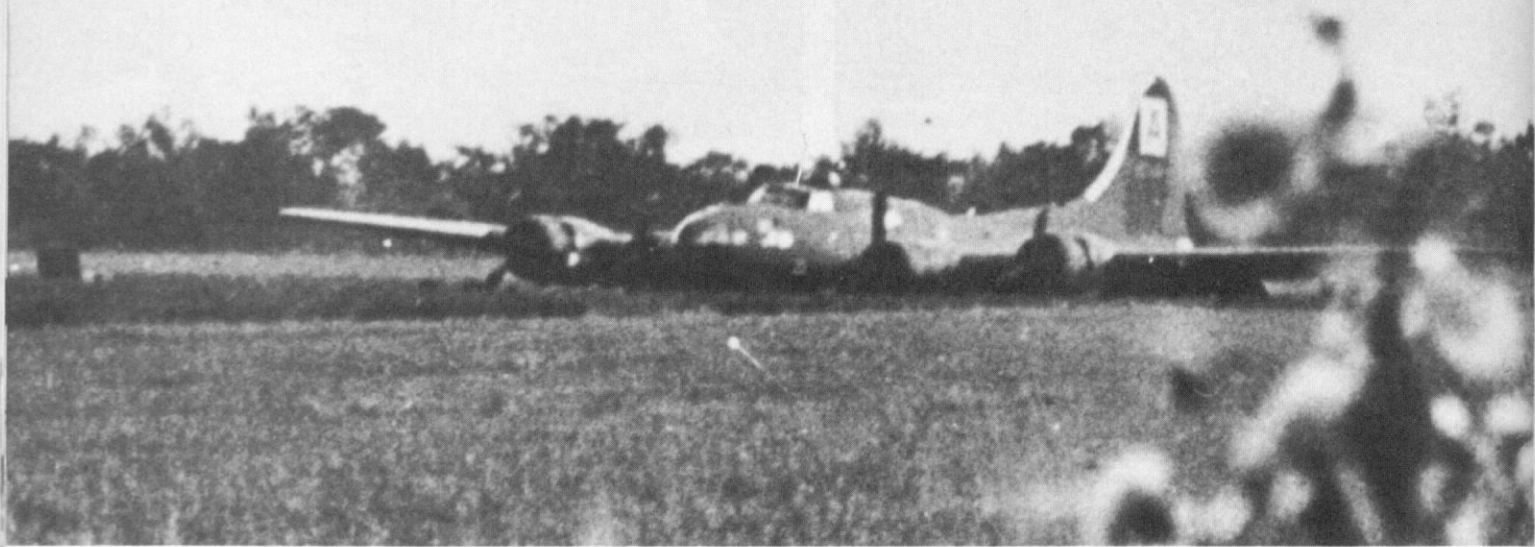
The wreckage of a 303rd Bomb Group B-17F (BN*V) rest in a rail yard in Germany waiting for transportation to a scrap yard. A lack of rolling stock often delayed shipment to the scrap yards for days or weeks. (Thomas E. Willis)



Gamecock an early B-17G was shot down in early 1944 on her twenty-third mission over the Reich. Stripped of her armament, the Fortress has been secured to a flatcar for shipment. (Dr. Volker Koos)

Aircraft components gathered from various crash sites in the Reich are stored in the *Deutsche Versuchsanstalt* storage yard at Berlin-Adlershof. The Research Center evaluated Allied construction techniques and technical advances for possible use in German aircraft production. Allied aircraft stored here include a pair of Spitfires, an A-20 Havoc, Lockheed Hudson, along with the wings from an RAF Mustang Mk I. (Thomas E. Willis)





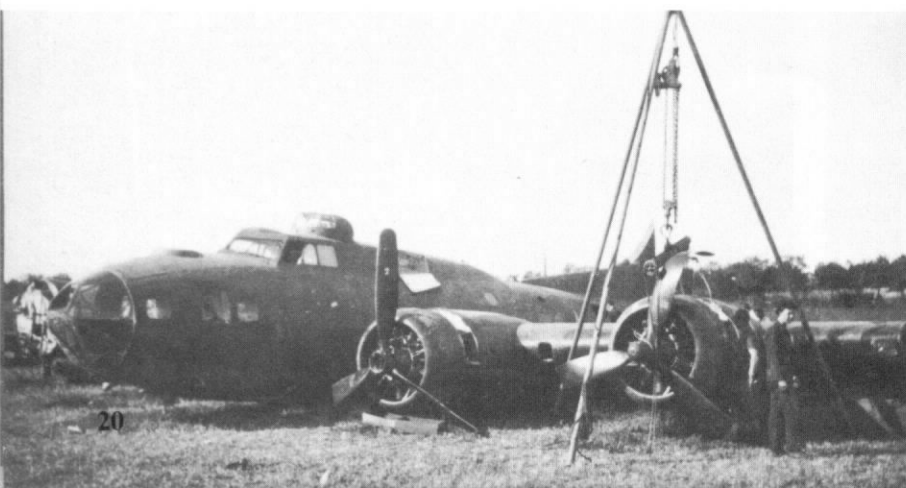
Down And Go!

On 29 July 1943, Eighth Bomber Command dispatched eighty-one B-17s of the 4th Bomb Wing to attack the Arado aircraft assembly plant at Warnemünde, Germany. The target was a major production center for FW 190 fighters and its destruction would have a major impact on the air war. The bomber stream arrived over the target between 0923 and 0925, dropping 129 tons of bombs on the factory. After the raid, German officials estimated that the damage to the factory would cut monthly production by at least twenty per cent. American losses were four B-17s listed as missing in action, one each from the 94th, 96th, 385th and 388th Bomb Groups.

The 94th Bomb Group, based at Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, had furnished fifteen Fortresses for the raid. The formation was led by MAJ E. O'Connor with LT McGlaun flying as lead bombardier. LT McGlaun noted an error in the briefed bombing trajectory figures and by making a quick adjustment, dropped his bombs squarely on target. At the debriefing, he was initially criticized for deviating from the briefed standard, but when reconnaissance photos revealed that bombs from the 94th BG were responsible for sixty-five per cent of the damage inflicted on the target, he and MAJ O'Connor were both awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Returning crews reported intense and accurate flak over the target area, but weak fighter opposition.

The Group's sole loss was LT Ned Palmer's B-17F-90-BO (42-30146) **Down and Go!**, a combat veteran that had been part of the Group's original inventory. The Fortress went overseas carrying the name **Cherokee** as part of the 333rd Squadron, however, soon after arrival at Bury St. Edmunds, the aircraft was re-assigned and the new crew changed the name to **Down and Go!**. 2nd LT Ned Palmer

Down and Go! a B-17F (TS*A) of the 94th Bomb Group with German engineers from the Heinkel Component Factory at Kastrup using a portable crane to help dismantle the aircraft for shipment to Kastrup. (Dr. Volker Koos)



Down and Go! rests in a Danish field after LT Ned Palmer's successful crash landing. According to the German salvage report issued by Airfield Command A 54/XI the Group marking was a Yellow 'A' on a White square. The serial number and fuselage identification codes were in Yellow. (Ned Palmer)

had arrived in England as one of the first replacement pilots assigned to the 94th Bomb Group. He flew two missions as a co-pilot before being assigned his own B-17 and crew. His crew were all experienced combat veterans and included: co-pilot Eugene R. Snyder, navigator Frank S. Pellegrino, bombardier Arthur E. Cooper, radio operator George A. Hamling, engineer Christos Bassios, ball turret gunner Vernon P. Rathbun, tail gunner William P. Clark and the waist gunners Olin E. Brown Jr. and Damon D. Cottingham. Ned Palmer later recalled the fateful mission to Warnemünde:

Our aircraft began having problems shortly after takeoff. As we climbed to our cruising altitude, both inboard engines began to backfire and run rough. Finally we had to shut down both engines since the propellers were producing more drag than power.

By using emergency power on the two good engines, we managed to stay with the formation until just before reaching the aiming point for the bomb run. Number Four engine then began over heating and we had to shut down the engine and feather the propeller. At this point, we had to drop out of formation and descend to sea level in order to stay in the air on one engine. The navigator gave me a heading for Sweden and we salvaged our bombs and all other excess equipment to lighten the aircraft so that we could maintain flying speed on the one good engine. A half hour later the navigator told me that we were over Sweden and I began to look for an airfield. We restarted the Number Four engine and were able to keep it running, although at a reduced power setting. After looking for an airfield and not finding one, I elected to crash land in a large open field. It turned out to be a German army parade ground — not a farmers field in Sweden.

Shortly before landing his crippled Fortress at Alvedore Holme, some six miles southwest of Copenhagen, LT Palmer ordered the crew, except for the co-pilot, to their crash stations. He managed to land the B-17 wheels up in the short field with little damage and no injuries to the crew. When the crew emerged from the Fortress they were surprised to find themselves surrounded by *Wehrmacht* troops. The officers and enlisted men were quickly separated and spent the rest of the war in different Prisoner of War camps.

Luftwaffe personnel from Vaerlose air base inspected the downed Fortress and reported that the bomber had suffered only slight damage to the fuselage underside during the belly landing. The crew had damaged

the Norden bomb sight with a hammer, however, the radio equipment had been removed and was in the safe keeping of a Signal Corps officer in Kastrup.

The *Luftwaffe* considered the damaged fuselage underside repairable and a few days later specialists and engineers from the Heinkel Component Factory at Kastrup arrived at Alvedore Holme to carefully dismantle the damaged Fortress for shipment to Kastrup where the bomber would be repaired.*

After its repair, the Fortress was assigned to Kampfgeschwader 200 (KG 200), a secret *Luftwaffe* unit involved in clandestine intelligence missions. During early 1945, *Down and Go!* was allocated to *Kommando Olga* under MAJ Peter W. Stahl and based, along with a B-17G (coded A3+BB), at Stuttgart-Echterdingen.

During 1945 KG 200 was facing increasing difficulty in meeting its operational commitments. The severe winter weather hampered flight operations and deliveries of spare parts from KG 200's headquarters at Finow were disrupted by constant Allied attacks on the German transportation network. Routine maintenance and repairs took days to accomplish and the fleet of captured aircraft were often grounded for long periods.

KG 200's primary mission was the delivery of agents, saboteurs, and their supplies behind Allied lines. Besides captured American equipment the unit operated a variety of other aircraft including Ju 188s, FW 200s, and Ju 290 transports, with detachments of KG 200 operating from forward bases on all fronts. MAJ Stahl's detachment, *Kommando Olga* shared its base at Stuttgart-Echterdingen with *III Gruppe* of Transport *Geschwader* 30. Equipped with He 111s, the transport unit delivered mail and supplies to German held positions in Western Europe, including the Islands of Guernsey and Jersey in the English Channel.

On 9 February 1945, eight aircraft of TG 30 were scheduled for a series of supply missions in support of German held pockets in the West. That same night, KG 200 was to carry out a high priority 'delivery' of French agents to the French-Spanish border. The crew for the mission, *Ofw* Karl Knappenscheider (pilot) and *Ofw* Von Pechmann (co-pilot), were both highly experienced test pilots and Knappenscheider had amassed a considerable amount of B-17 time flying KG 200's other B-17 (A3+BB). Just prior to take off an order arrived from higher authority changing the crew and Von Pechmann was replaced by *Ofw* Georg Joachim.

Shortly after dusk, the crew completed their preparations for the mission and loaded their passengers. On board the Fortress were nineteen people, a German crew of nine including observer *Fw* Richard Rosenfeld, radio operator *Uffz* Johann König, engineers *Fw* Eduard Siemsen and *Uffz* Wilhelm Frielingsdorf, jump master *Offw* Fritz Burnickel and the gunners *Uffz* Heinz Henning and *Fw* Friedrich Seeger. The ten French agents and government officials included:

Charles Comte De Bony De Lavergne
Pierre Lefevre
Henri Du Cros
Paul Canut
Georges Bredeau

Jean Lemain
Jacques Lemaire
Rene Petit
Gay Gilbert Pointeau
Henri Normand

TG 30 Heinkel He 111's were warming up for take off when another high level order came through — allegedly from Göring himself, that the B-17 must be allowed to take off first. Knappenscheider and his co-pilot started the overloaded aircraft down the grass strip at full throttle, and *Kommando Olga's* commander, Peter W. Stahl, lined up his Junkers Ju 188 on the runway to follow the B-17.

Down and Go! took off at 2200 and began to climb. As the aircraft reached approximately 300 feet, it suddenly exploded in a ball of flame. The gunners *Uffw* Henning and *Fw* Seeger, were thrown clear and survived the disaster. Debris from the aircraft also killed a man



The salvage crew has nearly completed work on *Down and Go!*. The aircraft was repaired at the Heinkel factory and later was assigned to KG 200. On 9 February 1945, *Down and Go!* was lost when it exploded after takeoff from Echterdingen. (Dr. Volker Koos)

from the *Kommando Olga* ground crew. The importance attached to the aircraft's mission was demonstrated the next day when a group of General officers arrived to personally conduct the accident investigation. The ten Frenchmen, part of the French Vichy Government in Exile under Marshal Petain and Pierre Laval, were buried with full military honors at the cemetery of Echterdingen by MAJ Stahl.

The loss of the B-17 and its two very experienced pilots greatly reduced *Kommando Olga's* capabilities. Pressure from advancing Allied troops led to several moves before the remaining aircraft were finally transferred to Holzkirchen airfield where the unit was disbanded on 29 April 1945.

*A number of German aircraft companies were involved in repairing damaged Allied aircraft. Lufthansa repaired a Lancaster at Staaken near Berlin. Espenlaub Flugzeugwerke rebuilt a Bell P-39 Airacobra. A North American P-51D was repaired by a Fock Wulf plant and the Wiener-Neustadter Flugzeugwerke overhauled a damaged Boeing B-17F.

Major Peter W. Stahl, (center) lays a wreath on the grave of one of the ten Frenchmen killed in the crash of *Down and Go!* on 9 February 1945. Only gunners *Uffw* Henning and *Fw* Seeger survived the disaster when they were thrown clear of the flaming wreckage. (Peter W. Stahl)





“BEETLE”

On 7 November 1943 the Eighth Air Force bombed aviation industrial targets at Wesel and Düren. 110 B-17s of the 1st and 3rd Air Divisions dropped a total of 257 tons of bombs on the targets and returned without loss — a typical example of what the crews called a “Milk Run”.

Fighter escort for the mission consisted of 283 Republic P-47 Thunderbolts of the 56th, 78th, 352nd, 353rd, 355th and 356th Fighter Groups. Working in relays the fighters provided their “Big Friends” with protection throughout the mission, however, six Thunderbolts failed to return. Five belonged to the 355th Fighter Group based at Steeple Morden, Cambridgeshire. The Group, under the command of COL William J. Cummings Jr., had flown its first mission only three weeks earlier, on 14 September 1943. Later in its combat tour the Group would set an Eighth Air Force record for ground kills, racking up a total of 502 strafing kills before V-E Day.

The “Ramrod” (a bomber escort mission) on 7 November was the 358th Squadron’s sixteenth operational mission. The 0815 pre-mission briefing laid out the plan for the day. Thirteen P-47s would take off at 0927, CAPT Walter H. Kossack was to lead Yellow Flight and CAPT Carl F. Ekstrom Blue Flight. The thirteenth Thunderbolt, the squadron spare, was flown by LT William E. Roach and would be airborne to relieve any aircraft forced to turn back. The Group would rendezvous with the bombers in the vicinity of Mons, France and would be relieved by the 353rd Fighter Group near Marche.

From the beginning, things began to go wrong. LT John Lanphier, of Yellow Flight, dropped out of formation with engine trouble and returned to base. Lt Roach eased his Thunderbolt, “BEETLE”, into the vacant slot in Yellow Flight. This would be LT Roach’s third combat mission to Germany and he still lacked experience with the demands of long range escort flights. The mission was uneventful until the Group reached their relief point. When Marche was reached their relief, the 353rd Fighter Group — was nowhere to be found. Weather had delayed the 353rd from the rendezvous, and COL Cummings elected to stay with the bombers rather than leave them unprotected. The delay and unexpected head winds quickly led to serious fuel problems for the 355th Group on their return flight.

CAPT Kossack, the leader of Yellow Flight, had become disoriented in the poor weather and was no longer sure of his position, and his pilots were reporting that they were dangerously low on fuel. Pilots of the 354th Squadron reported last seeing Yellow Flight heading southeast toward a low cloud bank that could have been mistaken for the English coast. CAPT Kossack was hopelessly lost and he soon ran out of fuel, crash landing his P-47D-5-RE (42-8477)

German officers inspect CAPT Kossack’s P-47D-5-RE (42-8477) after its forced landing near Caen. Unlike “BEETLE”, YF*X carries the White identification markings applied to Eighth Air Force Thunderbolts on the wings, cowl ring and tail. The salvage team has partially covered the Thunderbolt with camouflage netting to hide it from marauding Allied fighters. (Ray Shewfelt)

on a beach near Caen on the French coast. Flight Officer Chester W. Watson’s tanks ran dry approximately six miles off the French coast and he was forced to bail out over the sea. He was rescued by the Germans and became a POW for the balance of the war. LT Jack Woertz was the only member of the Flight to reach England. Low on fuel he attempted to land at Hastings, but his engine failed on final approach and his P-47 (YF*Y) crashed just short of the runway. Woertz walked away from the wreck unhurt, only to be killed in a crash a few weeks later.

2nd LT William E. Roach crowned the flight’s hard luck, seeing his leader’s Thunderbolt go down, he began looking for a suitable airfield to make an emergency landing. Believing he was over southern England, LT Roach spotted a field, set up a short pattern and landed. A “Follow Me” vehicle came out to meet Roach and led him to a parking place. Relieved to be down, he shut down “BEETLE’s” engine before he noticed the unusualness of the uniforms on the men approaching him with drawn guns. To his shock, he realized they were Germans! He was taken into custody and became a POW, spending the rest of the war in *Stalag Luft I* at Barth where he met an old friend — Yellow Flight’s leader, CAPT Kossack.

(Below) “BEETLE’s” pilot, 2nd LT William E. Roach, was on his third mission when he was forced to land at Caen, France. He had filled in for LT John Lanphier, when Lanphier’s P-47 developed engine trouble. (William E. Roach via Ray Shewfelt)

(Below) CAPT Walter H. Kossack was flight leader of Yellow Flight. Bad weather, delays, and head winds all contributed to the loss of the entire flight. (Ray Shewfelt)





LT Roach had mistakenly landed at the *Luftwaffe* air base at Caen, France presenting the *Luftwaffe* with its first intact and flyable example of the Thunderbolt. P-47D-2-RA (42-22490) was quickly repainted with the American stars being replaced by German *Balkenkreuze* on the wings and fuselage. To avoid destruction by strafing Allied aircraft, the *Luftwaffe* decided to move the P-47 to a safer airfield. Hans Werner Lerche was assigned the task of preparing the Thunderbolt for delivery to Rechlin. On the afternoon of 10 November, Lerche undertook a short test flight with the Thunderbolt and the next day another experienced test pilot ferried "BEETLE" to Corneilles, the first leg of its journey to Rechlin. Bad weather delayed the next leg of the flight for two days and it was not until 14 November that Lerche was able to depart for Rechlin, arriving later the same day.

Assigned Rechlin test center code 7+9, "BEETLE" was subjected to an extensive series of trials, which provided the Germans with important information on the fighter's performance, armament, and handling qualities. German test pilots considered the Thunderbolt slow and cumbersome at altitudes below 15,000 ft. The P-47's high altitude performance, however, was rated as superior, and all German test pilots were impressed with the Thunderbolt's speed in a dive, roll rate, and the fire power of its eight .50 caliber machine guns. During late 1943 "BEETLE" was damaged while on a test flight, but she was repaired and returned to service on 20 December 1943.

During early 1944, "BEETLE" became the star of a German propaganda film being repainted in full American markings. The German propaganda ministry had used other Allied aircraft for such films. At least three other Allied fighters, a Bell P-39, a Yak 7B, and a

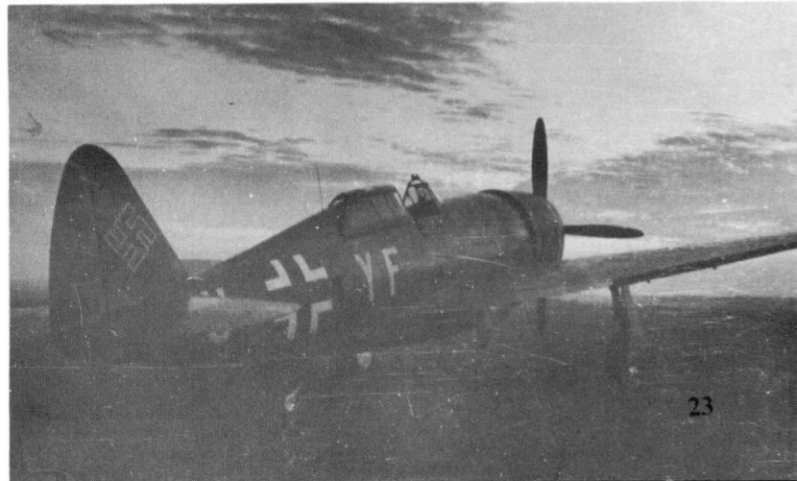
Pilots testing captured equipment always ran the risk of being fired on by friendly forces who recognized the silhouette, but didn't notice the marking change. "BEETLE" carries huge *Blakenkreuze* below the wings as an aid to recognition. (Bundesarchiv)

LT William Roach's P-47 Thunderbolt "BEETLE" shortly after landing at Caen on 7 November 1943. Lost and low on fuel, Roach thought he was landing on an English airfield. The US insignia was quickly replaced by the *Balkenkreuz* on the wings and fuselage but the US side code was retained. (Bundesarchiv)



Luftwaffe pilots who flew "BEETLE" were quite impressed with the Thunderbolt's roomy cockpit. Test pilots reported that the Thunderbolt had good high altitude performance, but thought it slow and unresponsive below 15,000 feet. (Bundesarchiv)

"BEETLE" rests in the setting Sun on the ramp at Lille airfield, France. The Thunderbolt has had a Swastika added to the tail and *Blakenkreuze* to the wings and fuselage, but retains its Olive Drab over Neutral Gray camouflage scheme. (Bundesarchiv)

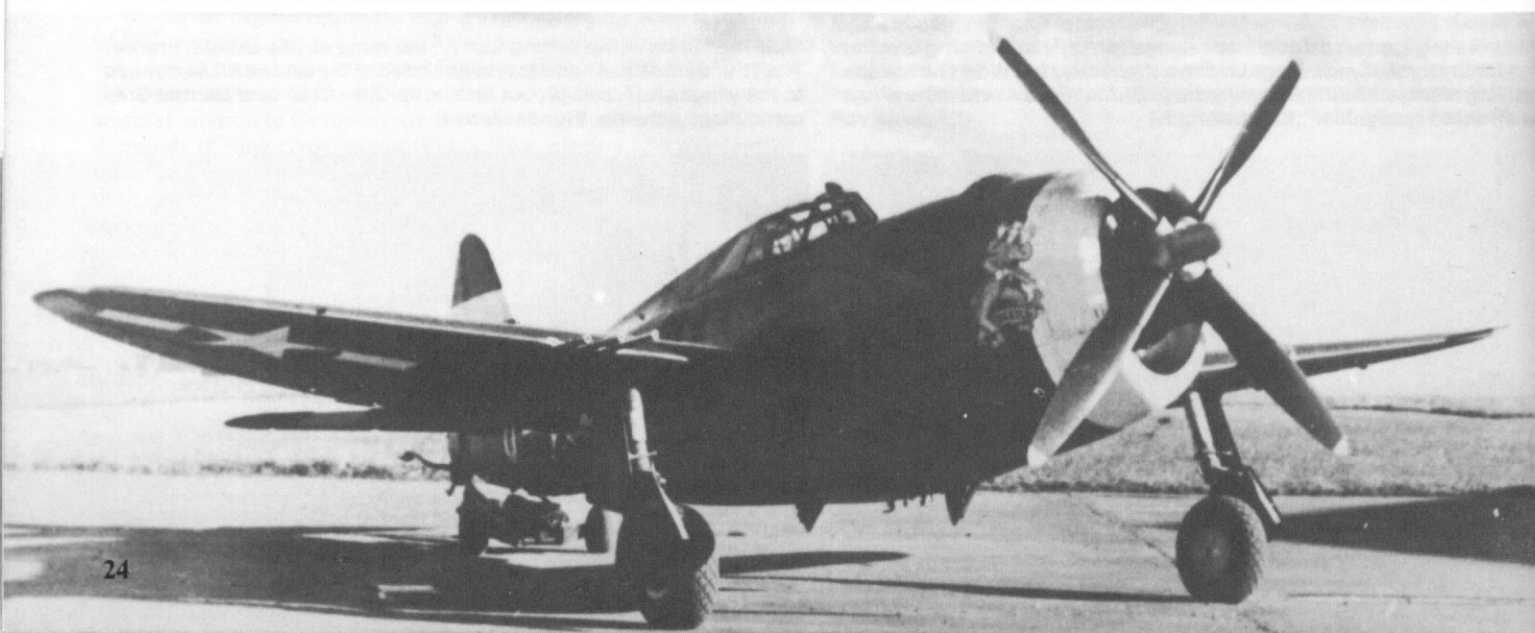


The Germans repainted "BEETLE's" cowling Red shortly after its capture. The cartoon character, however, was left untouched but the inscription *AGNES* below the cockpit was overpainted. (Bundesarchiv)

LaGG 3 were re-painted with false Russian markings for use in another film. Sometime earlier a captured Spitfire had been flown with full RAF markings for a Nazi propaganda film on the Battle of Britain.

After "BEETLE" was thoroughly investigated and its performance and handling characteristics documented, it was released by the test center and became part of *Beute-Zirkus Rosarius*. The Rosarius Traveling Circus was a special *Luftwaffe* unit under the command of *Flugkapitän* Rosarius. The "circus" visited front line fighter units, instructing *Luftwaffe* fighter pilots on characteristics of various enemy aircraft. "BEETLE" was one of at least three Republic P-47 Thunderbolts which were operated by the *Luftwaffe*. Two other P-47s, coded T9+FK and T9+LK, were later re-captured by Allied troops during early 1945.

Later the US national insignia was temporarily re-applied on "BEETLE" for a propaganda film. When the film was completed "BEETLE" was repainted with standard *Luftwaffe* insignia. (Dr. Werner Morath)





An International Exchange

During the summer of 1940, the *Wehrmacht* captured a number of abandoned Douglas DC-2s and DC-3s at Schiphol airfield in the Netherlands. After a short period of *Luftwaffe* service, these were added to Deutsche Lufthansa AG's fleet of Douglas aircraft obtained from Czechoslovakia. With the addition of the Dutch aircraft, Lufthansa was the largest operator of Douglas commercial aircraft outside the United States.

A shortage of spare parts, however, hindered Lufthansa's operations and agreements were reached with both the Swedish A.B.A. airline and Swissair to supply sufficient quantities of spare parts to keep the German fleet flying. Both companies, however, charged Lufthansa excessive prices for the spare parts they supplied, forcing Lufthansa to improvise on some items. The original DC-2 and DC-3

DC-3-220-B, D-AAIG, was repaired by Swissair after the aircraft was damaged in a crash landing at Berlin. The former Czechoslovakian airliner arrived in Switzerland on 26 January 1943 and repairs were completed some six months later on 3 June 1943. D-AAIG was lost due to an inflight fire off the island of Vesterö/Norway on 21 April 1944. (Heinz J. Nowarra)

tires and wheels were replaced by similar components from Ju 88 bombers. A maintenance center for the Douglas transports was established at the former C.L.S.(Ceskoslovenska/Letecka Společnost) facilities at Prague, Czechoslovakia.

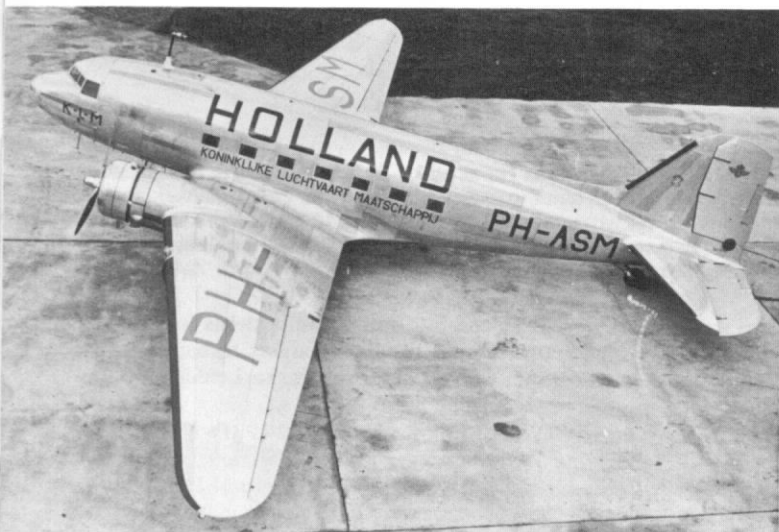
On 21 August 1941 a Lufthansa DC-3-194-G (D-ATJG) was damaged in a landing accident at Oslo-Fornebu airfield. The extensive damage to the aircraft's nose section was beyond Lufthansa's limited repair capability. This accident led to a somewhat clandestine co-operation program between Lufthansa and Swissair.

MEES was captured by the Germans at Schiphol and assigned to Lufthansa as D-ATJG. On 21 August 1941, the DC-3 crash landed at Oslo-Fornebu in Norway. Lufthansa originally approached the Swedish airline A.B.A. to repair the damage, however, the Swedes declined the contract and the repairs were undertaken by Swissair. (Gunter Ott)





(Above) D-ATJG had been found to have a long history. The bare metal DC-3-194-G was delivered to KLM Royal Dutch Airlines on 7 July 1939. Registered PH-ASM in KLM service, the aircraft was named **MEES** (Titmouse) and carried the name on the nose in Black. (Postma Archives via H. Dekker)



Shortly after the outbreak of World War II, the Dutch marked all commercial aircraft with 'Holland' in Black on the fuselage. These neutrality markings, however, did not prevent the DC-3 from being attacked by a German floatplane on 26 September 1939. (Postma Archives via H. Dekker)

After **MEES** was repaired by the Dutch, she was repainted overall with high visibility Orange paint. This neutrality scheme was adopted by other neutral airlines including Belgian Sabena Airlines and Swedish A.B.A. (Postma Archives via H. Dekker)

The War had forced Swissair to cut service on all its normal European routes and the company was facing bankruptcy. Other than special flights to Rome and Barcelona, Route 12 to Berlin, with a stopover at Stuttgart/Echterdingen, remained the only regular commercial route flown by Swissair outside Switzerland. As a result, Swissair had decided to store three DC-2s and four DC-3s for the duration of the war. If Swissair agreed to accept a repair contract from Lufthansa for the damaged DC-3, it would save jobs and improve the company's financial situation. Negotiations between Swissair and Lufthansa resulted in a contract to rebuild the damaged DC-3 at a cost of 65,000 Reichsmarks.

During late December of 1941, German engineers dismantled the damaged plane for shipment to Switzerland. The aircraft was shipped by boat to Basel-Rheinhafen where it was transferred to rail cars for the overland trip to Dübendorf-Wangen airfield near Zurich. The repairs were initially delayed, however, because a number of Swissair's skilled workers were on temporary military duty, however, on 23 March 1942, the work on D-ATJG was begun. The repairs proved to be extremely difficult, since every replacement frame had to be hand made. Douglas factory drawings were unavailable to the Swiss, because the United States had imposed an embargo on aircraft parts and engineering data even to neutral countries. The replacement frames were made from drawings drafted by Swissair engineers at Chippis after studying one of their DC-3s.





A damaged Lufthansa DC-3, D-ATJG arrives at *Dübendorf-Wangen* airfield Switzerland in December of 1941. The aircraft was damaged in a landing accident at Oslo and was shipped to the Swissair facility for repairs. The repair contract on D-ATJG was the beginning of a two year program where Lufthansa DC-3s were overhauled by the Swiss company. (Alfred Muser)

During the repair work, the Swiss discovered that this was not the first time D-ATJG had been damaged. The aircraft had previously belonged to KLM Royal Dutch Airlines under the registration PH-ASM and had been nicknamed "Mees" (Titmouse). Shortly after the War began, the Dutch had painted "Holland" in large letters on all KLM DC-3s. These neutrality markings, however, did not prevent "Mees" from being attacked by a German floatplane over the North Sea on 26 September 1939. Captain J.J. Moll succeeded in reaching Schiphol airfield, with two passengers killed and no less than 80 bullet holes in fuselage and wings. After the aircraft was repaired, it was repainted in an overall Orange paint scheme, which was later adopted by all KLM, Belgian Sabena and Swedish A.B.A. civil airliners. The aircraft was captured by German troops at Schiphol airfield on 16 May 1940, served briefly with the *Luftwaffe* (NA+LE), and later transferred to Lufthansa on 15 June 1940.

Repairs were completed on 29 June 1942 after more than three months work involving 26,718 man hours. *Flugkapitän* F. Zimmermann with Radio Operator Wegmann conducted the first test flight, and later that morning ferried D-ATJG from Dübendorf to Stuttgart-Echterdingen. A ceremony was held at the Hotel Trübsee Ob Engelberg where Swissair Technical Director Groh turned over the aircraft to Lufthansa's chief test pilot Von Engel.

Swissair mechanics maneuver D-ATJG's fuselage from the transport dolly in preparation for its repairs. The repairs would require over 26,718 man hours spread over a three month period to complete. Upon completion of the repairs, the airliner was delivered to Lufthansa at Stuttgart-Echterdingen airport on 29 June 1942, by *Flugkapitän* F. Zimmermann. (Alfred Muser)



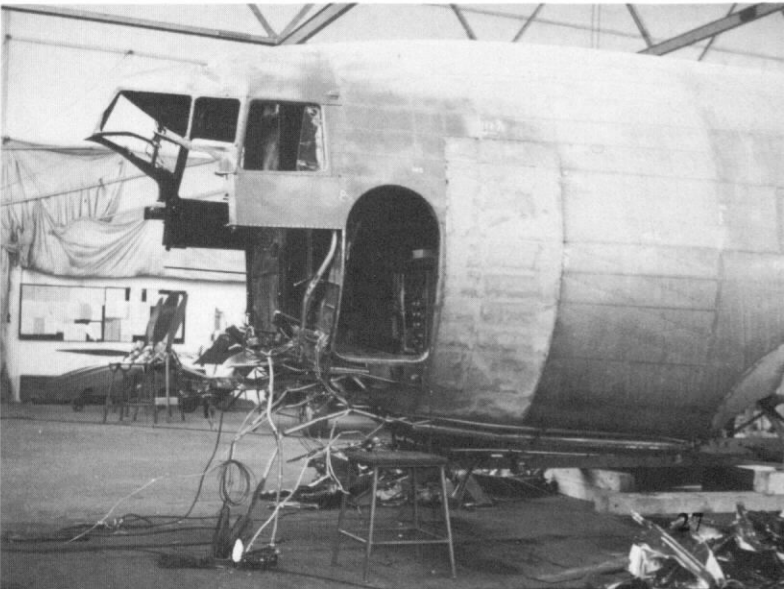
The DC-3 was disassembled and shipped to Switzerland during late 1941. Components were offloaded from flatcars on the military side of *Dübendorf-Wangen* airfield and trucked across the field to the Swissair facility on the northwest side of the field. (Alfred Muser)

D-ATJG (Serial 2142) remained in Lufthansa service until late 1944 or early 1945 flying Lufthansa's Spanish route. The last recorded flight by the DC-3 was on 3 September 1944, after which D-ATJG's records cease. It is believed that the aircraft was destroyed by strafing Allied fighters during late 1944 or early 1945.

Commercial ties between Swissair and Lufthansa continued and at least ten other Lufthansa DC-3s were overhauled in Switzerland between August of 1942 and December of 1943. The aircraft to be overhauled were flown to Dübendorf by German crews and after the overhaul was completed were returned by either Lufthansa or Swissair crews. For flights over Switzerland, the DC-3s were usually re-painted with Swiss national insignia to prevent the aircraft from being fired on by Swiss anti-aircraft units.

During late 1943 the Swiss government, concerned that commercial cooperation with Germany might weaken Swiss neutrality, brought political pressure to bear on Swissair to end the maintenance program. On 22 December 1943, the last Lufthansa aircraft overhauled by Swissair (DC-2 D-AJAS) left Dübendorf for Germany and the program was quietly phased out.

D-ATJG's nose section was totally destroyed in the crash landing. The replacement nose section was totally hand made since the US had placed an embargo on the shipment of aircraft parts for US-built aircraft to neutral countries. (Alfred Muser)



S for Sugar

On Tuesday, 11 January 1944, the 303rd Bomb Group based at Molesworth, Huntingdonshire left England as the lead Group of a force of 177 B-17s dispatched by the 1st Air Division against the Focke Wulf plant at Oschersleben. The target was involved in production of Fw 190 fighters and was well defended by both flak and fighters. The bombers were met with heavy fighter opposition and losses were severe. The Oschersleben force lost a total of thirty-four Fortresses, most to determined fighter attacks. Flying as the lead formation, the 303rd Bomb Group suffered the heaviest losses — eleven B-17s.

Returning crews reported over 400 individual fighter attacks during the three and a half hour mission with the 303rd Group bearing the brunt of these attacks. After the mission GEN Robert Travis, who had led the force, totalled the cost; thirty-four B-17s shot down, eighty-three damaged, nine men killed, eleven others wounded, and 349 missing in action. Oschersleben had its price, but the bombers had seriously damaged the Focke Wulf plant. All 1st Air Division Groups that participated in the raid were awarded Distinguished Unit Citations.

One of the aircraft reported missing by the 303rd Bomb Group was a combat veteran with well over fifty missions to its credit. The Flying Fortress, a B-17F-27-BO (41-24619), was one of the original aircraft that had accompanied the Group to England on 17 November 1942. The B-17 carried no name, but a painting of "Bugs Bunny" had been painted on the nose of the aircraft. The B-17 was known simply as "S" for Sugar (from the aircraft code GN*S carried on the fuselage side).

With "Bugs Bunny" on its nose the Fortress seemed to live a charmed life; it always managed to escape the "hunters" over Germany and had survived all the rough missions. Sugar was a contender for the title, "first B-17 to complete fifty missions", however, she missed the honor by three missions. **Knockout Dropper**, another B-17 of the same Group reached the magic number on 16 November 1943, Sugar's forty-seventh trip to Germany. M/SGT Fred Kuhn and his ground crew kept "Bugs" in top combat condition throughout its career with the 427th Squadron and by early 1944 Sugar was one of the few original 303rd Bomb Group B-17s still flying, others that had joined the Group were gone — mostly lost to flak and fighters over Germany.

On its last mission, "Bugs Bunny" was flown by 2nd LT Thomas L. Simmons and co-pilot Fred E. Reichel. The crew included: navigator 2nd LT William L. Clyatt, bombardier 2nd LT Richard W. Vaughn, engineer S/SGT Wallace S. Elliott, radio operator S/SGT Joseph A. Bennett, right waist gunner SGT Robert D. Stewart, left

The crew of 'S' for Sugar on her last mission: (left to right, standing): Richard W. Vaughn, Bill L. Clyatt Jr, Fred E. Reichel, Thomas Lamar Simmons. (left to right, kneeling): Leon Hasty, Bob F. Livingston, Joe A. Bennet, Bob D. Stewart, Wallace S. Elliot, and Dante C. DiPietra. (Robert D. Stewart)



Sugar did not carry a name, but only a rather jovial Bugs Bunny with the greeting HI DOC! on the nose. As a security precaution the Norden bomb sight was covered when on the ground. In the event, the Nazis had gained complete details of the sight long before the first American bomber went into action over Europe. (Steve Birdsall)

waist gunner SGT Robert F. Livingston, ball turret gunner SGT Dante C. Di Pietra and tail gunner SGT Wesley L. Hasty. The crew had completed three missions in "Bugs", their first being a mission to Bremen on 16 December. It was a common practice within the Group for green crews to be assigned an older, war weary aircraft and were usually positioned near the rear of the Group formation until they had proven themselves as competent formation flyers.

At approximately 1202, two minutes from the Initial Point, a pair of Focke Wulf Fw 190 fighters attacked the 427th Squadron's formation and badly crippled "S for Sugar". With one engine on fire, LT Simmons dropped out of formation and gave the order to bail out. The navigator, William Clyatt remembers the bailout:

"We were a replacement crew, two of us had flown five missions, one had three missions and the rest of the crew had completed four missions. We all survived the battle and bailed out successfully, and were captured. After we were rounded up, four or five of us were held in St. Andresberg. Later, we were taken to Bad Lauterberg where we joined the rest of the crew and other Americans crews. We were interrogated, then loaded onto busses and taken to Bordhausen where we remained for several days, before being joined by other POWs and sent to Oberursel and then finally to permanent incarceration. The officers were sent to Stalag Luft I at Barth on the Baltic Sea."

SGT Robert F. Livingston, the left waist gunner would not survive the war. He died of pneumonia on 24 March 1944, while at Stalag Luft 17B at Krems, Austria.

The ground crew of 'S' for Sugar just a few days before the bomber's last mission. (Left to right): Crew chief Fred Kuhn, SGT Trieber, SGT Al Steele, SGT Danny E. King, and SGT Warren T. Allen. (Robert D. Stewart)





(GPR-171-1-303)(10-OCT-43) GROUND CREW WORKING ON SHIP "S" FOR SUGAR" A-60921 A C

Ground crew performing routine maintenance on one of Sugar's engines. The B-17F of the 303rd Bomb Group was one of the contenders for the title 'first Fortress to complete 50 missions'. She was, however, edged out by another 303rd Fortress, *Knockout Dropper*. The Fortress with 'Bugs Bunny' on the nose survived over fifty missions before the *Luftwaffe* *Jägers* finally bagged the *Hase* on 11 January 1944. (National Air and Space Museum)

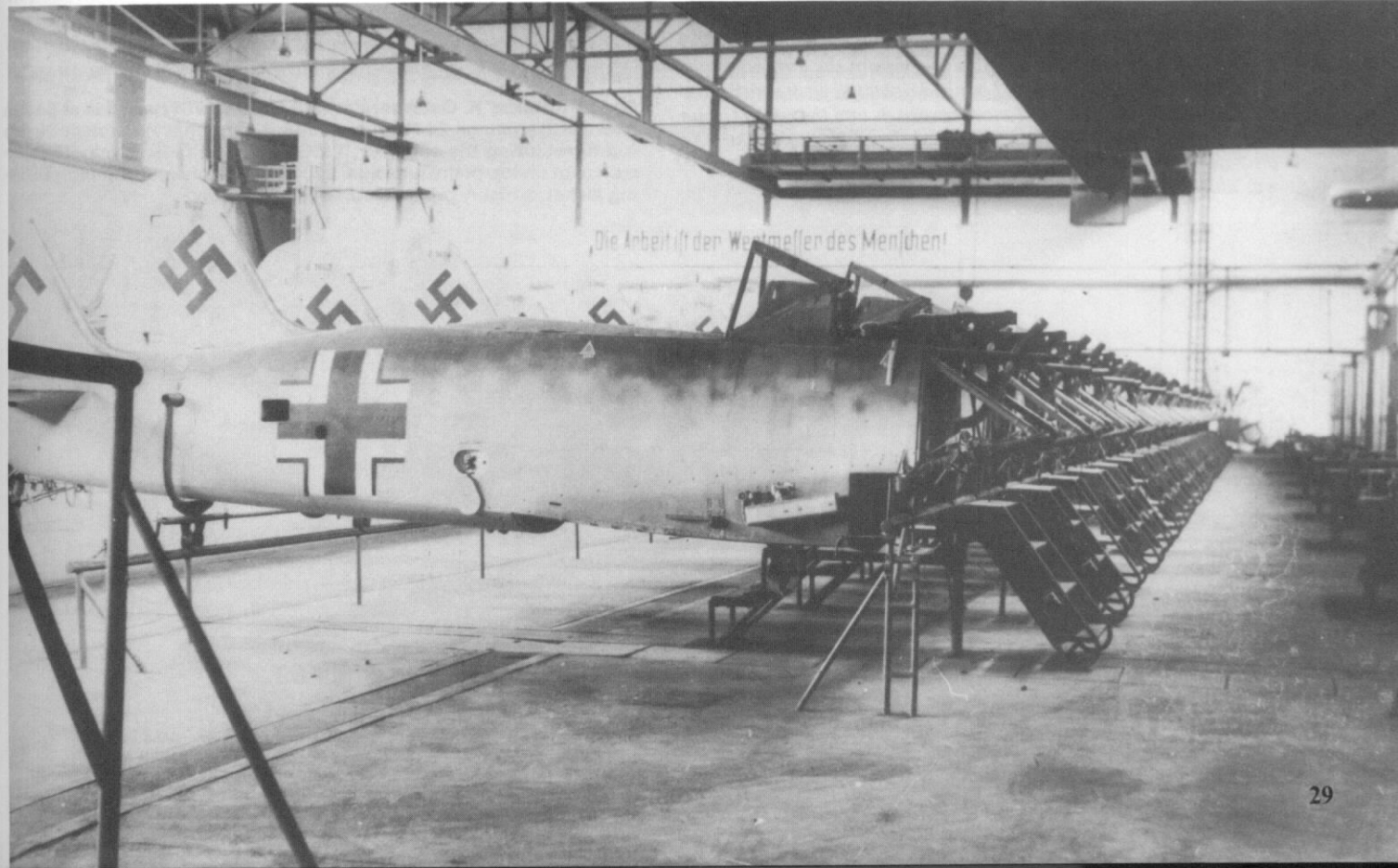
Pilotless Sugar continued flying in a north-easterly direction, steadily losing altitude. After crossing the small town of Bad Lauterberg, "S" for Sugar spun out of control and crashed into a forest at Oderhaus between Bad Lauterberg and Braunlage/Harz. The *Luftwaffe* *Jäger* had finally got the *Hase*! The local town's people frequently visited the wreckage of "S" for Sugar until a *Luftwaffe* salvage team finally cleaned up the crash site and shipped the wreckage to a German scrap dump.

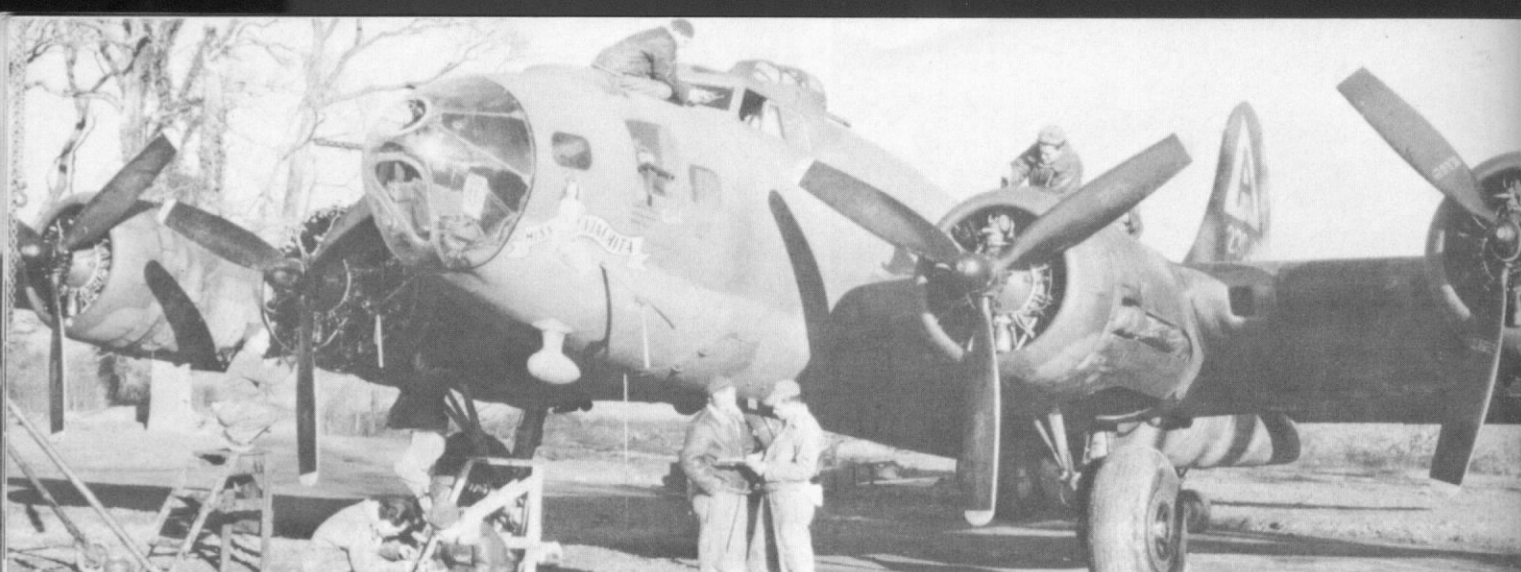
(Right) A German family at the crash site of Sugar during the Winter of 1944. Located in an inaccessible forested area, the crash site was typical of the conditions under which the *Berge Bataillone*'s often had to operate. (Herbert Kruse)

(Below) The target which cost the Eighth Air Force thirty-four heavy bombers, including Sugar and sent her crew to a German POW camp, was the Focke Wulf plant at Oschersleben. The mission cost the 303 Bomb Group eleven B-17s, its highest loss on a single mission. (Willy Radinger)



The wreckage of Sugar after the Fortress crashed between Bad Lauterberg and Braunlage/Harz on 11 January 1944. The local towns people often visited the wreckage until a salvage team finally cleaned up the crash site and shipped Sugar to a German scrap yard. (Herbert Kruse)





MISS OUACHITA

On 21 February 1944 the Eighth Bomber Command dispatched 861 heavy bombers to bomb *Luftwaffe* airfields in Germany as part of Big Week the Eighth's all out campaign to cripple the *Luftwaffe*. Most of the formations, however, were forced to seek targets of opportunity when their primary and secondary targets were socked in by bad weather. The 3rd Air Division, led by H2S radar equipped B-17s, was the only formation that hit their primary targets, the airfields at Diepholz and Brunswick. Of the 861 bombers that took off that morning, sixteen failed to return along with five of their fighter escorts.

Among the aircraft lost that day was **MISS OUACHITA**, a Douglas built B-17F-20-DL (42-3040) of the 91st Bomb Group based at Bassingbourn, Cambridgeshire. 2nd LT Spencer K. Osterberg flew the battered Fortress as a spare on the mission to Gütersloh airfield. It was the first mission he and his crew had flown with **MISS OCAUCHITA**. LT Osterberg recalled the mission:

On the way to the target, the Group changed course from time to time to avoid areas where heavy anti-aircraft fire could be expected. On one of these course changes the Group turned to the right, but the aircraft I was flying wing on turned left. My top turret gunner, T/SGT Lambert R. Brostrom, saw us going away from the formation and called out "Formation Right!". I banked right and went to full throttle, but there was too much distance between us and the rest of Group. We were now outside the protection offered by the guns of the other aircraft in the Group and German fighters hit us several times before I was able to close the gap.

MISS OUANCHITA, a B-17F (42-3040) of the 91st Bomb Group is checked out by her ground crew after a mission during the Fall of 1943. **MISS OUANCHITA** would not return from a mission against *Luftwaffe* airbases on 21 February 1944. (USAF via Ethell)

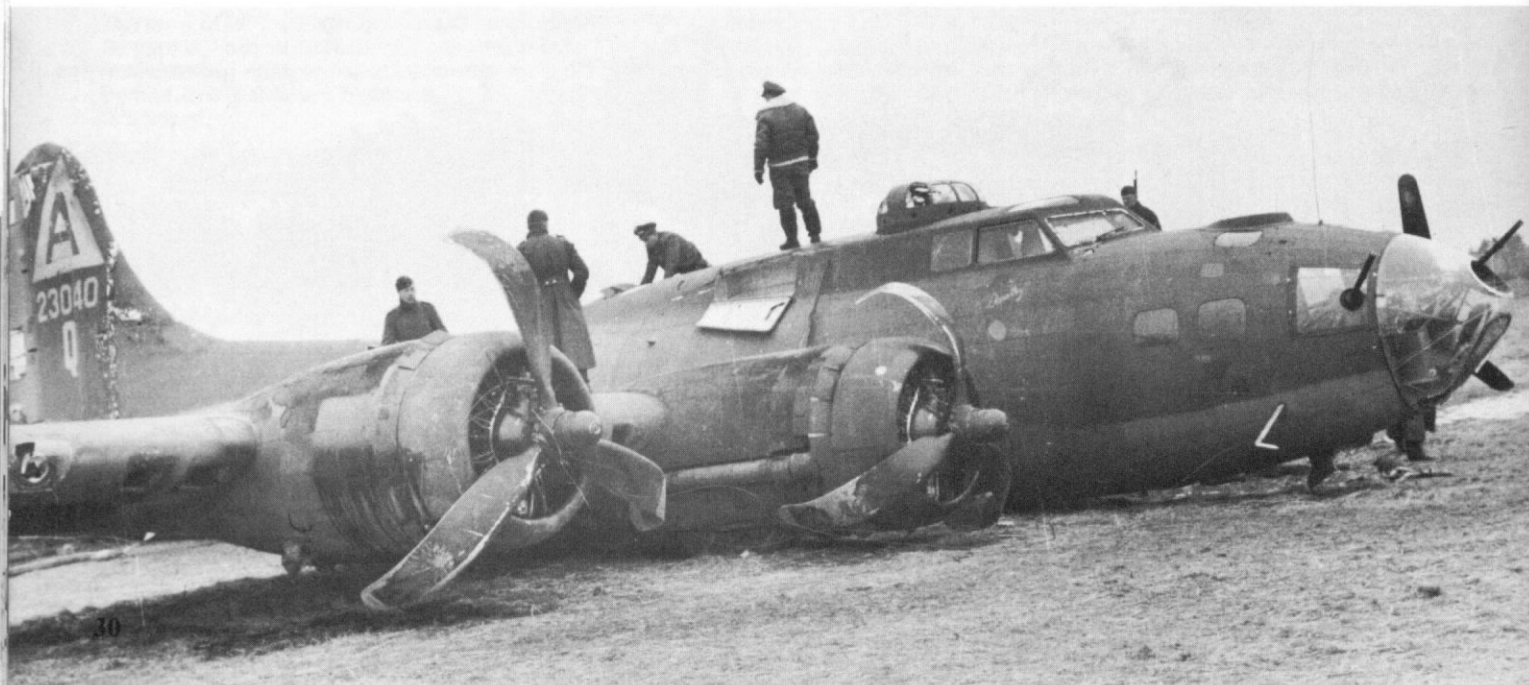
Focke Wulf Fw 190 fighters of II *Jagdgeschwader* I repeatedly attacked the lone Fortress hoping to score a kill before the B-17 could reach the protection offered by the massed firepower of the rest of the formation. The top gunner shot down one fighter before he was killed by a cannon shell exploding in his turret. The Fw 190s pressed home their attacks on **MISS OUACHITA** seriously damaging the tail section, radio compartment and oxygen tanks.

Wounded, T/SGT Harold Klem, along with S/SGT Clayton E. Morningstar, bailed out west of Hannover and were captured by German personnel from Rheine Air Base. SGT Klem was taken to the branch hospital at Lemgo for medical treatment before being transferred to Oberursel on 27 February.

LT Osterberg, the pilot, recounts what happened to the aircraft:

By the time I had regained the formation my oxygen mask was pressed up against my face and I had to take it off to breathe. I knew I could not stay at this attitude very long without oxygen. I pulled back on the power and headed down towards a cloud bank that was well below us. The fighters hit us one more time on the way down before we were in the safety of the clouds. We built up a lot of ice flying through the clouds and when we broke out I went down as close to the ground as I could to keep from being spotted by fighters. We came to a town, I

2nd LT Spencer K. Osterberg's **MISS OUANCHITA** bellied in at Bexten near Salzbergen on 21 February 1944. A cannon shell exploded in the top turret killing the engineer, T/SGT Lambert R. Brostrom. The German pilot on top of the fuselage, Leo Schuhmacher, is wearing a US flying jacket, a highly prized trophy. (Bundsarchiv)





Major Heinz Baer inspects another of his victories, **MISS OUANCHITA**, a B-17F-20-DL of the 91st Bomb Group. MAJ Baer was credited with at least thirty B-17s kills out of his 220 victories and was himself shot down eighteen times during the war. He survived the war only to be killed in an accident on 28 April 1957. (Bundesarchiv)

could see a church steeple and I decided to go to the left of it. In doing so I flew over a German airfield and I could see fighters taking off. They were soon making firing runs on us and the co-pilot, John E. Van Beran, was killed. As more fighters joined in attacking us, I decided our only chance was to crash land the aircraft.

LT Osterberg crashed landed the crippled Fortress at Bexten, near Salzbergen at 1527. The crew tried unsuccessfully to destroy the aircraft and were quickly captured by members of the *Volkssturm* (Home Guard). The pilot, navigator 2nd LT Morris J. Roy, bombardier 2nd LT George J. Zebrowski, assistant engineer S/SGT Alexander W. Siatkowski, assistant radio operator S/SGT Samuel P. Aldridge and Gunner SGT Jay J. Milewski were sent to the interro-

gation center at Oberursel then to *Stalag Luft I*. The dead crewmen, John Beran and Lambert Brostrom, were buried in the POW cemetery at Linge.

A salvage team led by *Oberleutnant* Radetzky considered the damage to **MISS OUACHITA** repairable and began preparations to retrieve the B-17. The next morning, personnel from Dreierwalde Air base began removing the ammunition, guns, instruments and other important equipment from the B-17. They had just finished when the Fortress was discovered by prowling Allied fighters. The fighters made several strafing runs over the crippled Fortress, finally setting it on fire. The *Luftwaffe* had lost another potentially flyable B-17, and the twisted, burned out wreck was sent to a German scrap yard to be melted down for its aluminum.

MAJ Heinz Baer and Leo Schuhmacher closely examine the B-17's survival equipment. The gaping hole torn in the port wing was caused by cannon fire from MAJ Baer's Fw 190 fighter. The partially inflated life raft on the wing was removed from its compartment by the salvage team from Dreierwalde air base (Bundesarchiv)





The salvage team from Dreierwalde air base, under the command *Oberleutnant* Radetzky surveyed the B-17 and reported that despite the damage done to the wing and tail section, the Fortress was repairable. (Dutch War Archives)

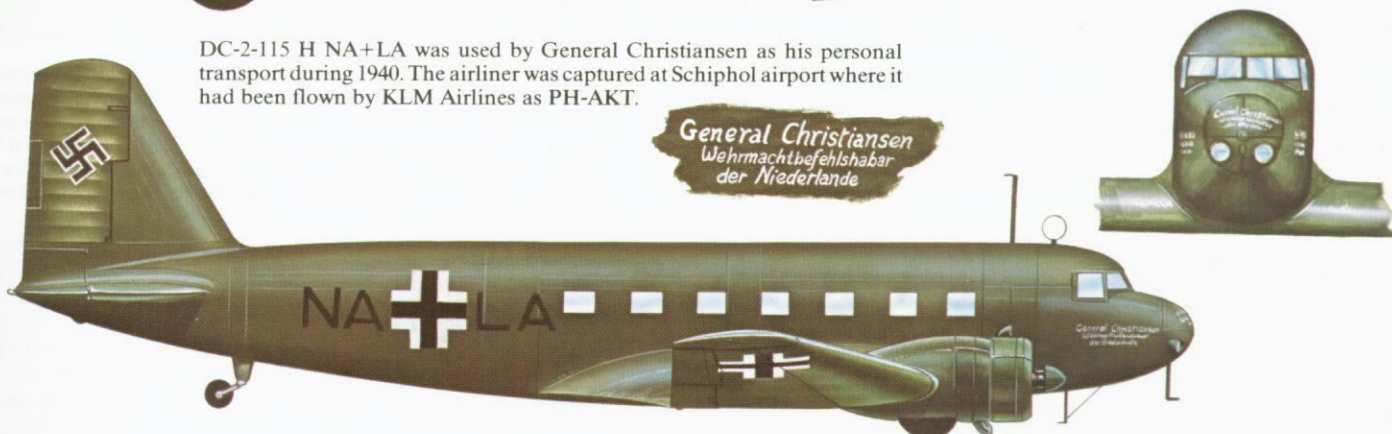
The salvage team had just completed removing the guns, radios, instruments, and other important equipment from *MISS OUANCHITA*, when the Fortress was discovered by Allied fighters. The fighters made several strafing attacks on the bomber, finally setting it on fire. The now useless wreck was later removed to a German scrap yard. (Thomas Kohstall)



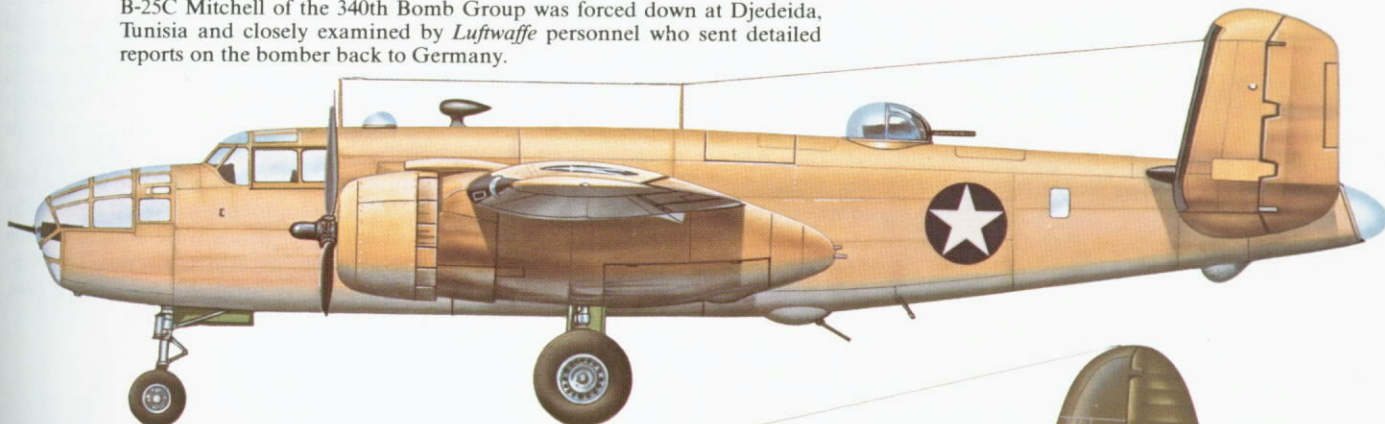
Wulf Hound, a B-17F-27-B0 (41-24585 PU*B), was the first Flying Fortress captured by the *Luftwaffe* on 12 December 1942. She was repainted in German insignia and received the side code DL+XC.



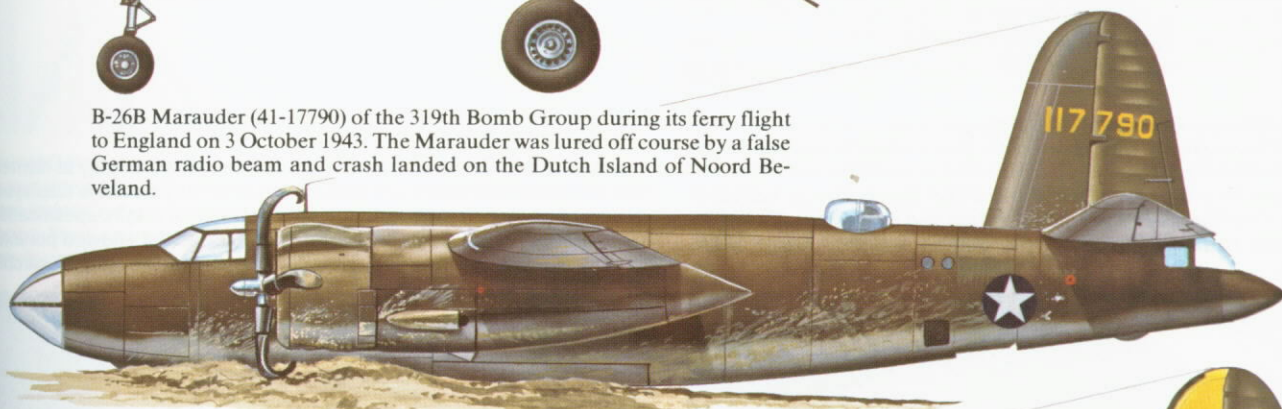
DC-2-115 H NA+LA was used by General Christiansen as his personal transport during 1940. The airliner was captured at Schiphol airport where it had been flown by KLM Airlines as PH-AKT.



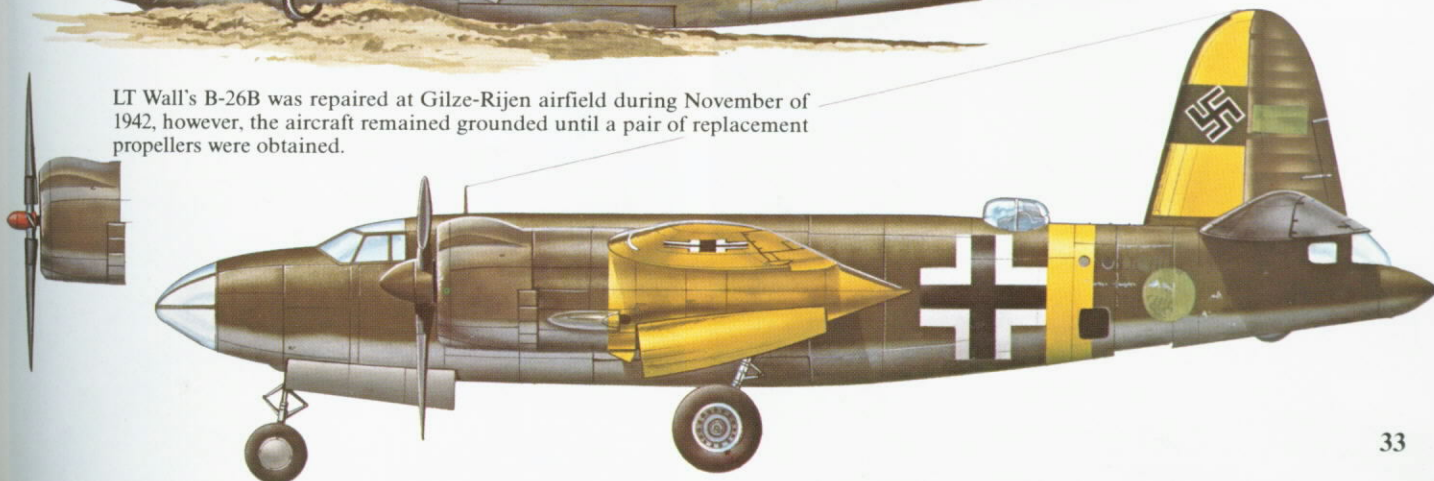
B-25C Mitchell of the 340th Bomb Group was forced down at Djedeida, Tunisia and closely examined by *Luftwaffe* personnel who sent detailed reports on the bomber back to Germany.



B-26B Marauder (41-17790) of the 319th Bomb Group during its ferry flight to England on 3 October 1943. The Marauder was lured off course by a false German radio beam and crash landed on the Dutch Island of Noord Beveland.



LT Wall's B-26B was repaired at Gilze-Rijen airfield during November of 1942, however, the aircraft remained grounded until a pair of replacement propellers were obtained.





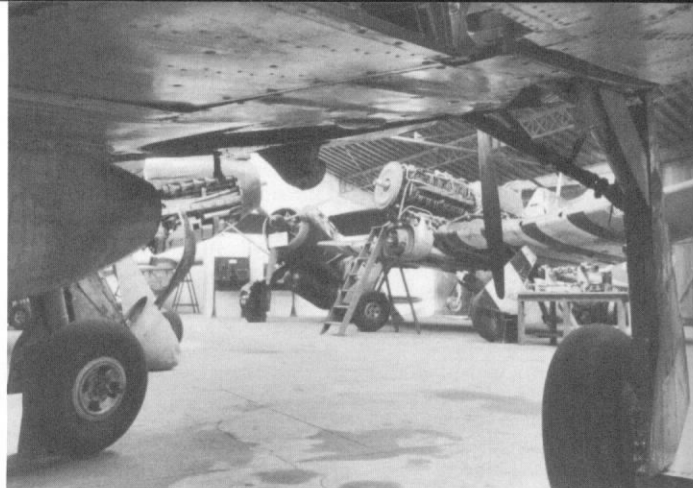
A Spitfire Mk I, Hawker Hurricane, North American Mustang Mk I and Westland Lysander represent the Royal Air Force at Nanterre. It is believed that the Mustang I is AM 180, flown by F/LT L. Bennet of No 239 Squadron. The Mustang crash landed at Adinkerke Belgium on 22 July 1943. None of the aircraft on display were in airworthy condition. (Bundesarchiv)

An Unusual Museum

During the Second World War the Germans established a number of 'Sample Collections' (museums) of captured enemy equipment. One of the first such museums was established at Rechlin, and was soon followed by other collections after the war began in September of 1939. The first items of captured enemy equipment in the Sample Collection at Rechlin arrived during the Spanish Civil War. The Russian aircraft had been carefully dismantled and investigated at Berlin-Adlershof before being put on display. The Sample Collections were to provide *Luftwaffe* personnel with a knowledge of the equipment they could possibly be facing in combat.

One of the largest Sample Collections was located at the *Beutepark der Luftwaffe 5* at Paris-Nanterre and included a section for airframes, engines, weapons, anti-aircraft guns, and equipment such as parachutes, life rafts, radios, and instruments. Besides Western aircraft, the collection had several Soviet aircraft on display, including a MiG-3 and a Polikarpov I-153. Data placards with the aircraft's technical data provided the visitor with an impression of the performance of the exhibit. For security reasons, entrance to the Sample Collection was restricted to German military personnel. The majority of aircraft displayed at *Beutepark 5* were not airworthy,

Part of the 'Sample Collection' of *Beutepark 5 der Luftwaffe* at Paris-Nanterre. The museum was created to give *Luftwaffe* personnel an impression of the equipment used by enemy forces in Europe. The B-17 tail belonged to a B-17F-70-BO of the 92nd Bomb Group based at Alconbury. The Handley Page Hampden has had part of its wing structure exposed to reveal details of the bomber's construction. (Bundesarchiv)



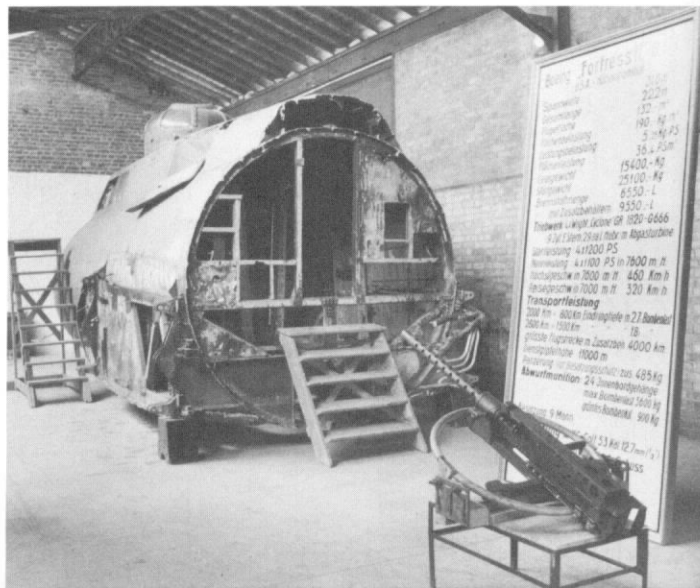
Framed by the landing gear of a Hawker Hurricane its replacement in RAF Fighter Command, a Hawker Typhoon, displays its complex Sabre engine. The Westland Lysander is believed to be formerly operated by No 161 Squadron, which was involved in flying agents into occupied France (similar to the mission of KG 200). The Lysander was reported missing while on a clandestine mission to France on 28 May 1942. (Bundesarchiv)

and many were damaged. Heavy bombers were usually displayed by cutting the aircraft into sections. By the Summer of 1943 the Museum included either complete examples or parts from all major aircraft in Allied use.

The aircraft and equipment displayed in the Sample Collections were gathered by *Bergetrupps* from all over German occupied territory and sent to *Beutepark der Luftwaffe* where the items were screened for display or scrap. Obsolete aircraft were later scrapped because of a lack of space, but during the Summer of 1943 the collection included a Beech 18 and an Autogiro, both of which had been captured by the *Wehrmacht* during the French campaign.

Luftwaffe personnel visiting the display at Nanterre were able to gain information on the latest developments in Allied aircraft. By studying the displays German fighter pilots were able to develop combat tactics for use in combat against Allied aircraft. The Nanterre Sample Collection grew steadily until the Autumn of 1944, when the retreating Germans destroyed the museum.

The forward fuselage of *ERNIE* a Boeing B-17F on display at Nanterre. The radio compartment .50 caliber machine gun mount is displayed in front of a poster depicting the B-17's country of origin, specifications, armament, and performance data. The step ladder allowed personnel to view the cockpit through the pilots open window. (Bundesarchiv)





The Fortress fuselage sections on display at Nanterre came from two different B-17Fs. The identity of *Ernie* is unknown, however, the tail section came from a B-17F-85-BO (42-30037 BK*F) of the 384th Bomb Group. The Fortress was lost on 26 June 1943 when LT Lykej Henderson crashed in France destroying the entire forward fuselage. (Bundesarchiv)

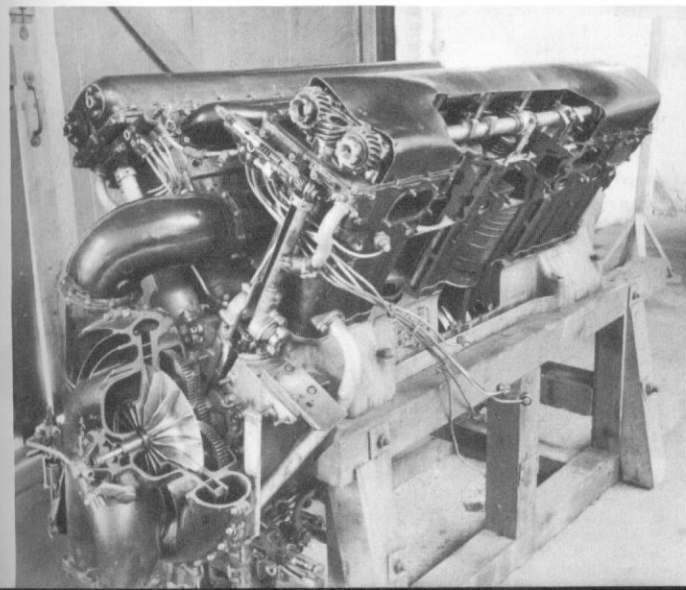


Even obsolete aircraft such as this French flown Beech Staggerwing and an Autogiro (F-AOHZ) were displayed at Nanterre. Both aircraft were captured during the French campaign of 1940. The autogiro's fuselage was cut away to show its control system. (Bundesarchiv)

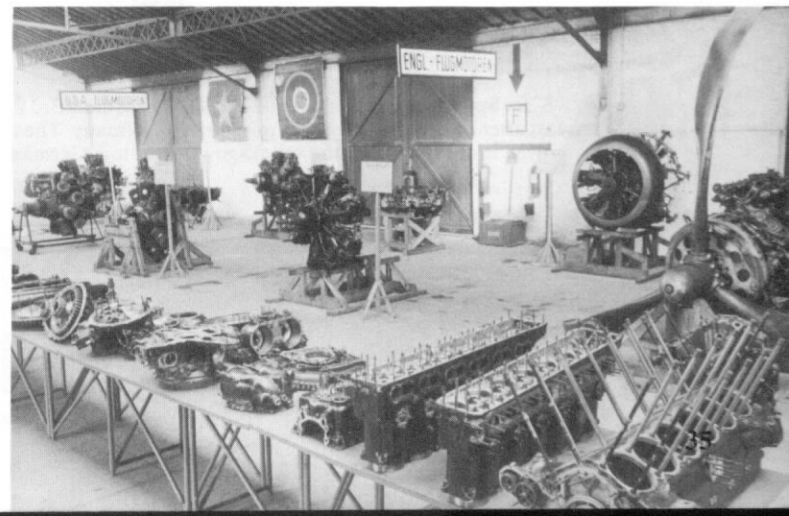


(Below) German engineers carefully cut away this Merlin V-1650 engine to reveal the construction of this powerful motor. German engineers were impressed and surprised by the performance of the "Merlin" engine. Many examples of powerplants were shipped to technical schools throughout the Reich. (Bundesarchiv)

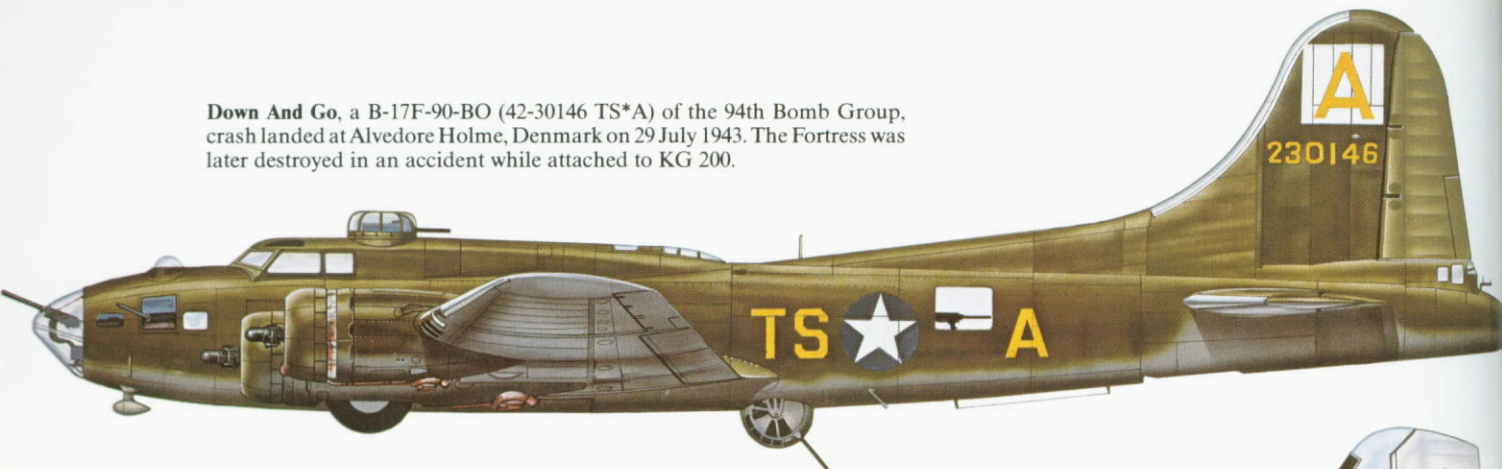
(Above) The armament branch in the "Sample Collections" included turrets and guns from American, British, Soviet and French aircraft. A tail turret from a B-17 is flanked by British Frazer Nash nose and tail turrets from a Lancaster bomber. (Bundesarchiv)



The aero-engine branch of the museum contained a vast collection of engines from various Allied aircraft. A number of engines were displayed partially disassembled to show the inner workings of the engine. (Bundesarchiv)



Down And Go, a B-17F-90-BO (42-30146 TS*A) of the 94th Bomb Group, crash landed at Alvedore Holme, Denmark on 29 July 1943. The Fortress was later destroyed in an accident while attached to KG 200.



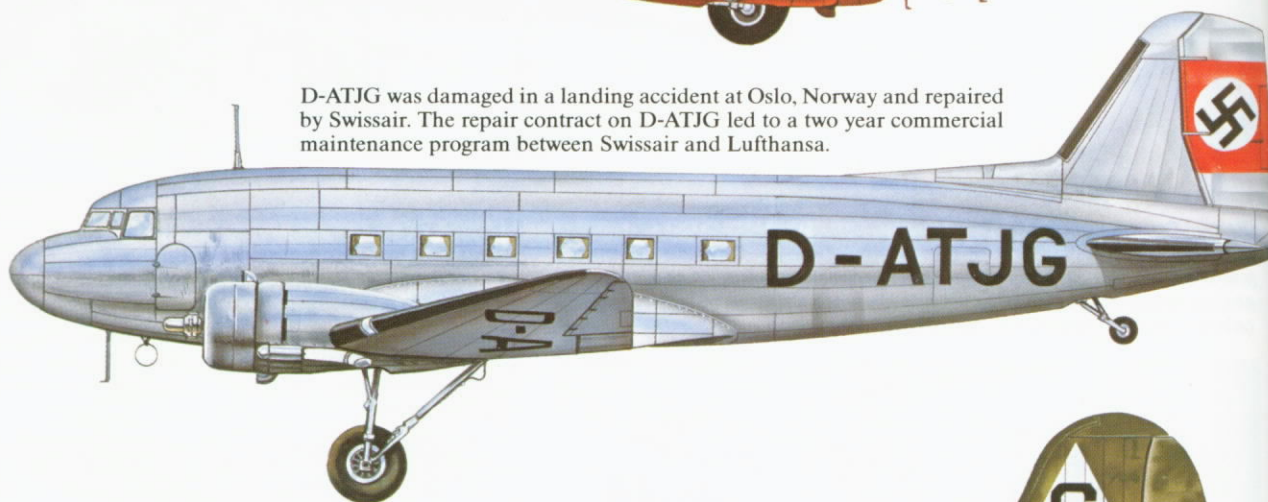
DC-3 of KLM Royal Dutch Airlines carried the name **MEES** (Titmouse) in Black on the nose prior to being painted in overall Orange.



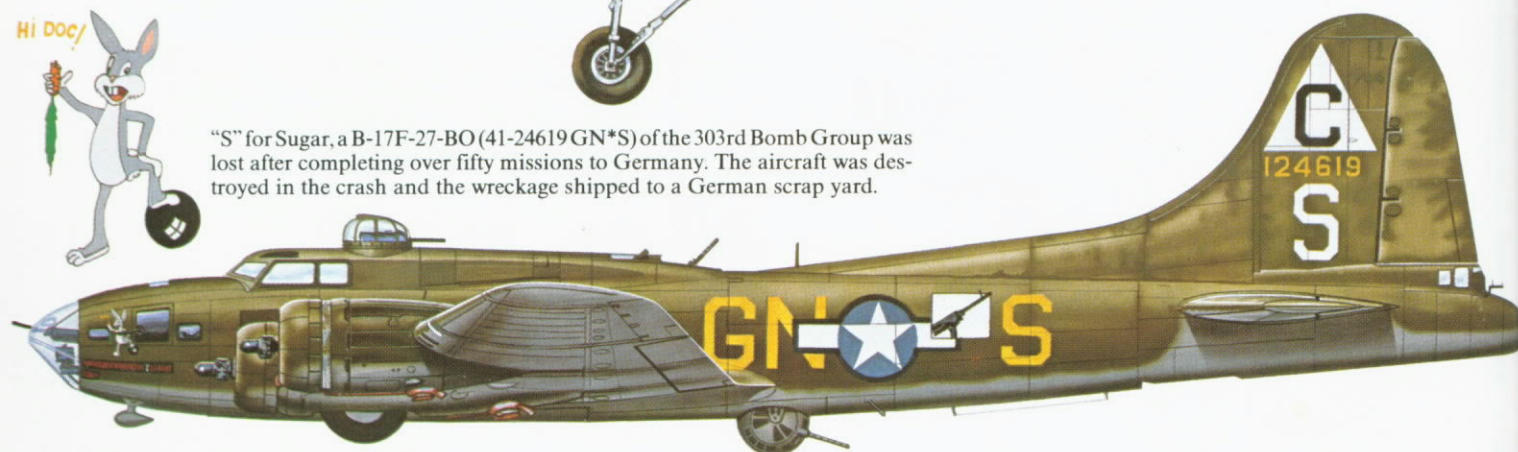
An incident over the North Sea prompted the Dutch to repaint their airlin in an overall Orange neutrality scheme. This DC-3 would later be opera by Lufthansa as D-ATJG.



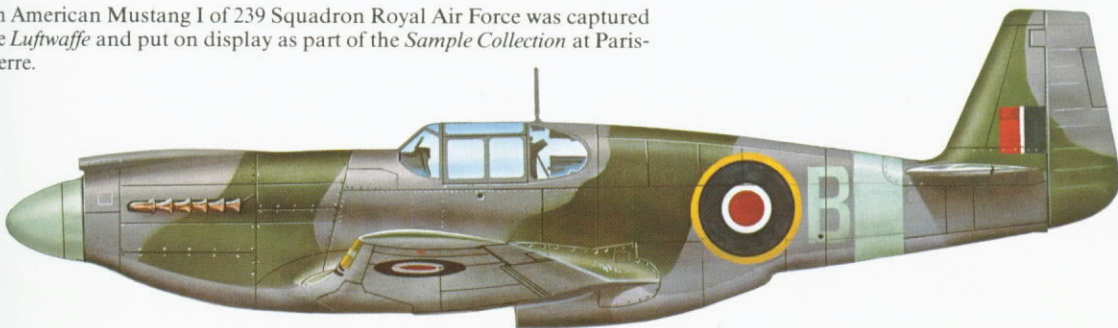
D-ATJG was damaged in a landing accident at Oslo, Norway and repaired by Swissair. The repair contract on D-ATJG led to a two year commercial maintenance program between Swissair and Lufthansa.



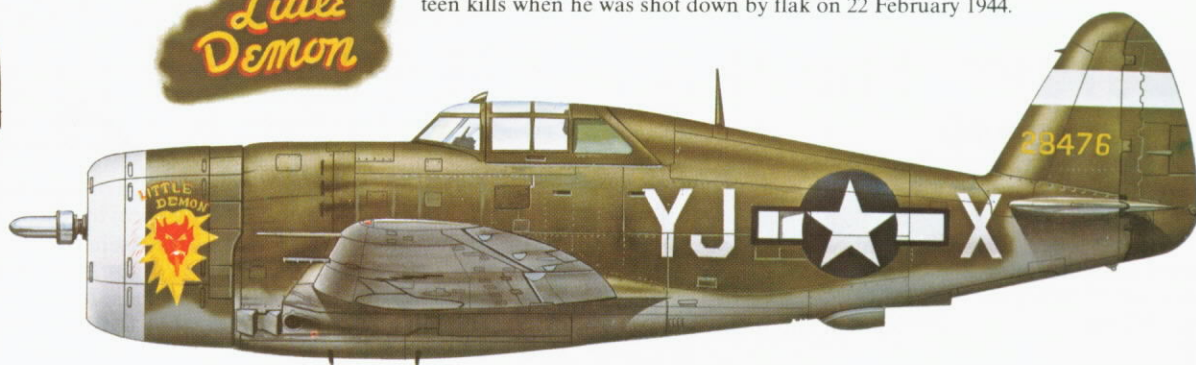
"S" for Sugar, a B-17F-27-BO (41-24619 GN*S) of the 303rd Bomb Group was lost after completing over fifty missions to Germany. The aircraft was destroyed in the crash and the wreckage shipped to a German scrap yard.



North American Mustang I of 239 Squadron Royal Air Force was captured by the *Luftwaffe* and put on display as part of the *Sample Collection* at Paris-Nanterre.



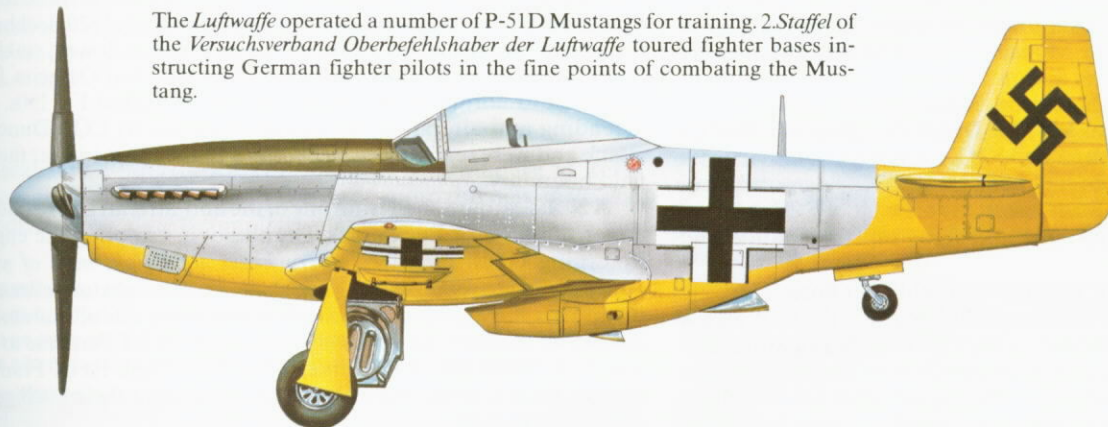
Major Carl Beckham flew this P-47D-5-RE (42-8476 YJ*X) named **LITTLE DEMON**. MAJ Beckham was the leading ace of the 8th Air Force with eighteen kills when he was shot down by flak on 22 February 1944.



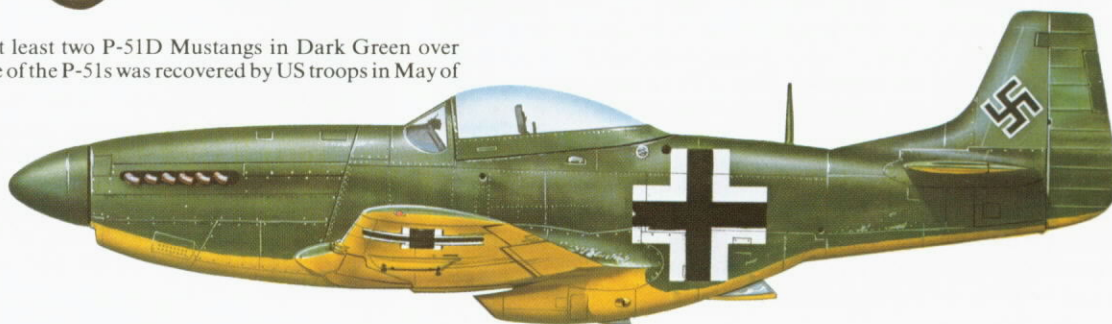
CAPT Thomas E. Joyce crash landed his P-51D-10-NA (44-14271 QP*K) near Bernau on 12 September 1944. The *Luftwaffe* salvaged the Mustang and transported the wreck to Göttingen Air Base for repair. The damage was more extensive than originally thought and repairs were never made.



The *Luftwaffe* operated a number of P-51D Mustangs for training. 2.Staffel of the *Versuchsverband Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe* toured fighter bases instructing German fighter pilots in the fine points of combating the Mustang.



The *Luftwaffe* repainted at least two P-51D Mustangs in Dark Green over Yellow undersurfaces. One of the P-51s was recovered by US troops in May of 1945.





Major Walter C. Beckham in the cockpit of his P-47D Thunderbolt, **LITTLE DEMON**. At this time Beckham owned the bushiest fighter pilot mustache in Europe. After twenty unsuccessful sorties he shaved off the mustache and the next day scored his first kill. (Walter Carl Beckham)

“...Take The Boys Home”

Major Walter Carl Beckham was one of the outstanding American fighter pilots of the Second World War. Before he was shot down on 22 February 1944, MAJ Beckham re-wrote the Eighth Fighter Command's gunnery manual and had scored no less than eighteen victories becoming the leading US ace in Europe. MAJ Beckham was born on 12 May 1916 and joined the Army Air Force in April of 1941. He was commissioned five days after Pearl Harbor and saw service in the Canal Zone before arriving in Europe in October of 1942.

Beckham joined the 353rd Fighter Group based at Goxhill, Lincolnshire during the summer of 1943. This Group eventually pioneered the ground attack techniques that were later adopted by both the 8th and 9th Air Forces. Beckham both felt and looked like a fighter pilot. He had grown the bushiest fighter pilot mustache in all of England. The mustache even drew the stares of civilians, which embarrassed Beckham, because he had yet to score a kill — he shaved the mustache off.

The next day, 23 September 1943, he scored his first kill, a Focke Wulf Fw 190, 'Turk', as he was nicknamed by his fellow pilots, destroyed three enemy planes during an escort mission to Münster on 10 October. During his next six sorties Beckham claimed six more kills. For heroism during the Münster mission he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and in November he assumed command of the 351st Fighter Squadron, 353rd Fighter Group.

His personal aircraft was **LITTLE DEMON**, a Republic P-47D-5-RE (42-8476) Thunderbolt (coded YJ*X), and most of his victories were gained while flying this 'Jug'. **LITTLE DEMON**'s ground crew: crew chief S/SGT Henry Bush, assistant crew chief SGT Marvin Eichstaedt and armourer SGT Richard Verity kept the Thunderbolt in perfect condition.

During early 1944 'Turk' became the Eighth Air Force's leading ace when he downed a Messerschmitt Bf 109 and a Focke Wulf Fw 190 over Frankfurt on 8 February — his 17th and 18th victories. The 27 year old Major was still eight victories short of his goal, Captain Eddie Rickenbacker's World War One record of twenty-six kills.

Eighth Fighter Command began experimenting with new tactics that involved strafing *Luftwaffe* aircraft on the ground at their bases. The 353rd Fighter Group pioneered these tactics and ground strafing quickly became an important part of American fighter tactics.

Shooting up ground targets, particularly airfields, on the way home from bomber escort missions became common practice. The fighters would provide escort for the bombers on the trip out, and when relieved by other escort groups, the Thunderbolts would make low level attacks against targets of opportunity on the way home. It was hoped that a significant number of *Luftwaffe* fighters would be caught refueling and rearming after their attacks against the bombers and be destroyed by the marauding Thunderbolts.



MAJ Beckham (in Mae West) and his ground crew in front of **LITTLE DEMON**, from left to right: SGT Marvin Eichstaedt, assistant crew chief, SGT Richard Verity, armourer, MAJ Beckham, and S/SGT Henry Bush, the crew chief. Beckham commanded the 351st Fighter Squadron based at Metfield, Suffolk. (Imperial War Museum)

On 22 February 1944, 353 P-47s of both the 8th and 9th Fighter Commands were dispatched to provide escort for the bomber force attacking the aircraft plants at Aschersleben, Bernburg and Halberstadt in Central Germany. Eight Thunderbolts failed to return, five from the 353rd FG. Against these losses, the Americans claimed fifty-nine *Luftwaffe* fighters. On that day, however, the Germans gained a major victory when they shot down the leading American Ace in the European Theater of Operations — Major Walter C. Beckham.

The 353rd Group, led by Colonel Glenn E. Duncan, was scheduled to escort the bombers as far as the Bonn-Koblenz area. COL Duncan led White flight, with MAJ Beckham in the lead of Blue flight. On this mission, MAJ Beckham was not flying **LITTLE DEMON**. He was flying a new P-47D-11-RE (42-75226 coded YJ*X) with a 2,000 hp Pratt and Whitney R-2800-63 engine featuring water injection. The water injection system boosted engine power from 2,000 to 2,300 hp for short periods of time, giving this variant a significant burst of speed for emergencies.

After being relieved of their escort duty, the Group went down on the deck looking for targets. COL Duncan sighted a number of Junkers Ju 88s and Focke Wulf Fw 190s at Ostheim airfield near Cologne and called White flight, better known as 'Bill's Buzz Boys' to follow him down across the enemy field. At approximately 1520 Beckham's Blue flight, which had been orbiting as top cover, followed, making a diving attack on the same airfield. They attacked Ostheim from southeast to northwest shooting at a row of parked Fw 190s. The defending anti-aircraft crews had been alerted by COL Duncan's attack and were ready when Beckham's flight swept in over the airfield boundary.

A 20MM cannon shell from one of the anti-aircraft guns exploded under the nose of Beckham's Thunderbolt, crippling the engine. Returning crews reported "...very heavy light flak, most of which exploded just above the flight...". Beckham made a right turn after completing his run at 50 feet and climbed to reach a safe altitude to bail out. As he climbed, he called his wingman, 1st LT Perpete to stay low. A day later, 1st LT Perpete, flying Blue 2 and 1st LT Frank N. Emroy, Blue 3, wrote the following statement in their intelligence debriefing reports:

We broke after the attack into a sharp right turn. Major Beckham's Thunderbolt had been hit and was leaving a trail of light smoke. He was heading toward a wooded ridge to the Northeast of the airdrome and had climbed to about 1,200 feet when we last saw him. He radioed us that his aircraft was on fire and that he would have to bail out, he repeatedly told us to leave him and go on home on the deck, and gave us the correct course to fly. He told us to tell the boys 'so long' for him when we got home.



First Lieutenant George F. Perpente added:

Beckham's Florida drawl cracked thru the interphone radio: "Take the Boys Home, George, I can't make it! Get the hell out of here. Take a course of 310 degrees, stay low and get going. I hope to see you all later."

MAJ Beckham recalled the events leading to his bailout:

I was hit by flak on our way down to attack some FW 190s on the airdrome at Ostheim. The engine was smoking and eventually caught fire. But I still had power and control of the bird — so I continued my attack. After leaving Ostheim, I flew to Opladen, a few miles northwest of Ostheim. The fire in my engine finally worked its way into the cockpit, so I jumped. I remember being in my parachute, about eight or nine hundred feet from the ground, and seeing my plane crash in a large ball of fire. I remember thinking: "Good, it can't be flown by our enemies."

Beckham's P-47D-11-RE crashed near a farmhouse at Berg-Neukirchen between Bonn and Düren at approximately 1530. The Thunderbolt was almost completely destroyed. The tail section was

Beckham's Thunderbolt exploded on impact and except for the tail section was totally destroyed. Heavy steel parts, such as the landing gear might be salvageable, however, the usual result of a high speed crash was a pile of twisted metal usable only as scrap. (Bundesarchiv)



Only the tail of Beckham's aircraft remained recognizable. The P-47D-11-RE (42-75226 YJ*X) was similar to *LITTLE DEMON* but featured a new Pratt and Whitney R-2800-63 engine with water injection. The water injection gave the engine an output of 2,300 hp for short periods of time. (Bundesarchiv)

the largest piece of wreckage remaining intact. Walter Beckham continues his story:

I landed in a tree, luckily unhurt. A crowd of angry German civilians would have slaughtered me, one had out a long switchblade knife and kept referring to me as a Schweinehund (rat), but the Police from Opladen arrived in time and rescued me. The Police began to question me — in German. I couldn't understand one word of their questions and if I had answered, they couldn't have understood me. Later I was incarcerated at Stalag Luft III at Sagan, Germany. I remember being cold and hungry most of the time I was a prisoner.

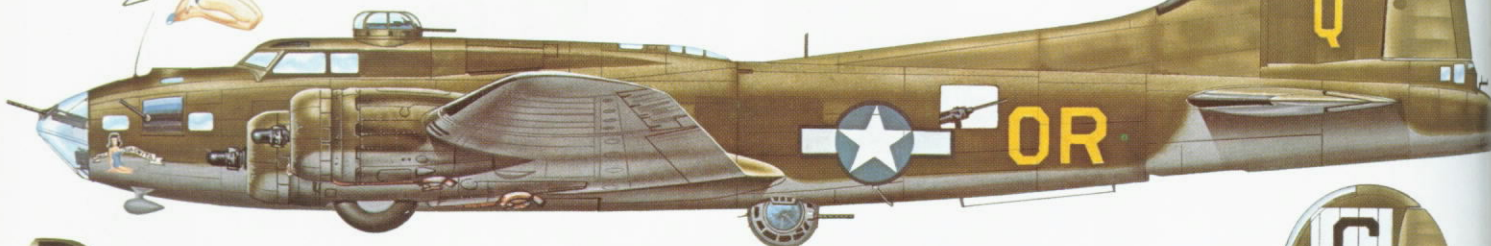
Major Walter C. Beckham survived the war and later became a Colonel in the post war USAF.

MAJ Walter Beckham in the custody of the Reich. In fifty-seven missions over Germany he gained eighteen kills before being shot down by flak over Ostheim on 22 February 1944. He recalled that: "...the questions the Germans asked me were in German, I couldn't understand one word...". He spent the remainder of the war in Stalag Luft III at Sagan, Germany, (Bundesarchiv)

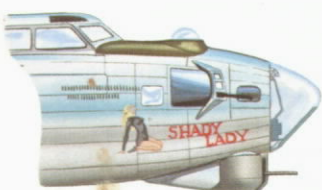
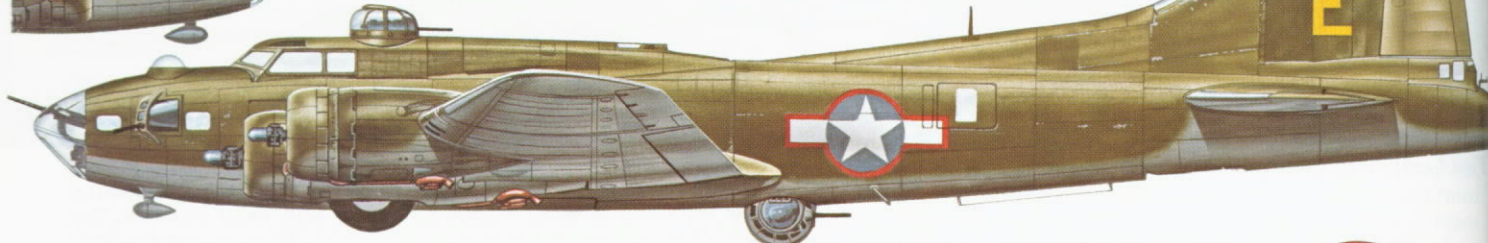




MISS OUACHITA a B-17F-20-DL (42-3040) of the 91st Bomb Group was damaged by FW-190s of II/JG 1 and forced to crash land at Bexten on 21 February 1944. Before the *Luftwaffe* could salvage the Fortress she was destroyed by strafing Allied fighters.

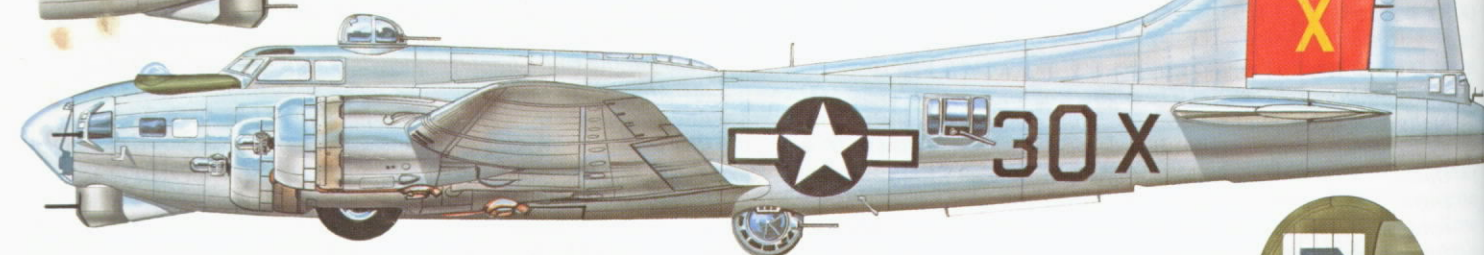


Miss Nonalee II a B-17F-100-B (42-30336) was lost during a mission against the Focke Wulf plant at Marienburg, Poland on 9 Oct 1943 when LT Bell was forced to land the crippled Fortress at Norholm Mark, Denmark.

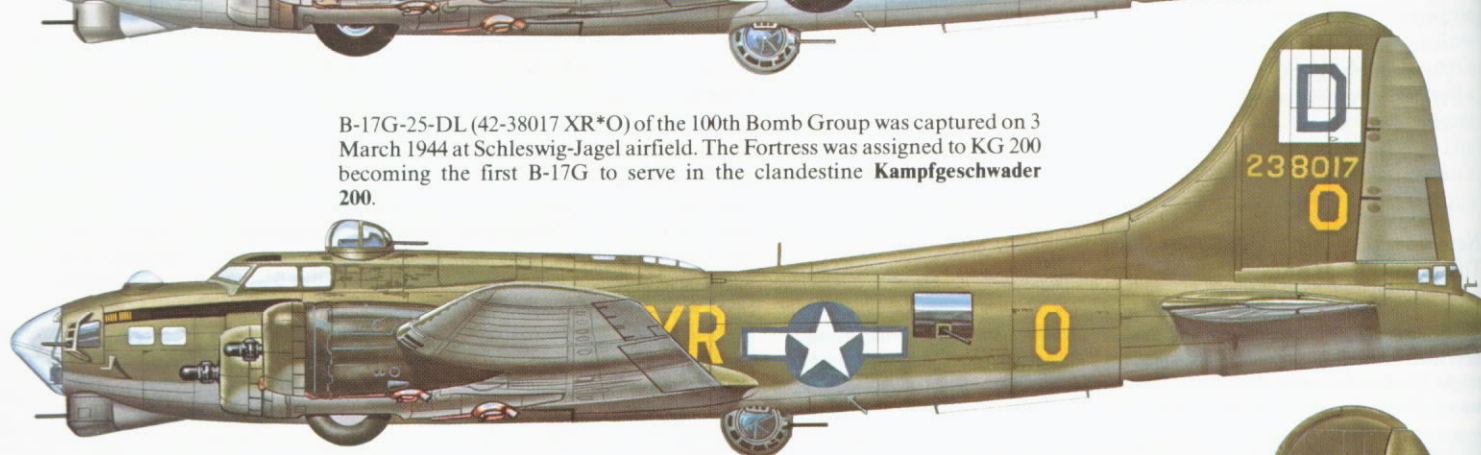


SHADY LADY

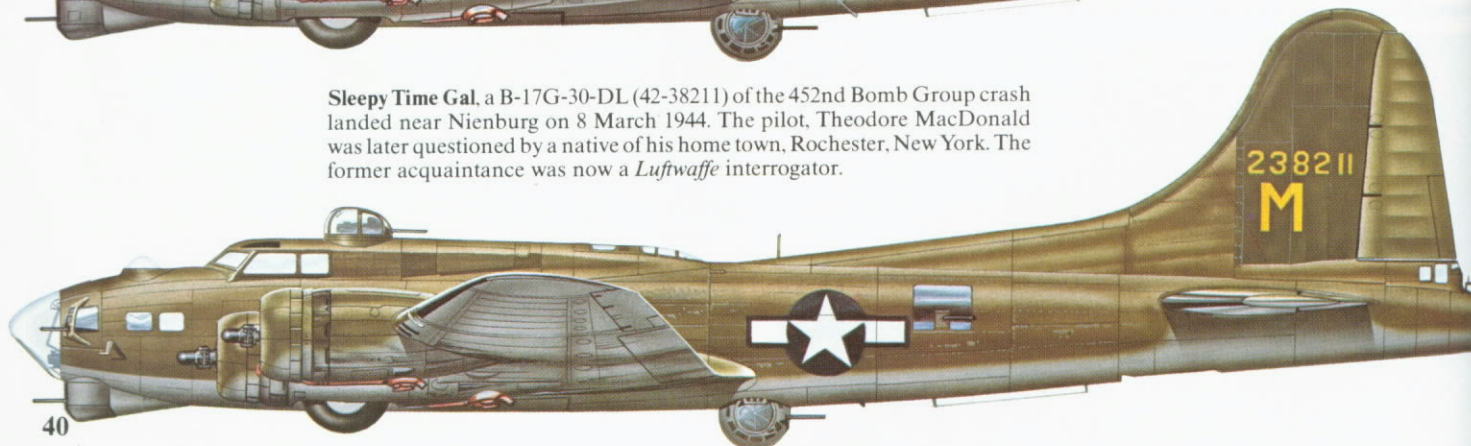
SHADY LADY, a B-17G (42-97385), of the 398th Bomb Group based at Nuthampstead, England crash landed at Rechicourt Le Chateau, France on 8 September 1944. American fighters destroyed the bomber before it could be recovered by the Germans.



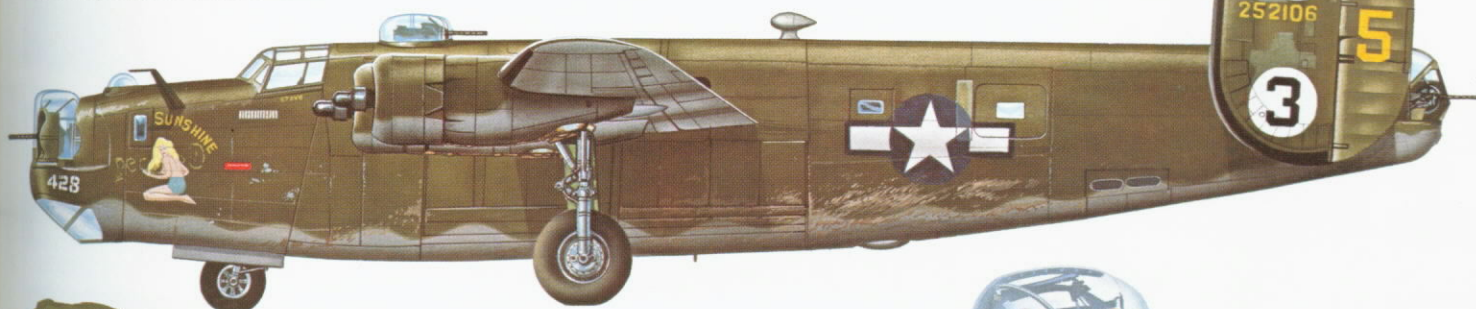
B-17G-25-DL (42-38017 XR*O) of the 100th Bomb Group was captured on 3 March 1944 at Schleswig-Jagel airfield. The Fortress was assigned to KG 200 becoming the first B-17G to serve in the clandestine *Kampfgeschwader* 200.



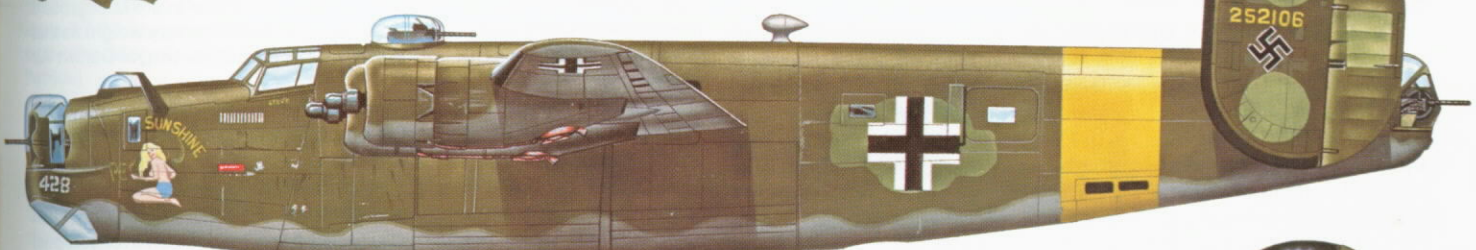
Sleepy Time Gal, a B-17G-30-DL (42-38211) of the 452nd Bomb Group crash landed near Nienburg on 8 March 1944. The pilot, Theodore MacDonald was later questioned by a native of his home town, Rochester, New York. The former acquaintance was now a *Luftwaffe* interrogator.



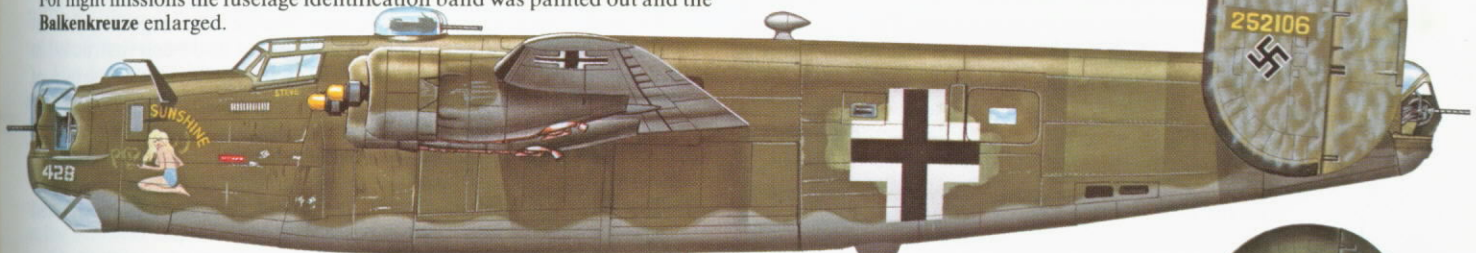
SUNSHINE a B-24H-5-FO (42-52106) landed in error at Venegono, Italy on 29 March 1944. The Liberator's crew were forced to participate in filming a German propaganda movie of their "surrender".



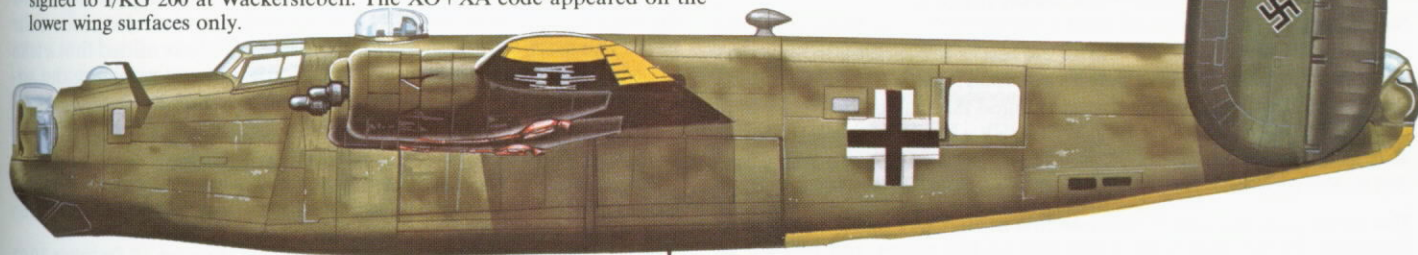
SUNSHINE was repainted with German markings at Venegono, before being ferried to Richlin for testing.



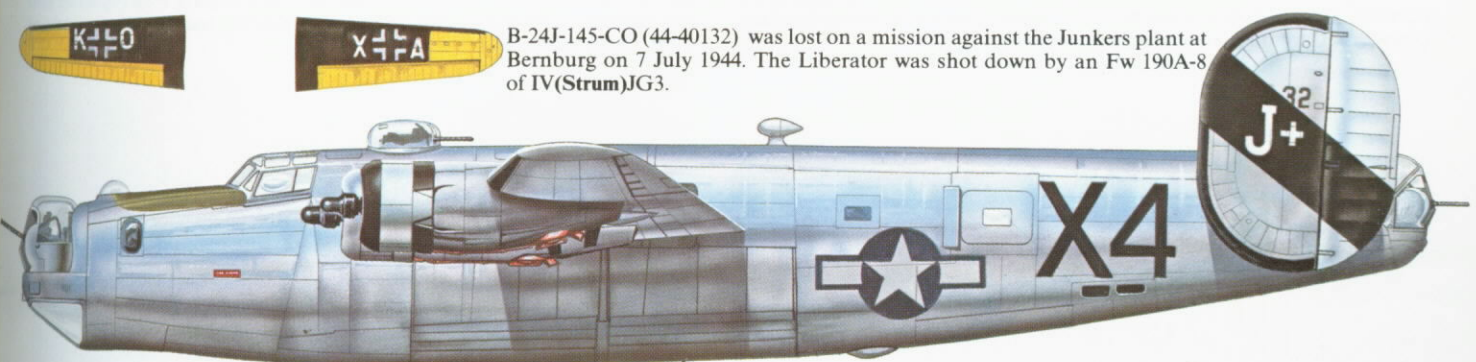
The Liberator's twin tailed silhouette led the Germans to outfit SUNSHINE with radar and use her to shadow RAF bomber formations over the Reich. For night missions the fuselage identification band was painted out and the Balkenkreuze enlarged.



KO+XA was formerly flown by the 389th Bomb Group based at Hethel, Norfolk. The B-24H-15-DT (41-28779) was captured on 20 June 1944 and assigned to I/KG 200 at Wackersleben. The XO+XA code appeared on the lower wing surfaces only.



B-24J-145-CO (44-40132) was lost on a mission against the Junkers plant at Bernburg on 7 July 1944. The Liberator was shot down by an Fw 190A-8 of IV(Sturm)JG3.





MISS NONALEE II

On 9 October 1943, the Eighth Air Force launched its most ambitious raid of the year. 378 bombers from all three Bomber Divisions would attack targets deep within the Reich. 115 B-17 Flying Fortresses of the 1st Air Division were targeted against the Arado Component Factory at Anklam in East Prussia. Bombers of the 2nd and 3rd Air Divisions were to attack targets in occupied Poland. 100 3rd Air Division aircraft headed for the large Focke Wulf plant at Marienburg (Malbork), an important center for production of Fw 190 fighters, while the remaining B-17s and B-24s of the 2nd Air Division bombed the harbors at Gdynia and Danzig (Gdansk). The bombing results were impressive with the Marienburg force scoring excellent results with minimal losses (two aircraft). The raid, however, did provide the Germans with another intact B-17F.

1st LT Glyndon D. Bell of the 385th Bomb Group left Great Ashfield, Suffolk in *Miss Nonalee II*, a B-17F-100-BO (42-30336). Bell's crew included co-pilot 2nd LT Arnold P. Martin, navigator 2nd LT Frank L. Bachman, bombardier 2nd LT Joseph Ostermann, engineer T/SGT Henry P. Elliott, radio operator T/SGT Lloyd E. Rodemer, ball turret gunner S/SGT Harold Rudick, tail gunner S/SGT Albert W. Spencer Jr and the two waist gunners, SGT John Edli and SGT Marshall F. Bryan. S/SGT Charlton K. Browning was a passenger on the mission, assigned as an aerial photographer to record the bombing for headquarters.

On the way to the target, *Miss Nonalee II* lost the pitch control on Number Two propeller and Bell had to feather it. Now on three engines, the Fortress lagged behind the rest of the formation. Approximately eight minutes later Bell turned *Miss Nonalee II* toward neutral Sweden and safety. Three other damaged American bombers also headed for this refuge. **SACK TIME SUSY** a B-17F of the 96th Bomb Group landed at Bulltofta, and two 93rd Bomb Group B-24Ds landed at Rinkaby and Hogsby where they were burned by their crews.

The intact Fortress sets in the meadow at Norholm Mark, near Varde Denmark. Danish police were the first on the scene, but instead of arresting the pilot, LT Glyndon D. Bell, they set about photographing the Fortress. Danish police often assisted Allied crews in evading capture. (Hermann Gammelgard via Esbjerg Kommune)

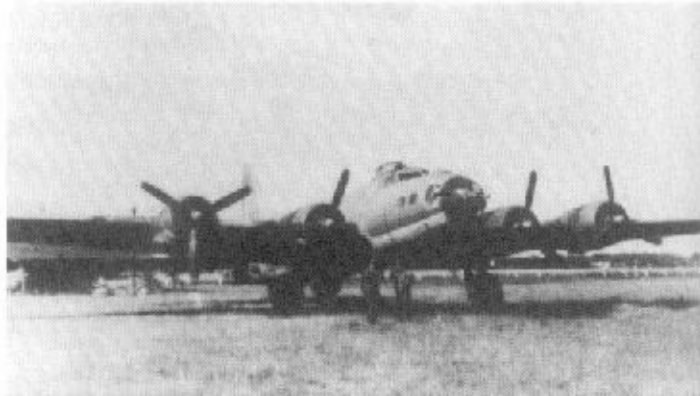
Miss Nonalee II shortly after the landing at Varde on 9 October 1943. To prevent sabotage, the German guards kept Danish civilians at a discreet distance from the downed Fortress. The trees in the background made it necessary to strip the bomber of all unnecessary weight so that it could be flown out of the short grass meadow. (Royal Danish Air Force)

With his Number Two engine out the 21 year old pilot nursed the B-17 low over enemy territory. The navigator spotted a large meadow and insisted it was inside neutral Sweden. With this assurance, LT Bell decided to land and gave the crew the option to either to stay with the aircraft or bail out. They all elected to bail out and parachute over the field. Unknown to the Americans they were still over occupied Denmark and they landed in the hands of the local Police. They were arrested and held in the jail at Tyskerne before being transferred to the Interrogation Camp at Oherursel.

LT Bell successfully landed *Miss Nonalee II* a large meadow at Norholm Mark near Varde, Denmark. As he had been instructed in England, Bell tried to burn the B-17, without success. A group of Danish civilians approached the Fortress and told Bell that he was still in enemy occupied territory. A local farmer, Sigurd Nielsen, hid the Bell until nightfall. Under the cover of darkness they made their way to the small town of Bredsten, where Bell was put in contact with the Danish Underground. With their assistance, Bell finally reached neutral Sweden.

It did not take the *Luftwaffe* long to discover the intact B-17. After receiving reports of an undamaged Fortress a salvage team from Flensburg was dispatched in an Arado Ar 232 transport. On board the transport was all the necessary equipment needed to recover the B-17. The team surveyed the landing site and determined that a take off with three engines would be difficult without reducing the aircraft's weight. The makeshift grass runway was 2,100 feet long but a grove of trees at the end made it imperative that the Fortress be stripped of all unnecessary weight to insure a safe takeoff. It was decided to transfer all the guns, armor, ammunition, and radios from the B-17 to the Ar 232 before attempting to fly the B-17 out.

The Fortress was ferried to Rechlin from Esbjerg on 16 October 1943. At Rechlin the pitch control on number two engine was repaired and the Fortress entered *Luftwaffe* service with the assigned side code of 7+8. (Willy Radinger)



Person
another
position
nose.
study
Petrick

TH
the la
the G
under
night
the sa
able t
had p
base
B-17
escor

TH
speed
willin
Schw
ing. T
servic
at the

D
demo
know
Aper
tinue
The
Dece
Nonu

Miss
1944
inter



Personnel of ZG 76 watch as *Miss Nonalee II* runs up her engines for another sortie from Königsberg. The B-17F featured two cheek gun positions besides the single .50 caliber machine gun mounted in the nose. ZG 76 flew mock attacks against the Fortress and were able to study the firing arcs of the various defensive gun positions. (Peter Petrick)

The Danish Resistance were monitoring German activities at the landing site and decided to attempt to destroy the aircraft before the Germans could complete their salvage operation. A small force under Bent Ollgaard would attempt to blow up *Miss Nonalee II* on the night of 16/17 October 1943. Unfortunately for the Danes, however, the salvage work progressed rapidly and Hans Werner Lerche was able to takeoff on three engines the same day the underground had planned their attack. Lerche headed for the nearby *Luftwaffe* air base at Eshjerg, where all the removed equipment was refitted to the B-17. He then left Eshjerg for Rechlin late that same afternoon, escorted by the Arado 232 transport.

The feathered Number Two propeller reduced *Miss Nonalee II*'s speed and Lerche was unable to reach Rechlin before sundown. Not willing to risk a night landing on three engines, Lerche landed at Schwerin for the night and continued on to Rechlin the next morning. The pitch control was repaired and the Fortress entered *Luftwaffe* service with the Rechlin experimental code 7+8. The B-17 remained at the Test and Experimental Center for the remainder of the year.

During the summer of 1944 *Miss Nonalee II* departed Rechlin on a demonstration tour to acquaint fighter pilots with the B-17. She is known to have visited units at Brandis, Munich-Riem, Vienna-Apern, Prague-Rusin and Königsberg (Kaliningrad). The B-17 continued in this role, visiting various fighter units until the end of 1944. The bomber's last recorded trip was to Leipzig-Brandis airfield in December of 1944, after which all records of her activities stop. *Miss Nonalee II*'s ultimate fate remains a mystery.

Miss Nonalee II over Königsberg, East Prussia during the Summer of 1944. The B-17F-100-BO was used by *Luftwaffe* fighter units to develop interception tactics against the B-17. (Peter Petrick)



Miss Nonalee II over Königsberg airfield during one of the many training sorties flown to support ZG 76. Oversized *Balkenkreuze* have been painted on the wing under surfaces to lessen the risk of being fired on by friendly anti-aircraft units. (Peter Petrick)

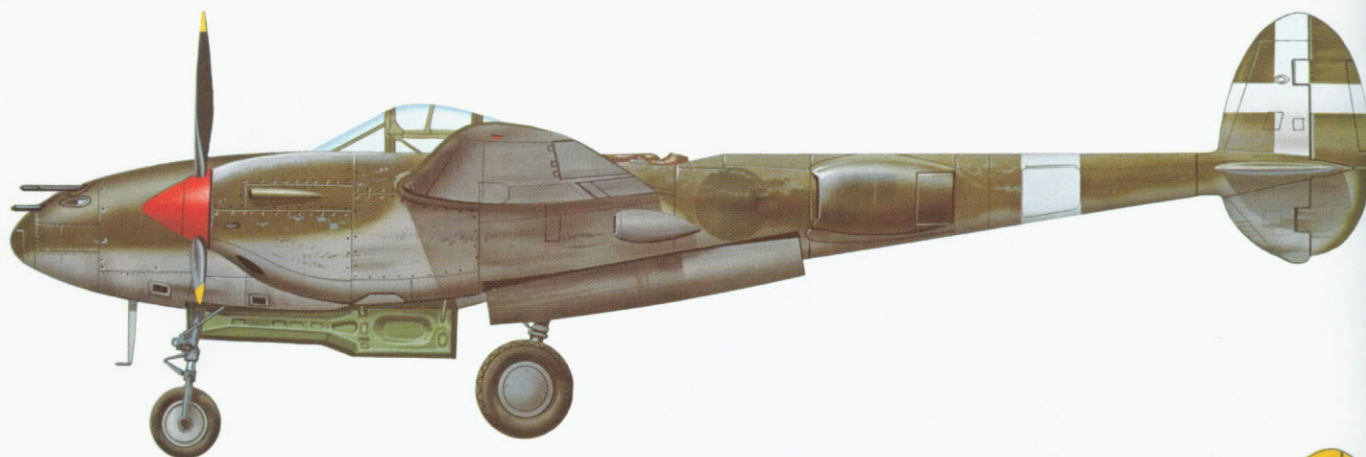


A *Luftwaffe* officer points out features of the B-17 to a visiting pilot. For evaluation flights at Rechlin, test instruments and equipment were fitted to the bomber to record performance data for later study by German engineers. (Willy Radinger)

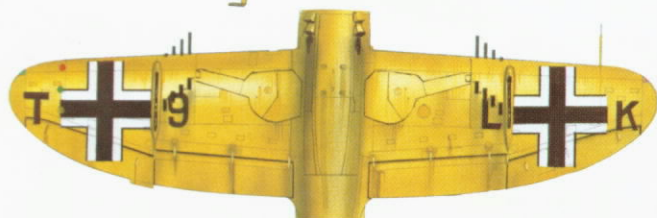
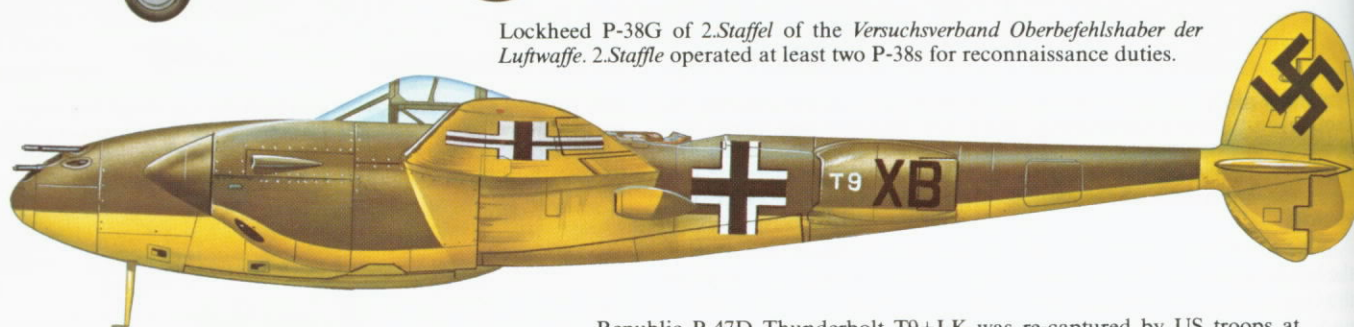
Fighter crews of *Zerstörergeschwader* 76 walk past *Miss Nonalee II* as she starts engines. One of ZG 76's Messerschmitt Me 410 fighters is visible under the B-17's port wing tip. (Peter Petrick)



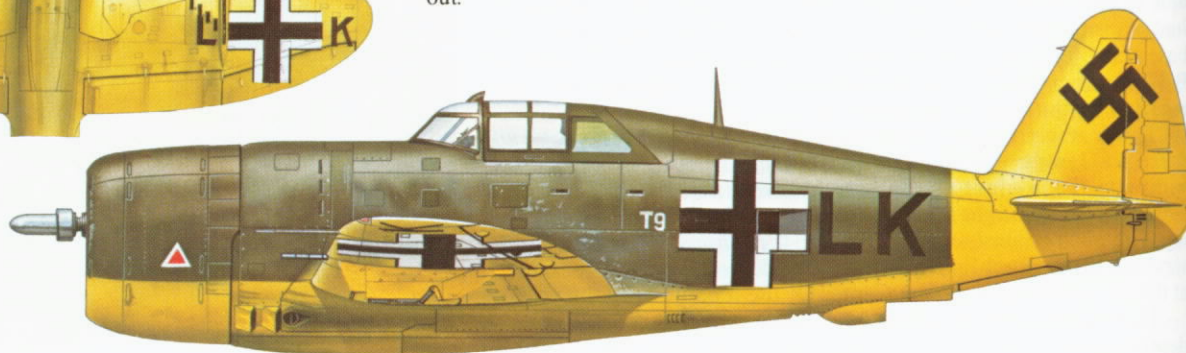
Lockheed P-38G Lightning was landed in error at Capoterra, Italy on 12 June 1943. The Lightning was later used by Colonnello Angelo Tondi to attack a B-17 formation off Torvajonica. The Colonnello shot down a B-17 scoring the only known kill by an enemy flown American fighter.



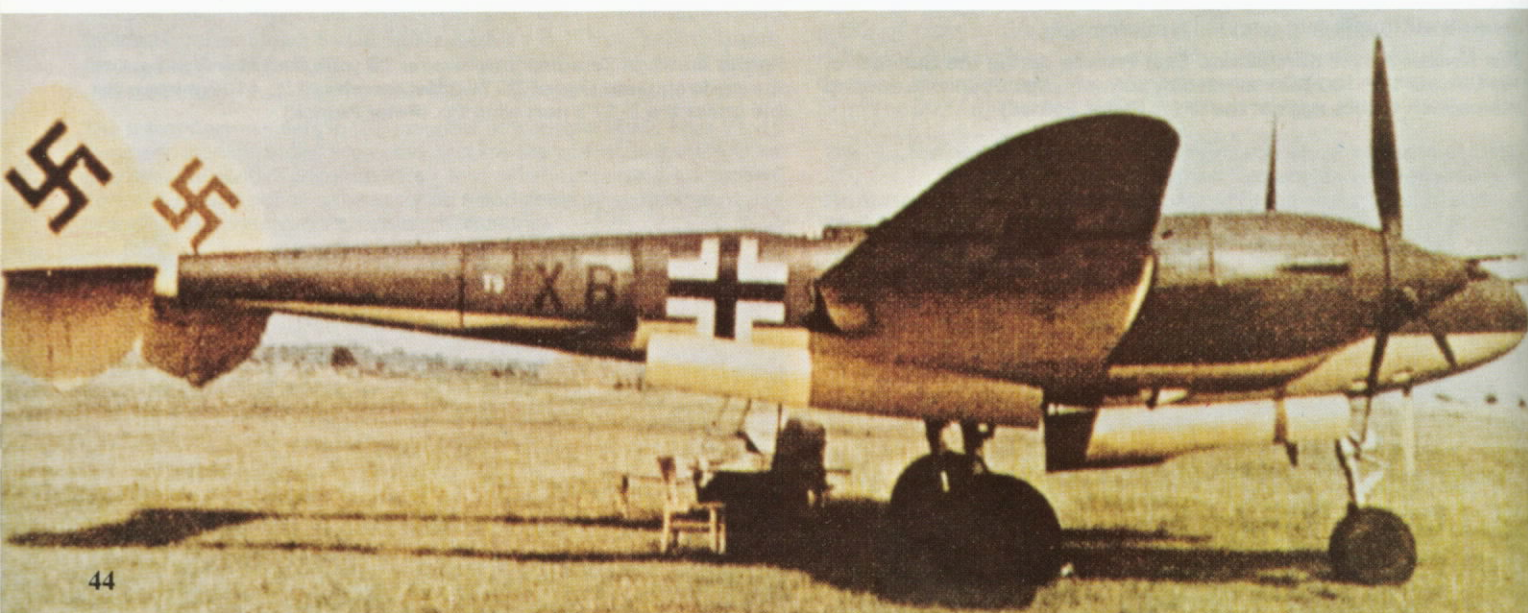
Lockheed P-38G of 2.Staffel of the *Versuchsverband Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe*. 2.Staffel operated at least two P-38s for reconnaissance duties.



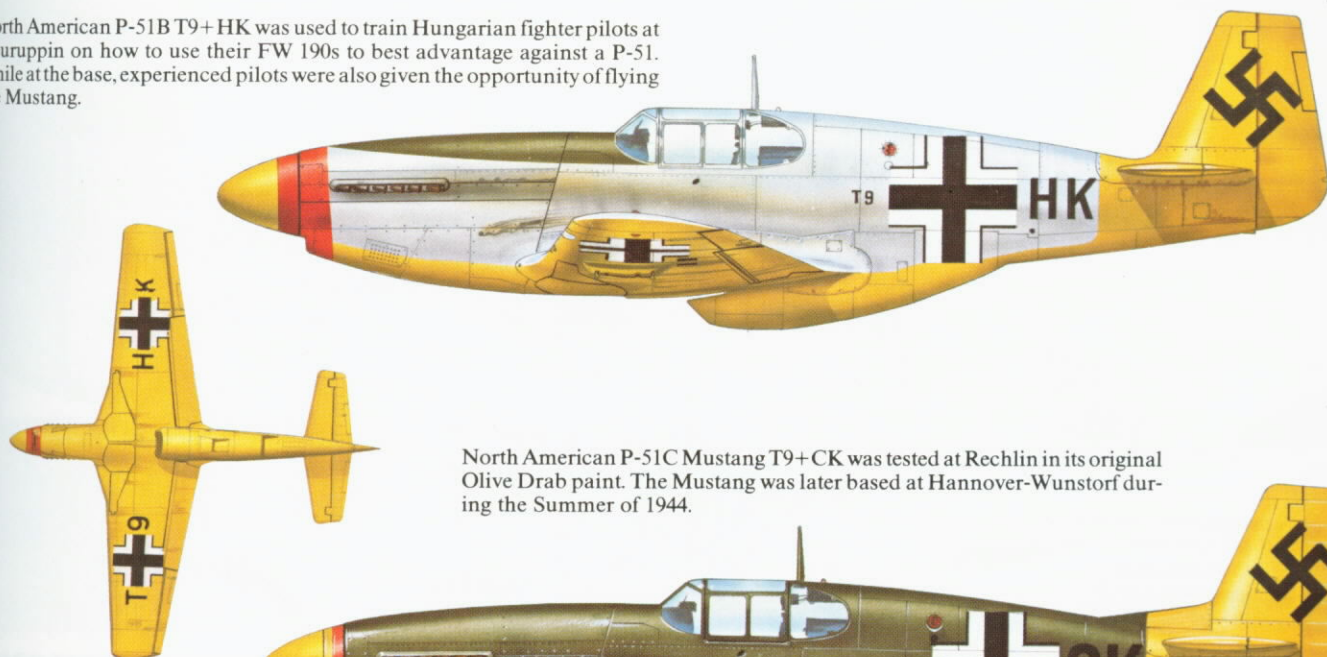
Republic P-47D Thunderbolt T9+LK was re-captured by US troops at Göttingen during late 1944. The Thunderbolt was abandoned by the retreating *Luftwaffe* when it developed mechanical trouble and could not be flown out.



Lockheed P-38G Lightning T9+XB of 2.Staffel. The Lightning was later used in an airshow put on at Rechlin during late 1943.



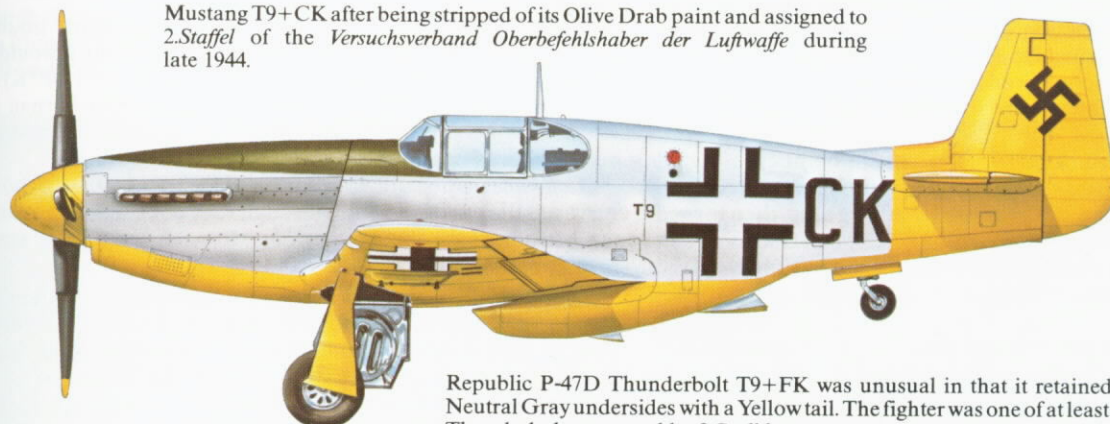
North American P-51B T9+HK was used to train Hungarian fighter pilots at Neuruppin on how to use their FW 190s to best advantage against a P-51. While at the base, experienced pilots were also given the opportunity of flying the Mustang.



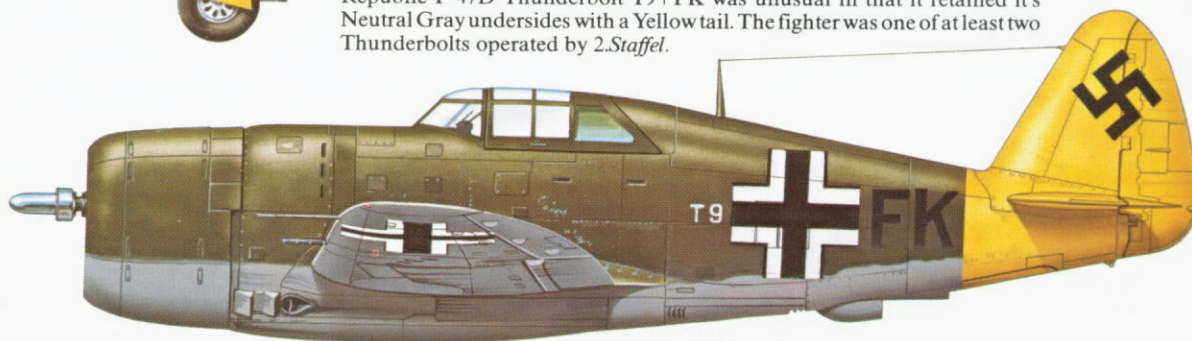
North American P-51C Mustang T9+CK was tested at Rechlin in its original Olive Drab paint. The Mustang was later based at Hannover-Wunstorf during the Summer of 1944.



Mustang T9+CK after being stripped of its Olive Drab paint and assigned to 2.Staffel of the *Versuchsverband Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe* during late 1944.



Republic P-47D Thunderbolt T9+FK was unusual in that it retained its Neutral Gray undersides with a Yellow tail. The fighter was one of at least two Thunderbolts operated by 2.Staffel.



This Curtiss Hawk 75A-4 KO+ZA was captured after the fall of France and used by the *Luftwaffe* in the fighter-trainer role.





Lost Eagle

The destruction of German oil production played an important role in the Allied bombing campaigns of World War II. On 11 and 12 September 1944, the Eighth Air Force launched major attacks against German oil production centers at Ruhland, Plauen, Misburg, Hannover, and Brück. On both days exceptionally strong fighter opposition was encountered and a total of seventy-five bombers and twenty-nine fighters were shot down by the *Luftwaffe* over the two days.

On Tuesday, 12 September 1944, a force of 888 bombers escorted by 662 fighters took off from England. The bombers entered German airspace over *Deutsche Bucht* in the Hamburg area, then turned southeast to Ruhland and the Sudetenland. Between Oschersleben and Halberstadt, the 1st Air Division was attacked by fighters of the *Reichsverteidigung* (Defense of the Reich), including *Jagdgeschwader* 4 and 76.

The famed US 4th Fighter Group based at Debden was part of the escort that day. The nucleus of the 4th Fighter Group were all highly experienced fighter pilots, having flown Spitfires with the Royal Air Force as the 'Eagle Squadrons' before the US entry into the war. On 12 September, the 334th Squadron of the 4th Fighter Group furnished sixteen fighters for the mission. The pre-mission briefing was held at 0730 and the squadron, led by CAPT Carl F. Brown in his P-51 Mustang coded OP-L, took off at 0830.

Landfall was made by the fighters at Den Helder and the squadron rendezvoused with the 'Big Friends' over Hagenow at 25,000 feet. Northeast of Berlin, two bombers were seen going down and an excited radio message was heard reporting that jet aircraft were in the area. The 'Eagles' were to escort the bombers to the target, the Sudetenlandische Treibstoffwerke AG at Brück in Czechoslovakia. This hydro-chemical plant processed coal into synthetic fuel and had been in operation since 1942. The Eighth Bomber Command had visited the plant earlier, on 12 May 1944, but the damage from that raid had been repaired and the facility was back in operation.

The 334th Fighter Squadron flew in a four flight tactical formation. 'Red' flight was led by CAPT Thomas E. Joyce and included LT Robert A. Dickmeyer, Ralph H. 'Buck' Buchanan and LT Arthur J. Senecal. Over the Rhein-Main area fighters of I/JG 2, I/JG 11 and I/JG 77 intercepted the bomber force. 'Red flight' bounced the enemy fighters from 26,000 ft, engaging Focke Wulf Fw 190A-8s and Messerschmitt Bf 109G-14s in a running battle over Wiesbaden. LT Dickmeyer claimed one Fw 190 and shared another Fw 190 with LT Earl F. Hustwit from the 336th Squadron. The 'Eagles' claimed nine enemy aircraft, but two pilots were reported missing in action. 1st LT

Captain Thomas E. Joyce of the 4th Fighter Group, based at Debden, Essex bailed in his P-51D Mustang (44-14271 OP-K) at Bernau near Wiesbaden on 12 September 1944. The 4th Fighter Group was descended from the 'Eagle' squadrons of the RAF and is credited with more than 1,000 German fighters destroyed over Europe. (Bundesarchiv)

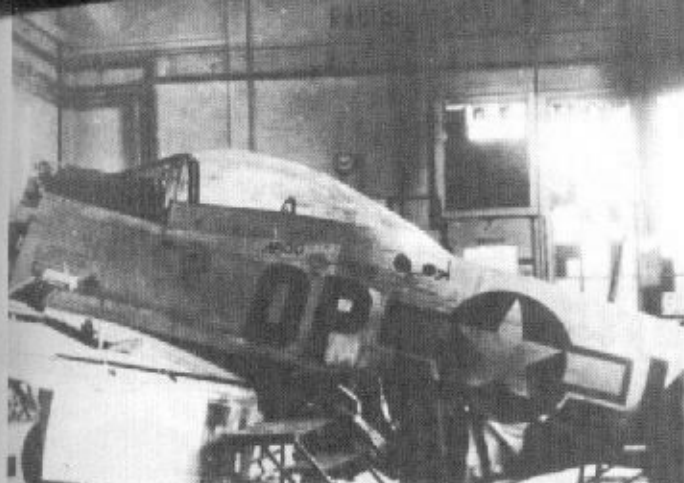
James C. Lane had bailed out due to engine trouble over the Trier area and became a POW.

CAPT Thomas E. Joyce was also having engine trouble, the coolant system had taken a hit and without coolant, it would not be long before the engine on his P-51D-10-NA (44-14271 QP-K) seized up. Joyce crash landed his crippled Mustang near Bernau at 1158 and destroyed the gun sight and a number of other instruments before he was captured by a group of nearby farmers.

Luftwaffe inspectors from Air Field District 27/III of Schönwalde surveyed the crash site and although they considered the damage to the Mustang's fuselage as serious, they felt the fighter was worth further examination at Göttingen Air Base.

The aircraft was dismantled and transported by train to Göttingen Air Base was responsible for overhauling and rebuilding American fighters for 2.Staffel of the *Versuchsverband*. Flugzeug-Instandsetzungszug Z.b.u. 102, under the direct command of *Luftflotte Reich* was also responsible for rebuilding P-51s. This salvage and repair unit was specially trained and equipped to return damaged enemy aircraft to airworthy condition. Work commenced on Joyce's Mustang during late Autumn of 1944 under Engineer Werner, however, a lack of spare parts kept the project from progressing. The *Luftwaffe* was highly interested in the project, and had a standing order to put all available P-51D Mustangs into service with the *Versuchsverband Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe*. German mechanics tried to replace the damaged items of Joyce's Mustang with parts salvaged from other crashed Mustangs, however, it is very doubtful if they succeeded in repairing the aircraft before Allied troops reached Göttingen.

The *Luftwaffe* was more successful with other P-51s. At least three P-51D's were successfully repaired at Rechlin in January and February of 1945. One Mustang airframe was found at Bad Zwischenahn when this base was captured by American troops. Another P-51D (44-15174) was being rebuilt at Kaufbeuren. This aircraft had landed at Odenburg on 9 December 1944 and was being rebuilt with parts from two other P-51s (44-13412 and 43-12147). P-51D (44-13905) made a wheels down landing, damaging its propeller at Barmersdorf on 20 February 1945, and was repaired at Ansbach before being allocated to 2.Staffel of the *Versuchsverband* on 15 March 1945. P-51D (44-63162) came down at Bad Eilsen on 20 January and was repaired by Focke Wulf. On 2 March another Mustang was captured intact, this P-51D (44-11363) landed at Zerbst and was repaired there, however, it is doubtful if the Mustang was ever used by 2.Staffel.



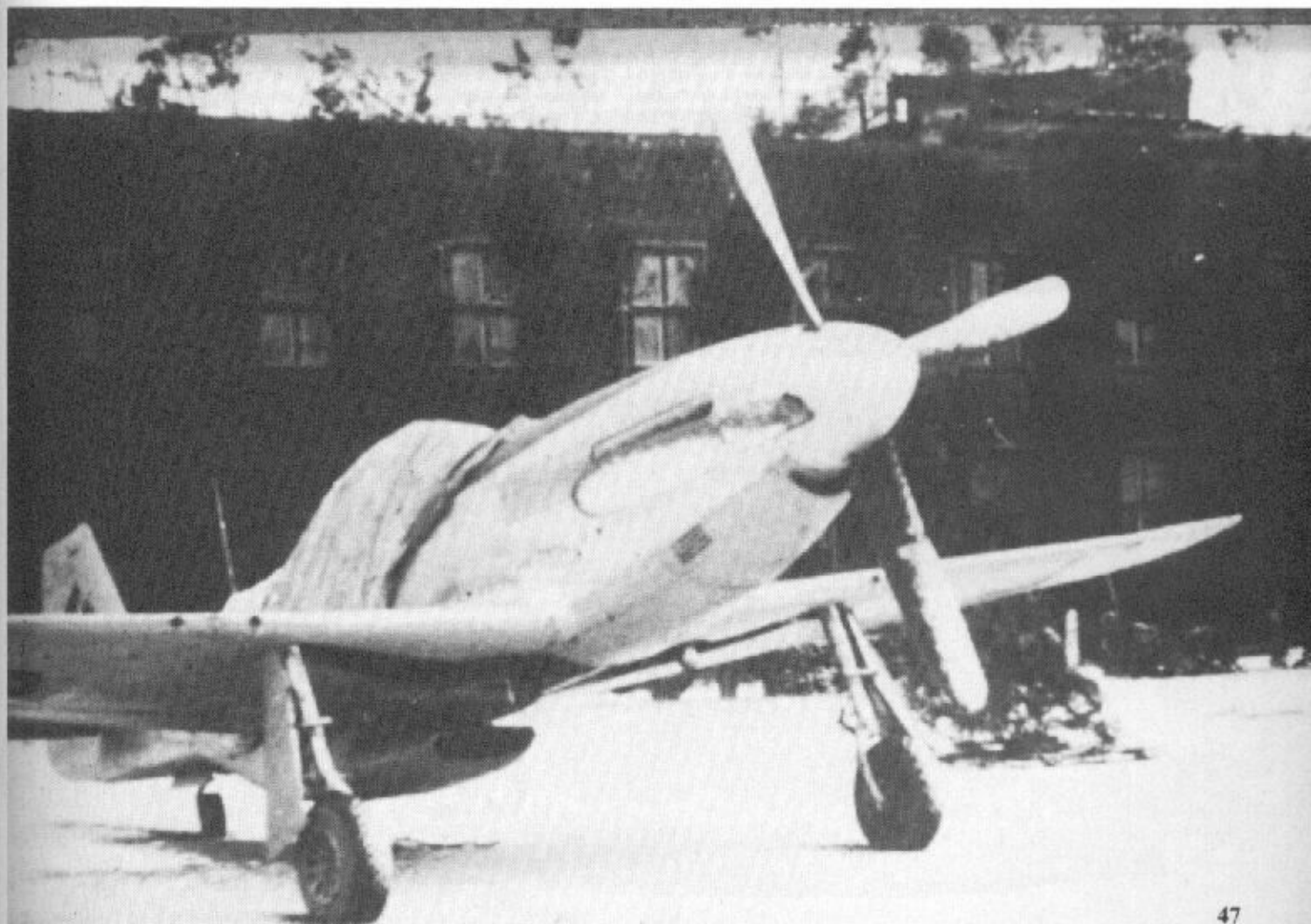
Luftwaffe technicians moved QP*K to Göttingen and began rebuilding the Mustang with parts salvaged from other wrecks. Göttingen, home of 2.Staffel included a large repair facility for rebuilding damaged aircraft. The sign on the hangar wall reads *RAUCHEN VERBOTEN* (No Smoking). (Alberto Salvati)

When the Soviets captured the Test Center at Rechlin, the majority of aircraft on the field were American or British. The Russians transferred a number of aircraft and components to the Soviet Union for study. There can be little doubt that the Soviets were as careful in their examination and tests of these captured aircraft as the Nazis had been. Göttingen Air Base, the former home of 2.Staffel of the *Versuchsverband* was captured by US troops in May of 1945. In addition to an abandoned Thunderbolt (T9+LK) they found a number of other Allied aircraft under repair or being used for cannibalization, including a Mosquito, a P-51D of the 353rd FG, a wing from a 357th FG Mustang (G4-J) and a large stack of usable aircraft parts.

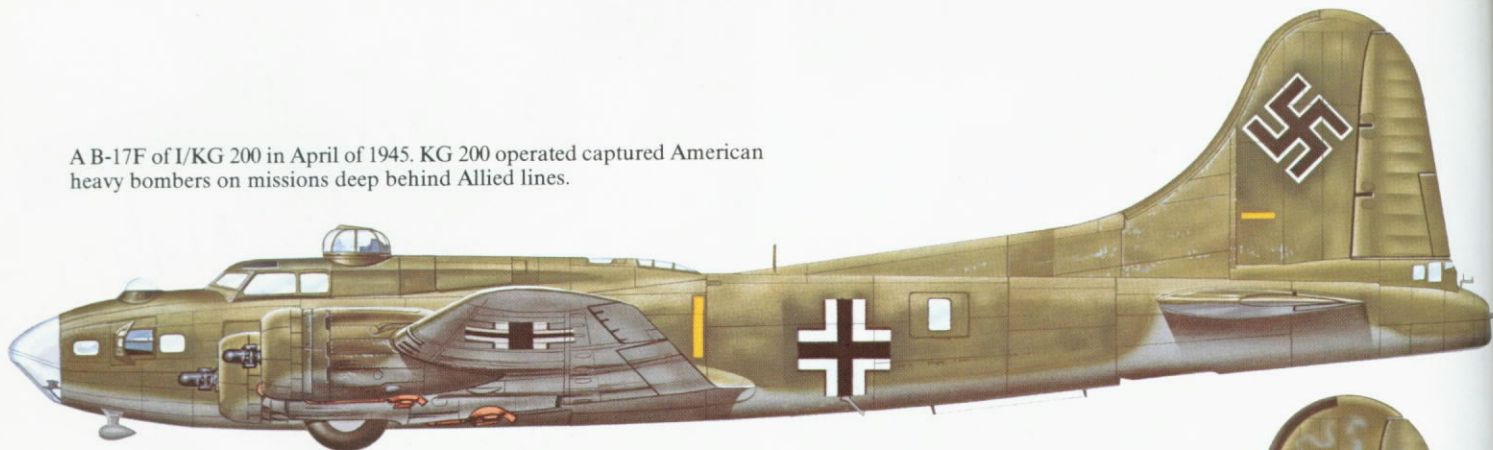


CAPT Joyce's P-51D-10-NA under repair at Göttingen still carries its original markings. The *Luftwaffe* was extremely interested in restoring any P-51 that was repairable for service with 2.Staffel and parts from wrecked Mustangs were brought to Göttingen from all over Europe to support the restoration program. (Alberto Salvati)

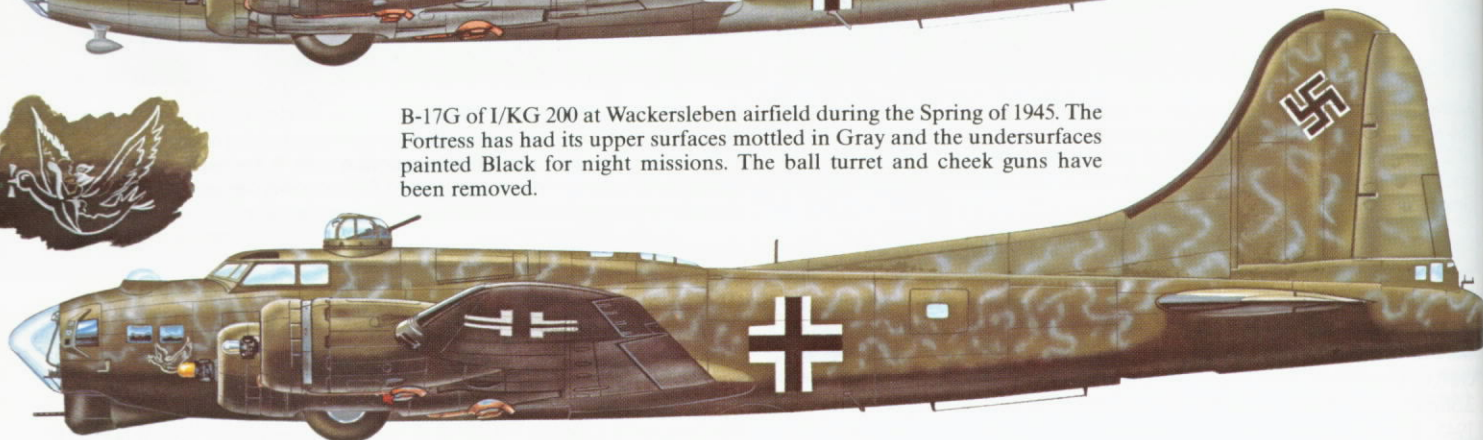
The middle .50 caliber machine gun has been removed from this P-51D and the gunport faired over. The fighters assigned to the *Versuchsverband* were serviced with American fuel and lubricants and flown fully armed. The goal was to keep the aircraft as close to US standards as possible to provide a realistic threat during combat training. (Heinz J. Nowarra)



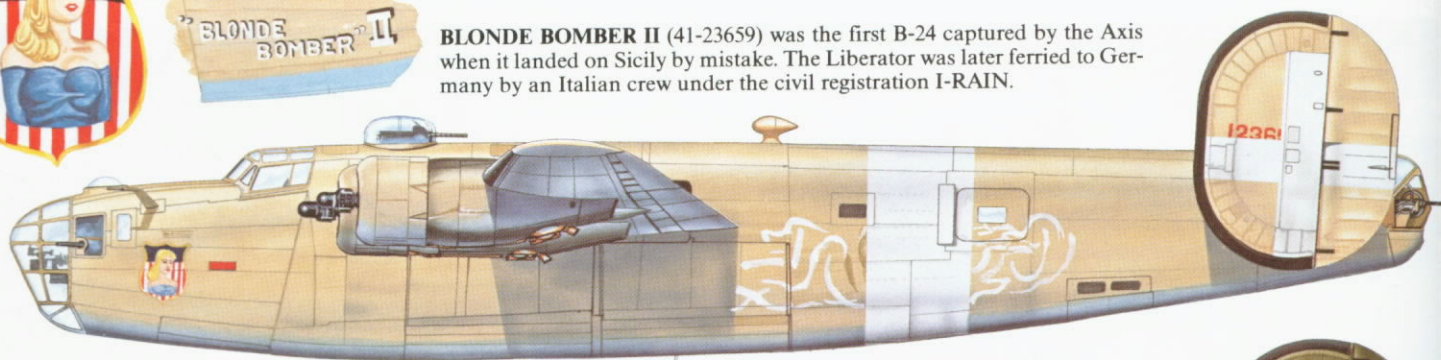
A B-17F of I/KG 200 in April of 1945. KG 200 operated captured American heavy bombers on missions deep behind Allied lines.



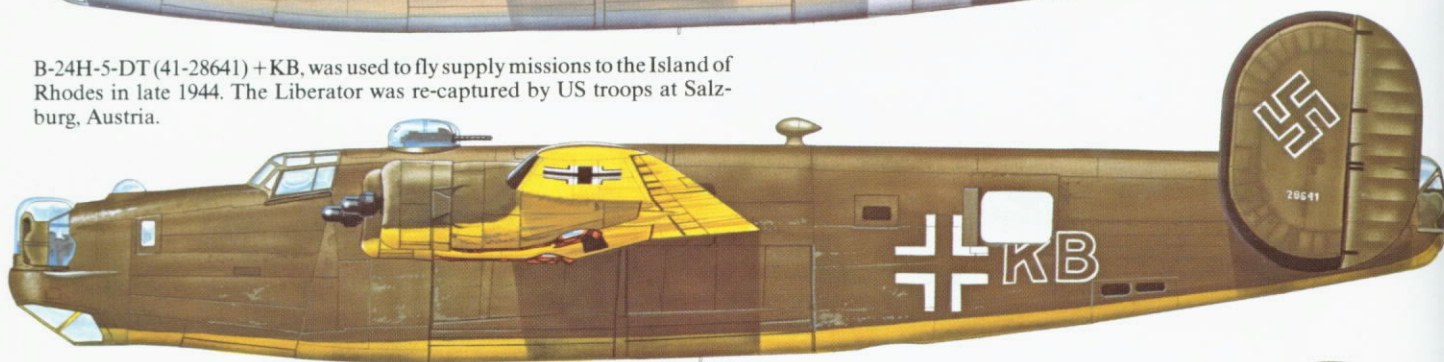
B-17G of I/KG 200 at Wackersleben airfield during the Spring of 1945. The Fortress has had its upper surfaces mottled in Gray and the undersurfaces painted Black for night missions. The ball turret and cheek guns have been removed.



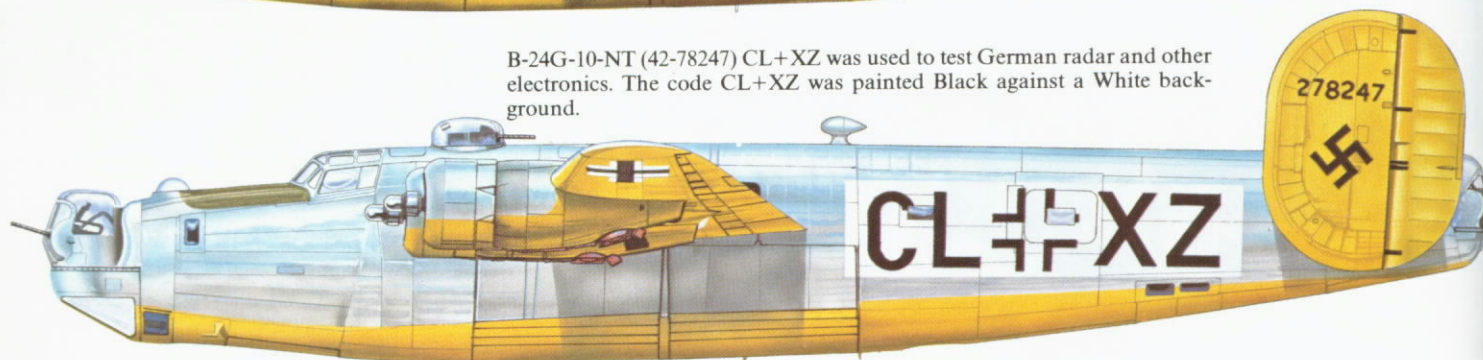
BLONDE BOMBER II (41-23659) was the first B-24 captured by the Axis when it landed on Sicily by mistake. The Liberator was later ferried to Germany by an Italian crew under the civil registration I-RAIN.



B-24H-5-DT (41-28641) + KB, was used to fly supply missions to the Island of Rhodes in late 1944. The Liberator was re-captured by US troops at Salzburg, Austria.



B-24G-10-NT (42-78247) CL+XZ was used to test German radar and other electronics. The code CL+XZ was painted Black against a White background.



How An American Bomber Becomes A Messerschmitt

The wreckage of Allied bomber and fighter aircraft proved to be an important source of raw materials for the Nazi War Machine. The Germans systematically collected all wreckage from the scattered crash sites into scrap dumps both in the Reich and in the occupied territories. One such dump was located at Paris-Nanterre in France. The operation of the dump at Paris-Nanterre is typical of the dumps at other locations.

Aircraft wreckage normally arrived at the dump by rail and after unloading, unskilled French and Italian workers stripped the airframes of usable equipment and instrumentation. Heavy metal parts were separated from the aluminum Dural structure/skinning and stored in separate locations within the scrap dump. Aircraft equipment, such as engines, radios and instruments were repaired when possible and stored in large warehouses at *Beutepark der Luftwaffe 5* at Nanterre for possible use on captured aircraft or as static demonstration pieces.

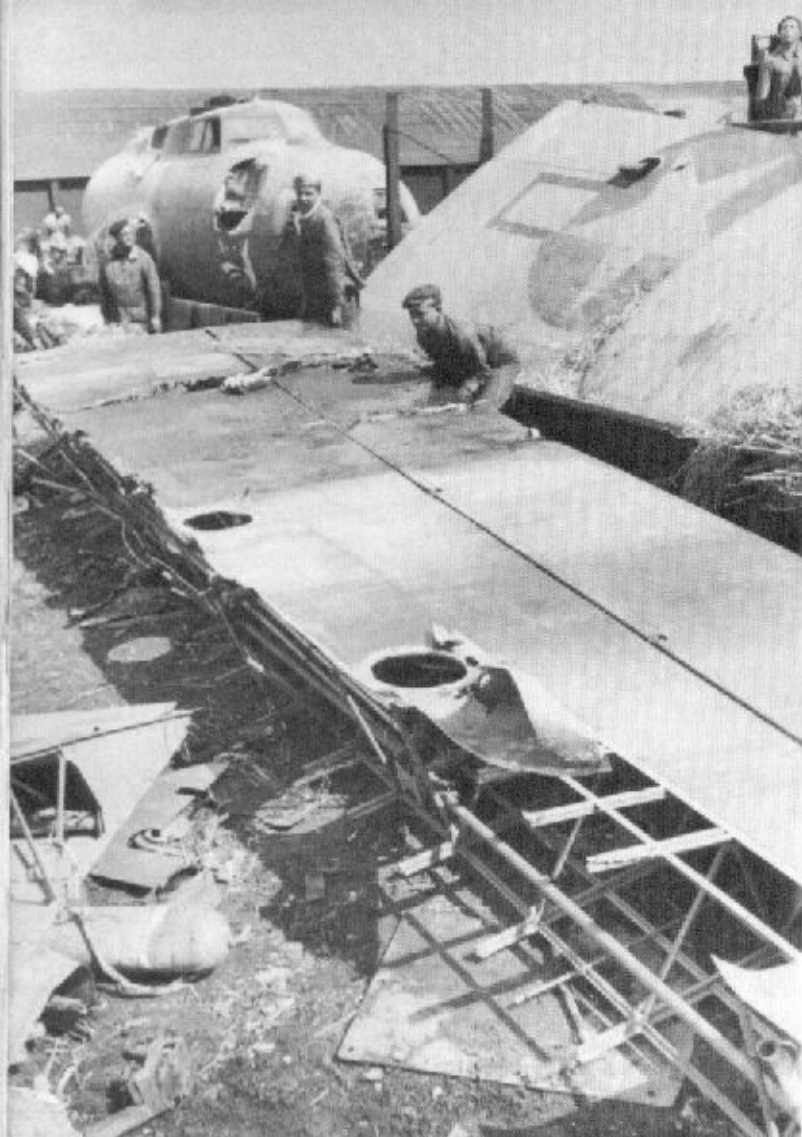
The aluminum alloy scrap was melted down and supplied to different aircraft factories where the metal was used in the production of *Luftwaffe* aircraft. Besides *Beutepark 5*, the *Luftwaffe* operated a number of other scrap yards and storage depots as Allied losses mounted during 1943 and 1944, providing the Nazis with large quantities of aluminum alloy. One of these dumps was located at Utrecht, Holland. This *Zerlegebetrieb* (Dismantling Yard) was responsible for scraping the wreckage of Allied and *Luftwaffe* aircraft downed in the Netherlands. In November of 1943, this yard alone

FIGHTIN' PAPPY was one of the residents of the scrap yard at *Beutepark 5* at Paris-Nanterre. The B-17F-50-BO (42-5407) of the 379th Bomb Group was lost on 9 October 1943 on a mission against the Arado Component Factory at Anklam. 2nd LT Vernon R. Smith crash landed the crippled Fortress near Kiel and after the wreckage was dismantled it was shipped to the vast scrap yard. (Bundesarchiv)



A French SNCF steam locomotive pushes a railroad car full of American oxygen tanks through a German scrap yard littered with the wreckage of former French aircraft. In the background are the buildings where refurbished engines, radios and other equipment salvaged from Allied aircraft were stored for possible future use. (Bundesarchiv)



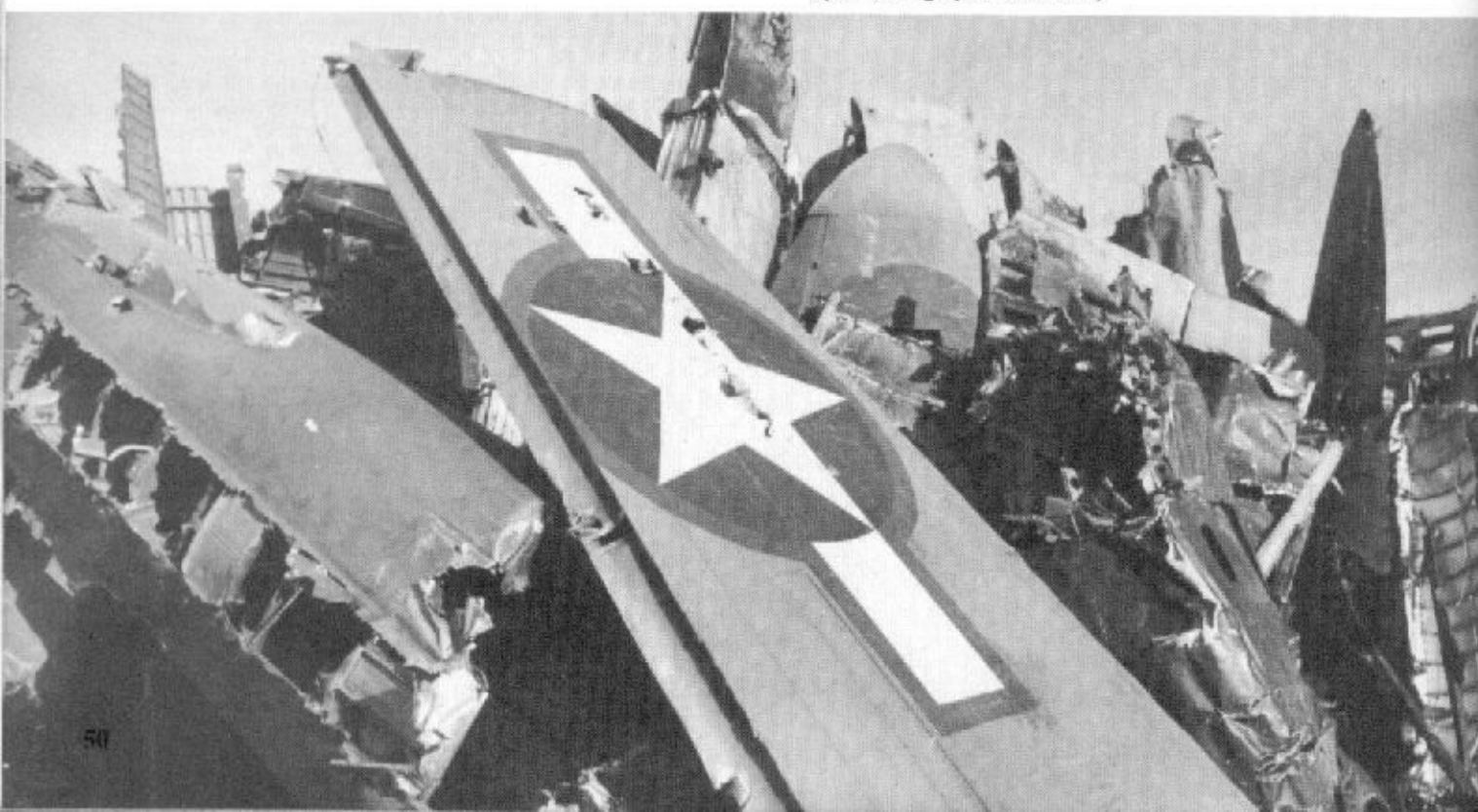


(Above) Dutch workers unload the wreckage of a B-17F from flatcars at the *Luftwaffe* scrap yard at Utrecht, Holland. The Fortress had been cut into movable sections by the salvage team at the crash site and loaded onboard flatcars for transport to the scrap yard. (Bundesarchiv)



The nearly complete fuselage of a French Martin 167 Maryland bomber (upper center) provides an impression of the size of this scrap heap at Nanterre. During 1943 and early 1944 all aircraft shot down over the Reich were taken either to Natterre in France or Utrecht in Holland. As more and more aircraft were shot down, the Germans established such scrap yards in Germany as well. (Bundesarchiv)

(Below) This neatly stacked B-17 wing carries the Red bordered US insignia introduced in June of 1943, and discontinued in August of 1943. The scrap pile also contains the graceful shapes of at least two Spitfire wings. (Bundesarchiv)



A Fre
of a
of sp
flyab
supp
inde
stor
mat
pro
Afr
of t
scra

for
yar
Flo
oth
def
und
aba

(Be
ing
and



A French worker carefully removes an electrical panel from the fuselage of a B-24. Aircraft stored at Nanterre and Utrecht were used as a source of spare parts to keep other captured American fighters and bombers flyable. (Bundesarchiv)

supplied more than 308,000 pounds of aluminum alloy to German industry. During this period another 800,000 pounds of alloy was stored at Utrecht, because of a shortage of rolling stock to ship the material to Germany. During late 1943, Utrecht was scraping approximately fifty *Luftwaffe* and thirty Allied aircraft each month. After D-Day, the rapid advance of Allied troops and the destruction of the German railway network made shipment of alloy from the scrap yards nearly impossible.

In August of 1944, Allied troops reached the outskirts of Paris forcing the Germans to halt production at Nanterre. The scrap yard's Italian workers were evacuated and sent to Varennes near St. Florentin. The yard commander, MAJ Biesenberger along with other high ranking officers, left the yard on 16 August, leaving its defense to *Oberleutnant* Karl Köning. The fifty-nine German soldiers under *Oblt* Köning held the park for several days before finally abandoning the facility during the night of 19 August.

(Below) A mobile crane moves the forward fuselage of a B-17 to its resting place in the scrap yard. The fuselage and wings were cut into pieces and stored in different areas within the yard. (Bundesarchiv)

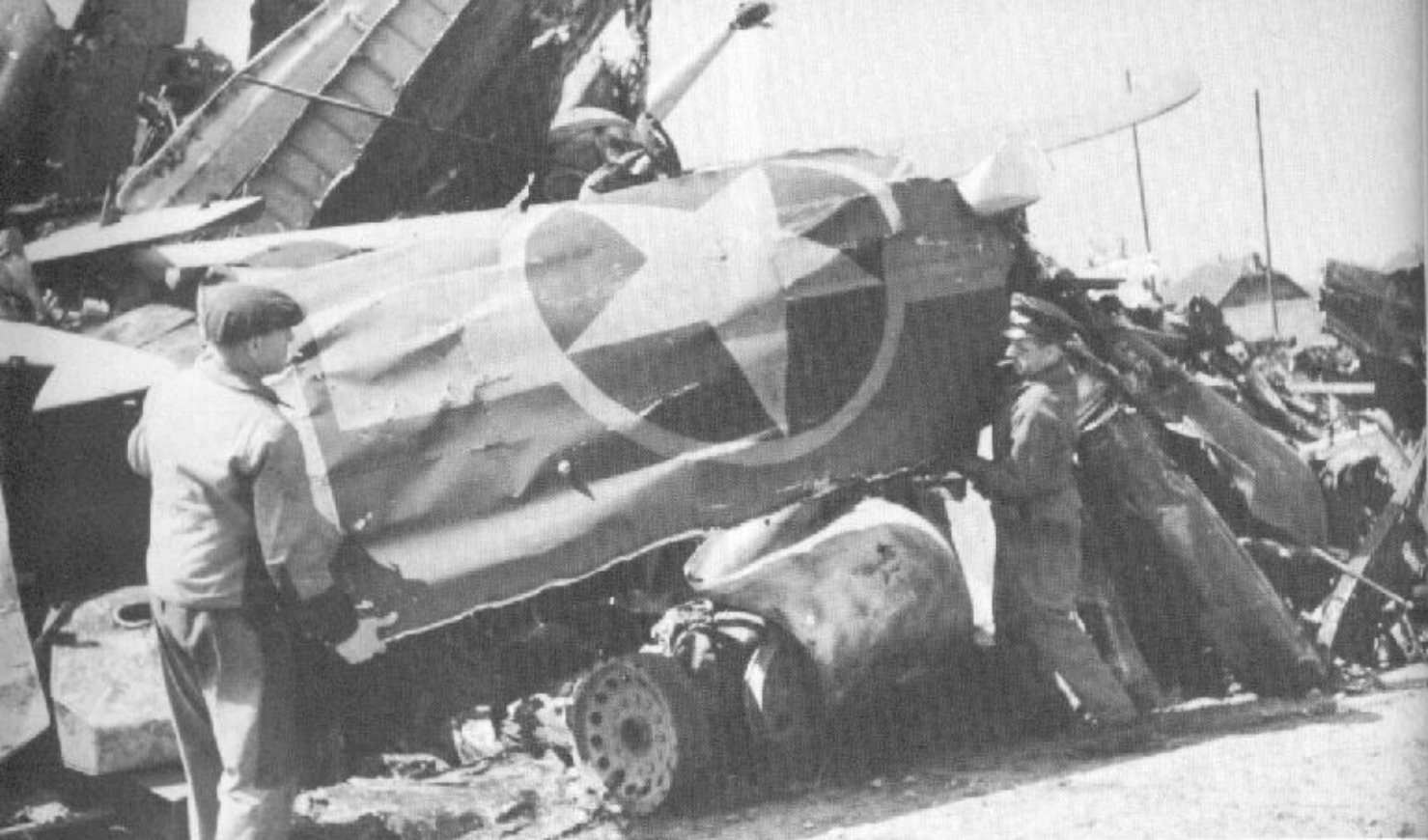


Storage depots were separated into small segments to allow workers access to the wreckage. This relatively small section of the scrap yard at Nanterre contains parts from B-17s, B-25s, Lancasters, and at least two French Potez 540s. (Bundesarchiv)



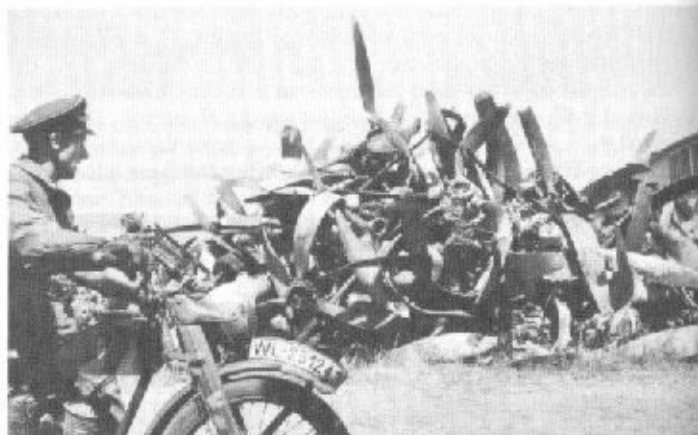
(Above) *Luftwaffe* personnel work on the forward fuselage of a B-24 nicknamed GASHOUSE GERTIE. Detailed records were kept of all equipment salvaged and stored at Nanterre. (Bundesarchiv)





A section of a B-17 fuselage is piled on a heap of scrap aluminum by workers at the salvage yard at Nanterre. The aluminum skinning and other structural parts were separated from other metals in the scrap yards and later melted down. (Bundesarchiv)

(Right) This pile of twisted propellers would grow higher and higher as more and more Allied aircraft were shot down over Germany. A number of flyable B-17s could not be restored because of a lack of replacement propellers. Heavy metal parts were stored away from the aluminum parts of the airframe and melted down separately. (BA)

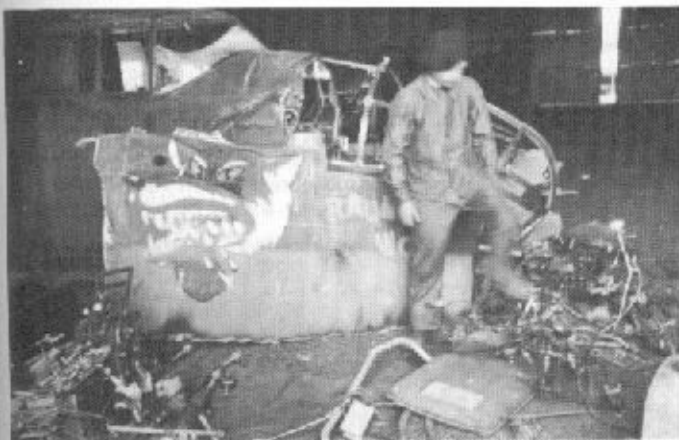


All airframes stored in the scrap yard have been cannibalized of all usable equipment. This P-47D was Q11 of the 361st Fighter Squadron, 356th Fighter Group while the B-17F in the background was known as *Raunchy Wolf* to its former crew. The damage to the nose was caused during the bombers shipment by rail to Nanterre. (Bundesarchiv)



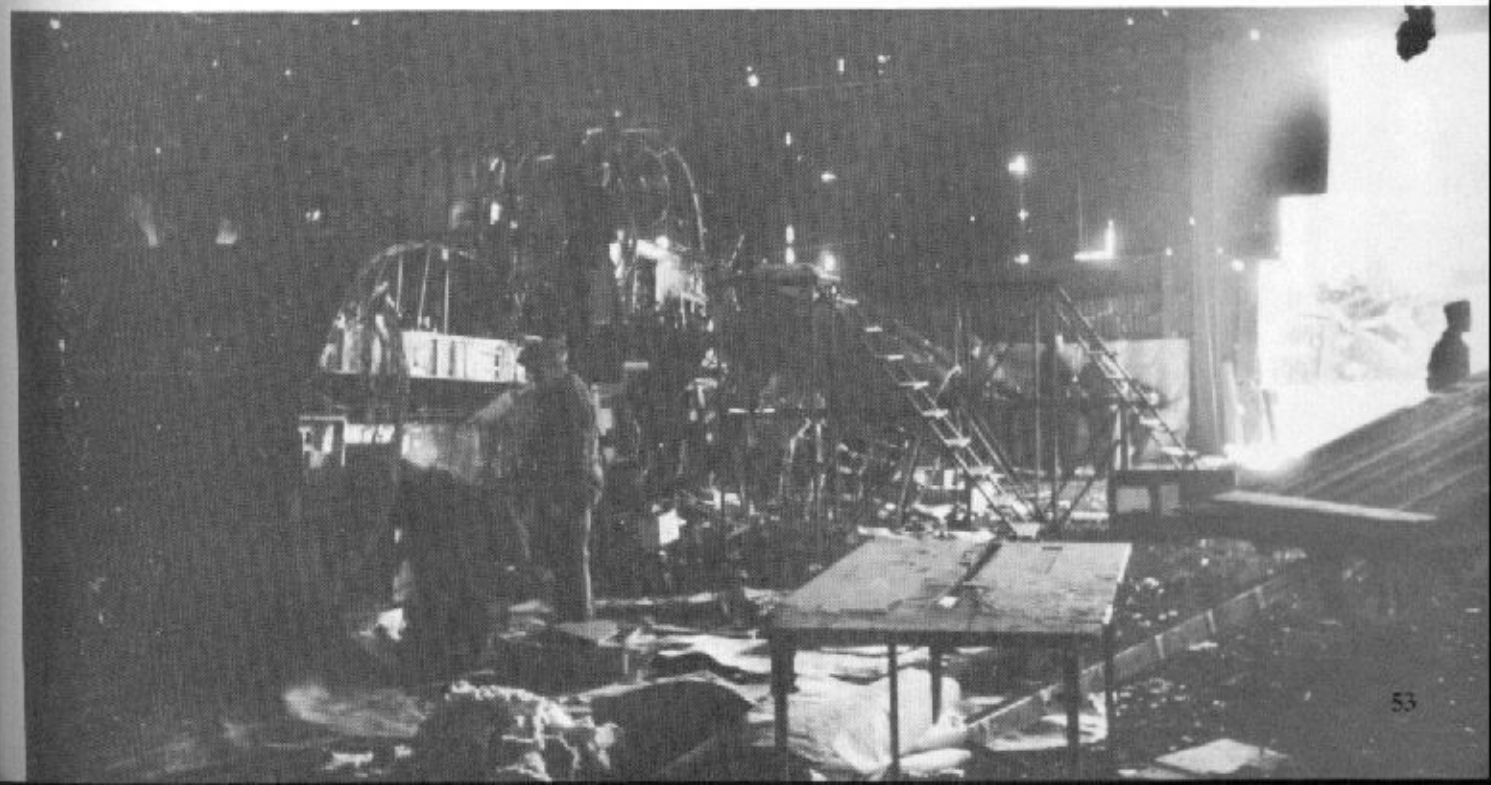


A French worker uses a cutting torch to cut *Raunchy Wolf* into easily handled segments. The aluminum salvaged from this Fortress could very well have end up as part of a *Luftwaffe* fighter. (Bundesarchiv)



(Left) Pieces of *RAUNCHY WOLF* and a RAF North American Mitchell await the furnace in the smelting works located close to the scrap yard at Nanterre, France during early 1944. (BA)

Inside the smelting plant at Nanterre. Aluminum salvaged from the wrecks was melted down, formed into ingots and shipped to German aircraft plants. In November of 1943 the smelting operation at Utrecht shipped over 308,000 pounds of salvaged aluminum to Germany. (Bundesarchiv)





(Above) Stacks of aluminum ingots are loaded onto boxcars for shipment to an aircraft plant in Germany. This source of raw material proved to be very important to the Nazi War Machine. (Bundesarchiv)

Aluminum salvaged from American aircraft was used to produce new *Luftwaffe* fighters such as these Messerschmitt Bf 109G-6 fighters on the assembly line at Regensburg during early 1944. (Willy Radiger)



T

O
tured
inexp
on 12
Regia
Guid
flight
tems

C
inter
He fe
bomb
carrie
COL
sion.
attach
gun b
last B
killing
Fortr
took
Catal

T
they
ately
for a
to be
Squa
cease
of the
sever
COL
fight
serior
P-38C
captu
Amer

In
to 2.5
cial u
Staffe
range
fight
test fl



The Fighters

One of the first American fighters to fall into Axis hands was captured by the Italians. A Lockheed P-38G Lightning flown by an inexperienced pilot landed by mistake at Capoterra airfield in Italy on 12 June 1943. A few days later the Lightning was transferred to the *Regia Aeronautica's* Test and Research Center at Guidonia. At Guidonia Colonello Angelo Tondi conducted a number of test flights with the Lightning, while engineers studied the aircraft's systems and weapons.

COL Tondi developed a plan to use the captured Lightning to intercept and destroy American bombers enroute to targets in Italy. He felt that with the Lightning he would be able to close in on the bombers before his identity was discovered even though the P-38 carried Italian national insignia and markings. On 11 August 1943 COL Tondi, with an escort of Macchi 202s, took off on his first mission. A formation of Twelfth Air Force B-17s was spotted and Tondi attacked. A firing pass from the five o'clock position sent machine gun bullets and cannon shells raking into the starboard side of the last B-17 in the flight. Two 20MM shells exploded inside the cockpit killing the co-pilot and starting a fire in the instrument panel. The Fortress crashed into the sea near Torvajonica and the survivors took to their life rafts, being rescued the following day by a PBY Catalina flying boat.

The crew reported to the startled Group Intelligence Officer that they had been shot down by a rogue P-38. Warnings were immediately issued to Twelfth Air Force Bomber Groups to be on the alert for a lone P-38. Any such aircraft approaching their formation was to be fired on. Fighter escort Groups issued instructions to P-38 Squadrons that fighters separated from their formations were to cease the practice of joining on bomber formations until the matter of the rogue P-38 was resolved. The Italian Lightning was used on several occasions to conduct further attacks on Allied bombers, but COL Tondi was unable to gain another victory with his 'Trojan' fighter. The use of lower octane Italian fuel eventually caused serious damage to the Lightning's engines finally grounding the P-38G. Tondi's single kill remains the only documented case of a captured American fighter flown by an enemy shooting down an American bomber.

In Germany, all flyable American fighter aircraft were assigned to 2.Staffel of *Versuchsverband Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe*, a special unit with unique roles and missions. The unit consisted of three Staffeln each having individual roles, 1.Staffel was involved in long range reconnaissance missions, 2.Staffel operated captured Allied fighters in a training role, and 3.Staffel carried out experimental and test flights with captured equipment.

This Lockheed P-38G Lightning landed in error at Capoterra, Italy on 12 June 1943. After testing the Lightning was used by Colonello Angelo Tondi to shoot down a B-17 near Torvajonica on 11 August 1943 — the only confirmed kill of an American bomber shot down by an American fighter flown by the enemy. Inferior Italian fuel eventually destroyed the Lightning's engines, grounding the P-38. (Nino Arena)

2.Staffel was created during 1943 to demonstrate captured Allied fighter aircraft to Luftwaffe units which had rotated back to the Reich for rest and re-equipment. During this period the *Luftwaffe* was expanding and pilot training had been compressed in order to quickly replace losses in operational units. Many of the young fighter pilots were having problems recognizing Allied fighters in combat situations since they all lacked combat training. *Luftwaffe* officials felt that the best combat training could be provided by flying mock combats against captured aircraft flown by the experienced pilots of the *Versuchsverband*. Such training, it was hoped, would considerably improve the combat effectiveness of replacement pilots entering front line fighter units.

The *Versuchsverband* was equipped with a number of captured Allied fighter aircraft including: the Lockheed P-38 Lightning, Republic P-47 Thunderbolt, North American P-51 Mustang, British Supermarine Spitfire, de Havilland Mosquito, Hawker Tempest, Soviet Lavochkin La 5 and Yakovlev Yak 3. Allied aircraft were acquired from several sources, the Test and Research Center at Rechlin transferred fighters to the unit after completing their test programs, while others were re-built at various locations throughout Germany specifically for the *Versuchsverband*.

As a recognition aid, all captured aircraft operated by the *Versuchsverband* had the tail and undersurfaces painted Yellow. The unit's average strength throughout the war was twenty aircraft. 2.Staffel was initially formed at Oranienburg near Berlin, but was later transferred to Göttingen during 1944. Göttingen airfield was well equipped with repair and overhaul facilities. Damaged Allied fighters could be repaired at the base without outside assistance. When US troops liberated Göttingen in May of 1945, they found a number of derelict Allied fighters, including several Mustangs and a Mosquito located in the repair facility.

Another of the *Versuchsverband's* flyable P-47 Thunderbolts, T9-LK, was re-captured by the Americans after it had been abandoned when the squadron moved to Bad Worishofen because of the rapid Allied advance. When the war ended the majority of the squadron's aircraft were located at Bad Worishofen or Schwangau in Bavaria.

Spare parts for captured fighters were obtained from salvaging downed aircraft all across Germany and the occupied countries. The salvage operation was such that the squadron never suffered from a lack of spare parts, ammunition, American fuel, and lubricants. When the squadron was assigned to conduct training with a front line fighter unit, five to six aircraft were normally deployed.



P-47D (T9+FK) and Spitfire IX (T9+BB) parked on the ramp at Rechlin during early 1944. Both aircraft were assigned to 2.Staffel and toured various front line fighter units to provide realistic air combat training for Luftwaffe fighter pilots. The unit maintained three P-47s and three Spitfires in its inventory of Allied fighters. (Manfred Griehl)

These aircraft were fully armed and operated on American fuel and lubricants. Maintenance crews received intensive training on captured aircraft and were the equal of their Allied counterparts.

2.Staffel of the *Versuchsverband Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe* quickly became known as the *Beute-Zirkus Rosarius* (Rosarius Flying Circus), after the commander of 2.Staffel, Ted Rosarius. Training missions were usually conducted with fighter units engaged on the Western Front. A training session began with a theoretical introduction to enemy fighter aircraft, describing the performance, armament, and weaknesses of each type. This was followed by an inspection of the Allied fighters 2.Staffel had flown to the base. Finally a mock-combat was held, with "Friend" and "Foe" both using the same radio frequency. The combat would take place over a designated area and the instructors of the "Circus" would explain the strengths and weaknesses of the fighters they were flying and the mistakes made in combat against them. Such lessons proved highly effective and a number of Allied fighters were later lost to pilots who had received this specialized air combat training from *Zirkus Rosarius*.*

Among the aircraft operated in air combat training by *Zirkus Rosarius* were two P-38 Lightnings, coded T9+XB and T9+MK (the latter fighter was re-captured by US troops at Schwangau in May of 1945), two P-47 Thunderbolts and three P-51 Mustangs. Of the fighters flown by 2.Staffel, German pilots rated the P-51 as the best Allied fighter of the war.

Apart from "BEETLE" at least two additional P-47s were flown by the *Luftwaffe*. One Thunderbolt was captured when it landed at Rome-Littoria airfield in May of 1944 and was delivered to Rechlin

in June being assigned the experimental code 8+6. Another P-47D coded T9+FK, was based at Hannover-Wunstorf during June and July of 1944. During the summer of 1944 a captured Thunderbolt was used to fly at least two reconnaissance missions over England photograph Allied preparations for the invasion of Europe.

It is believed that a total of two P-51B and four P-51D Mustangs were operated by the *Luftwaffe* during World War II. The first *Luftwaffe* Mustang is believed to have been captured at Cambrai on D-Day. The aircraft was tested at Rechlin with the Test Center code 8-7. Another Mustang, an Olive Drab over Neutral Gray P-51B coded T9+CK, was evaluated at Hannover-Wunstorf during the summer of 1944. Later the camouflage was removed and the bare metal T9+CK was seen in late 1944 at Paderborn airfield. Another bare metal P-51B, coded T9+HK was reported at Oranienburg, Rechlin, and Neuruppin. At least two *Luftwaffe* P-51Ds were repainted in a Dark Green camouflage and were later re-captured in a derelict condition by US troops in May of 1945.

A single Vought F4U-1 Corsair was carried on *Luftwaffe* strength reports for August and September of 1944. Although the aircraft was never flown, it was thoroughly inspected and provided the *Luftwaffe* with technical data on construction techniques and high power US radial engines. The Corsair had been obtained from Japan and had been shipped to Germany via submarine.

The acquisition had come about when an exchange of information was worked out between Rechlin and the Japanese Air Attache to Germany, Yoshio Nagamori. When the Germans found out that the Japanese had captured an F4U Corsair, they expressed their interest in studying the aircraft to Nagamori. Throughout the war, Japan and Germany exchanged data on Allied aircraft, mainly as written technical reports, although a limited amount of equipment was shared. The Corsair is believed to be the only shipment of an intact Allied aircraft from Japan to Germany. The *Luftwaffe* also sought data from the Japanese on the Boeing B-29 Superfortress since they expected to encounter the B-29 in combat over Europe.

*Such air combat training was the forerunner of the dissimilar air combat training programs such as "Red Flag" (US Air Force), "Top Gun" (US Navy), and other Aggressor types of training. There are persistent rumors that "Red Flag" training in the Nevada desert includes missions flown against an aggressor force made up of captured Soviet MiG fighters including MiG-17, 21s and 23s. At least one photograph of a MiG-21F-13 Fishbed C in US Air Force insignia has been published, lending some weight to these rumors.

Supermarine Spitfire Mk 9 believed to be of 2.Staffel of *Versuchsverband Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe*. All Allied aircraft operated by this training unit had the undersurfaces and tail painted Yellow. (Hans Obert)



(Above
late 11
Worish
recon
E. Will

P-47D,
ne and
derbolt
land to
ustangs
st *Luft-*
on D-
er code
P-51B
ing the
ne bare
another
enburg.
were re-
red in a

trenth
raft was
ftwaffe
wer US
nd had

forma-
attache
ut that
d their
ne war,
inly as
pment
t of an
fe also
ortress
urope.

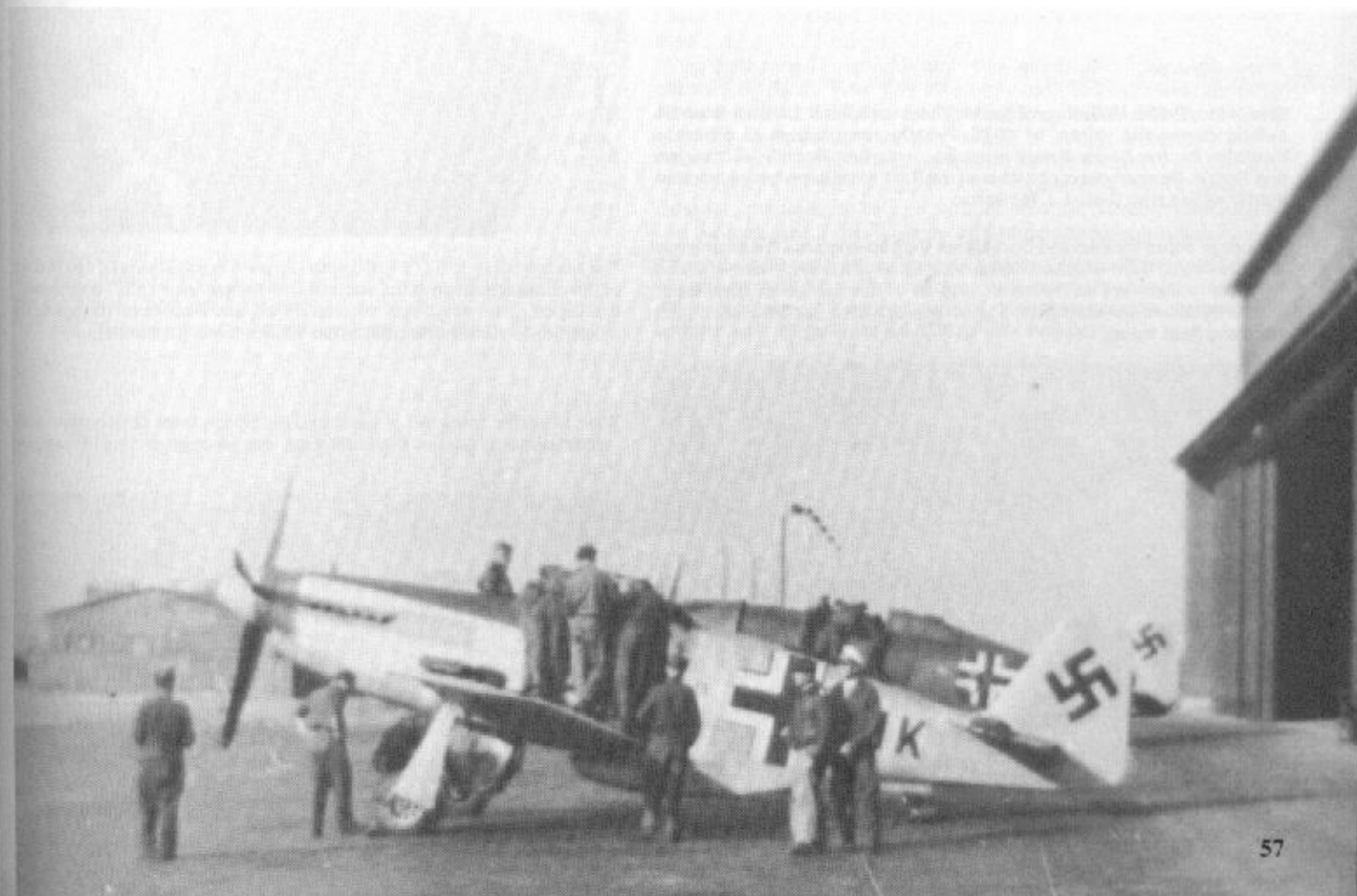
programs
fraining.
missions
MiG-17s
signia has

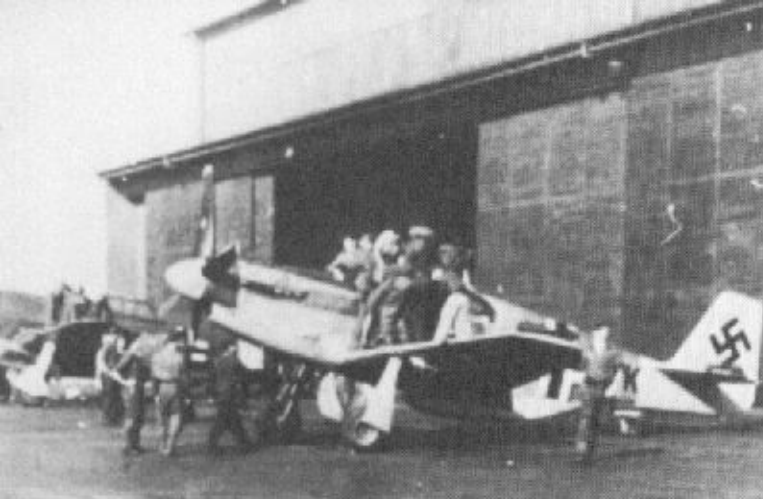
chsver-
ted by
(Hans



(Above) P-47D T9+LK was abandoned by 2.Staffel at Göttingen during late 1944 when the rapid Allied advance forced a withdrawal to Bad Worishofen. This P-47D may be the Thunderbolt that carried out several reconnaissance missions over England shortly before D-Day. (Thomas E. Willis)

(Below) These captured fighters were used by the *Beute Zirkus Rosarius* to train Luftwaffe fighter pilots on the fine points of combating Allied fighters. A P-51B (T9+HK) and P-47D (T9+FK) are being readied for another training sortie at Oranienburg near Berlin. Air combat training conducted by the "Circus" included theory, technical information, and mock combat. (Heinz J. Nowarra)

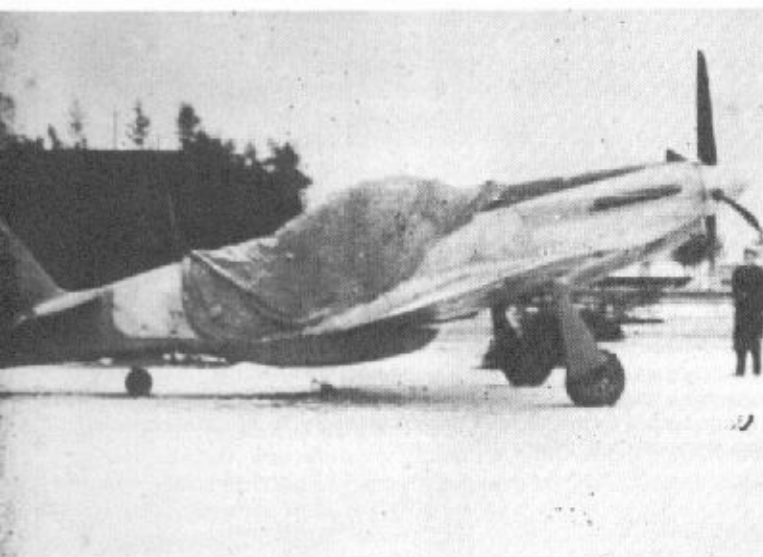




Luftwaffe pilots closely inspect the Mustang and Thunderbolt flown to their base by pilots of the *Beute Zirkus Rosarius*. Training sessions always included a period where the pilots could become familiar with the visiting aircraft. (Heinz J. Nowarra)

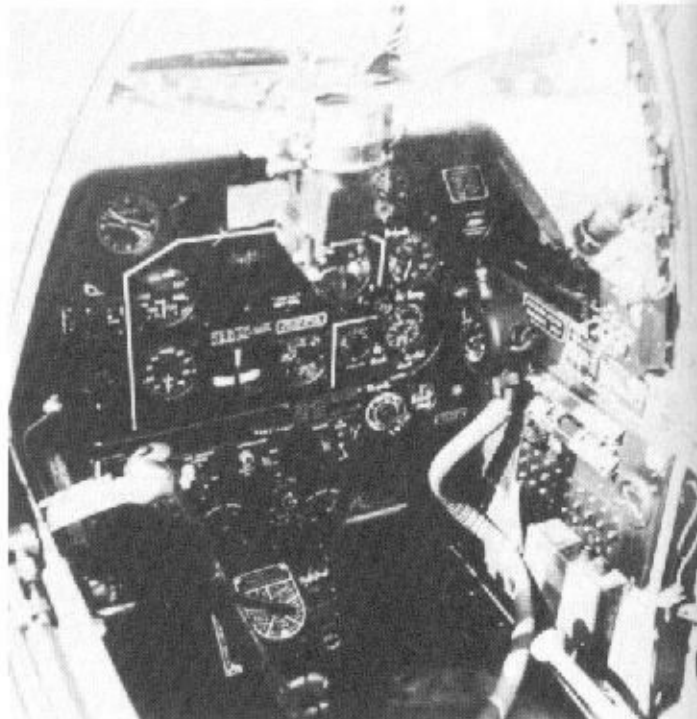
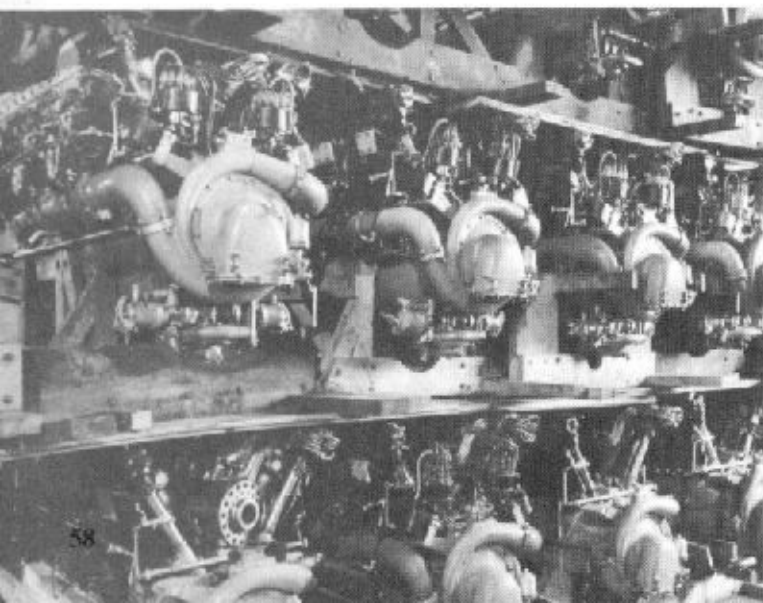


P-51B (T9+HK) during a demonstration tour at Neuruppin, Germany where Hungarian pilots, flying Focke Wulf Fw 190s, were given an opportunity to fly mock combat against the Mustang. When the "Circus" visited a fighter base, experienced pilots were allowed to fly the captured aircraft. (George Punka)



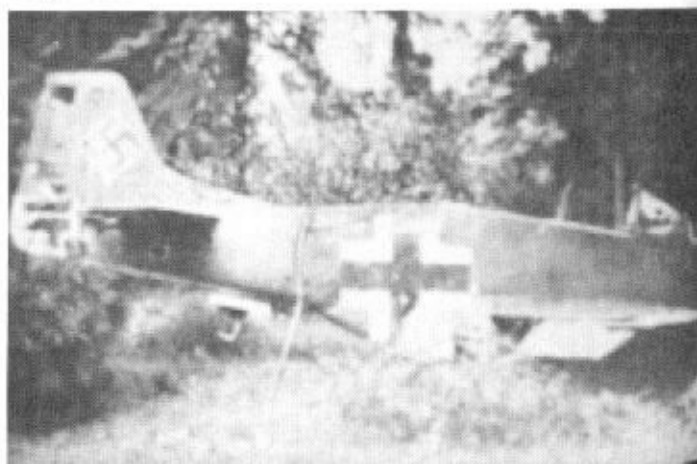
One of four P-51D Mustangs of the *Versuchsverband* at Leipzig-Brandis airfield during the Winter of 1945. P-51Ds were rebuilt at different locations for the *Beute Zirkus Rosarius*, including Rechlin, Göttingen and Zerbst. German pilots considered the P-51 to be it the best American fighter of the war. (Heinz J. Nowarra)

A storage depot for Packard-built Merlin V-1650 engines. These engines were salvaged from wrecked Mustangs, repaired at Paris-Nanterre, and shipped to Germany as needed. 2.Staffel of the *Versuchsverband der Luftwaffe* never suffered from a shortage of spare parts to keep their Mustang fleet flying.



The cockpit of P-51B (T9+HK) with German inscriptions added to some of the cockpit instruments, such as *Öl-Temperatur* (Oil Temperature), *Öl-Druck* (Oil Pressure), *Kraftstoff* (Fuel), and *Sauerstoff* (Oxygen). The inscriptions were hand painted in White. (George Punka)

The *Luftwaffe* operated at least two P-51Ds in Dark Green over Yellow undersurfaces. One of the Mustangs was re-captured by US troops in May of 1945.



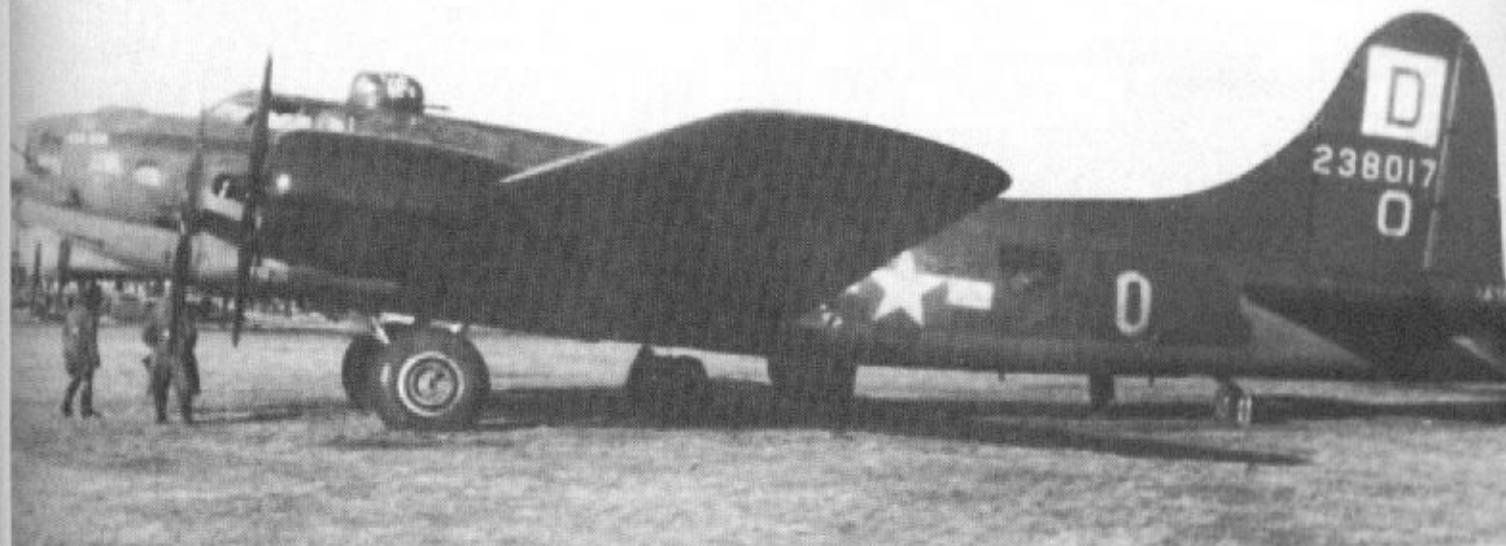
THE G

On
bombe
known
expect

As
leswig-
cloud
bombe
bombe
bombe

The
based
known
losses
reputa
1943 w
tresses
hard l
Royal
the mi

Du
were l
after t
Conti



The Hard Luck Group

On 3 March 1944, Eighth Bomber Command dispatched 748 bombers against the Nazi capital — Berlin. 'Big B', as Berlin was known to the bomber crews, was heavily defended and losses were expected to be heavy.

As the lead formations reached the enemy coast in the Schleswig-Holstein area they encountered unusually high and heavy cloud formations. Weather and a difficult assembly had cost the bombers so much fuel that the mission was recalled. Seventy-nine bombers that had already reached the coast, however, successfully bombed targets of opportunity, such as Wilhelmshaven. Eleven bombers and seven fighters were reported missing.

These losses included three bombers of the 100th Bomb Group based at Thorpe Abbot, Norfolk. The 100th Bomb Group was known as the 'Bloody Hundredth' because of the extremely heavy losses the Group had suffered early in its combat tour. The Group's reputation began on a mission against Regensburg on 17 August 1943 when nine of twenty-one B-17s dispatched were lost. Seven Fortresses were lost on a mission to Bremen on 8 October. The Group's hard luck reached a climax two days later during a raid on Münster. *Royal Flush* was the only survivor out of the twelve B-17s that began the mission.

During the Group's twenty-two month tour of duty, 177 aircraft were lost over enemy territory. By 14 October 1943, just three months after the Eighth Bomber Command initiated operations over the Continent, twenty-seven of the Group's original thirty-five aircraft

LT John Gossage landed his B-17G-25-DL (42-38017) at Schleswig airfield, Germany believing he was landing at a Swedish airfield on 3 March 1944. The damaged outboard engine has completely covered the nacelle with oil. (Heinz J. Nowarra)

had been lost. In the entire Group there was not a single complete crew of ten that had finished a combat tour of twenty-five missions, although a number of individual crewmen had survived their tours. The 'Bloody Hundredth' suffered major losses on missions where other Groups reported minor losses — the Group seemed to have a history of being at the wrong place at the wrong time.

On the 3 March 1944 mission to Berlin, three 100th Group B-17s were flying as lead element of the 3rd Air Division. When the raid was recalled, the three B-17s did not hear the recall and continued on alone toward Berlin. The three plane formation, led by CAPT Robert Lohof, with his wingmen Robert D. Vollmer and LT John G. Gossage, were in heavy clouds at 30,000 feet and failed to notice the rest of the Division turn back. After emerging from the clouds, they found their formation was alone — the only B-17s in the now bright blue skies over Germany.

The three B-17s quickly drew the attention of the *Luftwaffe*. A number of Focke Wulf Fw 190s attacked the Fortresses, shooting down two of the B-17s in rapid succession. CAPT Lohof's crew successfully bailed out and were taken prisoner, however, half of Vollmer's crew were killed during the battle. The last Fortress, a B-17G-25-DL (42-38017) coded XR*O, flown by 1st LT John G. Gossage, managed to escape with a damaged Number One engine and the engineer, T/SGT Arthur A. Cooper, badly wounded. Realiz-

Personnel of *Nachtjagdgeschwader 3* inspected the Fortress at Schleswig and reported that the damage could be easily repaired. After the battle damage was repaired and the ruined port engine replaced, the bomber was assigned to KG 200. (Peter Petrick)





Luftwaffe personnel anxiously peer upward at the sound of a passing aircraft. A chief concern for the Luftwaffe was the safety of captured aircraft. Allied fighters had standing orders to destroy any intact Allied aircraft in enemy hands and would strafe or bomb any captured aircraft they discovered. (Peter Petrick)



The Yellow mission markings painted on the nose, show that the Fortress had successfully completed ten missions before being forced down. The demarcation line between the Olive Drab and Gray camouflage on this Douglas built B-17G was slightly higher than on Boeing or Lockheed Vega built aircraft. (Heinz J. Nowarra)

ing that the damaged Fortress could not reach England, LT Gossage asked his navigator, Flight Officer Edward A. Werner, for a heading to neutral Sweden. T/SGT Michael G. Polanick sent out a radio message to Eighth Bomber Command reporting that they were in distress and were going to try to reach Sweden.

1st LT Howard G. Ball, the bombardier, had been in the Group longer than anyone else aboard the stricken B-17. He had arrived in England with crew 19, and was assigned to Donald K. Oakes' *High Life*, one of the Hundredth's original B-17s. During a mission to Le Bourget Air Field on 10 July 1943 the navigator Hiram Harris and Howard Ball were both wounded when the B-17F-85-BO (42-30080) was attacked by fighters. Harris continued to fly with *High Life*, but Ball's place was taken by 2nd LT Lloyd A. Hammarlund. On 17 August 1943, while attacking the Messerschmitt factory at Regensburg, *High Life* was badly hit. With two engines knocked out she became the first Flying Fortress to seek safety in Switzerland.

After Howard Ball recovered from his wounds, he was assigned to the 349th Squadron. By early March of 1944 only six men, beside Ball, remained from the original 100th Bomb Group aircrews. The others had been killed or were posted as missing in action.

LT John G. Gossage and his co-pilot Bertrand D. McNeill nursed their crippled Fortress toward Sweden. The navigator soon reported sighting an airfield that he was sure was the first suitable landing site inside Sweden. AT 1210 LT Gossage made a successful landing but the crew's visions of pretty Swedish girls and good food soon turned into a nightmare as German troops quickly surrounded the B-17. LT Gossage and his crew presented the Luftwaffe with an

intact B-17G by landing at Schleswig-Jagel airfield in Germany—not neutral Sweden.

The wounded engineer was transferred to Reserve Hospital II at Schleswig, where German doctors reported that he had lost a lot of blood but would recover. The rest of the crew, pilot John G. Gossage, co-pilot Bertrand D. McNeill, navigator Edward A. Werner, bombardier Howard G. Ball, radio operator Michael G. Polanick, ball turret gunner Thomas R. Wooderson, right waist gunner James W. Gregg, left waist gunner Donald B. Sackrider and tail gunner Arthur V. Congrove were sent to the Luftwaffe Transit and Interrogation Camp at Oberursel near Frankfurt am Main for processing as Prisoners of War.

The B-17G was inspected by personnel of *Nachtjagdgeschwader (NJG) 3* based at Schleswig who reported that the Fortress could be easily repaired. After the battle damage was repaired and a replacement engine installed the aircraft was assigned to KG 200.

Eighth Bomber Command reassigned the B-17's side code 'XR*O' to a new B-17G-35-DL (42-107137) flown by 1st LT Charles S. Harding. The new XR*O fared no better than the first. During a mission against Munich on 13 July 1944 the Fortress was damaged and diverted to Payerne air field in Switzerland.

Oil thrown from the damaged Number One engine splattered the fuselage near the top turret. During the fighter attack that crippled the Fortress, the engineer T/SGT Arthur A. Cooper was seriously wounded. He was taken to the Reserve Hospital II at Schleswig where German doctors reported that he would recover. (Peter Petrick)



TH
RO

Not
World
economy
America
ing bet
these fa
machi

English
America

A s
Center
York, b
Luftwa

The
success
returne
the 45t
reachi
fighter
causin
error le
bombe
lost a t
teen of
based
fighter

The
Gal, wa
pilot 2
2nd LT
LT An
Cline f
Rowde
Charles
S/SGT
gunner
S/SGT



The Boys From Rochester

Not all Americans served on the same side during the Second World War. As Adolf Hitler rose to power during 1933 Germany's economy steadily improved. A number of German emigrants and Americans of German decent returned to Europe in hopes of finding better living conditions and success in the old country. Many of these former Americans later served with the *Luftwaffe* and *Wehrmacht* at POW interrogation centers where their knowledge of English and American ways were of great value when questioning American and British prisoners.

A strange encounter took place at the *Luftwaffe* Interrogation Center at Oberursel. Both men involved were from Rochester, New York, but one was an Eighth Air Force bomber pilot, the other a *Luftwaffe* pilot and interrogator.

Their story began on 8 March 1944, just two days after the first successful daylight bombing of Berlin when the Eighth Air Force returned to the Nazi capital. 623 bombers departed England led by the 45th Bomb Wing (96th, 388th, and 452nd Bomb Groups). After reaching the Initial Point, the 45th Wing encountered heavy enemy fighter opposition. The lead navigator's Fortress was shot down, causing some confusion in the rest of the formation. A navigational error led to an incorrect turn coming off the IP and the formation bombed Wildau instead of its intended target. The 3rd Air Division lost a total thirty-seven B-17s, with the 45th Bomb Wing losing sixteen of them. The 45th Wing's youngest unit, the 452nd Bomb Group based at Deopham Green, Norfolk was badly mauled by *Luftwaffe* fighters, losing five B-17s.

Theodore J. MacDonald's B-17G-30-DL, (42-38211) *Sleepy Time Gal*, was one of these. The crew, on their fifth mission included: copilot 2nd LT John T. Godsey from Richmond, Virginia; navigator 2nd LT Jacob Moskowitz from Brooklyn, New York; bombardier 2nd LT Anton L. Harris from Salmon, Idaho; engineer T/SGT Merle L. Cline from Minot, North Dakota; radio operator T/SGT Willburn C. Rowden from Jefferson City, Missouri; right waist gunner S/SGT Charles R. Bardorf from Pottstown, Pennsylvania; left waist gunner S/SGT Wendell E. Dowell from Front Royal, Virginia; ball turret gunner S/SGT William J. Valigura from Temple, Texas; tail gunner S/SGT Robert L. Allen from West Wardsboro, Vermont.

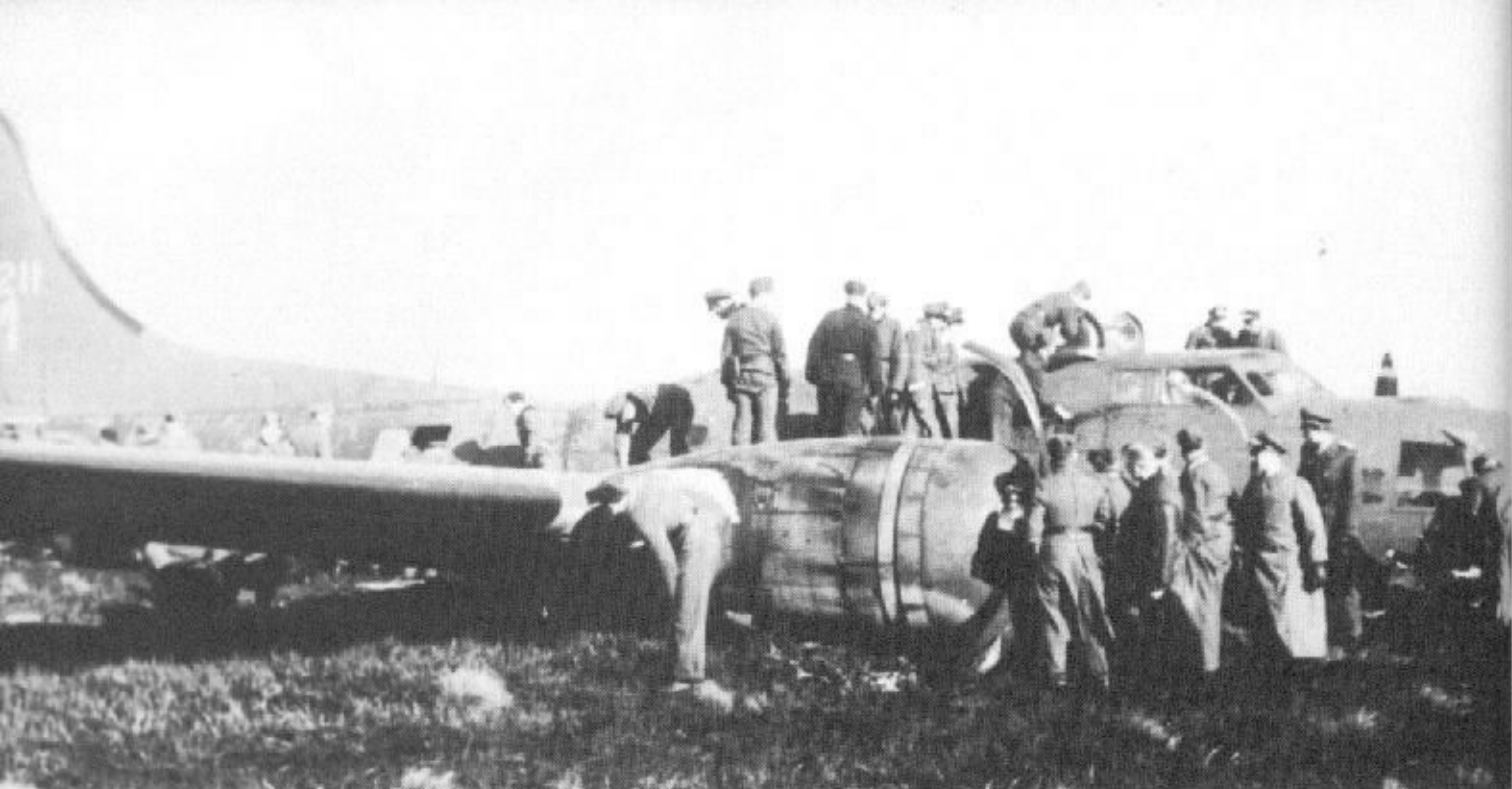
2nd LT Theodore MacDonald's B-17G-30-DL was forced down in a meadow near Nienburg on the Vesper river. The Fortress was one of five aircraft lost by the 452nd Bomb Group during the mission to Berlin on 8 March 1944. *Sleepy Time Gal* was one of the last Olive Drab B-17Gs built by Douglas at its Long Beach, California plant. (Willy Radinger)

The right waist gunner, Charles R. Bardorf, recalled the mission:

We took off from our air base, Deopham Green, Station 142, around 0600. This was to be our first daylight raid on Berlin. We had started for Berlin the day before, but they had scrubbed the mission because of bad weather over the target. We rendezvoused with the rest of the wing and headed out over the channel

Charles R. Bardorf, the tail gunner on *Sleepy Time Gal* bailed out and was captured by *Wehrmacht* troops. Bardorf was liberated by US troops at Stalag VII A at Mosburg, Germany on 29 April 1945. (Charles R. Bardorf)





around 1900. Everything was fine, except for a little flak, until our fighter escort left us around 1130.

I think we were flying about 30,000 feet when we were hit by German fighters. Our fighter escort had just left us and the relieving fighter group had not picked us up when we were attacked. The fighters hit us hard, two engines were knocked out, the radio room was all shot up, the tail gunner was hit, and the pilot said we were going down — bail out! About that time the fighters came around for a second pass. I looked out my side window and saw a Messerschmitt Bf 109 coming right at us.

I instinctively grabbed my .50 caliber machine gun and fired at him, holding the trigger down in one long burst. He kept coming, then all of a sudden he just blew up. The radio operator, Willie Rowden, was running around getting ready to bail out. The wounded tail gunner, Bob Allen, had crawled up to the side door and had passed out. Wendell Dowell, the other waist gunner, was standing there putting on his parachute. We opened the side door, but Bob Allen was in the way, so we hooked him to a static line and rolled him out. I realized that I had left my parachute behind so I went back to my machine gun station and put it on. By that time everyone had bailed out, so I jumped and pulled my ripcord right away.

The pilot, 2nd LT Theodore MacDonald recalled the tactics used by the German fighters that shot him down:

The Nazi fighters tried a new tactic, something we had never seen before. They flew at us in formation, line abreast. On the first pass their massed firepower knocked out one of my engines and blew a chunk off the tail. That first pass knocked us out of formation and on three engines we could not catch up with the rest of the Group. On the second pass they hit another engine, and started fires in the bomb bay and in the nose. The fire in the nose section destroyed both the bombardier's and navigator's parachutes. We normally carried only one spare chute, so we were one short.

MacDonald gave his parachute to John Moskowitz and rode the B-17 down alone. A pair of Messerschmitt Bf 109s joined up on the descending Fortress, taking up positions off each wing. Under the watchful eyes of the fighters, MacDonald carefully bellied in the crippled bomber, still carrying its full bomb load, near Nienburg at 1400. Remarkably *Sleepy Time Gal* suffered only minor damage in the crash landing. The crew was soon rounded up by the local police and *Wehrmacht*. The two wounded gunners, Bob Allen and Wendell Dowell, received medical treatment for their wounds at Reserve Hospital II at Hannover. The co-pilot John T. Godsey and bombardier

Anton L. Harris were reportedly killed by rifle fire from the ground while still in their parachutes. Charles Baudorf remembers his landing:

When I hit the ground I landed in a little stream. The chute came down on top of me and I became tangled in the shroud lines. While struggling with the chute, I heard shouting and screaming, and when I finally got clear and looked up, there stood twenty or thirty civilians with axes, pitchforks, and clubs. They kept coming closer, screaming "Killer", and other names. I put my hands up to surrender but they started after me with their weapons raised. A German soldier came running over with his pistol drawn and made the civilians get back. Later the Germans took us to a school house and eventually we were driven to an air base.

A salvage team from Hannover-Wunstorf Air base carefully examined the crashed bomber and decided that it was unrepairable. Once all usable items were salvaged from the aircraft it was dismantled and shipped to a scrap yard.

Theodore MacDonald was loaded on a train at Hannover and recalls the ride to the Luftwaffe Interrogation Center at Oherursel:

At Essen the train stopped and a number of Germans boarded. One soldier in a Nazi uniform with Staff Sergeant's stripes came walking down the aisle. I could see him from a distance and he looked vaguely familiar. All of a sudden I heard him shout, "Anyone here from Rochester, New York?" It was a shock for me. I looked again and was sure I recognized him. His name was Walter Hunemann and he had left Rochester in the late 1930s. I remembered that he used to hang around the corner of Park Avenue and Berkeley Street with the rest of the boys and later had become a pilot and skywriter. He came up to me and said, "You are from Rochester, aren't you? Sure, you are one of the MacDonald kids. You used to live on Vassar Street. Don't you remember me? I'm the Flying Dutchman!" I learned that Hunemann had joined the Luftwaffe and had flown Stuka dive bombers on the Polish front and was now on a rest leave. He had been assigned as an interrogator because of his intimate knowledge of the States. "Get smart, MacDonald", he said, "We're going to win this war easily. Come on and join the



Luftwaffe like I did!" I found his talk to be as cold as an iceberg. Before the train ride was over, Hanemann said, "I'll be back in Rochester before you will kid." At Oberursel I was interrogated by Hanemann and others. I was placed in a compartment six feet long by three feet wide and given 'the heat treatment'. The temperature was kept between 95 and 100 degrees and the lights were left on twenty-four hours a day. They kept me confined like this for ten days. Finally they herded me into a box car and sent me to Stalag Luft I on the Baltic Sea.

Ted Mac Donald returned to United States in May of 1945 and forgot the words of his former German captor. On Armistice Day of 1943, McDonald once again met Hanemann, in a candy shop in Rochester! Hanemann had returned to Rochester — not as a victor, but as an ordinary business man.

In the crash landing the Fortresses chin turret was ripped away causing major damage to the nose. Luftwaffe personnel from Hannover-Wunstorf air base who inspected *Sleepy Time Gal* reported the aircraft was unrepairable and began removing usable equipment. (Willy Radinger)

Ted MacDonald successfully crash landed the Fortress with a full bomb load on board. Before the Luftwaffe could start salvage operations, the bombs had to be removed from the wreck and disarmed. (Willy Radinger)





SUNSHINE

SUNSHINE of the 719th Squadron, 449th Bomb Group landed at Venegono airfield in Northern Italy on 29 March 1944 with the crew believing they were landing at an airfield in neutral Switzerland. (Roberto Gentili)

The *Luftwaffe* operated a small number of B-24 Liberators, one of which was **SUNSHINE** a B-24H-5-FO (42-52106) of the 449th Bomb Group, 15th Air Force.

On 29 March 1944, the 449th Bomb Group, based at Grottaglie, Italy received the order for a maximum effort mission against the marshalling yards at Bolzano, close to the Italian-Austrian border. The marshalling yard had been targeted because it was an important part of the German supply route over the Brenner Pass into Italy. The maximum effort order meant that all aircraft which were reasonably airworthy would fly, including **SUNSHINE**.

The war weary B-24H had begun its career with the 716th Squadron, but was now attached to the 719th Squadron. **SUNSHINE** was flown by 2nd LT Gifford T. Hemphill. LT Hemphill's crew had arrived in Italy as replacements in December of 1943. Individual crew members flew several missions as replacements in other crews before being assigned to **SUNSHINE** as a crew. During one of these missions, the original navigator, Robert 'Bob' Feldman of Chicago, was shot down spending the remainder of the war in *Stalag Luft 1*. His replacement was 2nd LT Samuel Guttenberg.

The crew had completed five missions since being assigned the Liberator including one mission they were forced to abort after an engine failure. **SUNSHINE**'s ground crew, led by SGT Daniel Wooldridge of Tulsa, Oklahoma; worked throughout the night to repair the engine with parts salvaged from other, more severely damaged Liberators. By dawn the engine was repaired and the Liberator was ready for the maximum effort mission against Bolzano. At 0821 on 29 March 1944 **SUNSHINE** took off on what would be its final flight in American colors. The crew, pilot 2nd LT Gifford T. Hemphill, co-pilot 2nd LT Nelson D. Wood, navigator 2nd LT Samuel Guttenberg, bombardier 2nd LT John D. Puff, engineer T/SGT Francis J. 'Frank' Talisano, radio operator T/SGT Dominic D. Lombardelli, waist gunner S/SGT D.C. Powell, nose gunner S/SGT Orel Malcolm Harper, tail gunner S/SGT Angelo P. Melchiarre, and ball turret gunner PFC Eugene W. 'Pat' Briggs would soon find themselves guests of the *Luftwaffe*.

Luftwaffe personnel who inspected the Liberator at Venegono reported that the B-24 needed two replacement engines and minor repairs before it could be flown out to Germany. (Alberto Salvati)

The nose gunner, Mal Harper, remembered the mission as if it was yesterday:

Enroute to the target we saw a squadron of German Messerschmitt Bf 109s off to our right. We tightened the formation to maximize our mutual firepower and braced ourselves for their attack. For some unknown reason, the fighters chose not to attack. We pressed on toward Bolzano but before reaching the target, our aircraft's defective engine once again malfunctioned and had to be feathered. With only three good engines, we began to lose speed and altitude. We were unable to keep up with the formation and knew we would be easy prey for enemy fighters. Fighters waited for a formation break up, then singled out and brought down the stragglers. We were now a straggler.

Our replacement navigator, Samuel Guttenberg, was flying his first mission with us that day and hastily plotted a course to the nearest point of safety — Switzerland. We salvaged our load of five 1,000 pound bombs onto the side of a barren mountain, and hoped for the best.

We scanned the sky for enemy fighters but saw none. We continued to lose altitude and the lower we flew, the more inhospitable and ominous the mountains below us became. We continued on course toward Switzerland, and just when we thought thought we would make it a burst of flak, possibly from Venegono, damaged a second engine causing the B-24 to begin losing altitude rapidly.

There was an excited exchange over the intercom and a brief moment of indecision whether to jump or stay with the bomber. The navigator shouted to the pilot that we were about two minutes from Switzerland! We decided to stay with the Liberator while the pilot tried to stretch our rapid descent enough to cross the border into Switzerland and safety. We sighted an airfield that we thought was across the border and prepared for an emergency landing.

SUNSHINE'S crew in front of a Liberator at Bruning Air Force Base in Nebraska before the men deployed overseas. From left to right: John D. Puff, Robert Feldman (he was replaced by 2nd LT Samuel Guttenberg), Nelson D. Wood, Gifford T. Hemphill. Front row: Francis J. Talisano, D.C. Powell, Dominic D. Lombardelli, Angelo P. Melchiarre, Orel M. Harper and Eugene W. Briggs. (Malcolm Harper)



SUNSHINE
gono a
ner Ar
(giving
an Am

Th
Vares
Maga
mome

w
ri
se
p

Th
Liber
and s
comp
pilots
Liber
on SU
large
M

o
I
w
w
A
A
b

The c
'surre
transf
origin



SUNSHINE'S crew were involved in a German propaganda film at Venegono airfield near Varese Italy. The crewman in the center is the tail gunner Angelo P. Melchiarre, followed by the nose gunner Malcolm Harper (giving the 'V for Victory' sign). The third man was an Italian dressed as an American flyer. (Heinz J. Nowarra)

The Liberator made a hard landing at Venegono airfield near Varese, only three minutes flying time from the safety of Locarno-Magadino airstrip in southern Switzerland. Mal remembered the moments after the landing:

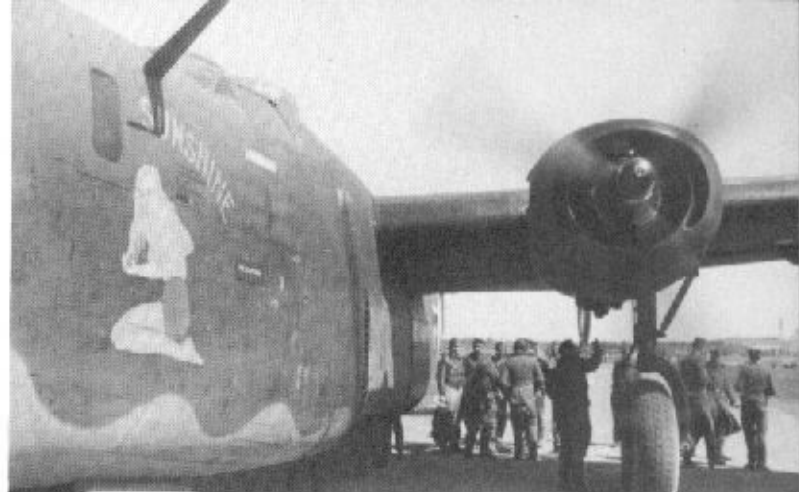
As we exited the aircraft we were surrounded by armed and very threatening soldiers. We could not understand their hostility because we thought we had made it to Switzerland. We soon learned that we were not guests of the Neutral Swiss, but prisoners of the Italian Fascists.

The Italians and Germans at Venegono discovered that the Liberator was basically undamaged. With two replacement engines and some minor repairs to the tail section, **SUNSHINE** would be completely airworthy. A *Luftwaffe* Fieseler Storch brought in two test pilots with B-24 experience to Venegono who would ferry out the Liberator once repairs were completed. *Balkenkreuz* were painted on **SUNSHINE**, replacing the American national insignia and a large identification band was added to the fuselage.

Mal Harper recalled the crew's first days as POWs:

We were immediately taken to a small building, stripped of our clothing and given a two piece burlap garment to wear. The Italian officers in charge of us had called the Germans and we were taken outside and made to stand in a field under guard until the Nazis arrived. Before long they came, put us in an open Army truck and transported us through downtown Milano (Milan) to the city's jail. The following morning we were again transported some distance to another town and another jail. I

The crew of **SUNSHINE** rest between 'takes' during the filming of the 'surrender' movie. After the propaganda film was finished the crew was transferred to *Stalag Luft I* at Barth where they were reunited with their original navigator, Bob Feldman. (Bundesarchiv)



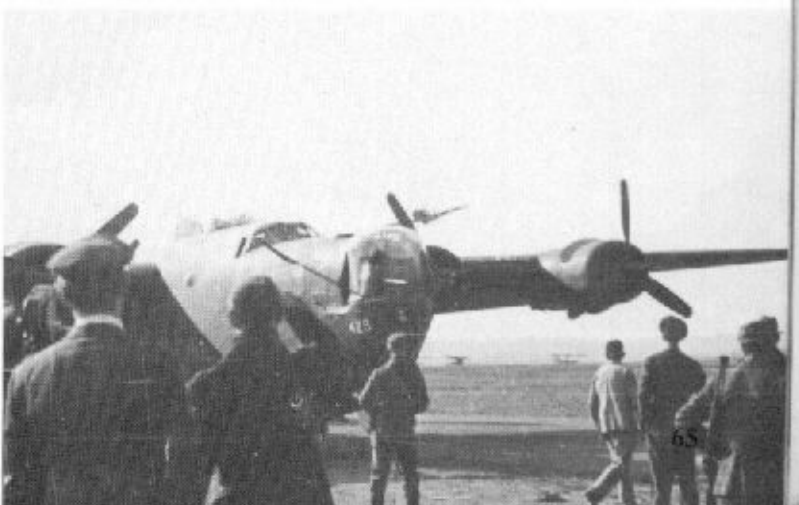
A German officer of the *Propaganda Kompanie* instructs the crew of **SUNSHINE** for their roles in the filming of their 'voluntary surrender'. Camera angles had to be carefully planned to avoid showing the *Balkenkreuz* and identification band already painted on the fuselage. (Bundesarchiv)

*believe the same thing happened the following day. Each night and morning we were interrogated. As part of the interrogation we were told that the next stop would produce more severe forms of interrogation. Finally we were placed in solitary confinement in some Italian town. I am not sure where. Keep in mind, that the Germans asked all the questions and told us nothing. After several days of solitary, our clothes were finally returned to us and we were put aboard a Junkers Ju-52 and flown to Venegono where we saw **SUNSHINE** again — for the last time.*

At the airfield we were lined up against the Liberator and, while German motion picture cameras filmed us, were told to show the German people that we were happily coming over to their side. The film was of all ten of the crew walking toward the front of the aircraft as though we had just landed and deplaned. I made the Germans unhappy by giving the 'V for Victory' hand signal and was warned not to do it again, but I never stopped. After several 'takes' a stranger in flying clothes similar to ours, stepped in between the radio operator, Dominic Lombardelli, and me and walked a few paces with us. He immediately departed after the film was shot.

After the filming the crew was transferred to the *Luftwaffe* Interrogation Center at Oberursel and finally to *Stalag Luft I* at Barth, where they were re-united with their original navigator, Bob Feldman. A few days after the propaganda film was finished, two *Luftwaffe* pilots flew the B-24 via Munich-Riem to Rechlin. After a short evaluation period, **SUNSHINE** was transferred to the *Erprobungsstelle der Luftwaffe, Aussenstelle Werneuchen*, the radio and radar research center. A Meddo-Berlin radar system was installed

An Italian fighter makes a low pass on **SUNSHINE** for the benefit of the movie cameras as German and Italian officers watch the filming. (Nino Arena)





An Italian officer dressed in American flying clothes discusses the Liberator with a German soldier. The German repainted the small detail stencil between the name and pin up girl changing the aircraft designation and serial number. The original inscription read B-24H-5-FO, Air Force Serial No. 42-52106, which was changed to B-24H-6-CO, Serial No. 42-52186. (Bundesarchiv)

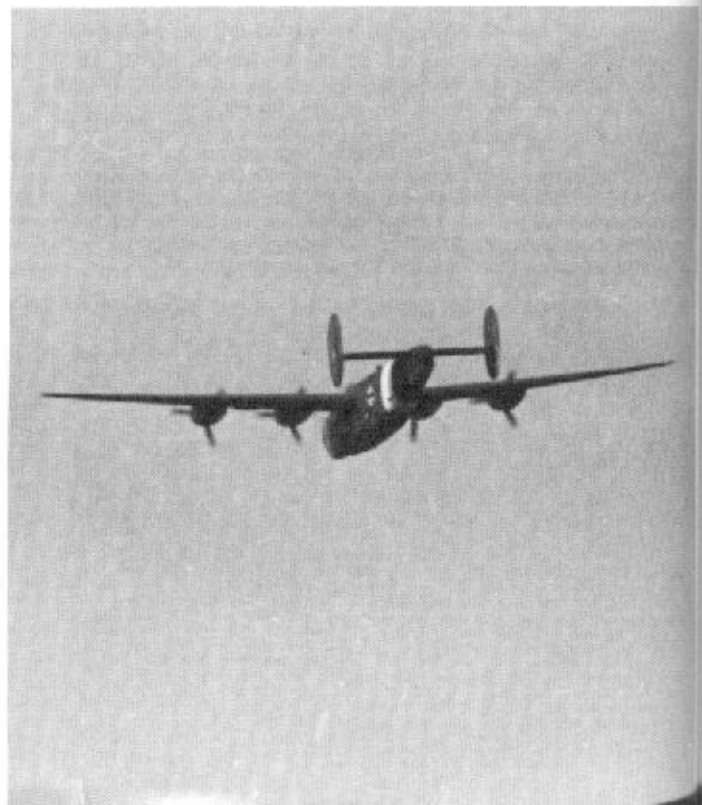
aboard the Liberator and after a short test period, the B-24H began intruder missions against Royal Air Force bomber formations over Germany. The large ID stripes were overpainted and the *Balkenkreuze* were enlarged. With its twin tails, the Liberator was similar in silhouette to the four-engine heavy bombers flown by the RAF. The Germans were sure that **SUNSHINE** would be able to join the British bomber stream under the cover of darkness and with her Meddo-Berlin radar, she would be able to monitor its direction and altitude.

These intruder operations continued until August of 1944. Technical problems with the radar grounded **SUNSHINE** for a short period, however, the Liberator was back in service with the *Aussenstelle Werneuchen* during September of 1944. The large ID stripes were overpainted and the *Balkenkreuze* enlarged. With its twin tails, the Liberator was similar in silhouette to the four-engine heavy bombers flown by the RAF. The Germans were sure that **SUNSHINE** would be able to join the British bomber stream under the cover of darkness and with the Meddo-Berlin radar, pass the number of aircraft in the stream and monitor its direction and altitude.



(Left) **SUNSHINE** on the taxiway at Venegono airfield. The Germans flew in an experienced B-24 crew from the Test and Research Center at Rechlin to ferry the Liberator to Germany. (Bundesarchiv)

(Below) The Liberator enroute to Germany. The identification band on the rear fuselage was in Yellow. The B-24 was flown via Munich-Riem to Rechlin where it was evaluated before being transferred to the Radio and Radar Research Center. (Bundesarchiv)



(Below) The Liberator prepares to depart for Rechlin. **SUNSHINE'S** pin up girl was carried only on the port side of the fuselage, however, the name was painted on both sides. **MARY** is painted on the nose turret and a cartoon character of the devil with the warning **LOOK OUT I'M POISON** was carried under the turret. (Bundesarchiv)



The Lib
nose
fields.
to the
gear a

Luftw
During
missio
Liber
(Hein

Germa
SHINE
kreuz
over p

nes dis-
ermans
and pin-
number.
e Serial
D, Serial

od, the
r Force
stripes
larged.
houette
e RAF.
be able
of dark-
be able

gust of
ISUN-
or was
during
painted
ills, the
ngined
s were
British
with the
in the

ns flew
nter at

and on
Riem to
Radio



The Liberator was unpopular with German crews because of its weak nose wheel, which proved to be unsuited for operations from grass fields. After a short evaluation period at Rechlin the B-24 was transferred to the *Aussensalle Werneuchen* for installation of special electronics gear and a Meddo-Berlin radar set. (Manfred Griehl)

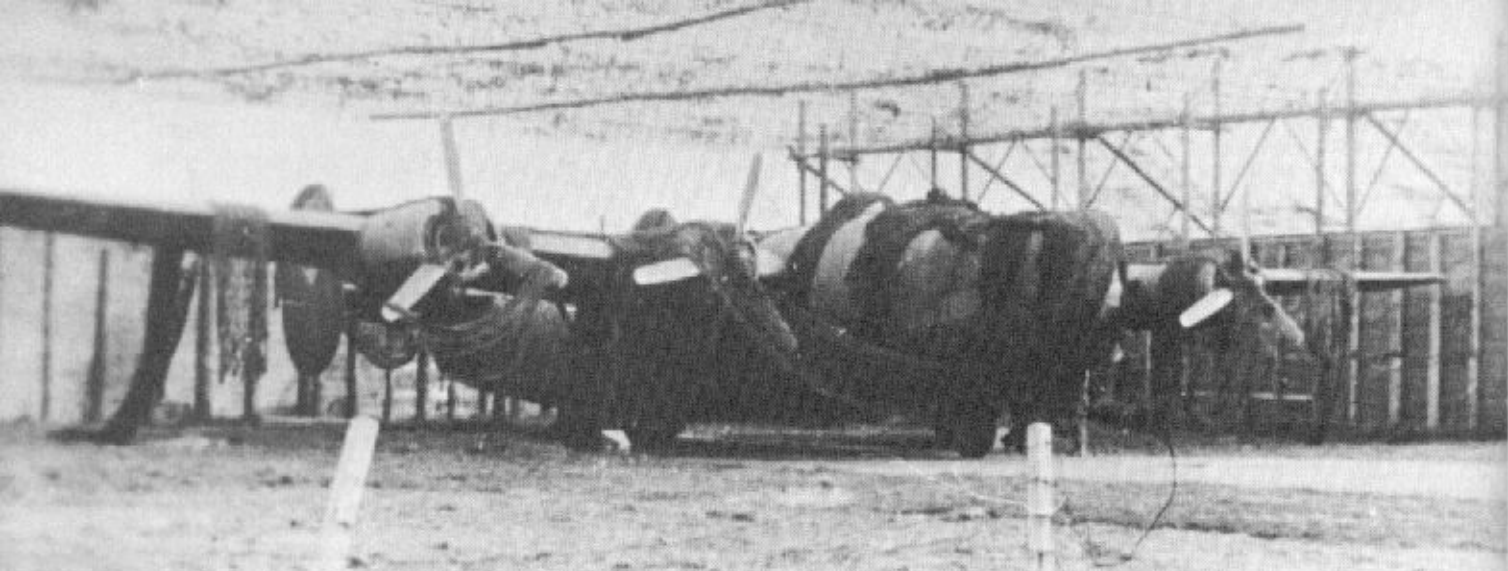
Luftwaffe officers inspect the Meddo-Berlin radar fitted on *Sunshine*. During September of 1944 the Liberator was used to conduct intruder missions against RAF bomber formations over the Reich. At night the Liberator's twin tailed silhouette could easily pass for an RAF bomber. (Heinz J. Nowarra)

German technicians service the Meddo-Berlin radar installed on *SUNSHINE*. For her nocturnal missions the B-24 carried enlarged *Balkenkreuz* on the fuselage and the Yellow fuselage identification band was over painted. (Heinz J. Nowarra)



The Liberator stopped at Munich-Riem airfield in Bavaria enroute to Rechlin. All American Group markings were painted out, however, the pin-up girl and nickname were left intact. The Volkswagen passenger car was the forerunner of the popular Volkswagen 'Beetle'. The 'People's car' was first placed into production at Hitler's personal order. (Manfred Griehl)





The End of KO+XA

On 20 June 1944, Eighth Bomber Command dispatched a force of 1,400 bombers escorted by 700 fighters against the synthetic oil plants in Germany and Poland. Three Combat Wings of the 2nd Air Division were to bomb the Hydrierwerke Politz AG at Politz, north of Stettin (Szczecin, Poland). This was the second raid against this plant, and the first raid, on 29 May 1944, had shown the target to be strongly defended.

The 245 B-24s of the 2nd Air Division came under fighter attack before the force reached the German coast. Messerschmitt III 109Gs of III/JG 300 based at Jüterborg and Me 410s of ZG 26 from Königsberg met the bombers over the Island of Rugen in the Baltic Sea at 0900. The first Liberator shot down fell to *Feldwebel* Buchholz of II/ZG 26. Most of the losses suffered by the 14th Combat Wing are credited to II/ZG 26, but they paid a high price. Twenty-five ZG 26 crews were reported as either killed or missing. Before the American formations reached the target, a number of B-24s were seriously damaged and set course for neutral Sweden. Despite the heavy fighter attacks, the bombers pressed their attack with the lead bomber of the 44th Bomb Group dropping its bombs on Politz at 0948.

The Liberators unloaded over 278 tons of bombs on the target, severely damaging the installation. For a period following the raid production at the Hydrierwerk fell to almost zero. Production was disrupted and synthetic oil production fell from 214,000 tons in March to 74,250 tons in June.

The bomber crews reported flak over the target as intense and accurate; one German anti-aircraft unit, *Flakbrigade Gross-Stettin*, is credited with shooting down eighteen bombers over the target and

Major Chester B. Hackett (center) crash landed near Stettin after being crippled by flak during a raid against Politz on 20 June 1944. He made a successful landing in a farmers field, but the Liberator's nose wheel hit a ditch and broke away. (Chester B. Hackett)



A well camouflaged KO+XA parked in its revetment at Wackerleben during early April of 1945. KO+XA once flew with the 389th Bomb Group as a Pathfinder Liberator equipped with H2S radar. MAJ Hackett crash landed the Liberator near Stettin on 20 June 1944. When repairs were completed the B-24 was assigned to KG 200. (Karl Kossler)

damaging a number of others. The Messerschmitts of JG 300 and ZG 26 continued to attack the bomber formations until they left the enemy coast. Thirty-four Liberators were shot down and eighteen landed in neutral Sweden, where they were interned for the remainder of the War.

One of the Liberators which failed to return from the Politz raid would see further service — with the *Luftwaffe*. The Liberator (41-28779), a H2S equipped B-24H-15-DT, a Pathfinder Force Liberator, had flown the mission as Deputy Lead for the 448th Bomb Group based at Seething, Norfolk.

In January of 1944, a Pathfinder Squadron was formed within each Air Division. In the 2nd Air Division the Pathfinder unit was the 564th Squadron, 389th Bomb Group. The squadron received twelve H2S equipped B-24Hs on 18 March 1944 and began providing Pathfinder services four days later. In May, another Pathfinder squadron, the 66th Squadron based at Shipdham, Norfolk, was established doubling the Pathfinder strength of the 2nd Air Division. The H2S aircraft were assigned the code name 'Mickey' and by the Summer of 1944, almost all missions were carried out with the Lead and Deputy Lead flying in a 'Mickey' Liberator.

For the Politz mission Colonel Gerry L. Mason, commander of the 448th Bomb Group and Major Chester B. Hackett Jr., commander of the 715th Squadron each flew in a 'Mickey' Liberator flown by 389th Bomb Group crews. COL Mason was the mission Command Pilot leading the 20th Combat Wing, while MAJ Hackett, his deputy, flew off his right wing in Liberator 41-28779. MAJ Hackett's crew included co-pilot CAPT Purlek, bombardier CAPT Garland East, navigator CAPT Switzer. LT Rose had been scheduled to fly as co-pilot, but since CAPT Purlek wanted to fly the mission, Rose filled in as a gunner. The other gunners in the crew were SGT's Albert Flack and Glenn Naze. MAJ Hackett remembered the mission:

The mission was uneventful enroute to the target with the usual flak and German fighters. We had escort fighters for the entire trip to Stettin and over the target. The weather was clearing as we proceeded across Germany and by the time we changed course just North of Stettin the sky was absolutely clear. We could look over to the South and watch each twelve ship formation make their bomb runs on Politz. We were flying at 30,000 feet and the anti-aircraft fire over the target was heavy. Before turning South to the IP I called COL Jerry Mason and asked him to consider changing our altitude to avoid some of the flak.

This was my 24th mission and COL Mason had only recently joined our Group to replace our previous Group Commander. He called me back having decided that we would not change altitude. So we made our run at the same altitude as the formations ahead of us. Just after we dropped our bombs the air-

KO+XA
outsid
days l
takeo

craft seemed to stop in mid-air. We had taken flak hits in the nose section, bomb bay, fuel tanks and waist compartment. Dropping out of formation I called COL Mason and told him I was going to try to reach Sweden. Power on all four engines was just about nil so I called the crew and directed them to bail out. As it turned out ten men jumped. One of the waist gunners called and informed me that LT Rose had been hit and was hurt badly. I instructed him to attach a static line to Rose's parachute, help him out the waist window and pull his ripcord for him.

After this I unbuckled as a faint odor of smoke began filling cockpit. I was about to jump out the open bomb bay when I saw CAPT East walking back from rear of the plane up the cat walk into the bomb bay. I asked him why he had not jumped. He told me that he had no parachute. He was wearing a harness but no parachute pack. The bombardier uses a chest type parachute. He just keeps the harness on and places the chest pack in back of him. This enables him to operate the bomb sight. A piece of flak had hit a walk around oxygen bottle which had exploded, ripping his chest pack. He had gone back to the rear of the aircraft looking for another chute. There was none to be found and he said LT Rose was dead in the waist section. He also stated that fuel was running all over the rear bomb bay. With CAPT East missing his parachute and LT Rose dead, I really had only one course of action, I told East to climb into the co-pilot's seat and I got back in the pilot's seat.

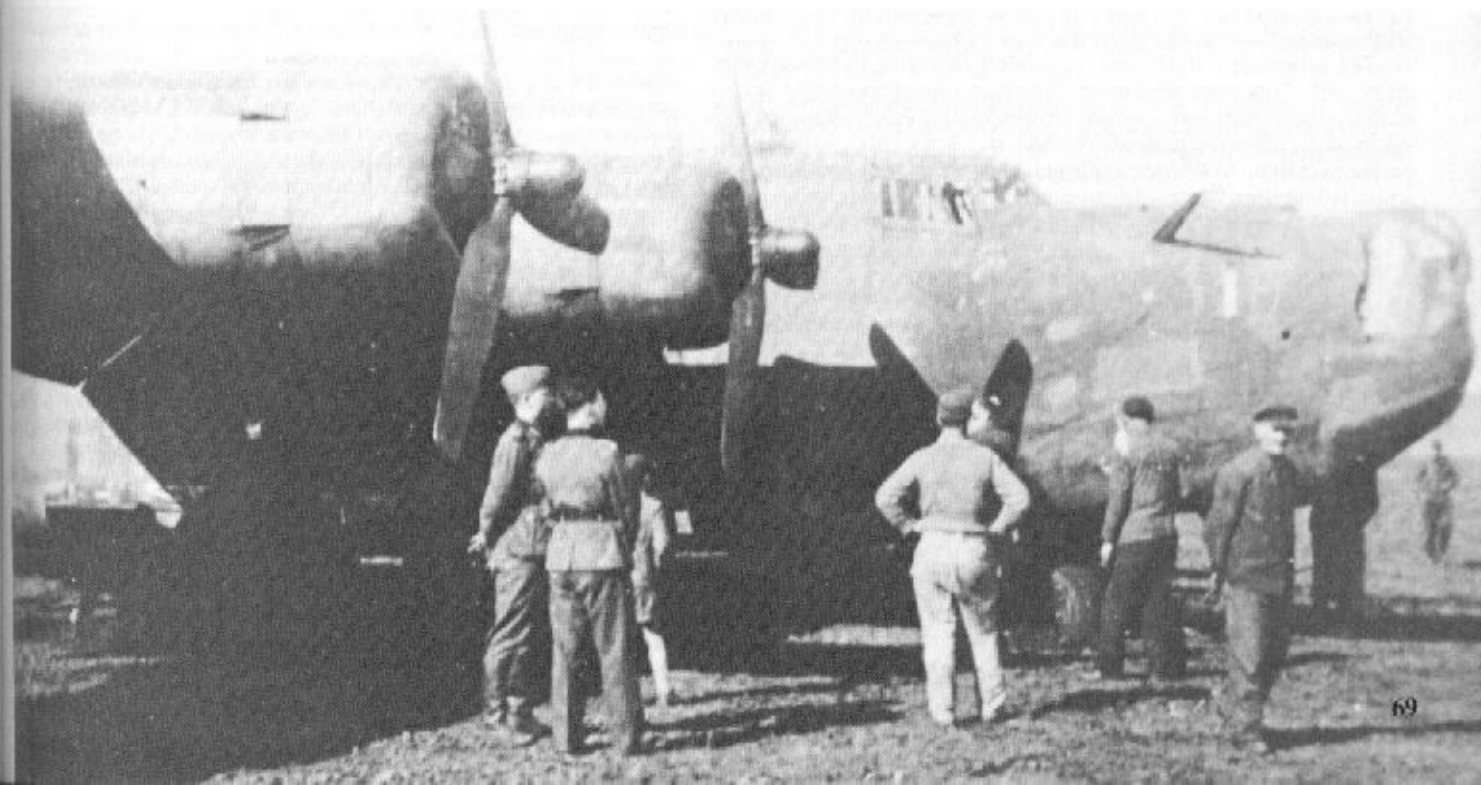
East and I proceeded to shut down everything, all power and electrical equipment, to lessen the chances of a fire. After everything was shut down the smoke in the cockpit subsided. All this took only a few minutes and I told him I intended to crash land. He said for me to go ahead and bail out, he would take the aircraft down. There was no way I would allow this, so we proceeded to descend, our altitude was now down to about 15,000 feet. As we continued our glide, two Me 109s attacked us from the left side. The only thing I could think to do was to dive, pick up speed and turn into them closing the distance between as quickly as possible. That was the last I saw of the fighters until we were about to land in a grain field. When we got down to about 2,000 feet, I started looking for a field and circled the one I had picked out. There was very little wind and at about 300 feet we lined up on the field and lowered the landing gear, however, I touched down too fast. After rolling about 2,000 feet we hit a

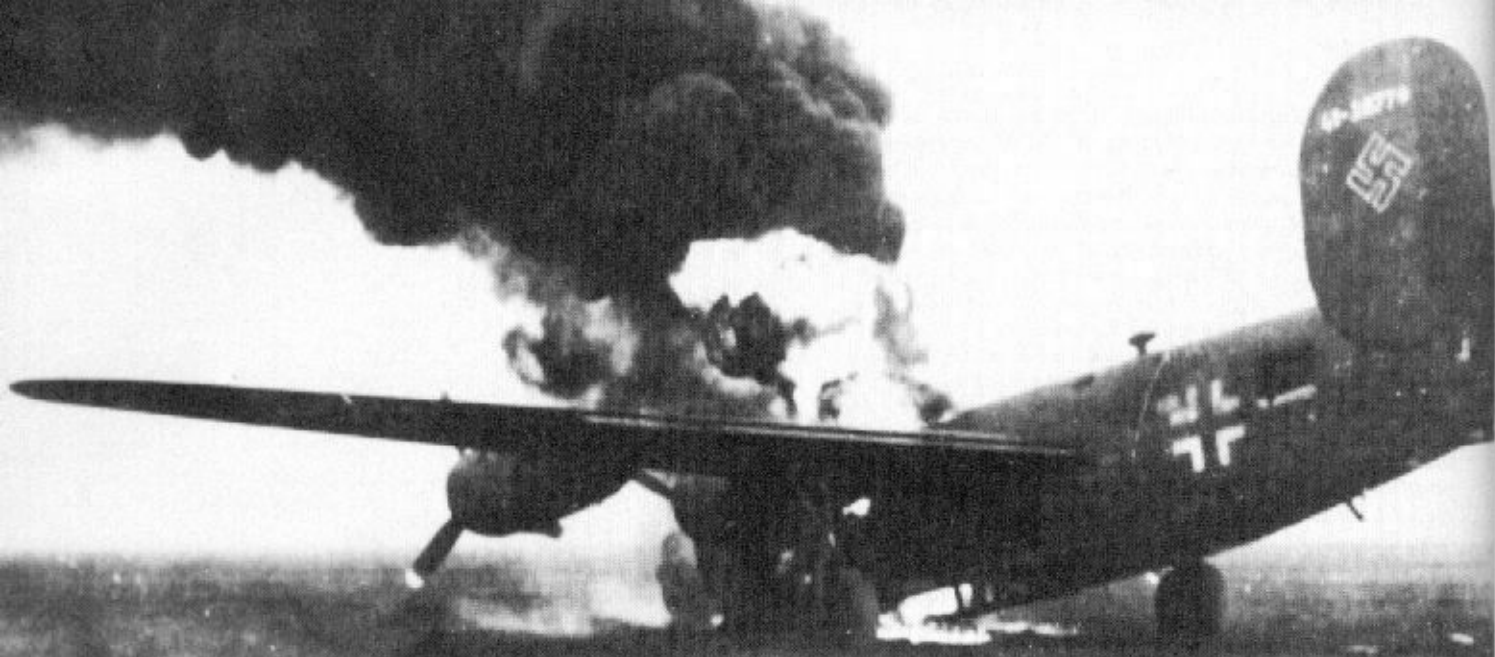
NO+XA of KG 200 was forced to make an emergency landing in a field outside Quedlinburg on 6 April 1945 collapsing the nose wheel. Six days later the wheel was repaired and Liberator was ready to attempt a takeoff. (Karl Kossler)



Luftwaffe pilots flying captured American aircraft always run the risk of friendly fire. Friendly flak damage forced Oberfeldwebel Rauchfuss (center) to make an emergency landing outside Quedlinburg. The holes in the rear fuselage were caused by shell fragments that killed one of the twenty-nine passengers aboard the Liberator. (Karl Kossler)

ditch and snapped the nose wheel. The aircraft came up on its nose, but did not flip over. As the plane slowed, the tail section settled back down and we slowly came to a stop. CAPT East immediately went down into the bombardier's compartment and detonated the explosives on the Norden bomb sight and H2S radar system, destroying them both. During the landing approach I had seen a Me 109 crash a short distance away. When East and I got out of the aircraft, two P-51 Mustangs flew over, turned and climbed for their flight back to England.





In the early morning of 13 April 1945, Oberfeldwebel Rauchfuss attempted to takeoff, however, the weakened nose wheel dug in and collapsed. The crew reluctantly decided to destroy the Liberator. Holes were punched in the fuel tanks and the B-24 was set on fire with a flare pistol. (Karl Kossler)

It was a great feeling to witness the dedication and bravery of our fighter friends. We had crashed a few miles Northwest of Stettin and were immediately surrounded by the German populace. They had watched our approach and landing, converging on us very quickly. They took us to the local village and eventually turned us over to the Luftwaffe. After being interrogated, we were sent to Stalag Luft 3 near Sagan, Germany.

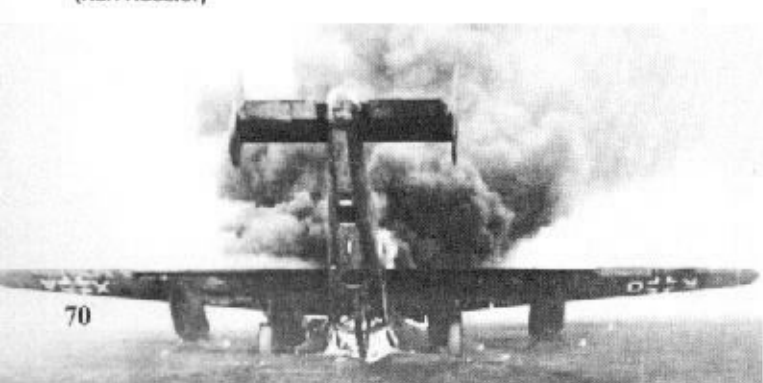
The Luftwaffe inspected the Liberator and decided the aircraft was worth repairing. The guns and damaged H2S equipment were removed from the aircraft. Balkenkreuze and the Stammkennzeichen KO+XA were painted on the Liberator replacing the American markings. The Liberator was allocated to the I Gruppe of Kampfgeschwader KG 200 and was involved in clandestine missions behind the Allied lines. The B-24H was based at Wackerleben together with three Boeing B-17s.

By early April of 1945 I/KG 200's situation had become critical. Fuel was in short supply and Allied air superiority had halted most of their activities. Soviet troops had pressed their advance to the Oder river and leading Soviet elements were not far from Wackerleben. The decision was made to evacuate all aircraft to Fürstentfeldbruck in Bavaria to escape the advancing Russians.

The evacuation flight was scheduled for early morning on 6 April 1945. The crews were briefed the previous night and each aircraft would fly to Bavaria singly. Oberleutnant Wache instructed the crews of the three B-17s, the B-24 and a number of Heinkel He 111s on the best route to Fürstentfeldbruck to avoid friendly anti-aircraft units. It had been impossible to notify the anti-aircraft units of the flight and the crews knew the risk of friendly fire would be great.

At 0530 the bombers were prepared for the mission, weather conditions were poor with a ceiling of 1,800 feet. A heavy rain fell the

It is believed that Oberfeldwebel Rauchfuss was the last Luftwaffe pilot to fly a B-24. The Liberator's Stammkennzeichen KO+XA was carried on the underside of the wings, but was not painted on the fuselage. (Karl Kossler)



night before had turned the airfield into a sodden, muddy mire.

A crew of four had been allocated to the B-24; pilot Oberfeldwebel Rauchfuss, radio operator Oberfeldwebel Monkemeyer, engineer Feldwebel Lange, and a crew chief. Except for personal belongings and spare parts, no freight could be carried. As the crew boarded the Liberator, they found twenty-nine passengers huddled in the fuselage. The stowaways were officers, soldiers and civilians from the nearby village of Wackerleben, and they all wanted desperately to escape the advancing Soviets.

To attempt a takeoff from the muddy field with an empty aircraft would be difficult, but with the extra load it would be extremely dangerous. Rauchfuss refused to take off, but the pleas of the passengers finally changed his mind. The pilot succeeded in taking off from the field and slowly climbed into the clouds. He headed for Brunswick, the first landmark on the flight to Bavaria. Twenty-five minutes later an anti-aircraft unit spotted the Liberator, and thinking it was American, opened fire. Shells exploded near the aircraft damaging the fuselage, wings and Number Four engine. Shrapnel cut the rudder cables, but Rauchfuss managed to maintain control.

The anti-aircraft fire had badly wounded two of the passengers and they urgently needed medical treatment. Rauchfuss began to descend, looking for a suitable landing field. After a few minutes he sighted a clearing near Quedlinburg, circled the field twice and lowered the undercarriage. On final approach the crew spotted a high voltage line directly in front of the aircraft. With a burst of power the pilot cleared the line, but as a result, the aircraft touched down too fast. The Liberator ran into freshly tilled soil at the far side of the meadow and the nose wheel dug in. As in MAJ Hackett's landing, the nose wheel collapsed. The two wounded passengers were taken to Quedlinburg for medical treatment, unfortunately, one died later that day.

Rauchfuss and his crew inspected the damaged Liberator and decided it could be repaired. The rudder cables and broken oil line on Number Four engine were quickly repaired. The broken nose wheel strut was removed and sent to the Junkers Component Factory at Eilsleben. Six days later, on 12 April, the nose wheel was returned and the repairs were completed. Takeoff was scheduled for the next morning and two farm tractors were used to tow the Liberator to the end of the improvised runway. The crew removed all unnecessary equipment, including the radios from the B-24 to lighten the aircraft. Unfortunately their work came to naught. The clearing proved to be too short and as the bomber bogged down in the sodden ground, the nose wheel broke a third time.

Reluctantly the crew decided to destroy the aircraft. Holes were punched in the fuel tanks and the crew set fire to the aircraft with a flare pistol. When the crew finally reached Bavaria, they learned that only one of the B-17s had successfully made it to Fürstentfeldbruck. One Fortress had crashed into a mountain side in the Thüringer Wald area, while the other was shot down by friendly anti-aircraft fire at Altenburg.

M Be

The
kenha,
Eighth
bat on
fifty-on
USAAF

The
month
against
June, a
werke A
erators

On
Wing a
Comm
in cent
Lutzke
separat
ing cou
imately
fly to a
and tur

The
to the I
Dumm
bomb f
division
Division
voke th
escorts

The
squad
Squad
hold pe
Bomb
Group
and as
Heaton
leading
mecha

Am
rick's B
craft. T
but Cre
pilot of

En
So
En
fin
air



Massacre Over Bernburg

The Liberator equipped 492nd Bomb Group based at North Pickenham, Norfolk was known as a 'hard luck Group' to the crews of Eighth Bomber Command. The Group was withdrawn from combat on 7 August 1944 after flying sixty-four missions and losing fifty-one aircraft over a four month period, the highest loss rate of a USAF Bomber Group.

The Group had made its combat debut on 11 May 1944. Each month brought their losses higher; eight aircraft were lost on a raid against Brunswick in May, fourteen were lost on the Politz attack in June, and the mission against the Junkers Flugzeug-und Motorenwerke AG at Bernburg on 7 July 1944 cost the Group twelve Liberators and 110 men.

On 7 July the 492nd Bomb Group was part of the 14th Bomb Wing assigned to attack Bernburg, while other Eighth Bomber Command formations attacked oil, ball bearing, and aircraft plants in central Germany; including Halle, Merseburg, Leipzig, and Lutzendorf. The three Air Divisions were to depart England at separate points, with the 1st and 3rd Air Divisions flying a converging course that would join in a common route at a point approximately 100 miles due west of Berlin. The two divisions would then fly to a point 40 miles southwest of the capitol, feint towards Berlin, and turn sharply west and south toward their respective targets.

The 2nd Division was to fly a route somewhat north and parallel to the 1st and 3rd Divisions. The formation would turn southeast at Dummer Lake and, at the last moment, splitting the formation to bomb four separate targets. The mission was timed so that all three divisions would be over their targets at 0930. Because the 1st and 3rd Divisions, would pass closest to Berlin, they were expected to provoke the most serious reaction and the bulk of the available fighter escorts were assigned to them.

The 2nd Division's 14th Wing formation plan called for three squadrons of the 392nd Group to fly lead, the two 492nd Group squadrons would fly low left, one additional 392nd Squadron would hold position high and to the right of the lead group, and the 44th Bomb Group's three squadrons would fly in trail behind the lead group. Twenty-three Liberators of the 492nd left North Pickenham and assembled on schedule. LT Konstand, with MAJ Donald Peterson as Air Commander led the Lead Squadron with LT Harding leading the low left. Both these aircraft were forced to abort with mechanical problems before crossing the enemy coast.

Among the Liberators of the 492nd was LT Donald M. Kilpatrick's B-24J-145-CO (44-40132) X4*J one of the Group's original aircraft. The Liberator was usually assigned to LT Robert A. Menweg, but Crew 908 was on stand-down for the mission. Bob Menweg, the pilot of B-24 44-40132 remembered the Liberator:

We trained for five months in the States before departing for England. We flew our new B-24, called I'll Be Around over the Southern Ferry Route of South America, Africa, and then to England. I believe I flew thirteen missions in this Liberator and finished the balance of my thirty missions in various other aircraft.

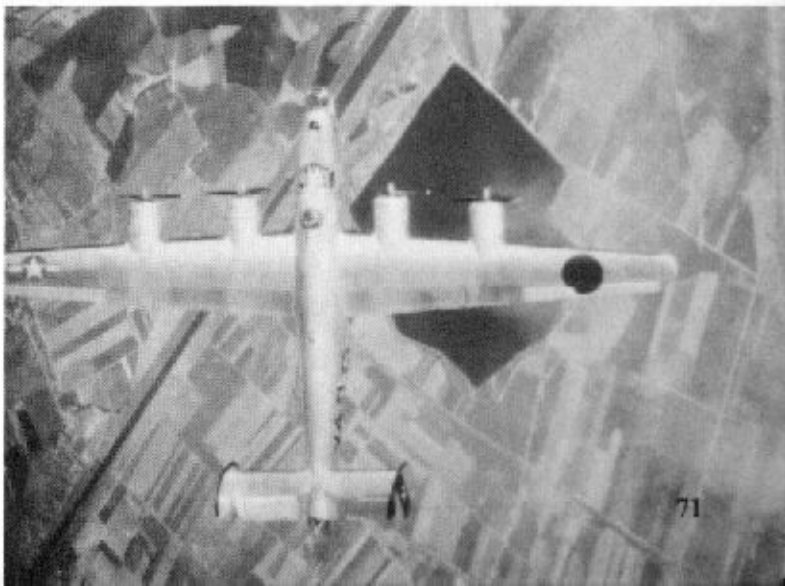
LT. Donald Kilpatrick's Liberator was one of twelve 492nd Bomb Group aircraft shot down during the Bernburg mission on 7 July 1944. The B-24J-145-CO (44-40132) X4*J+ had survived nineteen missions before it crashed into a corn field outside Alkendorf near Halberstadt. The wreckage soon gathered a crowd of curious school children. (Bundesarchiv)

Gunner Alston H. Howrey remembers why his crew did not fly the mission:

We did not fly the mission to Bernburg on 7 July, because we had flown a mission to Kiel the day before. The crew was dropped down to the last place on the schedule and was not called out to make the mission to Bernburg. The name I'll Be Around was never painted on the plane because we did not have time in the States to have it put on and after arriving in England, we were told by the Group CO that no more names or paintings could be put on the noses of our aircraft. The tenth member of our crew the bombardier, Lester Stein, was killed while flying with another crew. He had missed one mission with us and was trying to make-up the mission to finish his thirty missions. After his death we flew as a nine man crew, with the navigator acting as bombardier. We did not want anyone replacing Stein.

Because of the scheduling, LT Kilpatrick and his crew were assigned to I'll Be Around for the mission to Bernburg. 1st LT Kilpatrick's crew included: co-pilot 2nd LT Thomas L. Flaherty, navigator 2nd LT Charles F. Hanline, bombardier 2nd LT Glen R. Wrobel, engineer T/SGT Wilbur C. Idler, radio operator T/SGT James O. Coates, right waist gunner S/SGT Leon A. Byers, left waist gunner S/SGT Donald L. Brackins, ball turret gunner S/SGT Herbert M. Novotny and tail gunner S/SGT Kenneth D. Shinley. The crew had already flown fifteen missions, half way to the magic number of thirty missions.

German radar had watched the bombers assemble over England and the Luftwaffe was ready when the bombers crossed the coast. Approximately 175 single and 125 twin-engined fighters engaged the bomber formations and escorting fighters. The fighters concentrated their attacks against the 14th Wing attacking Bernburg. The escort fighters were out of position, flying with 44th Bomb Group X4*J+ over Magdeburg on 29 June 1944, the Group letter "U" had not been added to the Black circle on the starboard wing but when LT Kilpatrick took the Liberator out on its final mission she carried full Group identification markings. (Al Blue)



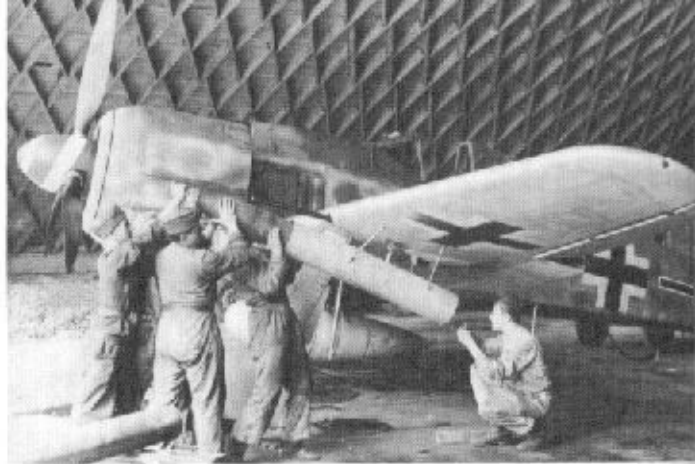


The Fortune's of War; Bob Menweg's crew was one of the fortunate few to complete a full combat in the 492nd BG. Normally assigned to X4*J+, they were on stand down on 7 July 1944. Left to right: gunner Howard S. Hameline, gunner Raymond D. Clawson, engineer William H. Veltch, gunner Alston H. Howrey, co-pilot Donald Girty, navigator/bombardier Lawrence J. Malloux, debriefing officer Charles Barrett, pilot Robert A. Menweg, gunner Amado Rescigno, and radio operator William D. Siler. (Robert A. Menweg)

and the 492nd Group was unprotected from attacks coming from the rear of the formation. Once again 'hard luck' had placed the 492nd Group in the hazardous position.

Shortly after dropping their bombs over the target, sixty to eighty Focke Wulf Fw 190s of IV(Sturm)/JG3, based at Illersheim, attacked the Group's low left squadron like a sledgehammer. It was the first time the *Luftwaffe* had used the heavily armed Fw 190A-8, called *Sturmbocke* (Assault Rams), in combat. Under the command of MAJ Walter Dahl the Fw 190A-8s were responsible for the massacre of the 492nd over Bernburg. The slaughter began at 0942 when Lt Hagenah downed CAPT Ernest E. Pelkey's B-24 and before it was over twelve B-24s would be shot down. Uffz Schafer shot down two Liberators and Major Dahl finished off another near Quedlinburg. The losses, however, were not all one sided, and three *Sturmbocke* pilots were killed and another seriously wounded.

LT Kilpatrick's *I'll be Around* was shot down by Uffz Schafer. Navigator Charles Hanline alerted the crew that the ship was on fire and as the Liberator spun out of control, the pilot gave the order to bail out. The Focke Wulf's cannon fire had killed both waist gun-



A Focke Wulf Fw 190A-7/R-6 is armed for another interception mission on a *Luftwaffe* base in Germany. The WGr-21 rocket proved very effective against USAAF bomber formations. Sixty to eighty Fw 190 *Sturmbocke* (Assault Rams) were involved in the action that brought down X4*J+.

ners, S/SGTs Brackins and Byers. Ball turret gunner S/SGT Novotny and bombardier 2nd LT Wrobel failed to escape and perished in the crash. The rest successfully bailed out, however, LT Kilpatrick was killed by rifle fire while descending in his parachute. The survivors were soon captured by the local Police and *Wehrmacht*. Charles Hanline and Kenneth Shinley were taken for medical treatment to the General Hospital at Magdeburg, while the remaining four crewmen were sent to Interrogation Center West at Oberursel.

I'll Be Around crashed into a corn field outside of Alikendorf about 15 miles northeast of Halberstadt at 0945. Personnel from Airfield Command 13/III examined the wreckage and reported the Liberator was totally destroyed. A salvage team cleaned up the crash site and shipped the wreckage of 44-40132 to a scrap yard in Germany.

Only the tail of X4*J+ remained identifiable. The wreck was surveyed by personnel from Airfield Command 13/III who reported that the Liberator was destroyed and four of the crew had perished in the crash. They were identified as Glen R. Wrobel, Leon A. Byers, Donald L. Brackins, and Herbert M. Novotny. The pilot LT Kilpatrick was reportedly killed by rifle fire while still in his parachute. (Bundesarchiv)



T
K

Ka
heavy
role o
person
its op
able t
much

B-

We
captu
nzeich
was as

Di
additi
85-BO
Down
ing 19
Norho

Th
XR'O
later P
J. Qu
10-VE
ced do
and th

Th
KG 20
with A
tine o
geschw
howev
feln fo

LS
was th
operat
A3+G
inganc
tial tra
transfe
KC
some
Greec



Trojan Horses — KG 200

Kampfgeschwader 200 operated a number of captured American heavy bombers for clandestine missions behind Allied Lines. The role of KG 200 was a tightly guarded secret and many of its ground personnel were unaware of the unit's actual mission or the nature of its operations. Captured Allied aircraft had the advantage of being able to operate at night over enemy territory without arousing too much suspicion.

B-17 Operations

Wulf Hound, captured on 12 December 1942, was the first B-17F captured intact by the *Luftwaffe*. She was assigned the *Stammkennzeichen* DL+XC and was followed shortly by another B-17F which was assigned the *Stammkennzeichen* SJ+KY.

During the Summer of 1943 the *Luftwaffe* captured at least two additional B-17s. LT Dalton Wheat belied in **Flak Dancer** a B-17F-35-BO (42-30048) at Laon airfield on 26 June 1943. Ned Palmer's **Down and Go!** was captured on 29 July. The last B-17 captured during 1943 was **Miss Nonalee II**, a B-17F-100-BO which crash landed at Norholm Mark, Denmark on 9 October 1943.

The first B-17G to be captured intact was LT John Gossage's **XR*O**, which was captured at Schleswig on 3 March 1944. Five days later **Phyllis Marie**, a B-17F-115-BO (42-30713) flown by 2nd LT Max J. Quakenbush, was captured at Werben. On 9 April 1944 a B-17G-10-VE (42-39974) of the 452nd bomb Group, 731st Squadron was forced down at Vaerlose airfield in Denmark. The crew was captured and the intact aircraft was delivered to Rechlin a few days later.

The B-17s, except for **Miss Nonalee II** (7+8), were transferred to I/KG 200 during the Spring of 1944 and received new codes, beginning with A3. I/KG 200's B-17s were used both for training and clandestine operations behind enemy lines. Until April of 1944 *Kampfgeschwader 200* operated as a single unit. During that month, however, the unit was reorganized being divided into different *Staffeln* for training and operations.

1. *Staffel* and 4. *Staffel* were both based at Finsterwalde. 4. *Staffel* was the *Operational Training Unit* and between May and June of 1944 operated at least four of the B-17s (coded A3+AE, A3+CE, A3+EE and A3+GE). Training with the B-17 included navigational flights, night flying and on at least two occasions bombing trials were carried out. After initial training of aircrews was completed with 4. *Staffel* these B-17s were transferred to 1. *Staffel*.

KG 200 operations were conducted under close security but some details are known. At least two B-17 missions were flown to Greece in early 1944. These missions were carried out at night with

A B-17G of I/KG 200 based at Wackersleben has the cheek guns and ball turret removed. The insignia on the nose is White and depicts a Swan with a Angel holding a bow and arrow on its back. B-17's used by KG 200 had a German A.S.I. barometric altimeter and FuG 101 radio altimeter installed in the instrument panel. (Karl Kossler)

the pilots and navigators being the only crewmembers briefed on the destination and route. On at least two occasions landings were made in Italy to pick up agents who had been previously dropped over Greece. Several agents were usually carried on each mission, along with their supplies and equipment. Prior to each flight pilots were briefed on the locations of all known anti-aircraft units (friendly and unfriendly) along their flight path.

During November of 1944 one of the B-17Fs (A3+CB) was used to develop long range night navigational procedures. This Fortress was later used for night missions to Greece, Italy, Ireland, France, the Low Countries, Africa, Transjordan (Palestine), Poland, and the Soviet Union. The range of the Flying Fortress allowed KG 200 to carry out operations deep into Allied territory.

The *Luftwaffe* used the B-17 for these clandestine missions because of a shortage of suitable German aircraft. The introduction of the Junkers Ju 290, gave the *Luftwaffe* a transport with sufficient range, however, KG 200 never received the numbers needed to replace their Fortresses. The B-17 was popular with KG 200's pilots who praised its handling qualities and rugged construction.

A *Luftwaffe* crew of KG 200 prepares for a mission over Eastern Europe at Wackersleben air field during 1945. The drawing on the mottled Gray Olive Drab over Black B-17G was inspired by a novel written by Nils Holgerson. (Karl Kossler)





Phyllis Mary is inspected by personnel from Airfield Headquarters 35/II after it crash landed near Werben on 8 March 1944. The B-17F-115-BO of the 390th Bomb Group based at Farmingham, Suffolk was flown by 2nd LT Max J. Quakenbush. US forces later re-captured the Fortress at Altenburg airfield south of Leipzig during April of 1945. (Bundesarchiv)

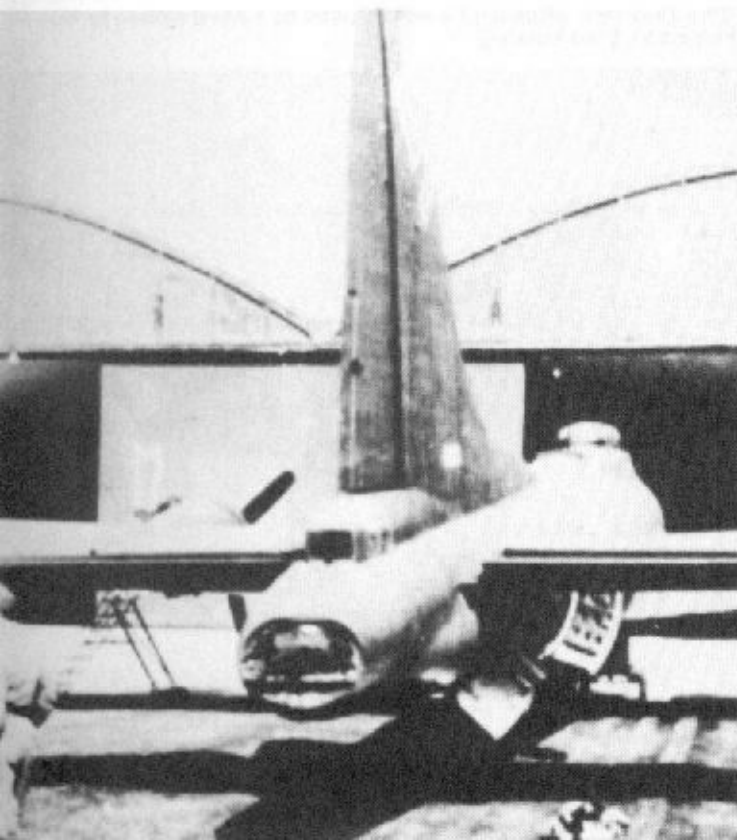
Even with careful planning KG 200's missions, flown alone and at night, were extremely dangerous and KG 200 suffered losses. The first B-17 loss is believed to have occurred on 15 May 1944. A second B-17 was lost on 27 June 1944, and a third was damaged on 19 November 1944.

Kommando Olga, under Major Peter W. Stahl, suffered two B-17 losses within a short period. *Ofw* Knappenscheider was lost with *Down and Go!* when it exploded shortly after take off on 9 February 1945. A second B-17 (A3+BB) was shot down by an RAF Mosquito near Luvigny, France on 3 March 1945.

At 2308 on 2 March A3+BB left Stuttgart-Euchterdingen and crossed the Rhine north of Basle flying at low level. To maintain security the exact route and drop points were known only to the observer and 1st pilot. The remainder of the crew were not briefed and if captured would be unable to reveal the locations of the agents they had dropped.

The crew of A3+BB included: 1st pilot *Fähnrich* Helmut Schenderlein, 2nd pilot *Uffz.* Werner Hoff, observer *Oblt* Beudel, radio operator *Ofw* Willi Helmdach, *Ofw* Karl Buch, *Uffz.* Weibel, gunners *Fw* Walter Raetzer, *Uffw* Wilhelm Lott, *Uffw* Kurt Boettcher, jump master *Fw* Heribert Adams, and *Gefr* Mehl. The Fortress carried nine agents and three supply containers.

A late model Boeing B-17F at Rechlin during the Summer of 1943. The aircraft's serial number and individual aircraft identification letter on the tail were over painted and replaced with the Swastika. The bright spot on the bottom of the fin is the aircraft's serial number re-applied by the Germans in Yellow. (Thomas E. Willis)



The first agent parachuted at approximately 0200, an hour later three others, together with the three supply containers, were dropped. The remaining passengers, four men and a woman, jumped some twenty minutes later. On the return flight the observer, *Oblt* Beudel became uncertain of his position and the radio operator tried to obtain a fix from Echterdingen, but was unable to establish contact. The B-17 was picked up by Allied ground radar near Dijon, France at approximately 0600.

Shortly after 0600, the Fortress was intercepted by a British Mosquito night fighter. The fighter scored hits in the fuselage and set the starboard wing on fire. The pilot ordered the crew to bail out, but of the eleven crewmen only the 2nd pilot, radio operator, jump master and three gunners successfully bailed of the flaming bomber, the others perished in the crash.

In September of 1944 the *Gruppenstab* and both *Staffeln* moved to Finow. In mid-February of 1945, KG 200 moved again, this time to Hildesheim. At this time, 1. *Staffel* had an inventory of three Junkers Ju 290s, one Ju 352, and three B-17s with a personnel strength of sixty aircrews. The crews were quartered in a former *Arbeitsdienst* (labor camp) just south east of the airfield.

While the unit was based at Finow aircraft of the 1. *Staffel* were frequently deployed to forward bases for secret assignments known to only the crews. Many of these missions were agent drops and resupply missions in areas far behind Russian lines. A KG 200 Flying Fortress deployed to Cracow, Poland on 20 December 1944. Three days later the B-17 took off with six Russian agents for a ten hour round trip to the Odessa area. During the first week of January 1945, a similar mission was carried out by the same Fortress and crew.

Additional sorties were flown from Cracow until mid-January of 1945 when advancing Russian troops forced a withdrawal to Stubbendorf. Two missions were flown from Stubbendorf, one on 18 January and another to Lubin, Poland the next day. The agents dropped on these missions were usually Russians dressed in Russian Army or partisan uniforms. The Russians were distrusted and on occasion had shown a reluctance to leave the aircraft. When an agent balked at jumping, the jump master usually called on the gunners for assistance. On one trip over Russia, an agent tossed a hand grenade into the aircraft as he jumped. Quick action by one of the gunners, however, saved the aircraft. Most agents were given a stiff dose of Vodka before jumping and, on more than one occasion, a very drunk agent had to be rolled out of the aircraft on a static line.

On 6 April 1945 KG 200 lost two B-17s on a transfer flight from Wackersleben to Fürstfeldbruck, however, the remaining B-17s (A3+EK and A3+AE) were active almost to the end of the war. Major Klemm flew a mission in A3+EK on 22 April 1945, and on the following night the same aircraft took off for another sortie, returning on 24 April. It is believed that A3+AE carried out KG 200's last operational B-17 flight when the Fortress flew from Wels to Aigen, Austria on 2 May 1945.

B-24 Operations

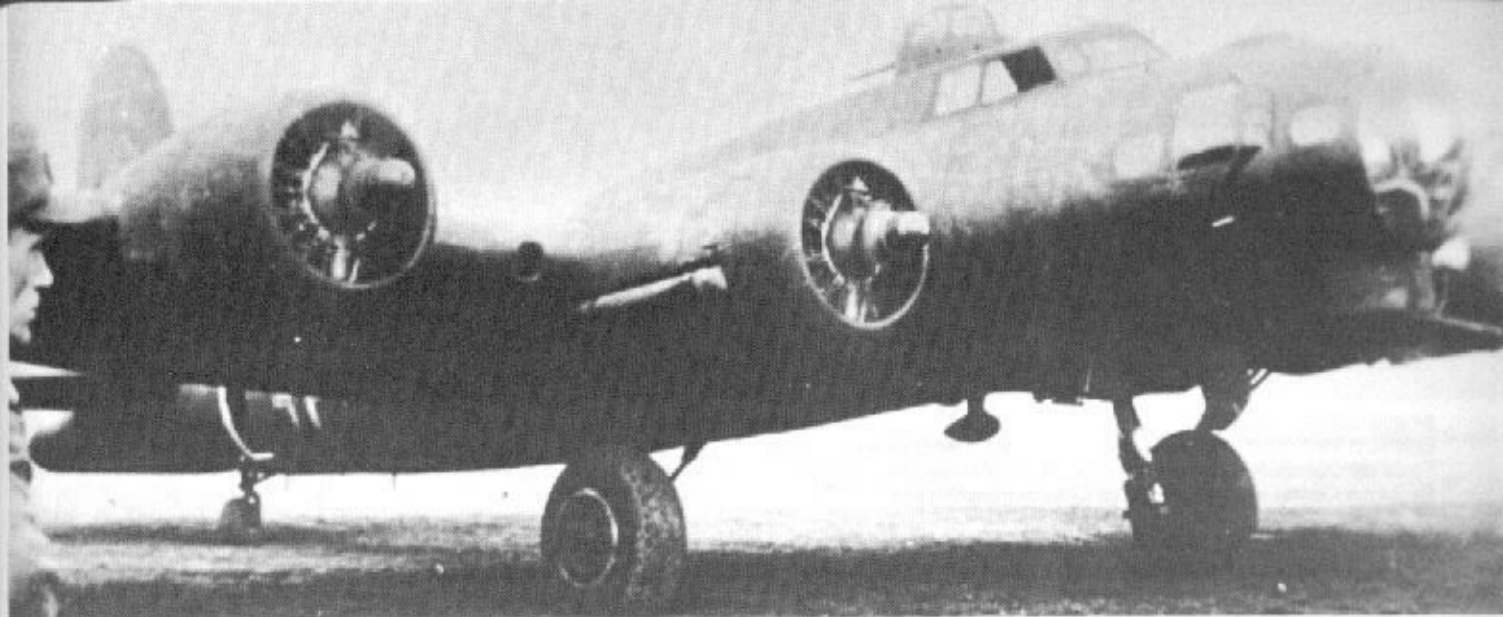
Consolidated B-24 Liberator operations in KG 200 were somewhat limited. The Germans found the nose wheel of the B-24 unsuited for operations from grass fields and Liberator operations never reached the level of its stablemate, the Flying Fortress.

The first B-24 captured by the Axis was *Blonde Bomber II*, a B-24D-1-CO (41-23659). Piloted by Don Story the Liberator landed at Pachino, Sicily on 20 February 1943. Captain Giovanni Raina ferried the Liberator to Catania-Fontanarossa and then to the *Regia Aeronautica* Test and Research Center at Guidonia near Rome.

The Germans were anxious to test *Blonde Bomber II* and diplomatic arrangements were made to transfer the Liberator to Germany. Captain Raina ferried the B-24, with a temporary Italian civil registration (I-RAIN), via Munich-Riem to Rechlin on 19 June 1943. Raina and his crew trained German test pilots on the Liberator and in turn, the Italians were allowed fly *Wulf Hound*. During a test flight at Rechlin, the Liberator's nose wheel collapsed and *Blonde Bomber II* was grounded until repairs were made. In early September of 1943 the Germans repainted the Liberator, changing the Desert Pink camouflage to a less conspicuous overall Dark Green.

A KG 200 clandestine exact route and 1st p

The fi (41-2864) *Luftwaffe* Liberator G. Emer training schedule with other Turner b climbed found th Liberator Stokes, a the grou Turn where he with the fix on th Making *Luftwaffe* wounded *Luftwaffe* the crew because the Red known 1944 it mission fields u May of Austria



AKG 200 B-17 prepares for another mission behind Allied lines. These clandestine sorties usually lasted between six and eight hours and the exact route and drop points were usually known only to the observer and 1st pilot. (Karl Kossler)

The first B-24 to be captured by the Germans was a B-24H-5-DT (41-28641) of the 453rd Bomb Group which was delivered to the *Luftwaffe* under unusual circumstances on 4 February 1944. The Liberator's pilot, 2nd LT John R. Turner and his co-pilot Raymond G. Emerson, had started the day intending to conduct a routine training flight from Old Buckenham, Norfolk. The Group was scheduled for its first combat mission in two days, and Turner along with other Group pilots needed more training in formation flying. Turner became separated from the training flight as the formation climbed thru a heavy overcast. When he broke out of the clouds, he found that he had become separated from the formation. The Liberator was last seen by another 453rd Group pilot, Milton R. Stokes, at 1103 on an easterly course, away from the remainder of the group.

Turner, flying in the wrong direction, re-entered the overcast where he became completely disoriented. Running low on fuel and with the inexperienced navigator, Boyd G. McClure, unable to get a fix on their position, the B-24 headed out over the English Channel. Making landfall in France the lone Liberator was easy prey for *Luftwaffe* fighters and the engineer, Martin W. Nissen, was badly wounded. Turner managed to land the crippled Liberator at a *Luftwaffe* airfield. When they discovered they were on an enemy field the crew tried, unsuccessfully, to burn the aircraft. SGT Nissen, because of the serious nature of his wounds was repatriated through the Red Cross, while the rest of the crew became POWs.

The Liberator entered service with KG 200 as +KB. Little is known about this B-24's operations with KG 200, however, in late 1944 it was used to fly supply missions to the Island of Rhodes. The missions were carried out from Wien-Aspern and Schwechat airfields under the command of Hptm. Stahnke of *Kommando Clara*. In May of 1945 +KB was re-captured by US troops at Salzburg, Austria.

Besides +KB, KG 200 operated two other B-24s (+PB and KO+XA). Liberator +PB was destroyed by strafing Allied fighters near Halle in early 1945, while KO+XA was set on fire by its own crew after it suffered a broken nose wheel in an aborted takeoff.

At least two additional Liberators were captured and used by the *Luftwaffe*. One was captured at Eger on 18 March 1944 and on 9 June 1944 a navigational error caused B-24G-10-NT (42-78106) of the 460th Bomb Group to land on the glider field at Fussach, a short distance from the Swiss border and the safety of the Swiss field of Altenrhein near Lake Constance. 42-78106 became NF+FL in *Luftwaffe* service and was used to train fighter units and develop tactics for use against the Liberator.

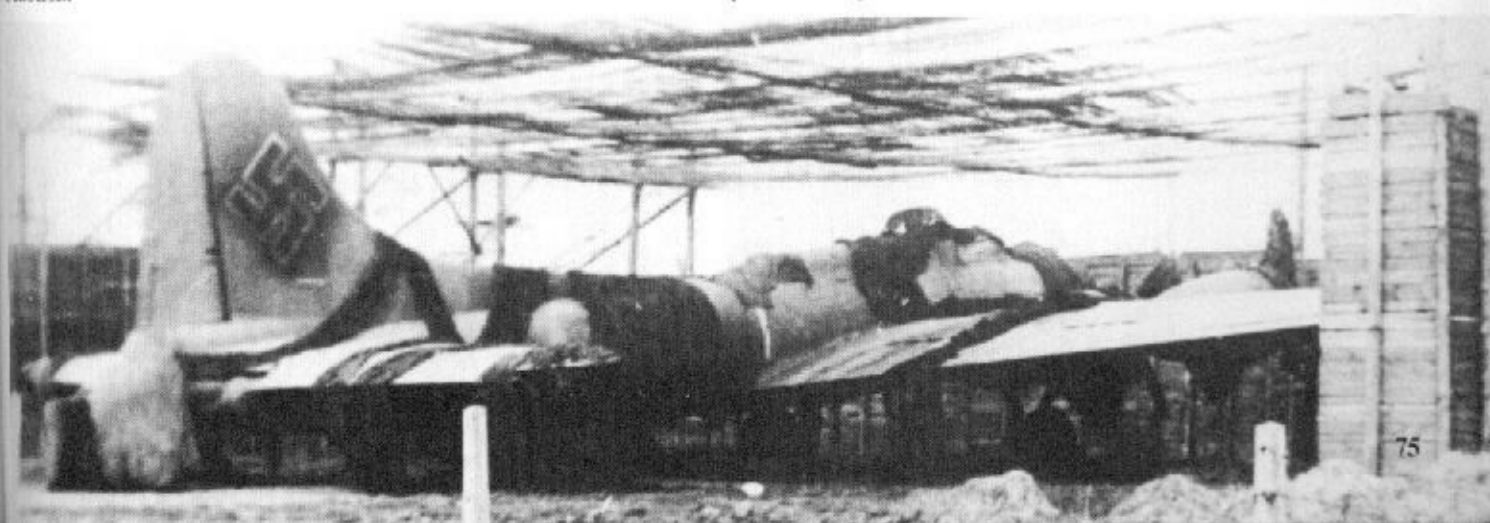
One other Axis nation, Rumania, is known to have operated the Liberator. At least two Consolidated B-24s, both victims of the costly USAAF attacks on Ploesti, were captured and repaired by the *Forțele Aeriene Regale Române*.

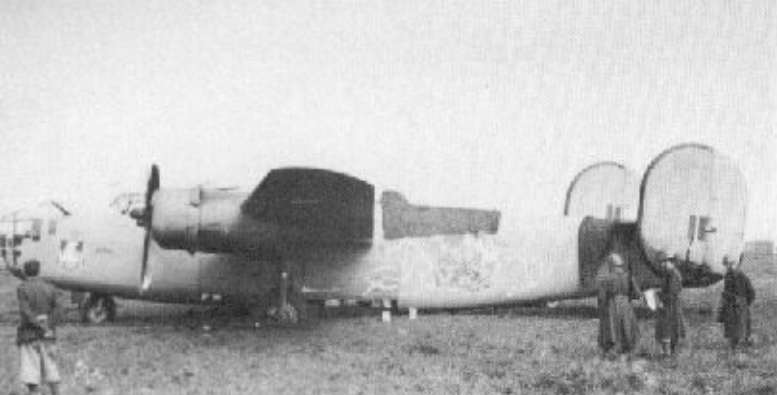
Mysterious Shadows

Returning American aircrews often reported strange B-17s and B-24s which they believed were shadowing their formations. Most of these were bombers that had become separated trying to re-join their Groups. It is doubtful that the *Luftwaffe* ever operated captured American bombers in American markings to shadow USAAF formations over Germany. One example of a case of mistaken identity took place on 31 August 1943. The *Notes on Enemy Tactics Report* of 18 September 1943 contains following:

On 31 August four groups of unescorted B-17s attacked the marshalling yards at Pisa between 1300 and 1307. The 97th Bomb Group reports that a B-17, bearing the number 25884

This B-17F of KG 200 is hidden under camouflage netting at Wackersleben in April of 1945. KG 200 operated at least three B-17s from Wackersleben during the last days of the War. When Soviet troops penetrated close to the air base, the order was given to ferry the ships to Fürstenfeldbruck in Bavaria. In the event, only one B-17 reached its destination. (Karl Kossler)





Blonde Bomber II was the first Liberator captured by Axis forces when it landed at Pachino, Sicily on 20 February 1943. The Liberator was later flown by Captain Giovanni Raina to the Regia Aeronautica Test and Research Center at Guidonia. (Hanfried Schliephake)

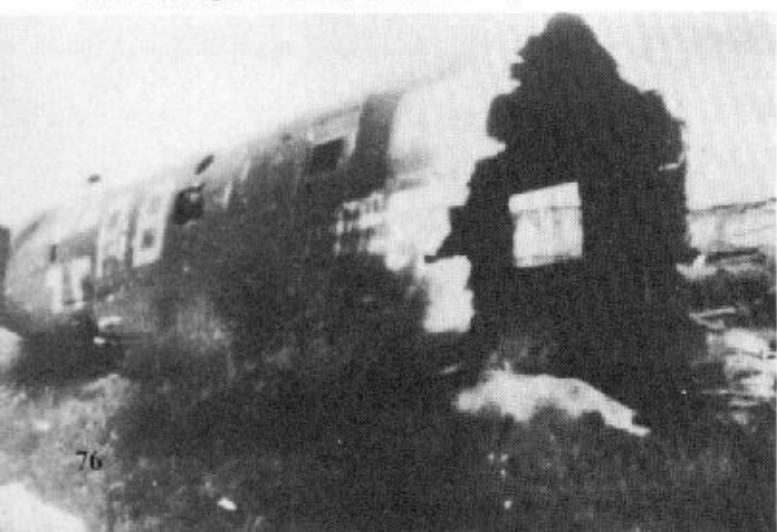
with an 'O' above and two Yellow bars beneath the serial number, joined the formation on departure from the Italian coast at 1515. This B-17 flew with the 97th Bomb Group for twenty minutes then turned away. It was joined by another B-17, both of which then flew towards Italy. This report is confirmed by a gunner of the 2nd Bomb Group...

The B-17 mentioned in this report was never a captured aircraft and was B-17F (42-5884) that survived the war and was transferred to the Reconstruction Finance Corporation at Altus, Oklahoma on 4 October 1945.

The Eighth Air Force was, however, highly concerned about the possibility of enemy operated B-17s and B-24s joining American formations. One report was issued by Air Intelligence during the summer of 1943 with the following intelligence estimate:

...The use of B-17s by the enemy does offer possibilities which, under present conditions, may seem worth trying. The limited use to which captured aircraft have been put is recorded from the first observed incident on 21 April 1943 to the present. The Germans first used the B-17s for observation, staying out of range of our .50 caliber guns. Since then they have been closely observing our tactics. When cloud or other openings appeared they have joined our formations and by radio have notified other enemy aircraft and ground stations of our every move. Not having sufficient .50 caliber ammunition, the Luftwaffe has re-equipped their B-17s with what appears to be 20 MM cannon. Our crews have shown a great eagerness to shoot them down, but any such combat in the middle of a close formation is in itself a case for special study. Great restraint has been put on our bomber crews so that we don't wind up shooting down our own aircraft. Positive identification that a B-17 is an enemy plane has not proved as easy as one might expect. The absence of heavy bomb loads certainly enable enemy B-17s to out maneuver our heavily loaded aircraft, permits

Allied fighters discovered this KG 200 B-24 at an airstrip near Halle during early 1945. When the fighters had finished, the Liberator was a twisted burned out pile of wreckage. The *Stammkennzeichen* PB was carried on the fuselage in Yellow. (Thomas E. Willis)



While in Italy **Blonde Bomber II** remained in US camouflage. The Liberator was repainted overall Dark Green at Rechlin and was displayed as part of an exhibit of captured Allied aircraft on 26 November 1943. (Thomas E. Willis)

them to carry more armament and ammunition, and allows them to stay with our formations along their entire route...

This series of Eighth Air Force reports deal with 'enemy' B-17s encountered by heavy bomber formations:

— Intelligence Memorandum, 4 May 1943, VIII Bomber Command:

An unidentified B-17 was observed by the 91st Bomb Group flying at 22,000 feet, twenty miles off St. Nazaire at 1135. The unidentified B-17 had gray lettering on the fuselage which USAAF crews were unable to see clearly enough to read. The waist gun windows were closed and the aircraft was under control. The B-17 made no effort to join any Group and flew around our formation, being observed by crews of 305th and 306th Bomb Groups. Enemy fighters did not attack this lone B-17...

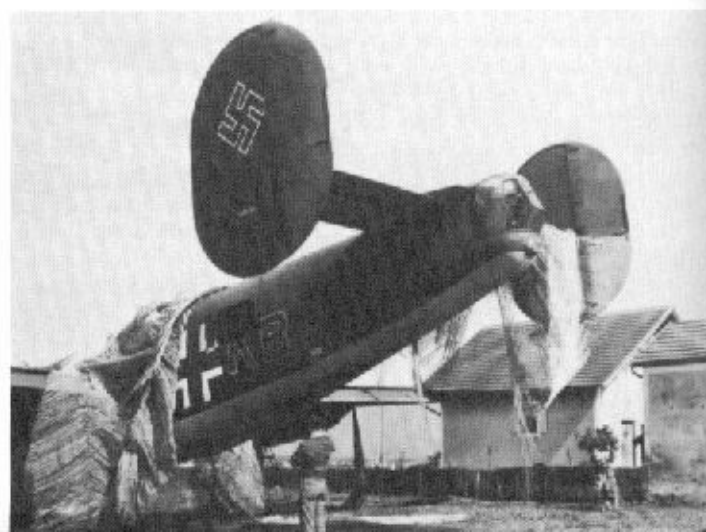
— Mission debrief, Mission No 64, 15 June 1943:

At 0743 an unidentified B-17 was observed joining the formation of the group behind the observing group. This aircraft held the number two position on the lead element of the high squadron and was seen to leave the formation in the London area on a heading of 210 degrees magnetic and an altitude of 14,000 feet. It was noticed that the waist windows were closed...

— Intelligence report, Mission No 67, 25 June 1943, off the Fri-sian Islands:

A heavily camouflaged B-17 was seen flying with the formation over the Elbe estuary. Its color was lighter than our aircraft and the windows of the waist gun positions were closed. It disappeared after two or three minutes...

LT John R. Turner's B-24H-5-DT (41-28641) was re-captured by Allied forces near Salzburg in May of 1945. During late 1944, Hauptmann Stahnke of KG 200 flew this Liberator (coded +KB) on supply missions to the Island of Rhodes from forward airfields near Vienna. (USAF)





MISSION TO MUNICH

On 4 October 1944 the 15th Air Force dispatched a strong force of bombers against Munich, the birth place of the National Socialist Party. The Liberator force enroute to the Reich included LT William Waggoner's Number 39, a B-24G-10-NT (42-78247) of 461st Bomb Group, 49th Bomb Wing (which included the 451st and 484th Groups). The 461st was based at Torretta, Italy and by war's end would fly 214 missions, drop 10,844 tons of bombs, and lose seventy-five Liberators in combat.

The crews were alerted for the mission before dawn and breakfast was followed by the pre-mission briefing which outlined the target and route to be flown. Liberator Number 39 was assigned to William E. Waggoner and his crew, which included; co-pilot Norman C. Schlarp, navigator Robert R. Brina, bombardier Paul D. Shaffer, engineer Ralph D. Vinson, left waist gunner Frank C. Hawthorne, top turret gunner Armand R. Turgeon, ball turret gunner John A. Peebles, nose turret gunner Woodrow W. Smith and tail turret gunner Edward J. Klepper.

The nose gunner, Woodrow Smith, remembers the mission to Munich:

We took off at 0700 from our base in Southern Italy. We lost Number One engine as we crossed the Alps. The pilot asked the navigator if he could plot a course back to base without encountering too much flak. The navigator said he could, but the co-pilot spoke up and said we were just ten minutes from the target and suggested we stay with formation, so that is what we did.

Over the target we were hit by flak and lost two more engines. That left only Number Four engine running. Our pilot, LT Waggoner, called the bombardier to salvo the bombs. The bombardier said that the bombs were already gone, and I knew we were in trouble. LT Waggoner pulled the plane out of formation and asked the navigator for a heading to Switzerland. The navigator told him to go between two lakes West of Munich. A little later the pilot told the navigator that we could not make Switzerland, that we were losing altitude too fast. The pilot restarted Number One engine and the engineer, SGT Vinson, called him that Number One was on fire. LT Waggoner quickly pulled the fire extinguishers putting out the fire.

The pilot Bill Waggoner continues the story:

As I recall we were hit by flak that knocked out Number Two and Three engines. Another flak burst hit directly under the co-pilot's seat wounding LT Norman Schlarp. We could not maintain our position in the formation, so I decided to try for Switzerland. But the Liberator could not maintain altitude on one engine. I offered the crew the option to either bail out or stay with me, because I could not leave the co-pilot to crash with the plane. So I landed on the first field I saw.

Woodrow Smith remembered the last minutes aboard the stricken Liberator:

I was out in the nose turret and could see the burnt engine. I thought it was losing oil but it turned out to be carbon dioxide fire fighting foam. I called the pilot and told him I thought he was losing oil from Number One engine. He said for the

B-24G-10-NT (42-78247) was captured after a forced landing at Landsberg-Penzing airfield on 4 Oct 1944. After being repaired the Liberator was assigned the Stammkennzeichen CL+XZ and allotted to Erprobungsstelle der Luftwaffe at Ainring-Hörsching during November of 1944. (Harold Werner)

navigator and I to clear the nose. I got out of my turret, picked up my parachute, and went thru the bomb bay to the waist — ready to jump.

Bullets were flying through the plane as we hit the ground. When I jumped out the back escape hatch SGT Hawthorne asked me what country this was and I told him it was Germany. He was under the impression that we had made it to Switzerland. We were taken prisoner by the Germans. This was when I found out that LT Schlarp was injured. The Germans had some of us carry him out and lay him in the grass, then they marched us away. LT Waggoner did a marvelous job of flying and probably saved all our lives. LT Schlarp was a fine young man, everyone liked him and hoped he would recover.

1st LT Waggoner landed the B-24G at Landsberg-Penzing airfield at 1245. The crew was taken to the Interrogation Center at Oberursel. After questioning, the officers were sent to Stalag Luft I at Barth and the enlisted men were transferred to Stalag Luft IV at Gross Tychow where they were liberated by Soviet troops in May of 1945.

The mortally wounded Norman G. Schlarp was taken to the Hospital at St. Ottilien near Landsberg. Despite the efforts of the German doctors he died on 7 October and was buried in the Kloster Cemetery in St. Ottilien.

The Liberator was repaired at Landsberg-Penzing airfield and assigned the Stammkennzeichen CL+XZ. The B-24 was transferred to the Flugfunkforschungsinstitut at Oberpfaffenhofen in Bavaria. Test pilot Hans-Werner Lerche ferried the Liberator to Oberpfaffenhofen and carried out a number of experimental flights with the B-24. American radios and instruments were replaced by German equipment and the B-24 served as a test bed for experimental radar projects. Bill Waggoner's Liberator proved to be responsible for Hans-Werner Lerche's marriage. He met his future wife, Gertraud, for the first time in CL+XZ when she was working on the bomber's electrical system.

CL+XZ was transferred to the Luftwaffe Erprobungsstelle at Ainring-Hörsching in Austria. A number of test flights were conducted at Hörsching between 6 and 11 November 1944. The ultimate fate of CL+XZ is unknown but the aircraft is believed to have been destroyed by Allied strafing attack.

The captured B-24G carried out several test flights for the Erprobungsstelle between 6 and 11 November 1944. The American markings on the port wing were overpainted and replaced by Balkenkreuz. The code CL+XZ was carried in Black against a White background on the fuselage sides. (Harold Werner)





SHADY LADY

On 8 September 1944, 1,070 B-17s escorted by 653 fighters left England to bomb oil installations at Ludwigshafen, Karlsruhe, Gustavensburg, and Kassel. The bombers dropped 2,647 tons of bombs over the targets, losing ten B-17s.

384 B-17s of the 1st Air Division were assigned the I.G. Farben Werke at Ludwigshafen and released 1,014 tons of bombs over the plant between 1143 and 1202. The Ludwigshafen force included the 398th Bomb Group based at Nuthampstead, Hertfordshire. The Group had arrived in England during April of 1944 under the command of COL Frank P. Hunter and flew its first mission on 6 May.

The 398th Group furnished thirty-six Fortresses for the mission to Ludwigshafen. The Group formation consisted of a 'lead', 'high' and 'low' Squadron. Flying in the 'high' formation was a combat veteran, **SHADY LADY**, a B-17G-45-110 (42-97385), coded 30*X, one of the Group's original inventory. **SHADY LADY** had flown forty-three missions over Germany, but for the Ludwigshafen mission she was being flown by a new pilot and crew. Because of his inexperience, 2nd LT Warren J. Wade, had been assigned a position in the rear of the formation. Wade and his co-pilot Theodore L. Prevost had flown several missions with other crews, but this mission would be the 'Baptism of Fire' for the men as a crew. Wade's crew included: navigator Burt D. Bream, bombardier William A. Howell, engineer Robert T. Ritter, radio operator John H. Rex, waist gunner Harrison F. Brooks, ball turret gunner Wilbert Y. Burns and tail gunner Eugene Gamba.

The crew of **SHADY LADY** during training before deploying overseas. Standing left to right: bombardier William A. Howell, pilot Warren J. Wade, co-pilot Theodore L. Prevost, navigator Burt D. Bream. Kneeling left to right: unknown Sergeant, radio operator John H. Rex, engineer Robert T. Ritter, tail Gunner Eugene Gamba, waist gunner Harrison F. Brooks, and ball turret gunner Wilbert Y. Burns. (Robert T. Ritter)



The second B-17G in this line of Fortresses at the Boeing Seattle plant would become **SHADY LADY** of the 398th Bomb Group. She would later be forced down over Germany on 8 September 1944. (Boeing)

At 1100, shortly before the formation reached the Initial Point, **SHADY LADY** ran into serious trouble. The engineer, Robert T. Ritter, remembers the events:

We had not reached the target area when we lost our Number One engine. I'm not sure if the engine was hit by a piece of shrapnel or if it just failed. In any event, oil started pouring from the engine and we were forced to shut it down and feather the propeller. We lost our position in the formation but continued on toward the target. A little later we lost our Number Two engine and had to feather that prop. At this point it was decided to jettison our bombs and plot a course for our home base. Of course, this was not to be, and we soon lost our Number Three engine leaving us with only the right outboard engine still operating. With the loss of Number Two and Three engines we also lost our flight instruments including the artificial horizon. These engines operated vacuum pumps which in turn operated the flight instruments.

This ended our hopes of reaching our base in England. We were still flying, however, we could not maintain altitude. As we descended through the cloud cover, I left my position the upper turret and stood between the pilot and co-pilot holding a radio head set by the cord to serve as a make shift artificial horizon. With only one engine in operation out on the right wing we had to keep the left wing from dropping or it would have led to a fatal spin. The head set helped the pilot keep the wings level and prevented a spin. We were descending at about 1,500 to 2,000 feet per minute and were down to about 4,000 feet. At this point we broke through the clouds and happened to hit a rising thermal current. The resulting bump caused me to fall between the pilots into the passageway to the nose section. When I fell I lost my

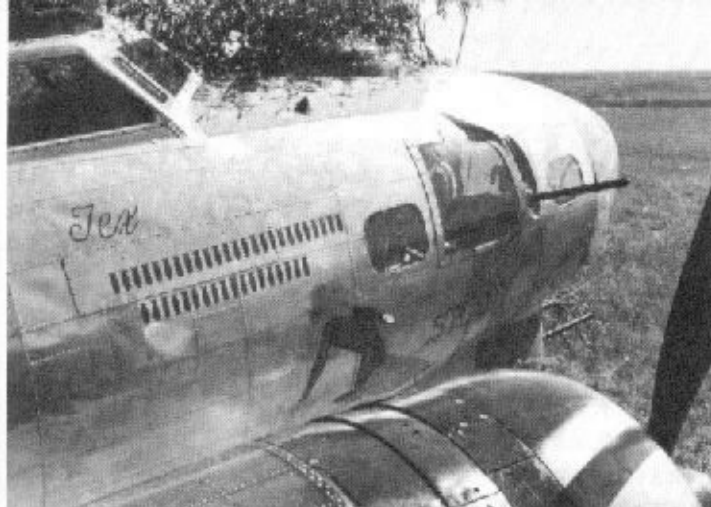
2nd LT Warren J. Wade crash landed **SHADY LADY** on one engine in a field near Rechicourt Le Chateau, a small town between Sarrebourg and Chateau-Salins in the Alsace region of France. (Bundesarchiv)



SHADY
sions
a US m
dress
(Bund

Ri
near
struc
injur
taken
Einv
St
crash
prepa
the u
T
quick
Rech
came
fight
retrie
it did
bom
ted b
A
oper

The
Harr
of th



SHADY LADY'S score card indicates she had survived forty-three missions over Germany. The pin-up girl was inspired by a Varga drawing in a US magazine and was painted on the Fortress by its regular crew. The dress and shoes are Black, and the band in her Blond hair is Blue. (Bundesarchiv)

headset and was out communication with the rest of the crew. I suppose I was slightly stunned and I slowly realized that someone had jettisoned the forward escape hatch. I pulled myself over to the opening and when I looked out I saw that we were getting fairly close to the ground. Knowing that some one had jumped, and not knowing the situation on the aircraft, I made a snap decision to bail out and dove head first out the open door.

Ritter and the bombardier William A. Howell hit the ground near Einville, Alsace (in German occupied France). Howell had struck his head on the aircraft as he bailed out and was slightly injured. Both men were found by the French Underground and taken to the home of Monsieur Maurice, a retired manager at Einville.

SHADY LADY continued to descend and the pilots decided to crash land. Wade ordered the crew to man their crash positions and prepare for a crash landing. He discovered an open field, lowered the undercarriage and landed.

The field was near a sizable German force and the crew was quickly captured by German troops and taken to the jail at Rechicourt le Chateau. The virtually undamaged Fortress was camouflaged with tree branches to hide it from prowling Allied fighters, until the *Luftwaffe* could replace the damaged engines and retrieve the Fortress. The Allies had air superiority over France and it did not take long for American fighters to discover the captured bomber. Repeated strafing attacks left **SHADY LADY** a pile of twisted burned out junk.

After being questioned by the Nazis the crew was taken in an open stake truck to Haguenau guarded by five SS guards. At some

The port waist gun position on **SHADY LADY** was manned by SGT Harrison F. Brooks who survived the escape attempt and spent the rest of the war as a POW. (Bundesarchiv)



Bill Howell and Bob Ritter were taken to the home of Monsieur Maurice, a retired manager in Einville where they were joined by two other downed US airmen. Guided by French resistance fighter, Paul Bodot, the four American airmen were taken to the American lines and established contact with the 4th Armored Division near Valhey on 18 September 1944. From left to right: William A. Howell, Paul Bodot, LT Ray Reuter (P-51 pilot), Captain Pierce MacKennon (P-51 pilot), and Robert T. Ritter. (Paul Bodot)

point along the route the crew thought they had a chance to escape and jumped their guards. LT Wade killed one of the guards and was then killed by the others. In the confusion and wild firing, Eugene Gamba and Wilbert Burns were both killed, one of the guards was hit by his own companions, and LT Bream was wounded in the hip. Wade, Gamba and Burns were buried on 11 September in the cemetery at Haguenau. Burt Bream was taken to a hospital and eventually re-joined John Rex, Harrison Brooks and Ted Prevost in the Kief Heide POW camp at Pomeria. They were eventually liberated by Soviet troops on 24 April 1945, after a forced march to Annaburg.

Howell and Ritter along with two Mustang pilots, Captain Pierce MacKennon and LT Ray Reuter, were hidden in an abandoned salt mine near Einville. MacKennon had been forced to bail out over Parroy on 28 August and Reuter had been with the Underground since 10 September. Howell's head wound was dressed by Doctor Schneider and he had recovered sufficiently to travel.

It was decided to try and reach the Allied lines and Paul Bodot, a French Underground fighter, volunteered to guide the four Americans. The group made contact with the US 4th Armored Division at Valhey on the afternoon of 18 September and the four Americans were soon back in England. Paul Bodot joined the 4th Armored Division and ended the war in Czechoslovakia. Bob Ritter and Bill Howell were withdrawn from combat and rotated home. Ray Reuter re-joined his old squadron and was killed in action on 17 April 1945. Pierce MacKennon became the commander of an air base in Germany and was killed in a postwar flying accident.

Allied fighters found the Fortress before she could be repaired and repeated strafing attacks reduced her to a burned out pile of scrap metal. A German infantryman reads the inscription *Oh My Darling* that had been painted under the port waist gun position. (Gino Künzle)



Appendix I

Known German Codes

Boeing B-17:	DL+XC, SJ+KY, DR+PE, 7+8 A3+AE, A3+CE, A3+EE, A3+GE, A3+EK, A3+BB, A3+CB
Consolidated B-24:	KO+XA, CL+XZ, NF+LF, +KB, +PB, I-RAIN
Lockheed P-38:	T9+XB, T9+MK
Bell P-39:	GE+DV
Republic P-47:	T9+EK, T9+LK, 7+9, 8+6
North American P-51:	T9+CK, T9+HK, 8+7

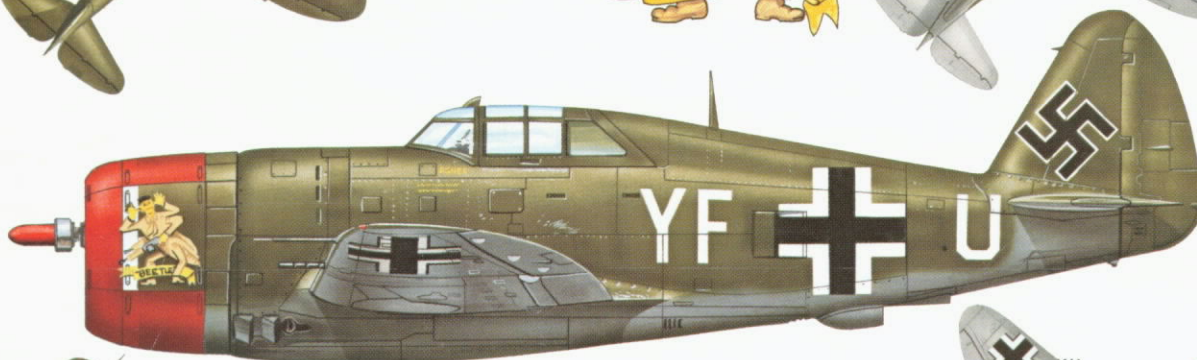
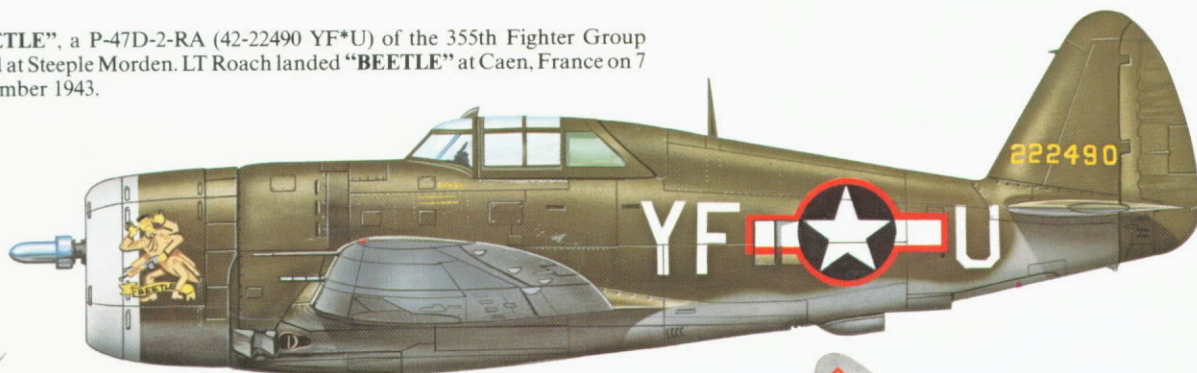
Appendix II

American Aircraft Flown By The *Luftwaffe*

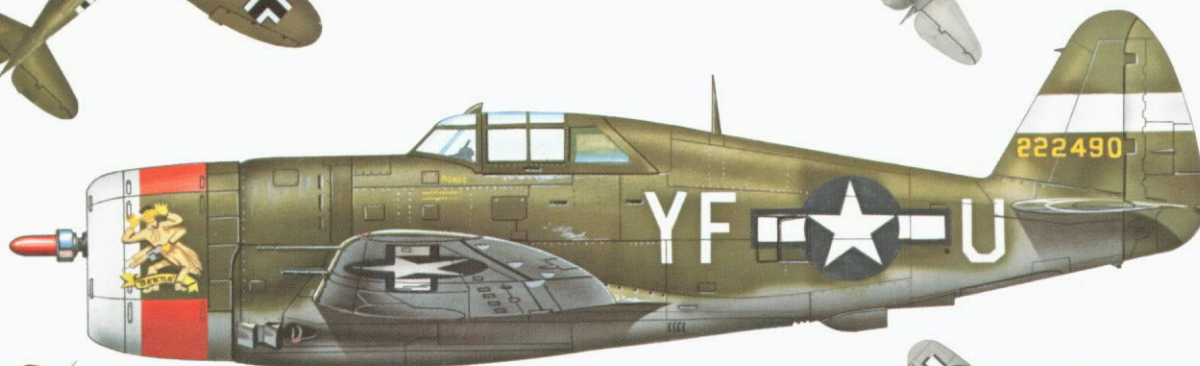
Type	Serial #	Unit (Gp/Sq)	US Code	German Code	Nickname	Date	Captured At
B-17F-27-BO	41-24585	303/360	PU-B	DL+XC	WOLF HOUND	12 Dec 1942	Leeuwarden/NL
B-17F-85-BO	42-30048	384/544	SU-K		FLAK DANCER	26 Jun 1943	Laon/Fr
B-17F-90-BO	42-30146	94/333	TS-A		DOWN AND GO!	29 Jul 1943	Avedere Holme/Dk
B-17F-100-BO	42-30336	385/548	E	7+8	MISS NONALEE II	9 Oct 1943	Varde/Dk
B-17G-25-DL	42-38017	100/349	XR-O			3 Mar 1944	Schleswing/Ger
B-17F-115-BO	42-30713	390/568	BI-E		PHYLLIS MARIE	8 Mar 1944	Werben/Ger
B-17G-10-VE	42-39974	452/731				9 Apr 1944	Vaerlose/Dk
B-24D-1-CO	41-23659	98/343	V	I-RAIN	BLONDE BOMBER II	20 Feb 1943	Pachino/It
B-24H-5-DT	41-28641	453/732	None	+KB		4 Feb 1944	Occupied Europe
B-24H-5-FO	42-52106	449/719	5		SUNSHINE	29 Mar 1944	Venegono/It
B-24G-10-NT	42-78106	460		NF+LF		9 Jun 1944	Fussach/Ger
B-24H-15-DT	41-28779	389/564		KO+XA		20 Jun 1944	Stettin/Pol
B-24G-10-NT	42-78247	461/765	39	CL+XZ		4 Oct 1944	Penzing/Ger
B-26B	41-17790	319/437	None			3 Oct 1942	Noord Beveland/NL
F-5B-1-LO	42-68274			T9+MK			
P-39				GE+DV		Summer 1943	Eastern Front
P-47D-2-RA	42-22490	355-358	YF-U	7+9	BEETLE	7 Nov 1943	Caen, Fr

ABBREVIATIONS Ger=Germany Dk=Denmark Fr=France It=Italy Ni=Netherland Pol=Poland

"BEETLE", a P-47D-2-RA (42-22490 YF*U) of the 355th Fighter Group based at Steeple Morden. LT Roach landed "BEETLE" at Caen, France on 7 November 1943.



Shortly after landing at Caen, "BEETLE" was painted with German *Balkenkreuze* and a Red cowling. The American side code YF*U, however, was retained.



"BEETLE" was repainted with American insignia for a propaganda movie at Rechlin during early 1944. When the film was completed "BEETLE" was repainted with German markings.

