

Diary of John E. Slowik

August 10, 1943

Presque Isle, Maine

Today I start this damn diary all over again with the hope that I will actually continue it. We are off to the "rat race" and this is the best time to start.

T.O. [Take off] about 1000-it had been raining cats and dogs all morning buzzed the field and buzzed Mary Francis at about 2000'-pretty high-would have liked to come down a bit and do a real good job. Flew here by way of Chicago, Selfridge, Toronto, Montreal and scudded in about 1915. Weather wasn't too bad. Didn't see too much of the country and I was damn sleepy and would catch myself dozing off. Finally had a catnap before hitting Montreal. Came in here and filled out forms as per usual. Must have filled those things a million times. Took the fastest physical examination you ever saw and passed the damn thing-drat it. Tomorrow is another day with me getting up early.

August 11, 1943

Presque Isle, Maine

Still here. Starter wouldn't disengage from no. 4 engine and generator was out. Two of our ships took. Feuerstacke and someone else. All the rest had trouble. Were briefed for Gander at 8:30 for the long hop across. Were briefed again at 11:30 for Goosebay for the northern route. As tis we didn't take off and have to sweat it out tomorrow depending on the weather. Finally decided on the name for our ship. It will be "Snarlin' Darlin'". Nick traced a Varga Gal out of the latest Esquire. Her pose is just right for being placed on a bomb. He stripped her of her clothes- Now all we need is a good painter and the rt. [Right] color paints.

Aug

~~April~~ 12, 1943

Goosebay Labrador

Finally got off today at 1700 GCT [Greenwich Civil Time, or Greenwich Meantime] and came into Goosebay at 2220 GCT. Presque Isle was overcast-drizzling and cold-this place is broken, clear and warm-further north though it is. Flew over Labrador and it was nothing but lakes not a human soul for miles. MaGregor got off yesterday and today he and Feuerstacke left for the next stop. We get briefed at 1000 GCT tomorrow morning. Also we have all switched our watches to GCT-it's easier to keep track of things that way. The change in climate has got me-been having sniffles ever since we hit Presque Isle, the contrast between Topeka and this section of the world is quite a bit but in comparison to Alamogordo-they are antipodes-one is pure desert and the other verdant country; you can really see what a big show all this is- Bases all over hell-the

whole continent working as one-planes coming and going-B-24's 26's 25's-A20's-D.C. Transports-. Goosebay is in a beautiful setting and for an outpost it has the best BOQ's [Bachelor's Officers' Quarters] I've seen in a long time. All the food you can eat and that's swell after Presque Isle.

Aug

~~April~~ 13, 1943

Mieske Field, Iceland

Took off at 1156 GCT for Iceland passing about 50 miles below Cape Farewell. Could see the southern tip of Greenland-gorgeous in the glistening sun. Weather was ok most of the way except for the last 200 miles- then t'was rough. Got in and this place reminds me of the Galapagos-almost the same except the rock has trees-birds and a little warmth-this has neither. A wind was howling up a storm when we got on the ground and I am dressed up warm. Take me back to New York-even Alamogordo looks good in comparison. Spending tonite in Nissen hut and I am going to cuddle, by gosh. The ships from our outfit that started out yesterday were held over because of weather. We will take off tomorrow weather permitting. I hope not so that we can get some sleep. We have been losing hours since we started-5 since Topeka.

Feuerstacke & the rest of the boys who came in yesterday and were weathered in today went to Reykjavik in a jeep driving 90 miles on a 10 mile an hour road. They say some of the women are really beautiful-but the soldier gets the old cold shoulder-Capt.[Captain Donald] Appert tried and he got it. You need a bottle of liquor to make progress and you can sell the stuff for \$35 a quart-it's that precious.

April 14, 1943

Prestwick Scotland

Came to England and received an introduction I'll never forget. Took off from Iceland and boy it was cold-that place is not for me. Hit just west of Storaway (spelling?) and crossed the Helvedes and started down the west coast of Scotland for Prestwick. Flew and flew reorganized one island and proceeded to wait for the next one-after a long wait-we didn't see a damn thing recognizable. Saw a few unusual islands and later found out they belonged to the N.W. corner of Ireland. Tried to get a QDM [Radio fix, or direction when lost] but reception was bad and we got so didn't know where we were finally got a QDM- and found out how good the British are. In 25 secs after holding the key down they gave us a heading and we followed it. The Prestwick radio lined up the radio compass and finally rode into Prestwick. Boy we got a razzing. Capt. Appert came running out to the ship and said he knew what was going on all the time. Watched the British track us down with radar. Heard some British wing man say something about the "Blokes flubbdubbing about Dublin". We'll never hear the last of it. I'm glad it happened and turned out as it did-gets me on the ball.

I like England-it's the prettiest place I've seen-wonderful to look at and smell and feel-narrow lanes-drive on the wrong side. The spitfires were acrobating over the field and those babies are fast. For dinner we went to the Admonton and old country house taken over by the A.T.C.[Air Traffic Control] Washed up-ate "cornwilly" [Cornedbeef Hash] in the kitchen-went to the bar and saw MacGregor's crew camped there and on very friendly terms with the barkeep who was serving MacGregor specials-scotch and sodas-had one and am having a hellava time figuring how the money works. Finally decided to look for a room and went to the Orange Hotel to see Major Child about billeting. He must have been waiting a long time for us-it was about 11 o'clock when we got there. Signed us up and back we went looking for R.A.F. [Royal Air Force] barracks and getting lost again. Some R.A.F. boy came and helped us find the place and now we are settled for the nite. That was my introduction to England.

From what I've seen of England-I like. The people are damn nice and it seems so peaceful-you'd hardly know there's a war on-but as far as I'm concerned it's the roughest theater yet; and what comfort you get-boy you earn it. We may stay here but it looks like we will be moving on which is o.k. with me as I want to see more of the world-certainly have seen enough of Ireland. Ole Dutch was worried about landing in enemy territory. We got so we didn't believe anything on the radio or the bearings because we figured the Germans were trying to snafu us into Norway or something like that.

August 15, 1943

Wendling Field

England

Well, today we finally arrived at our destination which was England. The R.A.F. fellow woke us up at 7:00 and after much trouble we got up and went to the Admonton for breakfast. Then sat around for an hour and went to the field for a briefing. We were briefed for a trip to the S.W. corner of England and it sure looked like "Africa here we come" to me. They said the 24's wouldn't take off till tomorrow so we went down to the plane to gather up our stuff and spend the day in town. Just as we were all set to leave the ship a truck came along and we were informed that we had attended the wrong briefing and had to go to another one. we did. Found that our group is stationed about 30 miles west of Norwich. A ship would come down and escort us to our field. Took off for dinner-returned had a weather briefing-the route was outlined so that we would avoid all the barrage balloons. Took off and headed east out of Prestwick to Harwich turn south to [undisclosed] and S.E. to [undisclosed]-edged over so we hit the wash and then to the field. Navigation is tough in this country-it is so broken up.

Circled the field and landed-as we taxied by the control tower-there was the group lined up and waving a welcome to us. It sure gave me a thrill and I felt so proud. This was my outfit. It's the first time I've felt that way about it. Everybody was wearing blouses, sporting mustaches, and riding bikes. The field is hidden and scattered into the country side with structures

everywhere mixed with the cottages. Climbed out of the plane, shook hands with everyone-the Colonel came out and looked our ship over. So it definitely looks like England to me.

Zahn (sp?), the adjutant said that I, as 1st ranking Lt rated a brand new bike-so I became excited as a two year old and we loaded our luggage double quick time and drove all over hell looking for the bike. Got Sergt. [Sergeant] Duncan to break horn out. Had to pump up the tires and ruined a pump doing it. I like everything around here and have never been so much in love with life since I was a cadet. The country side gets me. Everything captivates me and I literally walk on air. I intend to enjoy myself very much no matter how short or long my life is.

As we were parking, about 150 planes went overhead-toward Germany and its like that all day and nite-the droning of the planes and you look up and think-those boys are on training flights-its definitely big league. At Mess-met more of the fellows for the lowdown on their trip. They came over on the Queen Mary in 5 days. Lost the escort on the first nite and zigzagged all over hell-down to Bermuda up to Iceland and into Liverpool and they got a royal welcome from the people who watched the ship all day in the harbor waiting for it to unload.

Dutch and I drove all over breaking in the bikes and then to bed. Barracks are still unfurnished, lites aren't in yet and blackout curtains haven't been put up yet. Borrowed a couple of blankets from an empty bed to keep myself warm.

August 16, 1943

Got up and washed out of a brand new basin in true English style-pedalled up to the mess hall. Took a shower-listened to Major Caley-everyone's been promoted-Feldheim, Gram-all but the flying officers so it seems. **Blenheim** is going off to school today and we go tomorrow. Believe I'll see London. Then the officers in our crew Holloman, Nicholson, Veazey and I took off for town after getting passes for the men. First I went to see Sgt. Ralston to paint "Mary Francis" on my bike. Dressed up and pedaled into town about 6 miles -in formation hor sing around and I rammed into Dutch and his pedal broke a few spokes in my rear wheel and I sweated the rest of the journey. Got into town-had bike repaired and bought lites for it. All the pubs were closed so we did the proper thing and went into a tea room and had tea, crumpets and scones and whatever else you get wit it. The people could see we were strictly coffee drinkers as we lacked the techniques. The town is small & dirty so it seems and crowded. The name is E. Dereham and Cowper the poet is buried there. No pubs were opened, so we pedaled back to the base. Tomorrow we go to school and new sights to see.

August 17, 1943

Got up at six, breakfasted, packed up and left by G.I. trucks to Norwich. From there we took a train to London where we changed for Cheddington. Norwich and London show signs of the blitz. In Norwich, there are many wrecked buildings. Often there will be a stack of houses with one house gone in the middle-the rest unharmed. The same goes for London. Although I haven't seen too much of it-what I did see showed that it must have been a rough deal. Will wait

till the weekend and then will probably get a pass to go into London-it's only a hour by train. Last nite, Keilman, Kubale and Dow came in last nite. Made a hellava racket and had a hard time going to sleep as they were moving. The boys are unimpressed by the British women, and notwithstanding-they still are AWOL's [Absent Without Official Leave] at heart.

August 19, 1943

Still at school in Cheddingham. Came down with a case of trench mouth yesterday. Nick is a bad way also. Mouth is a mess. Am not supposed to smoke or drink- have done a bit of both but not as much as usual. Went to Aylesbury last nite- just filled up with R.A.F. and uniforms. Drank a beer at the Red Lion, walked about a bit and came back to the Red Lion and sat with Bratcher and Kvorjak. Talked with some blond auxiliaries. Finally caught bus, g.i, back at 22:30. First time I've been in a black out. People walk around and recognize each other in the damn thing and I don't know how. The gals running about are awfully young. Don't care for British gals so far. One look at their legs and it discourages a person. Nick has found that they are awfully dumb and laugh at the most pointless jokes- he is quite discouraged.

Today we went to classes all day. An R.A.F. Squadron Leader spoke to us and he was good. He gave the impression of knowing his ____ (lusinias?). This is the theater. Rough from a way back. Dutch figures we better fly our 25 missions and get them over with as soon as possible and I agree with him.

Aug. 20, 1943

Rode G.I. [Ground Instructional] bus into training and saw "Random Harvest". Walked the short cut home by way of the canal accompanied by the drone of a couple of planes passing overhead being sought out by searchlights. Impressive. In regards to the theater- they smoke in the English ones. Our crew was in bed by 11 o'clock when Feuerstacke wandered in drunk as Bacchus. He & his bunch had come in from the Red Lion in Aylesbury where the owner filled them up on free scotch. He kept this Nissen hut in an uproar for about a solid hour. The Lord must look after him- the way he barges about in the dark sends chills up & down a person's spine.

The R.A.F. Squadron Leader gave us a talk on the German Air Force. He says that the 8th A.F. [Air Force] first job here was the U-Boat for which we raided the pens in France and Germany and their U-Boat yards. Now that it looks as if we have that menace under control our job is now fighters. We've been going after their production centers, airfields and in the process shooting them down by the dozens. In that respect we are almost like fighters. Got our per diem to day for the trip across. Came up to \$34.40.

Aug. 21, 1943

Today, we got a taste of what the future has in store for us in the way of weather. Drizzled and rained most of the day. Went to classes and the boys sure are eating up all the stuff. Our

teachers are men who have completed the required number of missions and we take what they give us. A major from Bomber Command talked to us about P.W. escape- what to do if forced down in occupied or German territory. They have things really down pat with escape kits especially for the purpose. How fast you get out depends on where you land, your luck and yourself. We sure have been going after fighters and their production centers such as Regenberg & Weiner Newstadt. I imagine our group will give the jerries a surprise when our new ships come up against him. We will only be a drop in the bucket. But from what these boys have done in those old Libs is amazing.

Aug. 22, 1943

Last nite went into town to see a movie which I had seen already in the states and long ago at mat. Forgot to take my truck coat and regretted it very much. Got caught in this English weather and got wet. Took the road home to avoid walking in the mud along the short cut. H. Wasserstein was lead navigator and he got good and lost. Lucky thing they have M.P.'s [Military Police] at all boundaries of the reservation otherwise I'd still be walking. The traveling Q.M. [Quarter Master] had passed thru and cleaned me out of dough. Bought a lot of clothes and was clad in my best with a new pair of shoes. Quite tired, on arrival. Still going to school and learning a lot and this deal appears tough from away back. You can see 17's coming back at all times of the day and those boys sure must be glad to be over England again.

Last nite the R.A.F. were out and on the way back we could see the searchlights pointing out the direction home to the boys in the soup. The British are surely on the ball.

Aug. 24, 1943

Bovington, England

Finished up at Cheddington this morning and packed up and left about 1400 for this place. Have a field here actually and drove up to the registration building or headquarters. Stood around while Capt. Paddock was finding out what's what. There was an A.T.C [Air Training Corp]. driver- a British gal- married- who drove some major down from London. While standing about we engaged her in a conversation and kidded her about everything. The gal drivers dress in a uniform which has the same material as our officer's wear. Finally had to leave her and come to our quarters. Bratcher and I were quartered in No. 4 hut. Entered and found one of the filthiest places I've seen yet. Officers in the Air Corps are filthy and sloppy in their habits. There was only one bed there so we moved into No 3 hut which wasn't too bad. Went down to the Combat Officer's Club and had a haircut while waiting for the bar to open. When opened saw one of the most gaudy painted places yet. Nude and buxom pastel drawing of husky lasses all over the place. Roy Swangren and the rest of my navigators. Were finding old acquaintances everywhere. Haven't run into anyone I know – the kids are all after my time. Most are from provisional groups and waiting assignments. After supper went to the briefing on the Grope Trainer – worked out a flight plan. During the briefing – the 17's were returning from a raid –

counted 81 – an impressive formation. Don't know how many started out though. The R.A.F. Raided Berlin last nite and lost 51 planes. The pace quickens and you can feel it. This is a rough war and it will get rougher. Am drinking English ale in the club and writing before going to bed.

Aug 26, 1943

Bovington

Been here two days. Yesterday was spent in stripping .50 cal and lectures on sighting and harmonization. Ran into the first person I've known back in the States – name is Carp and went to Trinity with him. Took me some time to recognize him as he has put on weight since college. Also says he has definitely retired from politics – too much back stabbing. Back in school he was up as candidate for something or other & running a campaign. Now he's flying forts but at present is unassigned and just having a high-o-time. Today took a trip in the Grope Trainer. It's just like working a theoretical flight back in cadet days except that you are placed in a cubicle and see flak flashes – take bearings and your radio operator is supposed to bring you back from the target by getting QTF's (fixes) and QDM's (mag. bearings to the station with 0 wind). Chamblin was having a hard time getting the QDM's and for a while I thought he was screwing up. He found out the "D" Navigator (Capt Paddock) was still over the target and cluttering up the airways. Had to wait for him to get off and then came in. Finished about ½ hour before anyone else. I thought I was way behind.

Seeing today the typical weather – rain and shine. Nothing to do this afternoon so we are taking it easy sitting around.

Incidentally those 81 odd forts we counted coming in our first nite here – raided Paris and came back unhurt. Good show. Leaving tomorrow for Wendling. Will be glad to get there and catch up on my mail.

Aug 29, 1943

We did not leave for Wendling the next day as planned. Trucks were supposed to have been sent down from Wendling to pick us up at 10:00. They never showed up and it was almost 4 in the afternoon before Capt. Paddock after calling up the base found that out and so we camped another day at Bovington. Bratcher, Swangren & McLemore took off for London while I stayed in the club shooting the bull with Karp and reading Guy Gilpatrick's "Glencannon" – most humorous book I've read in a long time [John Guy Gilpatric, an American pilot, flight instructor, journalist, short-story writer and novelist, first published the short stories about Colin Glencannon in the Saturday Evening Post, Gilpatric died July 7, 1950 from a self inflicted gun shot wound to the head in a suicide pact with his wife Maude Louise Gilpatric].

Saturday, the 28th was up at 0630 – shaved, breakfasted and packed and we were all set to shove off at 0730 except for two navigators – pardon one– Winzenberg. Picked up the EM and their baggage came back for Winzenberg and rode into Boxmore to catch the 9 o'clock train.

Arrived in London about half past 10 or thereabouts. Next train was to leave at 1158: killed an hour in the station watching the goings on – uniforms galore – masculine & feminine. The U.S. Transportation Corps sure does a good job in routing. If you are where they ask you to be at a certain time you have no trouble at all. They shove your baggage from station to station in our care from Euston to Liverpool and find your seats. Damn good job. Settled on our train and took off at 1158 on the nose but we had a couple of noses missing MacDade & Winzenberg. They had taken off as soon as we hit Liverpool station. Half hour out the conductor led them into our compartment and the Capt chewed a bit – so did I. Arrived in King's Lynn about 1500 and arrived Wendling at 1600. No trucks awaiting for us – so we waited a half hour and finally they arrived and we reached the base about 1700. It was good to get back and to top it all we found we'd been moved closer to the mess hall but our baggage was in a mess – all mixed up and scattered – I'm still missing a heavy fur lined flying jackquet. Spent the evening unpacking. Got a load of mail and 5 letters from M.F. [Mary Francis] which sent the ole morale up 100%. Also letter from Worley – now Capt and taking up CVT Operations [Covert Operations]. Letter from Ed Conway – the Army seems to have taken over the Yale Medical School & Ed's a buck private. Also received the letter I wrote Smittle shortly after coming back to the States – it was returned all marked up – address unknown. Believe he's back in the States somewhere. Read my mail wrote M.F. a long one and went to bed.

Up today at 0700 – found out breakfast wasn't until 0800 so sat around listening to German broadcast of hot music. The battle of the net works is on continually. Got my pay voucher made out my clothes sorted wrote letters, had my teeth looked at – they are a mess – have to have one pulled but Gingivitis postpones the pulling. It's good to be back. The food is very good and plenty of it. This a rough theater as I've said before. Capt Appert ran into his old outfit the 381st. They've lost 33 crews in 4 mos. – 10 crews or so on the Regensberg raid alone. 17 outfit No. 13 mission is known as 12B.

Got me a set of maps and I'm trying to figure out the country. Tomorrow we take a flight to familiarize ourselves. From here to Cheddington to Nottingham to Stamford and back to E. Dereham. The afternoon to be local flying. Will draw up a flight plan and follow it – yeh man.

Sept. 1, 1943

Been so busy running around that I've been neglecting this diary badly. Flew most of the day Monday. Used the 1¼" to one mile maps and they are a charm – the best I've seen. In ordinary weather it isn't too bad doing pilotage – I imagine in dirty weather it's a bit rough. That afternoon we took a local hop – saw Cambridge and other places. It hardly seems possible that I'm over here seeing places I've read about. That nite Nick prevailed on me to take the Liberty run to Kings Lynn. Just before leaving got a pile of bad news. Our ship was cracked up leaving the depot. Tis said that it blew up about 15 min after take off. We lost Sergeant Schwartz, our crew chief and Maloney 578th nav. And MacKnight, 579th Navigator. It's hard to believe Mac's gone. I liked him very much. He was a quiet chap and nice as all hell. He came to our outfit as

an extra and I tried to make him feel at home as my assistant. Learned a lot from him as he was one smart boy. The best seem to go first. A passenger – a captain – killed on the same plane had just completed his tour in this theater – 25 missions – and was all set to go home. God, what irony! This is the second ship we've lost and one other almost a washout. Something tells me its cockpit trouble – they seem to put the G.F.U. [General Fuckup] into that job. Col. [Colonel]. Rendle is having us ferry our ships from now on.

Got two letters from M.F. – out of this world – and then to town with Nick and a GI bus. Kings Lynn is typically English – dismounted at the square and walked to a show and saw the “Silver Queen” with Geo. [George] Brent & Priscilla Lane. Came out into the blackout and headed for the hotel in front of the square. Nick & I tried to get into the door together – pushed and pushed to no avail – til I stopped - then – into the lobby I tumbled – those revolving doors in a blackout are a bitch. Bar was closed so waited about chewing the situation with Captain. Huber and MacGregor til bus left at 11 pm. Home at 12 and made up my laundry as tomorrow we go to 2nd wing in Norwich.

Went to Norwich at about 8:00 and arrived at 9:00 or a bit earlier and went into the auditorium and sat down and waited. Who walks in but the “Doc”. McKittridge – hadn't seen him since I left the 61st at Tucson. Gradually I'm running into people I know. Mac's in the 93rd I believe – B-24 outfit. He's just come back from the Ploesti raid. Says it was rough and most of his outfit was lost – lost a lot of key personnel. The hall filled up with visiting “firemen” from different wings and different groups – Col's Timberlake and Johnson were there – they led the Ploesti raid. Gen. [General] Hodges ran the meeting – and it was mostly a discussion of tactics to be used in the future. Where formerly we thought in terms of elements and squadrons they now talked of Wings and Air Divisions. The immensity is staggering and the opposition is tough which has brought about this evolution and it is continually changing.

Ran into “Goon” Miller – he is a Capt and all thru with his missions and now a wing nav. in the B-17 Gps. He says that he led Bill's Troop Carrier outfit on that last minute dash into Africa. Something tells me he is as full of talk as ever – would like to hear the other side of the story. He's a student of mine and my boys get a kick out of it all and these old acquaintances trying to commemorate me for my lack of promotion. Promotions don't bother me anymore. I've seen too many chickens go up and their tactics aren't the type I like.

Our crew has been picked out as a leader crew & MacGregor's is deputy leader. We will lead formations. They go in for pattern bombing which means toggling on the lead ship.

Meeting over – drank some beer in the Officer's Club – the pilots were invited to stay over for the smoker. Swangren, Taylor, Nick & I went into town of Norwich. Did some shopping after stopping at Midlands Bank. That's the only bank that will accept personal checks. We decided to stay the rest of the day and catch the 8:35 train to E. Dereham.

Looked for a pub; but they were all closed so had tea instead. Then rode around in an open carriage. All the people grinned and we grinned back. Saw the bombed areas – it must have been hell at one time here. At 6:30, we opened a bar. All they had to drink was ale, rum & Irish whiskey – the last a scorcher. Saw a R.A.F. officer dip his pen in the ale as he wrote. Watched an elderly queen use it to mix her whiskey with. English ale can be used for most anything from the looks of it.

Had dinner at the “Castle” with a scotch to top it off and then back to the “Bell” for more drinks to find they’d almost run out of it. They had some beer left – the black variety – God awful stuff.

MacGregor’s crew has been running into people they knew all day long. There are a lot of shay gals here and Yanks all about.

We decided to catch a taxi home so missed the train. While waiting at the cab station the howling banshees went off. The people here said not to get excited and led us thru the darkness to a shelter and we stood around and waited. Got to hand it to these boys over here. Nothing happened so on the all clear we hopped into the cab and tore home on the wrong side of the road mostly driven by a native so had his house struck by a bomb and lost members of his family various times during the blitz.

Got home to find Veazey back and peed off. He’d been stuck in the hole for the past few days and was mad as a hornet. Dutch came in with the rest- about 1:30 am and woke me up. He was drunk as a Duke.

Today we were supposed to go to Liverpool to ferry our ships back – cancelled because of weather. Got some instructions on GeoRadio instead. Gork that is the stuff!! You can get your position in two shakes of a lambs tail and right down to a quarter of a mile or less. Human error is the only thing to worry about. If the Germans had it during the blitz they’d have wiped the British off the map.

Sept 2, 1943

Went ferrying today to Warton and then to Bartonwood to pick up ships. Good nice trip with best weather yet. In good weather it’s not too bad navigating in this country. I Flew to Stratford to Wrexham to _____ to Speke A.D. and then down the corridor East of Liverpool to Prescott to Warton. Altogether brought 10 ships back. We ferry our own as we trust no one – yeh man!

Sept 3, 1943

Took the noon truck into Kings Lynn and stayed most of the afternoon returning at 5:00 pm.

Flew this morning with Nick & Keilman. Went to the bombing range at Sutton – East of Ipswich on the Channel. Veazey really dropped them in all less than 200'. Flew to Stamford and then home. Flew locally and saw the 44th Gp [Group] taking off from their field about 5 mi SE of ours. Tacked into one of their elements and followed it to the Wash when we decided to turn back. Came back to the field and Nick greased her in. Then took off and wandered about a bit and saw some P-47's buzzing the 44th's Field so we headed in and dogfoughted free shooter. We turned into him and turned a tight circle and he's scoot out of the way into the blue and we turn and buzz the field at a couple of hundred feet. Turning continually. The P-47 would come back and buzz and we'd and chase at him and he's scoot away and we come back and complete the buzz job – we really raked them and I haven't had so much fun since I calibrated A.S. with Keilman in Topeka.

Group flew formation this after – rough at first and by the end of the flight the boys were out in there. We can fly good formation and the Gps who fly good formations are the ones who come back.

Sept 5, 1943

Got up and the squadron had a meeting to discuss tactics etc. Supposed to fly a group mission but weather such that it was cancelled and we did a local formation flight. Flew with McGregor crew. Swangren, his navigator, has gone to Bovington for G. school [Ground School].

Just before supper found that 4 crews from our squadron were alerted for tomorrow. No passes tonight. I'm to fly with McGregor. I don't mind but I sure would like to fly with my own crew. Looks like a diversion raid. We go out to the French coast most like and see how many fighters we can scare up. The more we do, the more successful the mission is. At present I'm too ignorant to be scared but just am curious as all hell to see what will happen. Fingers crossed and knock on wood.

Sept 6, 1943

Went to bed last nite about 9 but by the time the bull session was over it was about 4. Kiddled each other quite a bit. We woke up at 1:00AM., breakfasted briefed at 0200. We are running a diversion to cover the forts, along with the 44th – they are leading, the 389th and the 93rd. Down to operations to draw up a flight plan and to the ships. I flew with my crew and was glad. Veazey and I loaded up the front turret, a helluva job – and now it won't happen again, but twill, I betcha. Took off about 0520 and we rendezvoused over the field and climbed to 11,000. The sky was flecked with planes – so many and milling about. About 0640 we started on course and began to tag onto the other groups and about 0700 were formed in some semblance of a formation. We flew the low position with the 44th leading. Headed toward the Dutch coast and started to turn about 0730. Didn't raise anything – and the weather was C.A.V.U(A) [Ceiling and Visibility Unlimited]. – perfect. Began doglegging and picked our fighter escort at 0742 on the dot – 10 Spits. We should have turned into the Dutch coast toward Antwerp about there, but

some one in the lead snaffued and we headed north for quite a ways before we turned toward Antwerp. If we were to follow the schedule from then on we'd be about a half hour late. Believe that spoiled the division. From there to Leruestoff to Lorigth. We were supposed to head toward York out of range of German radar and then head out to the Dutch coast again. To make up for time we didn't go to York but headed out. In the vicinity of the Dutch coast about 25 mi we dropped of all things 2-100 lb practice bombs. Headed to Cromer and turned north and dropped 2 more practice bombs. Lit down over the Wash and headed home. Flew mission at 13,000 ft.

Briefed and looked after our guns and to bed. Up for supper and writing this and to bed again. We aren't scheduled (our crew) for tomorrow – but Feuerstacke & Morpew aren't here from ferrying so most likely, we will fly tomorrow and it looks like the real McCoy. Gen Hodges sent us a wire giving congrats on our performance. I doubt if the mission fulfilled its purpose as we didn't run into a damn thing.

Sept 8, 1943

Yesterday – we were up at 0100 briefed at 0200 for a raid on a couple of Dutch A.P Leeurvarton primary and Altmar secondary. Down to the ships at 0400. Our crew was to lead the Group with the Col. Flying with us. We found things in a mess. Bombs weren't loaded and no in the group ready. Something we hadn't expected. You have to jack up the rear of the plant to lower the bottom turret in order to place the guns in. If the ship is loaded with bombs that's an impossibility. That seems to have been one of the delays also the installing of equipment to simplify pattern bombing for our type of ship. The mission was scrubbed and there was a general meeting in which things were ironed out.

We then went to bed and didn't (I didn't) get up till three. Wandered about the post looking for the finance office and got paid. The mission for today was called off on account of weather so took the Liberty Run into King's Lynn and saw Abbott & Costello in "Rookies" and a Sherlock Holmes picture I'd already seen in the state.

To bed and slept till nine today. Wandered about the post. Flew this after to the bombing range to check our new equipment.

At the 1800 news broadcast heard about Italy's surrender. We are alerted for tomorrow, and I'm wondering where we go.

Incidentally, the 24's that went out the 7th didn't bomb the airfields but tangled with a convoy ~~over~~ off the Dutch Coast. Lost one ship thru flak and another ditched. Heard the news over the German networks last nite and took a guess which today's paper bears out.

Sept 9, 1943

Up at 0200 this morning. Got some good sleep last nite awakened by Nick and his wisecracks and everybody's remarks about the coming mission. Got up in the middle of the night and found a ground fog covering everything. Briefed at three and our target was the

Abbeville Airport. Job was to hit dispersal area in N.E. corner of the field. T.O. at 0550 – instrument take off – nothing but fog and you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. Col. Rendle flew with us in the co-pilots seat and Nick took the tail gunners birdcage. Our ship was leading the Group and we flew low group in conjunction with the 44th which lead the mission. The first hour of the flight was the worst. I've never worked so hard keeping track of where I was. You couldn't see anything because of the ground fog. Rendezvoused with the 44th at Splasher No 6 near Pulham and headed on course to Beachey Head. The 44th gives me the creeps – they straggle all over hell. From Beachey Head across the channel Nick's turret wasn't working – too damn bad. Our IP [Initial Point- an identifiable land mark about 20 miles more or less from the target] was Ault on the French Coast. Hit a little flak at the coast. Personally I didn't see it – if I had I'd have been scared stiff – just felt a few bumps. At Ault Veazey took over and made a beautiful run on the target. Some lite flak just before the target and they had our attitude beautifully. Dutch says he saw it even though he was following P.D.I. [Pilot's Direction Indicator] No fighters at all. The bombing looked like a bull's eye –all the smoke seemed to be in the area marked out for us – until we saw the pictures and they never lie. We find that our bombs were dropping over so we will aim a bit short. The time log is a little too much in this toggling game. Turned and hit the Fr. Coast again at a little below the Le Treport and headed for Little Hampton. From there we flew over London – could see the barrage balloons way below in that sprawling metropolis and arrived at the base at 1010 and landed at 1030. Things are really cooking. While assembling large groups of Forts were doing the same and heading in different directions. When we hit the Fr. Coast a Group of Forts were just leaving it. The idea seems to be – don't give them any rest and it resembles a shuttle service. The forts hit them and while they refuel we hit them and give em no rest. And it keeps up in all phases – fighters – light & medium.

We were scheduled for another raid – this time on Fouval Airport at Evereux about 40 miles or so west of Paris. This one looked a little tougher and we took off about 1545, assembled and were all set to climb when the mission was scrubbed – weather.

Am scheduled for a mission tomorrow morning and it looks like a double header to me.

Veazey sure put his bombs on the home plate – later: The bombing looked good from the air but when they saw the photos J.B. Whitaker figured it as lousy. On Sept 11th Wing called up and congratulated us on our bombing – they figured 22% four bombs hit the target – the average is 9%. The bombs from the other group confused the pictures were wild a bit.

Sept 10, 1943

Awakened at 0700 for a mission today. Weather was poor all morning and they held up the briefing for as long as possible – it looked like an important mission and no one would talk – so did some guessing and by gosh – I guessed right. We were drawing up our flight plan and preparing to T.O at 11:15- or so when the mission was scrubbed. Am promptly forgetting as to where we were going – so even the diary doesn't get it until it is pulled off.

This evening went at the last minute to the Red Cross traveling show. All the seats were taken so had to stand up but it was well worth the effort. Had a fat (very) Jewish English drummer – somewhat of a character, dancing, singing and gals. All had a good time.

Sept 13, 1943

Weather has been bad for the past few days – nothing doing, but eating, sleeping and ground schooling. It cleared up a lot today and figure something might be cooking tomorrow.

Dutch has been put on another crew. The Col. didn't care for the way he led the formation. Capt. Appert was fair & square about it all and Dutch admits he's been lax in practicing formation flying. Nick is now our pilot and I believe I couldn't ask for a better one – He sure can fly formation and formation counts in this theater. Got 2 new navigators, Kelley & Crouch – they were replacement men who have been knocking about until they were assigned to us. Kelly was checking up on his brother who was shot down on the Schweinfurt raid. Went down to his ole outfit and found that all of his brother's crew is safe and prisoners most like. The C.O. [Commanding Officer] of that outfit said that the F.W's [Fighter Wings] came in head on, 12 abreast – right turn the formation, wheeled about and came on turn again.

Speaking of formation's – the 44th by our standards isn't too good. Taylor says that out of one squadron in that group only one officer is left and they sent him home. He was a copilot and ended up a Squadron Commander. I'm not talking as we have yet to see what we can do. As tis we are getting quite a rep – our training has been above anyone else.

Feldheim is back and things are getting back to normal again with his face about.

Sept 14, 1943

One rough day and evening saw one madman of a Slowik. Flew this morning and again this afternoon. Didn't mind this morning as I used G. [Grove Trainer, a training device that allowed navigators to practice radio navigation, map reading, flight planning, and log keeping, as well as the use of British equipment] with Swangren, Bratcher & Bevan. However, I must have got out on the wrong side of the bed. Got into an argument with Veazey who said I did something with his key to his locker and I knew damn well, I didn't and told him so – but he continued to press his charge in his opinionated & hotheaded manner – which didn't make me any cooler. Later found he had the damn thing all the time. Then to top everything Group planned a mission for this afternoon – a frontal penetrations.

Think is a beautiful nite – full moon et al, which means the RAF is out again and they've been droning east most of the evening. Feldheim saw some Hampdens (ole crates) so they must be tossing in everything.

Sept 19, 1943

Been neglecting this diary a bit so will catch up. Wednesday the 15th we were to run another raid into France in Couches and same. It was a snaffu job as we never got off the ground. One of our ships the deputy leader – bogged down at the end of the taxi strip; and all the other ships were so close behind him that none were able to take off. That's the third time we messed up thus far with yesterday included. By the time the mess was untangled it was too late to takeoff, so we scrubbed. The 44th and 93rd were in on the raid and we saw them wheeling overhead but they tired of waiting and continued on the trip. From the papers we learned that one B-24 was lost.

Thurs and Friday was spent in taking the run into Kings Lynn. Shopped and bought things and Friday, Dutch, Veazey Nick & I met a delightful ole gal who runs an Antique Shop – a Mrs. Bland. She's been to the states so we welcomed her into our friendship – Shopped a bit in her store and had to prevent her from giving us things. Bought some old coins after she's given me some as a Gift to start with. We think she's the best gal we've met yet in the E.T.O.
[European Theater of Operations]

~~These two days have~~ Friday was spent in ferrying the other B-24 Gps to St. Marugavis about 30 to 40m North of Lands End on the coast. Different crews did the job. We are now the only B-24 Gp left in the E.T.O. – the rest have gone south for the winter.

Saturday was detailed with our crew to fly to Shipdam to pick up some of the 44th to ferry to St. Marvgaais. It was the first time I've flown with Nick as pilot and he did a good job.

We were supposed to be briefed at 07:00. Woke at 6:00 and at 0615 Capt McFadden called and wanted to know where we were. So went down without breakfast. Got the route and headed back for a bite. We were a bit disgusted & the following events didn't make us feel any better. The weather was poor with low ceilings and low visibility.

As we headed to the ship we saw three take off at 30 sec intervals and by the time they had reached the end of the runway they were lost in the mist. We were taking off alone and I didn't envy them in formation – also found out later they didn't care for it themselves.

So we took off and promptly lost ourselves in the mist – so climbed up on top at 2500' to 3000'. McGregor & D'Aoust were up there circling and we circled for an hour and then were informed that Shipdam was closed & to return to Wendling. Got a QDM and headed thru the stuff – I wrote uncomplimentary remarks in my log about McFadden – damn Nietro man – we were told that the ceiling at Wendling was 800 ft. At 600 we were still in it and we came twice about 500' bring alternately lost in the mist which in spots was lower. Nick sure did some good flying. He practically had to handle the ship like an AT6 in order not to lose the field and we made 2 tries before coming in. We had flown for an hour & a half to go 5 miles and had never got there – and all done in the dirtiest stuff I've seen yet. We weren't too pleasant all morning – or all day for all that.

Took off at 1230 to go to Hardwicke to pick up a crew there. Landed and the damn fool in the tower ordered us to park head on into another B-24 – (he draws a picture of it here) and we had to get a detail to haul it out.

Flew to St. Marquais in formation with the 93rd. They made Nick mad. (the pilots flying with us in our ship). For 18 missions to his credit that pilot sure made a lot of work out of flying – They were a cocky bunch and I didn't care for them too much.

Deposited them with pleasure and scrambled home getting in at dusk. All a bit mad at a rough day. I suppose there are rougher days in the future too.

Today – wasted a morning trying to get into the air. Squadron meeting in the afternoon. One number of our crew is to be doubled – due to shortages of ground personnel and lack of fields for new group. So we will be training crews for a couple of weeks.

Friday Gen [General] Eaker, Col Timberlake & Col Johnson were here and they thought quite a bit of our Group. Col. T. said that we flew the best formation – and I agree with him after what I've seen. Col. Johnson said that ours was the 1st gp that dropped their bombs on the target on the 1st raid. Which makes us feel good as we thought we were left here in England because we were goofing off such as those three occasions. They may be keeping us for something special. Already we are calling ourselves the 392nd Air Force – the only B-24 Gp in England.

Flew with Nick this after and dropped bombs at Sutton Wash. [Also known as Cross Keys Wash, an embankment] Listened to waltzes from the Germans on the runs and came home again.

48 hr passes start for us and our crew gets theirs Tuesday nite. Am going to London – but aren't we all!

Sept 20, 1943

We were supposed to fly a diversion – but it was scrubbed because of weather. So listened to a lecture of Flying Control – nite flying mostly – Spent the afternoon moving to new quarters in Site 1 – we are now escounced in a wing of the hospital and already I'm wondering how long we will be here.

Sept 23, 1943

On the 21st flew with Nick to Warton to pick up some stuff for engineering. Found out that couldn't get a thing – they passed a new law and we were one day late – Came in about dusk – tired and peed off.

On the 22nd we flew our new ship 543 to Hetnel about 10 miles SW of Norwich and ferried Kubales and D'Aoust crews back. That took up the morning and test hopping the A-5 took up the afternoon.

Today flew this morning down to Sutton Walk Bombing Range – dropped one bomb and Nick flew instruments back.

This afternoon we flew another diversion which took us to the islands N.W. of Antwerp and then down the channel past the beaches of Dunkerque to the White Cliffs of Dover to Dungeness up north to the Thames above Sheerness and into the channel and then home. Typhoons (17 of them) met us off the Dutch coast and escorted us to Dover frolicking about. Didn't see any enemy fighters.

Last nite the RAF was out. They passed over the field for two solid hours. Today learned that they hit Hanover for 20 solid minutes. It is an impressive sight to see all those ships of all kinds Sterlings, Halifaxes, going over alone scattered all over the sky as far as eye can see.

Sept 26, 1943

Nothing much happened the past few days – we had bad weather so didn't fly much.

Today, we flew another diversion. Our ship was lead of the 2nd element in the low squadron of the first group. At the last minute they made our outfit the lead squadron. Bratcher did the navigating and did a pretty good job.

We taxied into position an hour before T.O. to relieve congestion and confusion. While we were on the taxi strip waiting to get into position, Chamblin, my radio operator, said that someone in a B-17 was calling for me. I jumped up and pressed my nose to the window and stuck it out the hatch. Figured it was Dave Tyler and it probably was as he was very persistent. He asked for me and wanted to know why he couldn't see me and they said they couldn't which was obvious as we all set for a mission. Finally, they convinced him and he took off. I wanted to see him bad and he felt the say way.

Took off on the diversion and nothing much happened. However it was quite beautiful. Cumulus clouds and picturesque. Saw my first contrails today over the North Sea. Between 15000 and 17000 we ran into layers of the stuff and as we went through our exhaust left great streams of white vapor. Pretty as can be but I don't care for them from a practical point of view as they give away your position and direction.

Tomorrow looks as though we have another mission of the same type. The boys are getting tired of this stuff as it is as much trouble as an operational mission and doesn't count to your credit.

Sept 27, 1943

Flew a diversion this morning for the forts who were raiding Enden. Before T.O. Capt Keilman told us that when we came back we could go on pass. Came down about 11 oclock, interrogated and the took a shower – dressed – got reservations at the Jules Club and were all set to walk into

Wendling & catch the 4:20 pm train. Ran into Maj [Major] Appert (he's been promoted) and he said that he was going to Bovington and we could ride down, which we did. Scooted most of the way at tree top height. Landed at Bovington – took a ride into Boxmoor and caught the train into London getting in about 6:30.

Sept 29, 1943

Back from London. The nite we got in – had supper at the Jules Club and then went out to Picadilly Circus and watch how things cooked. It was as crowded as Times Square. Stopped into a Brasserie – crowded as all hell and filled with Commandos and they really make a pass for the soldiers. Drank some beer after fighting for it and wandered about in the blackout, being accosted but that's not my idea of a B.T.O. [Big Time Operator, someone who thinks he's important]. Came home and to bed.

Got up the next morning and while having breakfast who should run in but ole Karp. So we had a college reunion and saw the sights with his navigator Poole – dropping in at all the bars. Tight all day. Lunch at Simpsons accompanied by lots of Scotch. Took in a movie to get some sleep. Got a ticket for me for the “Blythe Spirit” at the Duchess Theater. Reserved a dinner for us at Josef's on Greek street. Went to the theater and headed for the bar. Made friends with the bar maid after a poor beginning. Drank rum peppermint – a girls drink, snorted a British Lt. Col. “Not the way I drink it” – make it a triple rum & peppermint – We drank Scotch between acts. Had a hard time getting used to the play – the actors seemed to talk to fast.

Dinner at Chosefs with wine – a small piece of steak - paid the bill and left and then almost had a fit when we figured out in American £5/7. Spoiled our evening. Home to bed eight as a drum and woke up this morning seeing ghosts at the foot of my bed.

Up and wandered over to Westminster Abbey getting lost going there and coming back. Back in time to catch Veazey & Nick and take the 1155 into King's Lynn and then the afternoon liberty run home.

Meeting with K.Q. and we start Ground School again. Also he mentioned seeing Von Arb – a major now in the 390th Gp at Framingham.

Also found that Dave was back looking for me. “Three times and you've had it” So I don't see him the next time – well I've missed the boat got a letter from him. He finished his missions and is a capt.-

Karp says he's seen the Abbeville Kids and they are good. He doesn't worry about fighters – he can seem them coming in – it's the flak that gets him.

K.Q. says that he learned from Geo. Von Arb that they Germans come whizzing over at nite 300' or so feet in the air at 400 mph dropping anti personal bombs. Don't sound so good to me.

September 30, 1943

Payday today. Feel pretty good today and almost like an eager beaver too.

Col. Johnson – the Wing Commander came down and talked to us – twas a rainy day so we have time to burn. He says that by Xmas we will have 14 B-24 Gps in U.K. and by spring about 24 Gps. which means that by Spring we will be cooking with gas on a big scale. The B-24s that went to the MED are due back so we will begin operating in a big way soon. In a couple of months the 392nd will be the nucleus for a new wing and we will be training new groups.

Oct 1, 1943

Nothing doing today – weather is bad. Was on the line when a B-24-H of the 577 squadron was taking off and the nose wheel collapsed and she slid to a stop with the tail in the air. Crew vacated in a hurry – no one hurt. The ship wasn't as badly hurt as some of the older models we saw in the same condition at Alamogordo.

Got the new navigators, Casey, Ker & _____ along with Kelly & Crouch make 5 new ones.

Oct 2, 1943

Today our Gp ran off a combination diversion and raid on Woensdrecht Airdrome. Our Gp upped 31 planes finally – flew about the North Sea and then part of them went in for the drome and the other half continued the diversion. They had a Typhoon & Spit cover. The Forts were heading towards Endeim again.

Went down to the line and watched them come back. They all came back – but with bombs in the bomb bay. The target was covered by 10/10 and nothing could be seen. However, they will probably get credit as they went into enemy territory. It was a pretty sight to see the ships come in. The sky was clear, the sun setting as dusk approached and the last ship came in – overhead was the RAF, heading for Germany. Didn't fly today but will tomorrow and they say tomorrow is a double-header.

Oct 4, 1943

Today has been one rough day. I didn't start off so well and it hasn't ended up so well either.

We were alerted at about 11 o'clock last nite and the telephone rang all nite and Okie Taylor, Maj. Appert & Capt. Keilman were continually getting up to answer it. Up at 3:30 am briefed at 4:45. Mission was a diversion for the 17's who were going to Frankfurt. Was flying with McGregor in "Mac's Sack" – lead in the lead Group with Nick in "Georgie Bell" in no2 position and D'Aoust in no 3 position. Feuerstacke lead the high group with Smith as No 2 and Morphew as no 3. Major Appert was flying as copilot with Feuerstacke.

T.O. at 0730 formed between the base & Norwich and headed for Shipdam to pick up some of the 44th arrived at 0835 and left at 0843 for Cromer. The overcast was west of the base and there was some stuff up ahead so we started to climb from Shipdam instead of the coast hitting about 4 miles East of Cromer. Used G and got two fixes which showed us to be off course to the rt. Saw that a line thru them would practically hit the top point of the route so made a slight alteration of course instead of radical changes to keep the route. As we passed 4° E long. the G began to fade out and the jamming began to increase & became so effective that the set was useless so relied on the flight plan using the wind given that adding 10 miles into the velocity. Made the turn at 55-00N 7-00E at 0950 and headed to Helgoland turning about 10 miles short of it at 1005. At 1008 we saw our first fighters black specks sporting about and looking us over. At 1015 they made their first pass and their last pass took place at 1031. For twenty minutes time stood still. They came in from all angles. ME 109's, F.W.s 190's. Some saw JU88 sitting in the sidelines watching the proceedings. We were heading due West. At 1022 saw 5 ME's flying parallel at 0900 o'clock and then they drew up ahead and peeled into us practically line abreast. We opened up everything we had and it looked like a monster spewing red hot rivets. Seemed to discourage them, and they seemed to turn away from us and head towards the high Group lead element. Watched them head toward it and noticed that Smith's engines were on fire and smoking. Suddenly another plane seemed to lift and flip on its back and another to peel out of the formation. We lost three ships from our squadron then and there. Etheridge on D'Aoust's crew saw what happened and as far as I can see it was something like this. Those M.E.'s I saw didn't do the job. A couple came in on a beam approach and Etheridge saw the 20 mm play hell with the engine on Smittle's right side; you could see he was hit bad. They seemed to be flying a tight formation & the M.E. couldn't make the breakaway as deserted and collided with ~~Feuerstacke~~ Smith. Saw No. 28 Smith. The B-24 just erupted and pieces cut off the tail of Morphew's ship and both went down. Smitty was seen to drop out of formation and Taylor saw six parachutes come out. They dished it to us and we gave all we had. They'd come in singly, line astern or line abreast – sleek creatures spitting sundre. Last attack was at 1032 and two came from 11 o'clock and erupted smoke. Saw the black bursts between ours & D'Aousts ship – rocket bombs. Then as suddenly as it started everything quieted down. We made another turn towards the Dutch coast and then headed toward Great Yarmouth hitting about 10 miles above at 1756. This relieved me somewhat as I thought I might have brought them too close to the coast – Frisian Islands and their attendant dromes about 1121 was trying to work the G set when there was an explosion. The detonator went off and just about scared me. Lucky thing the glass didn't break otherwise I'd have had it all in my face.

Landed at 1218. Altogether I believe we lost 4 ships – one ship from Shipdam. One of the 76's ships came in with the nose turret shot away, the bombardier temporarily blinded and the navigator wounded. They'd lugged and pulled 50 inches & 2700 RPM [Rotations per Minute] to catch up. Saw a couple of B-24's on the deck. Another ship was seen to explode also. Don't know what the credit side of the ledger shows. The debit —3 complete crews – 3 airplanes and a squadron commander.

P	CP	B	N	
Fruerstacke	Kvorjak	Smittie	Bratcher	Maj. Appert
P	CP	N	B	
Smith	Sedequist	Wasserstein	Irvine	
P	CP	B	N	
Morhew	Purdy	Moore	Shearer	

MacGregor's radioman didn't show up so they put Kubales radioman in Morphews ship and Morphews radioman, Jeroloman in our ship. Jeroloman is the only one left of Morphew's crew – Luck – and how!

We had a gash in the sign Mac's Sack on the rt hand side of our plane and a more obtruse angle and I might have caught it.

Every chance I'd get I'd take a look to make sure that "Georgie Belle" was still there and she was.

Tonite Capt Keilman was made our new C.O. and Dutch was made Sqdrn Operations officer and everyone went to the bar and I was half lit a wee bit.

That bullet that made the hole in Mack's Sack, Veazey says – went right across the ship in front of his face and in front of me stomach – stirring up a cloud of dust.

Oct 5, 1943

Today we held a wing critique at our field with Colonel Timberlake presiding and Col. Johnson (Ploesti) also there. Col. Timberlake had a pretty secretary who took down all the proceedings.

They said that the diversion was a great success as the 17's didn't have any opposition on going into Frankfort. They say we flushed between 75 & 100 fighters. Mebbe about 30 or 40 might be a good guess. I don't know as I didn't have time to count them.

The first question to be decided was whether we had flown over Helgoland as some crews reported flak. I'd played the whole thing as safe as possible and Capt. Paddock bore me out. The 44th didn't think so – but looking where they had us hitting the coast way south of Great Yarmouth --I figure that we played it safe enough as we hit above Great Yarmouth as the Gee fixes of Jones and Casey bear out also Radio fixes of K.Q. came to the conclusion that we weren't too far off course and reports of flak weren't so – t'was rocket bombs instead. We haven't been on any raids when the men have seen enough flak to recognize it.

The 44th figured we timed at 1008 and K.Q. and I logged 1005. Argued about discrepancy in times and I remarked that maybe it was the difference in time before the head formation turned and the tail turned. Col. T. cracked – “That’s no formation!” Big laugh. Ole KQ talked his bit & Col. T couldn’t get a word in edgewise – so am not surprised I can’t – as I’m only a 1st Lt.

We were at fault for not sending out distress calls when the ships started to fall and chutes appeared. Also for making that extra turn into the coast after the fight. Once we have flushed fights our mission is completed and the maneuver known as “Let’s get the hell out of here” should be immediately initiated.

Oct 6, 1943

Dull day today. Had a meeting at 0900 when a Capt from the 2nd Air Division came in and told us about the mess the belated reports of ships down was. The base didn’t know we’d had a battle till the ships came in and they began to see the damage and then figured it was only a slight air collision. I feel pretty bad about it all and so does everyone else – as there was no excuse for not doing it. Once fighters sight us we don’t need to worry about radio silence. It was a hard lesson – even though the chance of a fellow chuting out with nothing but a Mae West [life preserver that made the wearer look big busted, like the prominent American actress of the same name] into the high seas as it was that day were less than 50/50. Still – no excuse.

Something cooks for tomorrow – slight rain this evening.

Oct 7, 1943

Today we were briefed for a raid on Emden. The route was similar to that we took on a division raid toward Helgoland – only with a few more turns – almost had heart failure when I saw it remembering that day in the North Sea. All set for the mission and it was scrubbed. As Olson said – It don’t make me too angry. I agree with him.

Oct 8, 1943

Briefed and ran a mission supposedly to Vegasack – where the flack goes wicky woo – Took off about 1325 and rendezvoused with the 93rd and the 389th was to fly high group, we low & 93rd lead. Headed out over the North Sea – scattered all over the sky. Made land full all sight and 1537 we were supposed to hit the I.P. The high group turned off but the lead kept on going and we followed them till 1547 when they turned off and we followed. The lead must have got lost and we overshot the I.P. and wandered South of Bremen – dropping the bombs in some woods – they were incendiaries. At 1600 Bomb bays were opened and I set on the floor with my hand on the salvo lever waiting for the signal to drop em – waited for 15 minutes, before we got rid of them. Passed east of Bremen & Vegasack going NE to the rally point and ran into a Flak barrage – cri,[j]. cari,[j]. the stuff hammered on the bottom of the fuselage and the sky was black with the stuff. Saw ME 110, 210, JU88’s and they stayed away – made a few passes – Veazey

got one – the pilot parachuted – Hoffman & Bosworth claim another one – and a third damaged. They didn't bother us too much and it was so quiet when we hit the German Coast at first, that it scared me as I figured they might be ganging up somewhere.

Lost one plane, Clifford, pilot Schnozder, Co-pilot, McLeMarz, nav & Whitman pilot. Cliffe lost one engine and I saw him down below to the left about 10 miles east of Wesermundz heading for the coast about 305° and a JU88 was weaving back and forth until they chased him away. As we left the coast 2 ships turned back – one on fire who exploded – no chutes.

Left the coast all right and headed out to sea. Some flak at the coast - light stuff not like the black stuff at Bremen.

Next thing I see is more black stuff and look at the compass and said Oh! Oh! – Helgoland. With all the North Sea about us – we pick this itty bitty island to go close to. Saw the flashes of guns below in the middle of the island. Headed out to see and joined into Splasher #5 and came in about 1840 and landed about 1920. A B-24D landed and cracked up on this field. All in all it was a messy mission.

Believe Clifford may be safe & a P.W. [Prisoner of War]. We also lost another ship – one from the 578th.

The Germans the next day – mentioned the “terror raids on another German Coastal area” besides the fast attack on Bremen. That was us. Veazey says t'was incendiaries was being dropped all over hell. As I flew about German – and before we hit fighters – I thought as I watched ??? towns go by – that we must be causing a lot of confusion down below.

Oct 9, 1943

We were awakened at 0330 for a briefing at 0430. The mission was a lulu – Danzig. Nick and the crew was to fly with the exception of Veazey & I. We've lost 4 crews this week and they are trying to save a few of the staff. Felt awfully bad to see Nick go off. He & the crew road in a truck to Shipham and took a plane off from there. The mission was routed to Denmark, across it down to Poland into Danzig – the colonel said the bombing run was 800 miles long. The raid was the longest pulled from the E.T.O. The ships took off about half hour late – trouble with bomb bay tanks and ship changes. So proceeded to sweat Nick out. He turned up about 1200. The late T.O. had fouled thins up and he had a gas leak so turned back.

The morning was very pretty with mist scattered about the trees in the holows – light clouds – bright sunlight and group after group roaring overhead to rendezvous.

All our ships came back about 17:45. There was flak over the target and fighters coming out JU88 – dropping bombs from above the formation – ME110s & 210's and some ME 109's.

The route passed close to Sweden and in the running dog fight some ships were forced down in Sweden.

Capt. Whittaker says our bombs missed the target.

Cassel says he saw about 15 subs scoot out of the pens and drop to the bottom. One ship saved half its bombs and dropped them on one subs.

Had a party at the club that nite and most every one got plastered. We have an Air Sea rescued crew attached to our squadron. The navigator is Capt. Witzer – 42-1 of Turner Field my lower class. He went to Langley and then flew patrol out of Newfoundland – came over here and flew patrol in the Bay of Biscay. His crew has 3 subs – 2 in the Atlantic & one in the Bay. He has the air medal. The requirements are 200 hrs patrol – air medal and oak leaf cluster for every 200 hrs after. I should, by that score, get it and 3 oak leaf clusters. Also he says 12 hrs patrol is = to one combat mission. I've flown at least 700 hrs.

Oct 16, 1943

Saturday, often sweating out missions all week – and sweating Nick out. Weather not so good. The only raid we did get into the air for was the Schwyzifort-Ozal. The lead group was the 93rd and they goofed off and we were forced to follow and ended up making up a division in the same area where we were so hopped on the 4th. The forts go all the fighters and lost 60. General Anderson sent a ??? at briefing stressing the importance. Morale is quite low as the missions lately have been goofed up.

Was Duty Navigator – up all nite preparing a practice mission – alerted for tomorrow. Don't know what it is yet.

Been scheduled as lead Navigator for the past few days – missions been either scrubbed or turned into practice missions. Today we took off before dawn and tried to assemble above the stuff. Situation was so snaffu – mission was canceled. Planes were scattered all over the place. Yesterday we were supposed to go to Durant – following the forts. Mission for us was scrubbed and we ended up flying a practice one in the channel SW of Beachy Head.

Cut out clipping of Dave Tyler out of an English paper yesterday.

It was pretty messing about as the sun was just lighting the eastern sky – but as Nick says – too early in the morning for that sort of stuff.

Oct 23

Been briefed a couple of times but weather is so bad haven't flown. Tonite was caught short on one "Shortsnorter" and broke all records by getting it in three min. flat. Looked like a streak of lightening going thru the club.

Nick and I were trying to teach McGregor, Butterball & Swangren, "O Escravos" – Sgt. Connolly ran out of liquor so repaired to our quarters, after I'd signed my life away for a bottle of soda water and glasses. Dug out my bottle of Scotch and they sure put a ??? into it – finishing it in no time. Nick and I figured the crew here were no good at foreign languages so he rewrote

the song while I cut Lt. Colzinans hair – my new navigator it's a passable job considering I only had nail clippers and a comb.

Here is the new version of "O'Escravas"

"At dawn we take off to sweep the heavens wide
And into the sun we'll cross the channel's tide
Onward, Onward into Chermany
Vegasek, too much flak
Ziggy, Ziggy Zag
Nesserschmidts, U22 calls it quids
Ziggy, Ziggy Zag

Was briefed, as leader crew, for a mission last nite – sweated it out and then it was called off. As tis they had a practice mission – but didn't fly it.

Attended sex lecture – went over to the machine shops to straighten me pedal on me bike. Twaz min job but five hours before I left the area. Interesting as can be.

Got package from home – wool socks. O boy – I only have about 30 pair as tis every lil bit helps.

Oct 30, 1943

Captaincy came thru today – weather bad per usual.

Nov 3, 1943

Raided Wilhelmshaven. This was a Luftfinder deal and our first try at it. I have never seen so many plans in the air in all my life. B-17 all over the sky let alone the 24's.

Weather was good over England and was ??? over the North Sea climbing on course and weather began to close in and before we reached the enemy coast it was solid. Lot of contrails visible – escort came along and with contrails looked like white fingers passing around the sky. Hit the coast and gradually clear in spots Est of Groningen so the P.F.F.'s were leading us in ok. Light flak and some fighter visible. But they didn't try much. ??? began to maneuver for a head on pass until he has 4 white fingers streak towards him and he quickly changed his mind. From the IP in the undercast was solid. Someone yelled "Bombs Away" and ours went off prematurely. Over the target scattered flack – not too accurate. Turned over the North Sea and headed for England. There were plans everywhere as far as eye could see.

Nov 4, 1943

Was duty navigator and we were alerted by mission was scrubbed about take off time. Didn't get much sleep and that afternoon, went to Division critique at ??? in Norwich. Met

Stogren – he taught me metro when I was a cadet. Now a Maj. and runs the metro division. Am getting a good nite's sleep and going on pass to London tomorrow. Mac's crew left today.

Nov 5, 1943

Took the buss to Kings Lynn and the train to King's Cross Station. Mac had us on a waiting list for the Regent's Palace Hotel. Didn't want to wait so to Picadilly and got sumptuous rooms that nite. Made the rounds and got drunk at the "Gremlin Club" in Soho with couple of P-shooters who have been ??? to Chas trains. This business is no longer a lark. Saw Nick about 4:00 am when he was going on a mission – this morning.

Nov 6, 1943

Shopped at Selfridges – bought a couple of books on London – wandered about with Ray & Taylor & Mac. Lunched at the Jewels – ran into an ole student of mine Capt Sigel – last class I taught – I ??? with him here – flying B-26's.

Saw "Strike a New York" . Think Sid Fields is the best ever. Laughed till I cried.

Nov 7, 1943

Went to church this morning in Regent Park – close to ??? Mrs. Taupads Exhibition – caught the afternoon train to King's Lyon. Learned that "Ole Nick" is gone. Veazeys promotion came through – so did Nick's.

Nov 8, 1943

Alerted. Came off pass at midnite and was up at 2:00 am to see the boysoff. Don't like to sleep thru it. Capt Paddock is going in ??? so am a ??? Gp Nav. Went to bed about 6 am mission was scrubbed about the same time.

Saw Foldheim and got the details as best as I could. It was a P.F.F. [Pathfinder Force] mission, but the weather turned out better than expected – clear as a bell over the continent. Target was Muenster. Got to the target ok and it looked like a milk run dropped the bombs and about then the flak started and it was damn accurate. The Col's ship (P.F.F.) was hit and he just made it to England escorted by P-38's D'Aoust's ship was hit and so was Nicks and both were forced out of the formation. Chuck out of D'Aoust & 4 out of Nick's were seen to come out and the ships were descending under control but damaged – with fighters about – yellow nose ??? – Abbeville Gp. Believe Nick may be a P.W. giving the Dutchmen a going over, I hope. Steinmetz out of the 578th was also lost close to the coast. Kubales ship just about made it all shot to hell.

They are now packing Nick's stuff – don't feel too bad as I have ?? of his, being ok. Feldheim was hit pretty hard and felt awful that nite – cried. Sometimes I wish I could do the same – but can't.

Saturday nite a big party held in the club. Everyone was drunk and fighting with each other. Feldheim was drunk, Dutch was fighting with a couple of people. All in all a knock down drag out brawl.

The two crews we lost, not makes 6 out of the squadron – the most in the group. With D'Aoust went Winzenberg – the nav. and with Nick went Kary. Nick's crew was my own as I've been with them so long so miss them most.

Nov 9, 1943

Were alerted at 0000 – went down and found it was a practice mission and per usual run off in the wee hours. Worked all nite and slept all morning. K.Q. is going on pass so am acting Group Navigator. Visit with Feldheim and plan our next pass to Cambridge.

Already alerted tonite. So will catch some sleep as will have to get up early.

Nov 13, 1943

We've been briefed a few times but the missions weren't run off either for one reason or another. The B-17's however seemed to go out. Been acting group navigator most of the week and will continue to do so till Monday when K.Q. comes back from pass. Thursday Nov 4, Keilman, Stock, I took the Oxford down to Framingham to Lake and start KQ on his pass. Went primarily to visit Major Von Arb who I haven't seen since Orlando Florida. Talked about the ole 25th days and gave each other a circular kick for ever leaving a gravy train. The compass was out in the Oxford and the gyro processed 25° in 30 min and we were a bit lost coming down to Framingham.

The new crews came in that day and we've been training them. Never knew how much I've learned since I been here till I began to impart my knowledge. Our losses have been quite heavy. This is no longer a game – it doesn't take many missions to make a Christian out of a man. You can tell a man about what it's like but he doesn't appreciate it and won't till he actually experience everything that occurs during a mission. You have to experience it all to appreciate anything that you hear about.

Today, our Group followed the Forts into Bremen. The winds at altitude were gale velocity about 110 miles an hour. Jones worked up the mission, and I got up early to help him. Getting so I rarely fly – only when the squadron leads. There were quite a few – 8 – abortions in the Group - one is our squadron. We lost one crew over the target – Lamma, pilot – Robeson, Copilot, Adams, Nav. and Freeborne, bombardier – air-sea-rescue boys. An ME came in and shot their No 3 engine out – knocked them out of formation and six fighters jumped them before the P-38's could get in.

Lt. Harris – Asst. Operations was shot down as ditched, don't know which with Roper's crew.

Maj. Crey of the 576 landed along the coast. And another ship of the 578 just made England – landing on a new built field, three miles within England ??? geo.

McGregors on pass with his crew. Lamma was flying his ship and “Mac's Sack” is no more.

Our group attacked targets near Oslo Norway. The weather was quite bad and there were abortions. We put up 5 ships out of the squadron, two reached the target, Goff and Higgins (H. is a Hartford boy). The trip was a milk run – few if any fighters, very light flak. The primary target and the secondary target were obscured and a factory was hit which was found later to be a nitrate factory was completely demolished. Norway is covered with snow as they say and the features difficult to distinguish. Our target was an airfield but couldn't be found. Some of our ships went to the target area individually, tacked onto formations of 17's bombed and returned individually.

Nov 18, 1943

Made another trip to Norway and I got in on this one – it was our turn to lead the group. Briefed at 0330 to hit the repair shops at a Kjellor field above Lillestrom about 10 miles from Oslo – east of it. Took off about 0615 assembled and started down the assembly line at 0742. Left England at 0816 above Skegness and headed out over the North Sea. Undercast with towering cumulus. Flew with McGregor's crew – with Roy Swangren in the nose turret- he was a great help in making landfall. Weaved back and forth behind the 2nd C.W. [Command Wing] up thru the Skagerak. As we went up the passage noticed that the visibility over the land was CAVU and we continued till we almost hit Sweden and with Roy's help we swung up the Ford, towards Oslo. The 2nd C.W. turned a bit too soon and found it out and came hightailing it after us. As and when we reached the IP our generators gave out except for one and the bombsight was useless. Necessitated a change in lead. Capt. Whittaker with Goff as pilot immediately took up the lead and made a short run and dropped the bombs and we timed out of the target. As we headed out the other wing struck and you could see the huge columns of smoke at each end of the field where our targets were. It was a perfect set up for bombardiers – ideal conditions with no fighter opposition and very little flak.

Fogarty of the 578 had to land in Sweden. Believe another ship of the 44th Gp did the same. As we left the target ships were scattered all over the sky. We had no electricity to spare for heat in ??? and did a lil freezing. As we passed along the Skagerak by Denmark the fighters came out. Saw them about 1252 and they left us about 1315. Ju88, MZ109, Me210's. The formations closed up in a hurry and after the first pass the fighters concentrated on the stragglers. Cut two out and they dove for the closed ???. Believe the Jerri's got one of them. Our turrets

soon went into operation. Felt very much alone up on the nose with Butterball. Good up on the back warming himself – he showed up in a hurry. Houston, Nx's tail gunners set one on fire and I could hear Taylor shouting that he'd got the s.o.b. Finally we were alone and came into Cronen about 1505 and landed at home about 1525.

It was altogether a quiet haul yet the target and our major losses were after we left the target and were coming home. Lt. Hull came in last and for a while we thought he wouldn't make it as he had engine trouble to and from the target. The bombing looks pretty good thus far and will know more details as they come in.

Nov 19, 1943

Went to Shipham to the 14 C.W. critique run by Col. Johnson. We tried to get a picture of what happened. Everybody sees such a small part of any one action that there are conflicts in the stories. General consensus was that target was hit. We lost 9 ships altogether – 3 landed in Sweden, the 44th lost 5 ships and we are ?? enemy action.

Nov 20, 1943

Took the afternoon off and hopped into King's Lynn visited with Mrs. Bland and then shopped and headed home.

Nov 22, 1943

The lead crews went down to Shipdham to hear Col. Garland talk about bombing. Gen. Hodges talked to us; told us that in all our raids – only one minute justified our existence – unimpressive when you think of it – all the effort from way back in the states concentrated in one minute over the target.

Ole homework – meet lots of fellows. One of my students – G.S. Vaughn, 42-5 is Gp. Nav of the 44th. Saw Ole Cutcher. He's just arrived – came by way of South America. Also C.T. Ballard – of my navigation class – he is a navigator in Cutcher's Sqdrn.

Nov 26, 1943

Today our group raided Bremen – a P.F.F. job. It was a bit confusing – most of this type mission are. Wasn't on this one – Dutch went along however.

The R.A.F. have been raising hell over Berlin all week and seeing them come home at nite – boy, you have to hand it to them!!!

Nov 28, 1943

Last nite went with Feldheim and Don Clarke down to Little Franchaim to Mrs. Littleproud's tea shop – in reality her house. Swell apple pie, tarts, scones and hot tea – good

music on a beat up Victrola. Sgt. Greene was there – met him for the 1st time. Used to be a ballet dancer in Ballet Russe??? – stage name Paul Petroff – was quite good. Enjoyable evening. Mrs. Littleproud's son George – a cripple from childhood – and a jack of all trades. He taught himself to paint floral designs on black silk or rayon – really quite good – I admire people like that.

Today decoration ceremonies were held in the new ??? Mess. Received the Air Medal. Keilman, McGregor, Good and many others. Kubale got the Purple Heart and K.Q. also. Kubale was hit by a piece of flak which penetrated as far as his leather jacket. K.Q. had his hand scratched. Kubale doesn't quite know what to do about it all.

Went to King's Lynn and ordered a battle jacket – I just have to sweat out receiving it now. Visited the Cathedral St. Maugriths. Talked with the vicar or whatever he is and got a lot of lowdown on different parts of it as to architecture, etc. Most of the town is practically built on water practically. The archways in the town and in this part are unusual in that its sides resemble the slant of the tower of Pisa due to settling. Took pictures. Also snapped one of the Guild hall – dates to Elizabethan and before – also one of an old house – which has an archway leading into an inner court. From the ceiling of the archway is suspended a cannonball dating from Cromwell times. There is much of interest if you know where to look for it.

Cut a clipping out of the Stars and Stripes on the Kjellan results. Did all right although have a hard time recognizing the description. Figure our planes must be ??? and drop;ping smoke – we had a smoke bomb to indicate our bombs and we ??? out of the formation in changing leads – interesting speculation.

Talked with Stauder coming from King's Lynn; and got straightened out on that division of Oct 4th. What I saw was correct. As feuerstacke's ship flipped out of formation it tore parts of Morphews ship and she went down. The M.E. collided with Smith's ship – we figure the pilot must have been dead as the Germans came close but they make sure they miss by a wee bit in passing through.

Dec 5, 1943

Since last entry – we've flown a mission to Bremen and today we flew one into France to Cognac – airfield – it was socked over the continent so nothing much was accomplished (wasn't on any of them).

Last nite was a riot. About 1:33 am we heard two explosions and the sky was lit up in one area of the field. About 2:20 came a gigantic explosion. First we thought it was an air raide – as R.A.F. planes were returning from a mission weekend.

Seems three men from armament were checking the racks and ??? on Higgins ship when a fire was started near the put-put. All three men were seriously wounded – burned – the first explosion was the gas tanks of the ship 50 cal shells began to go off and a tracer hit a gas truck

which caused the 2nd explosion. The fire raged for a while and the third explosion was caused by some 500 pound ??? going off.

We drop this stuff in Germany and think nothing of it much the same way as the Germans did earlier in the war. After I heard this and I sure don't want to be anywhere near Berlin when the R.A.F. comes over. This was a piddly explosion in comparison too.

Our motto seems to be "Get those ships in the air, even if you have to blow em up"

Dec 11, 1943

Flew on a raid to Emden. Snaffed the assembly – we were leading the division and ended up leading no one but ourselves. Wasn't on the ball too much and did a poor job – learned a lot, but this is no place to learn the stuff. Came into the coast N.W. of Emden. Flak got three B-17's before we got out of the target. ??? over the Frisian Island – three chutes came out and Veazey??? Saw the ship explode on hitting the water. Flak got another over a town N.W. of Emden and it blew up practically in our faces. Smokescreen over the town and the bombing was poor – half, no 2/3 rds of our bombs were dropped prematurely on the ??? lead. Veazey did evasive action around the flak and changed the M.P.I. If all our bombs had dropped on him – we'd have been the big dogs of the 8th A.F. as tis we are getting nothing but hell for a poor job.

Went to critique today the 12th and Gen Johnson tried to get the whole story straight. It doesn't take much to screw up a mission and be ineffective. Clipping into ??? picture ??? is a lot of ballywash. What tripe.. If you took the story at face value the war would be over tomorrow. For about 1 good mission there may be 3 or 4 misfires. So much can happen and it doesn't take much to snaffu.

Going on pass with Cap. Keilman tomorrow.

Dec 15

Back off pass. On the 12th the group raided Keil – we lost Rogillio – Kelly was his navigator. He left the target and then developed engine trouble and dropped back – he may have turned back. Today the group raided Brmen. Lots of flak – all came back ok.

Dec 17

Capt. Keilman received is majority today.

Dec 20, 1943

Today was my closest call yet. Raided Bremen – flew with Everhart and his crew. Dutch went along – riding in the waist. Briefed for a P.F.F. mission and by the time we hit the enemy coast things had changed. Clouds were higher and contrails persistent so that we made our own clouds – white streaks as far as eye could see. Ships were forced to climb through clouds in formation – there were lots of aborts who came ??the formations headed in the opposite

direction. Much confusion. Peyton's ship had its tail turret cut off at a vertical. Fin badly damaged by the pass of some other ship. Believe the prop was knocked off by Flak and cut off the tail turret! Lost the gunner with it. Peyton continued onto the target and back home with the ship in that condition. Fighter cover was good.

We hit the target and there was flak from the target out to the coast via the ?? of Vegasack, Wilhelmshaven etc. Bombed manually. Right after our bombs were away about 1214, flak burst under the open bomb bays and knocked out our hydraulic system. Then we caught it again and No 2 was peppered, No 3 damaged and No 4 all out knocked out. Wall all set to call it a day and join Nick. Everhart took it all in his stride and we kept on. Piece of flak went thru the windshield above Sassaman. Flew with all engines till we left the coast. P-51's gave ME210's a working over – nice to watch. Feathered No 4 once out to sea and plugged up ??? information on the ???. got home and the others landed and we still floated around. Had to crank the wheels down and they wouldn't lock – the nose wheel wouldn't come down. We were quite low and the inboards didn't sound so good. Tried to get No 4 going again and Northcutt and Johnson, the engineers went back to check the wheels again. About then the two inboards just quit and we were left with one engine. Everhart made an emergency landing and we ?? field close by. Just braked myself back of the armor plate. Northcutt just came back and didn't have much time to do anything while Johnson was just starting thru the bomb bays. Bounced about – wheels snapped and scudded to a stop. Pulled the hatch open and Sassamen, Chalten, the bombardier, the radio operator, Northcutt and myself got that way. Everhart cut the switches – No 2 was trying to run – and climbed out the side window and we all scrambled. Northcutt was banged about a bit – twas his 24th mission. We were afraid of fire and when it didn't go up came back and put out smoking No 2. We counted noses, first 10 turn a 11 and I headed towards the nearest telephone and met Col. Johnson & Major Gilbert coming across the field. Everything was taken care of. Came back and the men were trying to get to Johnston whom they discovered as missing – he was pinned in the bomb bay.

Doc Holland shoed the rest of us to the hospital and we spent the night there. Awfully hot there. Got a couple of shots of Scotch and pills.

Dec 21, 1943

Out of the hospital and thankful to get off so easily. It could have been much worse. Sassaman met Gen. Johnson going to the wreck and he asked Sassamen "What happened?" "We crashed" was his reply. That's the second time Sassaman has run into the Gen. And given simple answers to simple questions. Maj. Keilman got hell all around for letting me fly.

Received a cable from Georgie Nicholson saying Ole Nick is a prisoner in Germany – good news. Today was a P.F.F. mission to Munster where Nick went down. Snaffu deal.

Dec 24

Flew a mission into Calais area with McGregor's crew. We were briefed on the target the past few days, the 22 and the 23rd. The targets are believed to be rocket gun installations and the 26's are hitting them but from the look of it, haven't been doing too well. We were given two targets in the area??? Of Abbeville. The 576 and 577 took one and the 578 and 579 took the other. The 44th Gp had the same targets and split their group in like manner. The whole thing looked like a big show and I suppose it was – although I didn't see much of it. The 1st Division of 17's were to hit the area first and they were given 20 mins in the target area. The 2nd Div. Of 24's were given 15 min after they left and the 3rd Div. Of 17's were to have 20 mins. A blanket pursuit cover was to be given to the whole area from 12,000 on up to 21000 and above. Everything was to be poured in. ??? and R.A.F. were to hit before the 8th B.C. did and then after I believe. We were given only one run on the target and the Field ???? stated that if we didn't destroy the target on the first try – we would be assigned the same target and sent back the next day or at the first possible moment. Took off about 11:15 and left the coast at Beachy Head about 1227 and doglegged to point 02 St. Quentin on the Somme and headed inland and destroyed the target at 241(?). Visibility was perfect. No enemy fighters and no flak – it was awfully quiet – am not sorry. Came out at ??? and back to Beachy Head.

We had traveled down to Beachy Head and into the Channel as a group and at the corner of the dogleg we split up and formed squadrons with the 579th following the 578th. We destroyed both our targets and the pictures sure looked good. It was a perfect and ideal mission. The Group put up 28 ships – 28 ships hit the target and 28 ships came back. We sure must have looked good coming in for Gen. Johnson commented on it. Good formation. It's the first time we have come off a mission in a long time in such grand style.

Christmas Eve was spent at the Ground Officer's barracks of our Squadron. Big party and big drunk for many.

Jan 9, 1944

Just back from furlough – London, Oxford Cambridge. Sicne I've gone they have run off 5 raids. Dec. 30 – PFF to Ludwigshaven, Dec 31 to St. Jean de Angely on an airfield ??? It was plastered and 16 ships destroyed on the ground. Big New Years Party and I went on furlough the next day. While I was gone we ran three missions 2 to Kiel and one to Ludwigshaven Friday. On the 1st raid to Keil we lost five ships to fighters and two crashed on coming home. Hull was one of the five and lost Coleman, the navigator, a good boy.

Jan 11, 1944

Today our group went to raid Brunswick. The sky was full of airplanes as the 17's were also going in to hit targets beyond Brunswick close to Berlin. About noon, heard that the mission had been recalled because of a front moving in bases. Our ships came back about 1500 and it started to snow a wet snow. About 15 B-17's landed at our base an hour late.

Our group hadn't reached their target at the time of the recall so turned back and hit a target of opportunity at Meppen(?). The 17's were so close to there that they decided to continue and bombed regardless. Our group had no opposition whatsoever but ??? 17's.

Jan 13, 1944

More dope on the 11th Jan mission. The Germans claim 126 or more planes. We admit 59 Bombers and 5 fighters. We are right as that is the official report. AAA how has been asking why we didn't come out immediately with our losses. Reason is obvious – planes were scattered from hell to breakfast because of weather. Sure must have been a rough mission.

Jan 14, 1944

Was awakened at 0530 to fly a practice mission – our squadron was leading the Group and the wing. Got up briefing per usual and briefed and to our planes to await starting time. Spent our time watching the birds maneuver – such swarms – move like a complete airforce – war has ever hit them. About 0855 the mission was scrubbed and were to stand by in the briefing room. Major Keilman and I went to the war room and found that the practice mission had been exchanged for the real McCoy – France about 70 miles SE Dieppe. It was quick a rush and very helter skelter – given the route in time to get to the plans and T.O. Flew with Everhart with Maj. Gilbert. Flew down to Brighton and doglegged to a point east of Dieppe. In the rush made an error at Fecamp and paraded up the coast to the point of entry and into the target. Veazey nailed it. We had no route out so improvised one – made a tight 180° turn north of Ronen to avoid its flak and and left the coast about 10 miles west of our entry. Land fall at Hastings on the English coast and base at 1622. T.O. was at 1253. About a 3 ½ hr mission – no flak and a couple of fighters who were nailed by P38's. Col. Westover from 2nd Division flew with us. Didn't know he was a Col. – Veazey says I trampled all over him when he got in my way.

Jan 21, 1944

Another mission into the Calais area was run off. Ina way they are quite easy but still keep my fingers crossed – wasn't on this one – to prove that the 44th got snagged and lost 5 ships to fighters and one to Flak which had to crash land on the English coast. Lost a squadron Commander on is 25th mission and the Group bombardier. For a while though it was Vaughn who was navigator – but twas'nt. Our squadron was the only one who hit their target - ???

Jan 22, 1944

Been offered a job as Asst Air Force Nav. Don't know what to do about it. If I was ordered to go it would be easy, but they leave the choice up to you – mebbe because it ain't worth a damn and nobody wants it. Capt Bilyew recommended me and K.Q. put in the word. Will be interviewed Wednesday. Will see then what sort of a deal it is.

Flew a mission to Germany and as we were leaving the coast it was scrubbed so turned for home. Had to ditch some of our bombs and so just headed out to sea and came in any ole place – net result – flak.

Veazey left for 8th A.F. Hdqtrs to take up his new job there and I'm still thinking about my offer.

Jan 27, 1944

Met Capt Stugard from the 8th Air Force and he gave me his setup and asked if I'd like the job. Still didn't know so told him I'd call him up tonite. Finally decided to take it and see what happens.

Jan 29, 1944

The Group raided Frankfurt – PFF job. The 576th was leading and ??? assembly. There was a midair collision. Usry's ship chewed off the tail of the PFF ship in deputy lead. Major Gray was in the D. Lead and was killed. The P.F.F. navigator was from our squadron originally named Pautz – he was killed also. The pilot and copilot were thrown out thru the plane – they had seat chutes and now have a 50/50 chance. Usry and co-pilot and the other two officers were killed – some got out.

On the raid we lost one ship from our squadron – Strikers flying "Sally Ann." Landlord(?) was navigator and Crouch, my other navigator was flying in the nose turret. Don't know what happened. Crouch didn't have to fly but wanted to catch up with his crew on missions. I almost flew in that ship. Major Keilman asked me but I don't like to kick off fellows out a crew to get missions – so didn't fly.

Jan 30, 1944

Flew my 10th mission today. Target was Braunschwig. 577 was supposed to lead but didn't have a lead crew available so we took it. Flew with Everhart and Major Keilman. We were tail end charlie. The 1st and 3rd divisions went in first and then the 2nd Division with our Group bring up the tail end. We got to the division assembly line a minute or so early and had to get out of the way of the other wings forming. So ??? Crameer and ??? and fell into our proper place as they left the coast. The under cast started before we reached the Dutch coast. The contrail left by the receding division was so thick they formed a vertical bank to our right and we had to drop from 22,000 to 20,000 feet. There were fighters – ours – everywhere. It was an impressive sight to watch the division pass ??? – like boxes of ??? – and P-38's heading out. Dropped our bombs at 1223 – a lil flak and headed for home – a long ride we left the Dutch coast 14 min early and passed the 17's on the way home. No matter how I figured it the whole thing wouldn't add up to Brunswick - Hanover fitted a lot better as the target. Found out later that was what it was. The contrails were so thick that they decided to bomb Hanover instead.

Jan 31, 1944

Mission was planned but scrubbed early in the morning and then about 0900 we were alerted again – target in the Calais area. It was the usual madhouse of rush, rush, rush. Supposed to be a P.F.F. but ended up visual. We sure are experienced. On our 2nd mission we had all nite to prepare for it and weren't ready for T.O. and had to abort – now we can get off in about 3 hrs and probably could it in a lil less – but not much. The RAF has hit Berlin Fri, Sat and Sunday nite and we have him them Sat and Sunday nite. It will get worse for the Germans as time goes by.

Feb 1, 1944

Major Keilman & I & Everhart went to the critique at 1400 C.W. M.K. was going on pass to Norwich. We accompanied him and picked up Hernandez at Hersham and went to ??? to see Cutcher who is now a major. Went to the Magpie pub in Harleston – I drank and came home – to find that I was duty navigator.

Feb 2, 1944

Group went on another Pas de Calais area near St. Paris. Was duty navigator that nite and then flew with Baumgart and his crew in El Lobo. Target was overcast and several runs were made on it but couldn't see it. Swangren & Bevan flew in the lead ship and did a fine job. The 17's encountered the same sort of weather and bombed airfields as last resort targets. We brought our bombs back.

Feb 8, 1944

Was duty navigator and at the last minute this morning – we needed a navigator so flew with Everhart – per usual an interesting experience. The target was about 10 miles south of Calais and was approached on an East heading. The 578th was leading and the formation was very poor. We were loaded with 2000 pounds ??? PFF ship was leading. Reached Beachy Head a head of time so made an extra circle and took off for the target. As soon as we hit the coast – got down on the salve handle and sat there til the ??? and salved. Bombs away – and then immediately the fun started. Flat, ??? all about and very accurate – the formation seemed to break up and several ships were seen with engines feathered. Shea's ship had No 2 and 4 feathered and just about made England landing near London with all engines dead. Our ship had several hits and oil line leading to the prop ??? in No 4 was severed and we couldn't feather it so sweated the engine out. Our hydraulic system was again gone. We sweated out the field – had to crank wheels down – landed ok and taxied to the dispersal area – when we were all set to park the hship the brakes finally gave and the ship ended on the grass again. Life is never dull with Everhart – he is good.

Feb 9, 1944

Got three crews but only two new navigators – Lts [Leutenant] Gregory and Sheridan.

Feb 20, 1944

Flew my thirteenth mission when I least expected it and it was a lulu and not too damn good. Was awakened at 0700 and told that I would fly. The 578th was leading and was roped in to fly the P.F.F. ship. Lowell was flying it also – roped in too. It was a multiple thrust into central Germany – almost like the Pas de Calais affairs only on a group scale. Got to the central point and all the wings scattered to their targets. Ours was Halberstadt. Halfway to the central point the PFF equipment gave out – but it was broken to see where we were. We were flying ??? and to the left of the lead wing. At the central point we were to take a heading of 130° but the lead wing cut into us and we eased out of their way – the bombardier crawled up in to the nose pushing me out of his way and at the same time we switched leads for visual bombing and the same confusion occurred in the deputy lead ship's nose. The nose navigator saw what looked like the target and it was bombed – 30 miles from the actual target. The town was Helmstadt. A mess up - ??? after that long haul. Came into England dropped the group off and flew the P77 to Aleonburg. As we were landing we could hear a B-17 calling in. The copilot was dead the pilot badly injured and our engineer and navigator were trying to land the ship,. Later ??? they crashed and were killed. Lost Lt. Peyton – his ship was all shot up and exploded as he circled to land. Lost Lt. Gregory, new navigator on his first trip.

Feb 24, 1944

Flew 14th today, to Gotha – one of the important targets. Flew deputy lead in Baumgarts ship with M.K. Today was the clearest day I have ever seen, you could count the clouds on one hand. Also it was the roughest mission I have ever been on. From the time we hit the Zunder Zee into the target and past the Rhine we were under fighter attack. B-24's & B-17's went down like flies, blowing up, spinning down, doing cartwheels, turn the air – chutes all over the ship. The target was hit hard.

The 3rd Division went way into Poland and the 2nd Division hit Schweinfurt. The 15th Air Force hit in southern Germany

Our group lost 7 ships. Our squadron didn't lose any.

The latest scuttlebut says that the 445th lost 18 out of 30 ships. They flew low and ahead of us and were straggled all over. It was plain rough.

As far as I can see, they may ????? us up but we cannot be prevented from hitting the target. If the Jerri's don't give up they will end up a corpse with its skelton destroyed.

Mar 16, 1944

Monday

Flew my 15th mission today with Baumgarts crew who came on tour 22nd. Target was a Heinkel works on the ??? outskirts of Berlin. Friday the 3rd, we were briefed on Berlin and took off for that place. There were lots of aborts and weather was exceptionally bad and the rest of the group had to turn back when close to Hamburg. M.K. lead on that one and by the time he

reached the Danish coast, there were only 7 or 8 ships with him. The Fighter escort reached Berlin. The next day Saturday, Mar 4, we were briefed for Berlin again but couldn't get off because of a snow storm in the base areas. The Forts hit Berlin – one Wing of them did. Weather was bad – clouds to 30,000 – we couldn't have made it if we did get off. Sunday, Mar 5 the Libs went into France – primary targets were obscured – so hit Cognac again. Today we went towards Berlin again and weather was good. Broken clouds to almost clear in the target area. Didn't see any fighters at all – those that were around went after the stragglers. The 1st & 3rd Divisions caught hell from fighters over the target. We hit the I.P. and then the lead snaffued – P77 ship and missed the target altogether. Kennedy was bombardier in my ship leading the high section. He bombed Bridge in Potsdam. It sure doesn't take much to snaffu a mission – and after such a long haul – it's rather depressing. The Flak we could see it over the city – looks worse than Bremen – although we didn't get any of it. Coming back a B-17 up ahead of us hit stray flak south of Bremen about 30 mi and blew up. You can't figure on that flak at all.

Came back to find we lost a crew from our squadron – Skeas – on take off. Instrument conditions – something happened and he struck trees and hit the ground – blew up and burned. Lost Lowder – navigator – it was his 18th mission. No survivors.

Mar 9, 1944

Flew another pathfinder deal to Berlin. Was in Baumgarts ship – McGregor's crew was leading. Solid overcast – no fighters and we wandered all over Germany. Got separated from the groups with the P77 and were pretty much on our own. Wandered South and East of Berlin and bombs were dropped all over hell. Ran into quite a bit of flak in spots – scares hell out of me – you can't figure on the stuff. Flak made a few holes in our fuselage. Those boys were checked out – accurate as can be. McGregor hit badly and switches leads and Connolly brought us back in.

Mar 14, 1944

Came back from pass to Norwich. Had an air raid tonite – searchlights all around and Jerries seemed to dive down. Spent our time running in and out to watch. Once Jerry dived down and dropped incendiaries close to the overpass along the railroad.

Mar 16, 1944

All officers had a bit of a Pow Wow in the mess hall. Statistics show that our losses are getting tighter so our missions have been pro rated and a tour is 30 parties. I have 16 so am credited with 17 and have 13 to go. The GAF is taking a beating and our fighter support has increased tremendously and in the future flak should be our greatest enemy. The business is dangerous no matter how you figure it.