

From the Diary of  
S/Sgt. Robert L. Erfurth

2-1-45

Arrived in Scotland via the Queen Mary on February 1, 1945. From there we boarded a train bound for our first post in England.

2-2-45

Arrived at Camp Stone Replacement Center near the town of Hanby, England. We lived in Nelson Hall. All we did was attend a few lectures, etc.

2-3-45

Our second day at Stone was uneventful except for a few details such as K.P. and guard duty. At dinner I met a fellow that knew me from my football days. His last name was Hooper and is kin to Bobby Hooper. Late this afternoon we got our shipping orders. We leave here in the morning.

2-4-45

We shipped out of Stone this morning at 7:30. Don't know our destination but it will be our permanent base. Have been on the train all day and expect to arrive at destination sometime tonight.

2-5-45

Arrived at Wendling Army Air Field last night and got settled in our barracks. This morning we got up and started exploring the field. It's a fairly nice place with good barracks and food. We're scheduled for a few school classes tomorrow. Nothing of importance happened today.

2-6-45

Started school this morning at 8:30. Consisted mainly of introductory lectures, etc. We found out that it will be a couple weeks or so before we become operational. Also that we will fly with a nine man crew. As yet we haven't any idea who we will lose but I don't think it will be me. I hope not anyway.

2-7-45

Continued school today and had to attend gunnery classes. Found out that we will all have to be checked out in all our positions before we become operational. That's quite a pain in the neck. Still wondering who's going to stand down on the crew.

2-8-45

Continued school today as usual and am beginning to get tired of it already. Sure hope we become operational before too long. We've been told that it will be an enlisted man that will be stood down. I know for sure it won't be me but I sure hate to see a guy have to go. I think it will be Higgins but we have a chance of losing our bombardier. It's really quite a problem.

2-9-45

Have been checking for mail lately and haven't had any success. Hope to get some before long. Been writing every day to Mom and Mary. We continued our school today and are learning quite a few new tricks. We decided today that if we lose Washabou that I will fly the nose turret and act as bombardier. Higgins will fly waist.

2-10-45

Still going to school and it's really getting on my nerves. I can't stand this fooling around. Every morning we watch the missions form and it really makes you want to go with them. No losses to our group since we've been on the field. Today we definitely were told we would lose one enlisted man. It will be Higgins. He'll be on the crew and will fly missions with other shorthanded crews. Eventually we will lose Wash and then Hig will be with us again. There is a possibility of us getting lead crew. Hope so anyway.

2-11-45

Still going to school and still complaining. We're all getting anxious about flying. Got our flying equipment and that makes us all the more anxious. We were given phase checks today and I passed the nose turret check. Higgins was told he would stand down until we lost Wash. Oscar really hated to tell him but we all understand so it's not too bad. Checked mail again today and still none. It's really hard to write every day when you get nothing in return. I've been doing it though and I'll keep it up. Guess it's because I love Mary and the folks so much.

2-12-45

We did just about nothing today. We didn't get out of bed until 10:00 and all we did after that was eat. Of course I wrote Mom and Mary but haven't gotten any mail as yet. I did play a few games of cards with the boys but had very little success. Lost about a shilling (20¢). Boy, this English money has been giving me fits.

2-13-45

Today was uneventful as usual but we had a good time later in the day. About 9:00 at night to be exact we raided a coal pile to get fuel for the barracks fire. There's a shortage of it here and it's quite a bad thing to get caught taking it. I guess it was sort of foolish but we had a good time. The penalty is six months if you get caught. See what I mean?

2-14-45

We finally did something out of the ordinary today. We went out and shot skeet. We had a lot of fun too. Healy won with 17 then Oscar, Johnny and I tied with 15 apiece. Oh yes, Oscar, Healy, Trask, Wash, Gorman and Yoak had to fly a crew to another field not far from here to get a ship. On the way back they both got lost and got back after dark. We really kidded them about it.

2-18-45

Yes, I know I missed a couple of days but they were very ordinary ones, nothing unusual happened. Today I was checked out as a togalier and got a compliment on what I knew about the works. I just got back from church with Oscar and Laird. Really was a nice service. Think I'll go regularly now if I can.

2-21-45 MISSION #1 - 8 Hours

Well, we finally did it. We flew our first mission today and it was quite an experience. We bombed a target at Nuremburg, Germany. We carried a mixed load of five 500 lb. bombs and five 500 lb incendiary clusters. We encountered light but accurate flak. We received a hit in the right wing tip de-icer boot. Our ship was R+ number 875. She had 29 missions and we added the 30th. I flew right waist all the way and was I tired after holding up that flak suit for seven and a half hours. No one was hurt and we were all quite proud of our first job. Our primary target was Berlin but the plans were changed at the last minute.

2-22-45 MISSION #2 - 8 Hours

Today was our second mission and quite a unique one if I might say so. Our usual bombing altitude is always above 20,000 feet but today we set a record. Our bombing altitude was supposed to be 10,000 feet but we actually bombed at 5,500 feet. Our target was a marshalling yard at Northeim, Germany. The yards were located between a Luftwaffe fighter base and the town itself. we expected heavy flak and possible fighters but it was very calm. Up to this day I've never seen so many B-24's in formation. The visibility was good and we observed good bomb hits on all targets. Smoke and dust rose to an altitude of 6,000 feet and there were many large fires. We had P-51, P-47 and Spitfire fighter escort. We saw one B-24 go down from a direct flak hit. Flak was very light. I'm keeping all newspaper clippings about the missions we fly. Our ship was T+ number 238. Incidentally we straffed German territory with our guns today.

2-24-45 MISSION #3 - 5 Hours, 30 Minutes

Well, today we were pretty lucky. The mission was only five hours and 30 minutes and that was short compared to the previous ones. We bombed an oil refinery at Misburg, Germany near Hanover. It was a quiet mission until bombs away and then we hit flak. It was pretty heavy but not to accurate. At least it didn't hit us. Today I flew nose turret and acted as bombardier. I did OK and got bombs away just right. Higgins flew his first mission today because we lost Washabou to a lead crew. Oh yes, I had a close call today. The tail gunner in the ship just ahead and above us fired a couple of bursts with his guns and one of the empty shell casings fell my way. It went right through the turret and put a hole in it big enough to stick your head through. I was lucky it didn't hit me. It happened while we were flying through flak so

naturally it scared the heck out of me. Today we carried twelve 500 lb. bombs. Our ship was U+ number 906. She is named the "Dragon Lady" and has a very nice painting on her nose. Incidentally we really smacked our target today. I guess this was what you might call our third raid and we now have half an Air Medal. Oh yes, we practically lost an engine on the way to the target so we flew the mission on three engines. Pretty good, huh?

2-26-45 MISSION #4 - 6 Hours, 20 Minutes

We did it today. We hit Berlin but good. Our target was in the very heart of the city. We did a good job. Today was my second mission as bombardier and today's load made 11,000 lbs of bombs that I dropped on Germany. We carried six 500 lb R.D.X. and four 500 lb incendiary clusters. We had pretty heavy flak but got through OK. Our ship was L+, number 448. That's the ship we were supposed to get. It's a good ship too. Had no trouble at all today. Our first mission was to be Berlin but was changed at the last minute. Today we went through with it.

2-27-45

Today's newspaper said that we did a noble job on Berlin yesterday. I hope it was good enough so we don't have to go back. Our target was the Schlesischer railroad station in the heart of Berlin. The paper said that we completely destroyed it.

2-29-45 MISSION #5 - 6 Hours, 20 Minutes

We finally had a "no ball." That's a mission with no flak and no fighters. It was really a swell trip. We hit a marshalling yard at Seigen. I saw the Rhine and the Mozell rivers. It was my third mission as bombardier and brought my tonnage up to 17,000 lbs dropped. Our ship was A+ number 390. We carried twenty 250 lbs G.P.'s and two M-17 clusters, a total tonnage for five missions to 28,000 lbs. I guess we're doing our part, huh?

3-8-45 MISSION #6 - 6 Hours, 20 minutes

Well, we had quite a vacation didn't we. It started with a 3-day pass and was continued with three consecutive stand downs, but today we went back to work. We again visited the marshalling yards at Siegen. Today was also another, "No Ball," as was the last one, only this time we didn't even drop our bombs. It seems that something went wrong in the lead ship and our squadron didn't bomb. The other two squadrons dropped theirs so we had to bring ours back. I think the jerries were jamming our R.B.R. and that's why we didn't drop. Anyway, we got our sixth mission and an Air Medal to go with it. Today our ship was W+ number 901. We carried twelve 500 lbs G.P.s. Oh yes, we've been having a little trouble with the Luftwaffe lately. It seems that they're mad at someone so they try to take it out on us. They've been over here for the past few nights shooting up the place. They killed one of our truck drivers when they caught him with his headlights on and they put one of the neighboring fields out of commission. I guess we'll just have to get rough with them, huh? I don't like those guys buzzing the barracks.

3-12-45 5 Hours

Well, today they had quite a mission planned for us but it didn't go as planned. This one was to be flown at the request of the Russian Generals. It was the first time the Russians ever requested a target from the U.S. Air Force. It was Swinemunde, Germany. The main objective was a harbor on the Baltic Sea where the Admiral Schier, one of Germany's last Battleships, was docked. The entire flight was over water namely the North Sea. It took us from the English Coast over water to Denmark. If you will look at a map you will see that it's quite a ways. We had just past Heligoland and had flak. We were over the Denmark Coast when our number two engine went out. We were still about an hour from the target so we had to turn back. We couldn't have made the target and back on three engines but it was possible to reach England. We turned back with no fighter escort or anything for protection. Naturally we didn't carry our bombs back on three so we dumped them in the North Sea. You should have seen the splash. The water was disturbed for about five miles around. You see, we had twelve 500 pounds G.P.'s. That's 6,000 pounds of TNT. As you might surmise we got back OK but didn't get credit for a mission. Our ship was W+ 901.

3-15-45 MISSION #7 - 7 Hours, 15 Minutes

Today we got credit for #7. It was flown over Germany to a place called Zossen. This trip took us from the western to the eastern boundaries of Germany. We were after the German High Command and we did it. We got their barracks, mess halls and no telling who or what else. We set a big woods afire and burned the place to the ground. This was the first visual mission we had had in quite a while. At briefing we thought we were in for it because it was visual and so close to Berlin but it turned out swell. The primary target was just twenty miles south of Berlin and the secondary was Berlin itself. We thought the flak would be heavy enough to walk on but it was light and inaccurate. We also expected fighters because we flew directly over their forming area but none were seen. Thank goodness! Today we carried twelve 250 pounds G.P.'s and four 500 pounds incendiary clusters. Our ship was R+ #875.

3-16-45

This is just a side note and not a mission report. I'd just like to say that we've been pretty lucky so far. I guess maybe we've got God on our side and that's why. I know He's been protecting us because of our luck in getting by. I know He helped us back across the North Sea when we lost that engine. I know He was with us the other day when we tried to take off with locked controls. I know He was with us when Oscar's seat broke on take-off. Thanks Lord we really appreciate it.

3-18-45 MISSION #8 - 7 Hours, 40 Minutes

Today we hit Berlin again. This time it was really something. It was visual and everyone concerned caught plenty of heck

today. I guess this was about the roughest mission we've seen. It was nice until we got just about over the target and then the clouds disappeared. Where they quit the flak started. There wasn't a direction you could look without seeing a wall of flak. Over the target there were quite a few vapor trails which made things very dangerous. You couldn't see any ships but the ones in your squadron and you never knew when you were going to catch a 1,000 pounder on the head. Just after our bombs were away, Johnny reported bombs falling close past our tail then I saw five of them just miss our nose. That scared me more than all the flak I've seen put together. I guess I was doing a little praying at the time cause everything came so close that only God saved us. We had flak directly ahead, at 12:30, 2:00, 3:00, 9:00, 11:30 o'clock high and low. We had flak directly above and below us as well as behind and lots of it was close enough to hear. Take it from me, that's close. Somehow, we missed even getting a hole in the ship. Today there were 1,300 planes over Berlin. Incidentally, we observed direct hits on our target which was a large tank and flak gun factory. We carried five 1000 pounds G.P.'s and our ship was H+ #390. Today was our first mission without Gorman. He was on pass visiting on of his brothers who was wounded in France and is in the hospital at Oxford.

3-21-45 MISSION #9 - 4 Hours, 35 Minutes

Today we flew our ninth mission and it was really one to remember. Not because it was rough or dangerous but because it was so impressive and interesting. We had a 3:30 briefing and were told we were to bomb a Luftwaffe field at Heseper, Germany. It was the first mission we had ever carried frag bombs and it was something. Every ship carried 52 clusters and that made a total of 288 bombs per ship. If you will stop and think you will realize just how much that is. It all amounted to about 6,000 pounds. When a ship dropped their load it looked like it was raining bombs. We blasted that field something awful and I don't imagine that there is a plane left in one piece there. It was a "no ball" and clear as a bell. You could follow the bombs to the ground and watch them hit. Man! It was really something. Our group alone dropped about 8,040 bombs on that field and we were only one of many groups. The target was only one of the many fields hit in the same way. I guess this was all brought on by last night's Luftwaffe raid on the airfields in England. The Jerries gave our field a good going over. They just shot heck out of our ships. The 577th Squadron had only 3 ships flyable out of about fourteen this morning. The fireworks were pretty thick last night and they kept us up until 11:00. The Jerries really took a beating today though. I doubt if they come over tonight cause I think we knocked out a large number of their ships today. We're scheduled again tomorrow so I'll be back with more very soon.

3-22-45 MISSION #10 - 7 Hours, 10 Minutes

Today we bombed another German Jet Plane Field near Hall, Germany. The field is called Schwalich Hall field. This marked up our 10th mission and it was a good one. Washabou flew with us this time and

it was just like old times. He had a bomb sight but I dropped the bombs as usual. He just went along for the ride. We flew the slot today for the first time and we finally got out of Low Element Lead. It was swell flying for a change. You didn't have to worry about someone sitting down on you all the time. We hit the field with thirty-two 100 pounds G.P.'s and we really gave it fits. Plastered the runways good. We saw about twelve jets on the ground and one of their buddies in the air. He made one pass at our squadron but didn't hit anyone. Sure scared heck out of us cause he came so close. I can't understand how he missed. He went by so fast we couldn't get a shot at him. I guess he caught us with our guns down. On the way back home we had a few troubles. One tank was dry, the radio was out and we had a fire some where in the ship. Also found a hydraulic leak when <sup>we</sup> landed. We came down in Brussels, Belgium. We visited the town that night and came back to base the next day after getting things fixed up. We brought a P-51 pilot and another B-24 crew back with us. The 51 pilot bailed out over Belgium and the 24 crew came down like we did. They had to leave their ship though so we brought them back. The 51 pilot liked the 24 but said he wouldn't trade for the world. Our ship was P+ #507.

4-4-45 MISSION #11 - 6 Hours, 51 Minutes

Today we flew to Kaltenkerchin, Germany to bomb a Jet Airfield. Bombing was to be done visually only. Well, when we got over there, we had about seven to nine-tenths cloud coverage so we couldn't bomb. We looked all over the northwestern part of Germany for a target but couldn't get a hole in the clouds big enough to do any good. With sad hearts we had to bring our bombs home. I suppose that by now you think that this was an uneventful mission. It was as far as a bombing goes but the Luftwaffee made it far from uneventful. We were attacked by jets on the way back. I saw two M.E. 262's go through the group ahead of us like a whirlwind. Then the P-51s went after them. That is the last I saw of those guys. There were a couple of jets that attacked our group also. One of them tried firing rockets at us until he caught a burst from the boys. The 51's shot down another 262 about 400 yards off of our wing. Things were quite lively for awhile but all went well with our crew. Our ship was S+ #792. We were carrying forty 150 pounds G.P.'s. This is the second time we've brought our bombs back and believe me it sure does hurt to do so. We got credit for a mission though and that is what counts after all.

4-8-45 MISSION #12 - 7 Hours, 30 Minutes

A "no ball" today !!!!! Can't understand it but I certainly don't mind. We went way down into south central Germany to a place called Bayrenth. It was an ammunition factory and storage dump. You can imagine what kind of a boom it made. We were the second group over the target and we were carrying twelve 300 pounds incendiary clusters. The first group blew the place apart and we burned up the pieces. I think our bombs did more damage though. We started a bunch of big fires and the biggest explosions you ever saw. No flak today and we didn't see enemy fighters though

they were reported in the area. Our ship today was P+ \$507. A nose navigator flew with us today so I had to fly the upper. Laird had to stand down. We got our first Oak Leaf Cluster with this mission today.

4-14-45 MISSION #13 - 7 Hours, 31 Minutes

Today we attacked the Girande Pocket at Royan, France. It's one of the pockets of German soldiers that have established their own fortress in the hopes of defending themselves. We carried the largest bomb load to date. It was four 2,000 pounds G.P.'s. Really quite a load. We took off very early and it was quite dark. To be exact it was 5:40 when we got off and we were the last ones to leave the field. One ship went down on take-off this morning killing all but the engineer. He is in a serious condition. The ship went up in a mass of flames that lit up the sky for miles. Luckily the bombs didn't explode. It would have wrecked all the ships on our field if they had. We had no flak today and no fighters. In fact we didn't even carry guns. It was a long trip and we had to travel as light as possible to carry the heavy bomb load so far. We carried no waist gunners either. If per chance we had met enemy fighters it would have been a pity. Our ship was D #477. She's named "Miss Minnie". Because our bombs weren't loaded this morning we had a late take-off and couldn't catch our group. We bombed with another group. We also had a B-17 tagging along. Really was a sight to watch him trying to keep up with us. Incidentally, there were supposed to be about 35,000 Germans in this pocket and I imagine there are a few less after today's raid.

4-21-45 MISSION #14 - 7 Hours, 20 Minutes

Today we bombed Schwandorf, Germany. The target was actually a marshalling yards on the outskirts of the city. We bombed as a tactical Air Force. That is, in direct support of ground troops. The yard was lightly defended and the flak was light. We carried only ten 500 pounds G.P. bombs. As usual I was riding as togolier and saw the group ahead of us bomb. They hit the choke point of the yard and ours hit the main part of the yard. Our ship was D+ #753. We flew slot position today so I always had something to look out for. The mission as a whole was fairly peaceful.

5-22-45

This is a summary of the events between the time of our last mission and now. As it had been talked about before, etc., we finally moved to lead squadron and checked out as a lead crew. We were set for a mission as lead but things were changing fast. We got a 3-day pass which we spent in London. Upon return to the base we found that the 79th was being dissolved into a regular squadron and that lead crews were being put back into the squadrons like it used to be. Therefore we moved back to the 77th after a short 3 weeks in the 79th. Then came V-Day which was celebrated by all.

This brought about many rumors. Gosh but there were some good ones. Finally, around the 10th of this month we were told that the group was going home. Weed's crews was to be one of the first to leave. That suited us fine. We were to leave on the 23rd. Oh yes, being as we are lead crew, we brought our ship from the 79th to the 77th. It's A+ #\_\_\_\_. We have been working on her for the last week getting her in top shape for going home. Yesterday, things were postponed for one week because of bad weather around Iceland. We're going home via the northern route incidentally. If things hadn't been changed, we would be on our way tomorrow. We've been going nuts clearing the field, packing bags, working on the ship, etc. Great life. We have 100% censorship on our mail until we actually leave. Therefore we can't get any mail out. I guess the folks are really wondering by now. Since things are pushed back we have nothing to do but count the hours and believe me it's rough. We figure on at least 30 days at home. They are sending us to our closest separation units. That's Ft. Sam for me. Boy, am I going to surprise a few people at home. At the present, we still have hopes of hitting the states by the 1st of June. Lets hope so. Well, I'll be back again with more news.

6-6-45

Did I say we had hopes of hitting the state? Guess I was right cause here we all are safe and sound. We had to pack and leave in such a hurry that I didn't get to write anymore of the local news events. We left England on the 31st of May for Wales. Spent a night there and left for Iceland the 1st. Spent a night in Iceland and took off for Greenland on the 2nd. As usual we spent a little time there and took off for Maine about 12:00 midnight. Wasn't dark at all. We hit Banger, Maine just 7 hours 40 minutes later and was it swell. We spent a night there and then flew to Bradley Field, Conn. That's near Hartford. We processed and spent a night there. We got on a train and came to Boston, Mass. Miles Standish is the name of the camp. Incidentally it's a P.O.E. but we don't mind. We spent the night here last night and I expect to be leaving for Ft. Sam Houston anytime today or tomorrow. After we leave Ft. Sam Houston, we will be free for thirty wonderful days. WHOOPEEEEEE!