



# WWII BATTLEFIELD RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION GROUP

---

**Case file: B-17G 42-97956 "PARD"**

Subject: Crash location of 91st Bombardment Group,  
323rd Squadron B-17G, Serial # 42-97956  
Eighth Air Force, 2 November 1944.

**CASE FILE**

**INITIAL INVESTIGATION**

**GEOGRAPHICAL AREA**

**SUMMARY OF EVENT**

**AIRCRAFT DETAILS**

**EVIDENCE RECOVERED**

**PHOTOGRAPHS OF EVIDENCE**

**SUMMARIZED CONCLUSION**

# BATTLEFIELD RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION GROUP

---

## CASE FILE:

**CASE:** Crash site, B-17G #42-97956 "PARD".

**DATE FOUND:** 10 May 2016.

**LOCATION:** Libehna, Germany (51°42'56.00"N,12°02'45.8"E).

**ELEVATION:** 82 MT.

**SUBJECT:** Crash Site Confirmation of B-17G Fortress from 91st BG, 323rd BS, Serial #42-97956, Aircraft named "PARD" piloted by 1Lt. Hanford "Rusty" J. Rustand. This Aircraft was lost 2 November 1944, during the Merseburg, Germany mission to bomb the Luena Oil Refinery. Six out of nine crew members lost their lives, and three became POWs. The aircraft was 95% destroyed in the resulting impact.

## INITIAL INVESTIGATION:

In the year 2015, during the Memorial Day Ceremony at the American Military Cemetery in Hamm, Luxembourg, I met Marilyn Rustand-Lieurance. I was told she was a crazy cave exploring, coin hunting, fossil finding person, who loved history. She told me her father's grave was here in Hamm, and it was her first time ever visiting his grave. She told me about her hope to visit the crash site where her dad was KIA, and I asked her what unit he served in. She said, he was a B-17 pilot, shot down over Germany on 2 November 1944. She had never met her dad, because she was born 5.5 months after he was killed. Her mother never talked about him, and kept all the secrets locked away in a trunk. After Marilyn's mother passed away, she was going through the usual things one might find in a trunk, and found a photo of her dad and mom. This was the first photo she had ever seen of her dad, it's what sparked her journey to learn more, and to find out where the plane crashed. She told me she had contacted a person to look into this, and he reported he had found nothing, and told her there were no people still in the villages from the time period of the war. Personally, I didn't believe it, so I asked Marilyn to give the case to me, and I would find the location.



Marilynn's parents wedding photo (*photo, Marilyn Rustand- Lieurance*)

## BATTLEFIELD RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION GROUP

---



Hanford "Rusty" J. Rustand, *(photo, Marilyn Rustand- Lieurance)*



*(WW2BRPG)*

"What a fine thing you're doing to help me accomplish finding the actual land where my dad's plane went down. Being able to stand there where it all happened and take it all in. And, hopefully bring a piece of the plane back home with me." Marilyn Rustand-Lieurance.



# BATTLEFIELD RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION GROUP

---

## 10 MAY 2016 - FIELD NOTES:

**PERSONNEL PRESENT:** Myself (Patrick Murphy), and James Still.

**WITNESSES:** Mr. Siegfried Seyffert, residing at 1 Eichen Weg, Libehna and Mr. Wolfgang Kupfer of Repau.

At about 0830 this morning, we started out hunting down clues and talking to several people in three different villages, very few or none of whom spoke English. We had enough German and Luxembourgish dialect to communicate with the people in these villages. We went to see Mr. Siegfried Seyffert, who at the time of the crash was a six year old boy, and a resident of Libehna. This boy's father took him to see the wreckage, immediately after the plane hit the ground. The pilot was laying just outside the aircraft, up close to and alongside the nose of the plane, and he was dead. Three airmen were still inside the aircraft, and all three were also dead. These four men were buried in the cemetery in Libehna. Mr. Wolfgang Kupfer, who is a resident of the nearby village of Repau, also saw the crash--he was 10 years of age back then.



Cemetery in Libehna, (WW2BRPG)



## BATTLEFIELD RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION GROUP

---

Using our Google Earth photo, Mr. Seyffert pointed out a cattail and reed marsh, telling us this is where the crash was. We looked all around the border of the marsh, and did find one piece of Plexiglas from the nose of the plane.



(Google Earth)

**Mid-day:** With another crash site to follow-up on, we went to a second location and then to have lunch. We tracked down a man, who was supposed to have taken photos of the crash in Libehna. However, he denied it and said, he had no clue what we were talking about or what we wanted. Weeks later, *during a Second Trip on May 26*, we learned the photos were of damaged streets and houses in the villages, caused by the crashed aircraft and debris, but not of the aircraft. After speaking with this man, we looked for the site of a second plane, "Winged Victory", and later learned this was not the site of a U.S. B-17, but most likely a German Stuka Ju-87.

**Late Afternoon:** Back at the marsh in Libehna, we again looked for "PARD", and tried our luck with a metal detector. I started around the edges of the marsh, then decided to go through it, mud and all. A man, who is a Hunting Representative happened by, and told us how the plane had hit the ground 100 meters farther west, and then slid into the marsh. The large wreckage was removed, and the rest of it was 2 meters under mud. He asked if we had talked to Wolfgang Kupfer from the village of Repau, because he actually saw the plane come down and crash. We told him, we had not met Mr. Kupfer, and were then taken to meet him. We learned of the real and actual location of the crash, and were told a detailed story of how it happened. He described the aircraft being shot out of a sky filled with 100s of black puffs of smoke, known to be flak. He said, the bottom of the aircraft and one engine were on fire. The aircraft came straight down towards the village, just missing it, and crashed into a field several hundred meters west of Libehna. He also mentioned the flak positions around the area, and there locations.

# BATTLEFIELD RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION GROUP

---

The crash site wasn't in the marsh after all, but above it and both high and dry. When we had searched the marsh, we were only 100 meters away from the actual crash site. We returned to the location of the crash, combed the area visually, and found Plexiglas shards. After dinner, we again returned to the crash site and detected until 2400 hours, resulting in the find of several more pieces of the aircraft.

**Additional Note:** We learned about the location of a third plane, and some villagers told us it is a German plane. However, Mr. Seyffert insisted it is an American plane, *and a person might still be onboard*. We were told the Mayor of Zehbitz, does not want people going there, as it is a safety issue. Apparently, this plane crashed into coal mining tunnels, and some of the ground caved in. ***Further checking into issue is ongoing.***

## 26 MAY 2016 - FIELD NOTES:

**PERSONNEL PRESENT: Myself (Patrick Murphy), and Marilynn Rustand-Lieurance.**

**WITNESSES: Mr. Siegfried Seyffert, Maria Zschoche, and Mrs. Gretchen Schadeck.**

For Marilynn, this trip was very emotional, and probably the high point in a very empty lifetime search for closure. I took her to meet the German people, who helped James and I during our first time in Libehna. We first stopped at the Mayor's (Dr. Eiche Zschoche) house, to see if he had received the thank you letter I had sent for the community, and two certificates (one for Mr. Seyffert and the other for Mr. Kupfer, who told me the story of the crash and its location). The Mayor wasn't at home, but his daughter, Maria, was. She spoke pretty good English, and told us she was home on vacation from the university, and had lots of time to help. She phoned her brother, dad, aunt, and grandma (Gretchen Schadeck). Her dad told her, he had received the letter, but it was in his office. Grandmother, Gretchen Schadeck said, she had seen the event take place in 1944, so our first stop was her home.

Maria rode with us and was our translator. Her Grandmother, Gretchen lived in the nearby village of Repau. She spoke to us through a wide-open window in the front of her home, and said she was 12 years of age back then. Marilynn had many questions and comments, but it was very emotional for her. Gretchen had seen a lot of things in her lifetime, and was telling it like it was. She told how she saw the dead pilot laying on the ground next to his plane, his face covered in blood and all tore up. Marilynn couldn't speak, and then Maria told her Grandmother the pilot was Marilynn's father. Gretchen put her hands over her mouth and apologized. Marilynn said, the apology wasn't necessary, as she was there to learn the details of what happened. There were hugs and photos, and we said goodbye.

The second gentleman we stopped to see was Mr. Kupfer, who also saw the plane crash. We gave his wife the certificate, since he wasn't feeling well and was in bed. Next, we headed back to the village of Libehna. We spoke with Mr. Seyffert, who at the time of the crash was a small boy, who had been to the crash site with his father. He also described seeing the pilot outside the plane. He mentioned he too had not seen his father since 1943. Also, his wife's father never came back from the war. We told him Marilynn had never seen her father, because he was killed before she was born. They shared something in common, both missing a parent caused by the war. We had a good visit, more hugs and goodbyes.



## BATTLEFIELD RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION GROUP

---



Mr.Seyffert, Marilynn, Maria Zschoche,( *photo Marilynn Lieurance*)

Once again, Marilynn and I visited the crash site. I brought a loud stereo with me, and set it up in the field where the plane had crashed. I played a recording of Amazing Grace, and the Glen Miller song for the USAAF; and told Marilynn this was for her dad and his crew. At this point, Marilynn came to grips with a closure that flushed out so many pinned up emotions, years of speculating about her dad, and what had happened to him. We stayed in the field for another four hours, walking around and picking up a few more fragments of her dad's plane. Marilynn wanted to find a piece of her dad's plane herself, and she accomplished that. I gave her a bag of plane fragments I had found on my first trip there. She took a couple of pieces to keep for herself, and for the nephew of one of her dad's crew. Before leaving the field, I found an unused red candle. I thought it was odd that it was there, and put it to good use, lighting it in remembrance of the crew.



# BATTLEFIELD RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION GROUP

---



(WW2BRPG)

## GEOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION:

The location of the crash site lays in the close vicinity of the village of Libehna, community of Kothen Anhalt in Saxon-Anhalt. The actual location is in a field approximately 55 m North of Kothener Strasse, and 61.5 m East of the fertilizer silo. It also lays 139.21 m to the West of the Libehna marsh. The field elevation is 87 m and relatively flat, with a slight incline to the West. There is a slight concave in the ground where most of the fragments were recovered, suggesting the site of the aircraft impact. The travel direction is 258.12 degrees due West.

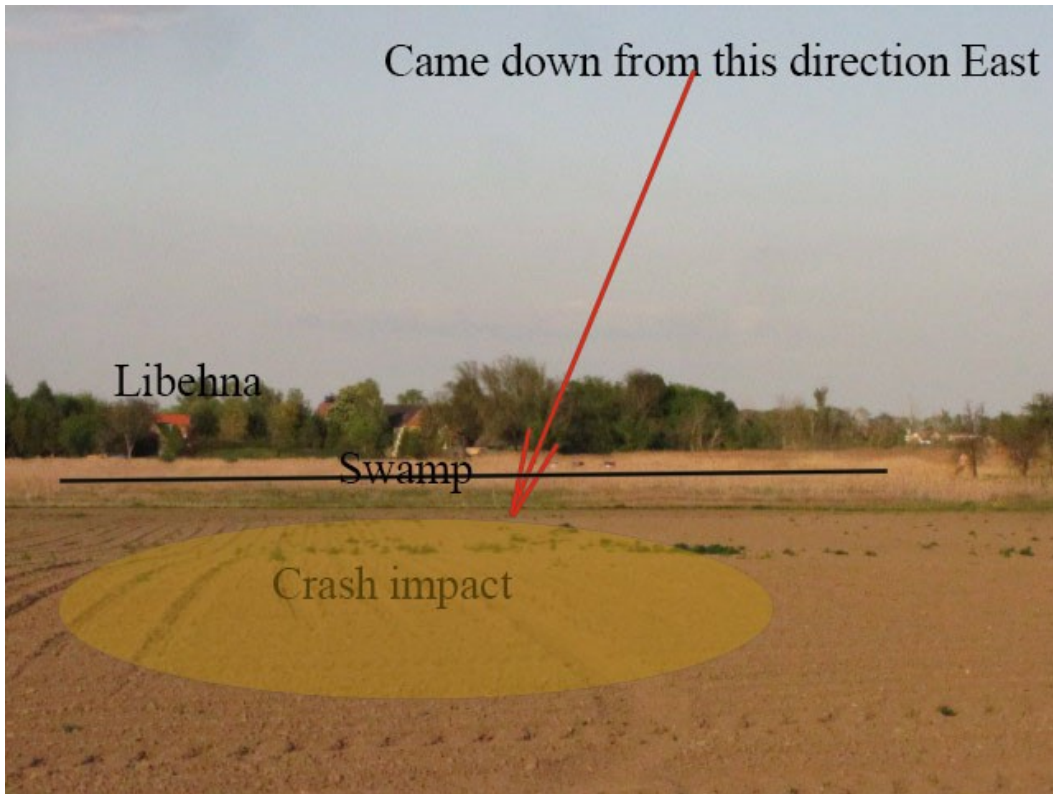


Impact area west of Libehna,(Google Earth)



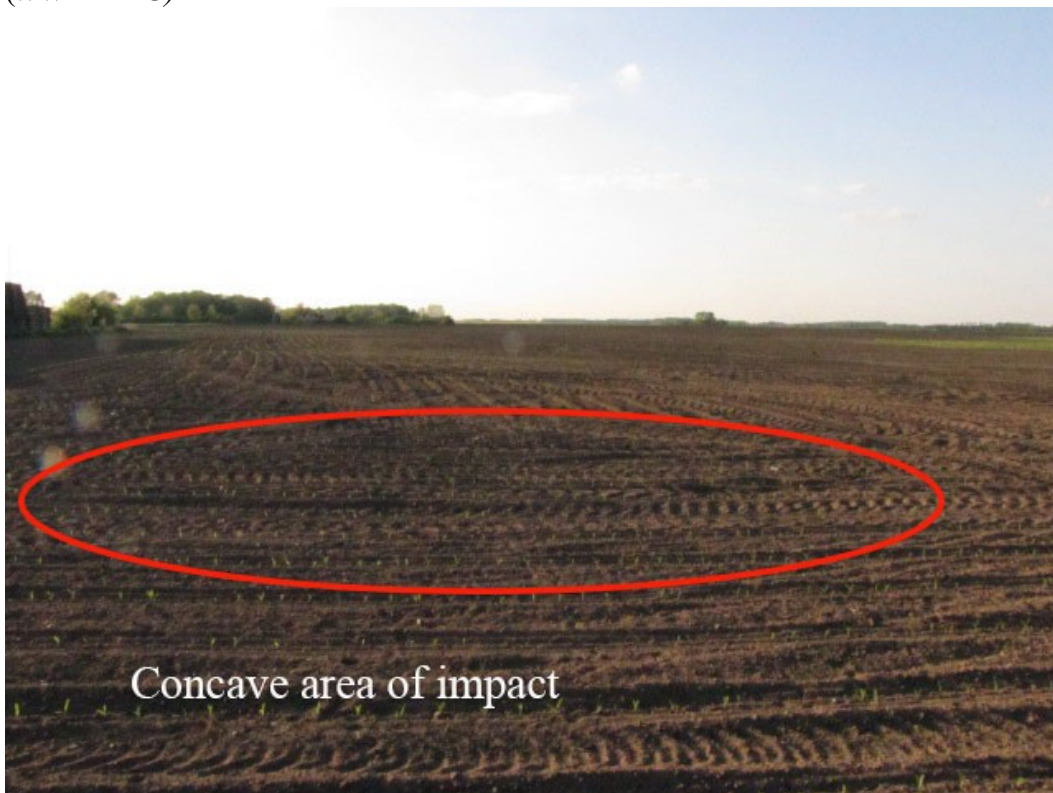
# BATTLEFIELD RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION GROUP

---



Looking East

(WW2BRPG)



Looking to the North (WW2BRPG)



# BATTLEFIELD RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION GROUP

---

## SUMMARY OF EVENT:

Aircraft #42-97956 was based in England, at the Bassingbourn Heavy Bomber AAF Station Nr 121. The aircraft was one of 37 B-17s from the 91st Bombardment Group, 323rd Bombardment Squadron (H), taking part in the Merseburg operation to bomb the Leuna Oil Refinery. Aircraft #42-97956 name "PARD" was also one of the thirteen brought down from the 91<sup>st</sup> formation of thirty-seven. The following is a list of the 323rd aircraft lost on 2 November 1944 during that mission:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Serial #</b>
"Pard"	42-97596
"Winged Victory"	42-97563
"White Cargo"	44-6298
"The Hard Way"	44-6093
"My Baby II"	44-8208
"Gal of My Dreams"	43-38212
"Miss Slipstream"	43-38202
"Cheri"	43-37625
"Cannon Ball II"	42-98012
"Sherry's Cherries"	42-97984
"Bomber Dear"	42-97234
"Jub Jub Bird"	42-31883
"Man O' War II – Horsepower LTD"	42-38083



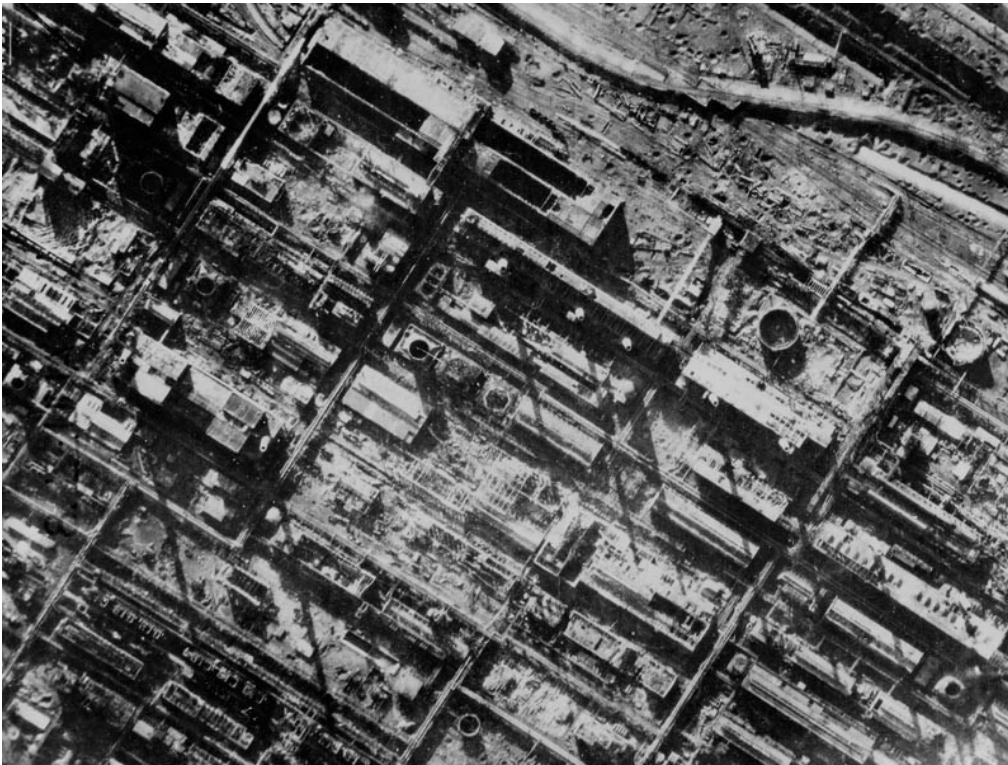


Target bombing of Leuna Oil fields ( *National Archives* )

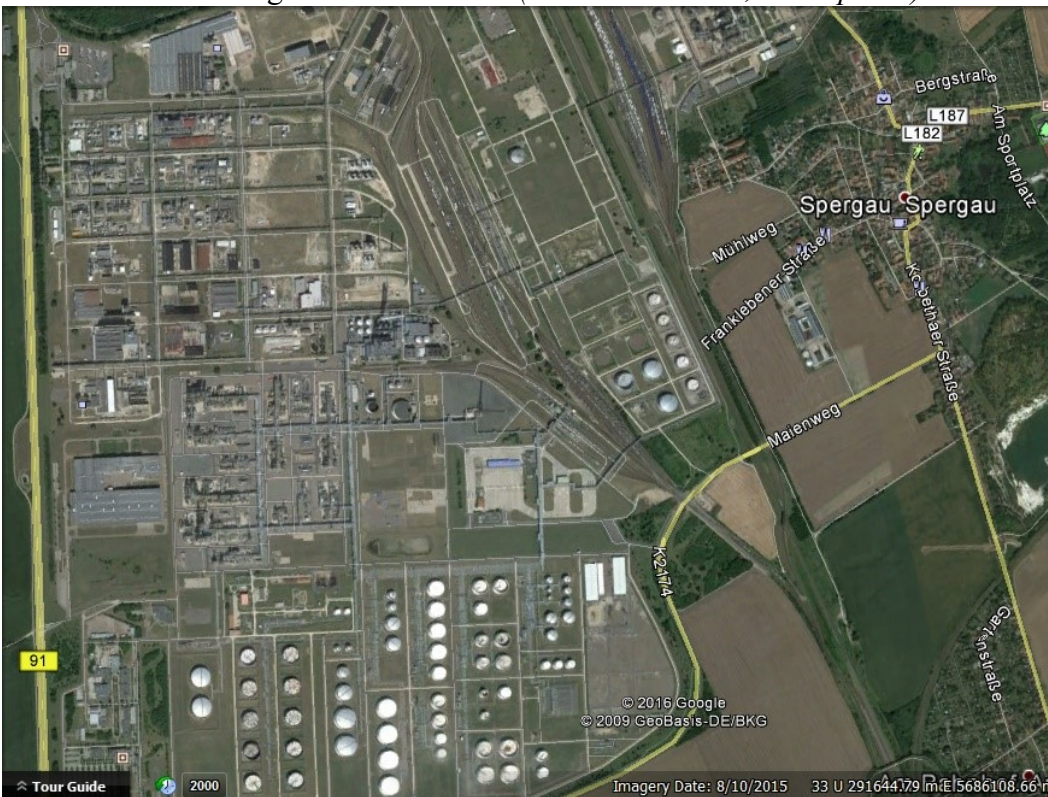


# BATTLEFIELD RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION GROUP

---



Leuna fields bombing raid of Nov 1944 (*Historum Forum, USAF photo*)



Leuna oil fields Today(*google Earth*)

# BATTLEFIELD RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION GROUP

---



The group of bombers made it to their target and dropped the payload on time, at approximately 12:44. They started the return path to England, heading North Eastward toward Dessau, and then back West in the direction of Kothen. At approximately 12:47 the group picked up a mixture of 50-75 Focke Wulf 190s, Messerschmitt BF 109s, and a few new Messerschmitt 262 jet aircraft. The Luftwaffe aircraft started their attack on the lower level ships in the rear of the formation. The attack on the group lasted 15-20 minutes. PARD was hit within approximately three minutes after departing the target area. The first burst of 20mm cannon fire took out the electrical system, causing both the communications and power that drives the turrets to fail, and making it extremely difficult to keep steady control of the plane. An intense fire broke out in the bomb-bays, igniting the oxygen tanks. The fire, burning hot and wild, caused both structure fatigue and control failure, resulting in a steep decent to the ground and ultimately destroying the aircraft.

## **Official Air Force Mission Description:**

Mission 698: 1,174 bombers and 968 fighters are dispatched in 5 forces to make PFF attacks on the oil industry and rail targets in Germany. Forty bombers, and fifteen fighters are lost.

1. Four hundred sixty B-17s are dispatched to hit the Leuna synthetic oil refinery at Merseburg (383). Thirteen strike Wolfenbittel, twenty-three hit Halle, and seventeen hit targets of opportunity in the area. Twelve B-17s are lost. Gunners claim 6 - 2 - 2. Four hundred thirty-three P-51s and thirty-four (9th Air Force) P-38s escort the 3BD, with the P-51s shooting down twenty-six e/a, losing eight. The P-38s claim forty-eight e/a destroyed.
2. Two hundred thirty-three B-17s are dispatched to Leuna synthetic oil refinery at Merseburg (210); 5 hit T/Os in the area. Twenty-six are lost, with B-17 gunners claiming 30 - 23 - 25. Two hundred nine P-51s escort this force, shooting down forty-six e/a, with six lost.

# BATTLEFIELD RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION GROUP

---

3. One hundred ninety-one of two hundred eight B-24s dispatched, hit Bielefeld viaduct bridge and rail yards with no losses. They were escorted by one hundred forty-three P-47s that claimed no e/a destroyed, but lost two a/c.

4. One hundred forty-six B-24s dispatched, hit oil industry targets in Castrop/Rauxel, losing 1 a/c. Thirty-seven escorting P-47s claimed no e/a.

5. One hundred seven of thirteen B-17s dispatched, escorted by 20 P-47s, struck oil industries at Sterkrade, and twenty hit the rail yards at Rheine.

In all 2,648 tons of bombs were dropped.

Source: THE ARMY AIR FORCES IN WORLD WAR II: COMBAT CHRONOLOGY, 1941-1945 by Carter/Mueller, the Office of Air Force History.

## 2 November 1944 EIGHTH AIR FORCE:

The Eighth AF is ordered to increase size of the 406th Bomb Squad (Night Leaflet), as liberation of Europe and conquest of Germany accelerate. About 1,100 HBs in 5 separate forces attack the synthetic oil plant at Merseburg/Leuna, Castrop-Rauxel, Sterkrade, and Bielefeld/Schildesche railroad and M/Y, along with several T/Os. Opposition is heavy, with an estimated 500 forts attacking, mainly against the Merseburg/Leuna force claiming 50 HBs. The seventeen escorting fort groups lose twenty-eight planes. A total of over one hundred sixty forts are claimed destroyed. (The Eighth Air Force Historical Society.)

The following is a list from the German Luftwaffe archives claiming aircraft downed, by which pilot, and the unit assigned to. [http://www.cieldegloire.com/jg\\_006.php](http://www.cieldegloire.com/jg_006.php)

### 2. November 1944

U.S. VIII Bomber Command: MERSEBURG/LEUNA, BIELFELD & STERKRADE

#### JaFü I. Jagdkorps/Lfl. Reich:

02.11.44	Maj. Gerhard Michalski	Stab/JG 4	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> IE-ID at 4.800 m.	11.56	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -						
02.11.44	Fw. Hermann Buchner	2./Kdo. Nowotny	P-47	<input type="checkbox"/> Bielefeld: 9.000 m.	12.15	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -						
02.11.44	Fw. Wiedmann	1./JG 400	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> 15 Ost S/LF-7/MF-1: 7.000 m.	12.17	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -						
02.11.44	Fw. Helmut Baudach	2./Kdo. Nowotny	P-47	<input type="checkbox"/> Bielefeld: 9.200 m.	12.18	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -						
02.11.44	Uffz. Arno Mittmann: 1	11./JG 27	P-51	<input type="checkbox"/> S.E. Aschersleben: 4.000 m.	12.25	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -						
02.11.44	Oblt. Hans Dortenmann	12./JG 54	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> FQ-1 at 5.000 m.	12.30	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -						
02.11.44	Uffz. Wilhelm Deutschmann: 2	3./JG 27	P-51	<input type="checkbox"/> KE-1 at 800 m. [S.E. Köthen]	12.30	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -						
02.11.44	Ltn. Karl Wunsch: 23	2./JG 27	P-51	<input type="checkbox"/> bei Köthen: 6.000 m.	12.37	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -						
02.11.44	Ltn. Oskar Romm: 86	4./JG 3	P-51	<input type="checkbox"/> KD at 8.200 m.	12.38	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -						
02.11.44	Fw. Hermann Buchner	2./Kdo. Nowotny	B-24	<input type="checkbox"/> Münster: 8.000 m.	12.38	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -						
02.11.44	Uffz. Fritz Koal: 3	6./JG 27	P-51	<input type="checkbox"/> über Leipzig: 9.500 m.	12.40	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -						



# BATTLEFIELD RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION GROUP

02.11.44	Uffz. Chrysanth Bürger: 1	13./JG 27	P-51	<input type="checkbox"/> N.W. Leipzig: 8.000 m.	12.35-40	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Uffz. Alfred Mannchen: 4	16./JG 27	P-51	<input type="checkbox"/> Leipzig-Halle: 9.000 m.	12.40	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Uffz. Heckmann	5./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> KD-7 at 7.000 m. [Eisleben]	12.45	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Hptm. Herbert Kutscha	Stab II./JG 3	P-51	<input type="checkbox"/> LC-9/MD-1-2: 6.500 m.	12.45	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Obgefr. Böhm	3.[Süd]/Fl.Ü.S.1	P-51	<input type="checkbox"/> N. Marisfeld: 2.000 m. [S.W. Suhl]	12.45	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Oblt. Ludwig Zwittnig: n.l.	1./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> KD-7 at 7.000 m.	12.45-50	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Uffz. Essig	14./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> KD at 7.500 m. [N.W. Halle]	12.47	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Fw. Karl Kleinemeier	13./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> KD at 7.500 m. [N.W. Halle]	12.47	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Uffz. Josef Zeiner	13./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> KD at 7.500 m. [N.W. Halle]	12.47	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Uffz. Josef Zeiner	13./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> KD at 7.500 m. [N.W. Halle]	12.47	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Ofw. Johann Bauer	13./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> KD at 7.500 m. [N.W. Halle]	12.47	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Hptm. Wilhelm Moritz*	Stab IV./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> JB-JC-KB-KC: 7.500 m.	12.47	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Uffz. Kurt Bolz	13./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> KD at 7.500 m. [N.W. Halle]	12.47	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Uffz. Hentelen	13./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> KD at 7.500 m. [N.W. Halle]	12.47	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Uffz. Jacobsen	13./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> KD at 7.500 m. [N.W. Halle]	12.47	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Fhj-Fw. Willi Vohl	13./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> KD at 7.500 m. [N.W. Halle]	12.47	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Fw. Leipholz	14./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> KD at 7.500 m. [N.W. Halle]	12.47	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Uffz. Oskar Bösch: 8	14./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> KD at 7.500 m. [N.W. Halle]	12.47	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Fw. Siegfried Küttner: 5	14./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> KD at 7.500 m. [N.W. Halle]	12.47	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Hptm. Hubert-York Weydenhammer: n.l.	IV./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> JB-JC-KB-KC: 7.500 m.	12.47	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Oblt. Werner Gerth	14./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> KD at 7.500 m. [N.W. Halle]	12.47	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Uffz. Streiter	14./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> KD at 7.500 m. [N.W. Halle]	12.47	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Ltn. Siegfried Müller	14./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> JB-JC-KB-KC-KD: 7.500 m.	12.47	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Fw. Kutz	13./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> KD at 7.500 m. [N.W. Halle]	12.47	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Uffz. Hoffmann	15./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> JB-JC-KB-KC-KD: 7.500 m.	12.49	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Ofhr. Miersch	15./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> JB-JC-KB-KC-KD: 7.500 m.	12.50	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Fhr. Gaider	15./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> JB-JC-KB-KC-KD: 7.500 m.	12.50	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Oblt. Zwittnig	Stab I./JG 3	P-47	<input type="checkbox"/> KD 7 at 1.000 m. [Eisleben]	12.50	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Oblt. Ernst-Wilhelm Reinert: 172	14./JG 27	P-51	<input type="checkbox"/> Eilenburg: 9.600 m. [N.E. Leipzig]	12.50	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Maj. Gerhard Michalski	Stab/JG 4	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> IE-ID at 7.800 m.	12.55	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Ofw. Nietzsche	Stab/JG 4	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> 15 Ost S/KE-1 u. 4: 7.800 m.	12.55	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Uffz. Kurt Scherer	6./JG 4	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> IE at 7.800 m.	12.55	Film C. 2031/II
	Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44	Ltn. Eck	5./JG 4	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> JE at 7.800 m. [Dessau]	12.55	Film C. 2031/II

# BATTLEFIELD RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION GROUP

Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44 Oblt. Markhoff	8./JG 4	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> JE at 7.500 m. [Dessau]	12.55	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44 Oblt. Ullmann	5./JG 4	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> JE at 7.800 m. [Dessau]	12.55	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44 Hptm. Köpcke	6./JG 4	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> JE at 7.800 m. [Dessau]	12.55	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44 Uffz. Weichmann	6./JG 4	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> JE at 7.800 m. [Dessau]	12.55	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44 Oblt. Niese	7./JG 4	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> JE at 7.800 m. [Dessau]	12.55	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44 Lt. Hans Hoster	7./JG 4	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> JE at 7.500 m. [Dessau]	12.55	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44 Uffz. Keller	5./JG 4	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> JE at 7.800 m. [Dessau]	12.55	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44 Uffz. Albert Erler	5./JG 4	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> JE at 7.800 m. [Dessau]	12.55	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44 Oblt. Markhoff	8./JG 4	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> JE at 7.800 m. [Dessau]	12.56	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44 Uffz. Helzel	8./JG 4	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> JE at 7.500 m. [Dessau]	12.56	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44 Oblt. Neumayer	1./JG 4	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> KE-14: 7.500 m. [Pretzsch]	12.56	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44 Fhr. Meinke	1./JG 4	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> KE-14: 7.000 m. [Pretzsch]	12.57	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44 Oblt. Wolff	Stab IV./JG 4	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> 15 Ost S/JD at 8.000 m.	12.57	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44 Gefr. Hauten	1./JG 4	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> KE-14: 7.000 m. [Pretzsch]	12.58	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44 Fhr. Esser	14./JG 4	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> 15 Ost S/JD at 8.000 m.	12.59	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44 Oblt. Wolff	Stab IV./JG 4	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> 15 Ost S/JD at 8.000 m.	12.59	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44 Fhr. Kleist	2./JG 4	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> ID at 7.000 m.	13.00	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44 Uffz. Kühn	4./JG 3	P-51	<input type="checkbox"/> 15 Ost S/JD: no height	13.25	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -					
02.11.44 Uffz. Walfried Huth	12./JG 54	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> GL-2 at 800 m.	14.03	Film C. 2031/II
Anerk: Nr. -					
<u>Supplemental Claims from Sources :</u>					
02.11.44 Oblt. Werner Gerth: 27	14./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> -	-	Reference: IV./JG 3
Lists f. 361					
02.11.44 Lt. Siegfried Müller: 10	14./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> -	-	Reference: IV./JG 3
Lists f. 361					
02.11.44 Fw. Klaus Neumann: 31	16./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> -	-	Reference: IV./JG 3
Lists f. 361					
02.11.44 Fw. Klaus Neumann: 32	16./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> -	-	Reference: IV./JG 3
Lists f. 361					
02.11.44 Hptm. Wilhelm Moritz: 44	Stab IV./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> -	-	Reference: IV./JG 3
Lists f. 361					
02.11.44 Fw. Willi Maximowitz: 14	14./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> -	-	Reference: IV./JG 3
Lists f. 361					
02.11.44 Fw. Willi Maximowitz: 15	14./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> -	-	Reference: IV./JG 3
Lists f. 361					
02.11.44 Uffz. Oskar Bösch: 8	14./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> -	-	Reference: IV./JG 3
Lists f. 361					
02.11.44 Lt. Henner Mebesius: 1	13./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> -	-	Reference: IV./JG 3
Lists f. 361					
02.11.44 Fhj.Fw. Willi Vohl: 1	13./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> -	-	Reference: IV./JG 3
Lists f. 361					
02.11.44 Fhj.Fw. Willi Vohl: 2	13./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> -	-	Reference: IV./JG 3
Lists f. 361					
02.11.44 Uffz. Friedrich Essig: 3	14./JG 3	B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> -	-	Reference: IV./JG 3
Lists f. 361					

# BATTLEFIELD RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION GROUP

02.11.44 Fw. Reinhold Hoffmann: 7 Lists f. 361	15./JG 3 B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> -	-	Reference: IV./JG 3
02.11.44 Lt. Ernst Rex: 2 Lists f. 361	15./JG 3 B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> -	-	Reference: IV./JG 3
02.11.44 Fw. Otto Erhardt: 12 Lists f. 361	13./JG 3 B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> -	-	Reference: IV./JG 3
02.11.44 Fw. Otto Erhardt: 13 Lists f. 361	13./JG 3 B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> -	-	Reference: IV./JG 3
02.11.44 Fw. Siegfried Küttner: 5 Lists f. 361	14./JG 3 B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> -	-	Reference: IV./JG 3
02.11.44 Fw. Johann Clässen: 4 Lists f. 361	15./JG 3 B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> -	-	Reference: IV./JG 3
02.11.44 Fw. Johann Clässen: 5 Lists f. 361	15./JG 3 B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> -	-	Reference: IV./JG 3
02.11.44 Fw. Harry Wald: 9 Lists f. 361	16./JG 3 B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> -	-	Reference: IV./JG 3
02.11.44 Uffz. Erich Miedl: 1 Lists f. 361	15./JG 3 B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> -	-	Reference: IV./JG 3
02.11.44 Oblt. Markhoff f. 271	8./JG 4 B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> -	-	Reference: JG 4 Lists
02.11.44 Oblt. Wolf f. 271	Stab II./JG 4 B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> -	-	Reference: JG 4 Lists
02.11.44 Lt. Eck f. 271	5./JG 4 B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> Bernburg: 8.000 m,	-	Reference: JG 4 Lists
02.11.44 Uffz. Kurt Scherer f. 271	6./JG 4 B-17	<input type="checkbox"/> -	-	Reference: JG 4 Lists
02.11.44 Lt. Karl Wunsch: 23 f. 575	2./JG 27 P-51	<input type="checkbox"/> Köthen	12.37	Reference: JG 27 Lists
02.11.44 Uffz. Wilhelm Deutschmann: 2 f. 575	3./JG 27 P-51	<input type="checkbox"/> Köthen	12.37	Reference: JG 27 Lists
02.11.44 Uffz. Fritz Koal: 3 f. 565	6./JG 27 P-51	<input type="checkbox"/> -	12.40	Reference: JG 27 Lists
02.11.44 Uffz. Arno Mittmann: 1 f. 350	11./JG 27 P-51	<input type="checkbox"/> S.E. Aschersleben	12.25	Reference: JG 27 Lists
02.11.44 Uffz. Chrysanth Bürger: 1 f. 470	13./JG 27 P-51	<input type="checkbox"/> N.W. Leipzig	12.35	Reference: JG 27 Lists
02.11.44 Uffz. Alfred Mannchen: 4 f. 470	16./JG 27 P-51	<input type="checkbox"/> Halle	12.40	Reference: JG 27 Lists
02.11.44 Oblt. Ernst-Wilhelm Reinert: 172 f. 470	14./JG 27 P-51	<input type="checkbox"/> Eilenburg	12.50	Reference: JG 27 Lists
02.11.44 Obgefr. Horst Rippert: n.b. f. 470	13./JG 27 P-51	<input type="checkbox"/> Raum Halle	-	Reference: JG 27 Lists



## BATTLEFIELD RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION GROUP

---



**PARD Serial #297956 - Crew names not in order.**

Hanford "Rusty" J. Rustand, Pilot; Henry A. Schwartz, Navigator; Wyndham "Wyn" M. Peck, Co-Pilot; George E. Roach, Tail Gunner; John P. Murphy, Aerial Engineer/Waist Gunner; John A. Griffith, Radio Operator/Gunner; John S. Gercovich, AR/Ball Turret Gunner; Gilbert "Gil" (NMI) Crotte, Engineer/Top Turret; Roger T. Keys, Bombardier/Nose Gunner. The last man, front row far right, in an unknown crew member (not on this mission)

# BATTLEFIELD RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION GROUP

---

---

## CIRCUMSTANCES OF CREW:

Prior to the first rounds of 20mm fire from the FW-190s, all crew were in their positions and performing post operations duties. As the first enemy planes appeared, the crew assumed the defensive positions and were ready to defend the ship. The first 20mm rounds found their target, and the communication system was put out of action. 1Lt. Rustand was at his position in the pilots seat, when he gave the order to bail ship. He was doing his utmost to maintain what control he could, and allow all the men to get out. During this brief chaotic moment, he also maneuvered the aircraft under one of his wingmen, Aircraft #32116 "HI-HO SILVER", to protect the underside.

First man out of 42-97956 was 2Lt. Henry A. Schwarz, the Navigator from the front hatch. He was greeted on the ground minutes later by the German military, and taken to HQ Air District 3/III, where he was interrogated and debriefed. All personal items and papers were collected by the Germans, and the prisoner later sent to Dulag "Durchgangslager der Luftwaffe" Oberursel, the German Truant Camp for USAAF POWs.

Second and third men out of the ship were TSgt. Gilbert Crotte, Engineer/Top Turret Gunner; and Sgt. Roger T. Keys Bombardier/Nose Gunner. In TSgt. Gilbert Crotte's testimony, he noted that Sgt. Roger T. Keys, had no chute on and jumped tandem with him. Sgt. Keys held on until at 2500 feet; when TSgt. Crotte opened his chute and the sudden lurch of the chute opening tore Keys from Crotte, causing Keys to fall to his death. His body was later found near the village of Klein Badegast, and buried in the town's cemetery until repatriated by the U.S. Army. Crotte also noted, that in his opinion, the following crew also perished in the crash, as he could not confirm them leaving nor being able to depart the aircraft:

1Lt. Rustand, Hanford J., Pilot - Temporarily buried in Libehna, Germany; later moved to the American Military Cemetery in Hamm, Luxembourg.

TSgt. Griffith, John A., Radio/Gunner - Temporarily buried in Libehna, Germany; Repatriated to Pinelawn Cemetery in Long Island, New York, U.S.A.

S/Sgt. Gercovich, John S., Ball Turret/Gunner - Temporarily buried in Libehna, Germany; Repatriated to the Golden Gate National Cemetery in San Mateo County, California, U.S.A.

S/Sgt. Murphy, John P., Waist Gunner/Engineer; Repatriated to Mt. Carmel Cemetery in Anaconda, Montana, USA.

S/Sgt. Roach, George E., Tail Gunner - Temporarily buried in Libehna, Germany; later moved to the American Military Cemetery in Hamm, Luxembourg.

## BATTLEFIELD RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION GROUP

---



(WW2BRPG)

Fourth man to get out of the aircraft was 2Lt. Wyndham M. Peck, Co-Pilot. Two reports from the MACR state he was blown out of the plane by explosive force. This was in his own testimony, and the same was written by T/Sgt. Crotte. Although, T/Sgt. Crotte was second out of the aircraft, (already out), he stated that 2Lt. Peck was blown out, being he had spoken to him after running into him on their way to the Frankfurt POW Camp for Air Force Personnel.



# BATTLEFIELD RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION GROUP

---

## 6 JULY 1945 - LETTER TO MRS. RUSTAND:

6 July, 1945

Dear Mrs. Rustand,

I am now at home on a delay en route after which I report to Miami Beach, Florida. I am writing this letter in hopes that it will relieve you somewhat of the suspense and anxiety you probably still feel about your husband.

We were flying the last position in the formation that on November 2 bombed Merseburg oil refinery. We had just dropped our bomb-load over our target when we were attacked by many German fighters. (F. W. 190's). Our fighter escorts were far outnumbered. We put up a good fight against the attack, but because of the great number of enemy fighters there were too many for us to handle.

Suddenly our plane was hit and all electrical power was broken, causing our interphone system to fail, also all our turrets. The bomb-bays were on fire, also our oxygen tanks. The controls evidently were shot away because the plane was completely out of control and heading straight for the ground. The navigator, being closest to the escape door, was the first man out of the plane. I followed the navigator.

After being captured I was placed in a cell for six days and transferred to a camp in Frankfurt, where interrogation took place. On the way to this camp I met Lt. Peck, our co-pilot. He explained how he was miraculously blown out of the airplane and regained consciousness while descending in his parachute. All the men that were captured from the raid that we participated in were transferred in a unit to this camp in Frankfurt. The only men from our plane to appear in this group were Lt. Peck, Lt. Schwarz, and myself.

Your husband, the co-pilot, navigator, Sgt. Keys, and I were in the forward part of the plane, for whom there was one escape hatch. In the back of the ship, beyond the bomb-bays, was Griffith, Murphy, and Gercovich, for whom there was the side door for escape. The tail-gunner had his own escape hatch.

Please remember that all this happened in such a few seconds that the chances of everyone leaving the plane before the explosion are very slim.

This was our ninth and last mission with the finest and bravest crew any man was ever privileged to fly with. And now, more than ever, I realize what their friendship meant to me.

Sincerely, /s/ Gil Crotte

# BATTLEFIELD RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION GROUP

TWO testimonies from the MACR (*National Archives*)

AFFPA-12

CASUALTY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Your name Wyntham M. W. Peck Rank 1st Lt. Serial No. O-745493

2. Organization AC Gp Commander Terry Rank Col. Sqn CO Wm. Taylor Rank Major  
(full name) (full name)

3. What year 1944 month November day 2 did you go down?

4. What was the mission, Murseberg, target, \_\_\_\_\_, target  
time, 1300, altitude, 27000 route scheduled, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, routes flown \_\_\_\_\_

5. Where were you when you left formation? about 3 minutes past the target

6. Did you bail out? No, I was blown out and came to in time to open parachute

7. Did other members of crew bail out? Yes, Navigator, Bombardier, and Engineer

8. Tell all you know about when, where, how each person in your aircraft for whom no individual questionnaire is attached bailed out. A crew list is attached. Please give facts. If you don't know, say: "No Knowledge". About 3 minutes after the target the order was given to bail out Navigator went first, then the Engineer with the Bombardier on his back with no parachute. A few seconds later the plane must have blown up.

9. Where did your aircraft strike the ground? Unknown

10. What members of your crew were in the aircraft when it struck the ground? (Should cross check with 8 above and individual questionnaires) Unknown. It is my belief that the pilot, radio operator, ball tur. gunner, waist gunner, and tur. gunner were still in the plane when it hit the ground, but I did not see it

11. Where were they in aircraft? ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Unknown

12. What was their condition? Unknown

13. When, where, and in what condition did you last see any members not already described above? Navigator and Engineer were PW's in Germany.

14. Please give any similar information on personnel of any other crew of which you have knowledge. Indicate source of information. No knowledge.

(Any additional information may be written on the back)

6-3862, AF

# BATTLEFIELD RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION GROUP

AFPPA-12

## CASUALTY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Your name Gilbert Crotte Rank T/Sgt Serial No. 16002065
2. Organization 8th Gp Commander Col. Terry Rank \_\_\_\_\_ Sqn CO \_\_\_\_\_ Rank \_\_\_\_\_  
(full name) (full name)
3. What year 1944 month Nov day 2nd did you go down?
4. What was the mission, 9th, target, Merseberg, target time, noon, altitude, 28000 route/scheduled, \_\_\_\_\_, route flown \_\_\_\_\_
5. Where were you when you left formation? Over Kothman
6. Did you bail out? Yes
7. Did other members of crew bail out? Navigator,
8. Tell all you know about when, where, how each person in your aircraft for whom no individual questionnaire is attached bailed out. A crew list is attached. Please give facts. If you don't know, say: "No Knowledge". Navigator went first, I went second. The Co-Pilot was blown out of the airplane.
9. Where did your aircraft strike the ground? No knowledge
10. What members of your crew were in the aircraft when it struck the ground? (Should cross check with 8 above and individual questionnaires) No knowledge
11. Where were they in aircraft? We were all in positions
12. What was their condition? Interphone system was dead when
13. When, where, and in what condition did you last see any members not already described above? \_\_\_\_\_ attached by fighter
14. Please give any similar information on personnel of any other crew of which you have knowledge. Indicate source of information. \_\_\_\_\_

(Any additional information may be written on the back)



# BATTLEFIELD RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION GROUP

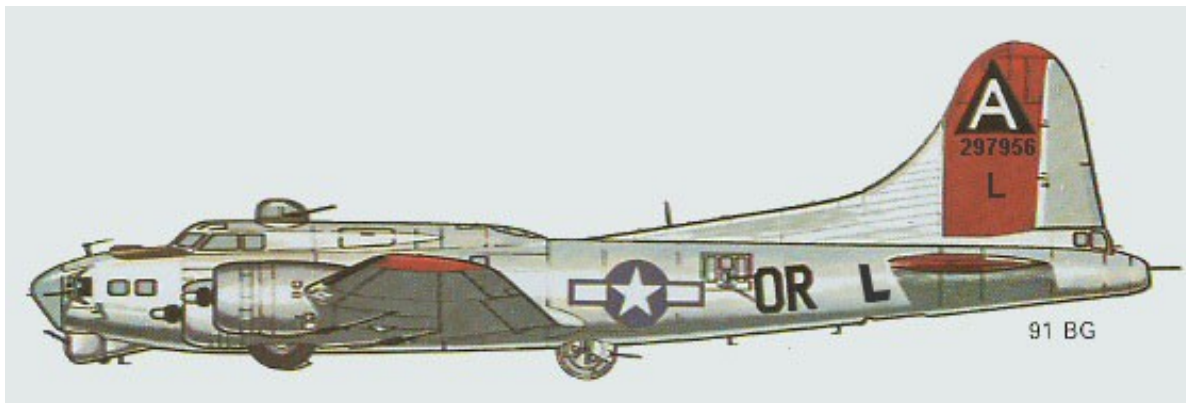
---

## Wyndham M. Peck - Prisoner of War Record Held in Stalag 7A near Moosburg, Germany.

Wyndham M. Peck was a Second Lieutenant in the Army Air Force during World War II. Wyndham was captured by the Nazis while serving in Germany, and was sent to Stalag 7A near Moosburg, Germany where 8,209 other American POWs were held. Wyndham's capture was first reported to the International Committee of the Red Cross on November 2, 1944, and the last report was made on June 9, 1945. Based on these two reports, Wyndham was imprisoned for at least 219 days (~8 months). The average duration of imprisonment was 363 days. Ultimately, Wyndham was returned to military control, liberated or repatriated. *National Archives and Records Administration.*

## AIRCRAFT DETAILS:

### AIRCRAFT DETAILS, Lockheed AC #42-97956 PARD



WWIIBRPG

Delivered Denver 13/4/44; Cheyenne 1/5/44; Hunter 14/5/44; Dow Fd 24/5/44; Assigned 323BS/91BG [OR-L] Bassingbourn 3/6/44; Missing in Action {38m} Merseburg 2/11/44 with Pilot, Hanford Rustand; Navigator/Nose Gunner, Roger Keys; Radio Operator, John Griffith; Ball Turret Gunner, John Gercovich; Waist Gunner, John Murphy; Tail Gunner, George Roach; (6 Killed in Action). Co-Pilot, Wyndham Peck; Navigator, Henry Schwarz; Flight Engineer/Top Turret Gunner, Gilbert Crotte; (3 Prisoner of War), shot down by enemy aircraft while trying to protect damaged colleague HI-HO- SILVER. Crashed in Libehna, Germany. Missing Air Crew Report 10148.

<http://www.americanairmuseum.com/aircraft/11031>

### B-17G-40-VE

**Crew:** 9-10

**Engines:** 4X895kW (1200HP) Wright radial engines.

**Max Speed:** 287/mph.

**Range:** 2000 miles.

**Dimensions:**

**Span:** 103 ft. 9 inches.

**Length:** 74 ft. 4 inches.

© 2016 Copyright, Author Patrick Murphy

# BATTLEFIELD RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION GROUP

---

**Height:** 19 ft. 1 inch.

**Weight:** 65,000 lbs. loaded.

**Armament:** X2.50 cal. Browning MG - trainable turret, chin, dorsal, ventral and tail, two waist, cheek and dorsal positions.

**Load:** 17,500 lbs. of bombs.

**Markings on PARD:** #42-97956 on tail A=91BG, OR=323BS, Call Letter – L

## EVIDENCE RECOVERED:

According to the German reports, two other individuals were among the capture/KIA. They reported Alfred A. Zwicky, Serial #0-75926 was among the dead recovered. This being in error, as Zwicky was not from aircraft #42-97956; but instead from another aircraft shot down within minutes of PARD, and crashed close by. The aircraft in question turned out to be Winged Victory #42-97563. Zwicky's body was discovered very near the village of Prosigk, Germany, and buried in that town's cemetery. The second individual the Germans reported on was a POW named Caldwell, Serial #0-716343. 1Lt. Ralph K. Caldwell was the navigator on board CANNON BALL TOO #42-98012 B-17G.

Several small fragments of plexiglas and aluminum were recovered, but not yet identified as any particular section of the plane. In general, these items consisted of small aircraft skin fragments, aluminum tubing, aircraft frame, clamps, rivets, melted aluminum; and 6-7 pieces of .50 cal. shells, showing they were heat caused exploded.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF EVIDENCE (WW2BRPG)





# BATTLEFIELD RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION GROUP





# BATTLEFIELD RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION GROUP





# BATTLEFIELD RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION GROUP





## SUMMARIZED CONCLUSION:

A request, by Marilyn, to find her father's crash site was made to the WW2 Battlefield Research and Preservation Group a.s.b.l. (WW2 BRPG) in 2015. After long and painstaking research into both military archives and private accounts, the suspected crash area was narrowed down. Almost an exact year after Marilyn's request, Patrick and his organization's Vice-President, James Still, visited the location of the crash and interviewed several local villagers of Sudlich-Anhalt. Two eyewitnesses were able to pinpoint the exact position of the crash site, and this was confirmed by the discovery of small remnants from the aircraft.

Hanford left behind a wife, six month old son, and his daughter Marilyn, who was *born 6 months after her dad's plane was shot down*. Marilyn's mother tucked her pain away, in order to move forward with her life. She couldn't bring herself to talk about her late husband, and consequently Marilyn knew very little about her father. After her mother's passing, Marilyn discovered papers, love letters, and the first photograph she had ever seen of her dad.

The conclusion and final piece of the puzzle came into play in 2016, when the WW2 Battlefield Research and Preservation Group stepped in to help. Marilyn visited the village of Libehna, Germany, and stood in the field where her father's plane had crashed on 2 November 1944. With the help of the WW2 BRPG, a quest of more than 20 years finally became a reality that provided Marilyn the answers and peace she was seeking.