Five: October 8, 1943 to January 5, 1944

October 8, 1943[1]

[1] Throughout September, the Eighth Air Force's meteorologists searched for upcoming weather patterns that would permit visible bombing against German targets. They predicted a suitable period of clear weather for the second week of October. Gen. Eaker proposed a series of tactics that he hoped would forestall the damages of the July 24-30 "Blitz Week." Diversionary strikes were planned for luring the *Luftwaffe* away from the primary bomber formations. Eaker expected to surprise and confuse the Third Reich's defenders with unprecedented excursions to Poland and East Prussia. Also, he intended to use his fighters, Thunderbolts equipped with belly tanks and a newly arrived force of P-38s, to the fullest extent of their abilities.

The *Luftwaffe* also had new strategies to employ against their daytime opponent. Massive numbers of FW 190s and Me 109s, accompanied by an assortment of night fighters, would meet the lead bomber formations at their initial point (IP), the beginning of the bomb run, and line up abreast of the stream, beyond the reach of the Eighth's gunners. The German pilots would then assault the bomber configuration, concentrating on the destruction of one group at a time. The fighters began their charges by launching rockets at the bombers *en masse* in an effort to break up the bomber formations and make sequential passes less hazardous.

The Eighth conducted missions on October 8, (Bremen) October 9, (Anklam, Marienburg, Danzig and Gdynia) and the 10th, (Munster). Despite their efforts at countering the German interceptors, the Eighth suffered eighty-eight heavy bomber losses in combat, the same amount yielded during the original "Blitz Week." This appalling development notwithstanding, the Eighth's strategists resolved to proceed with their plans for a follow up offensive against the ball bearing factories at Schweinfurt on October 14. The optimism expressed by men like Lt. Piech before the first raid was entirely absent in October; many airmen predicted that they would either sleep in German prisoner of war camps that night or worse.

Heavy clouds over England on the morning of the 14th set an ominous tone for the mission. A force of B-24s intended for the Schweinfurt sortie could not assemble in time; the Liberators were sent on a largely ineffective North Sea diversion instead. Of the 383 B-17s that took off that morning, only 291 continued on to the target. The force, divided into two divisions, the First and the Third, enjoyed P-47 cover on the way in. The P-38s Eaker had counted on had been delayed and would not become operational until the 15th. Despite the Thunderbolts' presence, the *Luftwaffe* set in on the First Division early. The Third, taking a slightly different route, escaped much of the fighters' attention. Both divisions returned to England that night, but they left sixty of their number behind. These losses, added to the amount already downed, justified the name given to this week of warfare, "Black Week."

For all of their misfortunes, the First and Third Bomber Divisions delivered highly accurate hits against the ball-bearing factories. Due to the emphasis placed on precision in bombardier training in the United States and England in mid-1943, overall accuracy rates had doubled since the July raids. However, the *Luftwaffe* had demonstrated that they controlled the skies over Germany. From October 14 on, the Eighth Air Force would never again operate beyond the range of their fighters. The second debacle at Schweinfurt provided the final spur for improving the range of the P-47 and P-38 and the deployment of the P-51 Mustang. The direct destruction of the *Luftwaffe* became the unit's primary goal, rather than an intermediary objective. (C&C, vol. 2: 696-706; Coffey: 280-340; Levine: 103-107; Kennett: 153-154; Overy: 122-123; Sherry: 158)

First Abortion[2]

Up at 0800. Briefing at 0900. Target: Bremen; sub pens and etc. High group and lead squadron; had a good position. On O_2: four hours. Flight time to be five-and-a-half hours. Altitude: 26,000 [feet]. Take off was at 1155.ßÞ Well, we got as high as 23,000 feet and about fifteen minutes over the Channel when [the] #4 engine started spouting oil and smoking[i] like hell. Had to feather [the] engine and turn back, god dammit!! The boys encountered quite some fighters and the heaviest flak yet. P-47s and Spits helped out beautifully. Hailed off to town. Home early, 10:30 PM. Listened to [the] radio in Doug's room. Loading tonight, but not for our crew, because we're going on a seven day pass, starting tomorrow. Whoopee!!!

October 9, 1943

Up at 1000. Start [of our] seven days leave; also, five crews [were] lost. One 509th man went down, Frank Williams,[3] with Christman, Maser, Turley, Morse and Warring; [his] first mission, a new crew.[4] The boys were [the] lead group, 509th was [the] low squadron, and only God knows how come they all came back. Altitude was 13,000 [feet]. Bomb load: a bomb bay tank and three 1000-pound [demos] and a few incendiaries. Flight time: eight hours. Target was some eighty miles NE[5] of Berlin, [the] town of Anklam.[6] They were jumped by the whole *Luftwaffe* for four hours, to and from

---

[2]The October 8 Bremen-Vegesack raid marked the debut of the "Carpet" system. Bombers discharged tons of chaff, long strips of paper covered in aluminum, as they entered air space monitored by German antiaircraft radar. These bits of foil filled the radar screens, masking the American planes and befuddling the flak batteries that relied on the radar operators for altitude and position data. Nevertheless, the antiaircraft gunners subjected the bomber streams to a withering volume of fire on the 8th.

Fourteen out of the twenty-one Flying Fortresses of the 351st Bomb Group that ventured past the English Channel accompanied the 300 heavy bombers that set upon the port facilities at Bremen. The formation faced heavy fighter opposition. As the fighters converged mostly on the lowest group, the 351st planes had to contend with only a few assaults by pursuit aircraft. Twenty-seven VIII Bomber Command heavies went down on the Bremen mission. An additional three were forfeited from the forty-three B-17s that bombed the U-boat construction yards at Vegesack. (351st: 16-17; C&C, vol. 2: 695-696; 850; CC: 199; Coffey: 280; Levine: 103-104)

[3] 1st Lt. Frank E. Williams, 508th Squadron (PW). (351st: 102; 135)

[4] 1st Lt. Joseph H. Turley, 508th Squadron (MIA); two POWs, three MIAs, four KIAs; F/O William H. Warring, 508th Squadron (PW); nine POWs; 1st Lt. Lloyd A. Christman, 510th Squadron (POW); six POWS, three KIAs; 1st Lt. Howard G. Maser, 511th Squadron (PW); eight POWs, one KIA; Capt. Harry B. Morse, Jr., 511th Squadron (PW); ten POWs. (351st: 102)

[5] Northeast.

[6] The Anklam mission was a diversion for forces headed for Marienburg, Danzig and Gdynia. The Fortresses and Liberators used the North Sea for cover for most of the flight, but the *Luftwaffe* rose to meet them over Denmark. The first wing of the 106 dispatched bombers to arrive over Anklam did considerable damage to the Arado Aircraft Factory. The second wing, which included twenty-one 351st B-17s, found its objective covered with smoke from the previous bombing and wound up dropping its deadly cargo in the town itself.

The Anklam taskforce continued to attract German interceptors on the return flight to England. Rocket-bearing Ju 88s and Me 110s supported the *Luftwaffe* squadrons that moved in after the bomb run was

[the] target, rockets and all. They flew over Denmark each way. Rest of [my] crew took [the] plane to Southport and will stay at the rest home.[7] I'm going to look for Uncle Peter.[8]

October 10, 1943

Up at 0930. Went to church this morning. Good dinner, roast beef. Read [the] paper 'til 1400. Wrote Letter #2 to home [and] wrote Letter[ii] #2 to Amy. Shower and shave. Beat off to town for [the] evening. The group went on a mission this afternoon. Low group. [Target:] Munster, Germany. Half of [the] group aborted, since [they were] low on gas. A few casualties came back to the field; John Tynan, with Capt. Argiropulos, all had to bail out. Tynan got a fractured ankle.[9] Shower and shave. Off to town. Invited to a late supper at Beth's home. Home by 2400. Mail: received two *Reader's Digest*s. Loading; canceled, late tonight.

October 11, 1943

Up at 1100. Dinner in a hurry. Recon car to [the] Peterborough Station. Train to London, 1255. Located Uncle Peter's APO at [the] Polish HQ building, [the] Ruben Hotel, Victoria Square, London. Pete is at Leslie, Scotland, Third Company. Saw a movie, *So Proudly We Hail*; didn't like it, too dramatic. Supper at [the] officers' Red Cross.[þ] Train to Edinburgh, Scotland, 10:10 PM, an all night trip, eight-and-a-half hours

---

complete. The harassment continued for over three hours, with fighters mounting assaults from airbases located on the Third Reich's northern coast. In all, eighteen Flying Fortresses did not return from Anklam. The Anklam ruse succeeded in preserving the bomber streams headed for East Prussia and Poland; only ten planes, total, were lost on those raids. The bombardiers who completed these missions, particularly the strike on the Focke-Wulf plant at Marienburg, were commended for the effectiveness of their efforts. (351st: 17; C&C, vol. 2: 696-697; 850; CC: 199; Coffey: 280; Levine: 104)

[7] In 1942, the Eighth initiated a rest and recuperation program for its men on furlough. The AAF gained the use of several English manors where, "fatigued officers and men could get completely away from the war." Airmen wore civilian clothes at these rest homes and participated in a slate of leisure activities. Crews were generally sent to an R&R manor after fifteen missions. (Wells: 80)

[8] Eva Piech's brother.; a warrant officer in the Polish Army, Peter Wner was first captured by the Germans, escaped, then was recaptured by the Soviets. He absconded from Russian custody and arrived in the United Kingdom through connections in the Polish Underground, where he joined the 1st Polish Airborne Brigade. He was captured by the Germans once again during the doomed MARKET-GARDEN operation in September 1944. (Interview #2)

[9] The nine B-17s from Polebrook that did not suffer mechanical failures on October 10 formed part of the 274-Flying Fortress bomber stream that pounded Munster. Several sources list the city's rail and waterways as the heavy bombers' main target. Harris and Harbour record that some of the 351st's ordnance also fell on the Munster marshaling yards. However, Alan Levine maintains that the bombers were sent to Munster to attack the homes of the rail junction's employees. Plans for a continuous fighter escort were botched, leaving the heavies vulnerable to nearly 200 German fighters. The October 10 incursion cost the Eighth thirty-three bombers. Three of those bombers, including the B-17 piloted by Lt. Argiropulos, were lost after the force reached England. (351st: 17; C&C, vol. 2: 698-699; CC: 200; Coffey: 280; Levine: 104)

or so; crowded train. Slept [for] about a half an hour [for the] whole night. Seats were very uncomfortable.

October 12, 1943

Edinburgh, 0730. Began an immediate search for Uncle Pete and [the] town of Leslie, [which is the] size of Parlin.[10] Took a train to Kirkcaldy; passed over the famous Forth Bridge, then, a bus to Leslie. Passed the Haig Scotch Whiskey factory. A nineteen-year-old Polish[þ] corporal guided me to Pete's company. Just my luck, to come when Pete was not at home. He's gone to Manchester to do some practice parachute jumps; will not be back 'til Thursday evening. Will wait for him in Edinburgh. Back to Edinburgh. Dinner at [the] American Red Cross.[þ] Room with a chaplain at [the] Thistle Hotel. Wrote a letter to Bett. Met [some] swell Scottish lieutenants. Went to a dance after a few rounds of beer. Bed by 2330.

October 13, 1943

Up at 0900. Breakfast at [the] hotel with my lieutenant chaplain friend, Gardner, an Evangelist new reform preacher. At 1015 [and] 'til dinner, I and Lt. Gardner joined in the crowd on a tour through the famous Edinburgh Castle and etc.; enjoyed the trip very much. Dinner at [the] American Red[iii] Cross building. In [the] afternoon, a captain, Lt. Gardner and I toured Mary, Queen of Scots, home, the Holyrood Palace; very interesting sights. (Snack bar before [the] movie), went alone to see *They Got Me Covered*, very good; laughed aplenty. Saw, also, *The Black Raven*. Met my Scottish friend, 1st Lt. Jim Watson of the Royal Scots Regiment, at a bar; had plenty of beer and, once again, off to a dance. We talked a lot of Anglo-American relations; also, [of] Russia's plans.

October 14, 1943

Up at 1100. Shave. Checked out of [the] room, very cheap lodgings and very satisfactory rooms; the bill: one pound, one shilling.[ß] Dinner at [the] American Red[iv] Cross, the usual scampy meat and vegetables; cost: two shillings or $.40. Spent [the] afternoon reading papers and saw another movie, a double feature, (movies cost about two shillings, six pence,[ß] or about $.55), *Johnny Doughboy* and *They Dive At Dawn*; the latter, a British picture, was pretty good. Snack bar at 1700. Met up with three Polish lieutenants; asked them about Uncle Pete. One lad knows him. Had a few double scotches and tea; also, talked plenty, all in Polish. Four of us took a train to Kirkcaldy. Leslie, again. Pete [was] not home; will not come 'til Friday PM, dammit. Slept with his company; what terrible quarters. Talked to these men in Polish 'til 2300. Gosh, what hardships they went through!!

October 15, 1943

[10] Parlin, New Jersey.

Polish Quarters

Cold morning. Up at 0700. The Polish boys had to prepare for a drill at 0800. Coffee and bread for breakfast. Talked to Pete's landlady; left him cigarettes and box of candy. Wrote Pete a letter. Saw his room and a few snaps of himself. He's a handsome lad, but, two years of Russian imprisonment left him with gray hairs and a wrinkled face. He's no taller than me, but, built solid and tough. Left Leslie before 0900. Dinner at [the] ARC.[11] Train to Peterborough at 1400, a long and dreary train ride. Passed through Newcastle and York. In Peterborough by 2100. Supper at [the] Allied officers' service club. Home by 2230. Bed by 0130. Received a pile of mail; look on October 17 for details.

October 16, 1943

Party

Up at 1030. Weather, closed in at Southport; thus, [the] rest of [the] crew will not come home until tomorrow AM, by train instead of plane. Cleaned up room, aired blankets and etc. Party this evening at [the] club, our monthly [party]. Had no extra briefing, ala squadron style, this month, since some of the old timers have already finished up their twenty-five and have left. As usual, [the] party was rough, but, not for me; stayed my usual, sober self and enjoyed myself the simple way. Party over at 2300. A foggy night it will be, and so it was.

October 17, 1943

Up at 1100. Dinner. Phone call from Betty[v] Shaw. Wrote Letter #3 to home. Steak for supper, and ice cream!! Another officer[‡] and I saw the sisters; had a swell time at their home with [the] rest of the family. Bus at 2300. Loading tonight!! Rained all morning; beautiful PM[12] and evening. Mail (received on Friday, October 15):

1. Air mail from Pat; also, two snaps.
2. Letter from Lorraine Kandel
3. Letters from Irene, #15, #17, #18[vi]
4. *del.* Letters from[vii] Frank, #16 to #19
5. *del.* V-mail from[viii] Milly, #20.
6. Three packages from Milly, half-and-half tobacco and magazines.

October 18, 1943

Scrubbed!!

[11] American Red Cross.

[12] Afternoon.

Up at 0500. Breakfast, 0530. Flew to [the] 305th Bomb Group [field] to help form a composite group [of the] 351st, [the] 91st, [and the] 305th. On that last Schweinfurt raid, the 305th Group lost thirteen planes![13] Met Perkins, Peacock [and] Joe Wellman, [from] SAAAB pre-flight. Target: City of Duren, Germany. Bomb load: forty-two one hundred-pound incendiary bombs. Time: six hours. High group. [Altitude:] 29,000 feet; however, we got as high as 30,300 [feet]. High squadron. Got over [the] English coast, flubbed the dub[14] for a while, and then, turned back for home. Weather was disastrously dangerous at our altitude. Temperature was a -50º C. Benson came very close to death while getting into his ball turret; he passed out from a lack of O_2. Harvey brought him conscious in short order. Took off at 1100. Landed at Polebrook at 1530. Tired as hell. My feet froze up there! Cleaned [the] guns. Supper and listened to [the] American Forces programs 'til 2200. Bed before 2300. Slept well. Stand by for tonight!! No mail.

October 19, 1943

Up at 1000. Complete overcast. No mission today; practice mission instead, skeleton crew only. Dinner at 1100. Wrote Letter #4 to home, mostly about my allotment trouble. Did odds and ends in [the] room; diary, assorting letters, laundry and etc. The entire crew gathered in Doug's room, had eggs, beer and frankfurters that were left over from supper. Rain, all evening. Bed by 2300.

October 20, 1943

Nineteenth Mission[15]

Up at 0500. Breakfast. Briefing at 0530. Got [the] guns and equipment ready and flew over to Chelveston, [the] 305th Group [field]. Same target and situation as [the] Monday, *del.* October 18th mission; this time, it went off much better. Had perfect P-47 cover. Ran smack into a front over France, well in[to] enemy territory; had to turn. Flew up along [the] coast, and then, decided to go home. Dropped the one hundred-pound

[13] The sixteen planes put up by the 305th Bomb Group on October 14 occupied the "Coffin Corner" position in the First Bomber Division formation. This section of the division's configuration was the focus of relentless fighter assaults, which claimed twelve bombers before the group reached Schweinfurt. (*Airwar (TV)*: 187-188)

[14] Wasted time; waited around.

[15] The onset of autumn and winter effectively suspended the daylight precision bombing campaign until February of 1944. In the interim, the Eighth used blind bombing methods to apply pressure to the German economy. On October 20, 212 Flying Fortress attempted to bomb the metal factories at Duren using the Oboe radar system. A pathfinder ship equipped with an Oboe receiver monitored broadcasts from two radar stations in England, nicknamed Cat and Mouse. Cat lined the plane up with the target. Mouse measured the distance between the plane and the target and signaled when to release the bombs. While quite accurate under optimal conditions, the fact that Oboe relied on a "line of sight" beam between Cat and Mouse and the target checked its use at the Ruhr Valley. Oboe often faltered, as it did over Duren on October 20. Only 114 planes bombed the city; the others, including seven B-17s from Polebrook, aborted when their pathfinder ship turned around. P-47s accompanied the bombers for the entire trip. (351st: 18; C&C, vol. 2: 850; CC: 204; Coffey: 336; Levine: 43; 110)

incendiaries in the Channel. [The] other wings that went in before us blasted the hell out of the Duren target. No fighter attacks on our wing formation. Took off at 1047. Landed at 1630. Plane behaved beautifully. No one was too cold; temperature was -50º C. Cleaned [the] guns. Supper and listened to [the] radio 'til 2200. Bed. Stand by. Rain, all night.

October 21, 1943

Mission Scrubbed

Up at 0300. Rained all AM. Briefing at 0330, a very messed up affair. On top of that, we were awakened very late; missed breakfast. Benson, Simmons and Hall [are] on [the] grounded list; Hall has sinus trouble. Target: in Paris, some factory. Altitude: 23,000 [feet]. [Bomb load:] twelve 500-[pound] demos. Low group, #3 [position], lead squadron. Take off at 0630. Mission called off just as a few ships took off. Back to sleep from 0700 to 1130. Practice mission for two hours at 9000 feet. Doug led the second element, low squadron, low group. Had thirty-six P-38s covering us. Boy, were they neat!! I acted as navigator. Supper. Listened to [the] radio all evening. No loading. Mail:[ix]

1. Claire M. Stata
2. Tessie
3. Amelia
4. Milly's [Letter] #23 and V-mail #26
5. Charlie Dux, [dated] October 10
6. Frank's clippings of October 5, #24; also, October 3, #22; also, September 30, #21.

October 22, 1943

Up at 1000. Attended a very interesting lecture "On Fighter Cover" by Lt. Col. Roberts, a P-47 pilot, [who] showed some pictures of P-47s bagging FW 190s and ME 109s. Dinner. Wrote a letter to Amy, #3; also, started a letter to Mrs. Kingery. Listened to [the] radio all evening and read magazines. Rain, all evening; sloppy as hell. Mail: Amy, Ray and Uncle Peter. Package from home, magazines. No loading.

October 23, 1943

Up at 1000. Early dinner. Practice mission. Finished a letter to [the] Kingerys. Shower and shave. Rained all morning and PM; sloppy day. Saw a movie with Bett, *Striptease Lady*. Starry night. No loading. Home, early.

October 24, 1943

Up at 0945. Church. Dinner, good; ice cream. Wrote a letter to home, #5; also, a V-mail to Elsie V. Brown. Went to town with Omo; had a swell time with the Shaw family at a corner inn. Drank scotches and beer. Back at 11:00 PM. Stand by!

October 25, 1943

Up at 1000. Nothing all AM. Spent all afternoon cleaning my clothes in one hundred percent octane gasoline. Blinker and radio code check. Spent [the] evening in town with Beth. Saw a movie, *Mr. Lucky*. Heavy fog set in. Busses stopped running; took us 'til 0315 to get home, via truck transportation. Mail: *Scooperoo* [and] an unknown envelope from Parlin with poems and jokes; also, Letter #25 from Irene.

October 26, 1943

Up at 1100. Foggy all morning and in mild form [for] all [the] rest of [the] day; heavy fog in [the] evening, again. Bombardiers' meeting for two hours; Col. Hatcher spoke to us. Wrote V-mail letters to:

1. Carl Dux
2. PFC. Ray Kandel
3. Cousin Lorraine
4. Cousin Tessie
5. Stata's wife
6. [The] Rudy Piechs
7. Bussy Luker
8. Chick Waldron
9. Pat Speck; a letter[þ] [and] two pictures

Mail: three packages from Sis Milly, Xmas cake, magazines, *del.* candy, three bags, and peanuts.

October 27, 1943

Up at 1000. Shower and shave. Foggy all AM. Meeting of all [the] officers on [the] post by Col. Hatcher; topics were security, transportation and saluting. Wrote Letter #6 to home, #4 to Amy. Got a sergeant to help me translate Uncle Pete's letter. Stayed in my room all evening and read the best damn story in my life, *The Human Comedy*, by William Saroyan, in the *Omni Book*. Bed by 0100. Starry night. Mail: Xmas gift, stationary, from Cousin Tessie, V-mail #28 from Sis Milly and a V-mail from Elsie V. Brown.

October 28, 1943

Up at 1030. Made a fire in [the] room. Weather, all closed in, all day. Read *Stars and Stripes* and a story in *Omni Book*, *War Eagles*, by James Saxton Childers. Read [the] story [for] most of [the] afternoon. Sgt. Hall [is] still in [the] hospital; getting out in a few days. Another officer[‡] and I, town; dance with the sisters. Foggy as all hell again! Played swell games of Ping-Pong with the lads this afternoon. Mail:

1. Box of Fanny Farmer's from Sis Milly
2. V-mail #29 from Sis Milly
3. V-mail from Harriet

October 29, 1943

Up at 1045. Made a fire in [the] room. Overcast, one hundred percent; slightly misty on [the] ground. Read a story from *Omni Book, A Sense of Humus*, by Bertha Damon. Date with Bet. Omo had a date with her sister, Diane. Stayed at the inn and at the house with [the] rest of [the] family. Home early, on a bus.

October 30, 1943

Up at 1030. Weather, closed in all day. Group went on a scrubbed mission to the Ruhr Valley; got over [the] coast of England and [the] mission [was] called off. Weather over England [is] very hazardous for flying. George flew as first pilot with Songer's crew. The rest of us, D.L. Harris's crew, stayed down. Doug is now an element leader and will only fly every so often. Took two hours of Link trainer for Doug. Saw a movie in town with Beth, *My Heart Belongs to Daddy*. Mail: V-mail #30 from Sis Milly.

October 31, 1943

Pay day: $70.90. Foggy and closed in all day; muddy and slight rain, all day. Played Ping-Pong in [the] club. Wrote Letter #7, a V-mail, to home. Wrote Letter #5, a V-mail, to Amy.[x] Another officer[‡] and I saw a movie with the Shaws, *Men of Texas*, good. Home by 2400. Played Ping-Pong with Doug 'til 0130. Bed, 0200. Huge crap game in [the] club. Nothing doing tonight! No mail!

November 1, 1943

First Lieutenant!!

Up at 1030. Rain and weather; closed in all day. Nothing doing all day. Lost a Ping-Pong game, three to one, in the club tournament. Got my battle jacket from Kettering; cost for [the] tailoring job: four lbs., ten shillings. Played poker in [the] evening; lost four lbs. Stayed home all evening. Wrote V-mail #11, November, to home. Paid fifteen shillings for a squadron insignia, leather and embroidered style. Mail: V-mail #31 from Frank.

November 2, 1943

Up at 1030. Few hours of clear spells in the afternoon; cloudy and foggy all evening. Washed my raincoat in one hundred percent octane gasoline. Stayed home all evening, again; read magazines and etc. Loading tonight! Mail:

1. V-mail #33 from Sis Milly

2. V-mail from Bussy Luker
3. Two packages of magazines, *Esquire* and *Coronet*
4. *Reader's Digest,* October, [at the] right address

November 3, 1943

Twentieth Mission[16]

Up at 0500. Briefing at 0600. Bomb load: ten 500-[pound demos] and fourteen one hundred-pound incendiaries. Target: Wilhelmshaven! Take off at 0935. Landed at 1600. Lead group, lead squadron, #3 [position] in [the] second element. George flew as first pilot with a new crew; did a swell job. We had the new crew's co-pilot. Altitude: 22,000 feet. On O_2: 0230 hours. Mission: five-and-a-half hours long. Had beautiful P-47 and P-38 cover. Saw two ships in [the] front wing go down as a result of a collision; also, in our wing, a collision occurred. [As] a result, we lost one crew, Nardi. A 91st [Bomb Group] ship crashed into Nardi.[17] Prop wash trouble. Bombed on [the] pathfinder; complete undercast. A number of holes from shell cases; heavy flak and fighters. Saw a magician show in town with Bet. Mail: Xmas package from Cousin Tessie. Loading tonight!!

November 4, 1943

Mission Scrubbed

Up at 0545. Briefing at 0630. Felt very stiff and tired. Low group, low squadron, #2 on [the] second element, Purple Heart position! Target: Gelsenkirchen, in [the] heart of [the] Ruhr Valley. Bomb load: same as yesterday. Take off [was] supposed to be at 0920, but, [was] postponed for an hour; then, [the] mission was scrubbed at 1015. Hurrah!! Were we glad. Supposed to have fighter cover in and out. On O_2: four-and-a-half hours. Mission: six hours long. George, Simmons and I slow timed a ship; I was the co-pilot. Got the actual Air Medal today. First lieutenant orders came through today, effective as of November 1st, 1943. Wore those silver bars [for the] first time today! Stayed home all evening. Wrote V-mail #2 to home. Starry night!!

---

[16] The steady supply of new groups and crews and replacements that Gen. Eaker had maneuvered for throughout 1942 and most of 1943 finally materialized in the last three months of 1943. The Eighth Air Force quickly replaced its losses from Black Week and significantly enlarged its bomber and fighter commands. On November 3, the VIII Bomber Command demonstrated its new strength by assembling a force of 566 Flying Fortresses and Liberators to raid the port of Wilhelmshaven. This mission marked the operational debut of the P-38 Lightning and the H2X radar bombing system.

539 bombers reached Wilhelmshaven, including twenty-five of Col. Hatcher's "Queens," where eleven H2X equipped pathfinders successfully aided them in destroying a shipyard. Only seven planes were lost on this mission, perhaps more because of the *Luftwaffe*'s reluctance to fly through the clouds than the efforts of the Lightning pilots. (351st: 18; C&C, vol. 2: 850; CC: 210; Coffey: 340-341; Levine: 110-111)

[17] Lt. Nardi's plane collided with the other bomber when turning for the bomb run. Nardi's plane was damaged and forced out of formation. FW 190s then besieged the plane until it exploded. Four men were killed, including Nardi, and six became POWs. (351st: 18; 102)

November 5, 1943

False Alarm![18]

Up at 0600. Briefing at 0645. Afterwards, we were told that our crew was standing down. Same target as yesterday, Gelsenkirchen, Germany. Bill Holloway flew this one with Omohundro. Fighter cover was perfect; they had but a few attacks. Heaviest flak yet, over [the] target! Had three ships shoot off red flares, wounded aboard. Slept again from 0800 to 1200. Flubbed the dub all afternoon. Waited to see the ships come in. Two enlisted men [were] killed as a result of flak wounds, from other squadrons.[19] Capt. Omo and I went to town. Bet and I saw *Bataan*, too gory. Mail: V-mail #34 from Frank.

November 6, 1943

Weather, closed in this AM; cleared a little this PM. Up at 1100. Cold as hell last night. Doug, Bill, Hartman, Simmons, two Barbers and I flew a new 509th [Squadron] B-17G, to test fire its guns; flight time: 0130.[þ] I acted as navigator. Another officer[‡] and I beat it off to town; went to a dance with the sisters. Dance was swell. Home early, 2315. Nothing doing tonight! Mail:[xi]

1. Frank's [Letter] #36 and clippings
2. Irene's [Letter] #32
3. Amelia
4. Xmas card from [the] Kingerys

November 7, 1943

Up at 1030. Doug and I attended church. Flubbed the dub all afternoon. Omo and I went to town, early. Spent [the] evening at the North Field Inn, drinking beer with the Shaw family; enjoyed the two-and-a-half mile walk back to town. Moon out. Weather, just cold enough too walk fast. T/Sgt. Harvey had his two WRENs[20] down here for a visit! Loading tonight! 33º F[†] last night! Mail: letter from Bet, Amelia, *del.* Irene's #29 and a military ballot.

---

[18] The city of Gelsenkirchen was subjected to another of the Eighth Air Force's blind bombing efforts. 323 heavy bombers, including fourteen 351st Bomb Group planes, attempted to bomb the city's oil refineries and marshaling yard, but, most likely, the town itself was hit. Twenty-five German planes assailed the men of 351st, who, in turn, destroyed four fighters, one probable, and damaged three. The group encountered heavy antiaircraft over the Ruhr. (351st: 19; C&C, vol. 2: 850; CC: 211)

[19] S/Sgt. George C. Osborn (KIA), 511th Squadron; Sgt. Edward R. Lupinski (KIA), 511th Squadron. (351st: 102)

[20] The Royal Navy's version of the WAVES, women who staffed shore facilities. WRENs rarely served aboard ships. (Oxford: 1150)

November 8, 1943

Pass

Up at 0430. Called on a mission. Half an hour later, Bill and I were told to go back to bed. Mission was scrubbed just before take off. Weather, closing in; cold day. Went back to bed; up again at 1030. Set out for the woods with a hatchet; collected heavy logs and lumber. Dinner. Had supper at Bet's home. Saw a movie, *Hers to Hold*, Diana Durbin, very good. Wrote V-mail #3 to home. Warm evening. Stand by 'til 2400; scrubbed!!! Mail: letter from Amy [and] a box of Fanny Farmer's from home.

November 9, 1943

Pass

Up at 1000. Sawed some heavy wood all AM. Dinner. Stayed home all day, writing letters and reading books. Weather, cloudy; rain, last night; warm day.

1. Wrote a letter to Bet[xii]
2. Wrote a V-mail to Amelia, #1, November[xiii]
3. Wrote a V-mail to home, #4[xiv]
4. Wrote a V-mail to Mr. and Mrs. J. Dux[xv]
5. Wrote a V-mail to [the] Analytical Boys[xvi]

Played Ping-Pong with E.P. Harris 'til 2400. Sandwich before bed, 2430. Mail: packages from Mr. and Mrs. J. Dux and [the] Film Lab. Letters from Amy, Marty Dux, Rudy, Frank and Uncle Peter, a registered letter.

November 10, 1943

Up at 1030. Read papers and etc. Went to [the] Kettering quartermasters to buy an officer's overcoat; size 37R, cost: eight pounds,[ß] very "G!" Supper, very good. Bill and Sgt. Hall left for London for two days. They're taking their two day pass today and Thursday. Mess hall and [the] club are very crowded these days and nights. [The] 401st Bomb Group is training on this field. They've been here [for] one week, so far.[21] Stayed home all evening; had a headache after supper. Read all [the] letters from home over again, then, went to sleep 'til 2230. The boys started to return from London and we talked 'til 0100. Slight rain before 2400. Loading tonight!

November 11, 1943

---

[21] In late 1943, concurrent with increases in the number of groups at the VIII Bomber Command's disposal, the actual strength of all existing groups was practically doubled. Previously, each group had maintained a three sixteen-plane squadron organization. Now, each group could muster an A and B group of three twelve-plane squadrons each. The 351st Bomb Group was augmented by crews and aircraft diverted from the 401st Bomb Group, which was still being formed at this time. (351st: 31; Levine: 109)

Up at 1130. The group started on a mission this AM, but, turned back just before reaching the enemy coast; weather! Target was Duren, again. That last time, they missed it by sixty miles. Took shoes over to be repaired. Wrote a V-mail to Marty Dux. Wrote[xvii] #5 V-mail, two pages, to home. Mailed the Air Medal this AM. Frankfurters for supper. Doug and I saw Betty Grable in Coney Island in Peterborough. Finished a letter to home before bed, 0100. Mail: Air Mail #37 from Frank. Stand down tonight! A British ME 109 and Ju 88 [are] on our field for a visit.[22]

November 12, 1943

Up at 1030. Did nothing of importance all day. Rainy weather, all day. *del*.[‡] Group bombardiers' meeting. Wrote V-mail #2 to Amelia. Sent a telegram to Pete; will fly down there either Saturday or Sunday. Mail: telegram from Uncle Peter. He is seriously ill and in the Balbirnie Auxiliary Hospital, Markinch, Fife, Scotland.

November 13, 1943

Uncle Peter

Up at 0800. Breakfast. Cleared for Scotland, Luchras Airfield, about fifty miles north of Edinburgh. Flew in #756. Doug [was the] pilot; I was [the] co-pilot. Bill did a swell job of navigating. Harvey, Simmons, Hall, Hartman and Joe, the sheet metal worker that helped me with Uncle Pete's Polish letters, [were] the crew. Had nice weather up, but, coming back, we flew through[xviii] rainstorms and etc; plenty [of] rough and tough flying. Take off at 10:00 AM. In Scotland by 1230. Coming back to [the field] at 1600. Home by 1745. Uncle Pete is and was not seriously ill; he just wanted to get me down there for a few days, the devil. [Had] a lot of trouble trying to get English RAF transportation to his hospital, fifteen miles away from the field. Doug rode in a Mosquito.[23] Date with Betty in [the] evening. Rain, all evening. A Mosquito blew up over our field.[24xix] 351st [Bomb] Group aborted from Bremen, no mission.[25] Mail:[þ] V-

---

[22] Harris and Harbour record that on November 10, a Ju 88, Me 109 and He 111 captured by the British arrived at Polebrook as part of a tour to acquaint American combat crews with these fighters. Tragically, the He 111, filled with curious "joy riders," crashed while attempting to land, resulting in seven fatalities and four other casualties. (351st: 19)

[23] The de Havilland Mosquito has been called, "the most versatile combat aircraft of all to be produced during the whole of the war." The RAF used the twin-engine Mosquitoes as bombers, fighters and reconnaissance planes.; After his tour with the AAF was complete, Doug Harris volunteered for duty in the RAF as a Mosquito pilot. He flew reconnaissance missions, photographing the results of bombing raids. (Interview #2; Rand McNally: 328-329)

[24] The Mosquito was performing acrobatic tricks over the field. During a high-speed maneuver, one of its wings ripped off. Three men were killed in the accident. (351st: 19-20)

[25] The Eighth struck Bremen six times in the fall-winter of 1943 in a series of missions known collectively as the Battle of Bremen. Bremen was chosen as the air force's target so often because its physical characteristics lent themselves to accurate bombing on H2X. Otherwise, the port of Bremen was a marginal target. On November 13, 115 bombers raided the city. The 351st contribution was among the 128 heavies turned away by poor weather conditions. (C&C, vol. 2: 850; CC: 215; Levine: 111)

mail from Rudy, dated November 5; also, an air mail dated October 28; air mail from Amy, dated October 27. Stand down.

November 14, 1943

Up at 0930. Practice mission, Doug to lead. I was going along as [the] co pilot and as [the] assistant lead navigator. Mission scrubbed, one[xx] hour before take off; weather, very PP. Chopped some firewood in the rain. Hot shower and shave. Good supper; ate at 1700. Another officer[‡] and I went to town to see the sisters. Late supper at the Shaws. Cold and windy night! Stand down! Mail: letters from Tessie and [the] Rutgers Alumni [Association].

November 15, 1943

Today is the birthday of: Sister Milly, 1916.
Up at 1000. Attended Air Force gunnery pictures. Practice mission, five ships; Doug led the formation. Went up to 26,000 [feet]. Dodged clouds and rainstorms [for] the entire mission. Take off at 1400. Landed at 1700. Cold, windy and cloudy, all day. Steak for supper, and was it delicious!! Wrote a two page V-mail to home, #6A. Air mail letter to home, #6B. Also, V-mail #3 to Amelia. Mail: one package from Rudy and Harriet, books, handkerchiefs and cards

November 16, 1943

Up at 1030. Beautiful day, all day. Closed in after supper. The group went on a smashing raid to Norway; hit [the] target one hundred percent. They were lead group, lead squadron. Bombed at 12,000 feet. No flak and [they] saw only three fighters that stayed one mile away.[26] Mailed cigarettes, candy and enclosed a letter to Uncle Peter in [the] hospital. Wrote letters to:[xxi]

1. Lt. and Mrs. R.L. Piech; a $25 check as Jeff's birthday present.
2. Crompton
3. Betty[xxii] Shaw.

Doug, Snuffy and George went hunting; shot one rabbit and a pheasant; skinned them in our room. Wrote the above letters all evening. Mail: Crompton and Shaw. Capt. Jack Omohundro and Capt. Dick Hathaway[27] completed their twenty-five today. Stand down tonight!

---

[26] Eighteen out of the twenty-one 351st B-17s bound for Knaben, Norway, bombed the molybdenum production center there with 112 other heavy bombers. While the group scored direct hits on the facilities, they did not impose enough destruction to halt production for very long. The crews of the 351st Bomb Group reported seeing six to eight *Luftwaffe* fighters in the distance and experiencing scant flak resistance. (351st: 20; C&C, vol. 2: 851; CC: 216; Levine: 111)

[27] 1st Lt. Richard E. Hathaway, 509th Squadron. (351st: 121)

November 17, 1943

Up at 1000. Cold as hell today. Puddles of water were frozen this AM; ground was all white from frost. Read the *Stars and Stripes* and had dinner at 1115. Read the abridged novel, *Citizen Tom Paine,* by Howard Fast, all afternoon,[p] very good. Beautiful day. Saw a movie in town, *Escape to Danger*. Had another midnight party, rabbit, chicken, pheasant, potatoes and coffee; a very enjoyable way to fight the war. Mail: V-mail from Milly, dated November 6, and a package from [the] Kandels, nuts and handkerchiefs. Stand down!

November 18, 1943

del. Cold as hell this morning, again; clear skies as all bells. Practice mission this afternoon. Doug, Bill, Arkwright and Harvey had to fly the mission; only went to 10,000 feet. Chopped some firewood this PM. Stayed home all evening, reading a book, *Topper*. George got seven pieces of luscious steak and we all had another room party, fried steak, coffee, French fried potatoes and grapefruit juice; a good time was had by all. Stand down!

November 19, 1943

Lead Bombardier

Up at 1000. Squadron Bombardier Lt. Baird told me this AM that I'm to be checked out as a lead bombardier. Doug and I will no doubt be leaders of our squadron and group. Dropped twenty bombs this afternoon from 6000 feet, AFCES; very good hits: three shacks and the rest were all within the one hundred foot circle; dropped three and four at a time. Baird dropped the last four in a train.[28] Went alone to Peterborough to see a movie, *By Hook or Crook,* with Red Skelton, good music. Home by 2230. Had another room party. George stole twenty-one eggs from [the] mess hall; happy days! Mail:[xxiii]

1. Harriet'[s] V-mail, dated November 9
2. Milly's V-mail, dated November 9[xxiv]
3. Elsie Brown's V-mail, dated November 5[xxv]
4. Uncle Peter's letter, dated November 17[xxvi]

Stand down!

November 20, 1943

Party

[28] Dropping two or more bombs at once so that they strike the target immediately after one another. (USAFD: 531)

Up at 1000. Same weather as yesterday. Group practice mission this AM and PM; we do not have to fly. Spent all afternoon cleaning our room, even mopped the floor. A large number of new crews moved in today. Our 351st [Bomb Group] will actually be composed of two groups in one. Another officer‡ and I went to town for the sisters. Drank only a glass of port wine during the entire evening. Had a very nice time, as usual. Bed by 0030. No mail! Stand down!

November 21, 1943

Slept 'til 11:00 AM; missed going to church, darn it. Had a very good dinner, steak. Bombardier and navigator meeting on a new type of fuse. Wrote V-mail letters to:

1. #7 to home
2. #4 to Amelia.
3. [The] Kandels
4. Elsie V. Brown
5. Uncle Peter, with my picture.

Misty and light rain, all day. Yesterday, wrote a special letter to home to be mailed in the States by Capt. Jack Omohundro,þ a confidential letter [saying that I] will be lead bombardier. Jack left Polebrook this PM for Liverpool, and then, home; happy days for him. Mail: two [letters] from Crompton. Spent a quiet evening at [the] Shaws' house. A wild party took place in our rooms while I was in town!!

November 22, 1943

Up at 1100. Clear skies all day; cold weather. Did nothing all day. Weather, very funny again toward [the] evening. Mailed a carton of Chesterfields to Uncle Peter. Kit Carson,[29] Omo's co-pilot, and I went to see *White Captive*, good, with the Shaw sisters. Home early, by 2330. Skies [were] very clear at 2400. Stand by before going to bed, 0100. Mail: "boots" from Crompton, M.J. Loading!!

November 23, 1943

Mission Scrubbed

Up at 0400. Didn't sleep a wink. Briefing at 0445. Target: Bremen! Doug was to lead [the] high squadron in [the] lead group. Half *del.* of [the] crews, on a mistaken order, [were on] pass; had to use all [the] new and old men available. 351st put up two groups, lead and low. 401st was in a North Sea diversion. Composite high group. Mission: five hours. On O_2: three hours. It was scrubbed ten minutes before [the] start [of the] engines; oh, were we happy! Bill, Snuffy, Harvey, Simmons and Hall were all away on pass. We were just a diversion for [the] Eighth Air Force flight to Berlin!! Practice mission in [the] afternoon. [Altitude:] 12,000† feet. Did nothing but practice

[29] Capt. John P. Carson, Jr., 509th Squadron. (351st: 115)

formations. Chest cold coming on; stayed home all evening. Bed, early. Cold night; cloudy, rainy and windy, also. Stand down.

November 24, 1943

Hospital

What a miserable morning I went through. My terrific headache matched the drum of Gene Crooper!! Up at 0900 AM. Straggled over to the hospital to be diagnosed. Had a slight fever and a cold coming on in my chest, plus, the infernal headache. Doc put me to bed in the hospital, gave me the works, and, by noon, my headache became but a memory. Wrote letters in [the] evening. V-mail #8 to home, V-mail[xxvii] #5 to Amelia. Read the book *Topper* by Thorne Smith. Bed by 10:45 PM. Rain in [the] PM. Maximum effort tomorrow.

November 25, 1943

Still in [the] hospital, all day; felt one hundred percent better today. The loading was scrubbed [at] 0400 AM. Finished the book *Topper*, a very, very good book. Getting restless, lying here! Had some turkey for dinner, very good. 351st had its anniversary party tonight, a stag party at [the] club. The dinner I missed at the club, I was told it was very memorable. Mail:[xxviii]

1. V-mail #43 from Frank
2. V-mail from Lyle Van[xxix] Dorn, SK 3/C,[30] USNR![xxx]
3. Xmas box of saltwater taffy from Marty Dux

November 26, 1943

Still in [the] hospital. Have to remain in bed [for] twenty-four hours after [my] temperature goes back to normal; will be out tomorrow. Read a book all AM and finished it by 3:00 PM, *Portrait of a Man With Red Hair* by Hugh Walpole, not such a good book. Our bombers bombed Bremen today. 351st made up two groups;[31] lost one crew.[32] A second crashed landed on [the] coast.[33]

---

[30] Storekeeper, Third Class.

[31] Thirty-seven out of the thirty-nine planes dispatched by Col. Hatcher on the 26th formed two combat boxes of the 427-plane formation that bombed Bremen. A crew from the 510th Squadron manned one of the thirteen pathfinder ships that coordinated the attack. The group's planes passed through several flak fields, but encountered only a few fighters. (351st: 20-21; C&C, vol. 2: 851; CC: 221)

[32] 2nd Lt. Orville L. Castle (KIA), 508th Squadron; two KIAs, seven POWs. (351st: 20; 102)

[33] 1st Lt. Clarence P. Lemley, 511th Squadron, crash-landed his plane at an English farm near the coast. (351st: 20)

1. Wrote a letter to Crompton and enclosed a letter to Lt. A. Bryant, a prisoner of war in Germany. [xxxi]
2. V-mail, three pages, to home, #19
3. V-mail to Lyle Van Dorn[xxxii]

Mail!! Wow, a record, all air mail letters:

1. Lorraine Kandel
2. Pat Speck
3. Chick Waldron
4. Tessie Kuchta
5. Amelia
6. *Scooperoo*

All the rest [are] from Frank, #36A, #38, #39, #39A and #40.

Stand down!

November 27, 1943

Out of the hospital; feel okay, except just a little pale and still [have] a slight cold. Rested in [the] room all day. Cloudy and damp, all day. Fog at night. Stayed home all night.

1. Air mail #10 to home, allotment expenses.
2. Two-page V-mail to Amelia.

George and his gang had another party in his room 'til 0300 [or] 0400. Bed, 2400, very [tired]. Mail: letter and a photo from Uncle Peter. Stand down!

November 28, 1943

Up at 1045. Went to church. Light rain, all day. Did nothing but rest all day; still have the cold. Very good dinner. Went to town this PM. Saw Bet at home. Home by 2330. Night, clear and getting cold as hell. Supposed to be a stand down tonight. Mail:[xxxiii]

1. V-mail #44, Frank, November 18
2. V-mail, Milly, November 17[xxxiv]
3. V-mail, R.L. Piech, November 18[xxxv]

November 29, 1943

Up at 1200. Our crew stood down. Our group was supposed to have gone to Bremen today, but, everything [was] SNAFU on account of ole man weather. The group got all

dispersed in the clouds and, [as] a result, all came home separately.[34] Haircut in [the] PM. Ping-Pong before supper. Doug and Snuffy shot one rabbit and two bob whites, quails, while out hunting. V-mail letters:

1. Marty Dux.
2. Cousin Tessie
3. Chick Waldron
4. Letter and four snaps to Uncle Peter

Bed, early. Coughing, all day. Loading tonight!

November 30, 1943

Up at 1100. The rest of [the] crew flew on a scrubbed mission to the Ruhr.[35] The group aborted over Holland. Spent most of [the] afternoon reading a pocket novel, *Lost Horizon*. Saw a movie, *Heaven Can Wait*, Technicolor, fair, with Bet in town. Home by 2330. Cold night and starry. Searchlights all over the sky. Mailed cigarettes, soap, candy and razor blades to Uncle Peter, December 1, 1943. Mail: Xmas card from George's parents. Loading tonight!

December 1, 1943

E.P. Harris Down

Today is the birthday of: Amelia, twenty years old.
Up at 0400. Rest of [the] crew flew a mission east of [the] Ruhr. Doug led [the] squadron, low lead group. E.P. Harris [is] missing, [the] first loss in [the] squadron for forty-seven raids.[36] Back to bed. Up again at 1100. Finished reading *Lost Horizon* by

---

[34] Again, the twenty-four B-17s put up by the 351st Bomb Group were among the heavy bombers that aborted before reaching Bremen because of bad weather and H2X equipment failures. Bremen still suffered an attack from 154 Eighth Air Force heavies. (351st: 21; C&C, vol. 2: 851; CC: 223)

[35] Only seventy-eight bombers reached their target, Solingen, in the Ruhr. Nearly 200 bombers had to abort because weather conditions over the Continent would have required flying above the optimal operating altitude for the Eighth's Liberators. (C&C, vol. 2: 851; CC: 223)

[36] On December 1, the Eighth mustered a 293-bomber strong force, led by six H2X pathfinders, for a blind bombing assault on Leverkusen. The H2X system did not cooperate with the VIII Bomber Command planners; the formation bombed the industrial sector of Solingen instead. (Harris and Harbour contend that Solingen was the intended target.) Thirty-five out of the forty Flying Fortresses put up by the 351st Bomb Group made up two boxes on this raid. Twenty heavy bombers went down over the Third Reich on December 1, including two 351st planes brought down by interceptors. The crew of the plane piloted by 2nd Lt. James Plant bailed out and spent the remainder of the war in a POW camp. Eugene Harris's plane, the *Patty Ann II*, managed to crash land in the English Channel. The survivors, including Harris and Thomas Briscoe, huddled in a dinghy awaiting the arrival of an Air-Sea Rescue vessel. For three days, the crew clung to their life rafts; only three of the *Patty Ann III*'s gunners survived. Harris's body was washed overboard in rough seas. (351st: 21-23; C&C, vol. 2: 851; CC: 224)

James Hilton; liked the movie better. Boys came back at 1430, very[xxxvi] tired. Supper, very[xxxvii] good. Wrote Xmas cards all evening:

1. Jeff Piech
2. Mrs. and Mr. Beacon
3. [The] Kingerys
4. [The] Kuchtas
5. [The] Kandels
6. Amelia
7. [The] Werths, George's parents
8. Home

V-mail cards to:

1-3. Marty, Charles, Mr. and Mrs. Dux
4. Elsie Brown
5. Analytical Dept.
6. Mrs. Stata
7. Pat Speck
8. Ray Kandel
9. Chick Waldron

Wrote V-mail #1, December, to home. Mail:

1. Letter from Capt. Omohundro. He didn't go home; has a HQ job in London.
2. Air mail #45 from Sis Irene

Stand down.

December 2, 1943

Up at 1000. Foggy AM. Read a book all day, *Chinese Parrot*. E.P. Harris and crew, still missing and presumed lost; Tommy Briscoe's last mission and E.P.'s twenty-fourth, [the] worst luck! First loss in [the] 509th Squadron, out of forty-seven missions, an ETO record. Bath and a shave. Saw a movie, *They Met in the Dark*, an English picture, pretty good. Was with Bet. Bet was sick in bed [for] two days, cold and etc. Home with the Major. Foggy night. Home by 2400. George is now a first pilot; has Holloway, Hall [and] Simmons on his crew. Mail: V-mail from Ray Kandel, [and the] October Rutgers Alumni Monthly. Stand down!

December 3, 1943

Foggy and light rain, all day. That goddamned cold of mine is still keeping me grounded; had a slight headache all day. Finished reading Charlie Chan's mystery, *The Chinese Parrot*, by Earl Derr Biggers, a very good book. Bombardiers' meeting; also, attended a bombs and fuses meeting. Doug and I played Ping-Pong after supper. Stayed home all

evening. Went to bed early. Mail: Xmas package from Rudy, books and etc. Stand by ‘til midnight.

December 4, 1943

Up at 1000. Rest of [the] crew had to fly somewhere for our hospital doctors. Attended a "G" lecture in [the] afternoon. Shave and wash before supper. Spent [the] evening at Bet's home; had a late supper, also. Betty is sick with a cold and etc. Capt. Omo came to visit us. He's stationed in London; has some secret duty on the invasion staff. Home by 2400. Still grounded! Ears are slightly inflamed from [the] cold. Mail:

1. Xmas package from [the] Kingerys
2. Air mail #41, November 12, from Irene and Janet
3. Letter from Crompton

December 5, 1943

Up at 1000. Did not go to church; studied bombardiering instead. News received of E.P. Harris's crew; they ditched. Two men [are] dead, a sergeant gunner and our good friend, Tommy Briscoe, his twenty-fifth mission. No news of [the] pilot and co-pilot. My pilot, Doug L. Harris, led [the] group today, low group. George was his deputy lead. Short hop to Paris; no enemy fighters. No bombs dropped on account of clouds.[37]

1. V-mail Xmas card to Mother
2. V-mail Xmas card to Padge, Douglas V., NJC.[xxxviii]
3. Air Mail #2 to home
4. Air Mail #1 to Amy[xxxix]

Mail: Xmas card from Claire Stata.

December 6, 1943

Up at 1000. Cloudy, all day. Spent two hours in [the] afternoon in [the] S-2 [room], studying three targets in the city of Leipzig, Germany. Spent all evening at home, reading a novel, *Young Ames*. Rain at night. Bed, 0100. Claire wrote that her Charlie went down on the October 9th raid, Marienburg.[38] Tapping, another 43-1 boy, also went down, on October 15, [over] Romilly.[39] Mail:

---

[37] 546 heavy bombers were ordered to strike various *Luftwaffe* fields in France, as well as industrial targets in Paris. All but three bombers returned to England without achieving their objective because of heavy clouds over France. The 351st put up thirty-five planes in two combat boxes; Doug Harris led the eighteen planes of the lower box. (C&C, vol. 2: 851; CC: 226; 351st: 23)

[38] Charles Stata was a member of one of two crews that were lost on the October 9th raid on Marienburg.

[39] The Eighth did not conduct operations on October 15, 1943.

1. *Reader's Digest* card for[xl] a one year's subscription from Frank, a Xmas present.
2. Letter #42A, Frank
3. Solook's letter and Irene's NJC newspaper.

December 7, 1943

*** Stata Is Missing, October 9**

Up at 1000. Built a fire in our room and read the novel 'til dinner time. Finished reading *Young Ames*, by Walter D. Edmonds, this afternoon; I liked the book very much. Weather, still bad; closed in by fog. Over to the hospital for ear treatments and nose spray. My cold is getting much less bothersome. Saw a damn good picture in town with Betty, *My Friend Flika*, with[xli] Marie O'Hara. Stopped at the American officers' Red Cross club with the Major and our captain navigator, Danby. Home, 0100. Mail:

1. Air mail from Amelia and her picture, dated November 15
2. Air mail #42 and clippings, Frank
3. Air mail from Harriet, dated November 15
4. V-mail from Elsie Brown, November 23
5. Marty[xlii] Dux, November 25
6. Letter from Mrs. C.M. Stata *
7. Xmas card from Irene[†]

December 8, 1943

Up at 1130. Still foggy and a complete overcast; [the] lack of any wind causes us to be closed in by [the] weather. Over to the hospital for nose spray and heat treatments for my ears; still grounded! Chopped another box of firewood this afternoon. Saw a picture, *The Human Comedy*, pretty good; liked the book much better. Came home early, 2300. Night, still foggy; closed in. Mail: V-mail from Mother, [in] Polish, [and] a V-mail from[xliii] Sis Milly, both dated November 26. Stand by 'til 2400!

December 9, 1943

*** Capt. D.L. Harris!!**

Up at 1000. Attended an AFCES lecture 'til 1200. Weather, still [the] same; utterly disgusting, not a plane flying! * Doug's captaincy orders came through today! Happy days for him. Free beer at the club tonight on our boy, Doug! Stayed home all evening. Wrote letters. Wrote:

1. Air mail, three pages, to home, Letter #3
2. Air mail to Amelia, Letter #2[xliv]

Mail:

1. Air mail from Amelia, dated November 19
2. Xmas card from [the] Kuchta family
3. Letter from Uncle Peter
4. Two packages[xlv] from home; diary, Nestles and dates.

Stand down!

December 10, 1943

On Pass; Forty-Eight Hours

The lads got up at 0600 this AM to beat it off to London. I have plans of going to Scotland to find Uncle Pete. A clear day, especially in the PM. Wrote two short V-mails, #4 to home, #3 to Amelia. Got all set to take [the] train to Edinburgh, Scotland, from Peterborough. Train [was] one hour late, 2153. I was half frozen from waiting, got mad, [had] my money returned and headed for home by [the] 2230 bus. Rearranged my new wallet and to bed by 0100. Mail: Milly's V-mail, dated November 28. Cold night! Brrrr! Loading tonight!

December 11, 1943

Snow!

What a pleasant surprise! Woke up at 1030 and, behold, the ground was covered with snow. It disappeared shortly after noon. [The] Eighth Air Force and [the] 351st Bomb Group raided Emden. No planes [were] lost from our group. [The] Eighth lost seventeen B-17s.[40] Cloudy all day and cold as hell. Went to town early. Booked for a room at [the] Red Cross for American officers; very nice dormitories for the men. Went to a dance with Bet; had a very nice time. Late supper over [at] her home. The night became slightly warmer. Mail: V-mail from Charlie[xlvi] Dux, dated November 11; not suitable for photography.

December 12, 1943

Today is the birthday of: My mother, 1893, fifty years old.
Up at 1000. Slept in [the] Red Cross. Mattress was canoe shaped, unusual. Wheatcakes for breakfast. A mild, cold and cloudy day. Read magazines 'til 1230. GI truck back to [the] base. Damn good hamburgers for dinner. Went to Bet's home for the evening; had some beer and a late supper. Home by 2330. Clear night. Loading for [the] others.

[40] Thirty-four out of the forty-two bombers dispatched by the 351st Bomb Group formed two combat boxes of the 523-plane force of Flying Fortresses and Liberators that attacked the port and industrial areas of Emden. The *Luftwaffe* ignored the planes from Polebrook while they converged on the formation's lower combat boxes. Seventeen heavy bombers did not return from Emden, although their P-38 escorts did knock down almost half of the Me 110s that plagued the formation. (351st: 23-24; C&C, vol. 2: 851; CC: 230; Levine: 111)

December 13, 1943

Up at 0945. Doug and I were supposed to spend half an hour on [the] AML trainer; no operator. 351st Group went to Kiel today, pathfinder bombing; saw only a few fighters and flak. All came back. 509th Squadron stood down![41] Doug and I dropped some practice bombs from 1300 to 1600 on the Ashton Range, a few miles NW of our base; had trouble with the AFCES. Altitude: 6000 feet. The Major, Squadron CO E. Ledoux, called a get together of all [the] 509th officers at 1900; lasted one hour. Ate fried eggs in George's room before bed. Listened to [the] radio. Bed, 2300. Pretty tired. Mail: *Life* magazine, November 15, *del.* November *Reader's Digest* and two telegrams from Uncle Peter. Loading!

December 14, 1943

Up at 1230. Slept that late because of [the] interruptions, namely, the 351st Group going to Berlin, low and lead group. Bill, Doug, Fred [are] all going, except me. [They are] still standing me down. Mission was scrubbed at 0830. Spent all afternoon cleaning my clothes in one hundred percent octane gasoline! Shower before supper. A cloudy and frosty day, all twenty-four hours. Stayed home all evening, writing letters and listening to [the] radio. Wrote:[xlvii]

1. #5 V-mail, two pages, to home
2. #4 V-mail to Amelia[xlviii]
3. Letter to Crompton, M.J.

Four of us talked ‘til 0100. Foggy night. Mail:

1. Received Letter #47 from Frank, November 30, a V-mail
2. Received a V-mail, December 1, from Rudy[xlix]

Cold as hell in [the] night. Stand down!

December 15, 1943

Up at 1000. Weather is too foggy for a crew picture. Meeting of all A teams, a wing meeting, from 1400 to 1530. Received a batch of mail. Shave. After supper, Maj. Ledoux and I teamed up in doubles and defeated all comers in Ping-Pong. What games! Pretty exciting! Mailed a package of magazines and *Stars and Stripes* to Frank, 12/16/43. Wrote a two page letter to Claire Stata, [telling her that I am] sorry to hear of Charlie's being missing. Bed, 0100. Bull session before bed. Received three packages: hair tonic, a scarf, [and] salve for [my] cold. Mail:

---

[41] On December 13, for the first time, the Eighth attacked Germany with over 600 planes, which were split between shipyards at Bremen and Hamburg and U-boat facilities at Kiel. Nineteen 351st Flying Fortresses bombed Kiel with the aid of a pathfinder plane. Col. Hatcher's men observed only five fighters and some flak. (351st: 24; C&C, vol. 2: 851; CC: 230-231)

1-2. Letter #46 and #46A, clippings and pictures of Jeff
3-5. Xmas card from Mother, Irene [and] Frank
6. Letter from Tessie and a Xmas card from Cousin Elizabeth Kuchta.

Stand down! Oh, yeah!!

December 16, 1943

Up at 0330. Squadron Bombardier Lt. Archer Baird checked me out as duty bombardier. Stayed at [the] S-2 office all night, working on target data. 351st [put up] two groups. Target was Bremen. Aborted over [the] North Sea.[42] Back to bed at 0800. Slept 'til 1300. Cloudy and cold, all day. Rested all afternoon. Worked on bombardiering before supper. Doug and I played four games [of] Ping-Pong; as usual, I took Doug for three games. Short beer in [the] club. Talk with Capt. Richardson,[43] [the] 509th [Squadron] operations officer, a darn swell chap. Wrote:

1. Letter to Uncle Peter
2. V-mail #6 to home
3. Air mail #5 to Amelia

Stand down!

December 17, 1943

Very cloudy and foggy; couldn't see more than fifty yards on the ground. Up at 0900, for a canceled meeting. Spent all [the] rest of [the] AM fixing a shelf for our room; [the] cabinet affair. Night, exceptionally foggy. No transportation to town. Stayed home all evening. Wrote V-mails to:

1. Rudy and Harriet
2-3. Marty and Charlie Dux
4-5. Lorraine and Ray
6. Tessie
7. [The] Kingerys
8. Elsie V. Brown

Mail: three Xmas cards: Sis Milly, Rudy and Harriet, *del.* Jeff and Elsie Brown.

December 18, 1943[l]

[42] 535 heavy bombers launched another offensive in the Battle of Bremen. The commander of the combat wing that included the thirty-six B-17s contributed by the 351st ordered his forces to abort the mission over the Channel after concluding that the mission had been scrubbed. Doug Harris led one of the 351st's combat boxes. (351st: 24; C&C, vol. 2: 851; CC: 232)

[43] Maj. Franklin A. Richardson, 509th Squadron. (351st: 130)

Cloudy, all day. Bombardiers' meetings all AM and continued all afternoon, 'til 1600. Sent Betty a telegram, [telling her why I] could not be at her party, etc. Wind and rain started in all evening, blowing like all hell!! Had [a car from]ß transportation with a captain to town. Changed my mind and quickly got ready to go to Betty's twenty-first [birthday] party. Showered and shaved at [the] American Red Cross officers' club.Þ Drank a bucket load of beer. Played games of all sorts; had a damn swell time. I made a hit with her working friend from the plant. [The] partyß broke up at 0400.† Slept at Betty's home. Mail: V-mail, December 5, from Sis Milly. Stand down!

December 19, 1943[li]

Up at 1000. Tea for breakfast. Slept only four hours; soft bed. Slept with Betty's sister Eve's boyfriend, Jack. Left their home [at] 1230. Missed my transport in town. Stayed at the Red Cross 'til 1700. Bus to [the] base by 1730. Supper, Spam!! Stayed home all evening. Played Ping-Pong with Doug. Retired to bed very early; going on a mission tomorrow! Clear night and cold! Mail: air mail, November 30, from Amelia. Letter from Crompton M.J. Loading!

December 20, 1943

Mission Twenty-One[44]

Up at 0330. Breakfast at 0400. Target: Bremen, Germany! Bomb load of chemical incendiaries, a gasoline and rubber mixture, M-47.[45] Flew as squadron lead bombardier, flying [in the] low group, low squadron, with George as [the] pilot and my Bill as [the] navigator. Everything SNAFU. Lead group, of course. [The 401st]ß formed wing over Holland. Fighters could have wiped us out if they knew of our weak formations. No enemy fighters [were] seen 'til after [the] target. P-47s gave us perfect cover to [the] target. We were twenty-five minutes late to [the] target, thus, no cover on [the] way home. A flak fragment hit my helmet, fourth time so far; close shave. Wow! Worst flak I've ever flown through!![lii] One fighter pressed his attack too close on our tail. The boys shot him down, and another probable Me 110 that shot rockets. Temperature: -45º C, cold. Landed at 1500. Seven hour flight. Altitude: 24,000 feet. Mail: V-mail from Elsie Brown, December 17, 1943. A number of 351st planes [were] lost, one seriously hit by flak. Stand down!

---

[44] The Eighth Air Force sent 534 heavy bombers to Bremen, but only 460 made the assault. Twenty-six planes from Polebrook, split into two boxes, bombed the city through a smoke screen. Harris and Harbour report that twenty-five fighters challenged the 351st. The group's gunners responded by shooting down three *Luftwaffe* aircraft and one probable. *The 351st Bomb Group in World War II* notes that the target area was well defended by its flak batteries. No planes were lost from the 351st; twenty-seven heavy bombers total were brought down on this raid. Lt. Piech's report may have resulted from the confusion of the air battle over Bremen. The bomber stream's P-51 and P-38 escorts raced to protect their "Big Friends" from the *Luftwaffe*, particularly its rocket bearing night fighters. (351st: 24; C&C, vol. 2: 851; CC: 235; Levine: 113-114)

[45] The M47A2 napalm bomb, a very effective incendiary explosive. (Levine: 104)

December 21, 1943

Up at 0800. Doug and I went up to the "Wash" to drop some practice bombs. Lot of practice dry runs at 12,000 [feet]; couldn't find [the] target, cloudy and heavy mist. Rain, all afternoon and into [the] evening. Studied radio navigation for one hour in [the] navigation room. Went to town for the evening. Betty had to work late, too late to see a movie; stayed at her home. Home by 2400 and to bed. Loading!!

December 22, 1943

Mission Twenty-Two[46]

Up at 0530. Breakfast at 6:00 AM. Supposed to fly deputy high group, but, "Mama's Boy"‡ wanted to fly there instead. Flew deputy low group with E.P. Harris's former co-pilot, Lt. Braden;[47] Braden's twenty-fifth. Took off at 1130 in separate flights to form [the] group over a certain splasher. Our radio compass was out and we were lost for one hour. Intercepted the group just in time to leave the English coast. Doug Harris led the high group. 401st [Bomb Group] led the wing. Omo's former co-pilot, Kit Carson, led the low group. Altitude: 25,000 feet. Target: Osnabruck, Germany, just NE[48] of the Ruhr. Bomb load: sixteen 250-pound British incendiaries. Fighter cover, P-47 and P-38, all [the] way in and out and it was sure good. Continent was a complete undercast; supposed to bomb first on [the] pathfinder when [over] a cloudy target.[liii] Fighters were possibly closed in; saw but a few. Lost one ship from [the] 511th Squadron, [which] ditched in [the] Channel; picked up eight; three were already dead.[49] Landed at 1600. Pretty goddamned tired. Another wing got in our way over [the] target and we couldn't drop our bombs, [so, we] came home with them. Wrote Letter #7, a V-mail, to home.

December 23, 1943

Up at 0930. Security lecture at 10:30 AM, to 11:30 AM. Dinner, very good, hot dogs and sauerkraut. Didn't [do] much of anything this PM, just odds and ends, here and there, all over the base. Shower and shave before supper. Left [the] base at 1800 for town. Saw a very beautiful picture with Betty, *The Great Waltz*. Home by 2330. Cold

---

[46] 234 Flying Fortresses and Liberators completed a blind-bombing mission over the marshalling yards at Osnabruck. The combat wing that included the thirty-four B-17s contributed by the 351st Bomb Group returned to England before reaching the target in the face of undercast conditions. Doug Harris led one of the group's elements. The 351st encountered only a few fighters and light flak. (351st: 24-25; C&C, vol. 2: 852; CC: 236)

[47] 1st Lt. Merle S. Braden, 509th Squadron. (351st: 114)

[48] Northeast.

[49] 2nd Lt. James D. McMorrow (MIA), 511th Squadron; three MIAs, one KIA. (351st: 103)

night! Clear as a bell. Mail (December 22): December *Reader's Digest*, *Life* magazine and a V-mail, December 10, from Rudy. Loading!

December 24, 1943

Up at 1100. Lazy as all hell. Spent all afternoon making a hanger affair in our room. Damn near everyone in the 351st flew on that milk run this AM, except me and Doug. They bombed the rocket installations near Calais at 12,000 feet. No flak! No fighters!! Boy, what a mission to miss!![50] T/Sgt. William A. Harvey completed his twenty-five missions today, on his twenty-third birthday. He's our radio operator. Saw a picture, *Captain's Blood*, with Betty. Had some Xmas scotch at her home with her dad, four shots! Brought them a quart of port. Foggy night. Home by 2330. Warm night. Plenty of lads [are] drunk this Xmas Eve. Mail: Xmas cards from Crompton and Beth's co-worker, Smithy.

December 25, 1943

Merry Xmas! Cloudy and warm, all day. Got up too late, missed church. Shaved before dinner. The Xmas dinner was swell, turkey and all its trimmings. Chaplain Richards[51] said a short prayer before we sat down to eat. Had two sittings, 1200 and 1300. We ate at 1:00 PM. Played Ping-Pong and [was] partners with the CO Major against Capts. Doc and Chaplain. Swell evening. Had a Tom and Jerry drink in the Major's room. Doug, Bill and I, and others, spent [the] evening at Lilleford Hall, American nurses; not much doing there. Drank beer. Home, 0100. Wrote Letter #8 to home, an air mail. Stand down!

December 26, 1943

Up late this AM. Meeting this afternoon[liv] of all lead teams. Missed church again, darn it! Went to town for the evening. Spent [the] evening at an inn, drinking drinks with Betty and her folks. Home by 2330. Warm and clear night! Mail: Xmas cards from Betty, Betty's mom, *del.* Crompton and Uncle Peter. Stand down!

---

[50] In May of 1943, Allied intelligence detected several facilities under construction in France along the English Channel, which they realized were launching sites for Hitler's V-weapons, the V-1 and V-2 rockets. Soon thereafter, the AAF and RAF began raiding these locations in a series of missions code-named CROSSBOW. Much of the importance placed on these targets derived from speculation on the weapons' abilities rather than concrete intelligence. The Allies believed that the missiles could be remote controlled and, thus, highly accurate. They also feared that a single rocket might carry a ten-ton payload. When the missiles began flying shortly after the D-Day invasion, the Allies discovered that they were primarily terror weapons.

On December 24, the Eighth conducted its first massive raid on a CROSSBOW target with the largest strike force it had ever assembled, 722 planes, of which 670 bombed the target. The 351st Bomb Group marshaled two combat boxes of seventeen planes each. Few fighters or flak batteries stood in the bomber stream's way and all 670 heavy bombers returned to East Anglia. (351st: 26; C&C, vol. 2: 852; CC: 238; Levine: 136-138)

[51] Capt. Thomas B. Richards, 351st Headquarters. (351st: 130)

December 27, 1943

Bill Harvey left for home early this AM. Nothing important happened to me the whole [day]. Made shelves for our room. Crew picture [was] taken in the afternoon. Date with Betty in the evening. Boxing Day for the English today; all dance and movie places [were] very crowded. We stayed home. Home by 2330. Clear night! No mail today! Stand down!

December 28, 1943

Up late. Flubbed around all AM. Swell day all afternoon. Acted as navigator for Doug on a half an hour flight to [the] vicinity of Ipswich. Doug, Betty and I saw a movie in Peterborough, *The More the Merrier*, damn funny. Home by 2330. Cold night and clear. Mail: V-mails from:[lv]

1. Amelia, December 13 and 14
2. Sis Milly, December 12
3. Marty Dux, December 9

Xmas cards from:

1. Mary Jane and Charles Wallin
2. Pat Speck

Stand down!

December 29, 1943

Up at 0930. Lead bombardiers' meeting from 1000 to 1200. Basket full of mail today! Squadron Bombardier Baird made captain today! Bomb trainer, one hour. Fixed up my room with maps and pin-ups all evening. Went to bed late, 2430. I am not on [the] loading list for tomorrow's mission, so they tell me. Clear night, beautiful as heaven. Mail:

1. [Twelve letters],[§] #49 and #49A, clippings, Frank, December 7, an air mail
2. Amelia, December 7 and
3. Irene's, December 4, #48 and #50

Xmas cards from Ray Kandel, [the] Sayreville USO and [the] Karchers; [from the] Film Plant, *Scooperoo*; v-mail from Adolph, November 15; also, Irene, December 10, #51. Loading.

December 30, 1943

Mission Twenty-Three[52]

Up at 0330 for breakfast. "Mama's Boy,"‡ again! He didn't show up, so, I had to lead the high squadron, low group, with George and Bill. [Bomb load:] one bomb bay and twenty-one one hundred-[pound] Type M-47 incendiaries. On O_2: five-and-a-half hours. Mission: eight hours. Altitude: 21,000 feet. Temperature: -28º C. My sight worked damn good. Bombed on [the] pathfinder ship; Continent, complete undercast. Lucky for us that the fighters couldn't take off to massacre us. Had Spitfires, P-47s and P-38s [for] cover most of [the] way in and out. Target: Mannheim, Germany; the largest chemical factory in the world, one mile [wide] by three miles long! Saw but three Me 109s. Flak, moderate over [the] target. We lost two ships out of our two groups,[53] with [the] 401st leading. Lt. John T. Tynan led the low group. Very tired out after [the] mission. Shower and wrote letters before bed. #9 V-mail to home. Letter to Adolph; he's in England. Mail: December 10th letter from Adolph Kuchta; also, *Life* magazine. Mail (December 31): V-mail from Amelia, December 16. Loading. 509th is standing down!

December 31, 1943

* Lost Our Colonel[54]

---

[52] There is some conflict over the intended target for the 698 heavy bombers put up by the Eighth on December 30. Harris and Harbour concur with Lt. Piech that the 351st was briefed to strike the I.G. Farben chemical factory at Ludwigshafen. (Lt. Piech lists Mannheim, adjacent to Ludwigshafen, as the factory's location.) Craven & Cate and *Combat Chronology* indicate that the Eighth struck the oil refineries at Ludwigshafen.

Thirty-six 351st "Queens," divided among two combat boxes, contributed to the H2X bombing mission carried out by 647 heavy bombers. Cloud cover over Germany prevented an effective response by *Luftwaffe* pilots. Antiaircraft fire presented a much graver threat to the strike force. Twenty-three heavies were lost on this mission, including one 508th Squadron plane. Another Fortress from the 510th Squadron crash landed on English soil, but lost several crewmembers when they mistakenly bailed out over the coast of Great Britain. (351st: 26; 103; C&C, vol. 2: 852; CC: 241)

[53] 1st Lt. Roy Parsons (PW), 508th Squadron; five POWs, four KIAs.; A B-17 piloted by 1st Lt. Joseph R. Adamiak, 510th Squadron, saw five men killed in action. (351st: 103)

[54] The Eighth Air Force sought to cap off its operations for 1943 with a 572-plane raid against airfields and aviation industry targets throughout occupied France. Two boxes of seventeen B-17s, one of which was led by Col. Hatcher, were put up by the 351st Bomb Group and joined 105 other Eighth heavy bombers in their attempted bombing of an aircraft factory at Bordeaux. After searching in vain for a hole in the clouds above their primary target, the bomber stream turned towards its auxiliary objective, the air depot at Cognac. Forty to fifty *Luftwaffe* fighters "escorted" the bombers from over Bordeaux until shortly before the formation reentered British air space. In addition, heavy flak was thrown up at the stream as it raided Cognac. Nevertheless, the group scored impressive hits on the Cognac aerodrome.

The Eighth paid for its visit to France on New Year's Eve with twenty-five heavy bombers, total, including seven from the 351st. Col. Hatcher's plane went down shortly after completing the bomb run. Hatcher and Capt. Danby successfully bailed out of the flaming Fortress; ironically, they landed near a German camp and were immediately made POWs. (351st: 26-29; C&C, vol. 2: 852; CC: 242)

Up at 1000. Did little jobs. Got [the] room cleaned [up] for New Year's. Rainy and foggy, all day. 351st Bomb Group, two groups, left at 0730 this AM for Bordeaux, France! A eight-and-a-half hour flight. 509th stood down. The lads had a very rough day; stoodged around too long over the target. Flak [was] the most accurate ever seen at 18,000 feet, knocked out most of our last ships. * Col. Hatcher, our group CO, was flying in the lead ship. Two [of his] engines [went] out over [the] target. [He was] headed down and west. We hope he went to Spain. Coming back, over West France, they missed their fighter escort and took a terrible pounding for four hours from FW 190s and Me 109s. We lost seven *del.* crews![55] All told, about twelve planes were lost due to crash landings and bail outs! Eighth Air Force lost twenty-eight planes. Our boys did not land here, [because of] weather. New [Year]'s Eve party at [the] club. Invited Betty as my guest. Had a swell time. May God let us live in peace by next New Year's Eve. So long, 1943!

January 1, 1944

Pay Day, Yesterday! 1944

Lost our Col. Hatcher on yesterday's raid [on] Bordeaux, France. Happy New Year. Still in England! Did not drink much last night; no hangover and etc., just a good night's sleep. Up at 1030. Just a cool day; skies, fairly clear. Our plane, #120, *Gremlin's Delight*, was flown back to our field all full of holes; will take three to four weeks to repair it for combat duty. Turkey for dinner! Spent all afternoon with my crewmates. Drank up all my wine and juice in celebration of the New Year, 1944! Won six lbs. in ten minutes, shooting craps. Went to a swell dance in town with Betty. Home, 2330. Stand down!

January 2, 1944

Up at 1000. Went to church with Bill and Doug. Beat Doug in a few games of Ping-Pong. Read magazines all afternoon. Cold and clear day. Dinner and supper, very good. Played cards in [the] club for fifteen minutes; won three-and-a-half lbs. Wrote Air Mail #1 to home; wrote Air Mail #1 to Amelia.[lvi] Bull session with my crewmates [for the] rest of [the] evening. Bed by 0100. Stand down!

January 3, 1944

Up at 1000. Cold coming on; Goddamn this English weather! Doug and I went to the US Army clothes QM in Kettering; spent all afternoon there. Bought Betty's pop a pair

[55] 1st Lt. Willis D. Smith (PW), 508th Squadron; nine POWs.; 1st Lt. Homer B. Wells (PW), 510th Squadron; nine POWs.; 1st Lt. Marvin H. Bender (PW), 510th Squadron; six POWs, three evaded capture.; 1st Lt. Ralph M. Saville (Escaped), 510th Squadron; three POWs, six evaded capture.; Maj. John A. Blaylock (KIA), 510th Squadron; eight POWs, including Col. Hatcher and Capt. Danby, two KIAs.; 1st Lt. Albert E. Jones (MIA), 511th Squadron; two POWs, five MIAs, three KIAs.; 2nd Lt. Warren L. Putnam (KIA), 511th Squadron; five POWs, three KIAs, one evaded capture. (351st: 103)

of [the] English version of GI shoes, one pound, twelve shillings, six pence.[ß] Spent [the] evening at Beth's home. Warm evening. Loading tonight! Mail:[lvii]

1. V-mail #53, Frank, December 19
2. V-mail, Charlie Dux, 12/4, and[lviii]
3. Lyle Van Dorn, 12/16
4. Letter from Cpl. Benny Kwiatkowski, Tessie's boy

January 4, 1944

Mission Twenty-Four[56]

Target: Kiel, Germany. Deputy lead group; only two groups to our wing. Woke me up one hour before [the] rest to study [the] target. Acted as deputy bombardier to Capt. Watts. Cold as hell at 25,000 feet; -50º C. Flew with Lt. Clay. 509th Squadron practically made the entire group. Target [was] clouded. Bombed on [the] pathfinder, good results. [Was in the] second wing over [the] target. Flak, moderate. No enemy fighters. Saw P-38s. Four-and-a-half hours on O_2. Seven hour mission. Came down with a bad cold in [my] head and ear trouble; grounded for awhile! Tired as all hell. Bed by 10:00 PM. Loading tonight! No mail!

January 5, 1944

Up at 1130. Bad cold, ear trouble and a headache. Hospital for treatments. [The] 351st, only one group, eighteen planes, bombed an airfield in Tours, France, good results.[57] I interrogated [the] bombardiers upon their return. Offered, and said yes [to], a position as bombardier on Gen. Eaker's crew and [to] fly with him all over the Mediterranean and Africa. Saw a movie, *True to Life*, with Betty, a swell picture. Cold evening; clear, also. Bed, 0100. Mail:[lix]

1. Air Mail #54, Irene, December 25
2. V-mail, Milly, December 20
3. V-mail, Rudy, December 20[lx]

Copyright © 2001 by Edward C. Piech and Shaun R. Illingworth
All Rights Reserved

[56] Fifteen out of the seventeen B-17s put up by the 351st Bomb Group bombed Kiel as part of a 500-plus plane taskforce. The Eighth used H2X radar to rain bombs through the city's cloud cover. All of the 351st planes that reached Kiel returned to Polebrook, having encountered only light fighter and flak opposition. (351st: 31; CC: 245)

[57] Sixteen out of the eighteen planes dispatched from Polebrook scored direct hits on several key buildings and parked aircraft at the air depot at Tours, France. The group's fighter escort intercepted a token force of Me 109s and FW 190s that contested the formation. This mission was one of several conducted by 426 Eighth Air Force heavies against objectives in Germany and France. (351st: 31; 87; CC: 246)

Last Update: April 16, 2013

---

[i] [smoking] smoke
[ii] [Wrote letter] indicated by dashes
[iii] [American Red] AR
[iv] [American Red] AR
[v] [Betty] b.
[vi] The editor added Numbers 4-6.
[vii] [from] indicated by dashes
[viii] [from] indicated by dashes
[ix] Numbers added by editor
[x][Wrote] and [V-mail] indicated by dashes
[xi] Numbers added by editor
[xii] Numbers added by editor
[xiii] [Wrote] indicated by dashes
[xiv] [Wrote] and [V-mail] indicated by dashes
[xv] [Wrote] and [V-mail] indicated by dashes
[xvi] [Wrote] and [V-mail] indicated by dashes
[xvii] [Wrote] indicated by dashes
[xviii] [through] threw
[xix] [A Mosquito…field] *interl.*, left-hand margin.
[xx] [one] 0100
[xxi] [1.] added by editor
[xxii] [Betty Shaw] Shaw, B.
[xxiii] Numbers added by editor
[xxiv] [V-mail] and [dated] indicated by dashes
[xxv] [V-mail] and [dated] indicated by dashes
[xxvi] [dated] indicated by dashes
[xxvii] [V-mail] indicated by dashes
[xxviii] Numbers added by editor
[xxix] [Van] V.
[xxx] [V-mail] indicated by dashes
[xxxi] Numbers added by editor
[xxxii] [V-mail] indicated by dashes
[xxxiii] Numbers added by editor
[xxxiv] [V-mail] indicated by dashes
[xxxv] [V-mail] indicated by dashes
[xxxvi] [very] v
[xxxvii] [very] v
[xxxviii] [V-mail Xmas card] indicated by dashes
[xxxix] [Air mail] indicated by dashes
[xl] [for] to
[xli] [with] by
[xlii] [Marty] M.
[xliii] [V-mail from] indicated by dashes
[xliv] [Air mail] indicated by dashes
[xlv] [packages] pack
[xlvi] [Charlie] c
[xlvii] Numbers added by editor
[xlviii] [V-mail] indicated by dashes
[xlix][Received] and [from] indicated by dashes
[l] This entry is marked by a large ink spot three-fourths down on the page.
[li] This entry is marked by a large ink spot three-fourths down on the page.
[lii] [Wow…through!!] *interl.*, left-hand margin

[liii] [Supposed…target] *interl.*, left-hand margin
[liv] [afternoon] after PM
[lv] Numbers added by editor
[lvi] [Wrote Air Mail] indicated by dashes
[lvii] Numbers added by editor
[lviii] [V-mail] indicated by dashes
[lix] Numbers added by editor
[lx] [V-mail] indicated by dashes