"LEM" HENSLEE IN THE E.T.O.

The department head's meeting was over and Major Broadhead, our CO said, "the only fair way was to choose numbers". I guessed number one; it turned out to be the lucky one. I had won a ride in a piggyback Mustang! What a treat for a Squadron Adjutant!

I suppose there have been piggyback P-51's converted before, but some ingenious mechanic in our top-scoring 357th Fighter Group had dreamed this one up by himself. The radio was taken out, the guns were taken out and an extra seat complete with air speed indicator and altimeter was directly behind the pilot. As a "paddlefoot" usually on friendly relations with pilots, I have gotten quite a few rides but never in an operational, single-seater fighter aircraft. I always wanted to ride in one -- to test its speed, gee-strain, maneuverability and thrills -- but I was a little bit scared too. Major Broadhead, on his second tour and with eight ME-109's to his credit, didn't make me any more at ease by explaining how difficult it would be to bail out. The make-shift canopy may stick and things happen awfully fast.

It seemed that at least half the G.I.'s in the squadron were watching me climb into the ship -- secretly hoping I'd get the Hell scared out of me. Which -- I DID!

Bob taxied to #06 (the long runway), and before I knew it, we were airborne. It was a beautiful day, with a layer of white baby wool clouds at 5,000 feet. Bob climbed up slowly through a hole, however to me, the altimeter seemed to be spinning like the second hand of a watch. Then before I knew what was happening, the nose of the ship dropped and the plane seemed to be falling right out of the sky. The air speed rose to 200..250..300..350.. and the nose came up again. All the weight of my body seemed to be directly against the seat. Ice water was flowing through my legs instead of blood. My jaw had involuntarily dropped and I could feel my cheeks and eyes sag like an old man's. I tried to lift my arms, they seemed glued to my lap. This, then, was Gee strain. Approximately four Gees --- Bob said later.

Now the nose was going straight up. If the altimeter had looked like a second hand before, it looked like a ferris wheel now. Before I knew it, we had looped. Not being satisfied with a gentle pull-out, Broadhead dropped her on one wing and did a barrel-roll.

After a few minutes of straight and level flying (while I got my breath back), Bob decided to hedgehop some clouds. A beautiful layer of white fleece stretched, endless as earth, as far as eye could see. Toward it, we dived 300 miles per hour. For five minutes, Bob indulged in his favorite relaxation of clipping the tops off clouds and turning on one wing. Occasionally the earth would wink at us, or clouds would engulf us from every direction.

"Now what would you like to do?" Bob seemed to signal from his cockpit. There was nothing I had rather do at the moment than get out and walk home, but that seemed a little impractical. Bob seemed to be making all sorts of "Hangar Flying" motions with his hand. In my brief experience, that hinted of violent maneuvers to come. Happily, I pointed to a lone fortress at seven o'clock. I thought we might fly alongside and wave at the pilot. Instead, we peeled off and made a pass at him.

There turned out to be two Forts, and two Mustangs were already giving them a bad time. It wasn't long until a flight of four more arrived from nowhere and joined in the fun. It was about that time that everything I

had ever heard about "Ratraces" was completely forgotten. I was learning from scratch. For a while, I kept my eyes on two 51's directly overhead. I looked straight down and there was the sun. We were up, down and around the Bombers --- right on the tail of a 51 -- on our side, upside down in a dive, in a pullout, I lost all trace of horizon, airspeed, ground -- my head was spinning. The prop was spinning. I was conscious only of the the throb of the engine and the occasional flash of an airplane overhead.

After a kingsize eternity, the ratrace was over and although I could not see Bob's face, I knew he was grinning from ear to ear. We had been up about thirty minutes. Seeing nothing else of interest, Bob headed "Eager Beaver" for F373. We flew straight and level on a compass heading, all the way home. I saw a town of around 90,000 from the air but I couldn't get very interested in it. I felt dead tired and as if I had worked a week without resting and had suddenly stopped. I had the thought that I was dead weight as much as a sack of flour. I WANTED TO COLLAPSE!

By the time we arrived at the station, I felt much better. The field looked like three toothpicks touching, with the ends overlapping. The altimeter read 8,500 feet.

"Fifteen minutes more and we'll be landing", I thought.

Bob grinned back at me. More maneuvers with his left hand. I nodded agreement and wondered what would come next.

One wing suddenly slipped out from under us and we were upside down. Little pieces of mud and debris went past my eyes and hit the canopy. I remember thinking they were falling upside down, then the nose dropped and we split-essed out, going straight for the ground. The airspeed increased, the earth grew larger. The huge prop was spinning like a man gone mad. I watched the airspeed -- 350...400...425. The altimeter was spinning backward like a watch going the wrong way -- 6,000...5,000...4,000. The earth had never looked so hard. At 2,000 we leveled out with the airspeed indicating 450.

After that, the peel-off and landing seemed dull. We had travelled a vertical mile in a matter of seconds and had reached approximately 550 miles an hour ground speed. The landing was rough. I tried to swallow and couldn't. My throat was dry. My hair was tousled, my legs were cold, my face was white. And I was glad to be on the ground.

Thanks to Major Broadhead, that was forty-five minutes of my life I'll never forget. And each time I remember it, the more I enjoy it.

Thanks to Eloise Henslee for passing Lem's story on to our 357th Fighter Group Association Historian, Merle Olmsted, in October 1992.

TIME FOR CHANGE

1943
P-39 Aircobra to P-51 Mustang
1993
A-7 Corsair to F-16 Fighter Jet

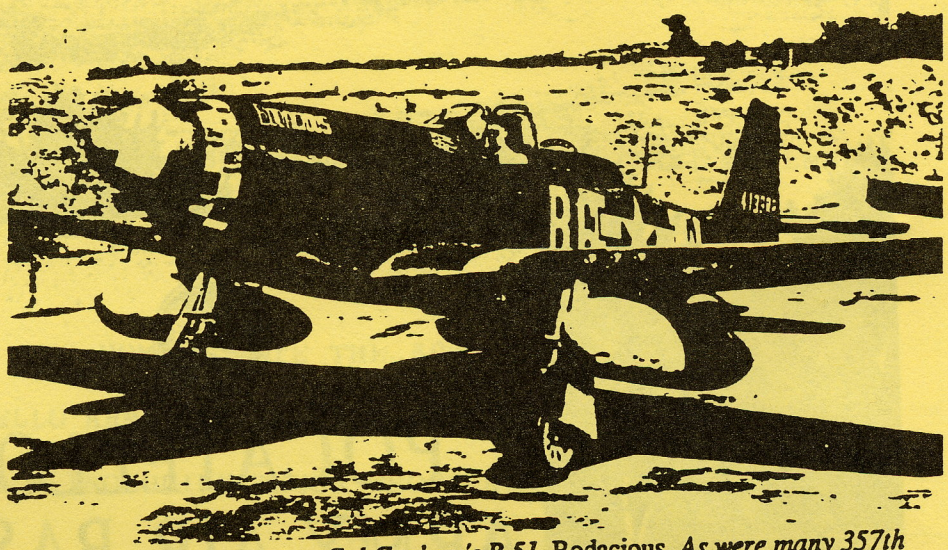
The latter change was announced in the January Newsletter of the 178th Fighter Group of the Ohio Air National Guard at Springfield, Ohio. Retraining required for many base members including 33 current pilots, crew chiefs and maintenance personnel.

We of the 357th Fighter Group Association wish all the best to our Associate Members of the 178th in their transition.

THE YOXFORD BOYS AND OPERATION "FRANTIC"

PART I

by
Merle Olmsted



Col Graham's P-51, Bodacious. *As were many 357th P-51s, this is painted in RAF green. (Photo: Olmstead)*

In retrospect it is, at first, difficult to see why the high command of the Army Air Forces in World War Two was so enthralled with the idea of shuttle bombing missions to Russia from Italy and the United Kingdom. Although the results were never worth the effort and the losses, looked at in the context of the times, the idea did have potential merit.

By the end of 1943, German industry was working hard to relocate much of its war making capability to the east—hopefully beyond the range of Allied bombers. It did seem reasonable that U.S. bombers flying out of Russian bases could strike these targets in Eastern Germany. Possibly even more important was the desire to show the Russians the Allied will to strike at Germany from all sides, and the hope that the Russians would be impressed with the capabilities of strategic bombing. Neither of these two objectives was to be met, however.

Lined up for take-off on 6 August is G4-B, Sweet Helel II, *with Harvey Mace and just behind is Maurice Baker in* Sebastian, Jr. *Baker cracked up on T.O. and returned home via B-17. (Photo: Olmstead)*



In October of 1943, General Arnold, Chief of Army Air Forces, obtained approval from the Combined Chiefs of Staff for the inclusion of the proposal as one of the objectives of the U.S. Military Mission about to be established in the Russian capital. Shortly after the mission's arrival in Moscow, Foreign Minister Molotov gave "approval in principle" for the project.

The Americans, not yet wise in the ways of the Russians, were elated at such quick agreement. From then on, however, the Russians made no attempt to translate the approval into action. It was not until early February, 1944, that U.S. Ambassador Averill Harriman, in a discussion with Stalin, was able to get his approval. At this time, Stalin offered six bases from which to operate 300 heavy bombers, and from then on there was a change in Soviet attitudes. Of the six bases offered, however, only three were eventually provided, and all were further east then U.S. planners had hoped for.

The three airbases, at Poltava, Mirgorod, and Piryatin, required a vast amount of work and during the spring, equipment and supplies began to pour into the area. Only 1200 Americans were authorized, but sufficient Rus-

sian workers were provided and eventually the bases were ready. Established as Eastern Command, a branch of U.S. Strategic and Tactical Air Forces, under Major General Robert Walsh, they were ready to accept aircraft by the end of May, 1944.

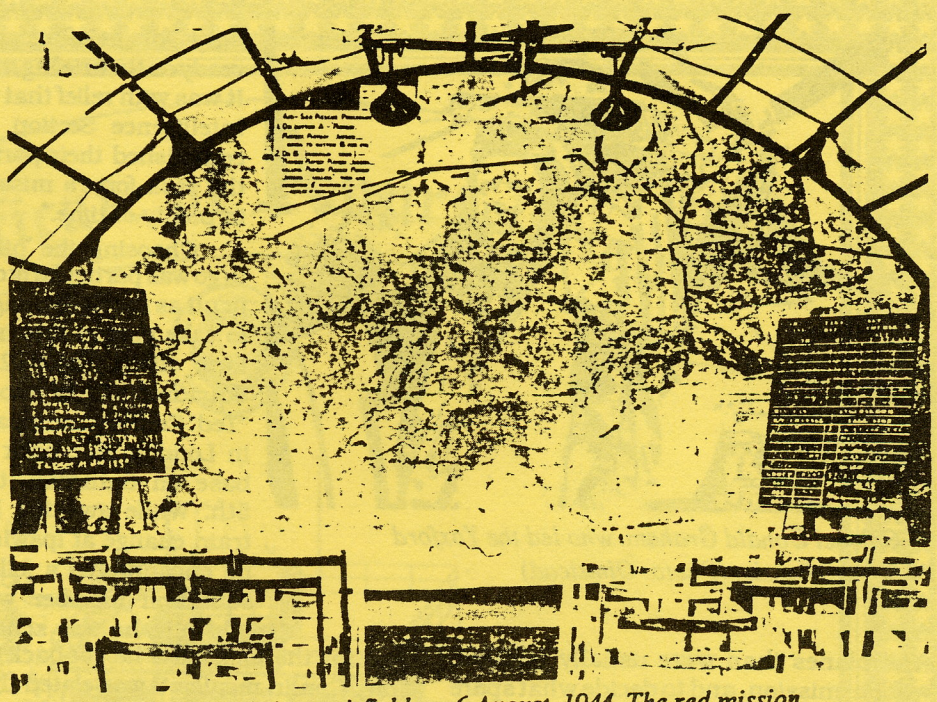
June 2 was picked for the first mission of Operation FRANTIC, to be carried out by four B-17 groups of the 15th Air Force out of Italy. A reenforced P-51 group was laid on as escort. The mission went well, and on 11 June the force returned to Italy, having bombed several targets from the Russian bases.

The first FRANTIC operation had come as a surprise to the Germans, but they took immediate action to be ready the next time—which they were sure would come soon. Four bomber *Geschwadern*, KG4, KG27, KG53, and KG55, had moved to Minsk, a German-occupied city in White Russia some 400 miles northwest of the American bases.

The 8th Air Force launched its first FRANTIC II shuttle mission from England on 21 June, with 163 B-17s and 70 P-51s. The mission started out well enough, and all aircraft arrived safely at their Eastern bases. Now, however, the Luftwaffe took a hand in the affair.

Oberst Wilhelm Antrop, CO of KG55, was notified at mid-day on the 21st of the passage of the B-17s headed east. By evening, the Luftwaffe force was bombed up and ready, and about eighty He 111s, and Ju 88s took off shortly after 2100 hours, arriving over Poltava at about 30 minutes after midnight. For some two hours, the bombers ravaged Poltava and Mirgorod with 110 tons of bombs dropped on aircraft and installations. Dawn the next day made it clear that the Luftwaffe had conducted a very efficient strike. Fifty U.S. aircraft were destroyed, mostly B-17s, and two Americans and 30 Russians were dead.

Half of the U.S. force, however, survived. The total mission was made up of the 45th Combat Wing, which landed at Poltava, and the 13th Wing, which went into Mirgorod. Soon after landing Colonels Edgar Wittan and Joseph Moller, 13th wing commander and deputy commander respectively, observed a German aircraft orbiting the base at high altitude, oblivious to the meagre Russian flak.



The briefing room at Leiston airfield, on 6 August, 1944. The red mission track tape can be seen going off the map at right. (Photo: Olmstead)

Wittan and Moller were extremely concerned about what was obviously a reconnaissance aircraft, and attempted to contact the force commander, General Archie Olds, at Poltava. Despite considerable effort by radio and telephone, Poltava could not be raised. Wittan then decided his 13th Wing aircraft must be removed from Mirgorod, and after obtaining reluctant Russian agreement, all B-17s took off during the night, and all safely landed, by moonlight, at three different Russian air strips, where they stayed for several days. They then returned to Mirgorod for refueling and bombing up. The remainder of these missions were flown by the 13th Wing, with the only six survivors of the 45th wing tacked on their formations. Escort was provided by the 4th Fighter Group, augmented by one squadron of the 352d Group.

Even though Wittan had outwitted the Luftwaffe and saved half the force, a major blow had been struck at the FRANTIC missions, and although the Germans never repeated their success, FRANTIC went downhill from this point. The next two, FRANTIC III and IV, were flown by fighters only, out of Italy, with minimal results.

Only the 13th Wing would make up FRANTIC V, in August, and then with only its 95th and 390th Bomb Groups, the 100th being left behind in England. The bomber force, then, was less than half of the previous 8th Air Force FRANTIC mission.

The Field Orders for VIII Fighter Command detailed three groups as escort, the 55th, the 339th, and the 357th. Only the 357th was to go all the way to the Soviet bases, the others turning back after the 357th joined up. The 8th Air Force Field Order also tasked the 8th Photo Reconnaissance Wing to provide two Mosquito aircraft to accompany the FRANTIC force, to scout ahead and report weather conditions to the mission commander.

The Yoxford Boys of the 357th had little advance notice that they were to take part in FRANTIC V. With takeoff scheduled for 0930 on Sunday, the 6th of August, the first warning arrived on the evening of the 4th. The 357th would supply all the pilots and aircraft, with no augmentation from another group, as the 4th had received.

"The monthly Operational Summary for August tells of the "hurry up" preparations. Less than 36 hours were given the group in which to prepare for the trip. These 36 hours had to be utilized to the fullest by all departments on the station. Engineering had to get ready one whole squadron more



Colonel Donald Graham, who led the Yoxford Boys to Russia. (Photo: Olmstead)

of planes than were usually required for a mission, and to decide what spare parts would be most urgently needed upon arrival in Russia, or later, Italy. In addition certain personnel had to be selected from among the maintenance men to fly as crew members in the B-17s of the task force and be available upon arrival to crew the Mustangs of the task force.

"The operations section had to decide who among the pilots would be left at home and who would make the trip. The selection of personnel was no easy job; everyone wanted to go. One of the assistant operations officers wanted to go so badly that he chose to go as a gunner in a bomber rather than be left at home when no fighter plane was available to him. In addition, [to this selection process] there was plotting of the courses, the timings, and all of the other things operations is responsible for.

"The intelligence section was given the job of preparing hundreds of maps; that covered the route clear across Europe and well into Russia. It befell them to do a hurried job of lecturing those chosen to make their first combat flight on such things as escape and evasion, obligation of prisoners of war, and other things a gunner on a bomber might need to know, whether shot down or not. The courses were on the board, the flak areas prominently marked, the position of other groups at certain times noted, R/V [rendezvous] point and time, along with other information necessary for briefing, was ready on the briefing map. It was with relief that the Intelligence Section accomplished their part in the task-force's mission in plenty of time."

Choosing the pilots to go was particularly difficult as most were eager to take part in this historic affair. The 362nd Squadron's Lt Raymond "Ted" Conlin was on leave in London, due back to base on Saturday, the 5th. While awaiting his train change at Ipswich, he encountered a fellow squadron member who told him he was scheduled for the mission if he got back on time. Conlin recalls: "I was elated that I would be back in time to go. Little did I know what was ahead. When I arrived at base, I went at once to squadron headquarters. There, Captain Cal Williams told me to get over to see Doc Snedden, our flight surgeon, right away. Doc said if I really wanted to go, I would have to receive all four of my inoculation shots at once—two in each arm. I said "OK," because I did not want to miss this one. The next morning, both of my arms were so sore, I just barely was able to handle the controls. But I went and had to bump Cal Williams' wingman to do it!"

As on the previous FRANTIC missions, the fighter group ground crews and technicians were assigned to fly in the bombers, some as waist gunners. One suspects that both the neophyte gunners and the rest of the B-17 crews sincerely hoped they would not have to fulfill their new duty!

Thirty-five ground support men were chosen, only four being officers. Lt Col Joe Brown, group supply, was the ranking officer. The group's engineering and communications officers and the assistant S-2, were the other three.

Takeoff was set for mid-morning, but long before that the four officers and 31 enlisted men of the support team were beginning the mission. Dawn comes early in Britain in the summer, but it was still dark at 0400 when they boarded the trucks bound for the bomber base. Whether the crews flew with the 95th or the 390th Bomb Group is uncertain, but the 390th was closest to Leiston Airfield, only a few minutes away at Framlingham (Parham), and it is probable that they flew in the "Square J" B-17s of the 390th. T/Sgt Leo Kiselewski remembers the sketchy briefing: "When we arrived at the base, everything was ready. The B-17s were loaded and waiting. All our belly tanks and spare parts were already aboard. We didn't get much briefing, they said we would be briefed aboard the plane. When we got aboard, I was assigned the left waist gun, and a regular crew member gave me a fast rundown on loading the gun, and how to clear a jam, and all the rest was up to me. He said 'pull the trigger and fire.' We did get some practice as we flew over the channel."

Captain Harry Ankeny, rapidly approaching the end of his combat career, made this entry in his diary:

"Since we were the only group to be escorting the bombers thru the target, we formed a group made up of the maximum number of planes. On all previous missions we used three squadrons, but this time we formed another

Flt. Lt. Jack Cleland, RNZAF, with 363rd Sqdn insignia over his RAF uniform. He later flew the Mk VII Spitfire in this photo.



squadron, called the "Victory" squadron, and it was made up of flights from all three squadrons. Major Dregne led this particular squadron, while Colonel Graham, our group CO, led the whole group. My job was leading Green Flight in the "Victory" squadron with Lt [James H.] Sehl on my wing and two 364th boys comprising the rest of my flight. On the ground I was also to act as our squadron's adjutant."

At 0922 hours, 72 Merlins coughed blue smoke and rumbled into life. A few minutes later, Leiston's taxiways and runway were crowded with Mustangs, the largest number ever launched by the 357th on one mission. At 0930, Colonel Don Graham got the show on the road, and the other 71 followed in good order. All, however, did not continue on, as seven of these were spares, only two of which were needed. Lt Norbert Fisher, Green 2 in the 363rd Squadron, found that his oxygen regulator was inop, and he was replaced by Flt Lt Jack Cleland, RNZAF, who moved in as wingman to Green Flight's leader, Lt Bill Overstreet. Capt Thomas Hughes in 363rd Blue flight was replaced by Lt Ray Staude. The other spares returned to base, and 64 P-51s set course on what would be a very long ride. FRANTIC V, mission #1, was underway.

By now, the bombers were well into the mission. It was a small attacking force by 8th Air Force standards, made up of 75 B-17s of the 3rd Division's 95th and 390th Bomb Groups. For such a small force it was heavily escorted, the 339th and 55th Fighter Groups providing cover during the initial stages.

The course took Dryden Group (357th code call sign) out to sea to the northeast, along the West Frisian, and then the East Frisian Islands, passing below the German island of Helgoland. The group then crossed into the narrow northern neck of Germany, over the Baltic for another 250 km or so, until they rendezvoused with the bombers over Leva See, a small coastal lake some 75 km northwest of the target area at Gdynia, Poland.

Luftwaffe reaction would be weak throughout the mission, but somewhere in the target area, two Me 109s were spotted which made a half-hearted attempt to get to the bombers, and then prudently retired from the scene.

Lt Henry Pfeiffer was element leader in Colonel Dregne's Red Flight, when the 109s appeared. Pfeiffer recalls: "Since they were on my side of the formation, and only two of them, Colonel Dregne decided only two P-51s were needed to deal with them, and dispatched my element. With tanks on, we proceeded to go after them. They immediately went for the deck so we broke off and returned to the formation. They came up again and we chased them away. They did not come up again."

As the bombers approached the target, the 55th and 339th Fighter Groups were still with them. Apparently all three fighter groups were present for a few minutes through the target run.

The target is uncertain; neither the 55th or 357th mission reports mention it. Freeman, in his *Mighty Eighth War Diary*, gives the target as A/I (Aviation Industry) at Gdynia-Rahmel. Other 357th records list it as an Fw 190 factory and it is known that such a plant was located in the Gdynia (Poland) area.

The 95th Bomb Group was leading the mission and at the navigator's station in the lead B-17 was Major Eric Scripture, a man who had flown the 95th's first mission on 12 May 1943, and who would fly its final mission on 7 May 1945, one of only two men of the 95th's original cadre to do so. Scripture remembers the target as being a power plant at Rahmel and that the bomb run was the longest he can recall ever making. It was near ideal conditions, the visibility was crystal clear, the target being visible from 75 miles away, and it was a straight-in run, with no turns at the IP. There was little flak, and it is not surprising that bombing results were reported as excellent.

The 55th Group mission report says "Escorted through target, 1301 at 19,000 feet breaking off at 5450N-1830E as 357th Group made RV. 357th had belly tanks at RV and no bombers were seen to be in trouble."

It was at about this point, shortly after 1300 hours, that the 55th and 339th broke off to return to base. As they did so a strange and unbriefed incident took place. Lt Clifford Sherman of the 38th Squadron, 55th Group, reported he had engine trouble, and would be going on to Russia, taking his wingman, 2nd Lt David F. Jewell, with him. The remainder of the 55th then returned uneventfully to home base, after a very long mission.

"...We claim one Ju 88 and crew destroyed. Ammunition expended: 0 rounds."

As far as can be determined, Sherman and Jewell not only went on to Russian bases, but stayed with the force all the way, going on to Italy, and returning to England. Whether they attached themselves to the bombers as a flight of two, or joined the 357th, is unknown. None of the 357th pilots questioned recall the two 55th Group P-51s.

For another 45 minutes after leaving the target area there was little to do except admire the scenery unfolding beneath their wings. At 1345 hours, however, there was a brief flurry of action, when three enemy aircraft were sighted. A surprised Lt Kirby Brown of the 364th Squadron reported:

"We [Brown and Lt Nick Fredericks] were flying Greenhouse Blue 3 & 4 and a black Ju 88 flew past our formation at 22,000 feet. We turned 180 degrees and pursued it. The e/a started a violent dive to evade and was headed for the only patch of woods in the vicinity. The woods were surrounded by wheat fields. We were 1,000 yards behind the e/a going over 500 MPH and we cut throttles and started to level off around 6,000 feet. We then went down to 3,000 feet and kept our eye on the e/a and it kept diving at about a 70 degree angle, doing approximately 500 MPH. The e/a failed to level off and was last seen at 1,000 feet still in its dive. We know the e/a did not pull out as we would have seen it crossing the wheat fields. We believe the e/a crashed in the woods, and due to the blackness of the woods we failed to observe any results of the crash. We claim one Ju 88 and crew destroyed. Ammunition expended: 0 rounds."

Even though the Ju 88 was not

seen to crash, it was jointly credited to Fredericks and Brown, and is so listed in the current USAF fighter credits for WW II.

At about the same time as the encounter with the black Junkers, and in the same general area, northeast of Warsaw, two Me 109s were sighted, setting off an incident that would have repercussions 45 years later.

Leading Greenhouse (364th Sqdn) White flight was Lt. Robert Shaw, with Horace "Pete" Howell on his wing. Shaw reported he saw the two 109s starting a pass at the last box of bombers: "I made an attack on the e/a from astern and got several hits as the e/a broke right. The Me 109 split S'ed and I followed the attack with several long bursts. At approximately 12,000 the e/a broke into smoke, and very short flame came from under the cowling. I pulled up as the e/a continued to spin down. I claim one Me 109 destroyed."

Lt Hollis "Bud" Nowlin was element leader in Shaw's White Flight, with Louis Fecher on his wing, and Nowlin was to deal with the other 109. Looking back on that day 4 1/2 decades ago, Nowlin recalls: "I wasn't properly prepared for combat, I had too much loose stuff in my plane. On the left side of the windshield above the panel were two oranges which I took from the breakfast table that morning; on the right side of the windshield were 6 or 8 navigation charts covering about half of Europe, along with a canteen of water which I sipped from about every hour or so. Under the seat was a set of spark plugs which Dennis Green [his crew chief] suggested I take, also a ditty bag under the seat containing a change of underwear, maybe a candy bar or two and a couple packs of smokes, with these things not tied down." Ready or not, Nowlin took on the other 109.

The two 109s were from Luftwaffe fighter unit JG51, and the leader was Gunther Schack, one of the stars of JG51 with over 100 victories over Russian aircraft. He was *Staffelkapitan* of the 9th *Staffel* III *Gruppe*, JG51. His wingman was Lt Besekau.

Schack still has vivid memories of that summer day: "The 3rd *Gruppe* of Fighter Wing Mölders [JG51] was stationed at Lyck, East Prussia, on the 6th of August, 1944. We were greatly astounded at the report that a hundred American "Furniture Vans" [German slang for four motor bombers] were flying from Danzig eastwards. Every available plane must intercept—all nine of us! The group commander was elsewhere, so I had to take command. We met the reported "big herd" at the (for us) unusual height of 18,000 feet, seemingly very close to the front line.

"It was reported to us by ground control that no escort fighters were with the bombers. It took a seemingly long time for us to overtake the bombers, which flew in many different heights, and to attack from the front, head on. But before we could begin our attack, Mustangs came out of the sun. In a turn my Me 109 received a hit in



Gunther Schack, of JG51, who attempted to intercept the shuttle armada with all available aircraft. (Photo: Olmstead)

the cooler, and I had nothing more in my thoughts than to continue west to make a belly landing in German territory. In a dive I thought to escape "the boys" and somewhat cool my engine. As I was concentrating on a place to belly land, a Mustang flew very close by past me, and turned to the east. After I was on the ground I received artillery fire and was hustled to safety in a bunker by infantrymen. Almost on the frontline itself I had landed. There was a small salient still held by our side, surrounded on three sides by the Russians."

We are fortunate in this case to have the view from both sides of the gun sight. Bud Nowlin's encounter report lists the time as 1345 hours and the location as NE of Warsaw.

"I encountered the e/a at about 23,000 feet where the e/a split S'ed and went down several thousand feet and leveled out. I gave the e/a a long burst in a steep turn and observed strikes. A stream of coolant or gas poured from e/a on left side of fuselage forward of cockpit. The e/a split "S"ed again and went down to 2500 feet and leveled off again. I got more strikes at this time but e/a was going so slow I could not stay behind it. At this time I had to pull off the attack to conserve fuel for the rest of the mission. Ammunition expended: 600 rounds."

Nowlin claimed only a "damaged," as the 109 was still flying when he last saw it. Even though the Messerschmitt was lost, it was over 40 years before Nowlin learned this fact, so his claim for shooting down Schack remains as a "damaged."

Gunther Schack, now [1991] living in retirement in Germany and Switzerland, says he seldom thinks of the WW II years, but one question has stayed with him for four decades—why had not the Mustang pilot finished him off? Why had the pilot waved and then turned away? Schack now believes he has the answer, and has come to the conclusion that Nowlin was a "good man" who did not desire to finish off a crippled fellow airman. Bud Nowlin certainly fits the description as a "good man," but there were other factors at work that day also. Nowlin recalls: "In the encounter report I mentioned that the e/a was going too slow to stay behind. I was a bit late finding out that he had reduced power and as a result I gave what I call a wave-off (that's somewhere between a wave and a salute). From that time I proceeded with a sharp climbing turn to the left and, unable to see my wingman, decided it was time to head toward our destination, east of Kiev." Nowlin located and joined the forma-tion in the vicinity of Kiev, ending his brief encounter with

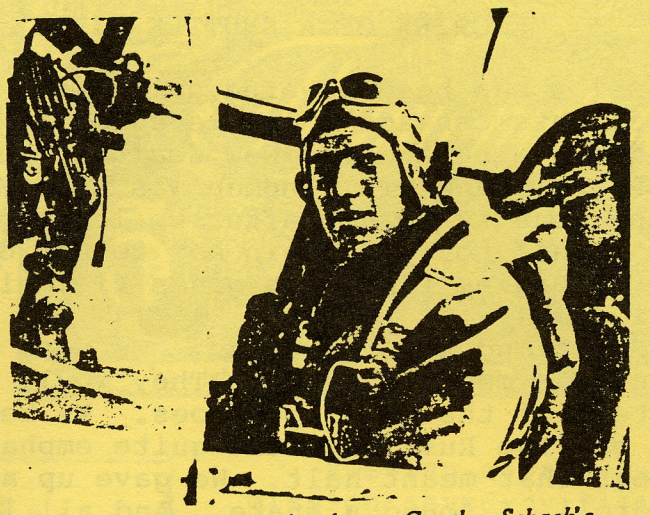
Hauptmann Gunther Schack.

Colonel Graham's brief mission report for 6 August mentions sightings of about 12 Me 109s and Fw 190s, and the Ju 88. In addition to the destroyed claim for the Ju 88, Shaw's 109 and Nowlin's damaged claim for Schack, the mission report also claims a damaged 190 for Major John Storch. However, Storch's encounter report has not been found, so nothing is known of this claim.

After this brief flurry of action, the force continued without incident until 1630 hours when the P-51s finally left the bombers ten miles east of Kiev. Thirty minutes later, the Mustangs arrived over their airfield at Piryatin, but not without difficulty. General Graham recently told this writer that the field was well camouflaged and difficult to see.

Henry Ankeny remembers the four red starred P-39s which formed with them as they approached the field. There would have been a nostalgic pang for the Yoxford Boys, most of whom had trained on the P-39. In his diary, Ankeny described the land they flew over: "When we were fairly certain we were within Russian held territory, we let down to about 5,000 feet and enjoyed sight-seeing the remainder of the trip. The land looked very fertile, but the towns were a bit torn up. We could see smoke far over to our right, from Warsaw, which was the extent of the lines at the time. We flew right on into the Ukraine over Kiev and on to our respective fields, the bombers going on to Poltava, while we landed at Piryatin, a small village just 100 miles east of Kiev."

By shortly after 1700 hours, all Mustangs were on the ground after a 7 1/2 hour flight, and the B-17s were safely down on their base, with thirty-five 357th technicians, probably relieved that they had survived their first combat mission.



Hollis "Bud" Nowlin who shot up Gunther Schack's coolant system and left him to crash land his Me 109.

Harry Ankeny's diary closed out a long day with these words: "The American soldiers at the field were sure glad to see us and gave us a real welcome, never saw so many flares shot up in the air before! We immediately ate supper and then half of us were to fly down to a field near the Black Sea so our airplanes would be dispersed. At the last minute they decided against it because of bad weather. We stayed up in the hospital area about a mile from the field. I never saw a field so well protected with AA guns. In the early part of the evening, the Russians started warming up the guns and it looked like the 4th of July around the field for an hour or so. The Russians guarding the field looked very rugged, but a little old. I imagine all the young blood was up on the front lines. To each of our planes was assigned a U.S. Army crew chief and a very young Russian mechanic. Sure was good sleeping that night!"

Back at home base in far away England, the following teletype arrived in the evening:

"Confidential 8 FC A810D report rec'd from Eastern bases via A-2 Pinetree on Frantic mission, F.O. 487, 6 August, 1944. 75 B-17s escorted by 64 P-51s of the 357th Group bombed Fw 190 factory at Rahmel with good to excellent results. 74 B-17s and 64 P-51s landed Eastern bases. 1 B-17 NYR, believed to be in Russia. 1 crew man wounded. All fighters arrived safely with no battle damage. Claims for fighters are 0-2-2, claims for bombers 0-2-2. No information available on two pilots of 55th Group believed to have gone on to Russia."

The claims listed in the above message are incorrect, and should have read 2-0-2 for the fighters.

Acknowledgment and sources:

Foremost my thanks go to those 357th Fighter Group veterans who were part of the shuttle mission, Harry Ankeny, Ted Conlin, Harvey Mace, Leo Kiselewski, and Henry Pfeiffer. I was also grateful to Ellis Scripture of the 95th Bomb Group, and Bob Littlefield and Bob Callaghan of the 55th Fighter Group for input. From the German side, Gunther Schack was kind enough to give his comments, translated by Bill Graham.

357th Fighter Group operational records in the author's files supplied most of the basic information, with additions from the eminent 8th AF historian, Roger Freeman. The following secondary sources were used:

Glenn B. Infield, "Shuttle Raiders To Russia," *Air Force Magazine*, April, 1972.

Ian Hawkins, *B-17s Over Berlin*, the 95th Bomb Group, Brassey's U.S., Inc. 1990.

Roger Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth War Diary*, Janes Publishing Co, London, 1981. ✪

MEMORIES OF A SHUTTLE PILOT

The shuttle mission has been covered quite well but maybe the memory of one of the participants can add a little color to the picture. I led a flight that included a wingman from New Zealand, Jack Cleland. The element leader was Charles Pearson and his wingman was Bill Fennell. The flight to Russia gave us new country to see after we left Poland. Russia was supposed to send up planes to lead us in but to Don Graham's disappointment, they didn't show up. Imagine finding a grass field in Russia with the instruments we had in 1944!

Somehow, we made it and the fun began. We were near a hospital so we met with a few Russian men and women. They would toast us with a vodka made from beets instead of the usual potatoes. We became quite happy and tried to wander off but the Russians were quite emphatic with their orders of STOY! It was clear that meant halt. We gave up and went to our tents. When I opened my bedroll, I found a snake. And all I really wanted was a mint on the pillow.

I saw some P-39's near by and wanted to inspect them, having trained in them in the U.S. The Russians made sure that I didn't get within a hundred yards of one of the planes our country had given them. The field was cleared by Russian peasants who had to join hands and walk around the field. With this treatment from their own superiors, there is no wonder they had so much admiration for the strength and brutality of the Germans.

We left Russia with some souvenir money and I left my ammunition so I could haul a load of that beet vodka. With my flight, I knew I would be safe as long as I made a smooth landing. However, when we were over Rumania, we saw some 109's who decided they would rather run than fight. Except for one that must of had engine trouble or something, they ran away. No one fired at the one who bailed out so imagine the smiles on the faces of the fellows when we were asked at the debriefing "Who was the closest one to him?" I was the closest but I had vodka -- not bullets. That could have been awarded to me as an aerial victory (it wasn't). And to many it would have been much more important on one's record than a plane destroyed on the ground where you had to fly through the fire of many gunners. And those gunners were not limited by guns on a fixed platform like enemy pilots. These boys all had guns they could point at YOU.

My landing at Foggia was quite smooth, thank you. We were able to get to the officer's club before five. They had ICE (what is that?) but refused to serve us until after five. I know, war is Hell. While in Foggia, we had two missions. One was to Yugoslavia to bring out downed airmen that had been brought to an airfield. The other was to escort a Red Cross lady to the beach on the Adriatic. On borrowed bikes, we protected her in the usual 357th manner, bring 'em back alive. Her dressing room was a blanket held up around her by fighter pilots. Tough duty, but someone had to do it.

The last leg of the shuttle was over southern France and then back to England. The entire mission had been completed without the loss of a single plane or Red Cross lady, to enemy action.

by Bill Overstreet



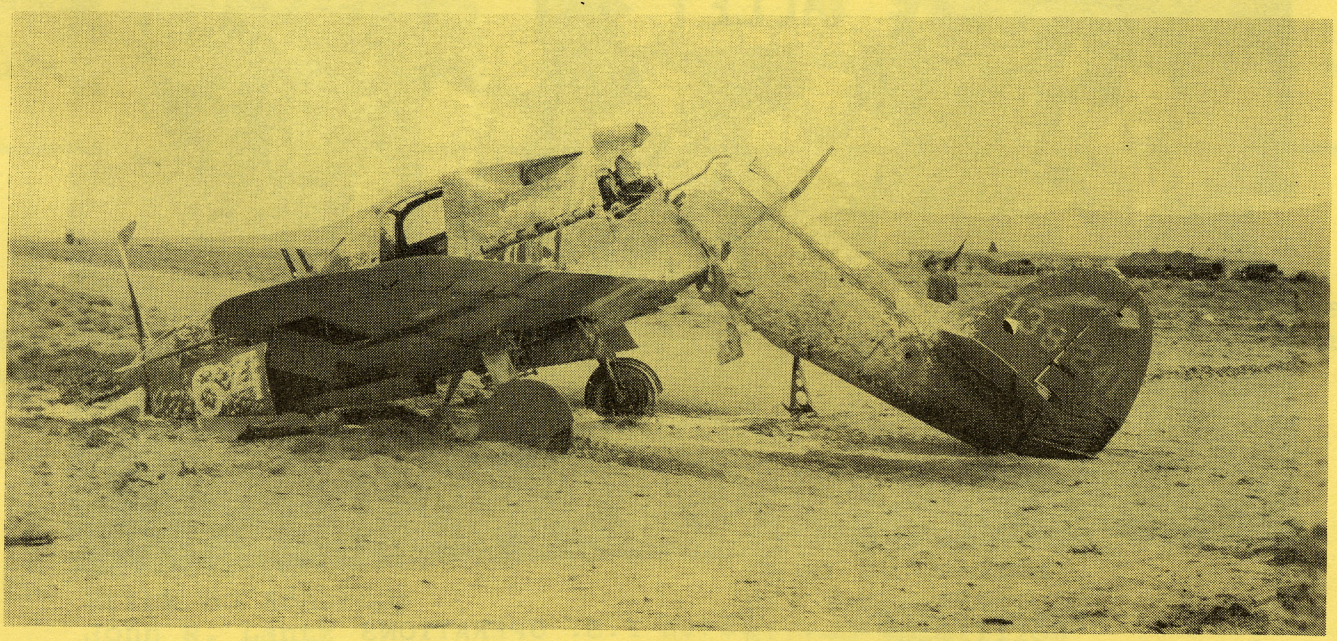


I AM AN AMERICAN.	Я АМЕРИКАНЕЦ.	YA AMERICANYETSS.
I AM HUNGRY.	Я ГОЛОДАЕ.	YA GOLODYENN.
I AM THIRSTY.	ХОЧЕТСЯ ПИТЬ.	KHOTCHETSYA PIT
I AM WOUNDED.	Я РАНЕН.	YA RANYEN.
BREAD : WATER.	ХЛЕБ. ВОДА.	KHLEB. VODA.
SHELTER.	УБЕЖИЩЕ.	OUBEJISTCHYE.
WHERE CAN I HIDE.	ГДЕ МНЕ СПРЯТАТЬСЯ.	GDYE MNYE SPRYATATSSYA
WHERE IS THE SOVIET FRONT.	ГДЕ СОВЕТСКИЙ ФРОНТ.	GDYE SOVIETSSKY FRONT.
NORTH . SOUTH.	СЕВЕР. ЮГ.	SEVER. YOUGG.
EAST. WEST.	ВОСТОК. ЗАПАД.	VOSSTOK . ZAPADD.
WHERE ARE THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES	ГДЕ СОВЕТСКИЕ ВЛАСТИ.	GDYE SOVIETSSKYA VLASTY

Russian currency from the shuttle mission saved by Bill Overstreet.

Note the signatures of Chuck Yeager, O'Bee Obrien, Paul Bowles and "Daddy Rabbit" Peters on the larger note.

Bill Overstreet's Russian passport on the left.



A SAD LOOKING P-39 AIRCOBRA FIGHTER AIRCRAFT AT TONOPAH NEVADA
Photo-Calvin Stone (Grp, Hdqt.)

I think most everybody in the Group remembers the B-17 that was mistakenly shot down near our base by the British gunners. I had just gotten up early one morning when I heard a buzzbomb approaching the coast. As soon as it got close I stepped outside to see the second or third round fired by the nearest gun to the bomb cause a big orange-yellow flash in the low cloud cover. It was a quick kill.

Not too long after I went back in the hut I heard the very familiar sound of a B-17 returning from what obviously must have been an abort from the morning's mission. It was quickly followed by the sound of the gun going off again and I rushed outside just in time to see the B-17 fall out of the clouds in flames. Fortunately it was followed by several 'chutes and I later heard that all ten men had gotten out of it. The B-17 had the missfortune of coming in about at the same altitude and track as the Buzzbomb over a British gun emplacement that had gunners that couldn't recognize the sound a 150 mile per hour B-17.

Many years later I became good friends with an ex Brit named Bert Smeeden that sold cars at the local British car agency in Sacramento, California. We were sitting around shooting the breeze one day when I thought I'd needle him a little by telling him the story. He came back with:

"You want to know something really strange? I was the gun captain of that gun crew that shot that B-17 down."

It is a small world indeed. I didn't press a vindictive attack in view of the two Mosquito kills chalked up by our Group! By Harvey Mace



HAPPY VALLEY 364th F.S. OPERATIONS
Cpl. charles J. Harris, aircraft painter; T/Sgt. Robert Grupposo, Flight Chief: S/Sgt. Elmer L. Troxell, Prop Specialist: S/Sgt. Joe F. Fieth, Ignition Specialist: Capt. John Storch, Commanding Officer; M/Sgt. George L. Metcalf, Hangar Chief: Sgt. Edward Bachmann, Instrument Specialist. Photo-J. Fieth