

2nd Lt. Joseph Gentner arrived at Rattlesden in November 1943, as navigator on the Hitchcock crew. The diary records his 31 missions with the 447th..

December 31, 1943 was the third mission for the 447th BG. The target was an airfield at Cognac. 20 planes took off at 7:30. 19 returned with one killed, four wounded. The 10-member Moore crew was shot down and missing. Flak was heavy, and 5% of the 464 planes that hit targets that day were lost.

The diary appears here through the courtesy of Mr. Joseph Gentner

Combat Diary

December 31, 1943 - Cognac, France - 1100 nautical miles. Excellent bombing. Encountered heavy flak - 21 holes in ship. Few enemy fighters. Lost one ship - 709 had one man killed, 2 navigators injured (Baugn and Porter).

January 5, 1944 - Bordeaux, France - Airfield - 900 nautical miles. Very good bombing. Flak not too accurate. Huff's ship did not come back. Many enemy fighters - tail gunner got one. Five machine gun holes in one wing and a hole through ball turret.

January 14, 1944 - Noball target - rocket installations on the coast of France. Bombed from 12,000 feet with good visibility. Easy mission. No flak or fighters, good fighter support. Highly successful mission.

January 29, 1944 - Frankfurt, Germany - Pathfinder mission. Undercast whole mission. Heavy flak but inaccurate. Excellent fighter support. No enemy fighters. Group lost one crew. Bombardier and navigator from squadron bailed out over Channel. Reports said bombing was very good. 900 miles.

January 30, 1944 - Brunswick, Germany - Pathfinder mission. Rough weather. Flew with Donahue's crew. Contrails bad. Flying through clouds on the bombing run. 900 miles round trip. Putman's crew missing. Sanner and Herdek our ball and tail gunner on the same crew. Good fighter support. No enemy fighters. Flak heavy but not accurate. Only one ship got hit. I am now one mission up on rest of crew.

February 3, 1944 - Wilhelmshaven, Germany - Pathfinder mission. Undercast, climbed to 28,000 feet. 900 miles round trip. Much accurate flak on the way in. Two engines out - aborted five minutes before I.P. Coming back alone, hit twice by M.E. 109's - first time five, second 14. Tail gunner got credit for one. We hid in the clouds but iced up and had to come out. When we landed. we found three 20 mm holes in ship.

February 4, 1944 - Frankfurt, Germany - Pathfinder mission. Flew with Morley's crew. Mission fouled up. Group got in with wrong wing. Heavy, accurate flak. Believe hit wrong target. Came back over Ruhr Valley. Three flak holes in ship. Three bombardiers wounded.

February 8, 1944 - Frankfurt, Germany - Pathfinder. Broken clouds. Bombed from 27,000 feet. Flak heavy, inaccurate. Target seems to be getting easier, must have knocked out some of their guns.

February 20, 1944 - Tutow, Germany - Important airfield in northern Germany, close to Sweden - 1,300 nautical miles. Little flak. Had some enemy fighter opposition. Weather was supposed to be clear but had a 10/10ths undercast. Had to drop bombs on ETA - results doubtful.

February 21, 1944 - Diepholz - An airfield near Oschersleben, Germany. Some fighter opposition. Inaccurate flak. Made two runs. Results excellent. Low on gas - landed at another field to refuel.

March 6, 1944 - Berlin, Germany - 1,100 miles. Most action I have ever seen in the air. Target - factories on southern edge of town. Scattered clouds. Dropped closer to center of town. Encountered flak along route in and out. Intense over target. Saw one plane get bottom of bomb bay and radio room blown out. Pilot brought it back. Had fighter attacks at one time and had 30 calibre holes in wing and tail.

March 8, 1944 - Berlin, Germany - 1,100 miles. Good visual bombing on a ball bearing plant at Erkner, 16 miles east of town. Heavy flak and fighters, but none close to us. Saw dog fights and enemy planes go down. Excellent day for pilotage.

March 11, 1944 - Munster, Germany - Short trip, just beyond Zuider Zee. Dropped on pathfinder. Flak at coast in and over target - fairly accurate. Bombing reports fair. Supposed to hit railroad yards in town. Appeared to be a scare raid.

March 13, 1944 - Noball in France - Just 15 miles in on French coast. 10/10 coverage. Had to bring bombs back. Light flak in distance.

March 15, 1944 - Brunswick, Germany - Pathfinder mission. Few breaks in clouds. Bombing fairly good. Hit railroad yards. Saw number of enemy fighters but none attacked. Flak heavy at target - encountered some on way in - heavy behind us on Dutch coast on way out.

March 18, 1944 - Munich, Germany - 1,200 miles. Visual to the target, then weather closed. Dropped by pathfinder. Beautiful view of Alps, flew over Strasbourg. Good fighter support. Flak heavy over target - Direct hit behind number 2 engine - left a 10" hole.

March 22, 1944 - Berlin, Germany - Pathfinder bombing. Breaks in clouds all the way. Target - an airfield north of town. Covered by clouds. Dropped bombs 3 miles north of town. Flak heavy. Good fighter support. Saw no enemy aircraft. Heavy on way home. Lead got off course and went over heavy flak fields. Had 88 mm hole in wing.

March 26, 1944 - Noball 93, near Cherbourg, France. Short mission. Bombed by squadrons. One squadron got a perfect hit. Flak heavy and accurate over target - 25 holes.

April 1, 1944 - Leipzig, Germany - Mission recalled as we reached French coast. Group got flak and credit for a mission.

April 10, 1944 - Diest Schaffen, Belgium - Target an airfield in France. Covered by clouds. Picked a target of opportunity. Flak moderate. No fighter opposition.

April 11, 1944 - Sttetin, Germany - Longest mission group has ever been on - 11 hours in the air. Target in Poland. Cloud coverage -went to secondary target. Attacked by 12 ME 110's. First time I got a shot at an enemy plane. Flak was accurate - four holes in navigator compartment.

April 13, 1944 - Augsburg, Germany - Long haul across the foothills of the Alps - beautiful. Bombed an airfield and experimental works. Results very good. Flak heavy and accurate. Group had its largest losses. 3 crews missing and 7 casualties.

April 18, 1944 - Berlin, Germany - Airfield just north of town, Visual until target, then closed in. Went over Berlin at 16,000. Capt.. Dalzell missing - the first man gone out of this barracks. Had an incendiary bomb in our wing when we got back.

April 19, 1944 - Lippstedt, Germany - Short mission. Circled the Ruhr Valley. No flak over the target. Even made two runs. Bombing was good. Target - an air repair depot and fighter field.

April 22, 1944 - Hamm, Germany - Visual the whole way. bombing results very good. No fighter opposition. Flak heavy over the target. Gilleran's crew got hit over target. All were seen to bail out. First crew lost from this barracks.

April 24, 1944 - Friedrichshaven, Germany. beautiful tour of Europe. Visual all the way. Bomb results good. Wing navigator got lost and almost led us over two large flak areas. Had minor flak damage.

April 27, 1944 - Louvain-Beauvechain, Belgium - Airfield near Brussels. Primary and secondary targets were overcast. Picked a target of opportunity. No fighters. Plenty of flak. Off-course at coast out and got plenty of flak from Ostend.

April 29, 1944 - Berlin - ROUGH.

May 7, 1944 - Berlin.

May 9, 1944 - Laon.