

The 344th Bomb Group had the honor of leading the Ninth Air Force into action that momentous day, our objectives being three heavy enemy coastal gun batteries on the Cherbourg Peninsula, and situated on the beaches at Beau Guillot, La Madeleine and St. Martin De Varreville, each approximately four miles distant. The Group furnished fifty-six B-26 planes, flown in three boxes of three flights each, each flight of six planes, and two spare airplanes to accompany the formation. Each Box had been assigned one of the forementioned targets.

News of the Invasion electrified these war-seasoned flyers and a look of determination spread from face to face as the plan was rapidly unveiled.

Following briefing, all proceeded to their planes and began last-minute preparations before take-off. Engines were warmed and at precisely 0412 hours June 6, 1944, the first plane piloted by Major Jens A. Norgaard, formation leader, roared down the runway and into the air. Every twenty seconds thereafter, the remaining fifty-five planes in succession roared behind him and circled into formation for the flight across the channel, and times to be at their targets at 0609 hours or twenty-one minutes prior to the landing craft operations of the allied ground forces on the beaches.

Bombs found their marks exactly as planned and then the 344th turned right and streaked across the Cherbourg Peninsula on its return trip home via the route between Guernsey and Aldernay Islands to England. Our planes had silenced their targets.

Interrogation revealed the first picture of this new battleground. Such scenes as Naval action directed against shore batteries, countless numbers of our fighters and bombers in the air and gliders towed across the channel filled with Airborne Troops.

The mission was not without loss, for as one of the flights made enemy landfall, flak from the enemy was encountered. One plane of the 497th Squadron piloted by 2nd Lt. James B. McKamey was struck in the right motor, which caused a fire that appeared to envelope the bombay section of the plane. Three parachutes were seen to leave the plane as it pulled out of the formation and turned left out over the channel. Before its burden of bombs could be jettisoned safe and allow the plane to be ditched in the water where rescue of its crew could be affected, the plane exploded in mid-air. Members of Lt. McKamey's crew were F/O J. F. Kechley, Co-Pilot; Sgt. J. M. Scott, Tail Gunner flew as bombardier; S/Sgt. S. J. Zuniga, Radio Gunner; S/Sgt. M. H. Larini, Engineer Gunner; Sgt. H. L. Finn, Ord. Munitions flew as tail gunner.

In the afternoon of June 6, 37 planes went to Amiens to again attack the marshalling yard. 24 ships

bombed with fair to good results. The flak was accurate and 20 of the planes received minor battle damage.

On June 7 two missions were flown, the first against gun positions at La Pernelle/Barfleur and the second to the marshalling yard at Argentan, both attacks being excellent in execution. During the latter attack we lost one plane to enemy action, the plane crash landing on friendly soil. Three crewmen were wounded and three planes battle damaged.

The following day a small railway bridge and railway embankment at Lessay was the objective with good to excellent results accomplished. One ship only was battle damaged.

On June 10 two missions were flown to destroy choke points at Valognes and road junctions at St. Lo. The Valognes attack was successful but the enemy defenses against us were accurate. One plane of the 496th Squadron was destroyed and six crewmen were reported missing, one crewman wounded and five planes battle damaged. The missing crew are as follows: 2nd Lt. H. L. Burdette, Pilot; 2nd Lt. D. W. Edwards, Co-Pilot; 2nd Lt. A. L. Collins, Bombardier; Pvt. J. G. Gisavage, Engineer Gunner; S/Sgt. M.H. Porter, radio Gunner; S/Sgt S. Billings, Arm Gunner.

On June 11 we proceeded to Conde sur Noireau but made no attack, the target being obscured by weather. However, seven planes were battle damaged by flak.

The following day weather improved slightly and the formation returned to Conde sur Noireau to strike the bridge at that point. Results were only fair. No injuries or losses resulted this date.

June 13 two missions were flown. The marshalling yards at Lissieux and Mezidon were struck with excellent results. In the afternoon a choke point at St. Pierre sur Dives with fair to good results. Eight planes were slightly damaged.

From June 14 through 29, our efforts were brought against a bridge at Beaugency, gun emplacements at Quinville, Railway bridges at Chartres and Laval, railway tracks at Melerault to St. Lubin, construction sites at La Belle Hotesse, Prouville and Autheux, strong points and fortified areas at Cherbourg, railway facilities at Beauvais and a bridge at Oissel.

Our attacks at these points were all very successful and materially aided the ground forces in gaining their advances against the enemy. The two strongest defended positions were the strong point at Cherbourg where three men were wounded, eleven ships battle damaged and an attack by enemy fighters which were warded off by our gunners and the Oissel mission, one man having been killed and eleven receiving wounds, along with 24 ships battle damaged.



UTAH BEACH
JUNE 6, 1944 PM.

D-Day
Utah Beach, June 6, 1944 PM.



Utah Beach, June 6, 1944 PM.

*Gliders and parachutes after
landing in France on D-Day!*

photo courtesy of Harry Pearson

10800
SECRET
BOX I

June 6, 1944

NORGARD-WITTY
Y5-S

GLASS Y5-F FOOTE Y5-C

JOHNSON-WILLMS
K9-S

#3
10,4
COURTRIGHT Y5-R
SEEBALDT K9-K

#2 10,6
GEARY Y5-N
BOWERS Y5-X

BAILEY K9-V CAHILL K9-J

PHILLIPS Y5-H NICHOLS Y5-B

STEEN K9-F

DIXON Y5-U

CARRINGTON N3-C

KOLBERG K9-H

McDONALD Y5-P

FITZWATER Y5-T

BOX II
MAXWELL-CLAY N3-S

YOUNG N3-A

ROBINSON N3-H

MAFFRY N3-K

#3
ALLEN N3-M

#2 10,0
HEANEY N3-L

HYMES K9-O

HARDY N3-V

ASHBERRY K9-Q

DE FORD K9-P

GINTHER N3-G

STOKES N3-X

ALLYN K9-R

MORGAN N3-U

FREIBURGER Y5-L

IDDINS K9-G

COURTRIGHT N3-R

BENEDICT N3-S

BOX III

BENTLEY-CATLIN

WITMERDEE 7I-F
~~WITMERDEE~~ 7I-J

SCOTT 7I-R

WILSON 7I-H

#3
HUGHES 7I-A

#2
HAYES 7I-Q

JONES 7I-T

JOSEPHY 7I-J

JACOBS 7I-U

SCHWAEGERL 7I-D

HARRISON 7I-N

WOOD 7I-S

STAHLHUT 7I-P

NEMETH 7I-C

CONVERSE Y5-G

BROWN N3-J

S P A R E

McKAMEY 7I-G

JURGESS 7I-K

LYON 6265

BURDETTE N3-Q

I Box Start Engines: 0354
II Box Start Engines: 0402
III Box Start Engines: 0410
I Box Taxi: 0402
II Box Taxi: 0410
III Box Taxi: 0418
Take-Off: 412 = (420) 428
Time Over Splasher: 443
Boater Rendezvous:
English Coast Out: 0545
Fighter Rendezvous:
Enemy Coast In:
I. P. : 606

Target: 609
Enemy Coast Out: 619
English Coast In: 652
Base: 733
FLARES:
I Box GREEN For Join Up.
II Box YELLOW For Join Up.
III Box YELLOW-GREEN For Join Up.
1 Hr. Delay: PEACH Procedure
2 Hr. Delay: APPLE Procedure
3 Hr. Delay: PEAR Procedure
MISSION SCRUBBED: BANANA Procedure

F10
-451

SECRET

Pilots Form

Box I R/T Call Sign: Pawnbroker I
 Box II R/T Call Sign: II
 Box III R/T Call Sign: III

VHF CALL SIGNS AND CHANNELS

	CALL SIGN	CHANNEL
1. Fighter Escort.....		
2. <u>Bombardier - over Continent</u> Fighter Ground Station.....	<u>Farmhand</u>	<u>B</u>
3. _____ (Other) Group.....		
4. BOMPER COMMAND.....	<u>Parade</u>	<u>C</u>
5. Air Sea Rescue Channel.....		<u>D</u>

Plane to Plane Communication IF

Emergency Landing Fields:

	R/T Call Sign
1. <u>Gravesend</u>	<u>Coastwise</u>
2. <u>Friston</u>	<u>Shellpink</u>
3. _____	

Emergency Homing VHF:

	R/T Call Sign	Channel
1. <u>Warmwell</u>	<u>Pingo</u>	<u>D</u>
2. <u>Friston</u>	<u>Shellpink</u>	<u>D</u>
3. <u>Brighton</u>	<u>Parade</u>	<u>C</u>

~~Code Word to Recall the Mission~~ (Sent in clear)

Group R/T Call Sign: _____
 Squadron R/T Call Signs:
 494 _____ 496 _____
 495 _____ 497 _____

Splasher Beacons 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 16

Time	Color	Challenge	A/C Reply
0200-0800	<u>R-G</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>7</u>
0800-2400	<u>R-RR</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>C</u>

AUTHENTICATOR
 Challenge A/C Reply
 Feather Code VBTA

Indexable 347 BPR
 Indexable 348 BHK

(V-Visibility in miles)
 (A-Amount of cloud coverage in tenths)
 (Z-Height of cloud base in thousands of ft.)
 (T-Height of cloud top in thousands of ft.)

Bomber Beacons
 Ford 1033 KC 909
 Christchurch 1066 KC 909

IFF will not be used except when actual distress and then turn on the emergency switch

Lead Plane - D-Day Mission

6 June 1944 A.M.

From: 03:55 to 07:45

IX BOMBER COMMAND
99 BOMB WING
344 BOMBARDMENT GROUP
495 BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON

"MARY JO"
Aircraft Model: B-26-B50 MA
Aircraft Serial No. 42-95876
Squadron Identification: Y5S
Crew Chief: T/Sgt John C. Wilder

CREW

PILOT – Formation Leader	Major Jens A. Norgaard	Iowa City, Iowa
CO-PILOT – Deputy Grp Commander	Lt. Col. Robert W. Witty	Cleveland, Ohio
LEAD BOMBARDIER Group Bombardier	Capt. James P. Parish (Died from wounds received on mission of 24 July 1944)	Montgomery, Alabama
LEAD NAVIGATOR	1st Lt. Louis Offenberg	Portland, Maine
ENGINEER GUNNER	S/Sgt. Kenneth L. Hobbs	Denver, Colorado
RADIO OPERATOR GUNNER	T/Sgt. John R. Leach	Poplar Bluff, Missouri
TAIL GUNNER	S/Sgt. Jules S. Theobald	Toledo, Ohio
NAVIGATOR	2nd Lt. Loris D. Gniffke	Cottonwood, Minnesota
WAR CORRESPONDENT	Ivan H. Peterman	Died January 18, 1978 in Drexel Hill, PA