

Dick Baer's Mission Notes

1st Lt Richard F. Baer, Co-Pilot 'Mean Widdle Kid'

839th Bombardment Squadron, 487th Bombardment Group,
4th Combat Bombardment Wing, 3rd Bombardment Division
8th Air Force. Station 137 Lavenham, Suffolk, England

Co-Pilot for 13 missions with 1st Lt Richard L. Althouse crew on B-17G 'Mean Widdle Kid' #43-37989, and B-17G 'Snake Bite' #43-38042. Flew last 2 missions on B-17G 'Gravel Gertie' #43-39188 with McDonagh Crew.

- 1st Mission** Sunday, January 7, 1945
Paderborn - marshaling yards; 51°42' N - 8°45' E; PFF bombing @ 22,000 ft.
So called "milk run" no bandits (fighters) saw one burst of flak - had a rough time finding field after peel off over Splasher Seven. ~~Sinus bothered hell out of me.~~ Over enemy territory (OET) 02:40. No losses
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- 2nd Mission** Monday, January 8, 1945
Frankfurt - marshaling yards; 50°06' N - 08°40' E; PFF bombing @ 26,000 ft.; OET 01:07 hrs.
McCarty landed in France - engine trouble. Sinus bothered hell out of me. No bandits - moderate flak on bomb run - received first flak hole in horizontal stabilizer. **Henderson** lost #1 engine, aborted after target bombed. Over enemy territory 01:07. **Garrison** passed out in waist, **Gustine** was sick, **Giltinau** spilled chute in tail, **Fugere** had to crank bomb bays open & closed. Saw France & White Cliffs of Dover for first time.
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- 3rd Mission** Saturday, January 13, 1945
Mainz - marshaling yards; PFF bombing; OET 02:40 hrs.
Very moderate flak, no battle damage, no bandits. On oxygen for 5 hours. Formation horribly messed up as everyone was ahead of schedule. Coming home flight indicator went out, had to let down through 5,000 ft. of undercast on C1. Home field had 0-0 rating - really sweat out that landing couldn't see 50 yards. Circled field three times - beautiful landing by **Haus**. (*Dick Althouse, pilot*)
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- 4th Mission** Sunday, January 14, 1945
Magdeburg - oil refinery; visual bombing; OET 3:00 hrs.
Moderate to heavy flak, no battle damage, bandits in area attacked group ahead and knocked out ten ships - ME109's. Saw two P51's and one B17 blow up. **Anderson** aborted over North Sea because of oxygen. **DeSelms** aborted right over German coast with runaway prop. Moser & Nyland had mid air collision over Germany, went down. North Sea looked awfully good after being over Germany so damn long.
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- 5th Mission** Thursday, January 18, 1945
Kaiserlautern - marshaling yards; PFF bombing; OET 0:30 hrs.
Milk run of all milk runs. No bandits - no flak visible. Weather bad over home field so landed in France near town of Laon - didn't get to leave base, single runway - bomb pocked field. Took off next morning and flew home without any weather trouble.

6th Mission	Saturday, January 20, 1945
Heilbronn - marshaling yards; PFF bombing; OET 01:20 hrs.	AIR MEDAL - HA! Two minutes before target on bomb run #1 prop ran away - were unable to feather it - began to burn itself out. <i>Coughran, Gustine, Giltinaw, Garrison</i> bailed out - no navigational instruments - radio compass and G-Box were out. Finally managed to set her down at a little field near Britinge twenty miles south of Paris. Were marooned in France until Jan. 28. Flew ATC back to Boorington and then a train from London to Bury St. Edmunds. <i>Giltinaw</i> still missing now on Jan 29.
7th Mission	Thursday, February 1, 1945
Wesel - autobahn bridge	This undoubtedly was the milk run of <u>all</u> milk runs. We were awakened at 07:30 with briefing at 09:00 - takeoff at 12:00. No bandits - no flak. Target time 15:30 landing time 17:30 - 05:30 hrs. long mission. <i>Hughes</i> - instructor gunner rode in <i>Giltinaw's</i> place today - still no word from Gil - not even a critique today - no difficulties encountered.
8th Mission	Saturday, February 3, 1945
Berlin - communications; PFF bombing; OET 03:30 hrs.	Biggest surprise mission in a long time as there were no enemy fighters whatsoever and only moderate flak. Were really sweating it out however as every thing was going <u>too</u> smoothly. No mechanical difficulties encountered until arriving back over England, then #2 and #4 prop governors began acting up. Left formation and landed alone. Were over North Sea for 03:00 hrs. Safe and happy in my nissen hut.
9th Mission	Tuesday, February 6, 1945
Chemnitz - Populace, built-up area of town; OET 04:00 hrs.	Most messed-up mission the 8th Air Force has flown to date. Timing and navigation was completely un-coordinated. Another group bombed abreast of us. On the way back the group was diverted to France and then recalled back to England. My sinuses were killing me so we couldn't let down very fast. We landed just south of Brussels near Mons and stayed with 487th Fighter Sqd. Came back on the 8th of February.
Hospital	Wednesday, February 14, 1945
England	"Nose operation" Underwent surgery for sinusitis, especially problematic during high-altitude mission flights in unpressurized aircraft.
10th Mission	Wednesday, March 21, 1945
Wittmundhaven - J. P. airfield; visual bombing; OET 01:20 hrs.	Flew #3 spot in lead. Another milk run. No bandits and no flak, just a shallow penetration northeast of the Zuider Zee. This was my first operational mission since my operation. My sinuses were quite painful but I think I can stick out 25 more missions. 5 hr. mission, takeoff 06:45 landing 11:45. Clobbered the MPI of two intersecting runways.
11th Mission	Thursday, March 22, 1945
Kupferdreh - Barrack area & motor pool; visual bombing; OET 00:13 hrs.	Another milk run - two in a row -wow!! No bandits, meager inaccurate flak. 05:30 hr. mission -more like it. Really clobbered the target (MPI). Flew #7 spot in the high, this was #26 for <i>Haus</i> .

12th Mission Friday, March 23, 1945

Holzwickede - marshaling yard; OAK LEAFS - HA! Today we flew with Rattlesdon as #7 in their high. On bomb run we hit prop wash and were forced to leave formation. We dropped our bombs on a target of opportunity, and turned left to R.P. (rally point). We joined up with Mendelshaw of 93rd Wing and flew #13. Their #11 ship was hit over the lines by flak losing his left wing tip and #1 engine. He lost control of plane and his #4 prop cut off our rudder - then he crashed into the ship on our left wing and they both went down.

Note: Flew B-17G "*Snake Bite*" #43-38042 -see photo of damaged rudder.

13th Mission March 24, 1945

Varrelbusch - jet airfield Another milk run - in fact didn't even see any flak - only a 5 1/2 hr. job. We supported an airborne offensive which dropped behind the German lines around Wesel in direct support of **Montgomery's troops**. Landed at 11:20 and hit the sack. Many rumors that we were going to fly two missions today - thank God we didn't as I am dragging - some groups did and the 8th really was up in force today. Three task forces. Sinuses are beating me up again. **Haus** is going to get D.F.C.

Special Orders Saturday, March 31, 1945

AAF Station 101: Camp Lynn, High Wycombe, Bucks County, England
AAF Station 511: Moultsford Manor, Berkshire (Air Force Rest Home)
(Hospitalized for sinusitus again?)

'Mean Widdle Kid' Shot Down April 10, 1945

Crew Members on 10 APRIL 1945:

Pilot (P)	Lt Richard L Althouse	POW
Co-Pilot (CP)	1Lt Clyde E Oliver	KIA
Navigator (N)	2Lt Douglas D Couchran Jr	POW
Engineer (E)	T/Sgt Thomas J Fugere	POW
Radio Operator (RG)	T/Sgt William R Bressler	POW
Toggler (T)	S/Sgt Aaron C Conn	POW
Ball Turret Gunner (BTG)	S/Sgt Norman D Garrison	POW
Waist Gunner (WG)	S/Sgt Harold R Gustine	POW
Tail Gunner (TG)	1Lt Willis E Peake	KIA
Temporary Waist Gunner (WG)	S/Sgt Lincoln Hudson	POW

14th Mission Friday, April 20, 1945

Neureppin - Milk run -no flak -no bandits. Flew #10 in low with **McDonogh** & crew -
Berlin area marshaling good man. Only over enemy territory 01:15 oxygen 03:00. Very uneventful
yards; OET 01:15 got to see a good bit of devastated Germany -Wesel is a terrible mess.

15th Mission Saturday, April 21, 1945

Ingolstadt - Milk run as far as enemy opposition no flak seen -no bandits but the weather
Autobahn & road center -worst I've ever seen. Assembly was okay -then began to run into scud -
finally were flying formation through solid cloud banks. Lost formation -
tacked onto Bury St. Edmunds and bombed with them. Lost them due to
prop wash, went into tight spiral when **McDonogh** got vertigo. Lost 3,000
ft., horizon tumbled - pulled out - flew home alone above bomber stream.
Nine hour mission.

After April 21, 1945; the 8th Air Force stopped flying missions
over Europe.

Source: Missions transcribed from Dick Baer's WWII scrapbook by Stacy Scharch c/o Anne Baer.