

Chris McDougal
3921-67th. Street
Urbandale, Iowa
50322

NOVEMBER 03, 1986

Dear Chris:

I received your letter yesterday (10/27/86). The reason I listed the date is because this letter may not be completed today as planned. I am attempting to write this at work and sometimes there are numerous interruptions.

First I will attempt to answer the questions that you asked and secondly describe the Kassel mission as I saw it.

The crew was as follows:

Pilot	1st Lt D. ^{W.} Smith
Co-pilot	2nd Lt A.F. Lerch
Navigator	2nd Lt W.O. Carpenter
* Bombardier	1ST Lt C.H. Smith
* Nose Navigator	2nd Lt A. Capuano
Radio operator	Tech Sgt W.R. Klinefelter
Engineer	Tech Sgt L.O. Davis
Asst. Eng.	Staff Sgt C.V. Cowart
Armorer	Staff Sgt J. Laswell
Tail	Staff Sgt E.E. Gray

* This is my best guess since these two flew with us from time to time.

The plane that we flew that day was known as 710 E (easy). There was no name on this particular airplane. We flew this plane most of the time but others also flew it. This may come of shock to you but we did not crash land as you indicated. We were the only plane to land back at Tibenham. As I recall G-2 informed us that one airplane landed in southern England and one landed in Belgium. That was the total number of 445th. airplanes returning from Kassel.

Mary Beth sent me a book that she has on the 445th. and I did not feel that the Kassel mission as described in the book was the same mission that I was on. Perhaps you will understand after I describe the mission as I saw it.

Now I will describe the Kassel Mission of Sept 27th. 1944 as I remember it.

My 15th Mission.

Statistics

Mission

Kassel

Locomotive Works

Gottingen

Tank Plant

Overcast

24,000 ft

-34 degrees C

2500 gals.

6 - 1000 lbs

7 hrs 30 min

6 hrs

Light

Waist Gunner

Good

36

3

30

Target

Weather

Altitude

Temperature

Fuel load

Bomb load

Time of flight

Time under oxygen

Flak

Position

Escort

Number of planes

Abort

Lost

The mission seemed like any other "milk run". We were leading the High Right Squadron. We hit the target and made our turn, I believe to the right, and in so doing our Squadron slid over to the left side, which probably saved us. In the process, I was flying in the left waist position away from all the action. I looked out the other side and saw what appeared to be P-51's barrel rolling up from our rear. (I was fairly good in Aircraft recognition so much so that when we were in Gunnery School in Harlington, Texas that they tried to recruit me as an Aircraft Recognition instructor.) On looking closer they were Me 109's with enlarged scoops underneath, at the same time we saw red balls exploding in front of the Airplanes below. Then all hell broke loose. Following the Me 109's were, I heard later from G-2, approximately 180 Fw 190's. They were coming from our rear and below. It just happens that our Ball turrets had recently been removed. The fighters would come in fire, roll over, then head for another target. One Fw 190 came up on the left between our tail and our wing, so close that I could see his face, and I fired until he dropped from view. I'm sure that I didn't miss, since his windshield was completely shattered but at the time we were too busy to follow any particular fighter. The rear guns were firing and Lonnie Davis in the upper turret kept asking where the fighters were. I don't believe that any got high enough for him to see. About that time planes were going down everywhere and the only thing that we could do was protect our plane and watch. Our wing ship, who eventually landed in southern England with as I recall about 20 20mm holes in their plane, stuck close to us during the fight and this probably is why we got back in one piece. During the fight I saw a Flight of P-51 (4 planes) dive into about 25 Fw 190's. It looked like one P-51 personally took on about 15 Fw's. But as I stated before we were too busy to watch any particular area during the whole encounter. When we

landed we were told, during the interrogation, that we were the only plane to land at the field. Also when we went to get our shot of whisky, which was standard practice, that we could have more than one because nobody else was coming back to the base. Although we had lost others before during combat this was quite a shock to a 20 year old just recently out of High School.

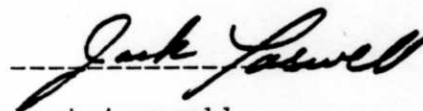
The pictures of the Kassel Mission that I have were taken with a K-20 camera and were taken by another airplane. Although I'm not sure that I didn't have a K-20 and take some of the pictures. Our plane is in several of the pictures. These were official photos from the Squadron and have an official stamp on the back which states that they are not for publication. The reason I got them was that we had our own photo lab to fool around in when we weren't flying and they had asked me to take a K-20 and take pictures during various missions. Most of the time our airplane had a K-22 camera mounted in the rear for strike photos. Because of this I became quite close to the people in the Squadron photo lab and G-2.

They gave us a week off and the Radio operator and myself went to Scotland. Would you believe that the second Mission back on Oct 7 our target was again Kassel. Turned out to be uneventful.

After 40 years there seems to be an awful lot of renewed interest. Incidentally I have total statistics on all my Missions plus some of the Ration Stamps we dropped and a 701 Squadron Patch if anybody is interested.

Don't lose faith I will eventually get the pictures copied for you.

Sincerely,



Jack Laswell
16152 Haldane St.
Whitter, Cal.
90603

CC. Mary Beth Barnard
Frank DiMola