

MY TRIP TO MÜNSTER

BATTERED AND BLOODY, THE 100th BOMB GROUP CREWS MANNED THEIR FLYING FORTRESSES FOR YET ANOTHER DANGEROUS MISSION. HOWEVER, THIS WOULD BE A PARTICULARLY DISASTROUS TRIP TO A WELL-DEFENDED GERMAN CITY - BY FRANK MURPHY - PART TWO

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Just over four miles north of Münster, on the main road to Greven, a narrow east-west bridge spans the Dortmund-Ems Canal. In October 1943, a regular *Luftwaffe* anti-aircraft artillery unit was positioned on the north side of the road at the east end of this bridge. In addition to its two batteries of 88mm *flak* artillery, this unit had four wooden towers equipped with 20 mm "light" *flak* guns to protect them against low-flying enemy aircraft. It was 88mm *flak* from this position that I saw bursting around the 390th BG a few moments after I bailed out of our aircraft.

The 20mm *flak* guns at this site were manned that day by a six-man team of young *Luftwaffe* auxiliary personnel known as *Luftwaffenhelpers* — schoolboys, actually—who were "helpers" on weekend duty with the active forces. One of them, Heinz Hessling, age 18, watched the air battle over Münster on the afternoon of 10 October 1943, through a pair of

binoculars. Sometime after 3:00 pm, he saw a single B-17, its right-wing trailing fire and dense, black smoke, flying in a northeasterly direction away from Münster.

It was receiving fire from its rear from two German fighter aircraft and appeared incapable of defending itself. This was B-17F, serial 42-30725, flown by Crew No. 31 of the 100th BG. As he watched, Hessling saw the crew begin to abandon the burning airplane.

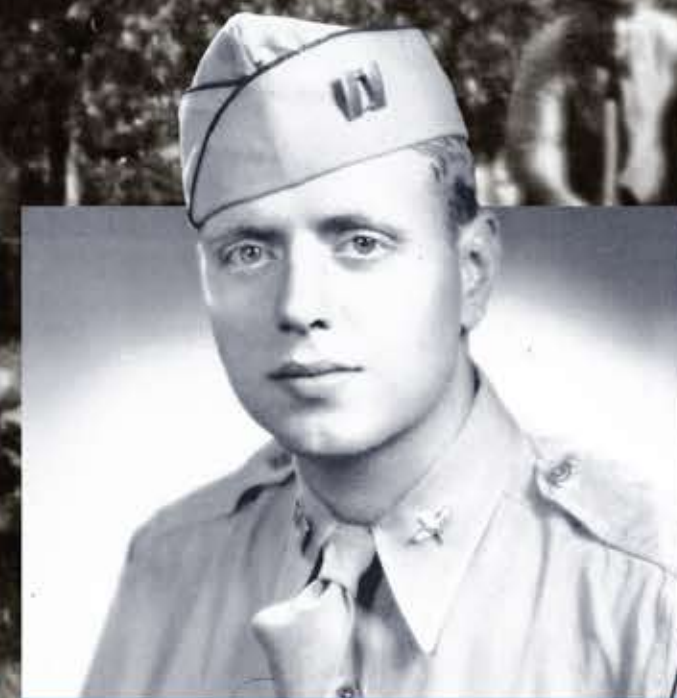
In October 1943, the tiny farm community of Holzhausen, situated in the flat, low-lying country 17 miles northeast of Münster near the tiny village of Kattenvenne, was little more than a crossroads providing access to a half dozen single-family farms. The small farm on the southwest corner of this crossroads, devoid of improvements except for a characteristic Westphalian brick-and-wooden-beam cottage, has



A shot of the author at Wendover during training and prior to departing for England.



The author's destroyed Flying Fortress. Two of the crew rode down with the plane and were killed on impact — they had probably been wounded by anti-aircraft fire and were unable to escape the burning B-17F.



Formal portrait of Frank Murphy, probably taken in England.