

MY MISSION TO KASSEL

FOR THE AUTHOR, HIS 20th B-24 BOMBING MISSION WOULD BE HIS LAST AS THE 445th BOMB GROUP WAS TORN TO PIECES OVER THEIR TARGET AREA

BY SAMMY S. WEINER

EDITOR'S NOTE: Contributor Scott Bloom was recently going through the files of his late father. Seymour Bloom had been active with several veterans' groups and was always urging members to write down their experiences. In the files, Scott found a manuscript written by Sammy Weiner describing being shot down on his 20th combat mission and taken prisoner by the Germans. We thought the story quite worthwhile since it tells what it was like for a 24-year-old sergeant to fly B-24 missions and then fall victim to the enemy.

What does a man think of during the momentous seconds in which his life is hanging by a thread?

"I've got to make it!"

These words of self-preservation I shall never forget. A man is powerless to combat the workings of fate and I believe it was God's will to wipe my number off death's list that fateful day of 27 September 1944. I was one of three survivors of our Consolidated B-24 Liberator bomber crew.

Having flown over the English Channel two days in succession, we briefed a 0330 in the morning of the third day and then sat down to the usual breakfast of cold pancakes. I had no stomach for the pancakes but I gulped a cup of coffee. A week later I would have

given a year of my life for a stock of those soggy cold cakes.

Our aircraft was B-24H USAAF 42-50324 and it carried the name *Eileen*. The crew consisted of 1st Lt. Donald Brent (pilot), 2nd Lt. Walter George (copilot), 2nd Lt. Harold Mercier (navigator), S/Sgt. Donald Larsen (nose gunner), T/Sgt. Constant Gauluszewski (flight engineer/top turret gunner), S/Sgt. Woodard Watts (tail gunner), S/Sgt. Milton Smisek (waist gunner), S/Sgt. George Linkletter (waist gunner) and myself, T/Sgt. Sammy Weiner (radio operator).

Our group — the 445th Bomb Group — had already bombed the identical target several times without encountering difficulty so this time we also expected another "milk run." Our objective was Kassel, Germany, with



The insignia of the Mighty 8th is probably the most recognized WWII insignia.



Flight jacket insignia for the 700th Bomb Squadron.

The 445th Bomb Group flew Liberators from Tibenham in Norfolk. The first mission was bombing U-Boat pens at Kiel on 13 December 1943. The Group continued to hit strategic targets in Germany, including the aircraft components factory at Gotha on 24 February 1944 during the USAAF's "Big Week" of raids against the German aircraft industry, which earned the Group a Distinguished Unit Citation. The Group was awarded the *Croix de Guerre* with Palm by the French government for operations in the European theater from December 1943 to February 1945. In this photo, a Pathfinder Liberator 42-51681 of the 453rd BG flies in formation with a fellow B-24 of the 453rd and a Pathfinder Liberator of the 445th BG.

