

Terror in the B17 - February 10th 1945, SGT Bill Watson's 19th mission flying B17's with the 388th Bombing Group 8th AF described their raid enroute to Brunswick Germany - "Fighters hit us at the enemy coast and came in like waves until we left the coast coming back." There were as many as 200 fighters at a time attacking the formations. Every place you looked you could see fighting 17s, blowing up, wings falling off, ships breaking in half, dogfights and parachutes. The sky was black with the remnants of the fight. They had their ME190 fighter planes painted like our B17s and we thought they were our escorts.

We had 8 of our 14 guns frozen as it was minus 46 below zero. Then number two engine was knocked out over the target and number 3 broke an oil line. We were keeping up with the formation with the two outer engines until heavy overcast and then number 4 engine lost all power. We were then 40 miles from the English Coast at 500 feet and losing altitude. Bob Bailey said to send an SOS, which I did and the crew were throwing equipment out to lighten the load. On one engine we crossed the coast at 150 to 200 feet. We landed at a Brit B24 base. We had 20mm holes in the vertical fin and horizontal stabilizer. This was the third raid on the ship. I will never forget that raid. We sure thought we would go down in Germany or the North Sea. There was a destroyer standing by in case we had to ditch in answer to my SOS.

Bill made his 25 missions and survived the war. He and Norma had 4 boys. Bill expired in 1984. I only wish we had met to say thanks and shake his hand in appreciation. There were many more Cambridge Ohio boys who served in the U.S. Army Air Corps during WW2 – w8su 2008

