

On A Wing and a Prayer

Frank Moll, the Ink Crew's Tail Gunner, flying 42-3388, *Sleepytime Gal* on Mission 27, remembers, "We were on our bomb run in #4 position when I saw the two planes in #5 and #6 positions (Pettinger and Whitlow crews) behind us off our wings get hit. I watched them bail out. 10 chutes from each plane and told Ink about them. Ink said that they had lost the two planes in front of them. I didn't know it at the time, but we had also been hit by FLAK and had lost an engine so we couldn't keep up with the planes in front of us. Ink still dropped his bombs over Munster despite us being on our own and peeled off to go back.

Ink asked over the intercom whether they should to to Switzerland or try to make it home. When no one answered, I said 'home' (still unaware we had been hit). Within five minutes, 18 German fighters attacked us for what seemed like hours even though it was minutes. In waves of three, ME 109s and FW 190s would peel off and attack from the rear as if they were practicing. When they got into range, I would let off a burst and tell link to 'kick it' and he would use the rudder to move as the Germans were forced to pass below. They couldn't follow us when we did this for two reasons: One was time and the other was because they might collide with each other. After a group would pass, they would get back in line to try again and the next wave would come in about 10 seconds later. After a few minutes of this, Ink found some cloud coverage below and dove in. When we emerged, the fighters had gone. During this time, another engine was lost. There were a few other attacks before we got to the Channel. Before we hit the Channel, another engine quit on us and we prepared to ditch as Ink nursed the remaining engine.

Upon reaching England, Ink prepared to land at the first runway he found which was a B-24 base. He called in on the radio, "I'm coming in." and the base replied that they had crippled B24s incoming and that he should circle around one time so they could work them into the formation to land, to which Ink once again said, "I'm coming in, Over and Out." And we did. As they prepared to land, the last engine quit and Ink and (Stokes Co-Pilot) made a rough "dead stick" landing and coasted as long as they could before they had to kick it off the runway. Ink must have recommended me after that mission as a few days later I received the DFC for getting us back home that day.