

Crew Missions Summary
Summer and Fall, 1944

1. Jun 23, Valenciennes La Boquette / Pas de Calais area, France:

Mission number: 1st sortie; target: enemy V-weapon installation; ten man crew: Nelson, Massaro, Willis, Staub, Nally, Steinecke, Danner, Fringer, Larkin and Lunn; crew aircraft: 705 "OLD MOE;" position for takeoff: not recorded; bomb load: twenty 250 lb general purpose bombs (5,000 lbs total); time of bomb release / altitude: 12:40 pm / 20,000 ft; results: unobserved due to complete undercast; enemy fire: none; battle damage: none; flight duration: between 5 hrs and 5 hrs 30 min; comments: Thirty-one group aircraft were dispatched with twenty-nine attacking three separate installations. Because of complete cloud obstruction over the target area, PFF radar equipment was used to sight the target. During the bomb run, Nelson's left side bomb-bay doors would not open so the bombs were salvoed through the closed doors.¹

2. Jun 25, Boulogne, France:

Mission number: 2nd sortie; target: not recorded; ten man crew: Nelson, Massaro, Hagen, Staub, Nally, Steinecke, Danner, Fringer, Larkin and Lunn; crew aircraft: 116; position for takeoff: 7th; bomb load: ten 500 lb general purpose bombs (5,000 lbs total); time of bomb release / altitude: 12:31 pm / 25,300 ft; results: good pattern; enemy fire: 12:31 pm—moderate yet accurate flak; battle damage: twelve flak holes; flight duration: 4 hrs 15 min; comments: Twenty-four group aircraft were dispatched to attack a target at St. Omer, France. However, after takeoff, Nelson joined the formation of the 446th Bombardment Group and attacked its target. Nelson was supposed to fly section one, right tail-end Charlie in the 458th's formation.²

3. Jun 28, Saarbrücken, Germany:

Mission number: 3rd sortie; target: marshalling yard; nine man crew: Nelson, Massaro, Hagen, Nally, Steinecke, Danner, Fringer, Larkin and Lunn; crew aircraft: 116; position for takeoff: 6th; bomb load: twenty 250 lb general purpose bombs (5,000 lbs total); time of bomb release / altitude: 8:57 am / 22,100 ft; results: unobserved; enemy fire: 8:55 to 8:59 am—heavy and accurate flak; battle damage: minor to moderate; flight duration: 6 hrs 30 min; comments: Thirty-five group aircraft were planned for dispatch with thirty-three attacking the target. At 8:58 am, a shell fragment from a flak burst entered the waist window at which Danner was standing. It penetrated his arm and knocked him to the floor. Nally and Fringer administered first aid and stabilized him for the return trip. Due to the serious nature of his injury, this was his last flight with the crew. Sixteen group aircraft suffered minor battle damage. For unknown reasons, Staub was not present on this crew mission or the crew missions of Jun 29 and Jul 2.³

4. Jun 29, Aschersleben, Germany:

Mission number: 4th sortie; target: Junkers airframe factory / marshalling yard; nine man crew: Nelson, Massaro, Hagen, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; crew aircraft: 705 "OLD MOE;" position for takeoff: not recorded; bomb load: eleven 500 lb general purpose bombs (5,500 lbs total); time of bomb release / altitude: 9:31 am / 22,500 ft; results: bomb hits on buildings and rail road tracks; enemy fire: 9:31 am—moderate to intense and accurate flak; battle damage: none; flight duration: between 6 hrs 25 min and 7 hrs 15 min; comments: This was Villers's first mission as Danner's replacement with Nelson's crew. Twenty-four group aircraft were planned for dispatch with nineteen attacking two targets. The majority attacked the primary target (Junkers factory) while approx five aircraft (including Nelson's) attacked a target of opportunity—noted in the mission report as "Leopolds Hall" (Steinecke recorded a marshalling yard as the target). Nelson's crew witnessed a B-24 blow up over the target area. It also witnessed a P-51 Mustang fighter crash at the coastal area on the return trip. Two group aircraft were shot down on this mission—the Hanneman Crew and the Armour Crew. Both crews safely bailed out of their stricken aircraft. A few in Armour's crew (including Charles B. Armour) evaded capture. However, all of Hanneman's crew were captured and held as POWs. Seven other group aircraft suffered minor battle damage.⁴

5. Jul 2, St. Omer/Coubronne, France:

Mission number: 5th sortie; target: enemy V-weapon installation; nine man crew: Nelson, Massaro, Hagen, Nally, Steinecke, Epley, Fringer, Larkin and Lunn; crew aircraft: 705 "OLD MOE;" position for takeoff: 6th; bomb load: twenty-four 250 lb general purpose bombs (6,000 lbs total); time of bomb release / altitude: not recorded; results: unobserved due to complete undercast; enemy fire: meager and inaccurate

flak; *battle damage*: none; *flight duration*: 5 hrs; *comments*: Twenty-four group aircraft were planned for dispatch with twenty attacking the target. Because of complete cloud obstruction over the target area, GH radio equipment was used to sight the target. No group aircraft suffered battle damage.⁵

6. Jul 6, Kiel, Germany:

Mission number: 1st abort; *target*: Krupp works; *crew*: Nelson, Steinecke, Villers (others unknown, but possibly a regular crew contingent including Massaro, Hagen, Nally, Fringer, Larkin and Lunn); *crew aircraft*: 108 “ENVY OF ‘EM ALL, II;” *position for takeoff*: not recorded; *bomb load*: not recorded (other attacking group aircraft carried ten to twelve 500 lb general purpose bombs); *flight duration*: 3 hrs 50 min; *comments*: Twenty-eight group aircraft were dispatched. After takeoff, Nelson’s aircraft lost all oil in number two engine causing it to run away several times. He turned back at 7:55 am and jettisoned the bomb load thirty miles east of Southwald. Twenty-one group aircraft continued on and attacked the target. Over the target the group encountered intense and fairly accurate flak which inflicted minor battle damage on six aircraft.⁶

7. Jul 12, Munich, Germany:

Mission number: 6th sortie; *target*: marshalling yard; *nine man crew*: Nelson, Massaro, Hagen, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; *crew aircraft*: 705 “OLD MOE;” *position for takeoff*: not recorded; *bomb load*: six 500 lb general purpose bombs and four M-17 incendiary cluster bombs (5,000 lbs total); *time of bomb release / altitude*: 1:53 pm / 23,400 ft; *results*: unobserved due to complete undercast; *enemy fire*: 12:57 pm—meager and inaccurate flak; approx 1:53 pm—intense yet inaccurate flak; *battle damage*: none; *flight duration*: 8 hrs 35 min; *comments*: Thirty group aircraft were planned for dispatch with twenty-five attacking the target. Because of complete cloud obstruction over the target area, PFF radar equipment was used to sight the target. Five group aircraft suffered minor battle damage. Additionally, two group aircraft—the [Herbert C. Hopkins Crew](#) (including navigator Arthur W. Willis, Jr. who flew with Nelson’s crew on its first mission) and the [Charles W. Quirk Crew](#) failed to return from this mission. Due to an engine malfunction, Hopkins’s crew was forced to land in Switzerland where it was interned for the remainder of the war.⁷

8. Jul 16, Saarbrucken, Germany:

Mission number: 7th sortie; *target*: marshalling yard; *nine man crew*: Nelson, Massaro, Hagen, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; *crew aircraft*: 352 “WOLVES LAIR;” *position for takeoff*: not recorded; *bomb load*: twelve 500 lb general purpose bombs (6,000 lbs total); *time of bomb release / altitude*: 9:47 am / 22,500 ft; *results*: unobserved due to undercast; *enemy fire*: 9:47 to 9:49 am—intense yet inaccurate flak; *battle damage*: none; *flight duration*: 7 hrs 5 min; *comments*: Thirty group aircraft were planned for dispatch with twenty-four attacking the target. Because of complete cloud obstruction over the target area, PFF radar equipment was used to sight the target. No group aircraft suffered battle damage. Nally reported the top turret guns in the aircraft would not fire.⁸

9. Jul 17, La Grande Vallee, France:

Mission number: 8th sortie; *target*: enemy V-weapon installation; *ten man crew*: Nelson, Massaro, Hagen, Sellers, Nally, Pientka, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; *crew aircraft*: 366 “MIZPAH;” *position for takeoff*: not recorded; *bomb load*: twelve 500 lb general purpose bombs (6,000 lbs total); *time of bomb release / altitude*: 8:27 pm / 23,000 ft; *results*: bombs hit in woods; *enemy fire*: 8:27 pm—five flak bursts behind aircraft; *battle damage*: none; *flight duration*: 4 hrs 45 min; *comments*: Thirty group aircraft were planned for dispatch with twenty-six attacking three separate installations. No group aircraft suffered battle damage.⁹

10. Jul 18, Troarn, France:

Mission number: 9th sortie; *target*: enemy troops; *nine man crew*: Nelson, Massaro, Hagen, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; *crew aircraft*: 108 “ENVY OF ‘EM ALL, II;” *position for takeoff*: 6th; *bomb load*: forty-eight 100 lb general purpose bombs (4,800 lbs total); *time of bomb release / altitude*: did not drop, bombs returned; *enemy fire*: 7:42 to 7:47 am—intense and accurate flak; *battle damage*: minor; *flight duration*: 5 hrs; *comments*: Twenty-four group aircraft were dispatched. The first section (in which Nelson’s crew flew right tail-end Charlie) did not drop its bombs—perhaps due to concerns of hitting friendly ground troops. However, the second section blanketed the area with hundreds

of 100 lb bombs. Upon debriefing, Nelson's crew reported hazy conditions but visible ground. Seventeen group aircraft suffered minor battle damage.¹⁰

11. Jul 21, Munich, Germany:

Mission number: 2nd abort; target: Dornier aircraft factory; ten man crew: Nelson, Massaro, Hagen, Levine, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; crew aircraft: 276 "ROTTEN SOCK;" position for takeoff: 17th; bomb load: ten M-17 incendiary cluster bombs (5,000 lbs total); flight duration: 2 hrs 30 min; comments: Twenty-six group aircraft were planned for dispatch. After a 5:55 am takeoff, Nelson lost number four engine. He turned back at 7:08 am, jettisoned the bomb load at 7:56 am and landed at Horsham St. Faith at 8:25 am. Twenty-three group aircraft continued on to attack the target and encountered intense and accurate flak over Munich. Fifteen group aircraft suffered minor battle damage and two suffered major.¹¹

12. Jul 24, St. Lo, France:

Mission number: 10th sortie; target: enemy troops; ten man crew: Nelson, Massaro, Hagen, Gorman, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; crew aircraft: 305 "I'LL BE BACK;" position for takeoff: not recorded; bomb load: fifty-two 100 lb general purpose bombs (5,200 lbs total); time of bomb release / altitude: did not drop, bombs returned; enemy fire: 12:15 pm—moderate and accurate flak; battle damage: none; flight duration: between 5 hrs and 5 hrs 30 min; comments: Thirty-six group aircraft were planned for dispatch with thirty-five over the target. Because of complete cloud obstruction over the target and concerns of hitting friendly ground troops in the area, the group did not drop. Eleven group aircraft suffered minor damage and one major. Nelson's crew reported an observable flak hit on a B-24 aircraft in the group behind the 458th's formation.¹²

13. Jul 31, Ludwigshafen, Germany:

Mission number: 11th sortie; target: chemical plant; ten man crew: Nelson, Massaro, Hagen, Cain, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; crew aircraft: 288; position for takeoff: not recorded; bomb load: twenty-four 250 lb general purpose bombs (6,000 lbs total); time of bomb release / altitude: 1:14 pm / 22,300 ft; results: unobserved due to undercast; enemy fire: 12:53 pm at Saarbrücken and 1:14 pm at target—intense and accurate flak; battle damage: none; flight duration: 6 hrs 15 min; comments: Thirty-six group aircraft were planned for dispatch with thirty-two attacking the target. Because of cloud obstruction over the target area, PFF radar equipment was used to sight the target. Nelson's crew witnessed Rudolf A. Neumann's aircraft go down over the target area. His aircraft received a direct flak hit in the nose. It pulled out of formation and eventually fell away in a spin. Bombardier Robert L. Levine (who had flown the Jul 21 aborted mission with Nelson's crew) was aboard the aircraft. He and three other crew members did not survive. Thirteen other group aircraft suffered minor battle damage.¹³

14. Aug 1, Belloy Sur Somme, France:

Mission number: 12th sortie; target: enemy V-weapon installation; ten man crew: Nelson, Massaro, Hagen, Cain, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; crew aircraft: 070 "ELMER;" position for takeoff: not recorded; bomb load: twenty-four 250 lb general purpose bombs (6,000 lbs total); time of bomb release / altitude: did not drop, bombs returned; enemy fire: none; battle damage: none; flight duration: 5 hrs 50 min; comments: Thirty-six group aircraft were dispatched with thirty-six over the target area. Due to cloud obstruction over the target, the group's first section lead aircraft (Nelson's section) did not drop. Some in the group sought out targets of opportunity and bombed with unobserved results. The second section received enemy ground fire which inflicted minor battle damage on four group aircraft and major damage on one.¹⁴

15. Aug 2, Mont Louis Ferme, France:

Mission number: 13th sortie; target: enemy V-weapon installation; ten man crew: Nelson, Massaro, Hagen, Cain, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; crew aircraft: 682; position for takeoff: not recorded; bomb load: twenty-four 250 lb general purpose bombs (6,000 lbs total); time of bomb release / altitude: 7:42 pm / 20,800 ft; results: bombs hit in target area; enemy fire: meager to moderate flak of fair accuracy enroute to target area; battle damage: none; flight duration: 5 hrs 45 min; comments: Thirty-six group aircraft were planned for dispatch with thirty-one attacking three installations. Eleven group aircraft suffered minor battle damage.¹⁵

16. Aug 3, St. Sylvester, France:

Mission number: 14th sortie; target: enemy V-weapon installation; ten man crew: Nelson, Massaro, Hagen, Cain, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; crew aircraft: 366 "MIZPAH;" position for takeoff: 15th; bomb load: twenty-four 250 lb general purpose bombs (6,000 lbs total); time of bomb release / altitude: 6:36 pm / 22,000 ft; results: most bombs hit in target, some short; enemy fire: at enemy coast—meager and inaccurate flak; at target—moderate flak of fair accuracy; battle damage: none; flight duration: between 4 hrs 15 min and 4 hrs 40 min; comments: Twenty-four group aircraft were planned for dispatch with twenty-two attacking two installations. Two group aircraft suffered minor battle damage.¹⁶

17. Aug 4, Rostock, Germany:

Mission number: 15th sortie; target: HE-111 aircraft factory; ten man crew: Nelson, Massaro, Hagen, Cain, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; crew aircraft: 276 "ROTTEN SOCK;" position for takeoff: 4th; bomb load: ten 500 lb general purpose bombs (5,000 lbs total); time of bomb release / altitude: 2:51 pm / 21,200 ft; results: bomb hits on row of buildings, before hangars and on hangars; enemy fire: 2:51 pm—moderate yet accurate flak; battle damage: none; flight duration: 7 hrs 30 min; comments: Twenty-four group aircraft were planned for dispatch with eighteen attacking the target. Six group aircraft suffered minor battle damage.¹⁷

18. Aug 5, Brunswick/Waggum, Germany:

Mission number: 16th sortie; target: aircraft factory; ten man crew: Nelson, Massaro, Hagen, Cain, Nally, Steinecke, Creathbaum, Fringer, Larkin and Lunn; crew aircraft: 366 "MIZPAH;" position for takeoff: 3rd; bomb load: twelve 500 lb general purpose bombs (6,000 lbs total); time of bomb release / altitude: 1:32 pm / 22,500 ft; results: bombs hit just a little long in target area; enemy fire: 1:32 pm—intense and accurate flak; battle damage: two holes in number four engine; flight duration: 7 hrs 30 min; comments: Thirty group aircraft were planned for dispatch with twenty-seven attacking the target. Nelson's crew was flying left wing on the formation leader. At the turn away from the target, Nelson had to throttle down to maintain formation with the leader. According to Steinecke, "flak knocked out one engine, and it must have wrecked our supercharger system which enabled us to fly at high altitude. Anyway, all the other engines conked out [when Nelson changed throttle] and we started to roll and turn and twist right down into Brunswick." After losing approx 10,000 ft of altitude, Nelson restored full power to the remaining good engines. Out of formation and without protection from the group, four U.S. fighter aircraft sidled up to MIZPAH and escorted her back to Horsham St. Faith. Additionally, the crew witnessed two B-24 aircraft go down at the target area—possibly belonging to another group. The crew also witnessed aircraft 359 (Prevost Crew) heading northwest just as it left the enemy coast. This aircraft ditched in the channel and all members except the co-pilot (who did not survive) were picked up by air-sea rescue service. Five other group aircraft suffered minor battle damage.¹⁸

19. Aug 8, St. Quentin, France:

Mission number: 17th sortie; target: Clastres airfield; ten man crew: Nelson, Massaro, Hagen, Cain, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; crew aircraft: 070 "ELMER;" position for takeoff: 10th; bomb load: twenty-four 250 lb general purpose bombs (6,000 lbs total); time of bomb release / altitude: 1:05 pm / 20,000 ft; results: unobserved; enemy fire: 1:05 pm—moderate yet accurate flak; battle damage: none; flight duration: 4 hrs 55 min; comments: Twenty-seven group aircraft were dispatched with all of these over the target. Nelson's crew was flying in the second section. It witnessed bombs from the first section hit all along the EW runway and bombs from another section hit the NW end of the field. Six group aircraft suffered minor battle damage.¹⁹

20. Aug 9, Saarbrucken, Germany:

Mission number: 18th sortie; target: marshalling yard; ten man crew: Nelson, Massaro, Hagen, Cain, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; crew aircraft: 070 "ELMER;" position for takeoff: not recorded; bomb load: five 1,000 lb general purpose bombs (5,000 lbs total); time of bomb release / altitude: 10:50 am / 19,000 ft; results: saw fires and smoke from vicinity of target; enemy fire: 10:50 am—intense and accurate flak; battle damage: minor; flight duration: 6 hrs; comments: Thirty-six group aircraft were planned for dispatch with twenty-five over the target. Because of cloud obstruction over the target area, PFF radar equipment was used to sight the target. Approx two minutes after bomb release, the crew

witnessed a B-24 go down spinning with its wing on fire. Although it was in the section behind, the crew could not tell if the aircraft was from the 458th. Most likely, it was not. All group aircraft returned except **the Evert R. Thompson Crew** and its demise does not fit the description of the downed aircraft given by Nelson's crew. Nineteen other group aircraft suffered minor battle damage and three major.²⁰ Steinecke also reported a tense experience which probably occurred on this mission: flak split open the gasoline lines for the number three engine spraying fuel through the bomb-bay. The aircraft lost a dangerous amount of fuel, the number three engine, and the hydraulic system. Steinecke said,

That meant we had no brakes. We could look forward to a crack-up if we made it home, and we were afraid to use our guns or radio on the way back because of the gas fumes. One spark and we'd have caught fire. As we made our landing approach two of our three good engines quit, and as we touched the runway the third died out and we coasted to a stop with no crack-up. There wasn't a drop of gasoline left.²¹

21. Aug 11, Strasbourg, Germany:

Mission number: 19th sortie; target: marshalling yard / railway; ten man crew: Nelson, Massaro, Hagen, Cain, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; crew aircraft: 070 "ELMER;" position for takeoff: 14th; bomb load: twelve 500 lb general purpose bombs (6,000 lbs total); time of bomb release / altitude: 3:20 pm / 20,300 ft; results: dropped in the city, to the left and over the target; enemy fire: 3:20 to 3:24 pm—intense and accurate flak; 4:32 and 4:35 pm—meager yet accurate flak; battle damage: minor—three flak holes; flight duration: 7 hrs; comments: Twenty-four group aircraft were planned for dispatch with twenty-one attacking the target. Unfortunately, the group attacked with poor performance and results. The first section hit the railway 2,000 yds southwest of the target. The second section (in which Nelson was flying) hit the center of the city. At debriefing, the crew reported its disgust with the lead ship which was recorded by the interrogation officer as: "Lead ship ~~very poor~~ did make use of evasive action – leading formation through flak." One of the flak bursts sent a fragment into the waist section of the aircraft where Villers was standing. The fragment which narrowly missed his left leg—the same leg which was seriously wounded by flak one year prior on Aug 15, 1943—ironically had the number "19" imprinted on it. The irony did not escape Villers, his crew members or the public relations folks. Villers was photographed holding up the fragment in front of "ELMER" and an accompanying article was published emphasizing the connection between the crew's 19th mission, the fragment with "19" stamped on it, and the narrow miss of Villers's previously wounded left leg. Fourteen group aircraft suffered minor battle damage and three major.²²

22. Aug 12, Chalon sur Marne, France:

Mission number: 20th sortie; target: airfield at Mourmelon; ten man crew: Nelson, Massaro, Hagen, Cain, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; crew aircraft: 311; position for takeoff: 9th; bomb load: twelve 500 lb general purpose bombs (6,000 lbs total); time of bomb release / altitude: 10:16 am / 20,800 ft; results: bombs hit all around target, no direct hits on target; enemy fire: 10:16 am—meager and inaccurate flak; 11:06 am—moderate yet accurate flak; battle damage: minor; flight duration: 7 hrs 10 min; comments: Twenty-four group aircraft were planned for dispatch with twenty-one attacking the target. Nine group aircraft suffered minor battle damage.²³

23. Aug 24, Brunswick/Waggum, Germany:

Mission number: 21st sortie; target: airfield; nine man crew: Nelson, Massaro, Hagen, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; crew aircraft: 516; position for takeoff: scheduled 4th position—late takeoff (see comments); bomb load: twenty 250 lb general purpose bombs (5,000 lbs total); time of bomb release / altitude: 11:18 am / 22,000 ft; results: generally good, across target area; enemy fire: 11:18 am—intense and accurate flak; battle damage: none; flight duration: 7 hrs; comments: Thirty-six group aircraft were planned for dispatch to attack the Misburg oil refinery near Hannover, Germany. Nelson's crew was scheduled to fly aircraft 305 "I'LL BE BACK." However, perhaps due to a malfunction, aircraft 516 was taken instead and the crew took off late at 8:33 am. Because of the late takeoff, Nelson could not form with the 458th. He hooked onto the formation of the 453rd Bombardment Group and bombed its primary target.²⁴

24. Aug 25, Lubeck, Germany:

Mission number: 22nd sortie; target: Dornier aircraft factory; nine man crew: Nelson, Massaro, Hagen, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; crew aircraft: 059; position for takeoff: 16th; bomb load: ten 500 lb general purpose bombs (5,000 lbs total); time of bomb release / altitude: 12:14 pm / 21,500 ft; results: bomb hits all along waterfront in target area; enemy fire: 10:41 am—accurate flak; approx 12:14 pm—moderate yet inaccurate flak; battle damage: none; flight duration: 7 hrs 40 min; comments: Twenty-four group aircraft were planned for dispatch with twenty-two attacking the target. A three gun battery opened up on the group enroute to the target. A flak burst from this battery found the wing of the Francis H. Morris aircraft. Morris was flying on Nelson's immediate left. Nelson's crew reported "rt. wing on fire – flew 15 minutes on fire – 4-2-2-2 'chutes – didn't go out of control till last 2 'chutes." After the crew bailed out, the aircraft went into a spin and exploded. Although Nelson's crew reported ten 'chutes seen, three crew members either failed to get out or were blown out of the aircraft when it exploded. The remaining seven (some burned by the fire and explosion) were captured and held as POWs.²⁵

25. Sept 8, Karlsruhe, Germany:

Mission number: 23rd sortie; target: marshalling yard; nine man crew: Nelson, Massaro, Hagen, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; crew aircraft: 276 "ROTTEN SOCK;" position for takeoff: 11th; bomb load: six 1,000 lb general purpose bombs (6,000 lbs total); time of bomb release / altitude: 11:51 am / 24,000 ft; results: uncertain; enemy fire: 11:51 am—moderate yet accurate flak; battle damage: minor—small flak holes; flight duration: 9 hrs; comments: Twenty-four group aircraft were planned for dispatch with twenty-two attacking the target. The first section's bombs (Nelson's section) hit the target and to the south, while those of the second section hit the target and to the north. Eleven group aircraft suffered minor battle damage and one suffered major.²⁶

26. Sept 9, Mainz, Germany:

Mission number: 24th sortie; target: marshalling yard; nine man crew: Nelson, Massaro, Hagen, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; crew aircraft: 366 "MIZPAH;" position for takeoff: 2nd; bomb load: twenty 250 lb general purpose bombs (5,000 lbs total); time of bomb release / altitude: 11:05 am / 23,000 ft; results: unobserved due to complete undercast; enemy fire: 11:05 am— moderate and inaccurate flak; battle damage: small holes and change of propeller; flight duration: 7 hrs 15 min; comments: Twenty-four group aircraft were planned for dispatch with nineteen attacking the target. Because of complete cloud obstruction over the target area, PFF radar equipment was used to sight the target. At 11:50 am, the aircraft flown by the Paul Stoneburner Crew developed engine trouble necessitating a bail out order. All crew safely exited the plane. Most evaded capture and returned to service. Three were captured and taken POW. Six group aircraft suffered minor battle damage.²⁷

27. Sept 11, Magdeburg, Germany:

Mission number: 25th sortie; target: synthetic oil plant; nine man crew: Nelson, Massaro, Hagen, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; crew aircraft: 070 "ELMER;" position for takeoff: not recorded; bomb load: fifty 100 lb general purpose bombs (5,000 lbs total); time of bomb release / altitude: 12:27 pm / 22,300 ft; results: unobserved due to complete undercast; enemy fire: 11:23 am—moderate yet accurate flak; approx 12:27 pm—meager yet accurate flak; enroute from target—meager and inaccurate flak; battle damage: minor—small holes; flight duration: 7 hrs 45 min; comments: Thirty group aircraft were planned for dispatch with twenty-five attacking the target. Nelson's crew reported aircraft 314 (Thomas G. Horgan's crew) hit by flak over Koblenz. Engine number one was feathered and six or seven parachutes were seen. The aircraft continued to fly at approx 10,000 ft for one-half hour, under control, when last seen. (All members of Horgan's crew eventually bailed out safely and the entire crew was captured and held as POWs.) Because of complete cloud obstruction over the target area, PFF radar equipment was used to sight the target. Twenty other group aircraft suffered minor battle damage and one suffered major. This was Hagen's final sortie mission with Nelson's crew.²⁸

28-36. Sept 18-30, Clastres, Lillie, and St. Dizier, France:

Mission numbers: 1st through 9th fuel hauling missions; destinations: airfields at above towns; probable five man crew for most missions: Nelson, Massaro, Hagen, Nally and Steinecke; crew aircraft: unknown; fuel load: between 1,662 and 1,710 gallons; flight duration: between 3 to 5 hrs; comments: After the Sept 11 mission, the group stood down from operational combat missions to ferry fuel to General Patton's forces

in France. These missions were dubbed “truckin’ missions” and no mission credit was awarded to participating crews. Essentially, B-24 aircraft were converted into flying gas tanks with bomb-bays and waist compartments loaded with fuel. The missions were hazardous as crews were required to fly into combat zones with thousands of pounds of high octane fuel aboard. While flying over Ostend, Belgium, Nelson’s crew came under fire from an enemy ground battery. Additionally, two group aircraft were lost on these missions: on Sept 20, [Herbert Humke’s crew](#) crashed on takeoff, killing all six crew members. On Sept 24, while returning from St. Dizier, George J. Koehn’s seven man crew was shot down over the Dutch coast. Six crew members were killed.²⁹

37. Oct 5, Paderborn, Germany:

Mission number: 26th sortie; *target:* airfield; *nine man crew:* Nelson, Massaro, Geiger, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; *crew aircraft:* 366 “MIZPAH;” *position for takeoff:* 16th; *bomb load:* twelve 500 lb general purpose bombs (6,000 lbs total); *time of bomb release / altitude:* 12:01 pm / 22,800 ft; *results:* crew reported it believed most bombs hit southwest edge of target with a few falling over; *enemy fire:* none; *battle damage:* none; *flight duration:* between 5 hrs 40 min and 6 hrs 30 min; *comments:* Twenty-seven group aircraft were planned for dispatch with twenty-three attacking the target. Because Nelson picked up mission credit while assigned to the 450th at Manduria, Italy, he completed his quota of missions on this date. Hereafter, crew command passed to his co-pilot, Massaro.³⁰

38. Oct 14, Cologne, Germany:

Mission number: 27th sortie; *target:* marshalling yard; *nine man crew:* Massaro, Coode, Bradley, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; *crew aircraft:* 070 “ELMER;” *position for takeoff:* not recorded; *bomb load:* sixteen 250 lb general purpose bombs and four M-17 incendiary cluster bombs (6,000 lbs total); *time of bomb release / altitude:* 12:25 pm / 23,000 ft; *results:* bomb hits all over the city, many large fires; *enemy fire:* 12:22 to 12:28—intense and accurate flak; *battle damage:* minor; *flight duration:* 5 hrs 45 min; *comments:* An uncertain number of group aircraft were planned for dispatch with thirty-three attacking the target. Although the group bombed with the assistance of PFF radar equipment (indicating undercast conditions), and group records indicate there were no observations due to weather conditions, Massaro’s crew reported seeing hits in the city with large fires. It also reported seeing one B-24 ahead of the group blow up over Cologne. Additionally, [the William Klusmeyer Crew](#) was hit by flak at 12:35 pm. It dropped out of formation with number one engine smoking and then disappeared beneath the undercast. After bomb release, Massaro deviated from the briefed route—he turned left at Cologne and returned alone. One M-17 bomb which did not come off Massaro’s rack was returned. Twenty-nine group aircraft suffered minor battle damage and one suffered major.³¹

39. Oct 19, Mainz, Germany:

Mission number: 28th sortie; *target:* marshalling yard; *ten man crew:* Massaro, Coode, Bradley, Finlayson, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; *crew aircraft:* 126 “SKY TRAMP;” *position for takeoff:* not recorded; *bomb load:* twelve 250 lb general purpose bombs and six M-17 incendiary cluster bombs (6,000 lbs total); *time of bomb release / altitude:* 12:44 pm / 25,400 ft; *results:* unobserved due to undercast; *enemy fire:* 12:40 pm—moderate to heavy yet inaccurate flak; *battle damage:* minor—two flak holes; *flight duration:* 6 hrs 15 min; *comments:* Thirty group aircraft were planned for dispatch with twenty attacking the target. Because of complete cloud obstruction over the target area, PFF radar equipment was used to sight the target. Weather conditions at the target were not as predicted, necessitating a change in altitude from the briefed 23,000 ft to 25,400 ft. Ten group aircraft suffered minor battle damage.³²

40. Oct 30, Harburg (Hamburg), Germany:

Mission number: 29th sortie; *target:* oil refinery; *nine man crew:* Massaro, Coode, Bradley, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; *crew aircraft:* 108 “ENVY OF ‘EM ALL, II;” *position for takeoff:* not recorded; *bomb load:* twenty-four 250 lb general purpose bombs (6,000 lbs total); *time of bomb release / altitude:* 1:22 pm / 27,500 ft; *results:* unobserved; *enemy fire:* 1:20 to 1:25 pm—moderate and accurate flak; *battle damage:* none; *flight duration:* 6 hrs 30 min; *comments:* Forty group aircraft were planned for dispatch with thirty attacking the target. [The William H. Curland Crew](#) failed to return from this mission. Curland was flying tail-end Charlie (no other details given). One group aircraft suffered minor battle damage and four suffered major.³³

41. Nov 2, Bielefeld, Germany:

Mission number: 30th sortie; *target:* railroad intersection/communications hub; *ten man crew:* Massaro, Sherrill, Bradley, Clachko, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; *crew aircraft:* 298 "THE SHACK;" *position for takeoff:* 9th; *bomb load:* sixteen 250 lb general purpose bombs and four M-17 incendiary cluster bombs (6,000 lbs total); *time of bomb release / altitude:* 12:21 pm / 23,400 ft; *results:* unclear; *enemy fire:* none; *battle damage:* none; *flight duration:* 6 hrs; *comments:* Thirty group aircraft were dispatched with thirty attacking. A premature release due to mechanical failure in the group leader's aircraft resulted in poor group bombing accuracy. Clachko finished his quota of combat missions on this date.³⁴

42. Nov 4, Hannover/Misburg, Germany:

Mission number: 31st sortie; *target:* oil refinery at Misburg; *ten man crew:* Massaro, Brice, Bradley, Finlayson, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; *crew aircraft:* 179; *position for takeoff:* not recorded; *bomb load:* twelve 500 lb general purpose bombs (6,000 lbs total); *time of bomb release / altitude:* 12:05 pm / 24,000 ft; *results:* unobserved due to undercast; *enemy fire:* 11:29 am—meager flak of fair accuracy; 12:05 pm—intense and accurate flak; 1:25 pm—meager and inaccurate flak; *battle damage:* none; *flight duration:* 6 hrs 30 min; *comments:* Thirty-nine group aircraft were planned for dispatch with thirty-six attacking. Because of cloud obstruction over the target area, PFF radar equipment was used to sight the target. A few openings in the clouds allowed some group aircraft to observe that bombing results were again poor, with bomb hits approx six miles east of the target. One group aircraft suffered minor battle damage and ten suffered major.³⁵

43. Nov 8, Rheine, Germany:

Mission number: 32nd sortie; *target:* marshalling yard; *nine man crew:* Massaro, Sherrill, Bradley, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; *crew aircraft:* 183 "BRINEY MARLIN;" *position for takeoff:* not recorded; *bomb load:* twelve 500 lb general purpose bombs (6,000 lbs total); *time of bomb release / altitude:* 11:30 am / 22,700 ft; *results:* bomb hits were long; *enemy fire:* 11:30 am—meager and inaccurate flak; *battle damage:* none; *flight duration:* between 5 hrs 30 min and 5 hrs 45 min; *comments:* Twenty-nine group aircraft were planned for dispatch with twenty-three attacking four separate targets. Massaro's mission report indicates he bombed the secondary target. Because of cloud obstruction over the target area, PFF equipment was used to sight the targets. Breaks in the clouds must have allowed Massaro's crew to observe its bomb hits. Two group aircraft suffered minor battle damage.³⁶

44. Nov 10, Hanau, Germany:

Mission number: 33rd sortie; *target:* airfield; *nine man crew:* Massaro, Sherrill, Bradley, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Villers; *crew aircraft:* 298 "THE SHACK;" *position for takeoff:* 11th; *bomb load:* forty 100 lb general purpose bombs (4,000 lbs total); *time of bomb release / altitude:* 12:44 pm / 24,900 ft; *results:* unobserved; *enemy fire:* none; *battle damage:* none; *flight duration:* 7 hrs 50 min; *comments:* Twenty-nine group aircraft were planned for dispatch with twenty-eight attacking the target. Because of cloud obstruction over the target area, GH radio equipment was used to sight the target. The crew reported the hydraulic lines out through mechanical failure. Villers completed his quota of combat missions on this date.³⁷

45. Nov 16, Aachen/Eschweiler, Germany:

Mission number: 34th sortie; *target:* enemy troops and gun emplacements; *nine man crew:* Massaro, Sherrill, Bradley, Nally, Steinecke, Fringer, Larkin, Lunn and Neudorff; *crew aircraft:* 199; *position for takeoff:* 27th; *bomb load:* twenty 260 lb fragment bombs (5,200 lbs total); *time of bomb release / altitude:* 12:44 pm / 21,500 ft; *results:* bomb hits in target area; *enemy fire:* approx 12:44 pm—meager yet accurate flak; *battle damage:* none; *flight duration:* 5 hrs 10 min to 6 hrs; *comments:* Thirty-eight group aircraft were planned for dispatch. At takeoff, weather conditions were extremely poor—visibility 500 yds in fog. Despite the weather, the group attacked the target with thirty-three group aircraft (along with other groups in the 2nd Bombardment Division) with very good results. General J.H. Doolittle (commanding general of the 8th Army Air Force) was extremely pleased with the results of this mission and delivered a personal commendation to be brought to the attention of all personnel in the 2nd Bombardment Division. Eight group aircraft suffered minor battle damage. Considering the poor bombing results from the earlier

November missions, it must have been satisfying for the members of Nelson's former crew to finish their combat tour with this mission.³⁸

Endnotes to Crew Missions Summary:

¹ Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth*, pp. 102-103; Group Records, 6/44; Misc. papers, Danner; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Mission Report, 6/23/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04. Danner, Nally and Steinecke recorded “Valenciennes La Boquette” as the crew’s destination; the mission report recorded “Blangermont.” Danner’s and Steinecke’s IFRs recorded 5 hrs flight duration; Nally recorded 5 hrs 30 min.

² Group Records, 6/44; Misc. papers, Danner; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Mission Report, 6/25/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04.

³ Danner, CE, interview; Group Records, 6/44; Misc. papers, Danner; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Mission Report, 6/28/44; Nally, interview, 10/10/03, 10/26/03 and 3/5/04.

⁴ Group Records, 6/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 6/29/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04. Steinecke’s and Villers’s IFRs recorded 6 hrs 25 min flight duration, Nally recorded 6 hrs 50 min and Villers recorded 7 hrs 15 min. For brief histories and pictures of the Armour and Hanneman crews see Scorza at <http://www.458bg.com/crewperkinson.htm>, <http://www.458bg.com/crew65hannaman.htm> and <http://www.458bg.com/crewarmour.htm> (accessed 7/25/05).

⁵ Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth*, pp. 102-103; Group Records, 7/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Mission Report, 7/2/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04.

⁶ Group Records, 7/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 7/6/44.

⁷ Group Records, 7/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 7/12/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04. For a brief history and picture of the Hopkins Crew see Scorza at <http://www.458bg.com/crewaa25hopkins.htm> (accessed 7/22/05).

⁸ Group Records, 7/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 7/16/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04.

⁹ Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth*, pp. 102-103; Group Records, 7/44; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 7/17/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04. Villers recorded “Dieppe” as the mission destination. The results of the crew’s bomb drop are unclear in the mission report: “in woods – think it [illegible word] target [illegible word].” Group records indicate the drop was in the target area with good results. Despite Nelson’s crew report of five flak bursts seen, group records indicate no flak was directed at the group.

¹⁰ Group Records, 7/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 7/18/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04.

¹¹ Group Records, 7/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 7/21/44.

¹² Group Records, 7/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 7/24/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04. Nally recorded 5 hrs flight duration; all other sources recorded 5 hrs 30 min.

¹³ Group Records, 7/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 7/31/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04; Reynolds, p. 77.

¹⁴ Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth*, pp. 102-103; Group Records, 8/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 8/1/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04. Group records indicate the formation bombed several targets of opportunity. However, Nelson’s mission report clearly states “Lead ship did not drop.” The formation plan called for twelve aircraft in each of three sections. If the formation adhered to the plan,

then the first twelve aircraft may not have dropped while the trailing two sections sought out targets of opportunity.

¹⁵ Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth*, pp. 102-103; Group Records, 8/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 8/2/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04. Steinecke's and Villers's IFRs recorded 5 hrs 40 min flight duration; Nally and Villers recorded 5 hrs 45 min. Despite Nelson's report of bomb hits in the target area, group records indicate all three targets were attacked with poor results.

¹⁶ Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth*, pp. 102-103; Group Records, 8/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 8/3/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04. Nally recorded 4 hrs 15 min flight duration; Steinecke's and Villers's IFRs recorded 4 hrs 40 min.

¹⁷ Group Records, 8/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 8/4/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04.

¹⁸ Group Records, 8/44; Massaro, interview, 10/19/03; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Mission Report, 8/5/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04. Massaro and Nally both recalled relatively vivid recollections of this mission during interviews with the author.

¹⁹ Group Records, 8/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 8/8/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04.

²⁰ Group Records, 8/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 8/9/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04. The mission report indicates that Nelson bombed the secondary target (the primary was perhaps a ball bearing plant on the edge of Stuttgart). The mission report also indicates the method of sighting was visual; the group records indicate the method of sighting was through the assistance of PFF radar equipment.

²¹ Misc. papers, Steinecke. Steinecke's account was related to a reporter circa Mar 5-16, 1945. He told the reporter the damage to the aircraft occurred while over Saarbrucken. Although the mission report gives little indication that this happened on this particular mission, it is the only mission (other than the Jun 28 mission in which Danner was wounded) in which the crew received fire over Saarbrucken resulting in battle damage. Nally also recalled the experience which closely parallels Steinecke's account: "once, I think we got a bad hit in the fuel lines, gas was pouring through the darn thing, and we just about got back to the airfield and the plane just got over the fence when the last engine conked out and we just plopped down onto the ground. Just plopped down, straight down on the ground. They had to tow the plane in, didn't even make the runway, it made the grass strip in front of the runway (Nally, interview, 10/26/03)."

²² Group Records, 8/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 8/11/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04. Villers's picture and accompanying public relations article can be seen at Scorza, <http://www.458bg.com/crewnelson.htm> (accessed 10/18/05).

²³ Group Records, 8/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 8/12/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04.

²⁴ Group Records, 8/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 8/24/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04.

²⁵ Group Records, 8/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 8/25/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04. For a brief history and picture of the Morris Crew see Scorza at <http://www.458bg.com/crewaa05morris.htm> (accessed 7/27/05).

²⁶ Group Records, 9/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 9/8/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04.

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- ²⁷ Group Records, 9/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 9/9/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04. For a brief history and picture of the Stoneburner Crew see Scorza at <http://www.458bg.com/crewaa39stoneburner.htm> (accessed 7/27/05).
- ²⁸ Group Records, 9/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 9/11/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04. For a brief history and picture of the Horgan Crew see Scorza at <http://www.458bg.com/crewj4horgan.htm> (accessed 7/27/05).
- ²⁹ Group records, 9/44; Misc. papers, Nelson; Misc. papers, Steinecke. Nelson's separation report indicates he flew nine fuel hauling missions. No dates of these missions are given. Steinecke's IFR lists six dates that were probably flown with Nelson: Sept 18, 23, 27, 29 (2X) and 30. Between Sept 18 and Sept 30 the 458th ferried fuel for thirteen days. For a brief history and pictures of the Koehn Crew see Scorza at <http://www.458bg.com/crewbj21koehn.htm> (accessed 9/17/05).
- ³⁰ Group Records, 10/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 10/5/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04. Steinecke's and Villers's IFRs recorded 5 hrs 40 min flight duration; Nally and Villers recorded 6 hrs 30 min.
- ³¹ Group Records, 10/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 10/14/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04.
- ³² Group Records, 10/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 10/19/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04.
- ³³ Group Records, 10/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 10/30/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04.
- ³⁴ Group Records, 11/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 11/2/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04.
- ³⁵ Group Records, 11/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 11/4/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04.
- ³⁶ Group Records, 11/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 11/8/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04. Steinecke's and Villers's IFRs recorded 5 hrs 30 min flight duration; Nally and Villers recorded 5 hrs 45 min.
- ³⁷ Group Records, 11/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Misc. papers, Villers; Mission Report, 11/10/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04.
- ³⁸ Group Records, 11/44; Misc. papers, Steinecke; Mission Report, 11/16/44; Nally, interview, 3/5/04. Nally recorded 5 hrs 10 min flight duration; Steinecke's IFR recorded 6 hrs.