



Shipping out, 1943

# EDWARD B. MIERZEJEWSKI

SSgt 2<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Group, 49<sup>th</sup> and 96<sup>th</sup> Squadrons  
European African Middle Eastern Theatre  
Ball Turret Gunner, B17s  
July – November 1944

# TIMELINE EDWARD B. MIERZEJEWSKI

- Inducted into the US Army 21 July 1943 at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana
- Sperry gun training and flight training at Las Vegas Air Field, February 1944. Involved in accidental mechanical failure of a B17G.
- Further training at MacDill Field, Florida May-June 1944. A number of these men flew in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Group on missions with my father. (I've included a photo with identification of all in this training group.)
- Sent to European African Middle Theatre, arriving 3 July 1944. Handwritten log of missions.
- First was a member of the 49<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squad and then transferred to the 96<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squad as a ball turret gunner on B17s.

# TIMELINE EDWARD B. MIERZEJEWSKI (CONT'D.)

- Involved in missions aimed at Verona, Ploesti, Memminham, San Vallier, Ordetal, and Blechhammer, and other targets.
- Mission 234 over Memmingham, Germany was in the Flying Latrine.
- Mission 263 over Moravska Ostrava, Czechoslovakia.
- Last mission, #306, over Brux Czechoslovakia noted in his journal as FINITO! This mission occurred on 11 November 1944. He was given leave to go home to celebrate his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday on 23 December in Toledo, Ohio.

# SPERRY GUN TRAINING/TRAINING LAS VEGAS AIR FIELD FEBRUARY 1944

- Training on B17G
- Mechanical failure of right landing gear, wheel did not completely come down, retracting mechanism failed.
- No injuries.
- Crew/men involved: 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Ernest R. Agnew Pilot, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. James C. Harris Pilot, Sgt Henry W. Luce, S/Sgt Jerry D. Johnson, PFC Warren Spence, Pvt Camden W. Michael, Cpl Carroll E. Theriault, Pvt John L. Funkhouser, PFC Gordon V. Wescott, Pvt Henry W. Means, Pvt James E. Ringham (unsure of surname), Pvt Edward B. Mierzejewski

# MISSIONS WHILE IN EUROPEAN AFRICAN MIDDLE THEATRE THEATRE

The following slides contain my father's handwritten log of his missions. Where the data he recorded varies from what is on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Group's database on its website, the entry is noted in orange. In one instance, an entire mission is missing from my father's log (October 17, 1944 over Blechhammer).

There is some numbering with each mission recorded on the handwritten log, although I do not understand what these numbers refer to. Perhaps someone will understand.

# MISSIONS

## 49<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squad 2<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Group (H)

1. July 13, 1944 Verona, N. Italy, Railroad Bridge Mission 230 Aircraft 2102830
2. July 15, 1944 Ploesti, Rumania Oil Refinery Mission 232 Aircraft 238205
3. July 18, 1944 Memmingham Germany, Airdrome Mission 234 Aircraft 46176

## July 20, 1944 Transfer to 96<sup>th</sup> B.S., 2<sup>nd</sup> B.G (H)

4. July 31, 1944 Ploesti Rumania Oil Refinery Mission 243 Aircraft 46289
5. August 16, 1944 San Valier, France Railroad Bridge Mission 253 Aircraft 48103
6. August 18, 1944 Ploesti, Rumania Oil Refinery Mission 253 Aircraft 46289
7. August 22, 1944 Ordetal, Germany Oil Refinery Mission 256 Aircraft 46116

49 Bomb Sqd - 2nd Bomb Gr. (H)

July 13	①	①
Verona N. Italy, R.R. bridge		
July 15	②	②
Ploesti Rumania Oil refinery		
July 18	③+④	③
Memmingham Germany, Airdrome		
July 20		
Transfer to 96 B.S. 2nd B.G. (H)		
July 31	⑤	⑤
Ploesti Rumania Oil refinery		
Aug. 16	⑥	⑥
San Valier France R.R. bridge		
Aug. 18	⑦+⑧	⑦
Ploesti Rumania Oil refinery		
Aug. 22	⑨+⑩	⑨
Ordetal Germany Oil refinery		

## MISSIONS (CONT'D.)

8. August 23, 1944 Vienna, Austria Oil Refinery  
Mission 257 Aircraft 231473
9. August 24, 1944 Pardubice, Czechoslovakia  
Aircraft Plant Mission 258 Aircraft 48167
10. August 25, 1944 Spare. The log I have  
indicates that this was Mission 259, Brno  
Czechslovakia.
11. August 26, 1944 Venzone, Italy, Viaduct,  
Mission 260 Aircraft 297161
12. August 27, 1944 Bechhammer, Germany, Oil  
Refinery, Mission 261 Aircraft 297508
13. August 28, 1944 Moosbierbaum, Austria, Oil  
Refinery, Mission 262 Aircraft 297161
14. August 29 Provasa Czechslovakia, Oil  
Refinery, Mission 263, Aircraft 46414
15. September 3, 1944 Sava Railroad Bridge,  
Belgrade, Yugoslavia, Mission 266, Aircraft  
46443

Aug. 23 (11)+(12) (8)  
 Wienamendorf Vienna Austria Oil refinery  
 Aug. 24 (13)+(14) (9)  
 Pardubice Czechslovakia Aircraft plant  
 Aug. 25  
 Spare  
 Aug. 26 (15) (10)  
 Venzone N. Italy, viaduct  
 Aug. 27 (16)+(17) (11)  
 Bechhammer Germany, oil refinery  
 Aug. 28 (18)+(19) (12)  
 Moosbierbaum Austria, oil refinery  
 Aug. 29 (20)+(21) (13)  
 Provasa Czechslovakia oil refinery  
 Sept. 3 (22) (14)  
 Belgrade Yugoslavia, R.R. bridge



## MISSIONS (CONT'D.)

16. September 4, 1944 Genoa Italy, Submarine Plant (?), Mission 268, Aircraft 297438
17. September 5, 1944 Budapest Hungary Railroad Bridge, Mission 269, Aircraft 46399
18. September 10, 1944 Vienna Austria, Oil Storage Tanks, Mission 272, Aircraft 297438
19. September 12, 1944 Ulm Germany, Jet Propelled Aircraft Plant, Mission 273, Aircraft 440912
20. September 13, 1944 Blechhammer Germany, Administrative Buildings, Mission 274, Aircraft 46379
21. September 15, 1944 Athens, Greece, Khalkis Airdrome, Mission 275, Aircraft 46395
22. September 17, 1944 Budapest, Hungary, Marshalling Yard, Mission 276, Aircraft 29716
23. September 20, 1944 Budapest Hungary, Railroad Bridge, Mission 278, Aircraft 2107006

Sept. 4. (23) (13)  
 Genoa N. Italy submarine plant  
 Sept. 5 (24) (16)  
 Budapest Hungary R.R. bridge  
 Sept. 10 (25 + 26) (17)  
 Vienna Austria oil storage tanks  
 Sept. 12 (27 + 28) (18)  
 Ulm Germany jet propelled aircraft plant  
 Sept. 13 (29 + 30) (19)  
 Blechhammer Germany administrative buildings  
 Sept. 15 (31) (20)  
 Athens Greece Khalkis airdrome  
 Sept. 17 (32) (21)  
 Budapest Hungary Marshalling yard  
 Sept. 20 (33)  
 Budapest Hungary R.R. bridge



## MISSIONS (CONT'D.)

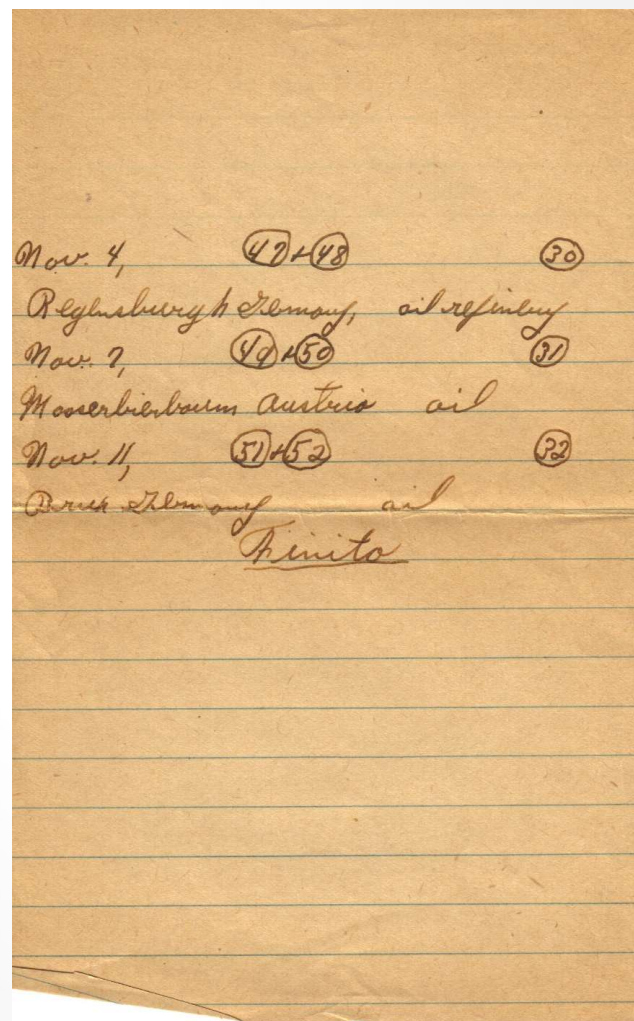
24. September 22, 1944 Munich, Germany,  
Aircraft Engine Factory, Mission 280, Aircraft  
46395
25. September 24 – 30, 1944, Rest Camp, Rome
26. October 7, 1944, Vienna, Austria,  
Underground Oil, Mission 284, Aircraft 297438
27. October 12, 1944 Bologna, Italy, German  
Bivouac Area, Mission 288, Aircraft 2107006
28. October 13, 1944 Blechhammer Germany,  
Oil Refinery, Mission 289, Aircraft 46395
29. October 17, 1944. ERT? Mission 293, This is not  
noted in the handwritten log.
30. October 20, 1944 Brux Germany, Oil Storage  
Tanks, Mission 294, Aircraft 46414
31. October 23, Pilsen Czechoslovakia, Skoda Steel  
Works, Mission 295, Aircraft 46414
32. November 1, 1944, Vienna Austria,  
Ordnance Depot, Mission 300, Aircraft  
338483

Sept. 22 (34)(35) (23)  
 Munich Germany, Aircraft engine factory  
 Sept 24 - 30  
 Rest Camp, Rome  
 Oct 7 (36)(37) (24)  
 Vienna Austria, underground oil,  
 Oct 12 (38) (25)  
 Bologna N. Italy German bivouac area.  
 Oct 13 (39)(40) (26)  
 Blechhammer Germany oil refinery  
 Oct 20 (41)(42) (27)  
 Brux Germany oil storage tanks  
 Oct 23 (43)(44) (28)  
 Pilsen Germany, Skoda steel works  
 Nov. 1, (45)(46) (29)  
 Graz Austria ordnance depot

## MISSIONS (CONT'D.)

- 33. November 4, 1944 Regensburg, Germany,  
Oil Refinery, Mission 303, Aircraft 338483
- 34. November 7, 1944 Moosbierbaum, Aistria,  
Oil, Mission 305, Aircraft 338483
- 35. November 11, 1944 Brux, Czechoslovakia, Oil,  
Mission 308, Aircraft 46414

FINITO



# PHOTO WITH BALL TURRET AND GUN



Unknown location, taken sometime during 1944 in Europe.

My father gave this photo to a cousin, Milton Mierzejewski, Jr. Milton contacted me and provided me with the photo.

# FLYING LATRINE



Flown July 18, 1944 Memmingham Germany, Airdrome Mission 234 Aircraft 46176. Photo courtesy of Antone Sousa, nephew of George Ratje.



# CREW 211, MACDILL AIR FIELD FLORIDA JUNE 1944



Photo taken June 10, 1944.

My father inscribed each of the names of the men he trained with. Several served with him in the 49<sup>th</sup> and 96<sup>th</sup>.

Inscription is on back of photo and follows on next slide. The inscription is transcribed on the next slide.

# CREW 211, MACDILL AIR FIELD FLORIDA JUNE 1944

MacDill Field June 10 1944  
Crew 221

TOP ROW  
LEFT TO RIGHT

PILOT	FLIGHT OFFICER	RAMSEY	CALIFORNIA
CO-PILOT	"	"	"
NAVIGATOR	"	VAUGHN	NEW YORK
COMMANDER	"	PECK	PENNSYLVANIA
ENGINEER	SGT	STICKLAND	VIRGINIA
		TAGUE	CHICAGO ILL.

BOTTOM ROW  
KNEELING

ASSIT. ENGINEER	CPL.	REYNOLDS	WAIST GUNNER	OKLAHOMA
RADIO OPERATOR	SGT.	BARTH		
ASSIT. RADIO OPERATOR		ME.	BALL TURRET GUNNER	PENNSYLVANIA
ARMOURER	SGT.	CASEY	WAIST GUNNER	OHIO
ASSIT. ARMOURER	SGT.	RATJE	TAIL GUNNER	NEW YORK
				CALIFORNIA

## Transcription

MacDill Field, June 10, 1944

Crew 221

June 10, 1944

Top Row

Left to Right

Pilot Flight Officer Ramsey, California

Co-Pilot Flight Officer Vaughn, New York

Navigator Flight Officer Peck, Pennsylvania

Commander Flight Officer Strickland,  
Virginia

Engineer Sgt. Tague, Chicago, Ill.

Bottom Row, Kneeling

Assit. Engineer Cpl. Reynolds, Waist Gunner,  
Oklahoma

Radio Operator Sgt. Barth, Pennsylvania

Me (Edward Mierzejewski), Ball Turret  
Gunner, Ohio

Armourer Sgt Casey, Waist Gunner, New  
York

Assit. Armourer Sgt. Ratje, Tail Gunner,  
California



# LONE WOLF MISSION

- The following slides contain scans of a story my father kept that was published in Yank Magazine, the Army Weekly, Vol 3 No 32: January 26, 1945
- My father wrote at the top, “this happened in my outfit and is a true story.”
- I do not believe my father was involved in this mission. However, this may be interesting reference material for someone else.
- A copy of this story is online at <https://archive.org/details/1945-01-26YankMagazine/page/n9>, produced by the University of Michigan.

# LONE WOLF MISSION

*This happened in my  
outfit and it's a true  
story.*

## Lone-Wolf Mission

**One of the first night-bombing heavies to fly solo from Italy over Germany loses three of its engines and crashes in the sea.**

By Cpl. GEORGE BARRETT  
YANK Staff Correspondent

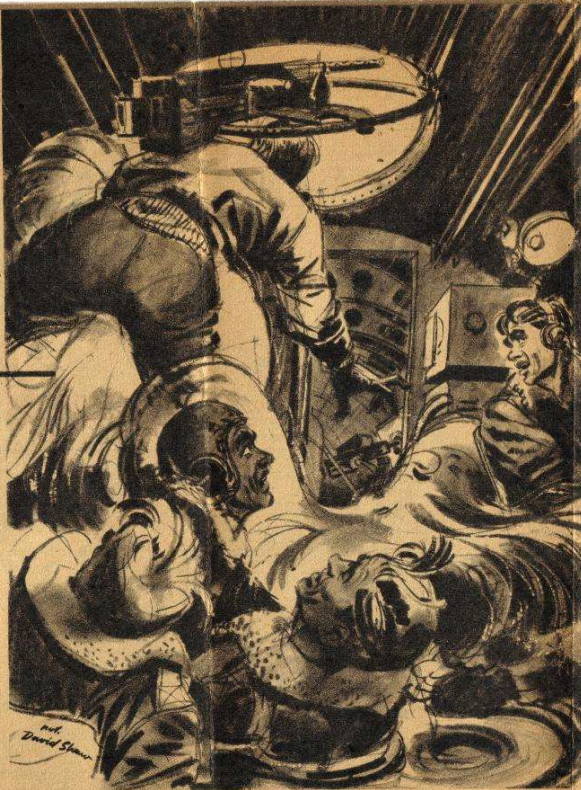
**I**TALY—The four Fifteenth Air Force B-17 crews stood in the large stone room with the secret maps, listening to the intelligence major. "Your target will be the Blechhammer South Oil Refinery in Germany," the major said.

Nobody moved for a minute, then someone in the back of the room sighed and a pilot sucked in his breath.

"Son of a bitch," he said.

"Your call sign is Lonesome," said the major.

The sign was appropriate. We were to fly this night as lone wolves without fighter protection. If we succeeded, it meant that American heavy bombers would no longer have to remain grounded, as they did last winter when weather made formation flying under escort impossible. The four Fortresses from our group were to take off at close intervals, and bombers from other groups were to fly at the same time to the same target. The bombers, each flying over a different route and at a different altitude and speed, would



Water swept into the ditched B-17 against the men in the radio compartment.

through the overcast and blinked out. Once I looked down and saw the flash of artillery fire. I pointed it out to the right waist gunner, S/Sgt. James F. Goodrich of Royal Center, Ind.

"It's the Russians," he said.

The flight went on. I got sleepy. Then the voice

The emergency catch was pulled on the door and it catapulted out. I snapped my parachute on the harness and yanked at the crotch to make sure it would be snug when I jumped. I took off my glasses and slipped them into a knee pocket.

"How about throwing some of the heavy stuff over?" the pilot said.

Scott came forward from the tail and we began to throw out the gun belts. The right waist gun was cleared first and 97 pounds of shells clicked across the jamb and snaked earthward. The other belt followed, and then our flak vests and anything we could move.

"Eight thousand feet," the co-pilot called.

"She's taking hold," the pilot said. "Losing only 300 feet a minute now."

No one said anything for a while.

"What about those Yugoslav mountains?" the pilot asked. "Think we can clear them?"

"If we can hold up," Worth said. "They should be about 6,000."

"I'm going to play a long shot and try for the emergency landing strip on that Adriatic island," the pilot said.

Minutes passed. The plane seemed to be holding its own now. The navigator cut course a shade and we flew along a canyon.

"We're over the strip," the navigator said.

I relaxed and looked across at Scott and smiled, and then the navigator added: "She's covered



# LONE WOLF MISSION

come in over Blechhammer one after the other. Our mission was to end the bogey of bad weather.

"This is the fourth night we have bombed the target this way," the major said. "On other nights the crews have been instructed to return to base without dropping their bombs if they could get no cloud cover over the target."

"Your planes are fitted with delayed-action 500-pounders, so you cannot land with them. Therefore you will bomb regardless of cloud cover. That is, you will bomb visually or, if necessary, by instrument. But you will bomb."

"There is a probability that 25 two-engine night fighters—ME-210s—will attack you. Make careful observations. It will help later crews."

The major stepped aside and another intelligence officer took his place. "This is where you can expect flak," he announced. He took a piece of paper, a kind of bombers' Baedeker, from his pocket and read tonelessly: "Sixteen heavy guns at Blank, 25 miles west of course; 163 guns at Blank; 310 heavies at Blank." His voice droned in the large room without emotion, reading the list of where death could be met and evaded.

The briefing went on for two hours. Then we walked out on the dark field. We dressed heavily, putting on all the paraphernalia to compensate for cold and lack of oxygen and flying shrapnel. I was to go as left waist gunner, relieving S/Sgt. David W. Dykes of Cochrane, Ga.

We took off on schedule and turned upward in the night sky. In rapid sequence each gun aboard the plane was fired to clear for action, spurting flames like acetylene torches. We were ordered to black out immediately. A blue light over the belly gunner's turret vaguely lit the narrow waist. Somewhere a bell tinkled faintly as the pilot checked the signal for abandon ship.

We climbed very high and the cold came quickly. My hand brushed the waist armor; it burned like dry ice. Most of the time the blackness was like flying in a box, but once the undercast broke for a moment and the lights of a town polka-dotted the darkness and then vanished. The oxygen flow fouled briefly and the tail gunner, T/Sgt. Ted Scott of Marlboro, Mass., called over the interphone that he was seeing things; but he switched to pure oxygen for a while and reported back, "All right." Once some searchlights probed to our left, but they couldn't get

of Scott, the tail gunner, came over the interphone: "Beaucoup flak." Goodrich and I pulled on our flak suits, letting them drag from one shoulder to blanket the side of our bodies not protected by the armor plate.

The flak was heavy now. There were some lights below us, shining through the thinning undercast, and I figured that was Blechhammer. Then the bombardier announced the bombsight was no good—covered over with ice from the 68-below-zero cold despite a special heated cover. The bombardier, Lt. Raymond E. Tuwalski of Cleveland, Ohio, called to the radar operator, Lt. Byron S. Martin of Pasadena, Calif., and directed him to target on a course line. Martin took over and sighted for range on his radar, which is now so sensitive that ground features are roughly reproduced through the worst interference.

We started the run. The flak was heavy but seemed far away. "There they go," somebody said over the phones. The bombs were followed by 4,500 news leaflets, and the sky filled with paper like snowflakes. We turned from the target. It looked as though the mission had been a success. "Eight in the target area," somebody said.

Then the No. 3 engine died. The co-pilot, Lt. Robert D. Draper of Cassopolis, Mich., and the engineer, T/Sgt. James F. Miller of Warsaw, N. C., tried to help the pilot feather it, but the engine froze too quickly. Then the prop sheared off by itself and windmilled down and out of sight. Sighs of relief came over the intercom. The lights of Blechhammer were gone and the undercast was back, shielding us.

Then the No. 2 engine flamed in brilliant streaks and blew three cylinder heads.

The gyro instruments suddenly went out and the radar quit cold from lack of juice. "Switch off your electric suits," the navigator, Lt. "Ack-Ack" Worth of Aberdeen, Idaho, said. "I need the juice for my instruments."

"How far are we from base?" asked the pilot, Lt. Isaac C. Pederson of Oakland, Calif.

"About 600 miles," Worth said.

"That's TS," the radio operator put in. He was T/Sgt. Carmine S. Noce of Solvay, N. Y.

The ship was losing altitude fast. In four minutes we were down from 23,000 to 20,000 feet.

"Get ready to bail out," the pilot called. "Spring the hatch."

over with thunderheads. Visibility zero. Ceiling zero." The radar, useless without electricity, couldn't penetrate the undercast. "Guess we can't make it." It was still dark; we were still dropping, and there were 100 miles of Adriatic ahead.

The pilot said: "I say stick with the ship."

The co-pilot said: "I say stick, too."

"Check with me."

"I stay."

One after another, in tones that were almost conversational, the crew voted to remain. At 4,000 we leveled off. There was a pale strip of dawn ahead of us. It was still undercast, but every once in a while I could see water below. We started to go down again. At 2,000 the radio operator began sending the distress signal, "Mayday." In the distance I could see the Italian coast.

Then the No. 1 engine ran out of gas and sputtered and died.

"Here we go," Scott said.

The ship began to fall sharply. "We've got to ditch," the pilot called. "Get braced. You men in the waist and tail pile into the radio compartment." We snapped off our chutes and went forward.

**T**HE Fortress hit, cracking the surface of the water evenly. Time suspended a second. We saw the water burst in and almost simultaneously sweep against us in the radio room. I gasped and struck out, and the water lifted me neatly out through the radio hatch and into the drink.

I scrambled back onto the fuselage. The others were already out. Two dinghies were floating in the water. Everything seemed very confused. Then I was in one of the dinghies, and the plane was foundering slowly in the water behind us. In the distance we could see an Italian fishing boat coming after us.

The fishing boat picked us up and took us into port, where there was an ambulance waiting. When we got there we were told that two of the four planes in our group had not returned, but the other planes that had gone out from other groups that night had proved that night bombing could be successful during the winter.

No one talked much after we heard the news about the other two planes, but when we were piling into the ambulance the co-pilot looked at his watch and said: "Those bombs we dropped are just blowing up now."

# GEORGE RATJE



Photo courtesy of Antone Sousa, nephew of George Ratje. George trained and flew missions with my father.

George was a waist gunner. He survived his World War 2 experiences and returned home to California. He passed away in California on 30 July 1950.