

Richard Pitt, Jr. was Flight Engineer and Top Turret Gunner on the Clarence Aaberg crew, one of the first replacement crews at Rattelsden. Tragically, Aaberg was killed on his second mission -- as described below. His place was taken by Lt. George Hoffmeister, co-pilot from the original Keller crew. After Hoffmeister completed his tour requirement, co-pilot Thomas Moriarty took over the left-hand seat in May '44.

Pitt's diary was transcribed and provided by his son, Richard Pitt, III.

Date: 2/24/44 Ship: 855

Place: Rostock the first mission Mission: 1

A very long haul for the first one. Also no fighter escort. Made it O.K. even though we were under fighter attack for 30 minutes. We had an attack on us and I got in a few bursts but did not get him. P.F.F. mission. Got very tired but feel much better after getting the first one in.

Date: 2/25/44 Ship: 855 (Rosemary III)

Place: Regensburg Mission: 2

Always remember this one, lost our pilot. A very long haul and #3 engine went out 10 minutes after target. Lot of fighters around few rockets shot at us but they never came in close. Made it back to the French coast on 3 engines okay. But one and four went out right after we left French coast where we were hit by flak. Bailed out in Southern England. Aaberg shoot didn't open. He did a wonderful job getting us back. Made the channel on one engine. 855 total loss.

Date: 3/3/44 Ship: 206 (Journey's End)

Place: Recall from Berlin Mission: 3

Biggest mess I've ever seen. Just as we came over the Denmark coast ran head on into first division - two collided off our wing and blew up. Nothing any bigger than a man came from the two planes just one big ball of fire and it hung in mid air for a long time. Contrails so thick could not see about sixty below and could climb over the overcast. Somebody sure made a mess sending us out today. Weather no good, our new pilot Hoffmeister okay.

Date: 3/4/44 Ship: 206

Place: Recall from Berlin Mission: 4

Second try for Berlin. First division got in I think but we were too late. Con Trails everywhere again today. Saw 47 shoot down 190. Had 109 in our Con Trails shooting at us but he missed. Tail gunner had a fit almost. Fifty degrees below C. And that is plenty cold. Got into Germany but couldn't get over the overcast so we had to turn back.

Date: 3/8/44 Ship: 206
Place: Berlin Mission: 5

Third try at Berlin. Target very clear. Hit airfield five miles outside Berlin. Saw smoke form target over 100 miles on our way out. Really plastered it. Flak pretty heavy and enemy fighters around after stragglers. No attacks on us. Plenty of 51's, 47's and 38's around. More planes than I've ever seen in the sky.

Date: 3/13/44 Ship: 206
Place: No-Ball Mission: 6

This my first no-ball. Only over enemy territory 30 minutes. Dry run over east coast so that couldn't see target. We don't bomb in France P.F.F.

Date: 3/18/44 Ship: 104
Place: Munich Mission: 7

We were supposed to hit airplane factory but overcast too heavy had to bomb center of Munich. Enemy fighters around but no attacks on us. Saw a couple of 17's go down over the target, nobody got out. One ship went to Switzerland. Lucky boys. Pretty heavy flak over the target and we came back with about ten or fifteen flak holes. First mission after two day pass to London.

Date: 3/20/44 Ship: 206
Place: Recall from Frankfurt Mission: 8

Little flak going in over French coast. We went into Germany but overcast so high had to turn back. This was another easy mission but if been able to go to target probably been rough. We had a new gunner in tail. Passed out on us and had to haul him off in meat wagon when we got down.

Date 3/23/44 Ship: 206
Place: Brunswick Mission: 9

P.F.F. mission lead by Col. Harris

No fighter escort going in and group way behind us got hit as soon as they were over the coast. Saw a couple go down. As we came up on I.P. fighters hit group directly behind us. 17's going down everywhere. No attacks on our group which was leading. Flak not too bad over target but we went over Happy Valley on way out. In flak for 17 minutes. Got # 3 engine. Fell out of formation and came back alone. 47's escorted us when we fell out of formation.

Date: 3/28/44 Ship: 865
Place: Airfield in France Mission: 10

Short run only over enemy territory for 1 hour and 12 minutes. # 3 engine very rough on take-off and fog so thick could cut it with a knife. No enemy fighters. Saw red flak over target accurate flak but not much of it.

Date: 4/8/44 Ship: 206
Place: Rheine Mission: 11

Hit a night fighter field in northwestern Germany. Flying tail-end Charlie. Came back with lots of flak holes and Duke got hit in fanny. Don't think it is very serious. Our squadron really got pasted and we thought it would be a milk run. Visual bombing and we really pasted the target. Lt. Cohrin, Duke and The Gear on their 13th. About the fourth try for a mission. Finally made it.

Date: 4/11/44 Ship: 206
Place: Arnimswalde Mission: 12

Another one of these rough weather missions. Flew as co-pilot to the Danish coast. 12 110's circled us for about 30 minutes but didn't attack. It was rough.

This is just a note that 711 Squadron really has been taking a beating. Operations officer went to Switzerland, the 43rd and they lost about 20 men but not all dead. The 12th new crew. On take-off their radio made two missions with us. These last few days have been really tough.

Date: 4/18/44 Ship: 206
Place: Berlin Mission: 13

Wasn't such a bad mission but as far as our Squadron was concerned a total failure but the rest hit the target. Run into bad weather over target and lost the lead ship so we couldn't bomb. We circled Berlin twice and the haze was so bad you could barely see the ship in front of us. If it had been P.F.F. over center of Berlin would have been rough.

Date: 4/19/44 Ship: 161
Place: W.E.R.L.E Mission: 14

Second morning in a row and had to get up at 2:00 a.m. A very good mission. Hit the target square and missed all the flak and no fighter but had plenty of our own. We were over enemy territory 2 hours and 30 minutes. Went all the way around the Rhur Valley but didn't get in it thank goodness.

Date: 4/20/44 Ship: 441 Silver Ship
Place: No Ball – N.U. 40 Mission: 15

Easiest mission ever made. Only over the French coast for about ten minutes. No flak at all. Took off about 5:00 and was back by 8:00.

Date: 4/22/44 Ship: 197 Another Silver Job
Place: Hamm Mission: 16

Had a heck of a time getting this one in. Took off in 206 (JOURNEY'S END) but had to bring it in and get another. Electrical system went haywire. Mission could have been very rough as Hamm is in the Rhur Valley. Flak a plenty but none of it on us. Very unsuccessful bombing. Worthy went down today but he got out before the ship blew up.

Date: 4/24/44 Ship: 206
Place: Friedrichhafen Mission: 17

Hoffmeister's last mission and drew a honey all the way to Lake Constance and 90 guns over the target. We went in at 26,000 ft. so the flak wasn't very accurate but plenty there. One hole in the ship. We were over enemy territory five hours.

Date: 4/27/44 Ship: 206
Place Airfield in Belgium Mission 18

What a day. The group made two raids in one day. I was on the second. Made three bombing runs on three different targets. Finally dropped them on the last target. Off course when we came over the enemy coast and got 18 flak holes in the ship. One guy went down and two ships had wounded aboard.

Date: 5/7/44 Ship: 206
Place: Berlin Mission: 19

Well another P.F.F. on Big B. My first time over the center of the city. Lots of flak. Got a big hole in the turret by the side of my head. Moriarty's first mission as Pilot. Also Dahlgran's first mission. Wasn't a bad mission but it could have been rough as hell. I just don't like Big B as a target. Can be almost suicide to go there.

Date: 5/9/44 Ship: 206
Place: Lason Airfield in France Mission: 20

This is the type I like. Plastered the target and only over enemy territory 1 hour and 20 minutes. 20 heavy guns over the target and not very accurate. Had about three holes in the ship. Hope my next ten are like this one.

Date: 5/11/44 Ship: 206
Place: Braisells Mission: 21

Didn't do so good but an easy mission. No flak or anything. There was a haze over the target. Killed a lot of Belgians I expect.

Date: 5/20/44 Ship: 206
Place: Air field in Belgium Mission: 22

Really a big mess today. Seems as weather is a bigger problem more than the enemy. Pretty heavy flak over the target but go back with just a few holes in the plane. Flying tail-end Charlie again. Rough place.

Date: 5/22/44 Ship: 206
Place: Kiel Mission: 23

Lots of flak but at 25,000 ft. wasn't too bad. Good escort but flak got a few ships. Long ride over water but a short time over enemy territory.

Date: 5/23/44 Ship: 206
Place: Troyes Mission: 24

Rode all over France and didn't drop our bombs. Hitting railroads now. Pre-invasion bombing. An easy mission.

Date: 5/27/44 Ship: 206
Place: Karlsruhe Mission: 25

Not such a long mission as far as hours are concerned but a long time over enemy territory. Saw some of the most beautiful country in Germany. Black Mountains and the weather was clear so that you could see them. Railroad yards Pre-invasion.

Date: 5/28/44 Ship: 206
Place: Konigsborn Mission: 26

Another long time over enemy territory. Not too bad a mission. All the Eighth Air Force out hitting targets everywhere. Still beautiful weather. First mission for Doohlthe.

Date: 5/29/44 Ship: 206
Place: Leipzig Mission: 27

Danzig's last mission and he made a mess. Didn't drop his bombs until two minutes after target. Wing in front and wing in back got hit by fighters. They skipped us thank goodness. 4 hours and 30 minutes over enemy territory.

Date: 6/2/44 Ship: 206
Place: Boulogne Mission: 28

Moriarty's last mission and what a honey - opened our bomb bay doors over the channel and over enemy territory about five minutes. Missions getting easy these days.

Date: 6/6/44 Ship: 206
Place: Cain Mission: 29

D-Day and what a day. A very easy mission but too much traffic. Hit the target at 0 hours. Flying with Captain Leach. Didn't even go to bed last night.

Date: 6/6/44 Ship: 206
Place: Argentan Mission: 30

Second mission on the same day. Saw the invasion from the air. Too high to tell much about it. Got the daylight scared out of me on the way back. Didn't get back until 11:30 P.M. and the air was full of planes and the elevation was only 1000 ft. All in a days work. All my combat hours was 214:05, not bad. Gives me over 500 hours in a B-17, The Flying Coffin.