

Transcription
of
Keith Redd's
WWII Diary
as a
B-24 Liberator Waist Gunner
January 22, 1945 - May 14, 1945

(note from the transcriber. The diary is transcribed exactly as written by Keith Redd except for a few commas for readability. A word that could not be deciphered is replaced with (?). German cities and bomb targets were difficult to decipher and they were transcribed as written followed by (?). An occasional note (in italics) is entered to further explain abbreviations or to clarify what is meant or to provide factual information)

Camp Kilmer, New Jersey January 22, 1944

A point of embarkation this size is quite an organization. I didn't realize the immensity of our army before. This camp is much larger than many of our average cities. Devoted entirely to equipping and outfitting men for combat. All branches of the service are processed for overseas shipments.

This camp like all P.O.E's (*point of embarkation's*) is on the armies secret list so we must keep to ourselves all that takes place at this station.

I had hoped to get a pass to see the big city while was stationed so close, but yesterday we were alerted for shipment so I guess it is "no soap" this time.

Not until today did I fully realize that I was starting on an entirely new adventure. An adventure that can come only from actual combat. It was today that I realized only too well that in a few hours I would be shoving off the shores of the country that I love so dearly.

We looked like real soldiers today when we loaded on to the trucks. We were dressed with field packs, steel helmets, leggings and gas masks. I felt very much like a foot soldier.

The (*truck*) convoy got rather messed up on the way to the dock. Never thought my first glimpse of N.Y.C. would be through the torn top of a G.I. truck. What a sight! I never realized that New York City was so large. What buildings !!! Wish I could have had Donna (*wife, married September 23, 1940*) with me and a few weeks to spend enjoying and taking in the sights. I imagine there are plenty of them.

We pulled right into the docks and walked up the gang plank of the SS Santa Marta just like it shows in the movies. As I went by the Sgt. at the end of the gang plank he called off Redd and I answered Keith B. and on up the plank to the ship. We are still in the harbor but its time to hit the sack.

January 23, 1945

Woke up this morning to find that we were already well out to sea. It was quite a sight to go out on deck and see the large convoy of ships. There are ships in every direction as far as I can see. Loaded with men and material for combat. The sea is rather calm. Not a bad ship we are on. Rather old, but not too crowded.

January 24, 1945

We are still sailing the blue Atlantic. They say it is a calm sea, but to this old mountain boy those waves look pretty big. Hope we never hit a rough sea. Sorry we pulled out of the harbor at night. Would liked to have had a look at the Statue of Liberty. But I guess its just as well. It would probably have made a lump come in my throat and make me even more lonesome for my loved ones. I've been thinking all day what a lucky guy I am to have such a perfect family. Gee but I do love them. The ships radio just played Piano Concerto in B flat. It made me think of my wonderful little Donna. I thought how beautifully she used to play that piece for me. What a happy day when I can hear her play it again. Sure do miss my little Jeanne and Buddy. Its so comforting to meet my darling wife each night in my prayers.

Just went for a stroll out on deck. Its chilly, but rather pleasant. But oh so lonely. If only I had Donna with me and was on a pleasant cruise to some foreign country.

I think often of Mom and my bothers and sisters. May god bless them all. Hope Mom gets to visit Floydie & Burt(?). Got a red cross ditty bag today. Just like xmas. I even got a harmonica. Everyone was a little P.O'd today cause the Captain made us clean the deck for having dirty quarters. I've read several stories today. The time passes rather fast. I'm getting used to the sea.

The swells looked so pretty today. They were the color of turquoise. This is quite an experience, but still think I would just as soon fly across the pond.

They are holding a song fest down in the galley so I guess I'll go down.

Sure miss my little family. Hope and pray they are all well and happy. My spirits are high. Swell bunch of guys aboard.

January 25, 1945

Another day on the rolling sea. Gee but it has been rough today. The waves have been sweeping clear over the top deck. The ships in the convoy seem so small compared to the Mighty Ocean. It seems unbelievable that these man made ships can stand against the wrath of nature. We old "land lubbers"

can hardly conceive of a storm at sea. God certainly made something when he made man, man who can conquer anything. Nothing seems to stop in his way of progress.

Ed has been entertaining us again tonight. What a guy. I don't know what we would do without the crazy devil. He keeps us all cheered up. He is a talented cuss in his crazy way.

Gosh but I do miss my loved ones. Could sure go for a little playing around with my little Jeanne (*daughter*) and Buddy (*son, born October 28, 1944*) tonight. Kinda love their little mommy too.

Guess I'll go do a few turns around the deck before I hit the sack.

January 26, 1945

Still the seas roll. This north Atlantic is really a hiss(?) cat especially when its storming. The trip is getting a bit tiresome. I've done a lot of thinking about home today. Had such a nice dream last night. Thought I was home. Hope Mom is visiting with Burt(?) & Floydie by now. May god bless my loved ones and keep them safe for me.

SS Santa Marta, January 27, 1945

The storm has calmed down today and I'm sort of getting my sea legs. Its getting rather tiresome and not much to do. I read Julius Caesar today.

What I wouldn't give for a bunch of Mom's delicious apples right now.

I have just been looking at the pictures of my family. Gee but they are darling. Don't know what I would do without them. Miss them terribly tonight.

SS Santa Marta, January 28, 1945

Gee but it is beautiful out tonight. The moon on the water is so pretty, only it makes a person rather lonely. Especially when he has so much waiting for him at home.

This trip is getting most tiresome. I'll be glad when we reach our destination.

“ In to each life a little rain must fall, but too much is falling in mine”. I like the way Ed sings this song.

May God bless my loved ones at home and bring us all safely together some day in the not too distant future.

SS Santa Marta, January 29, 1945

Still the same old thing. Nothing much of importance happened today. I still spend most of my time reading. As usual my thoughts are wrapped up in home and my loved ones.

SS Santa Marta, January 30, 1945

Had to fall out on deck with a full field pack today to satisfy the desires of a small caliber Captain we have in charge of us. I some time wonder how a man so (?) ignorant ever got the rank of Captain.

The sea is calm today and nothing much is happening. Everyone is getting plenty tired of this cruise.

The moon on the water made such a beautiful sight last night. I enjoy walking around the deck at night and think of home and my loved ones. Sometimes when I am thinking of my loved ones they seem so close that I could almost touch them. I wonder if they don't feel my (?) at times in the same way.

SS Santa Marta, January 31, 1945

Well here it is the last day of January already. How fun out on the deck talking with Ed. We wondered what we would do after the war. One thing I know I am going to do, that is build our little home. Until this war ends and I can go home it will have to be a dream home. But when that happy day comes will make our dream home a reality.

Its rather educational to enter into such discussions and hear the different points of view.

Don and I spend lot of time talking together about our wives and children and future plans. He is a nice kid and looks at many things the same as I do.

I wonder how my little fat Buddy boy is getting along. I layed awake four hours last night thinking of him and little Punky. How I long to caress my little children again. I can just feel this nearness and smell the scent of their clean little bodies. May god bless and keep them for me.

SS Marta, February 1, 1945

The water was so calm and the moon so pretty last night. Made me so lonesome for my loved ones. Nothing much happened today, except the convoy had a little gunnery practice.

SS Marta, February 2, 1945

All I can say tonight is I miss my little family so terribly much. The journey is going along just about the same.

SS Marta, February 3, 1945

There seems to be a lot of music aboard tonight. Either the boys are getting used to this trip or they are getting a little "(?)". One of he fellows was just singing the little old Irish song that the little fat guy used to sing to Donna and I at the Bridges(?). Funny how it takes a war to make us appreciate the good things in life - especially the little things.

SS Marta, February 4, 1945

The boys put on a variety show today - it was pretty good. Gee but I do miss my loved ones.

SS Santa Marta, English Channel, February 5, 1945

We pulled into the channel a few hours ago. We should soon sight the blighty shores of England. We should dock tomorrow sometime. Would give a million for a letter from home.

Feb 5, 1945

Just got my first glimpse of the "Blighty Shores". A beautiful little village or white castle or church of some kind. Truly a beauty all of its own, but so far from those that I love so dearly. If only I could be enjoying these sights with Donna on a pleasure cruise instead of seeing them under these circumstances. It's a thrill never the less - the first view of a land so far from home. One thing that makes me happy is to see this one little village, at least, that hasn't been touched by the bombs of destruction.

"(?) like seeing home, but it is good to see land again anyway.

When I look at the ocean I think of the greatness of man. I think of mans magnificent capacity that create ships such as this an to empower the (?) space of the ocean.

May god permit these man made ships to take me back ot to those that I love. Yes me and all the rest of our loved ones who are in foreign ports today.

SS Santa Marta, February 6, 1945

We are just pulling up into the Southampton harbor. On one side I can see England with its grassy hills. On the other side is water and Queen Victoria's summer castle. Who has thought this old country boy would ever gaze on these sights and this old country that has been the home of as many famous kings, queens, dukes, earls, and generals and admirals. History is astounding when a person stops to think about it.

There are ships of every description around us, everything from L.S.T's to the mighty battle wagons.

I can't explain my thoughts. England looks so peaceful and calm, more like a picture than a reality. I don't know what I expected to see, but its not like I expected anyway. I'm certainly not disappointed nor do I think it's a greater sight than my own beloved country, but it is different anyway, and its most interesting. Perhaps it's the history behind the country and it just doesn't quite dawn on me as yet that this is the England that I have always heard about. I always thought it would be a country that others would see but not myself. But here it is right in front of me, even if it did take a war to get me here.

The (?) of seeing a foreign country greatly affects me, but it still doesn't take away the (?) and love for my darlings at home. On the contrary it makes me miss them just a little more and appreciate and love them just a little more. I guess because it becomes such stark reality that I am a long ways from them.

The reality of the existence of a war and the reality that I was close to it struck home last night when a sub was sighted and the (?) escorts dropped depth charges. They sounded so close.

All of this brings my brothers so close to me too. Because I know that some of them have already gone through this, and I'm wondering if my little brothers won't soon be going through the same thing. I hope not, but if it must be that way, I pray to God to protect him and give him strength and courage. Not only him but all the rest of us and loved ones at home. May he permit us to unite as a loving family soon. It's odd to realize that Johnny and Gene are so close now and who knows maybe Lloyd. Wouldn't it be great if we could see each other, but that's not very probable. So will just have to wait until we can all come home. What a day for us all.

SS Santa Marta, February 7, 1945

I believe this will be a day that I shall never forget. The day that we land on English soil. We stayed in Southampton harbor all night. What a sight this great harbor is. Ships of every description and from every nation. The docks stretch for miles and miles. Troop ships going home and coming in.

We disembarked and marched up through the city of Southampton. It has been hit pretty hard by bombs, but it is quiet again now. The people look a little shabby, but seem to go on their way with a humble spirit and don't seem to complain much. They must have gone through hell. We are billeted in Camp #14 right in a park in the city. Hope we won't be here for long. It is a transient tent camp and the mud is plenty deep. We are living on C rations. This is a hell of a hole. Reminds me of a concentration camp.

Camp #14, Southampton, England, February 8, 1945

Well we moved again today. We marched through town to the rail station. We are supposed to go to Northern England some place.

The bombs have really hit this town. It has rained all day and we are all soaking wet. Hope our next base is better.

Gee but I do miss my loved ones as usual. May god bless them.

Camp Stone, England, February 9, 1945

We rode all night on the train. Quite a ride. This morning we arrived at Camp Stone. It is a nice camp and the barracks and buildings as well. But is plenty C.S. (chicken s...) Hope we aren't here long. I am anxious to hit a permanent base and get to work. The sooner we finish up the sooner we can go back to our loved ones.

Wrote my first letter home tonight. Hope they are all well there. I think about them so often.

I guess it won't be long before we will going into combat. I have a tender spot in my heart for these people over here. The little kids seem so thankful for an orange or piece of candy. I'm thankful that my little kiddies are living in a country that is untouched by the horror of war.

Camp Stone, England, February 10, 1945

Not much doing here. Just waiting on orders to proceed to our Bomb Group and permanent base. Food is good, camp is nice, but really C.S. I wonder how my sweethearts are tonight.

Camp Stone, England, February 11, 1945

K.P. (*kitchen police - mess hall*) duty today, but also we got alerted as we should ship out tomorrow. I hope this is my last K.P. and it should be. I'll be glad to get to our permanent base and start flying.

Is it ever cold over here.

389th Bomb Group, February 12, 1945

Had a nice train ride down from Stone. This is not a bad base. I feel rather proud to be assigned to such a famous old outfit. Miss my loved ones as usual.

Home Base Hethel, February 13, 1945

(note from the transcriber: Hethel is a small town on the east coast north of London and near Norwich. Keith often spells it as Hethal in his paragraph headings. The correct spelling has been used where this occurs in this transcription - hh)

Sounds like a good deal here. It seems funny to see the big birds take off and to know that they are going over to give Jerry hell, just like I'll be doing one of the fine days.

(note from the transcriber. The Germans called the big bombers "4 motors")

Went over to the NCO Club with the boys tonight and drank a little mild & bitter. This limey grog is funny tasting stuff. Nice NCO Club. Had a nice time.

Gee but I would like to see my little Jeanne & Buddy. May god bless them.

Hethel Airdrome, February 15, 1945

I am really proud to be a part of this group. I think more of them every day. They are pretty famous. It certainly gives a man a degree of pride to listen to the history of this group. Its hard to realize that this is the same group that plastered the enemy targets for so long.

(note from the transcriber. The actor Jimmy Stewart was a senior officer in the Group and often was the pilot in command of the lead bomber. Later in the diary Keith notes the fact that Colonel Stewart was the lead on a particularly tough mission)

Went down on the line to see the group take off for a mission this morning. I can't describe the feeling that I had when I saw them take off one after another and climb to 20,000 and form with other groups for a combat mission.

Fifty four of the big boys certainly made an impressive sight. They must really be impressive after they form with enough other groups to make a line of planes 300 miles long.

I went down to sweat out the return this afternoon. First there was the heavy drone of hundreds of engines and the big birds break through the overcast and start peeling off for a landing. Here comes one plane dropping red flares. Either plane trouble or wounded aboard. The runway is closed and all the other planes circle again. Ambulances and fire trucks rush down the runway to sweat out the cripple. He comes in with a hole through the waste and a wounded gunner. Nothing is spared in caring for the wounded or crippled planes. Once he is taken care of the others start to come in again. One at a time until all have landed. Many of the "Libs" (*B-24 Liberator's*) are scarred with flak but the casualties are few. Thank God. The Forts (*B-17 Flying Fortress's*) go on over to their respective bases. I suppose the sight is much the same at their bases. Ground crews and buddies line the runway with the same longing anxious expressions on their faces, straining their eyes and counting the number of planes returning, the same as at our base. This is the time when a man realizes that this is combat, and that few minutes before, these crews and planes were over Germany dropping their eggs on the Hun.

The crews come into the briefing room with deep dirty marks on their faces caused from the many hours that the oxygen mask was pinching their face. They don't act much different then a crew who has been on a practice mission. They act as if they had just done a job and it was finished for today so everything is O.K. Tonight they will write letters home, go to the dance or show or have a few mild & bitters at the N.C.O. Club or go to town. Nothing to it. Tomorrow or the next day or the next the same thing over again.

Yes, its quite a sight. Sometimes I wish the folks back home could see it all, then on the other hand, I thank god that they don't have to see this kind of destruction, and that they are in America where the bombs don't have to fall and the guns don't roar and men don't kill each other by the hundreds. I'm so thankful that my little family are all well and safe and pray that god shall keep them for me and bring me safely home to them sometime in the near future.

Hethel Airdrome, February 16, 1945

The “heavies” went up in strength today. I watched the take off and the return the same as yesterday. They had a fairly easy target and most of them made it back o.k. It is quite a thing to see the “little friends” (*fighter planes*) escort the big boys clear home and then play tag with each other on their way home. The skies at times are black with planes, B-24's, B-17's, P-51's, P-47's, Mosquito's, Lancaster's, and Halifax's. They looked so pretty today leaving the long vapor trails. One fighter made a figure eight with his vapor trail.

The weather has been really nice for the past 3 days. Hope it continues so we can start flying soon. I am really anxious to see what it is all about. I realize that I'll get my fill of it soon enough, but it still seems like a man is anxious to try everything once. Any way I want to get this thing over with and get back to my little Donna, Jeanne, Buddy, and Mom and my brothers and sisters and all other loved ones.

Hethel Airdrome, February 17, 1945

I still don't feel as if I was in combat. I guess that thought will change after I make my first mission over Germany.

They took off today, but were called back, the weather was so bad. The fog was so low that they buzzed over at tree top level when they came home.

Some of the boys got mail today. I was pretty disappointed. I am so anxious to learn how everyone at home is getting along and when all the boys (?), etc.

I am petty lonesome for my little family tonight. A man wonders about so many things over here.

Hethel Airdrome, February 18, 1945

I bought myself a bicycle today so I'm really in style to go pubbing. Don and I have been out cycling around. It's a lot of fun. I can't wait until summer comes so I can go out and see the country.

Well you have had it for tonight.

Hethel, February 19, 1945

Got my first mail from home today. One from Mom, so sweet as they usually are. Two from Donna. So happy to hear from them and find that they are all well.

Don and I went down to a wrecked plane to scavage some accessories for our bikes.

Hethel, February 20, 1945

We are still sweating out a chance to start flying. I guess it isn't long now. Took some pictures of contrails today. The formation looked so pretty this morning.

Such a beautiful moon, really a (?) moon. Makes me miss home and my loved ones. Gee but I do miss my little sweethearts. You have it for tonight.

Hethel Airdrome, February 21, 1945

The sky was specked with hundreds of planes again this morning. It was a nice clear day all day.

Missed not getting a letter again today. It seems to take so long to hear from home. Not much to do just waiting to start to fly. Shouldn't be long now.

The crew goes on Ack Ack guard tonight.

Hethel Airdrome, February 22, 1945

Well the Skipper took his ride today as copilot on another crew. They hit the Ruhr Valley at 6000-8000 ft. Straffed and bombed. The largest air offensive since D day. It sure looked good to see the big birds come home to roost. We were down on the line sweating out our Skipper. The planes came in low and peeled off for landings as they always do.

Large formations of "Lancs" (*Lancasters*) and Halifax's (*British four engine bombers*) blasted the Jerry today as well as our own 8th, 9th, and 15th.

Saw a Mosquito (*a fast British twin engine plane made out of plywood*) take off and buzz the field today. What a hot ship they must be. Jerry really took a pounding today. 6000 planes went over Germany.

Had a Squadron party tonight. It was wonderful. A nice steak dinner at the Officers Club and then spent the rest of the night at the NCO Club drinking beer and singing. I had no idea such a fine meal could be had overseas. I thought about the other boys and wondered if they can get such a luxury. Especially little Lloyd. I felt rather guilty as I was sitting there eating a delicious steak dinner with all the trimmings thinking all the time about Lloyd and Johnny and all the others eating cold C rations in a fox hole some where. Life is like that I guess. I'm sure that I have had my share of the good things in life.

I hope and pray that even though the others could not eat the nice meal that I did tonight, that they might find some sort of luxury and enjoyment to make them happy. There was such a fine spirit at our party. Officers and enlisted men alike seemed forget the war for a few hours and relax and enjoy each others company and association. I thought of all my loved ones and counted my blessings and thought how thankful I was for all of the many things that are mine. My family, friends and always gods protecting hand over me.

The WAF's (*Women Air Force*) put on a show for us. It was very good. Those girls were real talented. I'll never forget that long double jointed blonde. She reminded me of Limpey Dick.

Hethel Airdrome, February 23, 1945

Well we didn't get our mission. But I guess we will get plenty of it when we do start. I hope the Skippers mission counted as our first yesterday. If so just 34 more to go. We went to the show "Rhapsody in Blue", such beautiful songs. I thought of my little Donna and how she used to play those tunes for me. Oh how I do love her. When I get home I'm going to have her play for me for hours. Funny how songs reminds one of his loved ones and of people in general.

The boys are a bit restless today and sort of jump down each others throats for no reason. It will probably be good for us to start flying.

Hethel Airdrome, February 24, 1945

Took my first trip to town tonight (Norwich). I shall never forget how picturesque the country side looked from the truck as we rode in, in the evening. The green rolling hills looked so peasant with the little hedge rows fencing off each small field. The picture in my mind seemed to come from a story book.

What a contrast their cities are to our own modern cities. The sidewalks are so narrow and dark, winding around hills and these like so many cow trails. Little dark alleys with people going back and forth like so many ants. On one side of us is a duck pond and the other side is a bombed out building with those white helmeted M.P.'s standing by. The large group of G.I.'s are making a mad rush for the various pubs. The "Horse and Wagon Inn" isn't open yet. So we go on through a winding alley to another one. All this movement of people in the growing darkness reminds one of people who are living in the past.

We had a wonderful time "pubbing". Really met some characters. Don Theston(?) the yank with the black mustache and the Irish brogue. That Limey Sgt I met in "Backs". Interesting chap.

We stayed until they told us at the pub "Cheerio", "you've had it".

Hethel Airdrome, February 25, 1945.

We had a practice mission today. Ship (*the B-24 bomber*) "*D-Day Patches*".

(note from the transcriber. The bomber's name "D-Day Patches" was so named because it was "all shot up, full of holes on D-Day, and looked like swiss cheese" according to a former crew member)

First sight I've had of England from the air. It sure looks like a patch quilt. The little fields look so pretty with the varied hue's surrounded by hedge rows. The coast line has no beach. It looks as if the ocean had just came in and washed large chunks of soil away. I wonder how this little isle has stood the test of water and erosion and time for so long.

Hethel, February 27, 1945

Mission #1 - Halle Germany in the Ruhr alley. Target marshaling yards. Bombed at 24,000 through a 10/10 overcast. 8 hrs.

(note from the transcriber. In the book "Mission, Jimmy Stewart and the Fight for Europe by Leonard Maltin" the actor Jimmy Stewart since July 2, 1944 was the Operations Officer of the 389th Bomb Group at Hethel. He flew every fourth mission as the Mission Commander and would be the lead bomber in the formation. A crew would be selected from one of the four squadrons and he would replace the co-pilot for that mission.. The book documents that in February 1945 he was promoted to full Colonel and continued to function as chief of staff. He led this mission on February 27, 1945 when he flew in the lead bomber of more than 80 B-24's attacking the marshaling yards at Halle, southwest of Berlin)

I saw four countries today. England, France, Germany and Belgium.

It was an odd feeling I had as old "D-Day Patches" rolled down the runway with a load of 500 pounds. We had the entire 8th AF today and it was some formation. Hundreds of the Libs & Forts. Saw my first flak today. Thank god it was a long ways off from us. One crew got it.

I wondered what the people in Germany, France & Belgium thought as we roared over. The country side looked so peaceful below. Its hell that war must be, with all its destruction and suffering. I wonder if the boys in the lines saw us today. I thought of Johnny as we went over his lines in France, Spence & Frank and Elliott & Gene in Belgium and the airmen and other P.O.W. in Germany. We sweated out a fuel shortage on our way home, the coast of England surely looked good tonight.

I was pretty weary when we got back and was so happy for the letters from Donna and Mom.

Just 34 more to go. You've had it for today. Wish I could go home to my Donna, Jeanne & Buddy.

Hethel, February 28, 1945

Mission #2 - Armsburg Germany. Railroad aqueduct. No fighters and no flak was sighted. 10/10 (*cloud cover*) 20,500 ft altitude - 7 hrs 6 min. Overcast nearly all the way. This target was to help the advance of the 1st & 9th armies in this new offensive. Three ships aborted due to engine trouble. Hope our target was demolished, it was important to our western front armies.

What a sight it was to see so many planes today. We were over the clouds all day. Very few breaks so we didn't see much of the country. I did get a glimpse of the Rhine River through a break. The villages in Germany looked very much the same as those in Belgium, France, and England. I wonder what the people

thought when they saw so many Heavies away up there in the blue. Funny feeling to look down and see the country below and yet I have never set foot on it.

Today was a tiresome mission. So long on oxygen and the flak suits got so heavy & the heavy clothing was so uncomfortable. I am pretty weary tonight. I feel as if I had had it for today.

We flew "*D Day Patches*" again today. I guess its our baby from now on. Not a bad ship. Today it made its 74th mission over the Reich.

We had a pilots (?) with all day today same as yesterday. It is beautiful. Wish I had a camera to take pictures of such sights. The thousand pounders sure cut a hole in the clouds when they dropped. The hun is surely getting interest on what he dealt out to England a few years ago. War of this kind is hell, but he ask for it this way. Now we are beating him at his own game.

Hethel - (Id's of March), March 1st, 1945

Mission #3 - We hit the secondary target, marshaling yards at Magsdeburg Germany - 22000 ft. Flak was moderate and inaccurate. Heavens it looked plenty heavy to me. I was throwing chaff out the waist until I didn't have much chance to look at the flak or the target either. No fighters, but two rockets hit into our group. Luckily they never made any hits. Air time 8 hrs.

The flak was close enough today that I got a real idea of what it was like. I guess my prayers was answered.

Cloud coverage was 7/10 today so in the breaks I got a good look at Belgium & Germany. It is pretty country in Germany. The country is certainly covered with bomb craters. Poor little Belgium looks too small and peaceful to be the battle ground for two world wars

We crossed over our lines again today. I waved at the boys as usual.

Plenty cold today - 42 below. I still can't get over the fact that as we pass over the hundreds of German villages, that we are at war with that country. The country villages look much bombed, but peaceful.

Wish the war could end before every thing of beauty in Europe is destroyed.

Hethel, March 2, 1945

We started on our 4th mission today, but had to abort and turn back due to a gas leak. We drew "*Galloping Katie II*" and she was an old ship. The gas tank rotted away and filled the wing with gas.

We feathered #2 and turned back. Gas was pouring out of the wing in a dozen places. We made it back and the Skipper made a beautiful landing with a full gas load, and 10 five hundred pounders on three engines. That really takes a pilot.

Why that ship didn't blow up will always be a mystery. Why it happened before we got in enemy territory is another mystery. Some call it lucky, but being a God fearing man I believe its more than luck. I am convinced that the Master guiding hand was on us again. God is always our co-pilot. Without him it would make every mission a rough one to sweat out.

The target today was the synthetic oil plant at Magdeburg. They finally got a visual target and plastered her today. Hope we won't have to go back. They were jumped by fighters today.

Got a lot of mail today. Was very happy for it. Donna, Mom, Judy & John.

Hethel, March 4, 1945

Another day closer to coming home. We made another attempt at putting Mission #4 behind us today but the mission was abandoned on account of bad weather due to "con" trails. We flew close to Rheims, France before we turned back but still didn't get credit for a mission. The soup was so thick and we couldn't climb over it. Flying time 5 hrs. Altitude 22,000. Loaded with 10 - 500 pound incendiary bombs. Target airdrome in southern Germany. Would have crossed over the 7th Army lines in a few more minutes had we not turned back. We had our old pride and joy again today, "*Day Patches*".

Alert was sounded for enemy aircraft last night. They didn't hit us, but hey strafed a base not far from here. Alert was sounded again this morning. One single engine enemy fighter came low over the field, about 4000 ft. The batteries fired a few tracers at him, but the Limeys couldn't hit him.

I got a good look at the aircraft. It was dark but he was siloheted(sp) in the moon and by the tracers. He didn't straff us. Maybe they will come back. All clear was just sounded, so I guess Jerry headed for home. Lt. Kirks crew returned from France today. They didn't mind hitting the silk. Good bunch of boys.

Hethel, March 5, 1945

We had a stand down today so Ed, Don, Chet and I cycled into Wynondham. We had a heck of a good time. They stole the lights of our bikes in town so we rode back in the dark. We went pubbing. Met a Limey Sgt. that was a corker.

Hethel, March 6, 1945

We were alerted for a mission today, but it was scrubbed on account of weather. Had some mail today - was happy to receive it as usual.

A year ago now I was in Denver. I went in to see Bud and Betty. The last year has gone by in a hurry in one way and in another it has been a long time. Hope I don't have to spend another year away from my loved ones.

Hethel, March 7, 1945

Another attempt to get off #4. We had "*D Day Patches*" again today. 12 five hundred pounders. We were in Germany, only 35 minutes from the target when we had an engine fire and had to abort. We came back on 3 engines and jettisoned our bombs in the channel. (\$3000 worth of bombs dropped in the drink). What a nice starter for a new home. But we made it back safe so we shouldn't kick. The target was Swest Germany marshaling yards. Altitude 22,000 ft. It was a milk run, too bad we couldn't get credit for it after going clear into enemy territory. This makes 6 missions we've made and credit for only 3. Guess our luck is a little off.

We had fun coming back. Interphone chatter was funny as the devil.

Went cycling out into the country tonight with Ed, Jack and Burgess. What a character. We had a heap of fun. Visited several pubs and played darts. Didn't do bad either. Came back with only two flash lights.

Hethel, March 8, 1945

We weren't alerted today so didn't do much of anything except go to the show.

Went cycling out in the country with Jack. It was so relaxing to ride through the country in the twilight. We rode through several old estates with their heavy wooded area. It was beautiful. We stopped and passed the time of day at the "Maids Head" and then rode up to the "Dun Cow". I enjoy

these evening rides so much. Makes me think of the good things in life, of home and my family and loved ones.

Hethel, March 9, 1945

Just two months today since I left my little family. Such a long time ago. Rather an uneventful day this March 9, 1945. I think I shall never forget it. A beautiful clear sunny day The best I've seen in England. The sort of day that makes one happy to be alive. And that is just what I mean today. I still can't quite realize how I am and alive and safe after the experience we had today

I am so thankful to God for once again protecting our lives. I think that never has my life been held on such thin threads. I am convinced more than ever of Gods protecting care. He can and does do everything and anything to protect us if it is his will that we should live.

We finally completed Mission #4 Target - Munster Germany marshaling yards. Visual target and the flak was moderate and very accurate.

We crossed over into Holland and I saw the dykes along the Zider Zee and the canals of Holland and thought what a peaceful old country. I can remember how I used to read about Holland and its canals and peace loving people.

We hit the bomb run and the flak started in like so many specks of black pepper in the sky with an occasional puff of yellow that was belched from the 105's.

We released our bombs and in about 30 seconds I looked out the right waist window just in time to see an 88mm shell make a direct hit on our right wing, just inside #4 engine. I shall never forget that moment. A terrific clanging noise and a jar and then a jagged hole in our wing. Why it never exploded, why the wing never fell off, why it didn't hit the fuel lines or the engine something that no one will ever know. Perhaps it was because of my prayers. I can't help but feel that God did hear me up there today and that he did hold that wing on. "*Appationetta*"(?) (*our bomber*) shuddered from head to tail and we sweated it out back across the channel to home. Then the real test came, landing a crippled B-24 with a flat tire and a wing nearly severed. That's where our skipper came in. Lt. Watson certainly deserves the D.F.C. for this one. We swerved off the runway shortly after we hit. We careened off the runway and across the grass for couple hundred yards and came to a stop. Everyone safe and sound. The plane was in such shape that it will be salvaged even if it cost a quarter of a million dollars. But 9 lives were saved and no one hurt. Needless to say that everyone gathered

around and congratulated the Skipper on bringing her in. We never fully realized how bad it was until we got out and looked her over. The main strut in the wing was severed and the landing gear shot out. But still we were lucky. Two crews on the raid got direct hits and exploded in mid air.

(note from the transcriber. Archive records of the 389th Bomb Group, 564th Squadron show that the B-24 "Apassionata" serial number 42-50437 was hit in the wing on March 9, 1945 by an 88mm shell. Records show that it was salvaged due to battle damage. This is likely the same aircraft Keith was on, The aircraft name is just misspelled in one place or the other.)

A man doesn't have much time to think up there under such circumstances, but it was a sickening feeling to see two planes with full crews blow up and flame to the ground. It might have been us today. I was scared there is no denying, but there is a difference in being scared and being a coward. I guess I just went on throwing out chaff and paying to God to protect us. Perhaps God gave me courage to do my job when the chips were down as he did the rest of the crew.

As Shakespeare put it: "Cowards die many times before their deaths, the valiant men taste of death but once. Of all the wonders that I yet have heard it seems to me the most strange that men should fear; seeing that death, a necessary end will come when it will come".

But I have too much left to do yet in this life, as have all the other young men in our crew and as have all of my brothers, and loved ones.

Yes we got #4 over with, even if it did cost us a B-24. God was our co-pilot today.

Hethel, March 10, 1945

Not much doing today, went down and shot skeet for awhile and recuperated from the bad time we had yesterday. Ed, Jack & I went out into the country on our bikes. Good time.

Hethel, March 11, 1945

The crews all over the field are still talking about the bad time we had over Munster. They seem to think we are pretty lucky to come back. One Major told me that "88" had our name on it but didn't explode so we wouldn't need to worry from now on. Hope he is right.

We started our 48 hour pass to London today. I shall never forget my first glimpse at south London. Actually thousands of buildings blasted to pieces by the Blitz. I now have some idea of what these Londoners went through in 1941 and 1942. We actually didn't realize the war was on back home in those terrible days. What a pitiful sight Germany must be today. After what I've seen of London, and Germany has been hit so much harder than London was. There can't really be too much left there I'm afraid.

London England, March 12, 1945

So many things to see in this big city Beauty, culture, art, and history. Visited Madame' Tussouds world famous wax museum today. What a wonderful exhibit.

Shopped around a little and took in a few sights. Fooled around town all evening. Road (sic) in the famous tube and saw people sleeping in the underground station. I shall never forget how they looked especially the one lady who was in her bed reading a news paper as if she was in her own house, instead of a public under ground railway station where thousands of people pass by each hour. No privacy what so ever. No place to put their belongings, (if they had any belongings). More than likely the Bombs & Rockets took every thing along with their home. What an existence that must be, no home no place or thing to call your own. The same thing day after day. Deep in the underground at night and work by day. How thankful I am that my loved ones are safe back in the U.S. where the Bombs & Rockets are something they read about. One girl told me tonight, that for 2 years the siren started at 1800 (6pm) and the all clear sounded at 0600 (6am) the next morning. All night Jerry came and dropped his bombs & went back again for another load and to get ready for the next night. Yet these people don't seem to complain about anything. I heard 3 Rockets hit in London and it seemed quite unreal to me, but it didn't seem to concern the average Londoner too much. I could see the flash & hear the explosion and it seemed real close to me, but I guess it was several miles away. Yes, "the British can take it". I was out in the eastern section of London tonight and in the residential district where the blitz & the buzz bombs have hit so hard.

London seems dark to me but it is only dimmed out. It must have been hell when it was totally blacked out for so long. I'll bet neon lights and bright street lights will look good to the people when final peace comes again.

I was impressed with the way they have already cleaned up so much of the debris. Many buildings are still sand bagged for protection against future explosions. Its remarkable how well cleaned up the city

is after all the pounding it took. I can see that Jerry was more or less working on the peoples nerves rather than special industrial or military targets.

The bombs are just dropped at will on anything and everything. In many sections of the city it looked as if he deliberately tried to hit residential districts, and believe me he got plenty of them, to say nothing of the innocent lives that were lost during the Blitz. I can see now that Germany deserves the pounding they are getting today, but it does seem a crime(?) that so much of Europe must be destroyed.

London England, March 13, 1945

Well not everything was hit in London. In fact most of the more famous places & things were either untouched or only slightly damaged by the Blitz.

I saw all of these places today. A day well spent and a day I shall never forget. As I went from one place to another and gazed upon beauty, history, culture and art that had stood for thousands of years I thought how perfect it would have been to have Donna with me enjoying these sights. She could really appreciate the art and beauty and history of everything.

How interesting & impressive it was to see such places as Westminster Abbey, Buckingham Palace, Whitehall, Trafalgar Square with its monument to Lord Nelson, St. Paul's Cathedral where many of the famous Englishman are buried, including Lord Nelson and the Duke of Wellington.

London Bridge, the Thames River, the Tower of London, built by Henry VIII. The Lloyds of London, the Bank of England and numerous other places of great historical importance.

I saw the change of guards at Buckingham Palace. Most impressive sight. I saw Big Ben, the House of Parliament and No. 10 Downing St.

A trip well worth while. I should like to spend more time in London if I have the opportunity. History has certainly been made in that famous old city. Some of its buildings date back as far as 1066.

Now back to the old army life for a few more missions.

Hethel, March 14, 1945

Our mission to Arnsburg(?) was "scrubbed" the last minute so I guess there won't be too much to do today. It should have been a milk run, wish it hadn't been scrubbed.

Plenty of things get broken in war. When a shell or bomb collides with a house, there isn't much argument. The treasures of centuries go up in a flash. The bits and pieces can't even be put back together again. The world has lost something that can never be repaired or regained. Future generations are the losers. When some of these priceless treasures are destroyed no human hand or brain can reconstruct them. The pleasure they can give is gone forever. A link with the past is "destroyed".

Hethel, March 15,1945

Squadron stand down today so I guess I'll just take it easy and write a few letters. "Smitty" went down today over Hanover. I'll bet he gives the Jerry a bad time. He was the only one to hit the silk.

(note from the transcriber. The 389th Bomb Group consisted of four Squadrons, the 564th, 565th, 566th, and the 567th. Keith does not indicate which Squadron he was assigned to)

Hethel, March 16, 1945

The mission was scrubbed again just before take off. Looks like we are having about as hard a time to get in #5 as we did to get in #4. We're up gain tomorrow so maybe we'll get it in tomorrow.

Hethel, St Patricks day, March 17

Mission #5 today. "D Day Patches" 44 100 pounders, 2 - 500 incendiaries. Bombing altitude 24,500 ft. Cloud cover 6-7 tenths. Target was Munster Germany marshaling yards. The flak was meager to moderate. One barrage of about 25 bursts was real close to our left waist. In fact so close that I could hear the explosions.

Munster is a tough target, one of the worst but again God was with us as always and we made the Mission with no casualties.

Those Master Sergeants that man those flak batteries at Munster really know their stuff. I was really happy for the cloud coverage today. I'm afraid it could have been a bit rough if the target had been visual today. "Lucky Day for the Irish"

After getting a direct hit once, we sort of sweat them out, especially when those black bursts are all around as they always are at Munster.

These combat missions are no fun, but if we can always come home safely as we did today then I can't kick. After all we're not over here for the fun of it.

Again thank God for his protecting care over me today.

It was comforting to see the two chaplains wave us off this morning.

From the looks of the large group that were awaiting our return they might have been sweating us out.

Thirty more to go, it seems a lot to go yet but with God as co-pilot will make the grade. I can see already why they only require 35 mission to a tour. After 35 a man has really "had it" for awhile at least.

This should be (?) Staff/Sgt mission today.

I guess I'll ride over to the Dun Cow with Ed & Jack tonight and forget the flak for a few hours. Never fail to have a good time with those crazy devils. I would give a million to see my little Jeanne & Buddy and Donna & Mom and the rest right now. I hope and pray that my children won't get too grown up before I get to see them again.

A day like today separates the men from the boys. After a man has seen ships blow up in mid air and no chutes open it gives him a funny feeling to go back to the same target again. Yes, we went back to Munster again today and took a bite out of the dog that bit us on March 9th.

Hethel, March 18, 1945

Squadron stand down today. The Group hit "Big B" (*Berlin*) today. I'm rather happy our squadron did get a stand down today.

It was a beautiful day. Went to church. Chaplain Melich certainly gave a good sermon. Men in combat seem to change their attitude toward things. They look more to God for protection and guidance.

We went over to the old church at the end off the Burns(?) Road and took some pictures in the afternoon.

"Bligh" & "Sasky" (?) made their nightly trip over to the Dun Cow gain tonight.

Hethel, March 19, 1945

Mission #6 today. "*Lucky Lady Bett*" (see note below). Bomb load 10 x 500. Bombing altitude 20,000 ft. Visual all the way today. The target, a jet aircraft assembly plant & field in southern Germany. The name of the target was Baumenheim(?). It really got plastered. No flak, no fighters today, but it was a long Mission and I feel as if I had "had it" for today. 8 hrs 5 mins flying time.

(Note from the transcriber. "Lucky Lady Bett" was B-24 sn# 42-95038 built by Ford in 1942. She was assigned to the 389th Bomb Group, Squadron 565. "Lucky Lady Bett" survived the war and was ferried to Altus, Oklahoma on Nov 22, 1945 and apparently scrapped)

I got my first real glimpse of the destruction caused by war. I could hardly conceive of such destruction. First we crossed over Belgium then France then across the famous Rhine River into Germany and on down to the base of the Alps and into the target.

I thought London, Belgium, and France had been hit, but it can't compare to Germany. We passed over town after town in Germany that had been completely destroyed. Not one house left standing. Even the farming ground is so pocked with shells holes and bomb craters that it is useless. Everything looked as if it had been completely obliterated, even to the very soil of the earth. I wondered as we passed over, why? For which reason should Gods earth be so completely destroyed? I wonder how long God will stand for such destruction and abuse of his earth and of his peoples? How long can the "Hun" stand this terrific pounding. Our armadas of bombers by day, the RAF by night, round the clock pounding day after day. He doesn't even have any farming ground left to feed his people let alone build war machines.

We crossed the famous Rhine and could see its clear waters glistening in the sun as if it were mercury in a tube. So odd to see large highways leading up to its banks and away on the other side but the

bridges that linked the two together were all completely gone. Then on across the beautiful Blue Danube we saw the same story. Looking on to the South were the snow covered Alps. I thought as we soared over 5 miles above all of this, "what a beautiful country Germany must have been before the war". I shall never forget that beautiful little city on the Rhine with its circular pattern. One half on one side the other half on the other side. The linking bridge between of course was gone, as were all the buildings in the city, but its pattern was still there as if to defy man to destroy it.

I saw my first front line action today. I could see below artillery barrages of both sides across the Rhine. I could see whole cities burning. I saw the shell that once was the beautiful city of Cologne and another that was Coblenz(?) and many smaller ones, all destroyed. We crossed over the 7th Army lines, also the 3rd & 9th lines. I wondered what the boys thought as they saw our bombers go over. It seemed that I was so close to Johnny and the others and yet I was a million miles from all that hell they are going through down on the ground.

Many thoughts passed through my mind today. More than anything else though was, why does such destruction have to be? I'm thankful that my loved ones are not having their homes destroyed like this. Thank god they are safe in the tops of the Rockies.

I thank God for once again bringing me safely back. I pray that never again shall I see so much destruction in any one day or number of days as I've seen today. I know that it must be, but still I wonder, why?

Hethel, March 20, 1945

Mission #7 - *Lucky Lady Bett* Bomb load 12x500, bombing alt. 20,000 ft. Visual target an oil plant at Hollingstedt, Northern Germany, near Denmark. Air time 5 hrs. From the looks of the black smoke we really plastered the target. The smoke could be seen for a long time after we left the target. We didn't get any flak or fighters but saw the 445 (*squadron*) got plenty of flak. The lead ship got a direct hit. A man never knows who is going to get it next. It happens so fast. The ship today just seemed to break apart and was down in a matter of seconds. I'll never forget how I felt as I saw the ship hit the water of the North Sea. It almost seems unreal. Yet we are always conscious that when one of these bombers go down 9 or 10 lives go with it. Yet the formation goes on its way as if nothing had happened. Flak is a terrible thing, you just wait and hope and pray, yes pray so sincerely that it will miss you. There is no defense, nothing you can do but pray and keep on the bomb run. What a relief when the bombs are away and we turn and head for home. With fighter attacks a man can at least shoot back, but with flak there is nothing you can do except sweat it out. Again I'm convinced that the 389th is lucky.

There is an alert out again tonight. Jerry is over fooling around, seems to be a little fire works out side, but I guess it won't amount to much. After some of the things we see on a mission we don't seem to pay much attention to a lone Jerry raider.

Made Staff Sargent today, but I'm beginning to think that I'm earning it. We're up again tomorrow. Hope it's a milk run.

Hethel, 3/21/45

We greeted the first day of spring today with Mission #8. The target was Achmer Germany a little town near Arnsbruck(?). We hit jet aircraft fields. Bomb load 52 x 100. Altitude 20,000 visual target all the way. Air time 5 hr 30 min.

The flak was Moderate but accurate. I believe the missions get tougher each day. This was a "bitch kitty" today. The flak had us hemmed in and was so close that you could hear it burst and see the orange fire of the burst. That is too close for me. At one time I thought we had "had it". The Skipper and Slats were throwing "*Lucky Lady Bett*" into violent maneuvers to miss the flak and I guess with Gods help we got by once more. I'll never know how we got through it but we did. We got one little flak hole in our fuselage. In fact I guess 50% of the ships got holes today, but thanks to God none went down even though the flak was accurate and heavy.

(note from the transcriber. In the book "Mission, Jimmy Stewart and the Fight for Europe by Leonard Maltin" the actor Jimmy Stewart flew the 3/21/45 mission as the co-pilot and Mission Commander in the lead bomber. The book also documents that Stewart's nickname was "Slats". Keith's reference to the "Skipper" (the pilot) and "Slats" in the above diary entry indicates that Jimmy Stewart was aboard Keith's bomber as co-pilot on that mission. The book documents what a tough mission it was because of heavy flak and Jimmy Stewart was badly shaken when they landed back at Hethel. He had been flying combat missions longer than anybody and General Hap Arnold noticing the cumulative effect of all these missions told Stewart "I didn't want him to fly any more combat". Stewart didn't argue about it and never flew another mission)

Twenty seven more Missions to go and it looks like they won't be much easier either. In fact, from now on I'll sweat each one out just a little more. If God will just let me go back to my family when this is over then that's about all I can ask.

The target was really plastered today. Air fields in every direction were hit at one time. I could see 5 fields being bombed at once. When we left the area they were all in smoke and flame. The bombs looked like a pin ball machine as they exploded on the target. Jimmy Stewart was the command pilot today. This makes three in a row and we're up again tomorrow, four in a row. I'll really be ready for a rest. One good thing, each mission we fly is one less to go before we can go home. I miss my little family so much.

Hethel, 3-22-45

Stand down today, rather enjoyed the rest. Wish I could have spent my birthday at home. But it wasn't so bad, had a nice letter from Johnny. They finished Munster(?) yesterday.

Hethel, March 24, 1945

Another day off today. Kent(?) has been here for a couple of days, surely enjoyed his visit. We went on a practice Mission tonight. Sure has been beautiful weather for the past few days. Makes me rather homesick.

This is quite a historic date. This should be a great turning point in the war. The allies crossed the Rhine in great force. This group sent a formation of ships loaded with supplies for the paratroopers. I guess it was a plenty rough mission. It was flown at 300 ft. Six of our ships were lost. I thought I would liked to have been on the raid, but I guess I'm lucky that we weren't up.

What a sight it was to see the thousands of planes in the air this morning. The sky overhead was actually black with 24's, 17's, 26's, C-47's, Lancs, Halifax's and gliders. From 0400 until 0900 they roared over. There is no doubt but what this is going to be a great day. The Jerry will certainly catch hell today. Maybe the war will end soon.

Had some nice letters from home today. My children sound so cute and perfect. What a happy day when their daddy can come home to stay with them and enjoy them

Hethel, March 25, 1945

Today was our 9th Mission and also the 300th Mission for the 389th Group. The mission today was an underground oil dump at Ehrmen(?), Germany. Bombing alt. Was 23,000. Air time seven hrs. target visual. Flak at the target was nil, but we ran into a barrage at Hellingland(?) where the Daniel Boone

Master gunners hang out. The battery is located on a small island in the Zider Zee. They really put it in there. It was accurate as the devil and came somewhat as a surprise to us all. Several ships were hit but no serious casualties.

These Jerries can really throw that damn flak when they want to. They really caught it today. We saw several large fires caused from 11 tons dropped by the Lancs of the R.A.F. Two of the fires, Ausenburk(?) and Hanover, had smoke that reached up to over 20,000 ft. We could see the fires for almost two hours. The RAF was supposed to have hit Munster with 11 tons today. Hope they done as good a job. It looked today as if all of Germany was on fire. It makes a person wonder just how long they can hold out. They are taking such a terrific beating.

There were thousands of planes in the air again today. It seems they are trying to give Jerry the knock out punch.

The flak today was close to us again, but some how I didn't feel as if it would hit us. Maybe I'm just getting used to it. The puffs looked so black and so close today.

Hethel, 3-26-45

The Mission today was scrubbed on account of rain. I hear the RAF over head tonight so I guess we'll be out in the morning.

Hethel, 3-27-45

Forty - 8 (*48 hr pass*) begins today, am going with Ed, Jack and Chet.

London, 3-28-45

Had a good time last night. We were out in the suburbs of East London where the buzz bombs and Rockets still hit. Since we were in London a couple of weeks ago a rocket hit a residential block and destroyed everything. That particular section of London has surely had it. The people have seen their homes destroyed for so long now that they don't seem to pay much attention to them anymore. I ask one girl if she was scared when the Rockets hit, she said "Scared, no, why should I be?" Her home had been completely destroyed by a doodle (?).

London, 3-29-45

Went to see the Tower of London today. It is truly a wonderful sight. So full of history and the architecture of the place is most interesting.

Met a couple of Canadian soldiers today. They are good guys. More like U.S. boys. I gather they don't think too much of England and the English people.

Had a nice trip home. Met some very interesting people. One couple invited me to come to London to stay with them on my next pass. There are a lot of fine people over here.

Had a lot of mail waiting for me when I got home, was surely happy to hear from home & Burt & Jene(?). My little Jeanne & Keithie surely seem to be getting more darling every day.

The news is most encouraging at present. Our armies are pushing ahead into Germany at a rapid pace. I just can't see how the Jerry can hold out for long.

The Skipper is in the Hosp. with the grip, so I guess we won't fly for a while.

Hethel, 3-30-45

We were alerted today but since the Skipper is in the Hosp. We didn't fly. Maybe by the time he gets out the work for the heavies will be mostly over. I suppose will certainly end up in the Pacific.

The Group went to hit a German sub pen somewhere this morning. They were briefed for intense flak, hope they all make it back.

Its encouraging to learn that our armies are taking so many areas in the Ruhr that were such hot spots for the heavies. Namely Munster, Hanover, Brusswich(?) and a few others. Thank God we shan't have to hit them again. Our losses have already been far to great on those particular targets.

A german broadcast is just coming on the radio. Its an excellent program, even if it is for the purpose of trying to get the boys homesick & discouraged with war. Certainly they can't believe it will undermine our spirits. On the contrary we get a big kick out of it. The song they are singing now is, "Wedding bells are ringing for Sally but not for Sally & Me".

Hethel, 3-30-45

Skipper is still in the hosp so again we take it easy. By the time he gets out maybe the war in Europe will be over. The armies are surely moving ahead. They have already taken over many of the hot flak spots, but there still plenty left I suppose.

Today's Mission was pretty rough. They went to Brunswich(?) and were jumped by jet fighters. This group lost two ships.

Hethel, 3-31-45

Mission was scrubbed today - either the weather wasn't good or the armies took the target. Skipper still in the hosp.

Hethel, 4-1-45

Easter day and April fools day. This makes my 3rd Easter in the army. Hope I'm home with my family again by next Easter. Went to Church this morning, very beautiful service.

Mission scrubbed again today. Wonder if the folks back home had a nice day today.

This funny old England so different from our own country. I thought it funny to see couples taking their love where they can. Standing up in door ways and allies(sic) sitting in hay stacks and just any place they can find. But now it doesn't seem so odd after I've seen what war does to people. Here today gone tomorrow. So many homes gone and those that are left are so crowded up that house entertainment is out. After all young people are still human and still have the same instincts of nature. I suppose after having their boy friends and brothers and loved ones gone for 4 and 5 years they sort of lose the desire to wait longer. Some people condemn them for these things, but perhaps they have justification to a certain extent.

The radio just announced "No love is so great as the love of a man who continually faces danger". (?) that the allies have taken Munster. How happy we all are to hear this. So many fine young men have been lost over that target in the past. I have seen those ships go down in a flame of glory over that one single target. Too bad it couldn't have been taken six months ago. Those bastards could really lay the flak where they wanted it. I've heard & saw so many of those black and red bursts over that target and saw ships blow up in mid air and flame to the ground. Many is the time I've thought we had had it over that target and with out Gods protection we would have had it. That target was always rough -

plenty of flak & accurate as hell. Any time we were briefed for Munster we knew that some of us wouldn't come back and our knowledge was always confirmed. Yes was happy that never again will the flak guns at Munster belch death into our groups of bombers.

Hethel, April 2, 1945

Judy's birthday, hope she is enjoying her self.

Still taking it easy. Went out pubbing last night, had a pretty good time.

Hethel, April 3, 1945

Mission was recalled today on account of bad weather. Our targets seem to be getting fewer every day due to the advances of our armies. Stood guard on the ack ack guns tonight. Old Bligh sang to me all night.

April 4, Hethel

There may not be many targets left for the heavies but those that are left are tough ones. The mission today was air fields near Berlin. It cost our Group 4 bombers and a number of casualties. They were hit with jet fighters and flak too. The one ship that came back "*G+*" (*this is not the nose art name but the aircraft identification on the tail under the Circle C emblem for the 389th*) with the waist gunner shot up, was a hell of a nasty mess. Had about 70 holes in it. Blood and particles of flesh splattered the waist. I guess it will be Big B and Big H pretty often from now on.

April 5, Hethel

Mission scrubbed on account of bad weather again today. The Skipper got out of the hospital today so I guess our little vacation will come to an end shortly.

April 6, Hethel

We were up today but the Group drew a stand down so we didn't have to go. I guess we are just lucky. The more times we stand down the more chance we have of getting home in one piece, so I guess we shouldn't kick.

April 7, Hethel

Today is 2 years in the army for me, and what an anniversary it was. One of the darkest days in my life. I really saw it today. On today's Mission I saw everything that can be seen in aerial combat. Flak, fighters, dog fights, exploding and burning planes, chutes and attacks of every kind and from every angle.

The Mission #10 was ammunition factory & storage at Duensburg(?) near Hamburg, primary target. Marshaling yard at Newmunster secondary. Both targets were smashed, but the cost to us was great. We carried 10 x 500 - bombed at 18000 Visual.

To start the day off our bombs were accidentally released on the ramp before take off. So we took a spare ship "*Hollywood and Vine*".

We had hundreds of "Little Fiends" as escorts, but still we were hit by ME 109's and ME 262 jets. They came in first before bombs away and hot lead was spurting from every bomber in the formation. The Little Friends were dog fighting above us with Jerry, but still they came into the formation in a suicide attack. They knocked down our lead and Col. Herboth by ramming, and shot out the Deputy lead so that both ships went flying to the ground at once, steel still spurting from their guns as they went down. At this same time the ship behind us got it from a (ME) 109 and spun down in a blaze and later exploded. A fighter went down and the pilot bailed out. Within one minute I saw at least 3 ships with 30 men go down in a blaze. Every gunner in our formation opened up with all he had at Jerry. Naturally all the Jerries went down, but not before 3 B-24's and 1 P-51. We lost our Lead & Deputy Lead.

(added note by the transcriber from the History of the 389th: On April 7, 1945, the 389th Bomb Group was one of the targets of the [Sonderkommando Elbe](#), [Luftwaffe aerial ramming](#) unit. Two B-24s were destroyed in one ramming attack.)

Then the flak started. It was moderate and inaccurate. It let up until we hit the secondary then it started again with phosphorous rockets besides. Then we went to Helligsland(?) at the Zider Zee and it came up again. Old Daniel Boone is still there.

We lost an engine over the target and sweated it out across the rest of Germany, Holland, the North Sea and to the base.

We landed a tired weary lot as did all the other crews. But again God was with us as he always is and we landed safely. I look back on today's Mission and I pray that God shall let me close it from my mind and that never again shall I have to see such a sight as I witnessed today. It still doesn't seem possible that we didn't get it, they were falling on all sides of us today, but we were untouched.

I wonder if I will have the courage to go through 25 more of them. I don't see how I will be possible to survive that many more but I know if it is God's will that I shall. I pray that he will give me the strength and courage to continue my job as it should be done in spite of what may come in the future. Yes, I think I've seen my share of combat in 10 missions. There certainly isn't anything in armed combat left to see after today. If I can just get those burning planes out of my mind before tomorrow's Mission I'll be ok. That's the thing that gets a man's nerve more than anything. I thought flak was bad, but fighters are worse and a combination of the two are really hell. Those bastards really gave it to us today, but we also gave it back.

It is reported that the 8th (*Air Force*) knocked down 67 enemy fighters today. I don't think Jerry can stand many more days like that at this stage in the game.

Had 7 sweet letters from home tonight so I feel fine now. We're up again tomorrow, hope it's a milk run..

Hethel, April 8, 1945

We had it again today (Mission #11). Sometimes I wonder how anyone survives a full tour of Missions. I haven't lost my nerve, on the contrary. Combat Missions don't seem to bother me as much now as they did at first. But I just can't see how a man's luck can hold out time and time again. It seems that the law of averages should get you before you can finish, but somehow I don't feel that they will catch me. I feel that God can cheat even the law of averages and bring a man through hell or high water for as many times as he faces such experiences.

I am convinced that there are no Milk Runs left over the Reich. If it's not flak it's fighters or like yesterday it's both. Today it was flak. We expected fighters, but they hit the Group ahead of us and left us alone today. The flak was close, very close and heavy. Classified as Moderate & very accurate. We came back with three holes. One in #1 (*engine*), one in #3 and one in the wing. They boxed us in with the damn stuff and for a minute I thought sure we had had it. But we dropped down a couple of hundred feet and slipped away. I shall never forget the feelings I have over each target. I wonder if they shall come to haunt me after this thing is over. To see it day after day and see crew

after crew go down in a blaze of glory leaves a man with a feeling he can't soon forget. But God was with us and once more we came safely home. One Mission closer to home and my loved ones. Today made Number 11.

We flew "R" (*the aircraft tail number*) today - 10 x 500 M17 incendiary(sp). Target Kurth, at Munnberg(?) Germany. Jet repair factory. Bombing altitude 21,000 Visual. Result very good. 7 hours flying time.

Crossed over Belgium and the Rhine. Once again we saw the ravages of war. The destruction of Germany. We saw the Rhine where the terrific fighting took place. Passed directly over Brussels on our way home.

I hope that it doesn't hold out much longer. Those Jerries are getting better with the flak each day and every Mission there seems to be more of it. I'm not bitching. I realize that the other boys in combat have it just as tough but this is just my description of day to day combat in the air. Each day you sweat it out. Either you sweat it out and if you'll be up for the next Mission. If you are you sweat it out over the target. So what the hell, I guess it doesn't matter much.

Hethel, April 9

We were alerted today but were scrubbed at the last minute. Went to London on pass. Had a good time. I guess the boys had a rough mission again today. They were hit with jets and (ME) 109's again.

London, April 10

Met Ed and we took in the town. Went up to (?) on Bond Street. Had a wonderful evening.

Hethel, April 11

We were up today, but the mission was scrubbed the last minute on account of a front. The way the fronts are moving today will soon be out of targets. It is beginning to look like it won't be long until will be either headed for the Pacific or for home. I believe the job for heavies is over here is nearly finish. The Reich has nearly had it. My guess is Berlin within the week. What then?

Hethel, April 12, 1945

Mission scrubbed again. I guess brother Patton beat us to the target. We haven't been getting our Missions in very fast lately.

Hethel, April 13, 1945

Our 300th Mission party was scheduled to begin today, but due to the passing of our Commander In Chief, President Roosevelt, it has been called off.

I regret very much as does every other peace loving individual anywhere in the world, the passing of this great man. It seems as if each of us had lost a personal friend. I am sure that no other man has ever caused such world wide sentiment upon his death.

I think each of us, regardless of our political belief, feel the loss of a truly great leader. It has given me such pride to hear people from other countries praise our late President.

This great man certainly had the confidence of the entire world. It seems such a pity that he couldn't have lived long enough to see the peace that he played such a tremendous part in bringing about and making possible. I only hope and pray that our present leaders can carry on as well. I think he done more than any other man to bring about better relations and stronger and more lasting ties between our country and our allies. He has been an inspiration to us all during these terrible years of war. I'm sure that his great ideas and policies already set own shall not have been made in vain.

Hethel, April 14(?), 1945

No Mission today. Went out into the country this afternoon with Ace. England is really beautiful in the spring. There is no country side anywhere in the world so beautiful as it is in England. Rolling grassy hills with flowers and blooming trees and peaceful looking old churches and houses. I shall never forget the beauty that I have seen today. The stream running under the old mill. I thought how nice it would have been to have had Donna enjoying this afternoon with me.

We stopped in at the Dun Cow in the evening. I was so impressed with the way the British people grieve the loss of Pres. F.D.R. I am sure they feel just as great a loss as we do ourselves. You can't believe the sentiment that is felt over here without seeing and talking to these people in person. Everyone from the King to the lowliest country folk are talking with great reverence about the passing of this great man and how the entire world shall miss his leadership.

Hethel, April 15(?)

No mission again today. I'm beginning to feel like I'm just here on a big vacation. But I guess they will come soon enough. Each day that passes is a day near to my return to those I love whether I fly a Mission, or not. So I guess I shouldn't kick. Another beautiful day. Guess I'll go out in the country and take a few pictures.

I've been thinking and wondering why with all this beauty and with the beauty else where in the world, do men have to fight and destroy each other. Why can't they enjoy the good things in life and stop this bloodshed and destruction.

“Not 'till the loom is silent and the shuttles seem cease to fly, shall God unfurl the canvas and explain the reason why? The dark threads are as needful in the weavers skillful hand as the threads of gold and silver in the master pattern he has planned”.

Bush's crew went down today. Sure swell guys they were. B-17's dropped bombs on them through an accident.

April 16(?), Hethel

Skeleton crew flew the mission today so I didn't go. They hit a German held pocket near Bordeaux France. They carried the new fire bombs. They didn't encounter any flak or fighters.

April 17(?), Hethel

Mission #12 today. Target was Landshut way down in South Eastern Germany. It was a long haul. 9 hrs 15 min but we didn't encounter any fighters. The flak was intense over Munich, but thank God we didn't have to go through it. It was quite a sight to watch a little P-51 fly over there to draw the flak. They really peppered it up at him. But our "Little Friend" was too fast for the Hun. They followed him with intense bursts, but he got away.

We carried 11 x 500 (?) today. Bombed H2X(?) at 18,000. We flew over London on our way over and clear across France in (?) Germany. We saw the country that the 7th Army had fought so hard for. Stutgardt(?) etc. We crossed the Rhine a couple of times. Saw a lot of ground fighting today. The most we have ever seen. Fires and explosions in all directions.

It gave me a funny feeling to look down and see all this country and know that Johnny was down there fighting at the same moment. It seemed we were so near and yet so far apart.

It was interesting to watch the sun light turn the streams to silver as we flew along. Reminded me of quick silver. Most interesting Mission today. The best part is that every one in the Group returned home safely. One Mission closer to home and to the finish of this crazy war.

April 18(?), Hethel

We started on #13 today but had to abort just before we hit the coast of France. It was definitely a Milk Run. Sure hated to miss it, especially after we got started.

The target area was a rail bridge near Dresden. But they say never to feel bad about missing a Mission, it might have been the one you missed that might have got you.

(note from the transcriber: Keith's handwriting is has changed and is more difficult to read. It has more of a slant. Some days of the month have been written over to correct it in this 5 day period. The heading is also in a different order at times. The following entry has the same date as the previous one. It may be that he got behind in his dairy and was hurrying to catch it up to date since the war was close to ending – hh)

April 18, Hethel, 1945

Stand down today so we work on a practice Mission over Northern England. We camera bombed Manchester. Still beautiful weather.

April 19, 1945 Hethel

Another beautiful day. Group stand down. Jack & John went to France to take supplies. Should be a good trip for them. But if we stay over here after the war is finished will probably have plenty of time to see the rest of Europe.

I've just been thinking after reading about some of (*what*) the dough boys see; We really don't know what terrible sights are. We see our Buddies go down in flames occasionally. But we don't have to tramp through the ruins and destruction of towns and see it all first hand. We don't have to smell the

stench of death and look upon the poor creatures who have suffered as slaves under the Nazis for so long. We probably do our share of this destruction but we never see the results in detail as do the dough boys who come later. Yes I guess we have it pretty soft after all.

Hethel, April 20, 1945

Squadron stand down today, so I just took it easy. The weather is still pretty.

Hethel, April 21, 1945

Mission #13 today was to Salsburg down in Southern Austria. The weather was the worst I've seen. Must have been a pretty important target or they would have scrubbed the Mission. The target was supposed to be a marshalling yard to prevent Hitler's gang from joining him down in his secret hide out. The weather finally got so tough we had to abandon the Mission about 15 minutes from the target. We got credit for it however, on account we put in 8 long hours and fought the rough weather every minute and returned with our bomb load. We were in Enemy territory for a long time and as far as danger goes flying formation in thick clouds is far more dangerous than a lot of flak targets so I feel that we deserved credit for the Mission.

It was hell trying to fly through the stuff. We couldn't get over it and we couldn't get under it. It is a wonder that there were no midair collisions, but I guess once again God was with us.

We formed at 3000 ft over France and the weather was so bad that we flew at that low altitude clear across the Rhine. Then we climbed to 22,000 but it was so bad that it was impossible to bomb under such conditions so we had to turn back. Weather is one of the things that airmen sweat out just as much as flak and fighters. We nearly had it a couple of times. Ships came under us so close that they nearly took off our bomb bays.

It was a long haul and we really sweated it out, but it was rather interesting in that we flew so low that we could see so much on the ground. We saw beautiful country in Belgium, France, Holland, Germany and Austria. Germany and France were particularly beautiful. We could see thousands of fruit trees in full bloom and the fields were so green & pretty.

As usual we also seen plenty of the after math of war. Wrecked tanks, planes, trucks and thousands of shell & bomb craters. Hundreds of towns blasted to bits. We saw many bridges, or wreckage of bridges across the Rhine, as well as the new pontoon bridges that have been built by our engineers.

We saw a number of large convoys going both ways like so many ants. It looked good to see the white star on their sides. We saw many of Hitler's famous Super Highways with grass strips in between the lanes. Our tanks and trucks moving along the autobahn that Germany built for the purpose of moving their Wermachtt(?).

The country was beautiful down there, it is very hilly and most picturesque, with its many streams and rivers & lakes. I think it is the most beautiful of any country in Europe. Reminds me of some of the country back home.

I saw many beautiful castles on the Rhine, they looked just like the story books and songs used to portray them. I thought as I gazed upon them that perhaps many poor weary doughboy had probably found a few hours rest and comfort in these famous old castles. The best is none to good for them, they earned a rest in such a place.

War has become so real since I've been in combat and had a chance to see and take part in it all. At first it seemed like a Nightmare or dream to look down and see the wrecked cities and shell holes and the destroyed bridges across the Rhine, but now its common place and I don't think much about it. I used to read about such things but it didn't seem real until I saw it with my own eyes.

I am convinced that air travel is surely the way to see the country. For example yesterday I saw 5 countries in eight hours. There is only one way that can be done. From the flooded areas of the Zider Zee to the mountains in Southern Austria.

The Russians & Yanks are about to link up today. The Battle for Berlin is in full swing.

Hethel, April 22, 1945

Group stand down today. Got a nice package from Donna today. Surely appreciated it. Also there was the most darling picture of my little family. I wouldn't take a million for it. It is perfect. Again I thank god for such a wonderful family to come home to.

The battle still goes well today.

London England, April 23, 1945

Another visit to the big city. Its always a good time. Ed and I were together.

London England, April 24, 1945

Ed and I walked half across the city tonight. Slept in a bomb shelter for a while. Finally got a street car conductor to take us in and spend the rest of the night. We missed all the busses & couldn't get a cab.

Hethel, April 25, 1945

Sure hate to see our 48 (*48 hour pass*) come to an end as usual. Now to settle down to another two weeks of flying. Weather is still good. Its beginning to look as if the heavies had "had it". No Missions for 3 days for the 8th AF.

April 26, Hethel

Group stand down today. B-17's hit a target in Checkoslavia. The loss pretty heavy. RAF dropped 12,000 pounders on Hitler's Hide Out.

Hethel, April 27, 1945

Group stand down again today. In fact the whole 8th AF has stood down for 3 days now. The Russians and Yanks linked up yesterday. Its beginning to look very much like the job for the heavies in the ETO (*European Theater of Operations*) is finished.

Hethel, April 28, 1945

Group stand down again. Its been so long since I was on a Mission that its beginning to feel as if there is nothing to combat. We surely haven't done anything for a long time now. But I guess if there are no targets to hit then we don't go up. Wouldn't surprise me if we didn't fly another Mission over here. We are all wondering what the hell they are going to do with us now. Of course there are plenty of rumors as usual.

Seems like I've surely been over here for a long time to only have 13 Missions. I surely saw my share of combat. More in fact than a lot of crews see in a full tour.

It was snowing like the devil this morning. Some contrast to the Spring we have been having. Looked funny to see the snow on the flowers.

Hethel, April 29, 1945

Our springtime turned to winter today. Snow all over the ground. We're still sweating it out. It looks very much like the days of the Heavies are over in this theater.

I look back over it all now and while I've had some close ones and combat was plenty rough while it lasted, it wasn't for long. Certainly not long compared to the length of time some of the dough boys have put in on the lines. In fact I feel like they have had so much more of it than I have that mine is hardly worth mentioning. I think about the many hundreds of times that Johnny and some of the other boys have faced the enemy at close quarters and I feel just like a Rookie.

Funny how a mans opinion can change so quickly. A few days ago when we were putting our life on a limb each time we took off for a combat mission I actually thought it was rough, and it was. But now we've had it and in a way it doesn't seem so bad. Still I have a picture in my mind of the many planes that I saw go down in flames. Of the flak that mushroomed out into ugly black bursts on so many Missions, of the fighters who came spitting death in at us, of the times we were hit and the way we sweated it out time and time again. Wondering each time we received a hit, if the next one would take us with it.

I shall never forget how close I felt my time was, the day we were over Osnabauk(?) and I heard the Skipper call over the intercom and say, "My God were boxed in". Out of either waist window I could see the mushrooming flak in all directions. But again we were missed, so it was time and time again. Still, it doesn't seem so tough to me now.

I remember the day that Bush's crew went down. The fabric was all torn off the fuselage and you could see the skeleton of the plane burst into flames and see the crew moving around inside like so many trapped animals. Likewise I shall always remember the times that I saw Hunter, Ancil, Kunkle, Hensmanski, and many others get it and either blow up in mid air or go down in a mass of flame. I've often wished that I was a writer so I could write a story of combat while it is still fresh on my mind. Perhaps its just as well that I'm not though.

Hethel, May 1, 1945

So much time to just sit around and think of home and my loved ones and wonder how my little Jeanne and Buddy & Donna are. How wonderful it will be to be together again. How happy Mom shall be and millions of their Mothers to have their sons all surely home to stay.

Hethel, May 2, 1945

The news is so good today. Berlin falls. Mass surrender in Italy. Hamburg declared an open city. Hitler & Goebbels are dead. The entire German army seems to be rapidly falling apart. What a happy day if Japan were that nearly done for.

Hethel, May 3, 1945

The big Lancasters are just going over again this morning with food for the starving Dutch. They surely look pretty, especially since their Mission is a Mission to save lives rather than destroy them.

It looks like only a matter of days before Germany is done for. We have undoubtedly flew our last combat Mission over here.

While I don't like combat any better than the next guy, still I have a feeling like I would like to be doing something to help end this world struggle. The dough boys are still slugging it out, but we've done all we can for them now. They are in so far that it is impossible for heavies to carry on any more Missions. Hope it shan't be too long before they too can finish their job.

Hethel, May 4, 1945

Well the days with the "Big League" are over with for the 8th Air Force in the ETO. From now on will just sweat out our next assignment. May take a few trolley tours over Germany to see the battle damage. It is going to seem funny to go over this territory on more or less a pleasure trip and not worry about the flak and fighters. No more long hauls with a greeting of flak and fighters at the other end.

Its funny now that I have had it here in this theater. I wouldn't take a million for the experience, but I do feel pretty thankful to still be around. I am in that lucky 64% who make it, of course I haven't finished a complete tour either, but I've seen enough of it full tour, or not. Seems funny to think that Rouch & Calloway & (?) & Frankie & Cuzzo and all the others are not with us. In a way it just doesn't seem possible.

I wonder how it will be in the South Pacific. Or will it be in the occupational AF over on the continent.

In a way I sort of miss it now that I know I'm not going on any more combat Missions. Not that I like combat, not that I think there is any more to see than I've already seen, and not that I'm not thankful that God has seen me through thus far. But it just seems odd that I won't be awakened & alerted for briefing at 2 AM any more. Seems odd that I won't be going over the (?) shaped farm land of France, the rivers and hills of Germany etc. any more. But in another way I am so thankful that our job is finished over here and that we won't have to carry destruction to Germany again. But mostly because it seems that much closer to the end and the return home to our loved ones.

Since I won't see any more combat, for awhile at least, I'll sum it all up at saying, combat is hard to catch in words.

You write down what they did and tell how things were, but that isn't all of combat. No phrases will tell the empty seconds or minutes in the guts of every man aboard as they wait and almost even feel the attack, or the flak barrage, each wondering if this will be "it" or will he live to start back. This same empty feeling that no words can measure comes when you watch flames consume the very thing which bears you aloft, the fire begins to glow within the engine nacelles and eats slowly back into the wing. It takes courage to struggle, not to live, but to strike back. So many things can happen up there five miles above the earth and there is so much time to think.

Combat is shells and fire and wreckage and destruction. No matter where it is, in the air, the sea, and also, maybe mostly, what happens in a mans guts and his mind. In the air, that is the only combat that I know, the split second things that happen you can tell about. They happen and are dealt with by reflex, and there is no element of mind in them. But its after these split-second things happen, there follow long minutes and hours which airman call the time "the men are separated from the boys". Those are the minutes and hours of eternity in which fires smother, or roar on to explode in which surfaces stick together or flutter apart and start that crazy, spinning plunge to earth. Mine has always been of the former, but I too have seen the later, and I have an idea of what those men were thinking while they were starting that five mile spinning plunge. Such times are of mind, and speak infinite horror(?); you can tell little of them.

I write down these thoughts while they are fresh on my mind. Since combat is over for me, for a time at least many of these things shall slip out of my mind.

I was formally presented with my Air Medal today. Colonel Wright presented the decoration.

It sounds tonight as if the ground forces in Germany will too, soon be finished with combat. The latest (*news*) flash told of the surrender of all Northern Germany, Holland & Denmark. The end in Europe is near.

May 5, 1945 May 6&7

The armies are still going to town, can't be long now. We are still marking time.

May 8, 1945 - VE Day

Well this is the day we have so long waited for. Unconditional surrender of Germany.

I've just been listening (*on the radio*) to the cheering crowds in the different Capital Cities. How I would like to be in London tonight to join in the Celebration. But no, the soldiers are all restricted today & tomorrow. We fired a few flares in the area tonight. Some excitement for such a great occasion

May 9, 1945

Still the world celebrates and still we are restricted. Since we are no longer in combat the C.S. starts. We didn't get our pass today. Started Revellie(sic) and uniform regulations and Military Courtesy and all the other B.S. Personally I'm not going to like it. I would just as soon go into another combat theater.

May 10, 1945

Still (?) around and listening to rumors. Wish we could do something. No one seems to know the score on any thing.

May 11, 1945

Same old thing, rumors, rumors and rumors. Sure would like to do all this writing at home with my loved ones. Hope Johnny and the boys get home soon. Rumor has it we're going home.

May 12, 1945

Went on a trolley tour (*in the B-24*) over Germany & Holland today. Most interesting. Saw our old favorite target Munster from low level. Also the (?) part of Bremen, Hanover, Essen, and the Ruhr. They have really had it.

What beautiful country there is in Germany. Too bad they couldn't have been content with this (?) beautiful country. They would have certainly have ended up with more in the long run. Their cities & industry are all dead and still today.

Holland was beautiful and so clean & tidy looking with its old windmills and canals and green fields and happy liberated people. They seemed such a contrast to the beaten discouraged people of Germany.

All passes cancelled

May 13 - Mothers Day

(note from the transcriber. There were no more entries in the diary after the Mothers Day heading. Keith returned home to southern Utah and his family. He was born March 22, 1917 and passed away October 7, 1992)

(The book "The Mighty Eighth in WWII by Graham Smith" documents that from the middle of May 1945 until July over 2,000 heavy bombers and some 41,500 airmen made the journey back across the Atlantic, on what was known as the "Home Run". Some aircraft left from Prestwick, Scotland but over 90% departed from RAF Valley in Anglesey, which would become known as "The Happy Valley". A B-24 of the 389th Group based at Hethel (Keith's Group) was the first to leave on 19th May and it landed safely at Bradley Field, Connecticut three days later.

During the next six months and more, the B-17's and B-24's would find their last resting place in the wide open spaces of the Kingman Army Air Field in Arizona. At one time it was said that there were over 7,000 aircraft covering five square miles of desert. They were arranged in neat and orderly lines to await their final fate -- to be scrapped and melted down.)

the end