

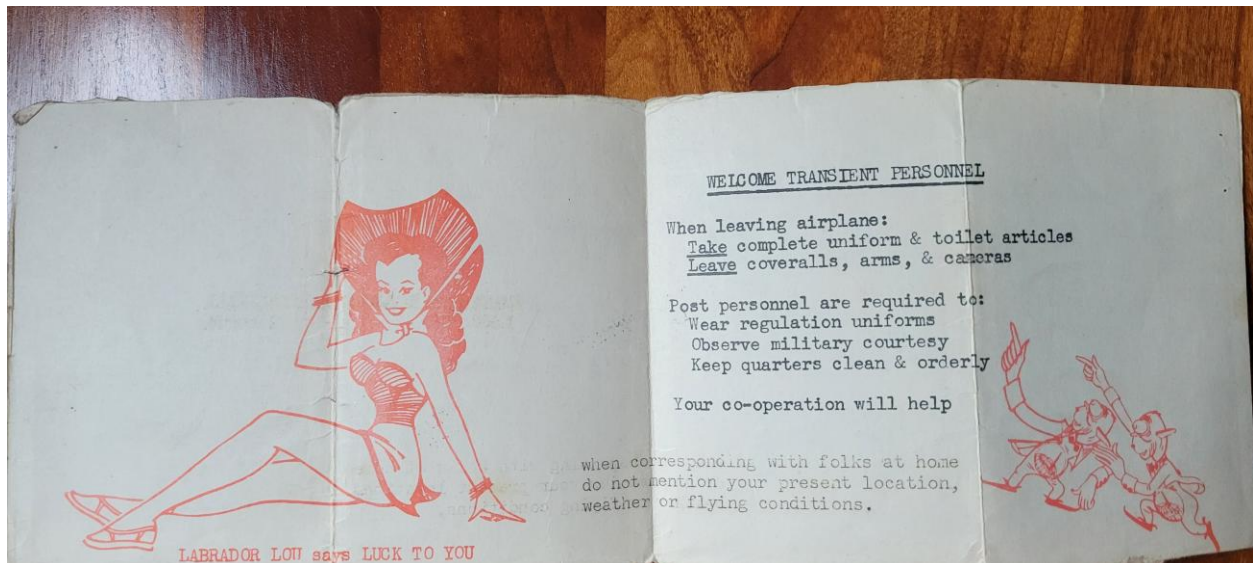
Leser Crew

By Joel Fleck, son of 579th Bombardier 1LT Ernest R Fleck

The following information is based on information from the military records of LT Ernest R Fleck, a few of his letters, and information provided by the 392nd BGMA Historian, Annette Tison. At the time, the Leser crew was formed, a B24 crew consisted of ten airmen. The crew consisted of the airmen listed below as taken from their movement order.

CREW NO. FF-400-AJ-55 AP NO. 42-52472 B-24H		
1st Lt	HENRY J LESER	01165527 P
2cd Lt	EDWARD J SMOLEY	0819196 CP
2cd Lt	FRANK R SELLERS	0707334 N
2cd Lt	ERNEST R FLECK	0699548 B
S/Sgt	BOYD A ROGERS	19140454 E
S/Sgt	JULIAN LIGHT	12192986 R
Sgt	ARMANDO DAMIANO	32181566 G
Sgt	RAYMOND L LINN	36448842 AG
Sgt	WILFIN R WECKEL	38341748 AR
Sgt	DONALD E FOWLER	33432476 AE

On January 31, 1944 LT Fleck was assigned to the 471st Bomb Group at Westover Field, Mass. where he was assigned to the Leser crew and trained until April 16, 1944 for deployment to Europe. On April 17, 1944, 12 B24H crews departed Mitchell Field, NY. They flew their new B24Hs to Dow Field Maine, then to Goose Bay Labrador, Newfoundland and finally landed in Ireland where they further trained for combat in Europe. I think they flew



I to Station 238 (Cluntoe), located 10 miles SE of Cookstown, Tyrone, Northern Ireland on the west shore of Lough Neagh. It was occupied by 8th AF in August 1943 and served as the 2nd Combat Crew Replacement Center. See <https://discoverloughneagh.com/us-army-air-force/>. As you might expect by the name, it is where newly arrived air crews came for intense training in formation flying, German fighter tactics, etc. It is where they brushed up on everything they had learned in training with much "lessons learned" information from 8AF combat veterans. The new B24H that they flew over (42-52472) was subsequently transferred to the 453rd Bomb Group stationed at Old Buckenham which was one of the bases we visited and where Jimmy Stewart was the Group Operations officer. It was named "Little Nancy". It was shot down on February 9, 1945.

They arrived at Wendling on May 25, 1944 and the crew flew their first mission on June 4 on aircraft 42-99990 Short Snorter. By August 4 they had flown 28 missions, 13 on Short Snorter. Almost a mission every other day. Their missions as shown below included some of bloodiest such as Bremen.

Mission Date	Unit	Airplane #	Mission # & Target
4-Jun-44	579	990	MISSION #99 Target: St. Avord A/F
6-Jun-44	579	25	MISSION #102 Target: Vire
7-Jun-44	579	164	MISSION #103 Target: Lisieux
11-Jun-44	579	586	MISSION #106 Target: LaPossoniere
14-Jun-44	579	448	MISSION #109 Target: Emmerich (Oil Refinery)
15-Jun-44	579	897	MISSION #110 Target: La Frilliere
17-Jun-44	579	37	MISSION #111 Target: Melun A/F
18-Jun-44	579	31	MISSION #113 Target: Luneberg
22-Jun-44	579	608	MISSION #120 Target: St. Cyr A/F
23-Jun-44	579	37	MISSION #121 Target: Leon/Athies A/F

25-Jun-44	579	544	MISSION #122	Target: Buc A/F
28-Jun-44	579	789	MISSION #123	Target: Saarbrucken
29-Jun-44	579	990	MISSION #124	Target: Magdeburg
4-Jul-44	579	990	MISSION #125	Target: Conches A/F
6-Jul-44	579	990	MISSION #126	Target: Kiel
7-Jul-44	579	990	MISSION #127	Target: Bernberg
8-Jul-44	579	990	MISSION #128	Target: Esternay
11-Jul-44	579	990	MISSION #129	Target: Munich
12-Jul-44	579	990	MISSION #130	Target: Munich
19-Jul-44	579	990	MISSION #134	Target: Koblenz
21-Jul-44	579	990	MISSION #136	Target: Oberpfaffenhofen
24-Jul-44	579	990	MISSION #137	Target: Hebeorevon-St. Lo
25-Jul-44	579	990	MISSION #138	Target: Hebeorevon-St. Lo
29-Jul-44	579	990	MISSION #139	Target: Bremen
31-Jul-44	579	608	MISSION #140	Target: Ludwigshafen
2-Aug-44	579	615	MISSION #142	Target: Corbie
3-Aug-44	579	789	MISSION #143	Target: Beveland
4-Aug-44	579	789	MISSION #144	Target: Kiel
5-Sep-44	579	615	MISSION #162	Target: Karlsruhe
12-Sep-44	579	608	MISSION #167	Target: Hannover-Misburg

The crew identified with the aircraft Short Snorter as illustrated by having the nose art



painted on some of their A2 leather Jackets. They flew on Short Snorter on 29 July 1944 but took another aircraft on their next mission on 2 August. Luckily for the Leser crew the Short Snorter crashed that day at Manston returning from a mission. One airmen was killed. According to the 392nd Historian," while looking through my 392nd BG files regarding the Leser crew this morning, I found that on 7 and 21 July 1944, the 392nd encountered fierce attacks by enemy fighters. According to the records of 579th Sqdn CO Maj Myron Keilman, on 7 July your father's crewmates engineer S/Sgt Boyd A. Rodgers, tail gunner Sgt Armando Damiano, and left waist gunner Sgt Donald E. Fowler EACH received credit for destroying an FW-190. On 21 July, Keilman's records say that Rogers and Damiano EACH destroyed an Me-109."

For unknown reasons, the crew did not fly any missions for a month and then flew 2 more and completed their 30 mission tour. Luckily the entire crew survived their missions. They returned by ship to the United states by the end of the September.