
The Mission to Stuttgart

By Martin Andrews
Pilot 306th Bomb Group, 8th Air Force



Flight crew of Martin Andrews

Except for scattered low cumulus clouds, the day of 6 September 1943 promised generally clear weather for the continent of Europe. The U.S. 8th Air Force, the night before, alerted its heavy bomber groups in England to prepare for a 'maximum effort' mission. The group commanders passed the word on down the line. Flight crews could expect to be awakened at 2 A.M., a miserable time to get out of bed, even if one was going on a picnic. On the nights before bombing missions I would usually read a book, but it seemed I would never fall asleep until midnight. When the corporal came round to shake my shoulder and say, "Wake up, lieutenant! Wake up!" I felt as if I'd never slept at all. And it would be a long, long day before everything was over and we got back to England.

If we got back.

It was always important to eat a good breakfast because you'd be going for many hours without eating, and flying at the high altitudes we did, in open, unpressurized planes, increased your hunger. At the briefing room that morning we learned that our target for the day was Stuttgart. I seem to recall that our specific goal was the Bosch Magneto Works. At least, the word 'Bosch' has stuck in my mind. This meant a long flight and a deep penetration of Germany, a matter of concern in those days because the American heavy bombers did not have the extra fuel capacity that they would have later on. Sometimes, when we flew into the interior of Germany, we would run so low on gasoline that, on at least one occasion, we had to cut our outboard engines and make a power glide to get us back to England.