

Bad Day for Tigers

Friday, June 11, 1943 was a bad day for Tigers, at least for the ones in the 379th Bomb Group. First Lieutenants Burrel Newman and George Hamrick, erstwhile Clemson classmates, were scheduled to pilot their B-17 Flying Fortresses on a bombing mission to Bremen, Germany. It would be Hamrick's first combat mission, Newman's second, and the last for both.

Burrel Franklin Newman enrolled at Clemson in 1933 as did George Hamrick, a fellow member of the Class of 1937. An industrial education major from McBee, Newman left Clemson in 1937 to marry Laura Martin of Pendleton. He returned in the late summer of 1938 and was assigned to Senior Company Number 2 of the Cadet Brigade. Newman completed his degree, graduating on June 5 with the Class of 1939.



Newman took a position teaching industrial education in Orangeburg, and in 1940, as the United States began the rapid expansion of its Army, he was ordered to active duty. Initially assigned to the 29th Infantry Division, Newman requested a transfer to the new airborne infantry. He was sent to the 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment at Fort Benning, Georgia. Newman completed sixteen training jumps with the paratroopers but apparently decided that he would rather fly airplanes than jump from them. He transferred to the Army Air Force and began flight training at Maxwell Field, Alabama. He continued through the phases of pilot training with stops at Camden; Shaw Field; and Spence Field and Hendricks Field in Florida. At Gowen Field near



Boise, Idaho, Newman joined the 379th Bomb Group. At Sioux City, Iowa, the group prepared for overseas deployment. The 379th flew to England in April 1943 with its ground echelon following by ship. Its first operational mission was flown on May 19.

On June 11, 1943, the 379th was alerted for a bombing mission targeting the shipyards at Bremen near Germany's North Sea coast. Thirty-one B-17s from the group took off mid-afternoon from the 379th's base at Kimbolton, England. The bombers started off with an escort of friendly fighters, but all too soon, these "Little Friends" reached the point at which their limited range forced a return to England. From this point on, the big, slow bombers had to rely on the protection afforded by their tight formations and massed machine guns. On this particular Friday, that wasn't enough.

Heavy cumulus cloud cover forced the group to divert to its secondary target, the naval dock yards at Wilhelmshaven, about fifty miles northwest of Bremen. With no Allied fighters to

contend with, some two hundred German fighters converged on the bomber formation. The fighters attacked head-on from high altitude and half-rolled to level off through the formation. Two of the fighters locked onto Newman's B-17 while it was on approach to the target. Fire from the fighters rocked the bomber violently and set it on fire. It fell to the left out of the group formation. Two men, the bombardier and the tail gunner, managed to parachute out of the doomed aircraft. It crashed in a field near Tossen, Germany. Newman and the seven other crewmembers were killed. In all, the group lost six aircraft on this, its second mission, including both B-17s piloted by Clemson men. The 8th Air Force after action report concluded that "The raid on Wilhelmshaven demonstrates the difficulty of operating beyond range of fighter escort as enemy fighter attacks prevent accurate bombing of the target."

First Lieutenant Burrel Franklin Newman was awarded the Purple Heart. He was survived by his wife, their two sons, his parents, three sisters, and four brothers. He was buried in Germany and after the war reinterred in the American Cemetery at Margraten, Netherlands. He is memorialized at McBee's Union United Methodist Church Cemetery.



Newman Portrait: <http://www.americanairmuseum.com/media/22696>

B-17 photo: <http://www.americanairmuseum.com/media/19816>

To read more about First Lieutenant George Hamrick click here.—ADD LINK