



**SAMPLE**

## “WING AND A PRAYER” - BY LEN KRENZLER

B17 “FLYING FORTRESS” RAID OVER FRANKFURT, GERMANY

ROBERT KIT CARDWELL, 1ST LT., PILOT USAAF, 379TH B.G., 525 SQN., NOVEMBER 5, 1944

SIGNED BY ROBERT KIT CARDWELL - DFC - AIR MEDAL

### The Machine:

The B17 “Flying Fortress” took on many of the toughest and most dangerous bombing missions of the war. They bombed by daylight which meant they often had to fight their way to and from the target. The B17G models shown here had four 1,200 horsepower 9 cylinder turbocharged radial engines which could drive the heavy bomber up to 287mph maximum speed or a cruising speed of 182mph.

The B17G could reach 35,600’ and it was very heavily armed with a total of 13 heavy (50cal.) machine guns. It had a range of 2,000 to 3,400 miles depending on the load and could carry up to 9,600lb of bombs with an average load being 4,000 to 5,000lb. On this mission they carried 10 500lb bombs.

The standard crew at this time was made up of 9 people, a pilot, co-pilot, bombardier/turret gunner, radio operator, navigator/cheek gunner, flight engineer/top turret gunner, ball turret gunner, waist gunner, and a tail gunner.

A true star of the Allied bombing campaigns, the B17 justified it’s name of “Fortress” and carried many airmen through perilous missions and returned against all odds.

### The Man and the Mission:

The mission shown here was flown Robert Kit Cardwell against an aircraft component plant in Frankfurt.

Shortly after dropping its load, Robert’s aircraft “Little Lovely” was hit by a heavy flak burst which destroyed control cables, caused the engines to over-run and left over 250 holes in the aircraft, about 50 of which were the size of a fist. This was Little Lovely’s 95th and final mission.

The crew of Little Lovely was most grateful for Mr. Cardwell’s exceptional flying skill which brought them home safely.

The 379th Bomb Group was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for its distinguished performance in combat.

### Edition Information:

245	20”x29” Chromira Paper Prints	\$180
24	20”x29” Chromira Artist Proofs	\$260
95	20”x30” Canvas Giclée Prints	\$480
10	20”x30” Canvas Artist Proofs	\$590
35	28”x42” Canvas Giclée Prints	\$880
5	28”x42” Canvas Artist Proofs	\$1100

## ROBERT CARDWELL'S MISSION REPORT:

On this mission, our target was an aircraft component plant in Frankfurt. We carried 10-500 pound bombs on our ship. We flew at an altitude of 26,200 feet. The time of attack was 11:23 am.

We started on our bomb run at what was called the IP or initial point and opened our bomb bay doors and as I recall the bomb run itself was approximately 6 minutes. Like any mission, flak was anticipated; you had no control over it or any defense against it. You just expected it on every mission. For a year and a half we had trained for that kind of thing. Your adrenaline of course was going when you approached the target area and when you turned on the IP you just said a little prayer and went on about your business. Besides, at that point in your life you are 23 years old and pretty much feel that you are indestructible.

The flak began to appear in front of us as we started on the IP. It was very heavy and accurate as far as our altitude was concerned; like they say it was so thick you could walk on it. Almost all of the aircraft in the group received some form of flak damage during this mission. During the bomb run you can not deviate from your course or altitude because the lead bombardier is sighting in on the target so you have no way to try and avoid the flak.

Just at bombs away we took a direct hit from a 105 or 88 mm and I remember that the airplane jumped about 20 feet and dust came up from the floor board up into the cockpit area. All four engines immediately ran away which meant that the RPMs revved up as far as they could go. All four turbochargers ran past the red line. Both of these things indicated that the plane could blow up any minute. We immediately reduced power on all four engines and cut off the turbo chargers.

Because of this, we started immediately losing altitude. Since we were leading the low squadron we had to lower our landing gear so our wing man would know we were leaving. This was standard procedure. We continued our decent to about 10,000 feet until we were on top of a cloud bank so we would not have to use oxygen and so that we could duck into the clouds in case we had to avoid any German fighters that may have been aware of our situation.

We had a pretty substantial oil leak in the number three engine so I had the copilot monitor the instruments and I feathered the prop when the oil pressure went down. Fortunately, when we started down we picked up a P-51 escort and he stayed with us for a little while.

All of the crew had been trained to take over certain responsibilities if anything like this should happen. Sergeant Page, the waste gunner, was monitoring the rear of the airplane, he came forward (the reason he did was because we had no intercom) and told me that Sergeant Hay the ball turret gunner had been wounded and that they had given him a shot of morphine and had sprinkled sulfur powder on his wound and pressure bandaged it. He had been wounded to the upper back of his leg, severed a nerve and maybe had a broken bone. I told him to go on back and strap a parachute to Sergeant Hay and attach it to a static line in case we had to throw him out if we went down. I told him I was going to ring the alarm bell one time to see if it worked.

To the left of the pilots seat there was a toggle switch and if you rang the bell three times real fast that was the signal to abandon ship. I hit the thing one time to see if it worked and it did, so we were fixed up there.

Earlier on after I had the ship stabilized I flicked the autopilot on just to see if it would work, it did so I went to the back (something I seldom did) to check the battle damage and to check the wounded crew member. There were wires hanging all over the place and I told Sergeant Page to try and splice the wires if he could because they were control wires and I got down and asked Sergeant Hay how he was feeling and he said he was hurting so I told sergeant Page to give him another shot of morphine and to cover him up best he could because we did not want him to go into shock, I also told him to start throwing things out of the airplane to lighten the load.

Then we saw some water beneath us and an opening and thought it was the English Channel so I started letting down. At that point, we immediately started getting flak from the ground. It turned out that it was the Zuider Zee on the coast of the Netherlands, not the English Channel. Shortly after that

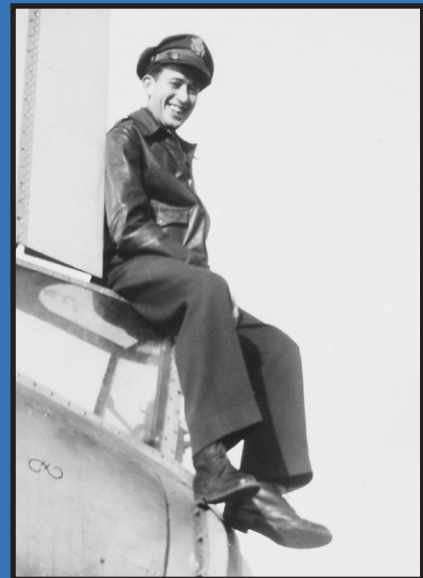
we let down and got down on the deck to about 300 feet and came in under the weather across the channel to Kimbolton.

We made it back to Kimbolton and got on the approach to land and I told the engineer (Sergeant Christenson) to fire a red, red flare as we approached the ground. I told him to fire another red, red flare this was to alert the base that we had a wounded man aboard and a wounded airplane. That way when we landed we were immediately pulled off the runway and the ambulance and flight surgeon were there to take care of the wounded gunner.

In order to land we could only use trim tabs and autopilot because of the broken control wires in the back. We looked the airplane over after we got on the ground and discovered over 250 holes (about 50 of them big enough to put your fist in); one prop even had a big hole in it and we also discovered that the turbochargers had melted which meant that our ship was only a short time away from blowing up.

As a result of the damage to the wings and all four engines, our ship had to be salvaged. We learned after landing that we were the only plane from the group to return back to our original base, because the group was told to return to an alternate base due to the weather. However, we did not receive that information because of the damage to our intercom and radio. We also learned that one ship from our squadron was lost after it was hit by flak. Its two engines were on fire as it was going down and it was assumed that it blew up.

We then went and got something to eat. After each mission we would be debriefed by the intelligence officer. We would normally be offered a shot of whiskey, but as I recall we gave ours away, even after this one.



1ST LT. ROBERT KIT CARDWELL

