



Rae Carey's initial B-17 Flying Fortress aircrew at Thurleigh Airfield, England in 1944:

(front row, left to right)

**1st Lt. Dean Allen, pilot;
1st Lt. Charles Rapp Jr., copilot;
2nd Lt. Charles Evans, navigator;
1st Lt. Michael Vlahos, bombardier;**

(back row, left to right)

**Tech. Sgt. Harvey Purkey, engineer and top turret gunner;
Tech. Sgt. Robert Newsbigle, radio operator;
Staff Sgt. Eugene LeVeque, ball turret gunner;
Staff Sgt. Richard Huebotter, waist gunner;
Staff Sgt. Charles Reinartsen, waist gunner; and
Staff Sgt. James "Rae" Carey, tail gunner.**

Carey would fly 26 combat missions before being shot down Aug. 26, 1944 during a bombing mission to Gelsenkirchen, Germany.

Missing in Action Gelsenkirchen 26/8/44 with:

Pilot Dean Allen,

Waist gunner: Dick Huebotter,

Tail gunner: Jim Carey (3 Prisoners of War);

Co-pilot: Charles Rapp jr., KIA

Navigator: Charles Evans, POW / Murdered

Bombardier: Mike Vlahos, KIA during his chute

Flight engineer/top turret gunner: Harvey Purkey, POW / Murdered

Radio Operator: Robert Newsbigle, KIA

Ball turret gunner: Eugene LeVeque KIA (6 Killed in Action);

Flak knocked off wing tip, crashed Budberg, near Jagergitternetz, Ger;

Missing Air Crew Report 8464. "HARD T' GET."

S/Sgt. James "Rae" Carey

In less than three months in England, Rae Carey had flown 26 combat missions.

"He would talk about missions they flew with targets like bearing factories and rail yards," Carey said. "My aunt said he would describe the missions with vivid detail and make you feel like you were right there in the aircraft. The stories ranged from antics on long flights with periods of what seemed like endless boredom to the sheer terror of being hit by German gunfire and limping home on two engines and a broken wing."

During one talk with Linda, Rae Carey recalled watching German fighters pounce on a group of B-17s.

"We were on the way out from our target and there was a group of enemy fighters flying close to the contrails that we made going to the target - about a mile from us positioned about 4 o'clock and level with us - so I had a very good view of them. We were about halfway out of Germany when I saw these planes come out of the contrail. It looked like they were flashing landing lights, but it was their 20-millimeter cannons - one in each wing. They were four abreast and coming right at the B-17s. In less than 30 seconds there were five planes out of a group of 12 falling out of the sky. We all expected this to happen sooner or later, but to see it was just unreal ..."

Rae's 27th mission was his last. Aug. 26, 1944 during a bombing mission to Gelsenkirchen, Germany the B-17 Hard to Get was gotten.

According to his grandfather and other crewmember accounts, the bomber was hit by anti-aircraft fire. The first burst hit the left-wing tip, destroying the wing inboard to the engine and causing the wing to flip up to the left.

"He said that while the bomber was tipped up, a second round hit the bomb bay and a third burst tore the rudder off," Carey said. "The plane turned completely over, then upright, and went into a flat spin. I can't even imagine the chaos and fear."

Amid the smoke, fire and confusion, his grandfather - reeling from the explosions and bucking of the crippled aircraft - made his way to one of the plane's escape hatches when he saw the B-17's copilot, 1st Lt. Charles Rapp Jr., preparing to get out as well.

"... he came through, smiled and gave me the high sign and then headed back to the front of the plane. I never saw him after that. I was told that when the plane broke up it took one of his legs off and there was too much time lost on the way to the ground and he bled to death. Charles was an amazing crewmember. I would have gladly traded places with him then. He was as good as you get," Carey's grandfather recalled about that fateful day.

Stunned coming out of the disintegrating bomber, Rae said he awoke to the sound of his pants flapping in the wind as he fell to Earth under a scorched parachute riddled with burn holes. He hit the ground, happy to be alive. However, he and four of the aircrew were soon captured - out of the frying plane and into the fire.

"He landed in the back yard of an SS officer's home," Carey said. "The townspeople converged on him, but the SS officer kept them at bay. He credited the officer for saving his life."

Rae Carey sprained his knee upon landing, which resulted in a limp he would have the duration of his time as a POW.

Carey was taken prisoner along with the pilot, 1st Lt. Dean Allen, navigator, 2nd Lt. Charles Evans Jr., top turret gunner, Tech. Sgt. Harvey Purkey Jr., and right waist gunner, Staff Sgt. Richard Huebotter.

Once captured, German soldiers stripped them of their belongings and loaded them into a shabby railcar destined for the Stalag Luft IV POW camp. All five were in the rail car, however, only three would make the trip.

The night of Aug. 27, 1944 the five were being transported south from Cologne following the Rhine River. During the trip, the train stopped in the middle of the night near a small town. Evans and Purkey saw their opportunity to escape and jumped from the train when the Nazi guards had fallen asleep. A short while later the alarm sounded.

Rae said the townspeople and SS forces ran the pair down and beat them severely. The three aboard the train never saw their fellow Airmen again. According to reports after the war ended, the town's mayor, police chief and three others were tried, convicted and executed for the beating deaths of two American Airmen.

Records indicate those killed were Rae's fellow B-17 aircrew.

Extract from a letter from a surviving crew member, Richard C. HUEBOTTER, to Col. John J. SMITH:

"It was August 26, 1944. Our Target was Gelsenkirchen, Germany. We had no trouble on the route in. We reached the IP. At scheduled time and were on the bomb run when we were hit by flak.

The first burst hit our left wing and knocked off most of the out section. The second burst struck the Bombay and started a fire. The third burst hit in the waist and a fire was started there also. I went for the small extinguisher. Looking over my head I saw of the control wires in a jumbled condition. The fourth burst hit the right wing and knocked out number three and four engines. This all happened rapidly.

The pilot gave the order to bail out.

The co-pilot was at the controls. From the statements of the crew members in the forward part of the ship I believe they left in the following manner; navigator, bombardier, engineer, pilot. As I left the ship I could feel it falling off on its left wing.

The crew of the ship whose wing we were flying on that day were shot down about a month later and we met them in prison camp. They said they watched our ship after it was hit. They saw several chutes and then they said the ship seemed to fall apart but it did not look like there was an explosion.

The report turned in back at the base was that four chutes were seen. I landed in the Rhine river and was picked up by a German in a row boat. He towed me ashore and I was taken into custody by a German soldier. He took me to a small shack which was some sort of a headquarters for a flak gun crew. Here I met Lt. Evans. He had on his officers greens under his heated suit and G.I. shoes under his leather flying boots. He gave me his flying suit and boots and I took off my wet clothes. We remained there until about 1730 hours. A German officer then came with two soldiers in a truck. This truck was used to go around to various spots and pick up parts of our ship. Our first stop was in a field and a car came up pulling a trailer carrying a casket. The soldiers went into the field behind some trees and came back carrying some clothes. I recognized 1st Lt. Vlahos bunny type heated flying suit.

We then went over to where the nose of the ship had landed in a back yard. They ordered Lt. Evans out of the truck to go with them, but told me to stay as I was injured and unable to walk. When they returned Lt. Evans said they had made him help them remove 1st Lt. Rapp's body from the flight deck. They also brought the G Box, the servo unit of the auto-pilot all badly smashed and several rounds of fifty caliber ammunition. We then went on further and picked up the life raft, the dinghy radio, some radio tuning units, the spare chute from the waist, a jacket I recognized as Sgt. Newsbigles and the black flying shoes of the Ball turret gunner Sgt. LeVeque.

There were also two more casket. From there we went to a headquarters building where we picked up 1st Lt. Allen. He said he had been with Sgt. Purkey and Carey until they had brought him there for treatment for his ankle. We then drove to an airfield where we saw Sgt. Purkey Carey. We spent the night here in jail, one man to a cell. The following day three guards came after us. We had to walk into town. St Lt. Evans and Sgt. Purkey assisted me. We went to the station and were waiting for a train when the air raid sirens blew. They took us into a bombs shelter. We could hear the ships overhead and bombs dropping. After the raid, we went back to the station and boarded the train.

This was just after midday. We rode this train to Cologne. Here we went into a Wehrmacht canteen and ate our supper. We boarded another train and rode to Wiesbaden.

There we were delayed about two hours waiting for another train. It was about 2:00 hours AM when we left there. This is when Lt. Evans and Sgt. Purkey decided to escape!

At a small station, we stopped and as the train started rolling again they opened the door and escaped. The guards were asleep, but when the door slammed shut they woke up. The train was rolling and they could do nothing. We stopped at the next station and they telephoned the situation. We got the next train back. When we got there the infantry was out with shovels and clubs to beat the bushes. We waited there for some time, but it was getting late so we got the next train for Frankfurt"

Charles Evan's mother noticed an article that had appeared in the Pittsburg paper stating that: Two allied fliers were beaten to death by the chief of police and another man in a small town near Frankfurt-on-Main, on 29 august 1944 and had been convicted and hung. The only identity of the fliers was one had an American shield and the name Dick written or painted on the pocket of his leather Jacket.

Lt. Evans and T/Sgt. Purkey were captured and sent to Frankfurt am Main by train from Cologne.

On August 29th. 1944 they were arrested again in that area and beaten to death at Gross-Gerau by the chief of the police and another man.

Both Germans were convicted in 1945, tried and hung for this war crime. Both airmen were initially buried in the community cemetery at Gross-Gerau.

1st. Lt. Dean C. Allen Interview

Interviewed by Russell A. Strong

January 27, 1978

On August 26, 1944, on a mission to Gelsenkirchen,

Dean C. Allen's plane was hit by flak at about 30,000 feet. The first burst hit the left-wing tip, shredding the wing inboard to the #1 engine. The plane flipped to the left, and while the wings were vertical, a second burst hit in the area of the bomb bay doors, driving the doors inward. A third blast tore off the rudder. The plane turned completely over, then upright, and went into a flat spin.

At this point, five of the crew members were alive and were able to exit the plane. The navigator, pilot and engineer went out the hatch on the left side of the plane, just behind the nose compartment bulkhead.

The bombardier (*Michael*) ???.... and co-pilot were dead.

The engineer had opened the bomb bay door before leaving the area of the top turret, and was singed by flames from the fire in the bomb bay. The radio operator later reported that the catwalk in the bomb bay was melting when he opened the rear door to the bomb bay.

It was very difficult moving about in the plane when it was in the spin, but the three finally escaped from the front.

Allen was quickly captured. He was lying on the ground after his descent, and a German soldier came over to him, put his boot on Allen's chest, and removed Allen's escape packet from his pocket, and then walked away.

On the night of the 27th, they were all (five) being transported from Cologne south along the Rhine River. At a small town, the train stopped in the middle of the night. The guards were all asleep, so the navigator and engineer got off the train and walked into the darkness.

Allen never saw them again, but after the war saw a news item from the town which told of the mayor, police chief and three others being tried, convicted and executed for the beating deaths of two American airmen.

Later check proved that these were Allen's navigator and engineer.

On 26 August 1944, Charles Rapp was flying with the Dean Allen Crew aboard B-17G-40-VE-42-97946, named "Hard To Get". The target for today was the oil refineries at Gelsenkirchen, Germany; about 38 miles east of the Dutch border. The crew this day was as follows:

1st Lt Dean C Allen (P), ASN: O-759675 (Georgia), POW/RTD/EUS Returned To Duty, Evacuated U.S.

1st Lt Charles U Rapp, Jr. (CP), ASN: O-705426 (Pennsylvania), KIA

2nd Lt Charles H Evans, Jr. (N), ASN: O-716290 (Pennsylvania), POW/Murdered

1st Lt Michael L Vlahos, (B) ASN: O-703540 (Ohio), POW/Murdered

T/Sgt Harvey J Purkey, (ETT) ASN: 16113858 (Michigan) POW/Murdered

T/Sgt Robert B Newsbigle, (RO) ASN: 33355040 (Pennsylvania), KIA

S/Sgt Eugene W LeVeque, (BTG) ASN: 39135725 (California), KIA

S/Sgt Richard C Huebotter, (WG) ASN: 19129898 (California), POW/RTD/EUS

S/Sgt James R Carey, (TG) ASN: 19076562 (Oregon), POW/RTD/EUS

There was a AAA barrage and tracking flak for seven minutes in the target area, most accurate when the bombers turned after bombs away. After the plane was hit several times, a wing tip blew off and it went into a tight spin with fire in the bomb bay and the ship began to break apart resulting in the order to bail out being given over Budberg, Moers, Germany.

Lt Rapp, S/Sgt LeVeque and T/Sgt Newsbigle were all KIA in the ship and never were able to bail out. *Lt Vlahos was shot in the head while descending in his chute, or after reaching the ground, the Nazis claimed he was hit in the head by flak.*

Lt Allen, Lt Evans, along with Sargent's Purkey, Huebotter and Carey were rounded up and held as POW's. On 27 August the group was being transported by train to Frankfurt via Cologne and Wiesbaden, here there was a delay until about 2:00 AM 28 August 1944. It was here that Lt Evans and Sgt Purkey made their escape from the train while the Nazi guards were asleep.

On 29 August 1944 Lt Evans and Sgt Purkey were arrested by Nazis and beaten to death in the small town of Gross-Gerau by the chief of police and another man. Case No. 12-793 (US v. Nikolaus Fachinger and Heinrich Flauaus) Trial concluded 3 Aug 1945 Both Nazis were convicted of this war crime being sentenced to death by hanging.

Both Lt Evans and Sgt Purkey were initially interred in the community cemetery at Gross-Gerau. Lt Evans was disinterred and re-interred at the American War Cemetery Margraten; Plot K, Row 19, Grave 18 where he continues to rest in peace until this day.

**** 1st.** Lt. Vlahos (bombardier on the plane) died on the day the plane went down, August 26, 1944. There is a death certificate in the MACR. He was buried on the 28th. In the MACR Purkey (who was later killed at Gross Gerau) is quoted as saying that he (Purkey) and Vlahos landed in the same field. Vlahos had a head wound and was dead. Purkey was not allowed to get close to the body, but could see the head wound. It is possible Vlahos was hit by flak on the way down.

It seems unlikely he was murdered after landing or Purkey would have seen that !
Alright here it is Vlahos shot in head. So, he is another suspected murder victim perhaps shot from the ground. (or if one believes the Nazis hit in the head by flak)

Here is a second statement Vlahos had no wounds! These are all hearsay accounts originating from (ETT) Harvey J Purkey.

Unfortunately, he was murdered so there is no postwar witness statement from him. Conflicting second hand witness statement not too surprising given the events of this day.

I vote he was murdered in his chute from the ground. It fits the mood of the Nazi public with a license to kill downed Allied airmen recently proclaimed by *Joseph Goebbels* in a broadcast to the public.

VLAHOS, Michael L.		0-703540			
Rpt. 7 Jun 44		368th (B)			
Dean Allen crew					
AM 7-4-44		Murdered in Germany 10-10-44			
olc 8-3-44, + +		MIA 8-26-44 Gelsenkirchen (w. Allen)			
PH		p. 269			
S.O.#					
Col	LtCol	Maj	Capt	1Lt Z	2Lt X