

 **Hell's Angels**
303rd Bomb Group (H)
427th Wertz Crew
Robert M. Wertz, Pilot

Robert M. Wertz, Pilot



**ROBERT M. WERTZ CREW - 427th BS
B-17G #43-38734 *Cheshire Cat* (427BS) GN-C
(crew assigned 427BS: 25 Nov 1944 - photo: Nov 1944)**

(Back L-R) S/Sgt Kenneth E. Jensen (BT)(POW)(*), T/Sgt Edward J. Giering (R)(POW)(*),
S/Sgt Kenneth A. Bennett (TG)(KIA)(*), T/Sgt Ralph N. Warne (E)(KIA)(*), S/Sgt Walter C. Campbell (WG)(POW)

(Front L-R) F/O Kenneth S. Hitt (N), 2Lt Melvin A. Durst (CP)(POW)(*),
1Lt Robert M. Wertz (P)(POW)(*), 2Lt Adelbert D. Leavell, Jr (B)

(KIA-POW) - On 16 February 1945 mission #316 to Langendreer, Germany in B-17G #43-39081 (no name) (427th BS) GN-G. Two bomb runs were made when the Gee-H equipment in the lead B-17 failed on the first bomb run and the target couldn't be identified visually. #43-39081 received a direct flak hit in its #1 engine. The engine came off and hit the fuselage near the waist window. It blew a hole in the fuselage and then fell away. The B-17 was momentarily out of control just after the hit, but Lt Wertz (P) regained control. When last seen the aircraft was losing altitude and lagging behind the formation.

Substitute Crewmen on mission: 2Lt E. Minnis (N-POW) for F/O Hitt (N); T/Sgt John B. Price (Tog-KIA) for 2Lt Leavell (B)

(*) DFC Medals were presented to these crewman for their heroic action on this mission. Medals were presented at a special ceremony at the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum, Pooler, GA on 16 March 1997. Kenneth A. Bennett was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross on 02 September 1998.

[photo from the 303rd BGA Archives]
[Researched by 303rdBGA Historian Harry D. Gobrecht]