

398th Photo 7053-M Photo Analysis

An attempt has been made to identify the date and pilot of the B-17 107053 N7-M in the photograph titled "7053-M with Bomb Bays Open - 1944." 7053-M was a 398th 603rd Squadron aircraft and generally all the crews were 603rd, but not always.

In this photo, the pilot's head can be seen and in the shadows, the co-pilot's head. I was motivated to determine the date of this photo as I knew my dad flew this aircraft a number of times both as pilot and co-pilot.

At first, the only photo available to me was the one I took at the Woodman Inn in June 2004 which showed a close-up of the aircraft with its bomb-bay doors open. The aircraft number was clearly visible and by consulting our aircraft list, it was determined this was a 603rd aircraft. Then in December 2008, Malcolm 'Ozzie' Osborn, found the same photo and transmitted it to me at high resolution. What was different about the photo he sent was that in the foreground of the photo was the left wing of the aircraft from which the photo was taken.

This positioning provided a possible clue to the date of the photo as 7053-M was to the left or in the #3 position of a 3-aircraft formation element. Fortunately, a complete listing of 398th Over Target formation charts had just been completed and I decided to identify the position of 7053-M on all of them along with the name of the pilot for each. That chart is shown on the following pages.

What I found was 53 Over Target combat formations charts in which 7053-M was flown. The last of which was on 2 November 1944 when Lt. Russ Reed and crew needed to jump out of her on a mission to Merseburg, Germany.

Of these 53 missions beginning 11 May 1944, 7053-M was in the position shown in the photo 20 times. I then compiled a list of the pilots for these 20 occurrences. Some pilots flew her once in that position, others, twice and one pilot flew her 4 times. I then associate probabilities. My dad, then Lt. Ed Jordan flew her in that position, twice and both times as pilot, and thus there is a 10% chance it is my dad in that photo. Other pilots with varying probabilities are shown on the last chart below.

Future refinements of probabilities are being investigated for:

1. **The cloud coverage over target.** There appears to be a cloud coverage above 5/10 but less than 10/10.
2. **The coloration of Triangle W on the tail.** For about the first month, May 1944, the triangle was not filled in, but just outlined. Thus suggesting, this is an unlikely match for 13, 24, and 25 May.
3. **The stamp on the back of the photo.** By studying the stamp closely (it is reversed and flipped), it reads PERSONAL NOT FOR I cannot read the rest. Thus it appears that this photo was taken by one of the men on the element lead aircraft, perhaps on a light mission or one with little flak or enemy aircraft, possibly by the engineer from the top turret position.
4. **The absence of other aircraft in the photo.** The absence of other aircraft might suggest that 7053-M was either in the Low Group Low Element or any Low Element.

7053-M Combat Mission Position

Mission Date	Pilot	Co-Pilot	398th Group	Element/Squadron	Element/Squadron Position Number	Position Match with Photo	Weather	Light to No Flak	Comments
5/11/1944	Hopkins	Jordan	Low	High	1	No			
5/13/1944	Cullinan		Low	Low	6	Yes			
5/24/1944	Scott		High	Lead	3	Yes			
5/25/1944	Scott		High	Low Low	3	Yes			
5/28/1944	Scott		High	Lead	5	No			
6/2/1944 - 1st	Fahrenthold		A Unit	Low	6	Yes			
6/6/1944 - 2nd	Krueger		Low	Lead	2	No	10 of 10		Bombs Returned
6/7/1944	Scott		Low	High	3	Yes			
6/12/1944	Scott		Low	Low Low	1	No			
6/13/1944	Scott		Lead	Low	2	No			
6/18/1944	Scott		Low	Lead	5	No			
6/19/1944	Foster, DL		High	Lead	3	Yes			Lead A/C Camera
6/20/1944	Scott		Low	High	3	Yes			
6/24/1944	Sleaman	Jordan	B Box	Low	2	No			
6/25/1944	Foster, TK		Lead	High	1	No			
7/4/1944	Scott		Low	Low Low	1	No			
7/8/2009	Fahrenthold		Lead	High	3	Yes			
7/9/1944	Latson		Lead	Lead	2	No			
7/12/1944	Engel		Low	High	3	Yes			
7/13/1944	Kaufman		High	High	1	No			
7/16/1944	Spitzer		Low	High	6	Yes			
7/20/1944	Richardson		Lead	Low Low	2	No			
7/25/1944	Spitzer		4th	High	3	Yes			
7/29/1944	Magnan		Low	Lead	3	Yes			
7/31/1944	Meyran		High	High	2	No			
8/1/1944	Fisher		Lead	Low Low	1	No			
8/3/1944	Jordan		Lead	Low	3	Yes			
8/4/1944	Doerr								Failed to Takeoff
8/5/1944	Fisher		Low	High	1	No			
8/6/1944	Jordan		High	Low	1	No			
8/8/1944	Newman	Jordan	Lead	Low	2	No			
8/24/1944	Jordan		Low	Lead	3	Yes			
8/25/1944	Jordan		High	Low Low	2	No			
8/26/1944	Jordan		Low	High	2	No			
9/9/1944	Magnan		Lead	Low	1	No			
9/12/1944	Zimmer		Low	High	2	No			
9/13/1944	Sleaman		High	Low	1	No			Returned to base before Bombing

7053-M Combat Mission Position

Mission Date	Pilot	Co-Pilot	398th Group	Element/Squadron	Element/Squadron Position Number	Position Match with Photo	Weather	Light to No Flak	Comments
9/17/1944	Lehner		Lead	Lead	3	Yes			
9/19/1944	Rehme		Low	High	1	No			
9/22/1944	Armor		Low	Low Low	1	No			
9/25/1944	Lehner		High	High	1	No			
9/26/1944	Hastings		Lead	High	2	No			
9/28/1944	Hancock		High	High	2	No			
9/30/1944	Lehner		High	High	1	No			
10/2/1944	Payne		Low	Low Low	3	Yes			
10/3/1944	Lehner		Low	Low	1	No			
10/5/1944	Griffin		High	Low Low	3	Yes			
10/9/1944	Tarr		Low	Low	3	Yes			
10/14/1944	McCarty		Lead	High	1	No			
10/22/1944	Behner		Low	Low	1	No			
10/26/1944	Sitler		Lead	Lead	3	Yes			
10/30/1944	Spangler		Lead	High	3	Yes			
11/2/1944	Reed		Low	Low Low	2	No			

Probabilities of Pilot Match with 7053-M Photo

Pilot	No. Matches with Photo	% Matches	Reduced Matches due to Weather	Reduced Matches due to Light to no Flak
Cullinan	1	5%		
Engel	1	5%		
Fahrenthold	2	10%		
Foster, DL	1	5%		
Griffin	1	5%		
Jordan	2	10%		
Lehner	1	5%		
Magnan	1	5%		
Payne	1	5%		
Scott	4	20%		
Sitler	1	5%		
Spitzer	2	10%		
Spangler	1	5%		
Tarr	1	5%		
Total	20			