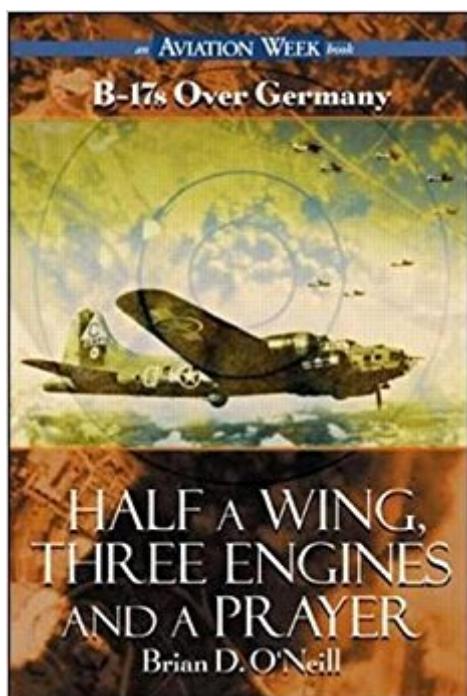


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# Half A Wing, Three Engines And A Prayer: B-17s Over Germany



## Synopsis

Incorporating a wealth of new material, here is the riveting story of the bombing raids that broke the back of Nazi Germany, praised as "a well-researched, highly readable account of a B-17 combat crew's experience ... excellent." (Roger A. Freeman, author of *The Mighty Eighth*)

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In 1943, when the outcome of World War II hung in the balance, B-17 crews of the Eighth Air Force flew harrowing, unescorted daylight bombing missions deep into Occupied Europe and Germany. These devastating raids have long been storied in film and fiction, but here is a firsthand, blow-by-blow account of these perilous missions as they really happened. In these pages, you'll see the events unfold as they were recorded and recalled by one crew's officers and enlisted men (pilot, copilot, navigator, radioman, and gunners), corroborated by other crews they flew with, and painstakingly correlated with the official records of the men's 303rd "Hell's Angels" Bomb Group. The publication of *Half a Wing, Three Engines, and a Prayer* in 1989 prompted a flood of fresh recollections, correspondence, and personal records from other veterans of the 303rd. This Special Revised Edition incorporates that wealth of new material into a vivid, thorough recreation -- complete with actual combat photographs -- of one of the most dramatic chapters in military aviation history. New in this Special Revised Edition: \* New veteran interviews \* Expanded coverage \* Revised data \* 90 photographs & illustrations \* Epilogue: crewmen's post-war careers "A well-researched, highly readable account of a B-17 combat crew's experience...excellent." -- Roger A. Freeman,

author of *The Mighty Eighth* "The best collection of stories about a B-17 Bomb Group that has ever been published." -- Harry D. Gobrecht, President, 303rd Bomb Group Association and author of *Might in Flight: Daily Diary of the Eighth Air Force's 'Hell's Angels' Bomb Group*

Brian D. O'Neill, is the General Counsel of Curtiss-Wright Corporation, the famous aviation company that manufactured the Curtiss P-40 fighter and the B-17's Wright Cyclone engines during World War II. Before becoming an attorney, he served with the U.S. Navy as a destroyer gunner officer and shipyard repair officer. An avid student of Eighth Air Force history, he resides in East Windsor, New Jersey.

This is the revised edition of Brian D. O'Neill's quintessential read on the greatest bomber of World War II. He was able to interview and gather data and direct background from some of the original crew members from the Hell's Angels, stationed at Bassingbourn Air Base in England. His writings provides more than just a "we were there" aspect to the story. Instead he shows an amazing ability to not only qualify the sacrifice of those who flew the B-17, but adds an amazing quantitative insight. Writing about a bombing mission, when he writes of the loss of 31 bombers on that fateful mission, he always illustrates the fact that each lost bomber included 10 valiant crew members. Thus in the mission in question the Mighty 8th lost over 300 souls. This book should be required reading regarding the history of WWII. Anyone who thinks war is glamorous and exciting should read this book for it will change your perspective. I strongly recommend you all take the time to share Brian O'Neill's amazing book. The history and honor of those who served deserve it.

I have read the second edition of this book on Kindle, and it is even better than the first edition. This is a well documented book that has been out for a while, but has not been topped as far as telling of the experiences of a relatively small number of crews in the Hell's Angels Bomb Group. It seems that every crew that made it through their 25 missions in 1943 and early 1944 did so by the skin of their teeth. Most crews did not make it at all. The author worked hard on not only following the paper trail, but interviewing many members of this famous bomb group while they were still with us. This book would be almost impossible to write today, as there are so few now to ask of their experiences. "Half a Wing, Three Engines and a Prayer" was written just in time. It was written at a time where veterans were finally willing to talk to people of their wartime experiences and there were still a fair number of men around to tell the tale. Similar books need to be written of other wars, for instance B-52 veterans of the Vietnam war. As for World War II, it is just too late now. My hat is off to Brian

O'Neil for putting in the effort to turn out a first rate book that gives us a window back to the bad old days with the 303rd.

I've read several books about the air war over Europe during World War II, and this is the best one I've read. The author does a fine job of describing the formation of the Eighth Air Force. From its beginnings in the fall of 1942 up until the end of the war in May, 1945, American B-17s along with their fighter escorts of P-38s, P-47s, and P-51s brought the war directly to the doorstep of Germany's cities and industrial centers. By the end of the war, it was the norm for over 1,000 B-17s to be included on a single raid. What really makes this book so enjoyable to read is the recollections of the pilots and crew members who flew the B-17s. From the start of the book until the end, the reader gets a true taste of what it was like to pilot a B-17 through enemy flak or shoot at enemy fighters as a turret gunner. The friendship and teamwork developed by the crews of these planes is a testament to their mutual respect and desire to complete their tours of duty and go home to their loved ones. Each chapter discusses a particular raid and is complete with photographs, a map of the route taken to the target, and individual recollections of each mission by the men who flew them. Each of these chapters reads like a novel, and the reader truly feels like they are in the planes themselves. There are too many instances of heroism included in the book to put in a single review, but rest assured that the reader will discover first-hand how brave and dedicated these men were to themselves, each other, and their country. I give this fine book my highest recommendation. This book does a superior job of fully describing the air war over Europe. Aviation fans will not want to miss this one.

I bought this for my husband because he was carrying my friend's borrowed copy around all the time. He cannot put it down! He is a "wing nut" and worked in aircraft several years. He remembers stats and says the historical research and attention to details is worthy of attention. An excellent source of accurate history. Grateful for the author's high standard and his desire to present the labors this plane went through for the benefit of our country.

I am reading it now on my iPad with the Kindle app. Since one of my uncles fought in the part of WWII that the book is about, I find it very compelling reading . . . to come this close to a witness to what he must have gone through, even though the book highlights a combat squadron & crew that were not his: the experiences must have been similar. If you enjoy reading about WWII combat from first-person accounts, then this would be a good read for you. It is just amazing how much

punishment a single B-17 could experience and still make it back to base. Not documented here, but I am also amazed at the efficiency of the ground repair crews that were able to get a shot-up bomber repaired and back in the air in what apparently were very short time frames. Half a Wing, Three Engines and a Prayer

Felt like I was in the plane with the crews - great personal accounts. Would have loved to have seen the guy I knew mentioned, but he only flew 52 missions for the 15th. Since he just passed, I will not get to ask him any more questions about his crew, but enjoyed this one. Thanks to Brian for writing it.

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