

Splashers - Navigation Aids

By John W. Howland

Splasher Seven was a radio station located 10 miles due south of Ridgewell. It squawked a noise and an identification signal picked up by our radio compass. Before every takeoff the radio operator picked up a flimsy for the navigator that contained frequencies to be used for the Splasher stations and the GEE box. The flimsy was written on rice paper and clamped between two sheets of lucite plastic. Our instructions were to eat the flimsy if in danger of being captured. But I often wondered. Who could think of food at a time like that?

As I recall, the Splashers always went off the air for five minutes out of each thirty minutes. I never did find out why they needed this rest period. Further, it seemed like every time I was homing in on Splasher 7, trying to get back to Ridgewell, it was time for a "rest period" and I had to resort to GEE or pilotage.

Splashers used long wave radio and were susceptible to jamming by the Germans. On May 27, 1944 we were flying the lead PFF ship for the 401st Bomb Group (Deenthorpe). During Wing assembly, we were using a "Splasher " as an assembly point. I followed the signal flying south, but it didn't flop when it was supposed to. I checked my position using GEE and found I was several miles south of the Splasher, and the needle still pointed south (directly toward Cherbourg). That was when we discarded the Splasher as an assembly marker and finished the Wing assembly using GEE fixes. Despite these minor problems, the Splashers were a great help. Especially Splasher Seven which led us all back to Ridgewell.

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324th Sq 91st Bomb Group

535th Sq 381st Bomb Group