#1

[redacted] #1 **Andy Brown (Stories 1-2-3-3A)**

OPTION # 1

(O.K. to Check-out & O.K to Make Copies)

B17 Navigator Andy Brown recalls his days with the 4

'You can always tell a na by the blisters on his fing

I was a member of Lt. Paul Gilbert's B-17G crew, which departed Kearney Army Airfield, Nebraska, on April 27, 1944, for the United Kingdom via Bangor, Maine; Goose Bay, Labrador; and Keflavik, Iceland. It was a week and some 33 flying hours before we arrived at Prestwick, Scotland, our aircraft (no. 42-102615) having required an unscheduled stop in Buffalo, New York, for repairs to the oil pressure transmitter in number three engine.

We turned in the plane at Prestwick, spent the evening in Glasgow, and then took an overnight train to Stone, south of Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire.

For 10 days we stayed at Stone, on May 14 the four officers and radio operator were sent to school at Bovingdon airfield, Hertfordshire. On one occasion there, we were given 12 hours leave and the first opportunity to experience the delights of London. The engineer and gunners were sent to a more distant training facility in Snettisham, Norfolk, on The Wash, for gunnery practice.

Home Sweet Home

We were reunited on May 30 at Glatton, a relatively new airfield amid the farms of the Cambridgeshire fenland. A farmhouse was situated in the centre of the runways, and adjacent to the field were Connington Church and Connington Castle (the latter was demolished after the war).

Home was a 20-foot by 40-foot Nissen hut with two windows and a door at either end. The hut was fully equipped for the blackout, with drapes on the windows and one entrance featuring two doors some four feet apart. The four officers shared a hut with their counterparts from another crew; the six enlisted men did likewise.

Furnishings were meager or non-existent, other than the steel GI cot with three "biscuits" — mattresses filled with an unknown and uncomfortable material. We had each bought our own GI blankets, and later, when the squadron came into possession of some genuine mattresses and sheets, I manage to obtain one of each.

There was a small cast iron stove for heat. It was intended for coal or coke, but that fuel was in extremely short supply and what we obtained we could not burn properly. We relied entirely on wood from the packing cases used for everything shipped from the United States. We would chop up the wood and place it in the stove, pour on some lighter fluid, and toss matches into the stove until a fire finally started.

The packing cases were handy in other ways as well, I borrowed some tools from the supply room, and made a "midnight requisition" of plywood from a British contractor working at the base. Eventually I was able to convert various boxes into functional desk/wardrobe, complete with a hamper for my dirty clothes and a rack for my shoes.

The 457th Bomb Group, to which I belonged, was a relatively new outfit, having become operational only on February 21, 1944. Consequently, beer and liquor supplies at the base club were limited and had to be saved for the monthly parties. Most evenings we would take a liberty run into Peterborough, some eight miles distant, to see what was available in the pubs. We had to be back on the base by 11 p.m., and if we missed the return truck, the taxi fare was £5 — equivalent to $20 at the time.

If we made it to bed by midnight and there was a mission the next day, we could only count on 2½ or three hours sleep, before being wakened for a 4 am briefing. After the briefing we would go to our assigned aircraft, install the working parts of the .50 calibre machine guns, and check the rest of the equipment. Usually we could try to get some sleep until around 7.30 am, when the engines were started; taxiing followed about half hour later and we would be airborne 15 minutes after that.

On occasions we just flew a practice mission to learn how to tighten up our formation (high box plus-600, low box minus-600 to our altitude), or escorted a weather aircraft out before a bombing mission began. If we were part of the bombing mission, our group would assemble over the base or a nearby "buncher" beacon, and await our turn to join the bomber stream leaving the departure point on the coast.

That was when my job, as navigator, really began. We would leave the coast at between 15,000 and 18,000 feet, and usually continue a climb until we reached 25,000 feet, where we maintained formation.

In the US we had practiced 45-second bomb runs, with evasive action. Over Europe, the shortest run we would make would be perhaps 20 minutes, straight and level, and more likely than not into a 100-knot headwind. For a time after bombs were dropped, we would speed up to an indicated air speed of 155 mph, but later our instructions were to remain at 150 mph for the entire mission.

Pictures left to right: Ray Conway, radio operator; Chuck Borland, tail gunner; Ernie Pappalardo, waist gunner; Dave Foltz, engineer/top turret; Dick Wright, waist gunner; Bob Moore, ball turret. Bottom (L to R): Jim Duffy, bombardier; Paul Gilbert, pilot; Dick Palmer, co-pilot; Andy Brown, navigator.

Life in a B-17

My seat was on a step in the floor of the nose section, with my backside very near the demand oxygen regulator. It supplied the proper proportion of pure oxygen, depending on the altitude, and mixed it with air from inside the cabin. On my first mission I discovered that

457th at Glatt...

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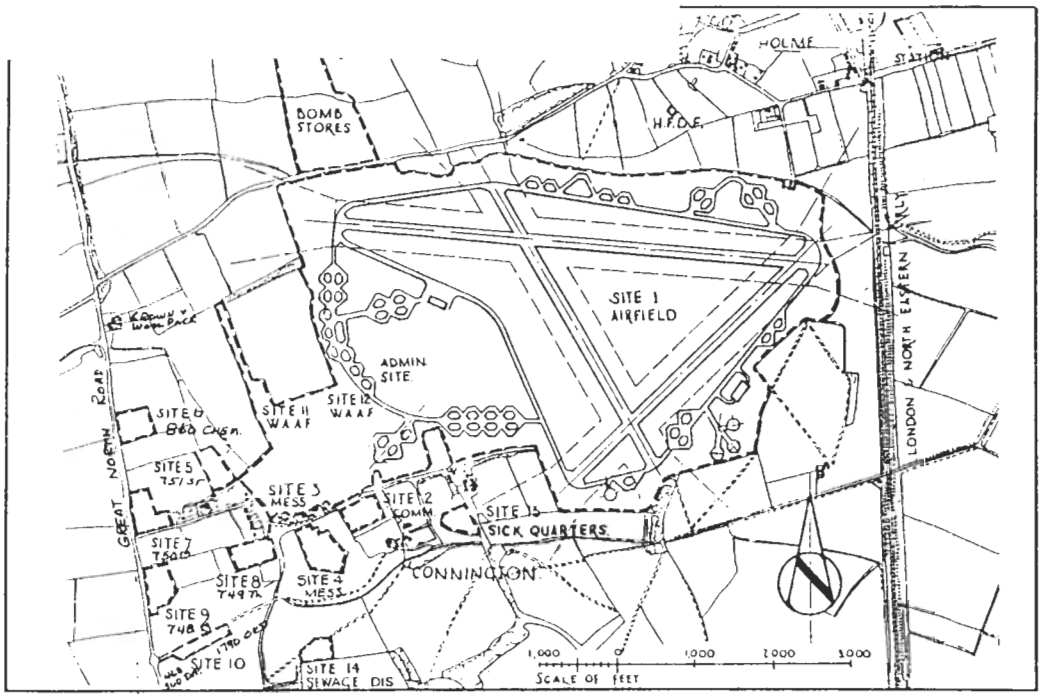

powdered eggs tended to produce wind; on subsequent missions I skipped breakfast.

It is cold at 25,000 feet, even in mid-summer, and the temperature would go down to 40 degrees below zero — the same in both centigrade and farenheit. I usually wore a heated jacket inside my fur-lined jacket, primarily so I could hook up to the heated gloves, a necessity for those who had to use a pencil for several hours during the flight. Even though we also wore silk gloves under the heated ones, it was always possible to tell us navigators from other crew members by the blisters on our fingertips, where the 32-volt wires in our gloves had worn through.

There were no loos on a B-17, not even a relief tube in the nose. The only options for disposing of the previous evening's bitter were either to roll up one of the excellen. linen-backed British charts (always in short supply), pull back the driftmeter, and stick the chart out the opening; or to resort to the ever useful condom. Usually we opted for the latter, tied a knot in the top and laid it on the catwalk by the escape hatch to freeze. If over Germany on the way home, we might crack the escape hatch and drop the frozen bomb, hoping to hit someone below.

If the mission was longer than the eight-hour average, or if it was rough, we would often have a prescription of 60cc — about two ounces — of spiritus frumenti awaiting us on our return. It was the duty of the navigator to sign up for this, so whenever I could I would check with our crew well before landing to see who wanted theirs. We had no non-smokers or non-drinkers, but at times I managed to end up with four or five doubles, nearly 24 hours after my last meal.

After debriefing we would have a bite to eat, take a cold shower (there was rarely hot water available) and headed into Peterborough.

On Sundays, when not flying, many of us would attend the 4.30 p.m church service to "take out a little flak insurance." The Chaplain would always leave a bit early, leaving the benediction to his assistant, in order to be first in line for the one good meal of the week, usually chicken.

Everything was rationed

Like the chicken, many items were rationed. We had a weekly allowance of seven packs of cigarettes, two candy bars, two packs of cookies, and a pack of gum. Less, frequently we would receive soap, toothpaste, razor blades and other toiletries, though most of us had brought enough of these items over to last us a while.

Our parties occurred monthly, always preceded by orders mandating that ties would be worn and "there will be no swimming in the static water supply." The bar was opened at 8 p.m. and five minutes later not a tie would be seen — or else it would have been cut in two — and anyone promoted to captain or above could count on going swimming fully dressed.

The bar closed at around 9:30 p.m. for half an hour while we ate, but if the group was "stood down," that is it did not have a mission the next day, then the party could continue until midnight. It always did anyway, whether we had a mission or not; the teletype room would be locked until midnight, so the field order could not come out until then.

About once a month, depending on how many combat mission we had been flying, we would receive a 48-hour pass, and head for the Picadilly Hotel in London, if we couldn't be accomodated there, the staff was always willing to help us locate another hotel.

Once crew members were about two-thirds of the way through their tour of duty (a tour of duty was 25 missions until D-day, then it was raised to 30 missions and shortly after that to 35 missions) they were eligible for a week at a "Flak House," These were large homes in the South and West, away from the buzz bombs, which had been requisitioned by the British Government. They provided rest and relaxation for some 25 fliers at a time. Ours, near Winchester, Hampshire, came complete with a butler, Mr Inch, who had once worked for Barbara Hutton.

One could sleep all day if he wished, and could dress in civilian clothes that were provided — a knit shirt and a pair of trousers, which he could not wear off the premises. One day three of us talked a sergeant into driving us to a country pub in our civvies. Naturally we stood out like sore thumbs, even before opening our mouths, as there were no able-bodied young men not in uniform in those days. The captain in charge of the house, a non-flier, heard of our escapade and came looking for us, but we managed to return without being caught.

The stay was so enjoyable that we extended our leave by spending a night in London on the way back to the base. Our superiors were not amused, but what more could they do, we figured, besides sending us out to get shot at again?

The Mission When Luck Ran Out

On a mission on september 10, 1944, our luck ran out. Over our target, a Daimler-Benz engine factory at Gaggenau, near Karlsruhe, our number three engine and oxygen and hydraulic systems were damaged by flak. The engine could not be feathered, and after a time the self-sealing oil tank ran dry and the engine caught fire.

That is the one time you leave a B-17.

We bailed out over the city of Luxembourg, just after noon. The Germans were retreating from Patton's 3rd Army, and happily for us, their tracers fell short as they shot at us the whole time we drifted down. We landed to the west of Arlon, Belgium, a town that fell to the Allies by the evening just as Patton's gasoline supplies ran out.

We were taken to Paris the next day, and flown to Croydon, Surrey, the following afternoon. Our commanding officer's plane happened to be there, and we returned to Glatton in time to keep the missing in action report from being despatched.

The group sent us to London, to 63 Brook Street, just a couple of doors down from Claridges, for interrogation. It was decided that, since we had technically been in enemy territory for a time and were close to completing our tours, we would be sent home.

We were given quarters in a Red Cross lodging near the Ritz, and were able to spend nearly four weeks in London until the paperwork ordering us home was completed. Then it was back to Glatton and from there to Stone, where I managed to find space on a C-54 Skymaster, rather than returning by ship, as most did.

'Sally B' Supporters Club member Andy Brown was a B-17 navigator assigned to the 749th Bomb Squadron, 457th Bomb Group, based at Glatton (now Connington), near Peterborough, Cambridgeshire.

#2

749TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H)
Office of the Operations Officer
Station 130, A P O 557

October 1944

Combat Missions Of Lt Andrew Brown (NMI)

GROUP MISSION #					
62	June	8	1	Etampes, France	6.40
65		12	2	Virty En Artios, France	5.30
66		14	3	De Bourget, France	7.00
67		15	4	Angouleme, France	8.00
70		19	5	Landes De. Bussac, France	7.45
71		20	6	Hamburg, Germany	7.30
74		22	7	Rouen, France	5.15
77		25	8	Montbartier, France	11.35
78		28	9	Laoncauvron, France	6.55
79		29	10	Leipzig, Germany	9.00
82	JUly	6	11	Rennescure, France	5.30
83		7	12	Liepzig, Germany	8.55
86		11	13	Munich , Germany	10.05
93		21	14	Schweinfurt, Germany	7.45
97		29	15	Merseburg, Germany	8.30
98		31	16	Munich, Germany	9.15
99	Aug.	1	17	Chateaudun, France	6.15
104		6	18	Genshagen, Germany	9.25
105		7	19	Nanteuil, France	7.20
106		9	20	EshlemBorn, Germany	6.20
107		11	21	Brest, France	6.00
113		25	22	Pennemunde, Germany	9.05
117	Sept.	3	23	Ludwigshaven, Germany	9.00
118		8	24	Ludwigshaven, Germany	7.55
119		9	25	Ludwigshaven, Germany	7.45
120		10	26	Gaggenau, Germany	6.00

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CERTIFIED CORRECT

WILLIAM L. GIBBONS
1st Lt, Air Corps
Operations Officer

#3

CONFIDENTIAL

BATTLE CASUALTY REPORT

457TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP
APO 557

AIRCRAFT NUMBER: B-17G 44-8032

ASN	NAME LAST	FIRST	MI	GRADE	SQUADRON	ARM OR SVC	TYPE CASUALTY	DATE
0757379	GILBERT,	PAUL	W.	1st Lt	749th Bomb	AC	MIA	10 Sept 4
0856314	PALMER,	RICHARD	G.	2nd Lt	749th Bomb	AC	MIA	10 Sept 4
0708243	BROWN,	ANDREW	NMI	1st Lt	749th Bomb	AC	MIA	10 Sept 4
0743695	WODEK,	ANTHONY	G.	1st Lt	749th Bomb	AC	MIA	10 Sept 4
13058218	FOLTZ,	DAVID	C.	T/Sgt	749th Bomb	AC	MIA	10 Sept 4
19095538	BORLAND,	CHARLES	H.	S/Sgt	749th Bomb	AC	MIA	10 Sept 4

CONFIDENTIAL

#3

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BATTLE CASUALTY REPORT

457TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP
APO 557

17G 44-8032

DATE: 12 September 1944

NAME FIRST	MI	GRADE	SQUADRON	ARM OR SER	TYPE CASUALTY	DATE	FLYING STATUS (BATTLE POSITION)	PLACE OF CASUALTY	MOS
PAUL	W.	1st Lt	749th Bomb	AC	MIA	10 Sept 44	Pilot	On mission to Gaggenau, Germany	1091
RICHARD	G.	2nd Lt	749th Bomb	AC	MIA	10 Sept 44	Co-Pilot	On mission to Gaggenau, Germany	1091
ANDREW	NMI	1st Lt	749th Bomb	AC	MIA	10 Sept 44	Navigator	On mission to Gaggenau, Germany	1034
ANTHONY	G.	1st Lt	749th Bomb	AC	MIA	10 Sept 44	Bombardier	On mission to Gaggenau, Germany	1035
DAVID	C.	T/Sgt	749th Bomb	AC	MIA	10 Sept 44	Top Trt Gnr	On mission to Gaggenau, Germany	748
CHARLES	H.	S/Sgt	749th Bomb	AC	MIA	10 Sept 44	Tail Gnr	On mission to Gaggenau, Germany	611

FOR THE GROUP COMMANDER:

JOHN F. SHINNERS
1st Lt., Air Corps
Asst Adjutant.

CONFIDENTIAL

#3-A

Vote For President In 1944

by Andrew Brown, Navigator 749 BS, 457 BG

After arriving at the group in early June 1944, my father sent me a subscription to *Newsweek*. So I was aware that Congress had passed legislation allowing servicemen, regardless of their home state or where they were stationed, to vote in the presidential election in November.

Some time in August a Pfc came to the hut and said that the squadron commander wished to see me. I went to the orderly room and in to see Major Snow. He had me sit down and proceeded to tell me about this opportunity to excercise my franchise, and urging me to vote. (It was clear that he was reading from a prepared text.)

He asked if I had any questions. I responded that I understood, and that there was nothing I would like more than to be able to vote, but that I had only turned 20 a couple of months earlier. He muttered something under his breath and dismissed me.

Soon afterwards I learned from a Sergeant in the orderly room that as soon as I left the CO came out and told him to check birth dates before sending anyone else in. The orders from the Pentagon were that the CO was to interview every officer and the First Sergeant every enlisted man, and certify that they had done so.