

SUMMARY OF CHARLES E. GALLAGHER'S WWII MILITARY SERVICE
MARCH 4, 1943 - JULY 15, 1945

March 4, 1943, I was inducted into the Army at Los Angeles, CA. I was sent to Ft. Douglas Utah Reception Center. From there I went to Shepherd Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, 3-14-43/9-8-43 for Basic Training and then AM (Aircraft Mechanics) School where I made PFC Private First Class. Shepherd Field was rather hot and miserable. We stayed 120 men in a 63 man barracks during Basic Training and 1500 of us lived in a hanger during AM School. I saw nine guys die from sunstroke and heat prostration on the drill field on one day, not too unusual other than the number.

In November, 1943, I went to Tyndal Field, Panama City, Fl. 9-11-43/12-10-43 for Gunnery School where I made Buck Sergeant, three stripes, upon graduating.

In late December 1943, I had a ten day delay enroute, 12-13-43/12-26-43, from Tyndal Field to Ft. Douglas, Utah so I went to LA for a very pleasant time.

In early January, 1944 I returned to Ft. Douglas, Utah, 12-27-43/2-9-44, for assignment. I ran into Rob Jones, a High School class mate, and he wanted to get me on his crew on a B-24. But I said no as I was going to B-17's. Bob's crew got shot down but they got back to Italy OK.

I was assigned to John A. Cotner's crew as Aerial Engineer, Top Turret Gunner. The crew consisted of 10 men:

- # PILOT: John A. "Jack" Cotner,
- CO-PILOT: Valgene M. Mathews,
- # NAVIGATOR: Albert T. Hillman,
Later Albert T. Mosiman
- BOMBARDIER: Lowell L. Wagner,
- ENGINEER: Charles E. Gallagher,
- # RADIO: Raymond V. Ptacek
- # L/Waist GUNNER: Kenneth D. Barning,
- # R/Waist GUNNER: Daniel Matthews,
- # Deceased BALL GUNNER: Donald C. Matthews,
- TAIL GUNNER: Carroll S. Watts.

We were called "JACK'S GORILLAS" as we had a big Gorilla painted, by Ken Barning, on the back of our A-2 Jackets. (I still have my jacket and can get it on if I don't breathe.

We changed Navigators later and got A. T. Mosiman. Dan and Don Matthews were twin brothers that had enlisted at 16 years of age. The crew was reduced to one Waist Gunner after our 10th mission, so Dan left the crew, the only married enlisted man. He flew with another crew and was shot down but escaped to friendly territory. It was a race between the Germans and the US to get him. As History shows, US won???

At Dalhart Air Base, Dalhart, Texas, 2-11-44/4-29-44, we took our overseas training with the usual interesting and scary events, lost engines, lost on night flights, wild and hairy formation flights and plain stupid stunts. My first time in a B-17 I was the Engineer and ran the flight crew

pre/flight inspection and any problems in flight (We got back!) I made Staff **Sergeant**, (3 Up & 1 Rocker) there.

From there we went to **Kearney**, Nebraska, 5-1-44 / 5-13/44 and to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, POE Point of Embarkation, 5-16-44 / 5-21-44 for embarkment on the HMS **RANGITATA**, 5-21-44 / 6-3-44, a New **Zealand** inter-island boat, for an interesting sea voyage to England. You get **used** to the fish soup but I never did get used to the eye balls floating one top. We landed in Liverpool at the **Mairsey** Docks. it was a sight to see the Barrage Balloons and all the war time activity. Later during our tour of missions we got **lost** coming back alone and let down through the clouds into that same Barrage **Balloon** field, needless to say we got out of that **area** as soon as possible as any plane over a port was fair game and the British gunners were good.

June 6, 1944, while we were in the ETO pool waiting for assignment, 6-3-44 / 6-7-44, we **got** up and the sky was full of airplanes and gliders. All were freshly painted with zebra stripes for easy recognition for D-DAY INVASION. We were sent to the Wash, a bay of the North Sea, 6-8-44 / **6-21-44** for Combat Gunners **qualification** and **then** to 336th SQUADRON, 95th BOMB GROUP (HEAVY), 13th COMBAT **WING**, 3RD DIVISION, **8TH** AIR FORCE at **Horham**, near Eye, near **Diss**, Suffolk, in East Anglia, ENGLAND, 6-21-44 / 2-2-44. Four crews of us that had trained together went into the squadron the same day. Within two weeks, two crews had been shot down and all **KIAs** (Killed in Action). **As** you can imagine. that was good for our morale as we knew we had to do 25 Missions. Later that changed to 30, then to 35. We **made** it although the other crew got shot down but were POWS (Prisoners of War). We were a lucky crew in that we only had 3 crew members hit by flack. Don Matthews three times, Jack Cotner, and **Al Hillman** once each. We all had **close** calls but close doesn't count in that game. Several times our plane had well over 200 hundred holes.

July 8, 1944, We flew our first mission, the first time that I had ever put both guns in +heturret, We got **back!** We flew 35 missions including a shuttle mission on which we left England and bombed Gydnia, which was above **Kiel enroute** to Poltava, Russia, approximately 200 miles south east of Kiev. The next day we bombed Trzbenia, **near Krakow**, **Poland** and back to Poltava. Next day we bombed Buzau, an airport near Ploesti and landed near **Foggia**, Italy. We used up all our soap, cigarettes, florins, and half crowns (British ccins) in the next few days for wine. We had a swim in the **Gulf** of Manfredonia. (Lowell Wagner, our Bombardier, **got** Malaria while we were in Italy and that slowed us down to where it took us about seven months to fly our tour.) From Foggia we bombed **Toulouse**, France, in **support** of the Southern France Invasion and on back to England. Around my **10th** Mission I made Technical Sergeant, 3 Stripes and 2 Rockers.

At the base we first lived in a Quonset Hut, a half round steel building that **accommodated** about 10 fellows. From there we moved into a 20 foot Pyramid tent for the five of us. We put in wooden walls, desks, and clothes racks made from bomb boxes. We had a little stove made for Coke, processed coal,

of which we were supposed to get 20 pounds each week. If you were flying that day you were out of luck, but really in luck, as we would go over the Coke compound fence and it was amazing how big a bag of our 20 pounds was in comparison to theirs. The guards understood that it wasn't fair to lose your ration because you were flying. We also had locked bomb boxes of wood that we thought some farmer didn't need at the time. There was a sort of GI laundry but very inconvenient so we would go down to the flight line and drain some 100 Octane fuel and wash our clothes and uniforms, who says leaded fuel is harmful to your health. We got one 48 hour pass a month, sometimes, and we would catch a train to London and live like human beings for a day. I met very nice British folks, in fact in the fifties we sponsored the Bernie and Nora Hand family to the US. Alan, their son, lives just 15 miles from us here. Ask me about War Stories sometime and I will fill you in.

After finishing our Tour we went to the 70th RCD Eng, Redistribution Center Depot England, I think, 2-2-45 / 2-21-45. By checking records and talking to fellows we knew that had been at the RCD since late July because of lost records we determined that about 180 out of the 550 of us that went into combat in July, 1944 survived.

We returned to Camp Kilmer, NJ, via HMS MAURETANIA, 2-21-45 / 3-3-45. It was a nice trip after we convinced the brass, with help from a Major P38 Pilot, that as 1st 3 Graders we didn't want to be on a below water dack for quarters. When we arrived at Camp Kilmer, N.J., 3-3-45 / 3-4-45, RED SKELTON met us and gave a very enjoyahls comedy routine. I got to thank him for it, in person, in West Lafayette, Indiana about 40 years later. In a K-Mart!! He was still a gracious person.

From Camp Beale, Marysville, Ca., 9-9-45 / 4-1-45 I had a ten day leave that I spent in Los Angeles, Ca. Florinc or Juanita (my sisters) took me to 7th and Broadway and surprised Mom right there on the street. (she didn't know I had finished my tour,) She didn't even recognize me.

I reported to Santa Ana Air Base Redistribution Center, 4-1-45 / 4-10-45, and inveigled my way into the Convalescent Hospital, 4-10-45 / 7-5-45. and spent about twelve weeks going in to LA every night, not getting a lot of sleep. The Point System came out and I had enough to get out so here I go to the Santa Ana AFB redistribution station, 7-4-45 / 7-11-45. Just before I picked up my orders it came through that Engineers were declared Essential but the Sergeant didn't want to go through all the paper work to undo and cut new orders so he gave them to me and told me to get off the base. The POINT SYSTEM, took 75 points to get out, based on the following values as I remember:

Points

- 5 for each year of age
- 5 for each year in the service
- 5 for each month overseas
- 5 for each decoration, Air Medal DFC etc
- 5 For each Battle Star
- 15 for being married.

I had enough points because we had a Squadron CO that wouldn't Authorize us a Distiguished Flying Cross when Group recommended it. Group would give us an extra Air Medal or so, Squadron didn't have to sign Air Medals. The medals were the same Point value so I had enough to get out.

I drove to Camp Beale, Marysville,, CA., Separation Center, 7-12-45 / 7-15-45. After another scare of engineers being essential I got my DISCHARGE on JULY 15, 1945, A buddy that offered to buy my gas for a ride down to Los ANGELES got caught as an essential engineer and didn't get out for about a year. My Army career totaled 2 years 4 months and 21 Days.

I returned to Lockheed in the flight test division on July 30, 1945, four years to the day from my original hiring date, and retired January 1, 1985 for a total of 43 years and 6 months at Lockheed.

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