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Larry Bellarts

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RED-TAILED PEACEMAKER

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Limited Edition

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RED-TAILED PEACEMAKER

Larry Bellarts

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FOREWORD

This is the story of a small town boy named "Larry" who, during his life, had the opportunity to see, and become a part of, a very wide variety of the good and the bad of this world. The story tells of actual events and situations he was involved in throughout his military career—many of these events and situations can only be described as having a high degree of violent, physical danger.

Sometimes this type of danger overtakes a person without warning, originating in everyday events, but twisted into the unexpected by Murphy's Law—"Whatever CAN go wrong, WILL go wrong." At other times it is necessary to intentionally become involved in a situation of potential danger—and hope to survive by taking action that involves a calculated risk. Regardless of the source, a dangerous situation can lead to the same dire result, and this small town boy was involved in many of them.

The story tells of events that occurred during World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War—1941 to 1968. He flew in combat conditions in all of these wars and tells of situations that include various degrees of danger. There are also comments regarding some little known events that occurred in those years.

After his military career, the years from 1969 to 1989, he was a Bank Auditor, a Bank Examiner, a Trust Examiner, and an Investigator of failed banks.

In 1990 he managed to arrange a trip to the Soviet Union—and the superscret Russian Missile Research Center at Baikonur in central Russia. The "Cold War" and the "Iron Curtain" were still in operation and the Russian KGB Secret Police was an extremely powerful organization. They became very interested in anyone who was photographing their missile center. Upon returning to the United States, NASA and several aircraft corporations requested copies of the Baikonur films.

RED-TAILED PEACEMAKER

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Looking back to the 1920s and 1930s when I was a young boy, it was a great time for aviation and anyone who wanted to fly. People all across our nation were going to airfields to watch the barnstorming pilots in their biplanes. Some of those old barnstormers became known all over the world for their daring and flying accomplishments.

Not all of those old pilots were just daredevil wingwalkers, some were the pioneers of aviation, setting records that seemed impossible in those days, records made in airplanes that were much less sophisticated than the planes of today.

Charles Lindberg made the first transatlantic flight from New York to Paris in 1927. It was twenty-six hours of flying in a small single engine plane. Two months later several more pilots made flights across the Atlantic. In 1932, Amelia Earhart made the first solo flight across the Atlantic by a woman. In 1937, while she was

attempting to fly around the world, her plane disappeared over the Pacific Ocean. She was never found.

There were hundreds of early aviation pioneers who not only flew the planes and set records, but there were those who designed new planes that would go faster, fly higher and fly further. This was the age I grew up in.

My Uncle Charles had great influence on my early years. He would take me with him across the river to the airport when he went to visit his friend George Pulse, the owner of an Eagelrock biplane.

I was about nine years old when Charles traded his motorcycle for a "Heath Parasol" airplane—a small open cockpit plane made of aluminum tubing covered with fabric. The wings were supported with wires to keep them straight, and it had a very small engine. Charles flew it the length of the airfield once—then sold it. I begged him to let me fly it, but he wouldn't let me do anything but sit in it.

At school I was never interested in studying but managed to get through the various grades. By the age of eleven I was much more interested in learning about the flight characteristics of the "Clark Y" airplane wing and the lift and drag components of the "Davis" tapered wing. By the time I was twelve years old I was designing and building model planes, usually with some experimental feature.

In the late 1930s I attended high school in The Dalles, a little town that had very limited contact with the "outside world" of fast-living and big spenders. It was a quiet little town most of the time—a fistfight or a brawl at a local tavern once in a while, but nothing else very exciting.

While in high school I learned that very few jobs were available locally for new graduates, but I was preparing for this problem. Prudent saving of a few dollars from odd job income for the past several years provided enough to buy a second hand 1935 Chev Coupe. The car was to be my transportation to places where unlimited opportunity was thought to exist.

During my high school years—1938 to 1941—there was a war going on in Europe. Germany's dictator, Adolph Hitler, had built a very large, well-equipped army and was using it to ruthlessly invade and seize control of the countries of Europe, one by one—Poland, Czechoslovakia, Norway, Belgium, Holland, France, and others.

Early in his conquest of Europe he had formed a partnership with the dictator of Italy, Benito Mussolini. It was known as the "Axis" powers. By early 1941, they had overrun and defeated the armies of all the countries of Europe except England, Russia, Switzerland, and Sweden. Hitler did not want to invade Switzerland because he needed their banking industry for his financial dealings with other countries—and did not invade Sweden because he used it for his avenue of trade with other countries.

During 1939, 1940, and 1941 the German air force was daily bombing various cities in England, and the German army was preparing for an invasion of England. In June of 1941 Hitler directed his army and air force to begin an invasion of Russia. The United States was not involved in the military battles of Europe at this time, but was sending military equipment and supplies to both England and Russia.

In June of 1941 I graduated from high school and started a search for some kind of employment. By late in the Fall of 1941, just before the United States became involved in World War II, I had found a job with the Boeing Aircraft Company in Seattle as a sheet metal mechanic. It was not a high paying position and careful budgeting of my salary was a necessity.

After looking at apartments for several days it became obvious that anything providing even the basic necessities was beyond my budget limitations. Then I explored the possibility of "board and room" living—and found a place at Mrs. Borne's Boarding House. She was a pleasant, middle-aged lady—had a few warts on her face, but was a great cook and the rooms were clean.

On December 7, 1941, "Pearl Harbor Day" the Japanese Navy, under the direction of Admiral Yamamoto, attacked our Navy Base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii without warning, killing or wounding some 3,000 American military personnel and destroying many of our ships, including battleships, cruisers and numerous airplanes. President Roosevelt immediately declared war on Japan.

The next day Germany's Dictator, Adolph Hitler, declared war on the United States. On December 11, 1941, Congress and the President declared war on the "Axis Powers" of Germany and Italy. Japan immediately made an alliance with Germany and Italy, and became a third member of Hitler's "Axis Powers." That was the start of World War II for the United States.

I was still working for Boeing—assembling parts for B-17s. The Military draft was started and would probably get to me within a few months, so I continued with my job, expecting to be called at any time.

After about a year I couldn't stand the waiting any longer, so I tried to join the Navy for flight training. They refused to accept me—they said I had a bad heart and could not pass the "Schneider Test." I went back to work for Boeing, but wasn't convinced the Navy doctor knew what he was talking about.

By late 1942 the war was a part of everyone's life and I wanted to do my part. I still wasn't convinced the Navy physical was correct, so I volunteered for the Army Air Corps with the intention of going through flight training. I had no trouble passing the Army physical—obviously, something had gone wrong with the Navy testing. Flying was to become my primary profession for the next twenty-five years—and during those years I flew everything from Piper Cubs and biplanes to single engine jets, four engine turboprops and four engine jet transports.

After being accepted for flight training I found myself in a group of recruits on the way to Kearns, Utah for basic military training. Everybody who entered the Army went through basic training—learning to march, wear a uniform, salute, and go through obstacle courses. Basic lasted about two weeks—then we were sent to Washington State College and given a two week series of classroom courses in such things as first aid, mathematics, and a few other subjects. They also had local civilian pilots take us up for flights in Piper Cub planes to give many of us our first taste of flying.

The next stop was preflight training at Santa Ana, California. It wasn't really training—it was a time when we were under analysis by a group of experts. There were all kinds of tests—physical, mental, and psychologi-

cal. About a third of my group "washed out" and were sent to other duties and training. Some of the "washouts" took it pretty hard—the psychological analysis got most of them—maybe they just weren't as crazy as the rest of us.

We were all "restricted to base" for about a week upon arriving at Santa Ana, but this was normal procedure—it happened at every new base while we were in training. Even though we could not get off base, we were learning that a lot of exciting entertainment was not far away—Long Beach, Los Angeles, and Hollywood were within reach for the evening—if one could find fast transportation.

Within a week after the restriction was lifted we found we could get a weekend pass—and with that kind of time we didn't need fast transportation—money was the big problem. Twenty-seven dollars a month didn't go very far, even in those days—when there was so much to spend it on.

My first payday at Santa Ana was on a Friday—and by Saturday night I was broke, but I had been to see the Earl Carrol Review in Hollywood—and danced on stage with one of the chorus girls. The doors to a fascinating world were starting to open.

Those of us who successfully got through Santa Ana were formed into Flying Classes and sent to various air bases to start Primary flight training. My group went to the "Tex" Rankin Flying Academy near Tulare, California. The planes we flew were biplanes called a PT-17—with open cockpits and no radios—much like the one the "Red Baron" flew in World War I.

PT-17 Biplane

We wore goggles, leather flying helmets, a flight suit that always looked baggy in the seat—and roared through the air at ninety miles an hour. Within a week I "soloed." Biplanes are very good acrobatic airplanes and within another week I was doing snap-rolls, tailspins, loops and all kinds of acrobatic flying. It was great fun—one of the most enjoyable parts of my flying career.

After completing Primary training we were transferred to Arizona to go through Basic Flight School with larger and more powerful planes—the BT-13, sometimes jokingly referred to as "The Vultee Vibrator." It made a lot of noise, but didn't go very fast.

My first aerial "dogfight" happened while in Basic. I was on a solo training flight about ten miles north of the base at about eight thousand feet altitude when two

Navy F6F fighters were on their way through our training area. One of them turned sharply and headed toward me. He probably thought he would have a little fun "buzzing" me.

I quickly rolled upside down and pulled back on the stick to go into a high speed dive called a "Split-S." The F6F also rolled over and also did a fast dive coming after me, but his speed caused him to overshoot my position.

I continued to hold back on the stick and came around in a loop. When I was in the top of my loop and upside down—I looked out the top of the cockpit canopy toward the ground—and there he was below me coming out of his dive. I continued my loop—coming down right on his tail.

The basic trainer I was flying, a BT-13, had a top speed of about 140 miles-per-hour—but in the dive onto his tail with full throttle I was going pretty close to 200 miles-per-hour. Of course, his plane was much faster and better than mine, but I was able to get close enough to make it a successful "dogfight."

Flying the BT-13 was fun, but some flights did not always go as planned. About half way through the training, I was scheduled for a cross-country flight of several hundred miles passing over several towns. Flying at 135 miles-per-hour and about 1,000 foot altitude everything seemed to be going very well. With my map spread out in my lap I found and passed the first town with no difficulty. As I turned to go to the second town the sun was bright and hot—and the temperature in my glass covered cockpit was up near 100 degrees.

I thought it might be a little cooler if I could get some outside air breeze—so I slid the canopy open about four or five inches. Suddenly there was a loud "WHAP" as my map was being rapidly sucked out through the canopy opening. I made a frantic grab at it and managed to get half of it back before the part that was outside ripped off. It was somewhat shredded, but fortunately, I had the part I needed to complete the flight.

The final phase of training was the Advanced School in still larger and faster twin engine planes. We were much more knowledgeable about flying by this time and the training included skills that would help in combat.

One lesson was the "200-foot-altitude cross-country." It was a low level flight about 250 miles long—across the Arizona desert. I never got up as high as 200 feet—most of the flight was about ten feet above the sagebrush. The plane could cruise at 150 miles-per-hour and it was lots of fun. Once it was necessary to go up a little to go over a fence.

About half way through the trip I saw an old run-down ranch building with a high wire fence around it. As I climbed a few feet to go over it I realized it was a turkey ranch. When I went by, about ten feet over the fence, turkeys and feathers went flying in all directions! A little further on, a little kid threw a rock at the plane—nearly hit my right wing. It was a flight I'll never forget.

With the completion of Advanced School we were graduated as officers and pilots. The flying class was broken up and we were sent to other air bases for specialized training in various types of aircraft. All during training I had asked to be assigned to P-38 fighter planes,

but at graduation I was told I was too big to fit in the cockpit of a P-38. I was selected for B-17 co-pilot training.

When the United States entered the European combat battles of World War II in early 1942, we had very few planes of any type that were ready for combat action. It wasn't until August of 1942 that the first American bombers, twelve of our B-17s, attacked rail yards in German occupied France.

The air war rapidly expanded after that and within another year and a half our Air Forces in Europe consisted of over 400,000 men and 11,500 aircraft. At the peak of air operations there were over 1000 B-17s flying combat missions each day plus 400 or more other types of American planes.

In the early part of the war, when the American air forces started to grow in numbers, it quickly became apparent that the air traffic of British and American planes going on bombing raids in Germany in large numbers would be difficult to control. It was at this time that an agreement was made wherein the American forces would take the task of daylight bombing, while the British Royal Air Force would attack Germany at night. This required little change in tactics for the Royal Air Force, they had been doing most of their bombing at night for the past several years to hold down the number of aircraft battle losses.

The B-17, commonly called the "Flying Fortress," was designed and built in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The cabin is not pressurized like modern planes today so it was necessary to use oxygen masks when flying above an altitude of 10,000 feet—and most of our flying

was at an altitude of 25,000 to 30,000 feet. It's always very cold up there—usually 30 to 40 degrees below zero—that made warm clothing a necessity.

After being assigned to a flight crew and going through a few weeks of B-17 flight training I was sent to England to fly with the 8th Air Force, arriving in early February 1945. I was immediately assigned to the 490th Bomb Group—849th Squadron.

The great Berlin Air Raid of February 3, 1945 happened about a week before I arrived. Normally our B-17s did not bomb German cities—our targets were always something that would damage the German military forces—railroads, oil refineries, tank factories, gun factories, submarine docks, aircraft factories, and other items that would hurt their ability to continue the war.

But, this Berlin raid was different—the targets were specific buildings in downtown Berlin—the German Air Ministry, the Foreign Office, the Ministry of Propaganda, the Reich Presidential Office, and the Gestapo Headquarters. There were over 1400 B-17 and B-24 heavy bombers that day—most went to the Berlin targets, but some of the B-24s bombed the synthetic oil plant southwest of Berlin. It was a devastating blow to the German ability to continue the war, but it was a costly mission for us—twenty-three of our B-17s and two B-24s were shot down.

I arrived at the base late at night and was assigned to live in a quonset hut—a round topped building made of corrugated sheet metal. Back home in Oregon, quonset huts were often used for chicken coops—but these were fixed up with windows, a wood stove, and Army cots to sleep on.

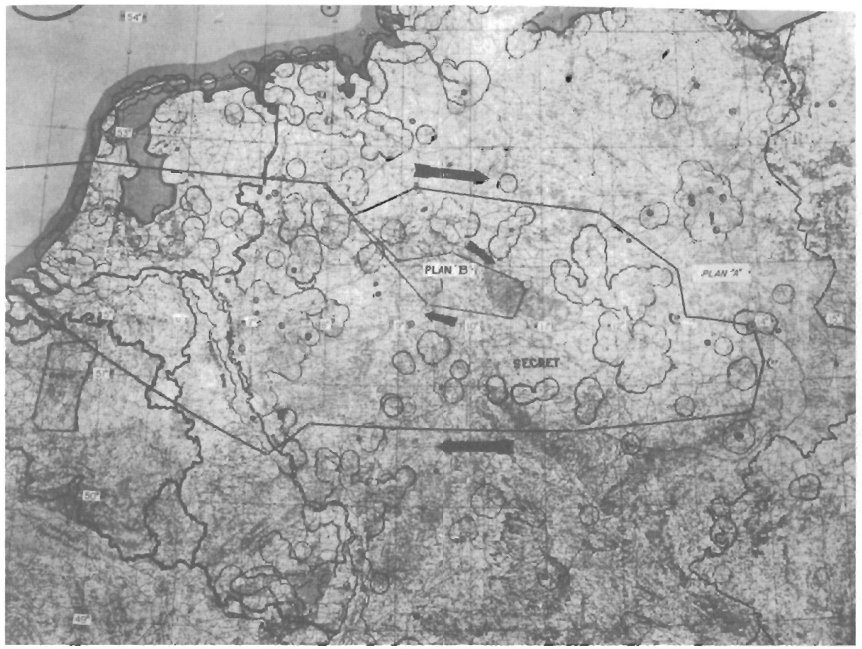
The next morning I had a chance to look around the base and saw the B-17s we were going to fly. It must have been a non-mission day because there were B-17s with red-tipped tails parked all around the airfield. Later in the day we were given a briefing on the restrictions and duties we were to follow. Our mission days would depend on the mission assignments given to the 490th each day, and bad weather would mean a non-mission day. The average was about two or three missions each week.

The airbase was called EYE, named for a small English village about two miles away. A larger English village called DISS was about three miles away. It was a real treat to get a non-mission day and go to one of the Pubs in Diss.

A mission day usually started with a wake-up before dawn by a sergeant who came to each of the metal-roofed quonset huts we lived in and yelled, "Three O'clock—everybody up." A half hour later the flight crews were expected at the mess hall for breakfast—and at 4:30 AM the mission briefing was started in another building.

The Group Operations officer who presented the briefing would give out the flight position assignments for each pilot within a squadron—then pull open the drapes covering a large map of Europe. This would show us the target for the day and the route we would take to get there and return. Known positions of German anti-aircraft guns were shown and our route would zig-zag across the country to avoid them—but there was always anti-aircraft around the target area.

The Intelligence Officer would then give us his latest information on German troop positions and the progress



Mission Briefing Map

This is a copy of the large wall map that was used by the Intelligence Officer for the briefing of B-17 aircrews before a mission. It was my sixth mission on March 21, 1945. The target was the Tank and Armament Factory of Plauen. The mission was completed using Plan A—hitting the target within a heavily defended area. The small circles scattered across the map indicate known locations of anti-aircraft guns—points to be avoided if at all possible. The large number of circles indicate that even at this late date in the war, German forces occupied much of the European mainland.

progress of the ground war so we would know where to try to go in case of emergency—if we had a choice!

The B-17 Groups were flown in three squadron formations of twelve planes to a squadron—if there were enough planes available. Usually they were short two or three. Squadrons were designated as "Lead," "High," and "Low" with the High squadron flying about 500 feet above the Lead, and the Low about 500 feet below the Lead, but none flying directly above or below the other. Combat missions usually made take-off about dawn and lasted from five to eight hours—depending on the distance to the target.

During my first seven missions we lost at least one plane from each squadron on every mission—by anti-aircraft fire or attacks of German fighter planes. Shrapnel wounds to aircrew members were numerous on planes that managed to return to our base. Battle damage was quite extensive to many of the planes on some missions.

There was a mission on March 21, 1945, my sixth mission, deep into the eastern part of Germany near the Czechoslovakian border. The target was a tank and armament factory at Plauen—but there was a second purpose to this mission. We were to act as "bait" to bring out an attack on us by the new German fighter called the Messerachmitt 262.

We didn't know a lot about the Me-262—except that it was powered by two Jet engines, it had four large 30-millimeter cannons in the nose, much larger guns than we had in the B-17. It was a very fast airplane—with a top speed of over 500 miles-per-hour. It was considered to be a major threat to our bombers. Because of our

Combat Picture
(Over the target)

limited knowledge about the Me-262—only four B-17 Groups, about 120 bombers, were assigned to targets in this area, but we were escorted by about eighty of our P-51 fighters.

The anti-aircraft fire (flak) was heavy as we crossed central Germany. Most of our B-17s were hit by flak shrapnel and damaged on the way to the target—but none went down. About twenty miles before we reached the bomb target—the flak stopped and the Me-262s attacked us. There must have been fifteen or twenty of them.

They hit the low squadron first and shot down three of our B-17s—then they hit the lead squadron—seriously damaging several more B-17s. I was in the high squad-

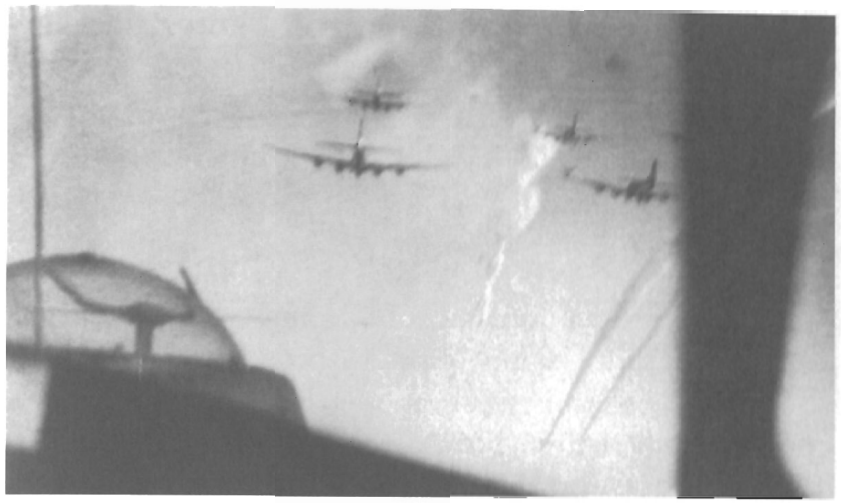
ron and next on their attack list. Every gunner on every one of our planes was firing at them. They must have been impressed by our firepower because they carefully stayed out of range for a few minutes–probably planning an attack strategy.

About this time our P-51s came after them and there was a wild aerial dogfight of Me-262s and P-51s all around us. It was difficult for the B-17 gunners to fire at the Me-262s because of the possibility of hitting a P-51.

After bombing the target we made a turn to the west and headed for home. Within a few miles the fighters left us and the flak started exploding around us again. It was very heavy, with 40 or 50 flak bursts visible at any time–but none of our planes were damaged enough to go down. There were only five or six shrapnel holes in my plane–but any one of them could have killed a crew member or damaged the plane so badly it would not be flyable–luckily, that didn't happen.

During the after-mission debriefing I learned that the P-51s had shot down two Me-262s and that a total of nine German fighters had been shot down. The other seven were probably Me-109s. The P-51s had also destroyed over forty of the German planes on the ground. I never found out how many of our P-51s were lost that day.

The tank factory at Plauen was bombed with great accuracy–the strike photos showed it to be nearly totally destroyed. Most of our World War II military targets were bombed with a high degree of accuracy by our B-17s, but then too, there were missed targets, and in a few cases our own ground forces were hit with "friendly fire" by mistake.



Combat Picture
(Over the target)

Whenever the German Me-109s and Me-262s took off to fight, their primary mission was to attack and shoot down our bombers–because our bombers were destroying the ability of Germany to continue the war. We were hitting oil refineries, oil storage, rail yards, tank factories, and aircraft manufacturing facilities–targets that would bring Nazi Germany's war machine to a grinding halt.

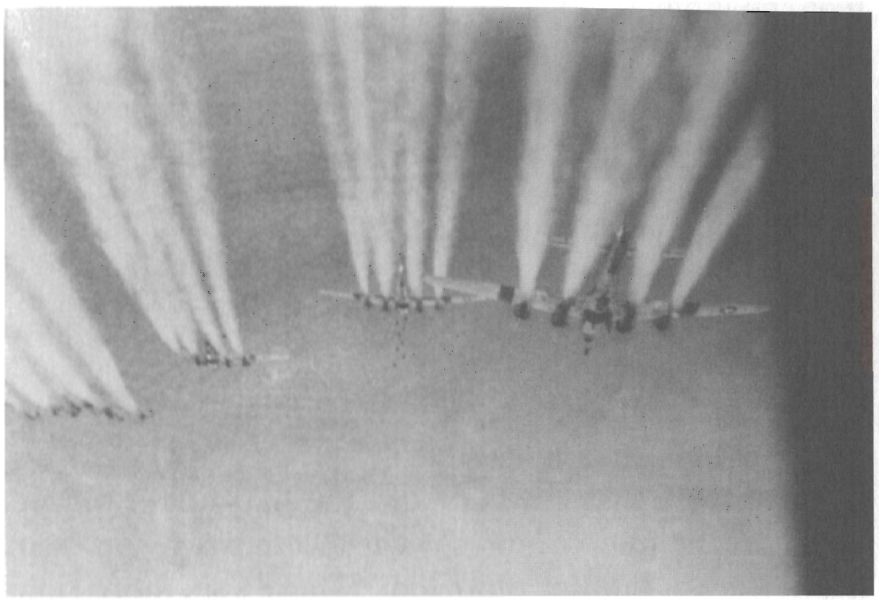
Due to their concentrated effort to shoot us down we lost a lot of bombers and thousands of the aircrew who flew them–but we would have lost a lot more if it were not for our "little brothers," our fighter escort. THANK YOU, "little brothers," we "big brothers" of the bomber force appreciate you for taking a lot of them off our back.

On one mission my plane was so badly damaged it was junked—towed out to the edge of the airfield and used for spare parts to fix other planes. That was the time the anti-aircraft shell went through the left wing and exploded just above the plane, putting over a hundred shrapnel holes in it—it was my eighth mission. The target that day was oil storage tanks near Hamburg, Germany, and we would be bombing from an altitude of 22,000 feet. The air temperature up there is about forty-five degrees below zero.

The bombardier, Jim Argetis, had just dropped the whole 6000-pound load of bombs when an 88-m.m. anti-aircraft shell went through the left wing. The plane lurched to the right—almost going into the B-17 on my right before I could correct it. At the same time I heard a crashing sound and a part of the windshield seemed to explode. Glass shards and pieces of metal were all over the cockpit. The other pilot, Ed, was holding his arm and talking to me on the intercom.

He said, "I'm hit—my arm—and my leg." Then I heard Joe, the flight engineer, say, "The top gun turret is gone, it's all blown to pieces."

By this time I had the plane under control but was losing airspeed and slowly dropping back from the rest of the squadron. The plane was still flyable, but was constantly trying to go into small climbs and dives—something was wrong with the controls, but so far I was able to control it. The engine instruments showed that the #3 engine was not putting out power. About that time the waist gunner came on the intercom with, "There's one helluva hole in the left wing."



Combat Picture
(Over the target)

I looked out at the left wing and saw a jagged hole between the #1 and #2 engines—it looked like it was about three feet in diameter. I tried to check the rest of the crew on intercom to see if there were any injuries but my microphone didn't work—the wires had been cut by a piece of shrapnel.

Then I yelled to Jim and Joe—told them to get Ed out of the cockpit and give him first aid. He was losing a lot of blood and looked like he was about to pass out. They managed to ease him out of the pilot's seat and down to the navigator's passageway where he could be laid down with his oxygen mask connected to a spare outlet.

With the #3 engine not operating it wasn't possible to stay with the rest of the squadron—we were becoming a "straggler" and losing the protection of being with the squadron. Stragglers were favorite targets of German fighter planes because they didn't have to worry about the gunfire of a whole squadron of B-17s when they attacked.

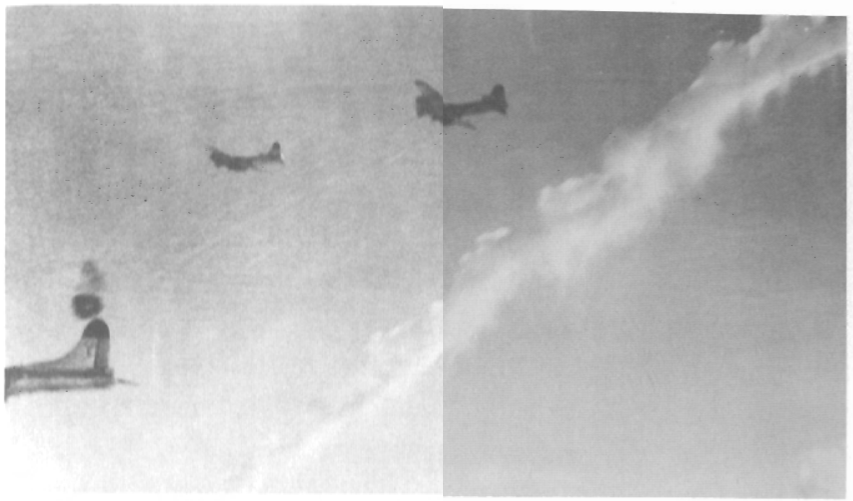
We were about a mile behind the rest of the squadron when the tail gunner came on the intercom, "There's three Me-109s about a mile behind us—it looks like they're getting ready to attack."

The two waist gunners and the ball turret gunner came on the intercom to say they were ready for them. Then the tail gunner reported, "There's six more fighters in the distance." Then, a few seconds later, "Those last six are our P-51s—they're after the Me-109s."

The Me-109s went into a dive with the P-51s after them—they never came back.

We were now about two miles behind and below the rest of the squadron, low enough that oxygen masks were no longer needed, and I could see the English Channel ahead. I asked Jim to get in the pilot seat—he was not a pilot but he could provide a lot of help and do the communications. After he got settled, with the seat belt fastened and headphones on, I showed him how to use the flap and landing gear controls.

I turned around in my seat to look at the damaged top turret—there was a big open hole where it had been, with a lot of broken wires, loose junk, breeches of the two .50-calibre machine guns—pointing in different directions, and ice cold wind blowing through the hole that should have been the glass of the turret. Then it



Combat Picture
(Flying through the FLAK)

occurred to me, Joe's head should have been in that turret—how did he manage to survive?

He was standing behind me looking at his wrecked gun turret. I called to him, "Say Joe, I just got a look at your top turret—or what's left of it—how did you manage not to get your head blown off?"

A few seconds later he came on the intercom and said, "Well, Lieutenant—I was bending over tying a loose shoelace on my boot when it hit—I was afraid the laces would get into the gears for the turret. I sure got a surprise blast of cold air when I straightened up."

I had set a course across the channel that would get us straight to our base near Norwich. The rest of the squadron was several miles on my right and still above me. They drew some anti-aircraft fire as they went near the Ger-

Combat Picture
(Flying through the flak)

man held island of Helgoland located a few miles off the coast of Holland.

Within another forty-five minutes I was in the traffic pattern of the base and preparing to land. When a plane returns from a mission with wounded on board a red flare is to be fired from the plane before landing. Jim got out the Very Pistol and fired about three red flares as I circled the field—then asked, "Is that enough flares?"

I said, "Fire a couple more, to make sure we have their attention."

He fired two more and then got back in the pilot's seat. On the final turn to line up with the runway I asked Jim to lower the landing gear. The wheels went down and seemed to be locked into position for landing.

As soon as I was lined up with the runway I asked him to put down quarter flaps. As they started extending—the plane started to roll over to the left—the left wing flap mechanism had been damaged by the flak and was not extending. I quickly grabbed his hand on the flap control and put it in the "up" position. The plane would not have been controllable with flaps on one wing down and the other up. This was going to be a no-flap landing—and with no flaps the approach would have to be made a little faster than usual.

I continued the landing approach and gently touched the wheels on the runway. Within a few seconds the right wing started to sag and the plane began to veer strongly to the right—trying to go off the runway. That anti-aircraft shell had also managed to give me a flat tire. Even holding full left rudder and brake wasn't enough—it was like a giant hand was trying to push the plane off the runway.

Rolling down the runway at about eighty miles an hour the plane was still going to the side of the runway—then I noticed a crossing runway just ahead—if I could keep it on the runway it would be possible to turn on to the unused intersecting runway and get the active runway clear for use by other planes.

As I got to the intersection the right wheel was still on the very edge of the runway. I kicked in full right rudder and brakes, turned sharply toward the other runway, bounced across it into the open field, and came to a sudden jolting stop—in a large cloud of dust and dirt.

As I cut the engines the ground emergency crew came running toward the plane. There were ambulances, staff

cars, jeeps and other vehicles around the plane before the dust had settled. With all the flares that Jim had fired, they must have thought everybody on the plane was either dead or wounded. I was the last one to get out, and as I dropped out of the front hatch the Group Deputy Commander was waiting under the wing. He walked over to me and said, "Lieutenant, that was some nice flying—I'm putting you in for a Silver Star."

I said, "Thanks—but right now I'd like a little rest—I'm beat." I never did get the Silver Star.

As he turned and started toward his staff car he said, "You'd better get over to the hospital and get your face fixed." It was then I realized there were some little sharp things sticking in my face.

The medics were busy putting Ed in the ambulance, so I started walking around the plane to see how much it was damaged—and started counting holes. Within a few minutes it was apparent there were so many it would be impossible to count them all, so, just counting the ones larger than my fist, I counted forty-three—there could have been more.

The hole in the left wing between the engines was the largest—well over two feet across with jagged edges. Standing under the wing and looking up into the hole—the end of the gas tank was clearly visible. The shell had missed it by only a couple of inches and had gone through the rear wing spar—over a foot of the spar was missing.

The contact fuse of the shell had apparently not worked, and an altitude fuse had exploded it right above the plane. The left half of the tail stabilizer was hanging almost to the ground and I noticed a piece of shrapnel

about an inch in diameter and six inches long that had broken the spar. It was still jammed against the spar but with a little wiggling and tugging it came loose. It made a nice souvenir. The right tire was badly shredded—it had been hit by shrapnel and then damaged further in the landing—that was what had caused the plane to go to the right when I landed.

About that time one of the ground crew came over to me and said, "You've got some cuts on your face—I can take you over to the hospital to get patched up, if you want." We got in his jeep and went tearing across the field about fifty miles an hour.

At the hospital they picked several shards of plexiglass, and metal out of my forehead and around my eyes, put some bandages on—then I went over to the debriefing officer and told him about the events that had occurred during the mission.

Later that evening I got the crew together to talk about the mission. During the discussion we decided that the plane was so "Hole-y" it should be named "The Little Chapel"—even though it would probably never fly another mission.

The next day the squadron commander told me that my flight crew was being split up and used as replacements on other crews—and that I would be getting a new crew that was due to arrive from the States in a few days. Later, I learned that Sergeant Mullins, the flight engineer on the first crew, was killed in action on another B-17 a few weeks later.

For the next week I would go out to the control tower in the afternoon to watch for our B-17s returning from the mission. Nearly every squadron would be missing a

plane or two as they came over the base. It quickly became apparent that the chances of surviving this tour of duty (thirty-five missions at this time in the war) were not very good.

My new crew had still not arrived and it looked like I would have a few days of free time—so I went to London to see the sights and relax. I stayed in one of the best hotels and even found a restaurant that served steak "American style."

When I returned to the base on April 12, 1945, my new crew had arrived and was waiting for me. I was now the pilot of this flight crew. My co-pilot, "Willie" Anthes, and the rest of the flight crew had trained together in "the States" but had never been on a combat mission. The squadron commander scheduled a B-17 for me to take up the next day on a one hour local flight with my new crew to develop crew coordination. The following day I was ready to go back to flying missions with the new crew, and a B-17 named "LOVE 'EM ALL."

The new crew was well-trained but very apprehensive about going on a mission—but that was normal. A little discussion about defense tactics while over Germany, and that our battle losses were less than they had been earlier, and they were ready to go.

We didn't have long to wait—we were scheduled for missions on April 15, 16, and 17. Three in three days was unusual—but they were relatively easy seven hour missions to bomb isolated German army forces.

April 19, 1945 was the day of the last great air battle in the skies over Europe—a deadly "winner take all" battle between several hundred of our B-17 bombers and all the jet fighters and other planes the German Air Force

LOVE 'EM ALL

could put in the air. The battle was fought near Prague, Czechoslovakia at an altitude of 23,000 feet.

The target we were to bomb that day was the railroad switching yards at Aussig, not far from Prague, and each of our B-17s carried twelve 500-pound bombs. It would be a long mission, nearly nine hours of flying time, and would require us to fly from our base in England called EYE, across all of Germany, bomb the target, and return to our home base. Because of the length of the mission, our fighter planes would not be able to escort us all the way to Czechoslovakia—they didn't have enough gas to go that far.

At the early morning pre-takeoff briefing we were told there would be anti-aircraft fire all along the way—and

that Germany had a large number of Me-262 Jet fighters at airfields near Aussig.

Only about three or four B-17 Bomb Groups were assigned to bomb this target—we of the 490th with three squadrons of nine or ten planes each, the 100th Bomb Group with about thirty planes, and a couple of other Groups.

It was a very early takeoff from EYE, and as we assembled into battle formation over England the sun was just starting to come up over the horizon. I was the lead plane of the third element in the 849th Squadron, with Lieutenant Stovall on my right wing, Lieutenant McAllister on my left wing, and Lt. Bob Norvell below and behind me in the diamond position.

As soon as we entered Germany the flak started. It became quite heavy at times, but no B-17s were lost. The flak became very heavy near Aussig—and just after we dropped our bombs the Me-262 Jet fighters attacked. One Jet quickly shot down two B-17s in the 850th Squadron, then one in the 851st went down in flames. Within a few seconds another Me-262 began an attack on my squadron.

I will never forget the red flash of machine gun fire completely covering the nose of that German Messerschmitt 262 Jet fighter as it came in from the two o'clock direction and raked the B-17 on my right from nose to tail.

Stovall was the pilot of that plane, a guy from Texas. Bits of metal and glass went flying from the bomber as hundreds of bullets hit it. The B-17 rolled to the right and went down—with no parachutes sighted. Probably all nine of the crew were killed.

Combat Pictures
(Flying through the flak)

The 262 was extremely fast—the pilot dived slightly after firing and went under the squadron and out to the left. The B-17 that had been flying the "diamond position" below and behind me, moved up to fill the position on my right wing where Stovall had been. That was Bob Norvell's plane.

The 262 went out about a mile or two and turned to come in from the left—again the blaze of gunfire that nearly covered the nose of the 262 and the B-17 on my left went down—nine more good men gone, with little chance of survival. That was McAllister's crew.

The 262 again went under the squadron and out to the right. A minute later he came in again from the two o'clock direction—a long flash of his guns and Norvell's

plane rolled over and went down on fire. That left my B-17 all alone at the back of the squadron, and very exposed to attack—undoubtedly his next target.

A few seconds later the left waist gunner reported the 262 circling around to come in from the tail position. The German pilot was changing his attack tactics. There was no doubt now that my B-17 was going to be his next target.

I told the tail gunner, "Aim high and start firing NOW before he gets within range." A few seconds later I could feel the vibration of .50-calibre guns firing—the top turret, ball turret and tail gunner were all firing. Then I heard the excited tail gunner saying, "I think I got him—he's trailing smoke—he's still coming but not firing."

About five seconds later the 262 came by just under my left wing. He was less than a hundred feet away and going much slower. In a quick look at him as he went by I could see the left side of his fuselage and cockpit was heavily damaged by gunfire. Gray smoke was streaming from the left engine—and I could see the pilot in the cockpit—slumped to his left and apparently dead. He was wearing a black flying suit and black helmet. The 262 slowly rolled over and started it's final dive toward earth.

This battle lasted a little over five minutes—a small part of an eight hour mission—and it resulted in the loss of twenty-seven good American friends and one German pilot who, like us, was also fighting for his country. The rest of the mission on the way home was the usual hours of extreme apprehension and anxiety waiting for the shrapnel from anti-aircraft shells or the

bullets from a German fighter plane. I learned later that the German pilot was from Squadron JG 7.

When you get this close to death and survive to think about it—you find it possible to develop some new and unexpected additions to your set of values. In this type of combat it's kill or be killed—and yet—later, when the heat of the battle is over, there is a sort of kinship and respect for your enemy. It takes a lot of courage to attack a squadron of B-17s with a hundred .50-calibre machine guns firing in every direction.

A couple of weeks later, to everybody's surprise, Stovall came back to the base and told of his escape from Germany. He and the flight engineer had managed to bail out of the plane and had landed in a forest. Stovall was not seriously injured but the engineer had a badly broken arm.

They decided it would be best if the engineer allowed himself to be captured so he could get medical attention. From their hiding place near a road they saw a squad of German troops going by. It looked like the best chance they could hope for, so the engineer walked out where they could see him and was immediately captured.

Stovall started making his way to the west, moving mostly at night and avoiding houses and people. On the second day he was resting in an abandoned farm house when he saw a squad of German soldiers coming toward the house. He needed a place to hide—and quickly.

He found a laundry chute in the kitchen of the house and climbed in—luckily the bottom trap door was closed. The chute was long enough for him to stand in, but was

only about eighteen inches square—not the most comfortable accommodations he had ever had.

The German soldiers stayed in the house most of the day, having lunch and talking—then left in the evening. Stovall climbed out of the chute and headed west again. The next day he was getting pretty hungry—and decided to take a chance and try to get some food at a small farmhouse.

It was a lucky break—the farmer was a member of the "underground"—people throughout the war area who hid downed fliers who had bailed out, and helped them get back to England. They were also very good at sabotage. The farmer started Stovall through the escape system—where he was passed from one contact to another until he arrived at the Holland coast. The final part of his escape was a ride on a fishing boat across the channel to England.

McAllister and his flight crew of eight men probably did not survive the gunfire from the Me-262—no parachutes were seen coming from the plane as it went down.

Bob Norvell and his entire crew were able to bail out and come down by parachutes. The tail gunner landed near a Czech village and was hidden and cared for by a Czech family—he was never captured. Bob Norvell was the last to leave his crippled B-17 and landed several miles away from the others. He was captured and held as a prisoner until the end of the war. The other crew members were captured after they landed, but did not survive in the prison facilities.

Each mission provided some new episode of violent, deadly action—things that were totally unexpected. On

one mission, deep into Germany, the anti-aircraft shell fire was unusually heavy. The black puffs of smoke were all around the squadron and some of them were so close I could see the red blast of their explosive charge as they fired.

After dropping the bombs, I happened to be looking out toward the right wing and saw a round metal ball about five feet in diameter come arching up level with my wing—then start down. It was not more than three hundred feet from the plane—and the first thing I thought of was—"What is one of those floating mines that are used to sink ships doing up here flying along at 25,000 feet?" When it slowly rotated and started to descend I could see a metal rod about five feet long attached to it—then I knew what it was—a ball turret out of one of our B-17s.

Later, back at our base, I learned that a B-17 flying below me had been hit by anti-aircraft fire, then collided with another B-17 and cut it in half with it's propellers—cutting the ball turret out of it. The ball turret gunner normally wore a clip-on type of parachute, but this gunner was a large person and normally left his parachute inside the plane to be more comfortable—he was still in the ball turret, without a parachute, when it was cut from the plane.

Shortly after takeoff on each mission—while we were climbing up to our bombing altitude—the tension and anxiety would start to grow in each crew member. As we passed over the English Channel and entered Germany, every comment made by a crew member over the intercom was strictly business—no discussion of the last visit to London or any personal matters—everyone

was watching intently for German fighter planes and anti-aircraft fire.

But when the mission was over and we were back at our base, there were times when some incident that happened during the mission would provide a little humor. Like the radio operator who always took a duffle bag full of extra clothes on each mission—until a piece of shrapnel from an anti-aircraft shell went through his duffle bag and tore up all his underwear. I never understood his reason for the extra clothes—but, if it made him feel better, that's what was important.

Then there was the piece of shrapnel that came up through the navigator's table, through his maps, smashed his little plastic computer into splinters, and punctured the oxygen bottle over his head. The oxygen was blowing on his head and he thought he had been hit—but he didn't get a scratch.

It is almost impossible to be in England for very long without hearing a "ghost story"—and this time was no exception. One evening, after a long mission, I was laying on my bed in the quonset hut when a flight engineer from another crew came running in and very excitedly said, "I just saw him—he was standing there looking at me—out in the latrine."

He was pointing out toward the latrine, and sure all fired up about something, so I asked, "Who did you see?"

He was so nervous he could hardly talk as he said, "It was my buddy, Bob Cramer—the flight engineer on Captain Bennett's crew—but—but—they were shot down today."

I asked, "Are you sure you saw him?"

"Yes" he said, "He was right there—just standing there looking at me."

I said, "That's impossible—they couldn't get back here that fast—even with the help of the underground."

"I know" he said, still very excited, "He was just standing there, but his feet weren't on the floor—he was standing about a foot off the floor. When I saw that, I ran outside. Then I went back, but he was gone."

There was no doubt in my mind that he really thought he had seen his friend.

Several incidents like this happened during the war—they usually resulted in a long talk with the chaplain and the squadron commander. Only rarely was a person sent home for further evaluation. These incidents probably developed from the stress of combat flying—and the knowledge that it was mathematically impossible to fly the required thirty-five missions and not get shot down.

Some crews were able to complete their full thirty-five, but others, only a few missions before the flak or German fighters got them. In the early part of the war, 1942–1943, the bomber losses per mission were very high, with a bomber crew able to fly an average of seven missions before being shot down.

Later in the war, 1944–1945, the odds of surviving improved slightly because the German Air Force had lost many of their fighter planes, but the bomber losses per mission remained very high due to new German defensive techniques and advanced weapons systems. Almost 50,000 American airmen were lost in the total air operation against Germany in World War II. About 4,750 of the 12,730 B-17s sent into combat were destroyed.

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According to records I could find, our allied fighter planes shot down 5,222 enemy fighter planes during World War II, but gunners on our bombers were "aces" too—they shot down 6,254 enemy fighters.

Many Americans today know little about some of the day-to-day actions and unreported events of World War II. There were occasional examples of unusual and honorable actions among the combatants in the European part of the war, actions that were the opposite of what one would normally expect. Of course, the actions of the Nazi SS troops, the oppression of the Jews, the death camps, and the indiscriminate bombing of cities cannot be considered as honorable—but throughout the European war operations there were a few events that told of honorable actions.

One of the most unusual actions that came to my attention in recent years involved the mutual respect fliers have for one another. Late in the war a badly damaged B-17, with wounded and dead crew members, was trying to return to England when a German fighter plane came into position to attack—but did not shoot. Instead, the German pilot recognized the serious condition of the B-17, flew beside it for a short distance, then saluted and returned to his base in Germany. He could easily have shot down the B-17, but chose to show respect for a wounded enemy. The B-17 was able to get to England.

I remember being briefed before each mission—that, if we were shot down, we were to avoid capture, but if we had to surrender for any reason, we were to surrender to the German Wehrmacht (regular army) if at all possible. The reason for this was based on reports that

the Wehrmacht units had been known to hide captured fliers from the German SS troops and protect them from brutal interrogation. They were also known to have rescued fliers from German civilians—usually farmers that wanted to kill any enemy flier who came down in a parachute.

Another important act of honor happened during the final days of the war. A twelve hour truce was negotiated between the German forces occupying Holland and the Allied Forces—to allow us to use our B-17s to drop food packages to the Dutch people who were near starvation. We flew low over a soccer field near Rotterdam and pushed boxes of army field rations out the bomb bay doors of the plane. German troops could be seen walking along streets as we flew over the city of Rotterdam at an altitude of about 200 feet—they were carrying weapons, but did not shoot.

When the twelve hour truce was negotiated—one of the conditions demanded by the Germans was that we would not photograph the food drop or any part of Holland—no photographs allowed. But, our High Command wanted pictures—and my plane was selected to have an Air Corps photographer on board. On the way back from the food drop I was to break out of the squadron formation and go full speed back to our base in England.

When we were a couple of miles from the coast of Holland and headed toward England, I banked out of the squadron, put on full power, and dived down to about ten feet above the waves of the English Channel. The tail gunner sounded a little worried about being so close to the water when he said on the intercom, "That

water is awful close—the props are kicking up four 'rooster tails' of water behind us!"

A couple of miles from the coastline of England I climbed up to about a thousand feet and was over our base a few minutes later. As I parked the B-17 and cut the engines there was a jeep waiting for the photographer to take him to Headquarters. The rest of the squadron landed about twenty minutes later.

Many years later, while traveling through Europe, I stayed a few days at a motel in Amsterdam. In talking with the motel manager I mentioned that I had been the pilot of one of the B-17s that had dropped food on the soccer field. He knew about it and said, "My wife was out there helping to pick up the boxes—but I couldn't be there—I was a member of the "underground" and would have been shot by the Germans if I had been caught."

The war in the Pacific had little action that could be considered as being unusually honorable. The sneak attack by Japan on Pearl Harbor, the Bataan death march where Japanese soldiers bayonetted prisoners to death, the execution of captured American fliers by firing squad in that little park just outside of Tokyo, the beheading of prisoners by the Japanese using a Samuri sword, are examples of some of the many less than honorable actions characteristic of the war in the Pacific.

There were some actions on our part in World War II that were not of the highest standards of honor among combatants, but then, sometimes it is necessary to do what seems best at the time. The "Bloody Hundreth" B-17 Group is an example of this—and the result was quite unexpected. There is an unwritten rule

of honor among combat pilots—if you are over enemy territory and under attack by an enemy plane—and are in circumstances in which you will undoubtedly be shot down—lowering the landing gear of the plane is a sign of surrender, and the attacking plane will escort you to a landing in their territory.

There is a story I heard that tells of what happened to a bomber of the 100th Bomb Group, better known as the "Bloody Hundreth." The B-17 was badly damaged and under attack over Germany by two Messerschmitt fighter planes when the pilot decided to lower his gear and surrender. The German planes stopped their attack and took up positions on each side of the B-17. As the planes were descending, the B-17 pilot noticed a layer of clouds nearby and decided to make a run for home base in England. He told the two waist gunners to shoot the German fighters—then dived into the clouds and got back across the English Channel to return to his base.

The "Hundreth" flew normal missions for a few days—but, about a week later, as they were returning from a bombing mission and circling their base to land, a squadron of German Messerschmitt fighters attacked and shot down several of the B-17s.

The "Bloody Hundreth" did not get its name from this incident—it earned the name because of heavy losses during many bombing missions over Germany. We like to think of the enemy as being less than honorable—but sometimes we too, find reasons not to follow the rules of warfare—and we paid dearly for it that time.

The 100th BG airfield was not far from the 490th and sometimes they were assigned to bomb targets in

Germany near ours—that meant that their take-off time would be about the same as ours. One morning, before dawn, our bombers were lined up on the taxiway, engines running, bomb bays full of 500-pound bombs, and waiting for the signal to take off—when I noticed a bright light in the distance coming up over the trees and gradually getting brighter. At first it looked like the sun was rising—but then the light went out. I found out later that the bomb and ammunition dump at the 100th BG had blown up. It must have been quite an explosion—but our B-17s took off on schedule. I don't know what happened to the 100th mission that day.

In recent years I have heard comments saying the accuracy of World War II bombing was not good. I don't know the sources of the comments regarding World War II bombing accuracy, but most of our targets were hit with a high degree of accuracy. One comment on our accuracy was: "We could drop a bomb in a pickle barrel from twenty five thousand feet."

The mission to hit the German submarine pens (docks) just north of Hamburg on the Baltic Sea was an example of pin-point bombing accuracy. We were bombing from an altitude of about twenty-five thousand feet and there was a broken layer of clouds below us near the ground. Just as we approached the target area, most of the clouds cleared away and I could see the three pens, exactly where we were briefed they would be. (Many years later I learned that those clouds were not really clouds—the Germans had fog generators they would turn on when they thought our bombers were coming).

The bombardier dropped the bombs and we immediately made a turn to the left to evade anti-aircraft fire.

The next day when I saw the strike photos, they showed a large plume of black smoke coming up beside the white clouds that had partially covered the submarine pens—a direct hit.

My fourth mission, the large Oranienburg railroad yard just north of Berlin, was another important target hit with precision. Oranienburg was very important to the German war effort because it was a crossroad and marshalling yard for the distribution of military supplies.

We dropped bombs with time-delay fuses from one end of the switching yards to the other. Some of the bombs exploded when they hit the ground, others would go off after 6 hours, 12 hours, 48 hours, or 72 hours. Those bombs probably tied up railroad traffic and delivery of military supplies for several weeks. (Fifty years later, in 1995, one of the unexploded bombs was found in the town of Oranienburg beside the rail yards.)

THE OREGONIAN, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1995

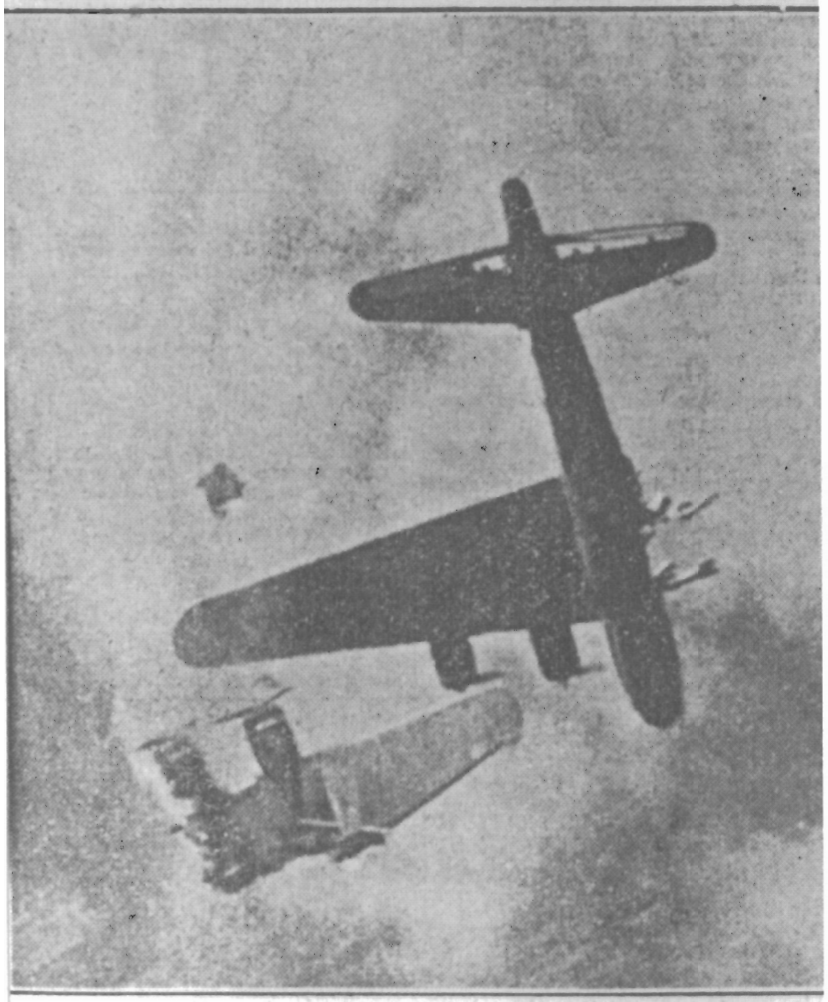
Old bomb forces 10,000 to leave town near Berlin

ORANIENBURG, Germany — The 10,000 residents of Oranienburg, north of Berlin, were evacuated for several hours Thursday after a World War II bomb was found where a Nazi arms factory used to be.

Police said the 500-pound bomb was found during construction excavation not far from the Oranienburg Castle. Discovery of old bombs is commonplace throughout Germany.

Newspaper Article from March 1945

No Milk Run Here



U.S. Army Air Force Photo

The massive blows of Allied air armadas have broken the back of the Luftwaffe, but the skies over Germany are not all lined with velvet. Here an 8th Air Force Fortress, one wing shot off by an Me109, plunges earthward after attacking an airfield near Oranienburg on Tuesday's record day. The 8th lost 25 bombers and eight fighters out of a force of 1,300 bombers and 850 fighters.

While we were bombing the Oranienburg rail yards north of Berlin, other B-17s were bombing the Headquarters of the German General Staff at the little town of Zossen, twenty miles south of Berlin. There were two reasons to bomb Zossen—not only was it the new location of the German General Staff—intelligence reports indicated Hitler was also staying there. He was not injured in the bombing.

At the same time Oranienburg and Zossen were being bombed, our B-24 Liberator bombers were hitting German oil refineries near Vienna, Austria and British Halifax bombers were bombing two benzol refining plants near Essen, Germany. It was a devastating day for the German war effort, but we also lost a lot.

Out of a total force of 1,300 bombers and 850 fighters we flew on missions that day, twenty-five bombers and twenty-eight fighters were shot down with many more severely damaged. It was not a day of easy "milk run" missions.

There were times when our planes were damaged while on missions deep within Germany—damaged to the extent they were still flyable but unable to make the long trip back to home base in England. For these situations there was an agreement with the Russians that we could land at a Russian airfield—a relatively short distance away. A B-17 of my squadron was in this condition—damaged and a long way from England—when the pilot, a friend of mine named Harry, decided to make it to a Russian airfield.

When Harry got back to England a few weeks later, he told of the experience. It seems the Russians accepted the entire crew as heroes and threw a big vodka party

the evening they arrived. There was dancing, and the local women and girls joined in the festivities. The party was a great success, even though none of the Russians spoke English and none of the Americans spoke Russian. Harry said that when the party was starting to quiet down near midnight, a big Russian woman of about 250 pounds walked over to his small tail gunner, picked him up, said "Da," tucked him under her arm, like a loaf of bread, walked out the door and took him home. The tail gunner came back the next morning, but refused to say anything about his overnight experience.

Russian airfields were only one of the places we could go in an emergency—it was also possible to land in neutral countries, such as Sweden or Switzerland, but if any of our planes landed there the plane and aircrew would be interned and held until the end of the war. A few B-17s, B-24s, and some British planes, landed in the neutral countries because they were so badly damaged while on a mission that they could not get back to England.

There were rumors that some of the planes that went to neutral countries were not damaged—but were flown there by aircrews that wanted to avoid having to fly more missions. I never knew of any aircrew that went to a neutral country, but I can easily understand the temptation to do so by any aircrew member that knows there is little chance of living through a combat tour of duty.

There was an unusual target for us in the latter part of the war near Rouen, France. When our ground forces moved through France after D-Day, they found strong German resistance around Rouen, northwest of Paris. To avoid a battle that would have caused a lot of casualties, they encircled the German forces and moved on. The Germans wanted to hold the base because it was a launching site for their V-2 rockets—a very large rocket powered missile with about a ton of explosives.

Ready for a B-17 mission—March 1945

We were to bomb an area just outside of Rouen to soften up their defenses—in preparation for a ground attack by allied forces. Our bombing altitude was lower than usual, twelve thousand feet, because little, if any, anti-aircraft fire was expected.

Just as the bombs were dropped there was a large explosion at our altitude and about 400 yards to the right of the squadron. It was a giant ball of red flame—much larger than even the largest flak burst. Every plane in the squadron was hit by small pieces of shrapnel, but no planes were lost. One small piece came through the side of the plane and ricocheted around the cockpit before it landed on my lap. I found out later that the Germans had put a timed or altitude fuse on a V-2 rocket and shot it at us. That missile, with a ton of explosives, was almost successful in shooting down the whole squadron.

There were thousands of missions flown by the Army Air Corps in World War II—some days there were over a thousand bombers in the air at one time. American forces suffered a lot of casualties—many in the air war and many more on the ground. There were several months in which total battle casualties nearly equaled the casualties of the entire Korean War—or the entire Vietnam War.

I lost many friends in a short period of time during World War II. Extreme danger was a part of my everyday life during the time I was flying missions—it changed my outlook on many things by presenting a very convincing demonstration of how short and uncertain life can be.

World War II was not only a large scale operation, it was a time when "high tech" was just getting started, and anything could happen. Radar had been developed by the British, and their Loran navigation system was in use. Early in the war the Germans started using fuel injection instead of carburetors in their fighter plane

engines to give them better performance and longer range.

They also developed the V-1 "Buzz-Bomb" that was a pilotless plane and bomb. It flew at an altitude of about fifteen hundred feet, was powered by a ram-jet engine that gave it a speed of 400 miles-per-hour—and was loaded with 500-pounds of explosives. It had just enough fuel to fly across the Channel to England, and when it ran out of fuel, or a distance measuring device cut off its engine, it would crash and explode. It was not designed to be accurate enough to hit targets—just cause damage anywhere it landed—and a great many of them were fired at England.

Later in the war the Germans perfected the V-2 rocket—the forerunner of the Intercontinental Ballistic missiles that today is one of our, and Russia's, primary weapons of war. It was designed to go almost straight up to an altitude of about sixty miles—then fall to hit somewhere near, or in, London. They were not sufficiently accurate to hit a designated target, but the 2,000 pounds of high-explosive they carried could do a lot of damage wherever it hit. There were over 4,000 V-2 rockets fired at Britain in the last two years of World War II, killing over 2,700 Londoners and causing over 6,000 wounded casualties. It was very similar to the Scud missiles that Iraq acquired from the Russians and used in the Gulf War in 1991.

The Germans also developed a rocket powered plane called the Messerschmitt 163, but it had a very small five minute fuel supply and could only stay up for short flights. In 1943 and 1944, however, they developed their Messerschmitt 262, a twin engine jet

fighter that was very fast, very maneuverable, and heavily armed. Fortunately, they did not have a chance to manufacture a great number of them before the war ended–Hitler didn't think it was a good airplane and had held up production on it. He wanted it redesigned to be a bomber.

And then there was the V-3 the Germans were developing late in the war–an artillery cannon with a very long barrel. It was designed to fire a shell over seventy-five miles–far enough to hit London from as far away as France. A pilot of the Royal Air Force first saw it under construction near the French coastal town of Boulogne, but didn't know what it was–so some B-17s from the 91st Bomb Group and the RAF bombed it just to be sure it was not some kind of weapon. Some members of the French "underground" also reported the strange "gun" that was being constructed and reported its location to British Intelligence.

After the war the wreckage was examined and found to be a long barrel gun, built in sections and bolted together–the same type of gun Iraq was building for the 1991 Gulf War. Although the Iraq gun was much larger and designed to be capable of firing a shell over 500 miles–it was the same type of design and construction the Germans used for their V-3.

Iraq was going to use it to fire shells at Israel, but never got it all put together. An arms merchant named Gerald Bull was secretly having the gun barrel sections made and shipped to Iraq as "machinery." He was murdered in Belgium in 1990, shortly after British Customs agents suspected what the "machinery" was and stopped the shipment. The final shipment contained critical parts

for the completion of the "Supergun" so it was never able to be used.

For the last couple of years of the war the German ground forces were using radar controlled anti-aircraft guns–so we developed a system of dropping "chaff" from our planes. "Chaff" is little strips of metal like Christmas tree tinsel–and as they floated down, their radar guns would be confused and fire at the chaff. Their radar control was very effective–until they noticed the guns were firing at the chaff and not at our planes–then they would turn off the radar control and fire the guns manually.

The Messerschmitt 262 fighter was not the only jet powered plane the Germans developed, they also had a twin engine jet bomber–the Arado 234B Blitz. It had a top speed of 460 miles-per-hour (very fast in 1944) but could only carry one 1,100-pound bomb. A later version was even faster. The Blitz was developed so late in the war that Germany did not have the time or resources to make it into a major offensive weapon. Very few were ever manufactured.

Another little known "high tech" item the Germans were developing in 1944 was a "stealth" airplane–but the project was never completed. It was known as the "Horton 9." There were several developmental models designed and flown but the end of World War II stopped the project. The partially completed final model was found after the end of the war and brought to the United States. It had many of the stealth characteristics found in our B-2 bomber, such as a flying wing design, engines mounted deep within the airframe, and the use of radar absorbing materials. There is no way to tell what

the outcome of World War II would have been if it had continued for another year.

The German scientists had worked on advanced technology rocket motors, rocket powered missiles, and jet engines for many years before the start of World War II. Development of the V-1 pulse-jet engine was started in the 1920s and the first jet powered plane was flown in 1939. The rocket powered Messerschmitt 163 was developed in the 1930s and first flown in 1941.

The Germans were not the only people interested in rocket powered planes. There was a little-known rocket plane experiment conducted in the United States in 1933 on the sandy shores of the Columbia River. On July 4, 1933, I bought a ten inch long "Fourth of July" skyrocket—and designed a balsa wood wing and tail for it. The finished plane was about two feet long with the rocket mounted on the underside.

On the sandy bank of the river I made a short takeoff ramp for it—slightly slanted upward to give it a good climb angle—and lit the fuse. It took off at about ninety miles an hour for ten feet—accelerating so fast it tore off the wings and tail—then the rocket went flying crazily in various directions. It had too much power for the model plane I had constructed. No further research was done on this project—I didn't have enough money for another skyrocket, and nobody was interested in financing the ideas of a ten year old boy.

In the Spring of 1945 the European part of World War II was coming to an end. The "Allies," (the United States and countries that had fought against the German/Italian "Axis"), had defeated Hitler's and Benito's armies in many battles and had advanced deep into German territory. The Air Forces of the United States and England had bombed and destroyed most of Germany's war materials, and Russian troops were advancing into eastern Germany.

On April 28, 1945, the Italian citizens of Milan captured and killed Benito Mussolini. On April 30, 1945, Adolph Hitler used poison and committed suicide in Berlin. On May 7, 1945, the German High Command surrendered, and on May 8, the surrender documents were signed, marking the end of World War II in Europe—but the war with Japan was still going on.

The war in Europe ended officially on May 8, 1945. About three days later I flew one of six B-17s to Linz, Austria, to transport released French soldiers (that had been prisoners of war) back to France. Each B-17 was

Linz, Austria—May 10, 1945
French prisoners of war released from German prison camps and getting ready to fly back to France in my B-17.

loaded with twenty soldiers—there were five in the nose compartment, four in the bomb bay, five in the radio compartment, and the rest back by the ball turret and waist gunner positions. There were no seat belts—they just had to hang on, but they didn't mind at all.

Shortly after takeoff from Linz one of the soldiers came into the cockpit and handed me a note written on a small piece of paper. He wanted to know if we had crossed over into France yet, or about what time we would cross into France. I wrote on the note that we would enter France at ten minutes to two. He said the other soldiers wanted to know so they could celebrate the return to their country. One of my aircrew told them when it was 1:50 PM and the soldiers all gave a big cheer—loud enough to be heard over the roar of the planes engines. I landed at Chartres, France, and delivered some very happy Frenchmen to their country.

While on the ground at Chartres, the French soldier came to me and wanted to give me a small lapel pin with a piece of Fleur-de-Lis in it. It was a small bit of his beloved France that he had carried with him throughout the war. At first I declined to accept it because I knew of its sentimental value to him—but he insisted I take it. It is now one of my most important mementoes of World War II. I wish I could find that French soldier again and return his pin.

From there, I flew back to England and was assigned a B-17 I was to fly back to America. The plane had steel armor plates behind the pilots seats and at several other places. It was a lot of unnecessary weight to carry on that long flight home—and the plane would fly better without it. I got the crew together and we spent two

days removing the armor. A few weeks later I was on my way back to "The States"—on a boat. Some Colonel had wanted a B-17 to fly home and took the one that had been assigned to me.

Germany had surrendered, but the war with Japan was still going on. I was sure that my return to the States would be nothing more than a brief visit before going to the Pacific War.

Our Army, Marines, and Navy had suffered huge casualties in the battles of the Pacific to recapture the territory and islands that were occupied by the Japanese Army—Iwo Jima, Okinawa and others. Now we were getting close to the point where we must make a landing on the Japanese mainland to achieve an end to the war—and judging from the fighting tactics they had used up to this time—it would probably be a long and bloody fight.

Shortly after Germany surrendered, several plans to invade Japan were prepared with estimates of American casualties that could be expected. For the initial landing just to secure a beachhead, there were estimates of over 100,000 casualties—with more as the invasion continued.

Two invasions of Japan were finally planned—the first on the southern island of Kyushu named "OPERATION OLYMPIC" was scheduled to start in late October 1945. The first step would be the occupation of a small Japanese island twenty-eight miles south of Kyushu. This island would be used as a radar base to provide warning of Japanese air attacks and serve as our fighter and bomber direction center. Over 3500 of our naval ships would be involved in the Operation Olympic invasion.

A second landing named "OPERATION CORONET" was to be made in March 1946 in the Tokyo area if such an invasion was found to be necessary. Several million Americans would be involved in the two landings and our casualties, based on available information at the time, were estimated to be as high as one million men.

Little did we know about the extensive preparations the Japanese had made to repel the invasion. One of their greatest surprises for us was a large number of hastily constructed airplanes we did not know about. Many of these were to be used as Kamakazies–planes full of explosives the pilot would purposely crash into our ships and ground forces.

Beach defenses were also very extensive with Japanese civilians, men, women and children, hidden in the hills with hundreds of machine guns ready to shoot our invading forces. It was about this time that the Japanese High Command issued orders for all American prisoners of war to be killed if the Japanese mainland was invaded.

The invasion landing would result in huge casualties for both sides. In addition to our estimated losses of a million American casualties, Japanese military and civilian casualties could possibly exceed four or five million, and the fighting could well have continued for months, if not years, before the Japanese would have surrendered.

Even the loss of one American was too large a price to pay for those of us who would be doing the fighting. Fortunately, we had a president named Harry Truman who had a very sincere concern about any loss

of American lives. He authorized the use of the atomic bomb to end the war and make the invasion of Japan unnecessary.

When the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were hit with atomic bombs on August 6, and August 9, 1945, they caused many Japanese casualties, but not nearly as many as an invasion if it had been necessary. Japan decided to surrender and the surrender documents were signed on September 2, 1945, ending World War II.

The atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was obviously a strong reason for the Japanese to surrender–but there was another reason that was equally important. The B-29 bombings had destroyed much of the major Japanese cities and military facilities in Japan.

Earlier in the Pacific War a Japanese plane carrying Admiral Yamamoto who commanded the attack on Pearl Harbor, was shot down by an American P-38 fighter plane flown by Lt. Rex Barber. Yamamoto, the commander of the Japanese forces that had attacked Pearl Harbor, was killed in that plane.

The period from 1946 to 1950 was a fairly quiet period in my life, except for the usual hazards of military flying. It was in 1946 that I met and married a beautiful and charming nurse. It was also in 1946 that I went off of active duty, became a member of an Air Reserve Unit, and did some flying around the country in an AT-6 or C-46. In my spare time I attended a local university–and eventually obtained a degree in General Science. Then, in 1950, I received a recall to active duty notice, "inviting" me to become involved in the Korean War.

The AT-6—March 1948

In Korea, 1951 and 1952, I flew cargo missions as the pilot of a C-46 airplane, hauling everything from food to ammunition in overloaded, old airplanes. During the Korean tour of duty I was credited with 355 combat flying hours.

The C-46 was a two engine plane left over from World War II that was famous for flying "The Hump" from India to China to support the Chinese army. It was heavy on the controls and difficult to land in a crosswind—but on a few occasions it was used to fly missions that the newer C-119 planes could not handle.

Prior to the start of the Korean War the Pentagon had decided to dispose of all C-46 airplanes because they were so old and worn out—then had sold all the

specialized maintenance equipment for them to a Chinese corporation called CAT Airlines (Civil Air Transport) in Formosa. Now that we were flying those old worn out C-46s in the Korean War, it was necessary to fly the planes to Formosa if any major repairs were necessary. Sometimes I thought our planes would take off in worse condition than some of the B-26 bombers returning from a combat mission over North Korea.

One time I flew missions continuously for thirty-eight hours without rest, flying missions that were mine, plus missions assigned to other pilots that were not available for flight duty. About every eight to ten hours I would land at either Brady Field or Tachikawa and get another flight crew and co-pilot. I flew one mission that the assigned pilot refused to take, saying he could not get through the storms that were raging across Japan and Korea.

The weather was very bad during the winter months. The clouds, rain, and thunderstorms would last for weeks at a time with poor visibility and high winds. Occasionally, when flying near a thunderstorm, static electrical sparks called Saint Elmo's fire would be all around the plane, sometimes on the tips of the propellers making a ring of electrical fire as it jumped from one blade to the next, and sometimes electrical static charges would go dancing across the windshield—but it never damaged the airplane.

The Iwakuni mission is a good example of the hazards involved in Korean operations. In the summer of 1952 the ground forces were involved in heavy fighting and running out of mortar shells. The mission was to start at Iwakuni Base in Japan, pick up a load of mortar

shells, fly to a point a few miles behind our ground forces battle line, and land in a field beside a road.

At Iwakuni the loading crew was on the way out to the plane before the props quit turning. I asked them to do a fast loading of the five thousand pounds of mortar shells they were supposed to have ready—five thousand pounds was the maximum load for a C-46 when the gas tanks had enough fuel to fly this mission. I went into the flight operations office, checked on the weather and got the latest information about the battle situation in Korea.

On the way out to the plane I could see that the main gear tires looked a little flat—and the tailwheel strut was much lower than normal—those were pretty good indications that the plane had more than five thousand pounds in the cargo cabin and was overloaded. I asked the loading crew chief if he had loaded only five thousand pounds of shells. He said, "Yes sir, but I didn't count the weight of the packing crates, containers, and the two five hundred pound boxes of fuses—do they count?"

I was speechless for a minute, then quietly said, "They sure do, those poor old wings can only lift so much." As near as I could tell, those extra items would put the plane at about two thousand pounds over maximum load capacity.

Doing a little quick mental calculating—the couple of hundred pounds of gasoline that had been used getting to Iwakuni would allow a little more weight to be carried, and the plane probably had a safety margin built into its maximum load limit—then I thought of the urgent need for the shells in Korea and told the rest of the aircrew, "Let's go."

I taxied out to the end of the runway for takeoff, checked the engines carefully and was cleared on the runway for takeoff. Iwakuni is an unusual air base—it is below sea level with fifty foot high dikes around it to keep out the sea water—and those dikes are not very far from the end of the runway.

I ran the engines up to full power, released the brakes, and started down the runway. Acceleration was a little slower than usual because of the heavy load, but the airspeed was increasing. At about ninety miles-per-hour and halfway down the runway—the right engine "coughed" and lost power. It only lost power for about two seconds and then came back with full power, but the loss of power momentarily stopped the acceleration necessary to get takeoff speed—and about 120 miles-per-hour was needed to get airborne.

I was going too fast to stop the takeoff and had no choice but to continue. Within a few more seconds there was enough speed to get the wheels off the runway—but well down the runway—and the dike was just ahead. I was able to get over the dike with about five feet to spare, but had so little airspeed it was necessary to fly just above the water for several miles at full power to gain enough airspeed to start climbing.

After a couple of hours of flying to Korea, and lighter because of burned gas, I arrived over the field where the Army troops were supposed to be waiting—but there was a layer of clouds below me at about five hundred feet above the ground. There were little holes in the

cloud layer and various checkpoints were visible. I knew where the battle lines were and about where to land, but couldn't find enough of a hole in the clouds to get below them.

Then I saw a break in the clouds up to the north—about five miles away and on the North Korean side of the battle lines. I headed up that way—dived through the hole to get below the clouds and leveled out about 200 feet above the ground and 100 feet below the bottom of the clouds. I put on full throttle and came back toward the battle lines from the north. The North Koreans were so startled at a plane coming from behind them at about two hundred feet over their heads they didn't fire a shot. After landing in the field, the ground troops unloaded the shells and I went back for another load.

Occasionally these old planes would develop mechanical trouble and present pilots with a serious problem. One time I saved another C-46 and flight crew that had lost its communications radio while in flight. It was about 11:00 AM one morning when we each filed a flight plan to go from K-14 airfield near Seoul, Korea, and fly airways to Tachikawa Air Base near Tokyo. He taxied out to the runway just ahead of me, was given takeoff clearance, and assigned an enroute altitude of 11,000 feet.

The weather at K-14 was clear, but the weather at Tachi was forecast to be five miles visibility, a 1,500 foot ceiling, and cloud tops at 10,000 feet—not the best weather, but not real bad either. My clearance was also for 11,000 feet, but would be five minutes behind him.

The C-46 in Korea

I made my takeoff on time and climbed to cruising altitude before reaching Tagu in central Korea—the first checkpoint enroute. We were both on the same radio frequency and I heard his position report when he crossed Tagu. When he crossed over Pusan in southern Korea I again heard his position report—but when Pusan Radio gave him an update on deteriorating weather conditions all over Japan, he did not acknowledge receiving it. From Pusan he flew on airways across the Sea of Japan to Miho on the west coast of Japan.

At Miho the ground station gave him the new weather report—and again he did not respond. By now it was apparent his radio receiver was not working—and without it he would not be able to make the instrument approach and landing that would be necessary at Tachi because of low ceiling and visibility conditions. He was in serious trouble and probably did not know it.

The only way I could figure to help him was to fly close and try to get his attention. His radio receiver just might have enough power to hear me if the planes were close enough, but that was only a possibility. Our assigned airways route went from Pusan, across the Sea of Japan to Miho on the west coast of Japan, then to Osaka, Nagoya, Oshima, and Tachikawa—but there was another, seldom used but slightly shorter airway, between Miho and Osaka.

Shortly before arriving over Miho I requested a change in airways—to fly the shorter route between Miho and Osaka. The shorter route—and a little more throttle for a slightly faster airspeed—would put us both over Osaka at the same time. I told Miho of my plan so they wouldn't get nervous about two planes being at the same point, at the same altitude, at the same time.

The clouds became complete coverage with the tops at about 9,000 feet at Miho—I was in the clear with nothing but a brilliant white blanket of clouds below me in every direction, and a beautiful blue sky above. A couple of minutes before arriving at Osaka beacon I saw the other C-46 slightly to my right and about a mile ahead. With just a little more throttle I moved to within about a hundred feet of him—slightly to his left and a little behind his left wing.

I called him on the radio, "Air Force 7849—over Osaka now—this is Air Force 6742—do you read me?"

A few seconds later he answered, "This is Air Force 7849—I can barely hear you—where are you?"

I called back, "Look out behind your left wing—I'm about a hundred feet from you."

We both knew now that his radio receiver was only able to pick up very strong signals from a close-by transmitter. He could hear me—but nobody else. I notified Airways Control of the situation—that we would be flying the rest of the route together and would be making our descent and approach to Tachi in formation.

We arrived over the Tachi beacon at 11,000 feet, still a thousand feet above the tops of the clouds. Approach Control said they would vector us to a point and altitude where GCA would give us a final approach to Tachi. I had the other C-46 move into a close formation position—with our wings about thirty feet apart—so he wouldn't lose sight of me. We made plans on what each of us would do if we lost sight of each other in the clouds—and how I would let him land on the first pass over the field, then I would make another approach for my landing. Approach Control and the GCA team heard all of our radio transmission and would know what to do.

Following instructions from Approach Control we started descending into the clouds. I repeated all heading and descent instructions from Control so the other pilot would know what to expect. The clouds became more dense and darker as we descended, but fortunately there was very little turbulence—that made it easier for him to keep in close to my wing.

At 2,500 feet altitude Control handed us over to GCA for the final descent to the runway. With wheels and flaps down we broke out of the clouds about 400 feet above the ground with the runway directly ahead. As we previously had planned, he made his landing. I managed to stay under the clouds, circled around and landed.

Flying close formation in clouds is about as dangerous as playing Russian Roulette with three bullets—it just isn't done, but we did it. If I had not escorted him down he would have had to head the plane out toward the ocean and have all on board bailout—trusting to luck they would not land in some Japanese farmers rice paddy. This was but one of many flying incidents that happened during the Korean War.

There was a film made a few years ago called "Flight From Ashiya"—it had nothing to do with me—but I'll always remember Ashiya, an air base I occasionally stopped at in southern Japan. The runway was good, but the west end of it was right at the waters edge—nothing but the Sea of Japan in front of you when taking off to the west. The rest of the base was surrounded by hills about 500 feet high and not far from the runway.

It was about midnight of a moonless, black, night when I landed at Ashiya for a ten minute stop to let off some passengers. After they were unloaded, I restarted the engines and taxied out for a takeoff to the west.

Everything seemed normal as I put on full throttle and started the takeoff roll, but just as I lifted the wheels off the runway the landing lights went out, the cockpit instrument lights went out, the radio went dead, and the electrically controlled propellers went to flat pitch allowing the engines to overspeed—a complete electrical failure with full takeoff power applied on both engines. The engines went to a speed far above their allowable revolutions per minute and the propellers gave a sound like a high pitched very loud continuous scream. I had to quickly pull back on the throttles or the engines would have torn themselves to pieces, yet I needed enough power to keep the plane flying. Too much power and the engines would fail—too little power and the plane would stall.

Because there were no lights on the cockpit instruments there was no way to tell how high the RPM's went—but I had never heard engines scream like that. The crew chief was on the flight deck between me and the co-pilot and fortunately had a flashlight. Within a few seconds he had it turned on the instrument panel so I could see to get as much power as possible and still not overspeed the engines. With the limited amount of power available it was barely possible to get enough airspeed to maintain flight.

I was out over the water by this time and started a cautious turn to the left to get back to the airfield—and at the same time trying to get a few more feet of altitude. As long as I was out over the water I didn't have to worry about the hills surrounding the air base, but it would be necessary to have more altitude before I could get around to land on the runway. I had about three hundred feet of altitude by the time the turn back toward the field was completed, but was still slowly gaining altitude—about twenty feet a minute. At this rate I would never get enough altitude to get over the hills, but there was a good chance to get around for a landing into the wind by staying close to the airfield—very close. A strong westerly wind blowing in from the ocean made a landing to the east a very fast touchdown—and would be against the traffic pattern.

Knowing those hills were not far from the end of my wing, I started the turn for the lineup and approach to

the runway. When half of the turn was completed, I knew the hills were no longer a problem. Since the landing gear was still down, all I had to do was land—on a black, moonless night, with no landing lights! I touched down the main wheels and rolled to a stop—then taxied to the parking ramp.

The next day, when the mechanics worked on the engine to find out what had happened, they found that the electric engine starter on one engine had become re-engaged after starting the engine and had acted as a reverse current generator. That reverse current had been controlled for a while by the electrical system but with takeoff power and high RPM it couldn't take it any longer—and had blown out every fuse and electrical panel in the airplane.

Flying conditions were unusually hazardous for many reasons in Korea. The North Koreans would occasionally infiltrate to the south and set up hidden machine guns about 200 yards from the end of an airfield runway so they could shoot at us when we were taking off or landing.

Weather conditions were bad much of the time, with poor visibility and icing conditions. This required us to fly on instruments for most flights. The North Koreans knew of the poor weather conditions and our need to fly on instruments—so they had their friends, the Russians, set up a strong radio beacon near Vladivostok with the same frequency as one of the Korean beacons we used to guide us when crossing the Sea of Japan. When our beacon was tuned in—the Russian beacon would give us a false course heading out to the middle of the Sea of Japan.

None of the planes from my unit were lost, but several were drawn a few miles off course before they discovered they were following the wrong signal.

At an airfield near Seoul, Korea, known as K-13, I had the fun of watching "Bedcheck Charlie" from North Korea. He would fly over us in the late evenings in a small plane and drop hand grenades or small mortar shells. He was the North Korean bomber. He never did much damage, and when he came over we all went outside to watch for him. Someone would hear the "put-put" sound of the little engine of his plane and yell out, "Here comes Charlie." He didn't come every night—sometimes only once a week.

There was always the possibility he would get lucky and drop a hand grenade in our midst—or maybe drop one when we were in our tents, but the chance of that was so slim we just enjoyed looking for "Old Bedcheck."

During the Korean War my home base was at Brady Field in southern Japan. It was built on a sand dune that stretched out into the Sea of Japan, and everybody lived in tents. The only permanent structures were two or three brick buildings that were used for Headquarters. I was seldom there because I was one of the lucky pilots assigned to a special squadron located at Tachikawa Air Base, near Tokyo. Although my assigned living quarters were at Tachikawa, I wasn't there much either. Most of the time I was staying at various bases in Korea and Japan.

It was difficult to find a good bed to sleep in when it was necessary to stay overnight in Korea. I was fortunate in knowing Carl Kinchloe, one of the Korean Ace pilots that flew F-86 fighters. When I was at K-13, his

base, he invited me to stay in his tent, and when he went to Tachikawa he would stay in my usually unoccupied room. His name was really Iven Carl Kinchloe, but he never liked the name Iven—he preferred to be called Carl. He was killed in an air crash a few years ago—now there is an air base named for him in Michigan.

In 1953 and 1954, at Larson Air Force base near Moses Lake, Washington, I was an Instructor Pilot (IP) in the C-45 airplane—in addition to my other duties. The C-45 is a small twin engine plane that would carry about five passengers and was used for administrative flights and hauling small freight items. Most of my students were newly graduated pilots assigned to the base. On several occasions these new pilots I was instructing almost caused crashes, they just lacked experience.

My position as a flight instructor sometimes resulted in unusual extra duty. There was the time one Christmas when I was the pilot who flew under low clouds and through forest valleys in a snowstorm—looking for a passenger who had parachuted out of a disabled airplane near Yakima, Washington. I didn't have to fly into those valleys, but one does what one can to help others in their time of need, and this guy needed all the help he could get—the snow must have been ten feet deep in that region. He was lucky though—he landed unhurt, near a forestry cabin where he found shelter and some food. I never found him, but two days later he was able to walk to a road a couple of miles away and was found by ground searchers—in good condition, but very cold.

There was a story about this incident, published in a national news magazine. The fellow who had bailed out was a Marine who was "hitchhiking" his way to Seattle

to be with his family for Christmas. The plane he had jumped from had been flying in clouds and was getting ice on the wings up to the point it was close to stalling out when the pilot said to "Bail out". The Marine jumped with his parachute and the plane went into a tailspin—coming down through the clouds. The pilot was able to recover from the spin as the plane came out the bottom of the clouds. He then flew to Larson Air Force Base, about sixty miles away and landed.

The plane had been structurally damaged when it was in the spin and had to be realigned and repaired in the aircraft maintenance facilities at Larson. After it was repaired—I was the test pilot who took it up to see if it was in flyable condition again. It was flyable, but the flight instruments were all connected up backwards and gave reverse or zero readings after I took off.

From 1955 to 1959, during the time I was stationed in England, my primary assignment was the supervision and control of a warehouse full of critical supplies and equipment that would be required if a war started in the European area. It was an easy job—not many new items came in, and nothing went out—I just had to be sure everything was available and ready to use. With little to do on the job, there was quite a bit of time to fly around Europe as the pilot of an old C-47, also known as a "Gooney Bird".

One time I had to make a landing in very dense fog at Wiesbaden, Germany. The fog was so heavy the control tower couldn't see my plane after I landed and was on the runway. Iced up wings and propellers were a common occurrence while flying in Europe, and a major hazard. While in England, I was able to visit such places as

The C-47 "Gooney Bird"
England–1959

Oslo, Norway–Stockholm, Sweden–Paris, France–Athens, Greece–Munich, Germany–Berlin, Germany–and many other cities.

In 1959 I flew one of the last flights by a C-47 across the Atlantic Ocean. The trip went from England–to France–to the Azores Islands–to Newfoundland–and to Maine. About half way across the Atlantic, between the Azores and Newfoundland, the right engine started running erratically. I was at the point in the trip where I doubted I could make it back to the Azores, and not sure I could get to Newfoundland if the engine would quit completely. I found that by running it at reduced power I was able to keep it going and get to Newfoundland.

In 1960 and 1961, I was stationed at Dyess Air Force Base, near Abilene, Texas. While there I learned to fly

the T-33 jet fighter trainer. The T-33 was not one of the newest jet trainers, it had been around for quite a few years. In fact, when it was first produced it was known as the F-80 and was one of our first jet fighters. I think much of the technology for the F-80 may have been gained from the engineering analysis done on a Messerschmitt 262 that was found in Germany after World War II.

The T-33 was not designed to go through the speed of sound, but could do about 500 miles-per-hour and was easy to fly. It had a large fuel tank out on each wing tip, and as the fuel burned down a little after takeoff it would slosh around and make the plane roll from side to side. When the tip tanks were empty and the main tanks were being used, it was smooth flying.

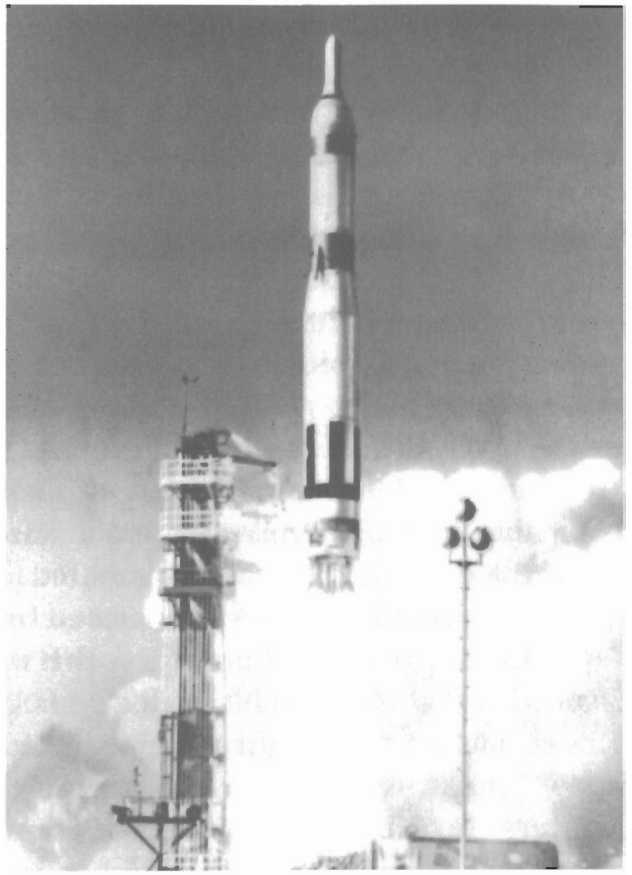
The T-33–1961

One thing was necessary to remember when cruising the T-33 at high altitude–be sure to reduce the throttle and open the speed brakes to slow the airspeed before starting a descent. If you pointed the nose down with power on, it would go to–and probably through–the speed of sound within a few seconds. The plane was not designed for such high speed and would not be able to stand the high speed stress. It might lose some important parts, like maybe a wing!

One day when I was flying a T-33 at 45,000 feet altitude, the cockpit pressurization failed and the interior pressure went to about 38,000 feet–not a very good feeling. About that time the Air Traffic Controller requested I descend rapidly to land at Dyess and allow other aircraft to proceed through the airway over Abilene. Four days later I lost all hearing in my left ear and became so dizzy I couldn't stand up for several days. I was promptly taken off of flying status and grounded by the flight surgeon.

I stayed grounded for about a year before being able to convince the Air Force I could fly with hearing in only one ear. After many physical tests and tests of my flying ability, I was returned to flight status–even though I was deaf in one ear. Part of these tests were made at the medical center in Texas that gives the astronauts their physical testing. I passed all their tests except for the hearing. They never found the exact reason for my hearing loss, even with all the testing.

I never regained any hearing in my left ear. Every day since 1961 when I lost my hearing, I have lived with a ringing, hissing sound in my ear, a sound that is always associated with hearing loss.



The ninety-eight foot tall Titan I Missle

From 1961 to 1964, I was in the Titan One Intercontinental Ballistics Missile program as a launch crew commander. I also served as senior instructor of launch crews and was responsible for teaching new crews the latest procedures for launching the missiles. These missiles were mounted in underground concrete "silos," in groups of three, with an underground command center–it was called a missile complex.

The Titan I Missile was about ninety-eight feet tall and could send a large nuclear warhead halfway around the world—and hit within a few hundred yards of a selected target. It was a two stage rocket powered by liquid oxygen and a fuel similar to that used by jet engines. When the fuel from the large first stage was all burned out it would fall away and the second stage would start its rocket engine to continue the flight.

The second stage with its nuclear warhead attached would reach a speed of about 17,000 miles-per-hour and an altitude of over 100 miles—a little less than enough to go into orbit—then fall toward the target. There was a guidance system within the missile, but it was almost entirely controlled by radio signals transmitted from the missile complex—signals that were generated by a large computer using a program that aimed the warhead, using its speed and altitude, to hit a selected target. The computerized launch and flight program used by the Titan One is similar in many ways to the one used at Cape Canaveral for launches of the space shuttles and satellites.

An interesting incident happened while I was on complex duty. One day a Russian KGB agent attempted to gain access to the missile complex while I was in command. The man came to the complex gate and presented credentials identifying himself as an employee of the U.S. State Department in Washington D.C.—and demanded entry to inspect the missile site.

I refused to let him in and directed the gate guard to escort him away from the complex. His name was Butinko, and State Department or not, he had no business in the missile complex. I expected to get a nasty

letter from the State Department in a few days for telling him to "get lost"—but nothing happened.

A couple of weeks later I heard that he was, in fact, a Russian Agent, had an American TOP SECRET clearance, and had been arrested by the FBI in Virginia—caught in the act of passing military secrets to a Russian Diplomat. He was later traded to the Russians in exchange for one of our agents they had discovered. I often wondered if he was looking for information about the complex, or had sabotage on his mind.

In October, 1962, the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis, I was on duty as a launch crew commander at one of the Titan complexes. The Crisis lasted for thirteen days—from October 16 to October 28—and it was a time when the world was very close to a total nuclear war with the destruction of nearly everything on earth.

It all started on a Tuesday, October 16, 1962, when President Kennedy learned that Russia had sent intermediate size missiles (1,000 mile range) to Cuba and they were being set up on launch pads. As the thirteen day crisis continued there were high level meetings in Washington D.C. where plans for defense and attack strategies were prepared. Messages were sent between President Kennedy and the Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, containing threats of war.

On Day 9, October 24, all American military forces were put into Defense Condition 2, DEFCON 2—just one step away from total war. It was about this time we were preparing a 180,000 man ground force for an invasion of Cuba. By Day 12, known as "Black Saturday," we knew there were thirty-six intermediate size missiles in Cuba capable of launching a one megaton

nuclear warhead to almost anywhere in the United States. Early in the morning of Day 12 revised targeting programs were brought to my complex and all three missiles were assigned new targets. If the new targets were in Cuba—there would be little left of that country in the event of war.

Suddenly, on Sunday, October 28, Day 13, Khrushchev agreed to remove all missiles from Cuba and the crisis ended. We learned later that there were also twelve battlefield tactical nuclear missiles in Cuba. With their range of about thirty-five miles they would have been used against our invasion forces with disastrous effect on our troops.

All of the Titan One missiles are deactivated now, but a few were brought out of storage in the late 1970s and used to launch small satellites.

In early 1965 I was assigned to 15th Air Force Headquarters at March Air Force Base, near Riverside, California. In addition to my duties there as a Supply Administrative Officer and Base Procedures Inspector, I flew the C-97 Stratocruiser airplane. It was a large four-engine plane similar to one used by the airlines at that time.

On one trip, as I was flying back to March Air Base, and about 100 miles north of San Bernadino—the Los Angeles Radar Control called me to say they were recording two unidentified flying objects on their screen that had been following my airplane for the past fifty miles. They said they had no clearance for other planes to be in the area and asked if I would try to see what they were. The flight crew all looked for them without success—and about that time, Los Angeles Radar called

to say the two objects had just made a sharp turn to the north and went off their screen at a speed estimated to be in excess of 3,000 miles-per-hour. I never found out what they were, but I doubt that a human pilot could withstand the stress of a quick turn like that and the acceleration from my speed of 200 miles-per-hour to 3,000 miles-per-hour in that short time.

In 1966, and into early 1967, I was on a combat tour of duty in Vietnam, flying the C-130 Hercules transport plane. The C-130 is a four-engine turboprop plane (jet engines driving large four bladed propellers), with each engine producing 4,000 horsepower—16,000 total horsepower. Although it was a big plane and could carry many tons of cargo or about a hundred troops and their equipment, it's power made it possible to take off or land on very short and rough landing fields.

The C-130 is a very reliable airplane and relatively inexpensive as compared to other airplanes of its size. It has low maintenance costs, its safety record is excellent, and is an amazingly versatile airplane. It can be used to carry freight over long distances, drop troops into battle, evacuate casualties, be fitted as a flying gunship, and even fight forest fires. Various models of the C-130 are used by many countries throughout the world to carry passengers and freight. It is one of the truly great airplanes of the 20th century.

There was a constant danger of "ground fire" by the Viet Cong (North Vietnamese) while flying anywhere in Vietnam. They would shoot at us with anything they had—rifles, machine guns, or rockets. When we were on the ground they would make life for us dangerous in other ways. They had nasty little tricks like putting

Having lunch at the "Under-The-Wing" restaurant. Vietnam–1966

ground glass in our food or bottled drinks, such as Coca-Cola or Pepsi. If they could get near our planes while they were being loaded they would hang a hand grenade on a string in a place where it could not be seen—hang them in such a way the vibration of the plane in flight would cause the grenade firing pin to be pulled and explode.

One time, as I was coming in for a landing at Da Nang, a Viet Cong machine gunner fired about a hundred rounds of tracer bullets at me as I banked in at the end of the runway. He had apparently crawled across the open field just south of the runway, covered himself

with brush, and waited for a nice big plane to come along to shoot at.

I was in a steep right turn at about 300 foot altitude and almost lined up with the runway for landing when I saw those little red tracer bullets coming toward me from a clump of brush in the field about 300 yards from the end of the runway. They looked like little balls of fire—one, two, three fireballs in the air racing toward me—then another—then another—with more coming one after the other. At the last second they curved slightly and went right under the seat of my pants—I tried very hard to raise up in the pilots seat and still fly the plane but the seat belt held me down. I don't know how those bullets missed me, but they did. I leveled out and landed, and within a few minutes our air base ground troops were on the way into the field to take care of the problem. Nobody was injured on the plane and there was only minor damage—a couple of bullet holes in the lower fuselage.

For a short time I was one of a group of C-130 pilots at Da Nang who flew the Battlefield Command and Control plane over the Ho-Chi-Minh Trail area. These C-130s were specially equipped with communications and radio systems to receive and analyze information from our ground troops and air strike planes—then send information about enemy action to them. There were about six control operators in the plane communicating with our ground forces, spotter planes, and air strike planes.

Each mission would last about ten hours, flying up and down the Ho-Chi-Minh Trail at thirteen thousand feet altitude. The base Intelligence Officer said he had learned

The C-130 at Da Nang

that the Viet Cong had a price on the head of any pilot of these airplanes, $15,000.00 each, in gold, dead or alive. That was why we were required to stay in specially guarded tents when we were on the ground–and never went into an area where we could not be protected.

Before each flight the Intelligence Officer would brief us on the latest war activity–and warn us to, "Be sure and avoid any telephone poles you see coming at you." That was his attempt at humor–and a warning that the Viet Cong might be using SAM (surface-to-air) missiles in our area. A SAM could easily destroy a C-130–and our planes had no electronic equipment for defense against the SAM.

Shortly after I left Da Nang a C-130 was hit by a SAM and blown up while flying over the Ho-Chi-Minh Trail. A pilot in another plane flying nearby saw it happen and reported, "It was blown to bits." The plane crash site and body remains were found in 1993.

In research of combat action I found one report that indicated thirty-two C-130s were lost in Vietnam. Even though we were subject to daily enemy ground fire and SAM missiles, none of the C-130 aircrews were credited with combat missions.

For several months of my Vietnam duty I flew missions out of Nha Trang, a little town on the east coast near Cam Ranh Bay. It became almost a second home base for me. Nearly all flying was done during the day, and at night the flight crews stayed in a two-story concrete building with many large windows–no glass in the windows, not even window frames–but it had good ventilation. There were about forty iron fold-up type beds on each floor–you just picked out a vacant one and tried to get a few hours of sleep. During most of the year the day and night temperature ranged between 90 and 100 degrees–with a humidity of about ninety-eight percent. Restful sleep was difficult to obtain.

To make conditions even more difficult, since Viet Cong forces were known to be in the area around the town, the U.S. Army unit holding the town set up a 155-m.m. cannon just outside of the concrete building. They connected it to some kind of radar device that would automatically aim and fire it if movement was detected in the nearby hills. About every hour during the night the gun would fire and shake the whole concrete building. The Viet Cong knew about the big gun and would

herd a few goats down the hill from time to time—just to see if it was still working. Nobody got a good night's sleep at Nha Trang. The goats didn't do so well either.

The C-130 type of airplane was the primary means to supply our ground forces in Vietnam jungle bases—by delivering millions of tons of passengers and cargo between 1962 and 1973. With very little means to navigate in the Vietnamese back jungle country, it was necessary for a pilot to fly visually most of the time, staying under the low cloud ceilings, and trying to avoid hostile Viet Cong gunfire. It was a type of flying that required the pilot to rely on his wits and judgment if he wanted to deliver his cargo and still stay alive.

I flew missions in Vietnam for fourteen months—and went into almost every part of the country—Pleiku, Saigon, An Khe, Phan Rang, Qui Nhon, Tuy Hoa, and many others. Near Tuy Hoa I landed in an open field to deliver a plane load of troops to help with a firefight battle that was going on in a nearby village. Just as I brought the plane to a stop and the troops were going out the back door—a mortar shell landed about fifty yards away and exploded throwing up a lot of dirt, smoke, and shrapnel. It was one of ours—fired by mistake! One of the Army ground troops was checking his mortar ammunition to see if it was the correct size when it slipped out of his hand—went down the barrel—fired—went straight up about 1000 feet into the air—came straight back down and exploded. We were all lucky, none of the shrapnel hit the plane or the troops.

Flying in Vietnam often required the use of "Pilot Ingenuity." There were no instrument approach systems

at the jungle airstrips to aid in landing in poor weather. Some had just a radio marker, but others had nothing.

One time I was supposed to land at a jungle airstrip known as "Golf Course" to deliver supplies and pick up some wounded men for transport to an Army medical unit. Whoever named it "Golf Course" had a strange sense of humor, it was anything but a golf course. The landing airstrip—made of PSP (pierced steel planking) was about 3000 feet long and seventy-five feet wide, located in a dense jungle valley.

When I arrived over the radio beacon at about 2500 foot altitude, the airstrip was covered with clouds with tops about 2000 foot altitude. I had landed at Golf Course before and knew the size of the valley and the general location of the hills. I could see an opening in the clouds about four miles up the valley so I headed up that way.

As I got close to the opening I told the co-pilot (new to Vietnam) to "Put down full flaps" and slowed the plane down as slow as possible (about 110 miles-per-hour). When over the cloud opening I pulled back on the throttles, went into a sudden dive through the hole in the clouds, and told the co-pilot "Flaps up." While in the dive I rolled the plane in a half turn and started to level out—going back down the valley. By the time the plane was level I was about 200 feet under the clouds and 700 feet above the tree tops with airspeed at 220 miles-per-hour. The airstrip was clearly visible ahead for an easy landing. The co-pilot was somewhat "shook-up" at the unexpected maneuver, but he recovered nicely after the landing. The system of diving through a hole in the clouds to get under

them was similar to the one I used in Korea—only this time it was a much larger plane.

Then there was the airstrip deep in the central Vietnam jungle that I landed at once. The preflight briefing described the landing strip as being in heavy jungle growth that had been cleared just enough to allow a plane to land—with only about an extra 175 feet on each side for the wings. It would be just barely long enough to land and stop the plane—and the jungle was so close to the sides it might be difficult to turn the plane around to take off. The reason for the mission was to deliver supplies to the native Vietnamese Montagnards who were helping the U.S. forces.

They are a primitive people who live deep in the Vietnamese jungle, but are a different race of people from the Vietnamese—more like Polynesian. There are many different tribes, each with its own language and customs—and all of them with a strong dislike for the ethnic Vietnamese. They have never had schools, a right to vote, or representation in the government of Vietnam—and were considered to be "savages" by many Vietnamese.

They live off of the jungle, harvesting rice grown on the sides of mountains and fish from the streams. When the American forces came, they quickly learned how to use the military weapons brought by the Army and Marines—and were especially impressed by hand grenades—they used them to go fishing by exploding them in the water to stun the fish.

It was less than an hour of flying time from Nha Trang to the area where the jungle strip was supposed to be. The rough dirt landing strip that had been cut

from the jungle was so small it was difficult to find. There were no radio signals to show its location and the tall jungle trees made it nearly impossible to be seen from a side view. The only way to find it was to circle just above the trees in the area where it was supposed to be until getting in line with the strip, then it became visible. After a few circles above the tops of the jungle trees—suddenly, there it was, and only a couple of seconds to make a quick bank to line up with the strip—level the wings—put down full flaps and lower the wheels. Then as the wheels touched down on the dirt at about 110 miles-per-hour all four throttles were put into full reverse.

Those four powerful engines driving the propellers in reverse must have made an earth-shaking roar through the jungle, a roar that would scare the spots off a wild leopard—but they brought the plane to a quick stop. It was none too soon—the end of the clearing was less than fifty yards away.

After the engines were shut down I went outside where I found four or five U.S. Army troops and a couple of Vietnamese waiting to unload the cargo. While they were getting the supplies out of the plane I had a chance to look around. On the other side of the plane there was a cleared area in the jungle with several small thatched roof huts. About a dozen natives—men, women, and children, were standing near the huts just looking at the airplane.

A few of them wore some form of clothing or a loin cloth, and some had no clothes at all. They didn't look much like jungle fighters, but they were our allies and they fought for us. The plane was unloaded in about ten minutes—and the possibility of a Viet Cong force com-

ing made a hasty departure for Nha Trang seem the best course of action.

There was another flight to a little place called Dong Ha, very near the North Vietnam border. I was only on the ground less than five minutes, but as I taxied out to take off, a large mortar shell hit the spot where my plane had been parked. It blew a large hole in the parking area and sent PSP (sheets of steel) flying in all directions. I thought it best to leave Dong Ha—quickly—and took off.

My designated home base for the Vietnam duty tour was on Formosa, but I was seldom there. It was called Ching Chaun Kang Air Base, more commonly known as CCK. It was a Chinese air base we were allowed to use, but all American activities were closely monitored by the Chinese military forces. They went so far as to collect all garbage from the base each day and take it to a large (supposedly vacant) hanger at one end of the field.

In the hanger there were about a hundred Chinese workers going through it, piece by piece, reconstructing torn up pages of anything they could find, even our letters from home. If we went to Tai Chung, a nearby town, we were always under surveillance, and sometimes they photographed us as we walked along a street. A curtain on a window across the street would open a few inches and a large camera lens would be seen pointing at you for a few seconds, then the curtain would go closed. There was never any confrontation or problem concerning them—just a strange uneasiness knowing they were always watching.

There were a few flights to other countries while I was on Vietnam duty—Bangkok, Thailand and Clark Air Base in the Philippines were stopping places several times. When in Bangkok I stayed in a downtown hotel.

Bangkok is a very interesting city, very clean streets and buildings, and many things to see. The people are very sociable, and at that time, two dollars would pay for a taxi ride anywhere in the city—and back. Although the city appeared clean and well kept when viewed from the street, if you went a few feet down an alley and looked at the city behind the buildings it wasn't quite as nice as you would expect.

At Clark Air Base in the Philippines, the transient aircrews seldom went off the base—there was always the possibility that the "Huks," the communist guerillas in the nearby mountains, would kidnap or kill an American if they found him alone in town. This did not happen often, but the danger was there.

One time when I landed at Clark, coming from Vietnam, it was late in the evening and I needed to stay overnight. There were no transient rooms available on base, so they made arrangements for me to go to the best motel in Angeles City, just a mile from the base.

Normally when an aircrew is sent off base to stay, they leave their weapons at the base. I still had my .45-caliber automatic in my shoulder holster and was going to leave it at the billeting office—when the Duty Officer said, "Take it with you, and keep it handy." At the motel, I saw it had a concrete wall around it about eight feet tall—with broken glass imbedded in the concrete on top—and an armed Philippine civilian guard walking around! I knew then why he said to keep my gun handy.

The Vietnam War was a very unpopular action--even though our political strategy planners believed the fall of Vietnam would create a "domino effect," resulting in the fall of other Southeast Asia countries to Communism. There were people who did not believe there was any potential for substantial gain for anyone, or any country, regardless of the outcome—only losers.

This does not diminish the fact that our military forces fought well to accomplish the objectives of our government. I sometimes wonder if the final outcome of the Vietnam War—and the Korean Conflict—could have been significantly different if all guidance for the conduct of war operations had been developed and issued solely by experienced military people.

The Korean War was especially bitter for me—Jim, my bombardier of World War II, lost his life in Korea. He acted as my co-pilot once on a B-17 mission over Germany—when the other pilot was wounded by shrapnel and had to be taken out of the cockpit. He was one of the finest men I have ever known.

Shortly before my Vietnam/Formosa tour of duty ended, I received a departure date for return to the U.S. My new assignment was to be the flight operations officer for the astronauts at Houston, Texas. By this time I knew my hearing loss was going to be a major obstacle to continued flying duty and my best course of action was to take retirement.

I called the Air Force Personnel Office at the Pentagon and requested my stateside assignment be changed to somewhere in the Northwest—because I planned to retire there. It was a heartbreaking and difficult decision to turn down that wonderful Houston assignment.

In early 1967 I came back to the United States, and to McChord Air Force Base in Washington State. The planes in use at McChord were C-141s, large transport planes with four jet engines. They were a good long range plane that for many years had been used solely for the movement of supplies and personnel. They had been designed for this use—but were also capable of performing combat air-drops and deployment of troops and equipment.

Since little training had ever been performed by the C-141 air crews and planes in combat air-drop operations, the Pentagon had directed, just before I arrived at McChord, that the C-141s would perform a military exercise to include air-drops and troop deployment.

Based on my recent experience in C-130 air-drop procedures, I was assigned to the unit that was responsible for planning the exercise—as chief planning officer. The exercise was directed to be performed within three months and was to take place in Alaska. It was a war game to simulate repulsing an attack by Russian ground forces that were invading Alaska. It was called BIG BEAR II.

The plan involved the air-drop and deployment of two U.S. Army Brigades and all their equipment near Nome, Alaska. The force included about 300 Army troops, their trucks, jeeps, field equipment, and a couple of large bulldozers—all hauled and delivered by the airplanes—and the deployment had to be completed within ten hours once it was started. The exercise was performed in the Fall of 1967, just as I had planned it. The lessons and experience learned in the Big Bear exercise were used by the Air Force in air-drop operations for several years

after that, and probably are a basis for some procedures in use today.

During the summer of 1967 when the weather became very hot all across the nation, riots began to develop in many of our larger cities and it became necessary to use military force to control the rioters. I was one of the operations officers that coordinated the use of Air Force C-141s to transport Army troops from Fort Carson, Colorado to Chicago, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles (Watts area). Over a thousand troops were sent to each city to restore order and stop the looting of stores.

In the early part of 1968 I filed the necessary paperwork and set the date for my retirement from the Air Force in the Fall of 1968. In April of 1968, a couple of months before my retirement, I was at the base hospital getting my retirement physical—when a sergeant came running in and notified me that I had two hours to pack a bag and report to the flight line to go to Korea.

The Pueblo Incident had occurred the previous January when North Korean forces had captured one of our ships, the *Pueblo*, and now, one of our reconnaissance planes had been shot down in the Sea Of Japan by the North Koreans. Another officer and I were to go to Korea and set up a Command Center to control Air Transport operations in case the incident would erupt into a war action.

A couple of days after arrival at the old K-13 Korean air base our command center setup was completed and we didn't have much to do but wait and see if a war started. Since I had some free time, I went down to the flight line and checked out in an old C-47 "Gooney Bird" that was available.

Because it was necessary for me to be ready to activate the Command Center at any time I could not fly on trips of more than two or three hours. After a week of this local area flying I was contacted by the local Intelligence Officer. He asked if I would be his co-pilot for a day to fly some South Korean agents into North Korea, land and drop them off, and bring back other agents

I thought he was joking when he first mentioned it, but then he told me they had done it before, and there was a system that would work. I agreed to do the job, although it was obvious there was quite a bit of luck involved. The North Koreans knew what we were doing, but didn't know when or where we would be doing it.

The next day an agent delivery trip was scheduled. The flight was to be made by going west from Kimpo, out over the Yellow Sea, and flying about 100 feet above the water, dodging between the hundreds of small islands. Most were about a mile long and a half mile wide, some a little larger, and some a little smaller—none were more than fifty feet high above the water. They all had a few small trees with some green underbrush on the high ground—and beautiful, white, sandy beaches—suitable for landing an old C-47.

The North Koreans had patrol boats with machine guns ready, doing patrol duty among the islands—trying to guess where the landing would take place. It was going to be a pretty tricky game of "cat and mouse." At the designated island, if it was all clear, it would be necessary to land on the sandy beach, quickly transfer the agents, and take off as fast as possible. If it wasn't clear,

the plan was to fly around and draw off the patrol boats–then go back to the island and land.

It was a clear and sunny morning when we took off from K-13 and headed west at about 800 feet of altitude. There were six or seven Korean men dressed as civilians in the cabin of the plane, and several bags of some kind of supplies—they just sat quietly. Within about thirty minutes we crossed the coastline and went out over the water. After a slow turn to the north, and descending to about 100 feet over the water, we started to see the islands.

We had dodged past about fifty of them when I saw one with a small patch of something white showing above the green brush—that was it. We climbed to about 150 feet altitude and circled the island looking for any gunboats—then landed on the sandy beach. The Korean men jumped out of the plane and ran toward the brush with their supplies, while several other men came running out of the brush to get into the plane. As soon as they were inside we quickly took off and turned west toward open water. An hour and a half later we landed at K-13.

I only flew on two of these agent deliveries–both were an interesting change to my normal routine.

About a month later I returned to McChord, and in September 1968 retired from the Air Force as a Lieutenant Colonel. In twenty five years of service with the Air Force I had survived the dangers of combat missions in three wars, and at other times became involved in situations involving considerable personal risk. I knew I was still a good pilot and able to fly just about anything, but the Vietnam combat flying tour of duty with

the total loss of hearing in one ear, and the constant roaring noise in my ear caused by hearing loss, had convinced me not to pursue a career in professional flying. The flying skill that had served me well for many years was now in jeopardy because of my inability to fully monitor radio communications plus flight crew voices at the same time.

The decision not to continue active flying was very difficult. It hurt me deeply—I felt like a bird with a broken wing—able to watch the other birds fly, but unable to join them.

I carefully packed away my uniform, joined my wife, and moved into the ranch style house a contractor had recently built for us. I bought a nice display case for my medals—a Distinguished Flying Cross, a couple of Air Medals, a Purple Heart, and about a dozen other minor medals—and hung it on the wall. Now I was ready to enjoy a life of leisure and fishing—but that was not to be—the hazards of civilian life were about to descend upon me.

The battles of the military years were over for me, and so were my dreams of getting a high-paying civilian flying job. I had an approved FAA Commercial Flying License, but knowing the enormous amount of important and critical radio communication involved in commercial flying—and being totally deaf in one ear—I knew it would be best if I did my civilian flying only under circumstances suitable to my judgment. I had successfully flown the combat tour in Vietnam with hearing in just one ear, but it had been very difficult.

Now it was time to start settling down in our new house, get the lawn and shrubs in, and do some visiting with the neighbors. Fred, the real estate agent that sold us the prop-

erty for our house, came by each morning for coffee, and a discussion of neighborhood gossip or the national news of the day—he knew quite a bit about both. The morning coffee ritual had gone on for about six weeks, when one morning I noticed Fred had something special on his mind. He suddenly put on a big smile and said, "Larry, I've decided you need to go to work."

This took me by total surprise, and before I could say anything he continued, "I made arrangements for you to learn how to be a banker. Monday morning you are to meet John Howe at the Holly State Bank—he's going to start you on a training program that will make you a banking executive in a couple of years."

That meeting turned out to be the start of a very interesting career in the financial jungle of civilian life, a career that would eventually lead me into the darkest corners of the financial world—and very close to situations almost as dangerous as those of my military career.

I learned how to perform duties in nearly all parts of the bank, including the Trust Department. After five years with the bank I resigned to take a position as a State Bank Examiner.

The Examiner position presented an opportunity to broaden my banking knowledge and experience. It was very interesting to see the financial dealings between banks and the National Banking System. After twelve years (1974 to 1986) I resigned the Examiner position to take a position as a Banking Investigator with the Federal Deposit Insurance Company (FDIC).

There were numerous Savings & Loan organizations and banks failing in the late 1980s, so there was no shortage of investigative work. My job was to find out why a

bank failed and who caused it to fail—then prepare reports to be used in legal action against those responsible for the failure.

There were some very interesting failures, a few involving criminal organizations that required cooperation with the FBI and the U.S. Attorney General. Extensive involvement of organized crime was found in one of the banks—and they did not appreciate my investigation of their financial activities, or the shutdown of their banking operations. International financial dealings were also a part of some investigations. The complete story of financial investigation activities is too extensive to be included in this book.

After four years of investigative work I thought it was time to retire. I resigned and went fishing.

Less than a year later (1990), I had an opportunity to visit Russia, including St. Petersburg, Moscow, and a place in central Russia called Baikonur. I knew what was at Baikonur—the Russian Supersecret missile development and launching facilities. Russia was still a very powerful and secretive nation, the "Iron Curtain" was still closed, and the KGB Secret Police controlled everything and everybody. I was surprised and amazed that I was able to take two hours of video pictures of their missiles and facilities—and get them out of the country—even under the watchful eyes of the KGB. The complete Russian story is also too extensive for this book.

After returning home I received requests from NASA, Grumman Aircraft Company, and other organizations for copies of my video tapes. I provided copies to each of them.

At home the retired life seemed the best course of action—there was always work to be done for somebody, and I never had enough time to do it all. My wife thought it was time for me to settle down at home, and my friend, "Wally," let me know very clearly that he didn't want me to go away again. So it was home to stay for me.

"Wally"

EPILOGUE

There's not many of us left now, the ones who fought the battles of World War II, and we're getting to be fewer and fewer each year. More than four hundred thousand Americans like us gave their lives to win that war, and another half a million were seriously wounded or disabled with the loss of arms and legs. Many more did not return and were never found—the MIAs. We were the ones who fought the battles where the bullets flew, but many other Americans were fighting with us—the ones at home who made the ships, planes, tanks, and guns—who were affectionately known as "Rosie the Riviters." They suffered their casualties too. It was a time when all Americans were dedicated to one cause—win the war.

Today there are very few Americans who realize how close we came to losing that war. When the United States entered World War II, Germany and Russia were fighting on the Eastern Front, and all of the Western European countries had been occupied or threatened into

submission by the German Army–all except England. The small British Army and the Royal Air Force was all that remained to fight the powerful German military forces in Western Europe. If it were not for a couple of mistakes made by Hitler, Germany would have won World War II and we could all now be subjects under his, and Japanese rule. That–I am sure–would be a very unpleasant way to live. If they had won World War II, they most certainly would not have been the generous benefactor to us, that we have been to them.

During that war Hitler's engineers were in the process of developing and building combat airplanes, missiles, and other weapons of war that were superior to some of ours, and his scientists were well on the way to building atomic bombs. They never completed making the bomb, and fortunately, only a few of Germany's other advanced technology weapons were manufactured–because Hitler had made the mistake of invading Russia–and because our bombing had destroyed much of Germany's fuel supplies, railroads and resources to continue the war.

If Russia had not been invaded, Germany might have had the time and resources to build military forces that would have been almost impossible for England, America and the Allies to defeat–and if Germany had perfected the atomic bomb, there is no doubt Hitler would have used it in Europe and on our cities in the United States–then, in the Pacific to help the Japanese against us.

It is a great disappointment to us who fought for our country, to find that very little of this is taught to the young Americans in our high schools–and that the vast

majority of all our younger generations do not know how close we were to losing World War II.

After the end of World War II there were only a few years of peace until the Korean War started–and another 33,686 Americans gave their lives in battle casualties, plus 2,830 non-battle deaths and over 8,000 missing in action.

A few years after the end of hostilities in Korea, the Vietnam War started–and another fifty-eight thousand of our finest Americans gave their lives.

In recent years–1990 to 1997–several interesting events have come to my attention that reach back to subjects discussed in this book, unusual in that they have a relationship to events that occurred many years ago.

After the end of World War II the citizens of Czechoslovakia constructed a memorial to honor the airmen who fought to free their country from German domination. The memorial has a B-17 propeller from one of the planes shot down near Aussig–it may be one of the propellers that came from Bob Norvell's plane. The Czech people have not forgotten those of us who fought in the sky–they will never forget.

In 1993 the wreckage of a C-130 and bodies of the flight crew was found in Vietnam. It was the plane that had been flying combat control duty and was shot down by a SAM missile a week after I left that duty. It was found twenty-seven years after it was shot down.

In 1994 I received correspondence from two young Czechoslovakian men who lived near Prague. They were members of a civilian organization that was starting to establish a memorial and museum dedicated to "The American Fliers who had fought to free Czechoslovakia

from the Germans." They were specially interested in me as being one of the 490th BG B-17 pilots of the April 19, 1945, bombing raid when the German Me-262 jet fighters shot down several of our planes. They were also interested in members of the 100th BG who lost several planes that day. These young men had searched for and found wreckage of the planes and their serial numbers, and had researched available American records to find the names of the pilots and crew of each plane. In 1997 I met these two men in England. They were very appreciative of the information I could give them about the air battle that took place that day over Prague.

In 1997 I learned that the B-17 I was flying in 1945 when it was hit by anti-aircraft fire and badly damaged, was repaired in England after the war using pieces and parts of other planes. It was then flown to Kingman, Arizona where it was destroyed—along with many other B-17s.

After the battles, in which many thousands of our finest young men and women lose their lives, the administrative duties of the country are turned over to the "Custodians of our Nation"—our elected and appointed officials. If those Custodians and Appointees always do their job well—maybe it will not be necessary for more wars to be fought—and more of our finest Americans to pay the "Supreme Sacrifice" to defend our country.

I hope that Americans will always remember—it was our Military Forces, soldiers, sailors, and airmen, and their determination to serve our country, that secured the freedom we enjoy in the United States.

AUTHOR'S NOTE (see page 30)

In January, 2001, information came to my attention that indicates the German jet fighter pilot who shot down three B-17's of my squadron on April 19, 1945, might have been Colonel Gunther Lutzow.

Comments in a book 'The Final Hours' by Johannes Steinhoff, referring to his close friend, Col. Lutzow, show that on, or about, April 19, 1945, the Colonel was flying a combat mission in an Me 262 attacking American bombers in the same area we were in. He did not return to his base.

The Me 262 Jet Fighter that shot down the B-17's of my squadron that day was flown by an obviously highly qualified pilot, and Col. Lutzow was one of Germany's best. Most German pilots at that time during WWII were young and not combat experienced.

It seems very possible that Col. Lutzow attacked my squadron over Germany on April 19, 1945, and was the pilot of the jet fighter that shot down three B-17's who were flying beside me. He only made one fatal mistake - he tried to shoot me down by approaching from behind. My tail gunner shot him down.

But, was his action a mistake, or was he out of ammunition and intended to crash into my B-17 to bring it down? We will never know.