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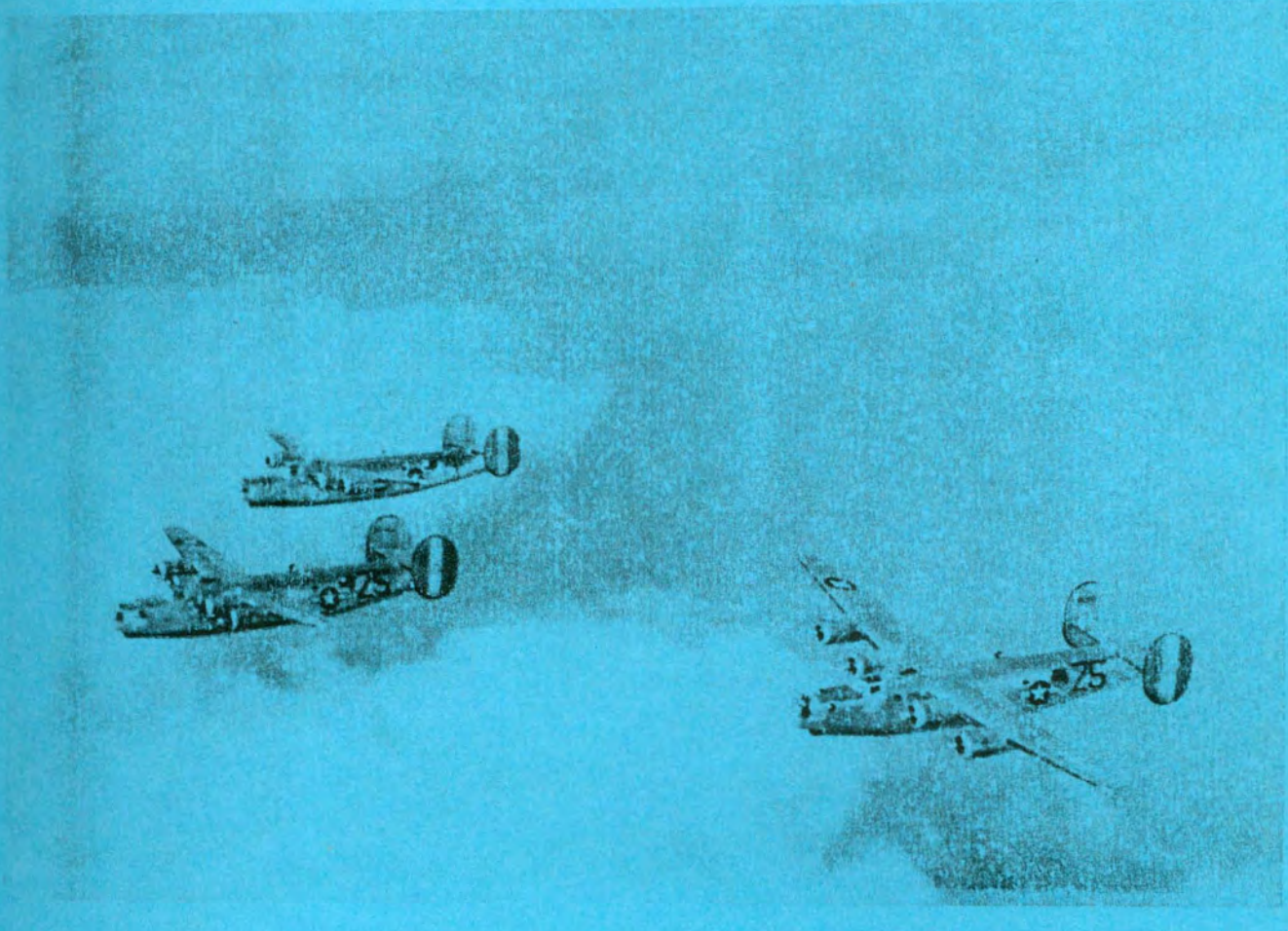
WORLD WAR II IN EUROPE

AND

A FARM BOY FROM OREGON

BY

LAWRENCE R. FICK



DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMBERS OF MY FIRST CREW THAT LOST THEIR LIVES ON SEPTEMBER 24, 1944 WHILE SUPPLYING GASOLINE TO PATTONS ARMY.

Top Row

Left	George J. Koehn, Pilot
Right	John R. Tucker, Co-Pilot

Bottom Row

Left	James A. Soesbe, Bombardier
Center	Merlin T. Ash, Flight Engineer
Right	Anthony J. Corlito, Radio Operator

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CHRONOLOGY OF MY MILITARY SERVICE

Date	OCCURANCES
August 1942	Registered for the draft with the Yreka Draft Board at a Blister Rust camp in Northern California.
October 26, 1942	Enlisted in the Army Air Force at Corvallis, Oregon.
March 25, 1943	Received Orders to report for active duty.
March 26, 1943	Reported to the M.P. (Military Police) desk at the A.T. and SF. railroad station in the Ferry Building in San Francisco.
March 29, 1943	Reported to Sheppard Field in Wichita Falls, Texas for Basic Training.
April 21, 1943	Reported to Texas A&M for assignment to College Training Detachment.
July 30, 1943	Reported to San Antonio Classification Center for classification.
September 10, 1943	Reported to Ellington Field for Navigation PreFlight Training.
November 13, 1943	Reported to San Marcos, Texas for Advanced Navigation Training.
April 8, 1944	Graduation Day, commissioned 2nd Lieutenant and rated as an aerial navigator.
April 11, 1944	Reported to Lincoln, Nebraska Army Air Base Classification and Replacement Pool.
April 23, 1944	Reported to Peterson Field Colorado, Replacement Training Unit.
June 19, 1944	Reported back to Lincoln, Nebraska with our combat ready crew and our new airplane.
June 30, 1944	Departed Lincoln for Grenier Field, New Hampshire
July 2, 1944	Departed Grenier Field for the Goose Bay Army Air Field in Labrador, were diverted to Bangor, Maine.
July 3, 1944	Departed Bangor, Maine for Goose Bay Labrador again.
July 6, 1944	Departed Labrador for Meeks Field, near Reykjavik, Iceland.
July 8, 1944	Departed Meeks Field for Valley, Wales.
July 10, 1944	Departed Valley, Wales, for Stone, England.

Date	OCCURRANCES
July 13,1944	Departed Stone for Northern Ireland and combat crew indoctrination.
July 31, 1944	Departed Northern Ireland for Norwich, England, 458th Heavy Bomb Group.
August 6, 1944	Flew my first combat mission.
August 26, 1944	Received the Air Medal.
November 22, 1944	Promoted to First Lieutenant.
January 18, 1945	Received Oak Leaf Cluster for Air Medal.
January 23, 1945	Officially appointed as 752nd Squadron Navigator.
March 18, 1945	Received Oak Leaf Cluster for Air Medal.
March 25, 1945	Received Distinguished Flying Cross.
March 28, 1945	Rated as Navigator-Bombardier-Radar.
May 2, 1945	Promoted To Captain.
June 8, 1945	Departed Norwich for Valley, Wales.
June 11, 1945	Departed Valley for the island of Pico in the Azores.
June 22, 1945	Departed Azores for St. Johns, Newfoundland.
June 23, 1945	Departed St. Johns, for Bradley Field, Conn where we left our airplane.
June 23, 1945	Departed Bradley Field on a train for Camp Miles Standish.
June 26, 1945	Departed Camp Miles Standish for Fort Lewis, Washington, on a troop train.
June 30, 1945	Arrived at Fort Lewis.
July 1, 1945	Home for 30 days of Rest and Recouperation.
August 2, 1945	Reported back to Fort Lewis.
August 4, 1945	Reported to Sioux Falls Army Air Base, in South Dakota,
September 29, 1945	Reported to Portland Army Air Base for processing and discharge.
September 30, 1945	Headed for home.
November 20, 1945	Effective date of separation, including accumulated leave time.

A PRELUDE TO MY MILITARY SERVICE

The Beginning

On March 15, 1939, I was a high school student in Jacksonville, Oregon, just 2 days away from my 16th birthday. I would soon get my drivers license, my farm chores and school work occupied most of my time, and I enjoyed hiking in the nearby hills when I could get away.

On that day, Hitlers armies stormed across the border into Czechoslovakia. The conflict that would be known as World War II had started.

For the next two and a half years I kept on with my school work, farm chores and worked for hire in the fields and orchards in the Rogue River Valley. In June of 1941, I graduated from high school and got a job working for the Bureau of Entomology in Northern California in the blister rust control program. I entered the Oregon State College Forestry School in Corvallis in the fall.

During the same period of time, Germany invaded Poland; France and England declared war on Germany and the German forces defeated the countries in Europe from their border to the North Sea and the English Channel. The Luftwaffe launched massive air attacks on the English cities.

I remember reading about the war in the newspapers describing how the German Armies were sweeping across Europe. Every movie we saw had news reel footage of the Stuka dive bombers of the Luftwaffe and the armored vehicles of the Wehrmacht as they crushed the cities and the armies of their outmatched neighbors. A new word was added to the terminology of modern warfare It was"blitzkrieg"(a sudden surprise attack with aircraft, tanks, infantry and artillery on wheels). The Nazi submarines roved the seas sinking military and civilian ships at random. The purpose of the sea war was to deprive the French and the English of the badly needed supplies from abroad. Poland was overrun within one month in spite of the heroic efforts of the Polish military forces. The Polish horse cavalry even attacked the armored vehicles of the Germans in a vain attempt to hold them back. After the Polish military forces had been defeated, the Russian army moved in to share the spoils. This left the German and Russian armies facing each other in what had been Polish territory. Germany invaded Russia on June 22, 1941.

In the fall of 1941, I was living in a boarding house for college students that was run by one of my mothers distant cousins. She had nine boarders and I was the only freshman. I registered in the School of Forestry and worked at odd jobs in my spare time to help cover some of my expenses. In this setting the wars in China and Europe seemed very far away

We are in the War

On Sunday December 7, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and President Roosevelts speech declaring war on Japan, Germany, and Italy the next day made us realize that our world had suddenly grown much smaller. Some of the fellows were in advanced R.O.T.C. and all of us were draft age, but we all stayed in school until the end of spring term.

The Draft Board

At the end of spring term, I went back to the Northern California camp where I had worked the year before. More than half of the fellows in the camp were draft age, so in August, the Yreka, California draft board came to us so we could register without going home. They sent our completed papers to our home boards.

During the summer, I decided to enlist in one of the service branches as soon as I got back to college. My priority was: Air Force, Marines, Army, and Navy.

I Enlist in the Air Force

When I got back to college I registered for my Sophomore classes. This time I included ROTC and the ROTC drill unit in my schedule of classes. I had been in the band as a freshman but I wanted to switch to regular R.O.T.C. to get some experience in army procedures before I went to active duty. The person at the registration table could not understand why I would want to register as a freshman in the ROTC Artillery class when I was a sophomore but I finally got my message across and was allowed to register. I made plans to go to Portland the Saturday following registration to find a recruiting office and enlist. I would have to go on the bus and I had never been in Portland, but I figured that I could find a recruiter without too much trouble. During the week the campus paper had a headline "Recuiters on Campus". I cut classes and went to the Armory to see what was going on.

When I walked in the door they asked me what branch of the service I was interested in. I told them, Air Force, and they directed me to a room just down the hall. When I entered they handed me a fist full of papers and told me to sit down and write. Following completion of the test, lunch, and a 3 hour physical, I was sworn in as a member of the Air Force reserve. There was a room full of students taking the written test in the morning but when it came to the physical examinations they ran into a snag. Only three of us could pass the eye exam after the eye strain of the morning. We got extremely thorough physicals.

I finished fall and winter terms and signed up for spring term. There were a lot of us still going to school that were in the reserves just waiting a call-up. One day there would be a fellow sitting next to you in class and the next day he would be gone.

My Call-Up

My orders to report were mailed to my home address and by the time that they got to me, I only had one day to report to the Ferry Building in San Francisco. My mother called when the letter arrived and then mailed it on to me. As soon as I got the phone call, I checked out of school, paid all of my bills, closed my meager bank account, packed my old brown leather suitcase, boxed everything else to be picked up by Railway Express, and said my good-byes to everyone. When my letter arrived, I picked up my suitcase and walked the 14 blocks to the bus depot.

I found that I could ride on a bus to Medford, visit with my folks for about an hour and then catch the next bus to meet the passenger train at Dunsmuir, California. I exchanged my travel voucher for tickets and called the folks to tell them when I would be at the bus depot at Medford. It would only be a short visit but at least we could say hello and good-by.

I put my orders in my suitcase so I wouldn't lose them out of my jacket pocket and checked it through to Medford. When the bus pulled into the station my folks were waiting, but when I asked for my bag I found that it wasn't on the bus that I came in on. They told me that it would probably be on the next bus. The one that I had to catch to make my connection with the train.

It was a tense time when we were waiting, wishing the bus would hurry up to see if I could be reunited with my suitcase and not wanting to say my good-by to my parents.

The bus finally arrived with my suitcase on board. This time I put my orders inside my shirt for safekeeping, checked my suitcase again making sure that it was put on the bus, said my final good-bye and got on the bus.

ACTIVE DUTY

The First Step

When I left Medford that night I embarked on a journey that would last for 28 months and take me one third of the way around the world. I would see places and have experiences that I had never dreamed of. The next leg of my journey was the 100 miles on the Greyhound bus from Medford to Dunsmuir The railroad passenger service went through Klamath Falls, so the first place that I could meet the train was at Dunsmuir, California. It was the middle of the night when the bus pulled into town. I got my suitcase and walked to the nearby train depot where I discovered that the train was about ready to pull out. I ran down the platform until I found my Pullman car. Once on board I found that I was in a dimly lit corridor with curtains down both sides. I had been assigned to an upper berth so it didn't take too long to figure out that I had a problem. How was I going to get into an upper berth without stepping in someones face? I finally located a S.P. (Shore Patrolman) who was assigned to the train. He helped me find my berth and got me a ladder to use to get into it. I crawled into the berth with my suitcase and got undressed. That was enough stress for one night and I finally drifted off to sleep wondering what the tomorrows would bring.

When daylight came and the Pullman was converted for daytime use, I discovered that I was in flat country, out of sight of mountains for the first time in my life. I soon noticed that there were others in the car that had big fat envelopes sticking out of their pockets. By the time that we arrived at the Oakland pier we had gathered our forces and were ready for whatever lay ahead. Only San Francisco Bay and a short ferry ride lay between our lives as civilians and army life. When we arrived at the Ferry Building we joined a crowd of fellows reporting in at the Army Transportation desk. As we turned in our papers, they checked our names off of a list and told us to wait in a designated area. After our numbers had outgrown the waiting area, they told us to board some rail cars that were standing on a side track. These cars appeared to have been rescued from the salvage yard. They were the type of coaches where you could move the seat backs depending on which way you wanted to face as you traveled. It was obvious that the seats were made for durability and not for comfort. They were very hard. We were learning our first lesson in the army. It was that everything was "Hurry up and Wait".

In due time, a steam locomotive arrived and we were off, traveling south for a long time and then turning east around Barstow. As we went over the mountains and into the high desert of Arizona it became quite warm. Those old cars were not equipped with air conditioning and our only defense against the heat was to open the windows. That gave

cooling but it also gave us lots of soot. I soon discovered that I had made another mistake when packing my suitcase. I had sent most of my clean shirts home and the closer that we got to Sheppard Field the more apparent my mistake became. My shirts were getting so grimy that I was ashamed to wear them onto the base so I decided to report to the army in a greytone Tee shirt.

Most of our meals on the train were prepared in a baggage car that was located in the center of the train. At our assigned meal time we would go from our car to the baggage car, get our food and then go back to our car to eat. When we finished eating we repeated the trip and washed our mess kits in garbage cans filled with hot soapy water. They did give us a treat when we went through Albuquerque, New Mexico. They stopped the train on a side track in front of a large adobe building and had us get off. We soon discovered that it was a Harvey Restaurant, just like in the movies When we got inside it was cool and we could see long rows of tables with white tablecloths and linen napkins. There were many "Harvey Girls" lined up against one wall waiting for us to get seated. As soon as everyone was ready, they began serving us a great meal. They were apparently used to large crowds because it only took them a few minutes to serve us all.

Basic Training

We finally arrived at Wichita Falls, Texas on March 29 and the train rolled right into Sheppard Field. We were greeted with a loud chorus of "You'll be Sorry" from the soldiers in the barracks along side the tracks. It was indeed a sorry looking bunch of recruits that fell out along the side of the train that day. A Sergeant called the roll and assigned us to barracks making sure that we knew were in the army every step along the way.

I thought that the first order of business would be to get us into uniforms. Wrong. I must have been average size because all of the uniforms my size had already been issued. So it was testing, physicals, and close order drill in my very un-uniform, dirty clothes. Eventually we all got our ill fitting uniforms and began to look a little more like soldiers.

In its infinite wisdom the army assigned a Buck Sergeant to each barracks to introduce the recruits to army life. Our "house mother" was Sergeant Smith from Tennessee. He showed us how to make up our bunks with hoods and hospital corners. The blankets had to be stretched so taut that they would bounce a quarter at inspection. If the inspecting officer could grab the center of a blanket, you failed and your bed wound up on the floor. To help you remember you received demerits. The Sergeant showed us how to hang our uniforms on our clothes poles in a special order and how to arrange all of the items in our footlockers. We even had to roll our socks the army way. He

demonstrated how to scrub the floors and dust the walls. We used bars of yellow GI soap, short bristle brushes with no handles, string mops, and buckets of hot water to go over every inch of the floor. The guys on the lower floor always had trouble when water from the upstairs would come cascading down the stairs onto their clean floor. There was no interior paneling so we had to dust all of the exposed 2 x 4s and bare boards. Getting rid of the dust where Oklahoma blows through in the morning and Texas blows back in the afternoons was a never ending chore. The Sergeant even explained that we should not lace our shoes to the top since that would chafe our ankles. I had worn high top shoes and boots most of my life so I could skip that little bit of wisdom.

The morning that I got up and put my leggings on the wrong feet almost ended in disaster. We had to jump out of bed at the whistle, get dressed and fall out in front of the barracks in correct uniform for roll call. In my haste, I put my leggings on the wrong feet and by the time that I discovered my error it was too late to change. That meant that the hooks and the lacings were both to the inside. I had to walk very carefully to keep from locking my feet together and falling flat on my face. At least we didn't have to stay in formation very long so I was able to correct my mistake when I returned to my bunk. You can bet that I never made that mistake again.

By this time we had learned that there was three ways to do everything: The right way, the wrong way and the Army way. I often wondered if Sergeant Smith had to spend the whole war teaching new bunches of recruits how to make beds and tie their shoes.

Our days started at 0430 and taps were sounded at 2200 hours (10:00 PM). After we got settled they had us run through a barrage of physicals and shots. For the shots, we would walk in a line between some medical corpsmen and get two shots at a time. My shots didn't bother me too much beyond sore arms, but a number of the guys must have had a reaction. They sure did a lot of turning and talking during the nights following the shots.

The base was made up of several duplicate sets of buildings. Each grouping had a chapel, a PX (Post Exchange), an orderly room (office), a theatre and a number of barracks. The barracks were two story frame buildings with a latrine in one end downstairs. They were heated with a furnace. There was one hospital for the entire base. That part of North Texas was very windy and there were few trees and very little grass. It seemed like the dust was always blowing from some direction. There were a lot of men on the base for aerial gunnery school and aircraft mechanic training. Many of them had been drafted and they were not too friendly toward the new arrivals who had enlisted and were trying to become flying officers.

We all had to get a GI haircut soon after our arrival. It only took the barbers a few minutes to reduce the nicest head of hair to a quarter inch stubble patch. At least, we didn't have to spend a lot of time with a comb, a towel worked just fine. After a few days on the base they started us on PE. We would have a period of calisthenics and then run for several miles in our new GI shoes.

The first time that I got to go to the PX I ran into some of the fellows that I knew at Oregon State College. It was nice to see familiar faces so far from home. The prices at the PX were pretty good: Candy bars were 3 cents, soft drinks were 4 cents and those butch haircuts were only 35 cents.

One day we stood in line for four hours and didn't accomplish a thing. It guess it was an exercise in learning to take orders without question.

They issued us some gas masks and showed us how to put them on in a hurry. They emphasized that we had to make sure that they fit snug to our faces. A few days later they took us to a building where we were to undergo gas mask training. Before we started the actual training they had some planes drop smoke bombs near us to demonstrate how an enemy could stage a gas attack. When they were ready to send us into the building they threw in some tear gas canisters to give us a taste of nonlethal gas. We went into the building with our masks on and stayed there for a while. At a signal we all had to remove our masks and then work our way out of the building with our eyes almost closed and with lungs burning. We were convinced that the gas masks worked, at least they worked in the presence of tear gas.

I located my neighbor from home who was at the base taking aerial gunnery. Stanley was the friend that I used to make model airplanes with. Here a few years later, we were at an air base in Texas getting ready to go to war in real airplanes.

On Sundays we had some free time, but we had to get up at the usual time, eat breakfast, clean the barracks and stand for inspection at 0800 hours. If the barracks hadn't been clean enough on Saturday to please the inspecting officer, we had another GI party to scrub and dust everything down again on Sunday.

Basic training usually took about three to four weeks. Three to four very long weeks during which they outfitted us in ill fitting army uniforms, gave us shots, physicals, close order drill, physical exercise and trained us in the use of gas masks. The end of basic was supposed to be a field exercise with full field packs, instruction in the use of the rifle, and sleeping in pup tents. We were lucky and shipped out before our field exercise came up.

We didn't need a lot of money which was a good thing because I didn't have much with me. I did have some travelers checks, but there was no place that I could get to that

would cash them. Every office that would cash them would be closed by the time that I had any free time.

When the Post Commander, Colonel Clagget, left for another assignment, we had a big parade. We had to polish our brass and our shoes, and make sure that our uniforms were neat. Everyone on the base was in formation on the flight line. We had the flags and an army band, the whole works. They even had a formation of training planes fly over the parade grounds during the review. Quite a show.

We found out how you got paid in the army. You marched in formation to the orderly room and signed a slip of paper. I also signed up for $6.30/ month for $10,000 in life insurance and $6.25/month toward a war bond.

Another of my high school friends came to my barracks and I ran into last terms roommate from college. We went to a movie on the post where the price of admission was only 15 cents.

Empty bunks started to show up in the barracks when some of the guys shipped out to their next station. I was hoping that my name would show up soon because the ones of us that were left were drawing all of the KP (Kitchen Police) and guard duty. As the new guys came in they had tests so they didn't have to pull details except on the week ends.

We had a tornado alert and everyone was confined to the barracks. This batch missed our base and soon it was business as usual.

My name finally showed up on a shipping roster. It didn't say when we would be leaving or where we would be going. It just alerted us to be ready to pull out on a minutes notice. We didn't have a clue as to the duty that lay ahead, but we all hoped that it would be some place with grass and trees and a lot less dust. A group of cadets that had washed-out in pilots training came into our barracks and from the way that they talked, only about 4% of us would make it all of the way through training. I am sure that they were bitter about their experience, but at least it indicated that we had a rough road ahead of us.

College Training Detachment

We left Sheppard Field in the morning of April 21, 1943 on a train and the farther that we got from the panhandle, the better Texas looked. We began to see trees, green grass, and we even saw a few spring flowers along the track to brighten things up. We went through Fort Worth and Waco before arriving at our destination, College Station. We were out in the wide open spaces of Texas. College Station is the service community for Texas A&M (Agricultural and Mechanical College). In 1943, College Station consisted

of about 15 stores, a post office, a laundry, some offices and a theatre. The only big town in the area was Bryan that was about 5 miles away and had a population of about 8,000 people.

When we were there, Texas A&M was a military college with an all male student body. Most of the upper classmen were already in the service so there was lots of vacant dormitories for the Air Force, Navy, and Army units to occupy. The college students wore uniforms all of the time so it was more like an army base than a college campus. We moved into one of the four story brick buildings where I was assigned to a room on the ground floor. The rooms were large enough to accommodate three students with bunk beds, study tables, dressers, and closets. The bathrooms and showers were just down the hall. One of my roommates, Don Ferguson, was from Oregon State College. His home was in Gold Hill, Oregon, just a few miles from where I grew up in Jacksonville. We never met before we got to Sheppard Field, but we became good friends during the 12 months that were together in training.

For our first three weeks at A&M we were quarantined so we couldn't bring any illness to the rest of the population. We had to stay together for classes and in the mess hall. For the rest of the time we were confined to our dormitory. When our pay caught up with us I got $25.00 for a half month less $6.25 for a war bond and $6.30 for life insurance. They gave it to us in little brown envelopes with the gross pay and the deductions indicated on the outside.

The dining hall was a lot different from the mess halls at Sheppard Field. We marched from our dorm to the dining hall in formation, but when we got inside it was pretty much like a dining hall at any college.

Everyone wore suntan uniforms. We had an Air Force patch on our shoulder and light blue piping on our cap. At A&M we were addressed as "Mister", a considerable improvement from what we were called at Sheppard Field.

After our quarantine was up we explored the rest of the campus and went into College station. I bought a money belt to help me keep my cash and money orders safe. I didn't have much, but I wanted to keep what I had. We dropped off some of our shirts at the laundry to have them taken in on the sides. The Commanding Officer didn't want to see his men walking around in baggy shirts. As soon as we got the first shirts back we took in the others to be cut down.

The students that had been there for several months were friendly and they helped us learn the ropes. The rules for close order drill were more strict than they had been at Sheppard Field. It was eyes front, body rigid from the waist up, and kick out slightly at the knees as you marched. There were fewer of us at A&M so they could really watch what

each man was doing. When we got organized, they assigned us plenty of exercise. For five days a week we would have calisthenics and then run on the roads near the campus. The roads in the area were laid out in a I mile grid so we would run four miles. If we didn't finish in the allotted time we got to do it over again. Some of the guys were caught taking a short cut through the fields, but I don't think I ever heard of anyone trying that stunt again. I had taken cross country running at Oregon State for physical education so I didn't have any trouble meeting the time limits. As we ran, we could see the crops that they raised in that part of Texas. We saw potatoes, corn, cabbage, and cattle. Most of the cattle were holstein and herefords. I was surprised to see the brahma bulls in with the herefords. W e marched in formation everyplace that we went and had a review (parade) every saturday morning. Our class work consisted of algebra, physics, English composition, geography, history, and first aid. The mathematics class was basic freshman course work, review for most of us. The geography class was interesting, but the instructor got a free ride. He just assigned a couple of students a day to explain the geography in their home state and then sat back to expand his information base. I guess that this stage of our training was worthwhile. We did have close order drill, physical conditioning, and an introduction into military organization, but the class work was a waste of time. The main advantage that I could see was that we were together in a place where the military could grab us on a days notice and send us on to the next phase of our training.

I attended the College Station Presbyterian Church that met in the movie theatre. I enjoyed the services and the people were very friendly. In this small community, they all knew each other and they could pick out the visitors easily. The Methodist church met in the YMCA building on campus. It was next to our dorm so we could hear the choir practicing in the evenings.

They scheduled a big review for some General so we drilled 3 hours each evening to get ready. When the big day came it was very hot and we had to stand at attention in the noon day sun for a long time. A number of the sailors fainted and were left where they fell. Their noncoms (Non-commissioned officers) must not have told them how to survive standing at attention for long periods of time. You have to keep your knees moving slightly to allow circulation, but you just don't want to move so much that it can be observed through your pants legs.

They gave us lots of good food, meat three times a day and a pint of milk twice a day. They gave us fruit, but the oranges didn't look too good. They had a freeze in the Rio Grande valley earlier in the year that froze the oranges turning the skins brown and tough. The fruit inside was good, it was just a little hard to get at. I got used to some food that I had never eaten at home such as hominy grits, and okra.

During the school year, the A&M cadets and the military personnel marched together for the saturday morning reviews to the music of the A&M band. When the college students went home for summer vacation the military units were left without a band. One of our Lieutenants asked if any of us had ever marched in a college band. A bunch of us said that we had and we signed up to be the fill-in military band. I don't know why the Air Force students were the ones to develop the band, maybe the Lieutenant had some experience with marching bands someplace. We were able to use the college drums and bass horns but the rest of us had to provide our own instruments. The Lieutenant promised to send them home when we shipped out so we had our folks ship them to us by Railway Express. Our band started to practice in the evenings before we had very many instruments. They loaned me an old beat up baritone to use, but there wasn't much music left in it. As the instruments started to arrive we began to make a little more music. I was glad when my horn finally arrived so that I could contribute to the music as well as fill a place in the formation. We didn't sound too great at first but with daily practice we improved. There were several trumpet players from San Jose State College that were really good. We finally settled down with 30 members in the band and the Commandant of Cadets gave us a compliment. He probably did it to boost our morale since we did all of the practicing on our free time and the most of us provided our own instruments and paid to have them shipped to us. Whatever the reason, we liked to be acknowledged for our efforts. The band soon joined the rest of the corps of cadets for the regular reviews so everyone was marching to music again. It was a lot easier for large formations of men to keep in step if there was the beat of the drum and music to march to. We continued to provide the music for the rest of our time at A&M. Not exactly a real army band, but a pretty good substitute to be thrown together in a few days. Each night, Captain Hill, our C.O.(Commanding Officer) would tell us that were getting better and then he would point out that there was still room for improvement. It got easier for us to march and play at the same time and we finally had the music memorized.

What a difference a year made. In July of 1942, I was checking ribes eradication work in Northern California and in July 1943 I was in Texas marching in an army band and getting ready to take flying lessons.

I had some photographs taken at a studio in College Station and sent them home so the folks could see what I looked like as a soldier. I figured that I might need some dental work so I decided to go to a civilian dentist rather than wait until I got to my next post. He found 9 cavities and I decided to have them all filled. I think that he was a cattleman with a dentistry practice as a side line. All he talked about was his hereford cattle when he was filling my teeth. He was the roughest dentist I ever had work on me.

He must have been used to working with cattle. When I finished paying for the pictures, my dental bill of $55.00, having my watch fixed, and buying some gym clothes, I wound up with 12 cents and a bus token in my pocket. I wasn't broke, but I was sure badly bent.

We got to go to a couple of USO dances in Bryan and at College Station. There were Sailors, Soldiers, Marines, Air Corps, chaperons and of course the local Texas girls. I finally located seven of the fellows that I knew at Oregon State that were assigned to the various service programs at A&M.

The Commanding Officer for the Air Force student program at the college was Captain Hill, a Presbyterian minister. He used to substitute at the Church in College Station when the regular minister needed to be away for a day. I never heard the story of how a minister happened to be selected to command a military training unit. His brother, Major Hill, was an ace flying P-40s in the Pacific Theatre.

We went swimming in the outdoor pool and played volley ball on Sunday afternoons. It was the only time in my life that I ever got a good tan. We had a lot of fun and I met some nice guys from the other units. One of them was Rolph Fuhrman, a star basketball player from the University of Oregon.

Don Ferguson and I used to discuss what duty we wanted when we got to classification. We finally decided that we would be able to contribute the most as navigators on bomber crews. To be classed for navigation training you had to have a high score in mathematics as well as passing all of the aptitude tests.

Our turn at flying lessons finally came up and we went to the grass field where they kept the planes. They were blue, fabric covered, Interstate Cadets, about the size and shape of Piper Cubs. The instructors explained the function of the controls and told us what would be expected of us. Eventually my instructor got into the rear seat and told me to spin the prop, making sure that my hands would be in the clear when the engine started. Sometimes an engine would kick back and you had to be ready to let loose or suffer serious injury. After the engine started, I got into the front seat and the instructor taxied out and took off. There was no control tower at this field. You had to watch out for anything moving on the ground and in the air at all times. After we got some altitude the instructor let me get the feel of the plane. It was fun but I soon discovered that the plane didn't always do what I wanted it to. When I wanted to stay straight and level, the plane would climb, when I wanted to turn, I would slip and skid. You had to learn to control the rudder and the stick together to make smooth movements. I guess if it was easy they wouldn't need an instructor. It didn't bother me to be flying, but a lot of the fellows got air sick their first time up. It was interesting to look down at the ground from 3,000 feet. We flew four or five times a week until we completed the scheduled 10 hours of actual flying

time. Before we finished we had practiced take offs, landings, turns, stalls, and spins. A couple of times when we were practicing some maneuver the instructor would shut off the engine. At those times we were supposed to check the ground below us and head for the best landing area within our glide area. I didn't always pick the spot that suited him the best. We flew at 60 miles per hour. When you dove or spun it gave you a funny feeling and when you pulled out it seemed like your body weighed a ton and your head wanted to go down into your lap. When you spun, it seemed as if the plane was stationary and the landscape was turning in front of you. I enjoyed flying but I didn't feel that I was a born pilot. I knew what to do and how to do it but I had to think my way though each maneuver. I felt that a good pilot needed to be able to react instinctively in each situation. This experience reinforced my intention to try to get classified as a navigator. When I finished my ten hours of flying, I passed my check flight and the instructor gave me a passing, if not an outstanding, grade.

One time they arranged a dance in the dining hall where they brought in a number of enlisted WACS (Women's Army Corp) and Officers. It was strange to see the students (privates) dancing with the officers. This would never have been permitted away from the campus.

I had heard how good Texas watermelons were, but when they served us some in the dining hall I decided that they were not nearly as good as those grown by my mothers folks down on the Rogue River. Maybe it was the seed or maybe it was just that anything from home tasted better.

I used to stay on campus some of the weekends and read. It was cheaper than going to town and money was in short supply. After my second payday I was in a little better shape financially. My mother kept me informed about my friends from Jacksonville: two were in the Air Force, one was in the Navy and one was in the Army Infantry.

When we neared the end of our assignment at A&M our squadron won several awards for drill and we had the highest scholarship standing in the detachment. They were a hard working bunch of guys. When we finished our flying we went back to a more demanding schedule of classes and drill. We were all wondering whether we would be sent to Santa Anna, California, for classification or if we would stay in Texas and go to San Antonio. It would be nice to get away from the 100 degree heat, the violent thunderstorms, the tornados and the hurricanes.

Classification

On July 29, we received our shipping orders and on the next day we boarded a train for the 150 mile journey to the Army Air Force Classification center at San Antonio, Texas. We were looking forward to classification. It meant that we were going to finally get some real training. We put all of our belongings in two brown canvas sacks called barracks bags. One was marked "A" and the other one "B". There was a list of items that had to go into each bag. The big wool overcoat almost filled one of the bags and we didn't have much use for them in the 100 degree weather.

When we arrived at SAACC (San Antonio Aviation Cadet Center) we found two-story barracks similar to the ones that we had lived in at Sheppard Field. They assigned us to our barracks and we arranged our uniforms on the poles and in the foot lockers. After breakfast the next day they gave us an idea of what lay ahead. We were to have lots of tests and physicals. They even gave us a letter to send home explaining that we were very busy and wouldn't have time to write for a while. All we had to do was to sign it and put it in the envelope that they provided. We even had the franking privilege so we could just write "free" where the stamp should go and put it in the mail box. I usually had some air mail stamps with me so my letters would get home a little faster. We were welcomed to SAACC by a hurricane with very high winds and buckets of rain. They flew all of the planes out to safety and we found a good use for our raincoats. Houston had winds of up to 130 miles per hour. After the rains left, the sun came out again and you could get a good sunburn in short time.

I pulled guard duty on the first Sunday that I was in camp but was lucky and drew the theatre post. I was designated as corporal of the guard and my squad was to keep order at the post theatre. There were two showings so I had half of the squad stay outside during the first showing and then go inside so they could see the second showing. The fellows that drew the walking posts sure got a bad sunburn. When the show was over, the theatre guard had to go back to the guard house and clean rifles. We got to go back to our barracks when we finished the rifles, but the ones with the walking posts slept in the guard house when they were off duty during their 24 hour shift.

SAACC was a lot nicer than Sheppard Field. The buildings were about the same, but there was grass, trees and no dust. Also, we didn't have a bunch of draftees calling out "You'll Be Sorry" every time they saw a formation of fellows that hoped to get into training as flying officers. The food in the mess hall was very good and we had bright California oranges to eat instead of the brown ones that they gave us and A&M.

The testing started with a seven hour written examination over everything that you could think of. Some of the parts on map reading and aircraft identification were actually

fun. The second day we were introduced to a bunch of machines designed to test coordination. Next came another physical. About one fourth of the fellows that were still with us failed this physical and were sent back to Sheppard Field and reassigned to be trained as a gunner, mechanic, truck driver etc. They kept us busy as promised. Tests during the week and KP (Kitchen Police) and guard duty on the week ends. When we had KP we were in for a long day, but we could go back to the barracks to sleep after the mess hall was all cleaned up in the evening. We peeled vegetables, set the tables, mopped the floor, washed the trays and flat ware, washed the big cooking pots, cleaned the kitchen ranges, and scrubbed the garbage cans. The first time that a new bunch of guys showed up for KP the Sergeant would ask for volunteers for the "China Clipper". In those days the "China Clipper" was a Boeing flying boat that flew from the West Coast to the Orient. The eager volunteers soon found that they had volunteered to run the steam dishwashing machine dubbed the "China Clipper". Filling that monster was hot dirty work and no one ever volunteered the second time.

I passed all of my tests except that my blood pressure was too high and the flight surgeon thought that I had an enlarged heart. He said that he could see it beat through my chest wall. I just kept going back to see if my pressure would go down, but I was getting pretty discouraged. I think the reason that my blood pressure stayed so high was that I was worried that I wouldn't pass and I would be assigned to be a gunner or mechanic. We were also interviewed by psychiatrists to see if we would be stable under stress. Those interviews were plenty stressful in themselves. August 13 was my lucky day, my heart checked out OK, and my blood pressure finally dropped to normal, and they accepted all of my papers at the final check station.

When you passed all of the tests, your papers went to the placement board. They decided if you would be accepted for flight training and if so what duty you would be eligible for.

The army had a great rumor mill. The rumor of the day was that they didn't need any navigators or bombardiers, so Don and I decided to put our choices as pilot, first, navigator, second, and bombardier, last. We felt that if we selected pilot training first it would give us a better chance of being accepted. We were both classified for pilot training and scheduled to stay at San Antonio for preflight training. Pilot preflight took three months and if you passed, you went on to another station for more training.

We finally got our cadet uniforms. They included: new shirts, pants, brass insignia, cloth Air Force and Cadet patches, sox, underwear, cap, and white gloves.

I went to church on Sunday and found that the chapel was arranged for Jewish, Protestant, and Catholic services. You had to check the schedule to see the time for the

service that you wanted. At Sheppard Field I learned that 11:00 was for the Episcopal service. They had a nice organ and with a full house the music really filled the room. Don and I got a pass to go to San Antonio in the afternoon. It seemed strange to a couple of kids from rural Southern Oregon to see how everything was arranged. The first buildings were the houses for the Mexican people, the next buildings were the housing for the blacks (negroes at that time), and the inner part of the town was the housing for the whites and the business district. We walked all over town and visited the old Spanish buildings. The Alamo looked very tiny surrounded by the tall sky scrapers. It was well preserved and set off by carefully tended gardens. We saw the guns, knives, and clothing of Crockett and Bowie. The San Antonio River which meanders through the center of town had concrete paths and gardens along the sides. It was an attractive place to visit during the day but they said that it was not a good idea to be there after dark. The streets were narrow and crooked and the traffic was a mess, but the locals seemed to manage.

A few days later they posted a notice that they needed more navigators and anyone who had been classified as qualified for navigation training could apply. Don and I quickly applied and were both accepted. Navigation training took less time than pilot training so if we made the grade we could be commissioned in 7 months from the time that we left classification.

The fellows who had been classified as navigators and bombardiers in the first round had already left so when the pilots shipped out for their preflight training it left just a handful of us to do all of the details during the week. Guard duty was for a 24 hour shift. We would walk a post for 2 hours then be off for 4 hours to eat and sleep. As soon as the 4 hours were up we had to march around the post to relieve the men that were on duty. It was no fun, especially when you had to challenge all of the officers coming back from a night in town. My biggest problem was a severe case of athletes foot that I picked up at Sheppard Field. I lost my toe nails and the fungus spread up my ankles to the top of my shoes. It hurt to walk, and by the time that I had finished my 2 hour tour my feet were numb. When I got to lay down, I got some feeling back in my feet and in 4 hours I had to do it all over again. At that time they didn't have any medication to control the problem. All they had was potassium permanginate that turned my feet purple. I had been on guard duty so long that they finally assigned me as permanent corporal of the guard, and that meant a little less walking. I guess that the training that I received at Oregon State ROTC and the drill team paid some dividends. We spent a lot of time marching and doing the manual of arms at Corvallis so acting as corporal of the guard was a piece of cake. We only pulled interior guard duty and had no ammunition. I guess we were supposed to run any intruder through with our bayonet or hit him with the butt of our rifle.

PreFlight

Our shipping date finally came up and we boarded a train for Ellington Field, Texas. Ellington Field was established in 1917 only to be abandoned in 1925. It was reopened in 1940 to train aviation cadets for the Army Air Corps. By 1943, the base was serving multiple functions in the training of bomber crews. The navigator and bombardier hopefuls went through Ellington for preflight training, and a lot of the pilots took their twin engine training there.

We were finally full fledged aviation cadets and were able to wear the Air Force insignia on our shirt collars. We were issued garrison hats with cadet wings on the front to wear when we were on parade, walked punishment tours, and went on a pass.

We arrived at the base just in time for the monthly inspection so we had to cut the lawns, trim the shrubs, and scrub the floors in addition to arranging our uniforms by our assigned bunks. Everyone pitched in and got the work done in good shape so we passed our first inspection at this post.

A new order at this post was that we had to wear garters at all times. In addition to making sure that the back of your belt buckle was shined you had to be able to display garters when asked. I guess that all of this picky stuff had a purpose in turning a bunch of college students into army officers. If you failed to remember to do any of them they gave you an hour of walking a punishment tour to help you remember. Each tour was one hour of marching back and forth on a section of blacktop with a rifle. I managed to keep my name off of the punishment list so I never had to experience walking a tour.

The fellows that I was with were hard working and we usually passed our inspections with flying colors. As a reward we were given free time from 1700 to 2200. We had it a lot better than the pilot and bombardier cadets. They had to clean their barracks over again and someone in charge of the bombardier wing was allowing hazing.

Our shirts, pants, and caps went to the post laundry and came back with so much starch that they were shiny. We washed the rest of our stuff in big tubs in the latrine. Some of my clothes had been in the post laundry at Classification when we shipped out and I was glad to get them when they were shipped to us. They issued us more shirts and pants because we had to wear a freshly pressed uniforms every day and it took several days to get a set back from the post laundry.

They started to treat us more like officers than privates and they expected us to act accordingly. A cadet could be eliminated from the program for cheating, stealing, lying, or allowing another cadet to do any of those things.

We had classes in Morse code, aircraft identification, ship identification, map reading, physics, and lectures by combat veterans who had completed their tours and by

our officers. There were about 70 in each class section. For aircraft and ship identification they flashed a silhouette of the airplane or ship on the screen for 1/10 of a second and then gave us a little time to write our answers down on a piece of paper.

I usually got the top score in aircraft identification. I guess that my years of making model airplanes really paid off. Like the other courses that we took, if we didn't get a passing grade we would be washed out and assigned to ground duty. I got good grades in all of my class work, but I was a slow learner in the Morse code class. Some of the fellows got up to speed quickly, but I just had to keep working on it until I finally reached the required speed of 10 words per minute (50 unrelated letters). The letters did not make words, so you couldn't go back and fill in the ones that you missed. We used to practice on our code after lights out. Someone would tap on a bed frame with a piece of metal and the rest of us would try to get the messages. We also would practice during the day when we were just standing in formation and waiting for something to happen. Then we would say "dit" for dot and "da" for dash. For example: dit-dit-dit /da-da-da /dit-dit-dit was SOS, the international distress signal.

When we left classification, we left KP and guard duty behind. From then on all of our efforts were directed toward becoming flying officers. Our pay was raised to $105/month, but we had to start paying for our meals. That left us about $85/month. I raised my deduction for bonds from $6.25 to $18.75 in keeping with my improved pay status.

Our mess officer had a hotel management background and the food in the mess hall was outstanding. The list of foods was endless. I had never seen so much good food at one place. On our first trip through the mess line some of the fellows let their eyes overrule their better judgement and they piled too much food on their trays. When they went by the garbage can where we scraped the trays they were stopped by an officer. They had to stand there and eat every last bite that was on their trays. There was some very uncomfortable guys when they got back to the barracks. They suffered, but it was a good lesson for the rest of us. The sign on the wall in the mess hall that read "TAKE ALL YOU WANT, BUT EAT ALL YOU TAKE" meant just what it said. It was like they say "If it seems too good to be true it probably is". The mess officer was putting out great food, but he wasn't paying any attention to the bottom line, his food budget. Overnight the food served in the mess hall changed. The mess officer was replaced, and the pay of the mess attendants was reduced. The new officer had to make up the budget shortage so we were fed a lot of pasta, dried beef, and chicken a la king. The mess attendants and the cooks were unhappy so they slacked off on their work. We had dirty trays and flatware and the mess hall was not as clean as it should have been. One day while we were eating lunch

we noticed a commotion several tables from where we were sitting. We usually ate in silence and sat at attention during the meal. The guys at that table were talking loudly and a couple of officers went over to see what it was all about. One of the fellows at the table had discovered a chicken head in his chicken a la king. I don't think that it was accidental. At least it got the attention of the officers in charge and they put a whole new crew in the mess hall. The food improved and everything was cleaned up. The food was not as good as before, but it was well prepared and we had a good variety. They actually gave us a "T" bone steak for one meal. A real treat after so much chipped beef and pasta.

We were kept busy during the days, but we had the run of the post after supper. We could go to the PX, the theatre or to another barracks to visit. On saturdays, we were kept busy until afternoon. If our barracks had passed inspection on Friday night, and if we had passed personal inspection, we could get a pass to go to town. Don and I got a pass and went into Houston on September 25 and had a good time. The base was 17 miles from town so it only took the busses a half hour to make the trip. We found Houston to be a very big city, much nicer than San Antonio. They had several service clubs. We took in a couple of movies. The theatres were beautiful and one of them had a stage show. After you purchased your ticket and went inside you had to walk up a carpeted incline for 50 feet before you got to the entrance to the seats.

We met a man who had lost a leg on Bataan. He was one of the last to be evacuated before the Japanese overran their position. He looked like he was 60 years old but I am sure that he was much younger. He was having a hard time getting used to his new artificial leg.

On another pass, we took in a college football game between Rice and Tulane. Too many of the older fellows were already in the services so it wasn't much of a game. Tulane won 33-0.

We noticed that more than half of the civilians on the streets were young girls. I guess they came to the big city to get jobs in the war industries.

I had to stay in our barracks one weekend for my turn to be CQ (Charge of Quarters). I sat at a desk where I could see the doors until midnight to see that no one came in that didn't belong there. It was the custom for everyone that went on a pass to pitch in 25 cents for the CQ so I got more than $5.00 for my shift. That was better than my army pay. I caught up on my letter writing, reading, and studying. On some weekends we would stay on the post and play football, take in a movie and I could always go to the code lab and practice.

On September 16, we were confined to the barracks waiting for a hurricane to arrive. The winds off the coast of the Gulf of Mexico were up to 160 miles per hour. They

evacuated Galveston and we packed all of our gear and waited. The planes were flown out to safety. A cold front from the north came down and stopped the advance of the storm so all we had to deal with was high winds and torrents of rain. On November 8, another cold front came down and caused a lot of tornados. None of them came across our base but a lot of damage was done nearby. We may have some kinds of bad weather in Oregon, but as far as I was concerned the weather in Texas was for the birds.

We had arrived at Ellington in early September wearing Suntans, and by October it was getting pretty cool. In November we were finally given the orders to get out our wool uniforms and we were glad to make the switch. Most of the other services had gone to winter uniforms much earlier.

Saturday mornings were set aside for inspections and reviews. After the morning inspection, we all marched out to the drill field. One morning our performance did not suit those in charge so we were given three extra hours of drill to improve. On October 10, we had a big review. When we marched out to the flight line we formed into squadrons with 24 men marching abreast. It was difficult to keep the ranks straight with that many men but I guess we didn't do too bad because we won the Wing competition and got to go to town on the first busses.

Some of my friends from Jacksonville were getting leaves during their training, but those of us in the cadet program just moved from one phase of our training to the next. They apparently needed air crews as soon as they could train them. The army rumor mill said that we would get a leave at the next station, but I was never assigned to any of those stations.

We went through some more gas mask training with the aerial bombs and the tear gas in the building. The gas mask was becoming part of our uniform.

An important part of our training was the pressure chamber. The chamber itself looked like a big pipe laying on its side with a cap at one end and two doors at the other end. The double doors formed an air lock so someone could enter or leave the chamber during a training exercise. There were viewing ports along the side so that the operators could see what was going on during an exercise. We were warned not to drink any carbonated beverages before going into the chamber. Several of us would go into the chamber at a time with two instructors. We sat in two rows facing each other and they closed the outer door. They placed some balloons on a shelf that were tied but contained very little air. When everyone was ready, the operator started the pump to remove the air. When we got to the equivalent pressure of 10,000 feet we all put on our oxygen masks and went on up to 18,000 feet. At 18,000 feet we took off our masks to see how we would feel. My finger nails turned blue and I felt light headed. After a while they told us to put our

masks back on and they started the pumps again. They stopped again at 29,000 feet. This time they asked for one volunteer to remove his mask so everyone could observe the results. I wanted to find out how it would feel, so I volunteered. One of the instructors came to where I was sitting and told me to remove my mask. I went out like a light, but when the instructor put my mask back on I came to again. I don't know how long I was out but I found out what I wanted to know. If you don't have oxygen at high altitudes you can just fade out with no warning. Our Navigation File (one of our text books) stated that "if oxygen has been supplied up to 30,000 feet, sudden removal of the supply produces great mental and physical inefficiency in from 30-60 seconds, and unconsciousness in 30-90 seconds." I proved that the book was correct. After they got me functioning again they started the pumps and took us on up the equivalent pressure that you would encounter at 39,000 feet. We stayed there for about 30 minutes. The once nearly empty balloons were now fully inflated and some of the fellows got severe stomach cramps. They had to be taken out through the air lock. I guess their stomachs reacted like the balloons and all of us had to loosen our belts to accommodate our oversize bellies. When they started to take us down (increase the pressure) most of us had some trouble clearing our ears but some had more trouble than others and were in real pain. It was quite an experience and we all learned a lot about what lay ahead of us on combat missions.

After we finished most of our course work they took us out to the pistol range. The .45 calibre Colt automatic pistol was the weapon that air crews carried on bombing missions. They gave us a lecture on range procedure and weapon operation. After they were convinced that we wouldn't shoot each other, they issued us some pistols and empty clips. We loaded the clips and went to the firing line where we each fired 40 rounds. Pretty noisy. In those days they didn't use ear plugs. I was a pretty good shot with a .22 calibre rifle but those .45 calibre pistols were something else. We went to the range for three days in a row and on the final day they recorded our scores. They didn't hand out many medals for marksmanship. We finished the last required course on November 8 so everyone who was still with us was headed for an advanced navigation school as soon as the next class started.

On November 11, we got into some GI trucks and went into Houston to participate in the Armistice Day Parade. Units from all over that part of Texas joined us and it made a pretty long parade. There was a lot of mechanized equipment from Fort Hood and the infantry units carried their rifles. The Air Force units were the only ones without weapons. We didn't present a very formidable image. There was a lot of people along the route, but they were a pretty somber bunch. Not a very enthusiastic response for the marchers.

To give us a little variety in our PT they arranged a track and field meet between the

navigation cadets and the bombardier cadets. The navigators won. I competed in the shot put and did pretty well against all of the fellows except one. He was the runner-up for the national collegiate championship.

Graduation day finally arrived. A big post review in the morning and overnite passes. They arranged a dance on the post for the graduating class, but Don and I just went into town and took in a movie. On sunday, I went to church and took in a show on the post. No big deal, but I was well satisfied with the way that I celebrated the big occasion.

I didn't ship out with the first group, but my name finally came up on a list that was to go to San Marcos, a small town about 40 miles northeast of San Antonio

Advanced Navigation Training

When we arrived at San Marcos on November 13, 1943, we found a new type of base. Some of the buildings such as the chapels, PXs, and orderly rooms were similar to the ones that we found on other bases, but the barracks were one-story shacks, covered with tar paper and sitting on concrete blocks. The latrines were in separate buildings. We did have some well-constructed classrooms with lots of windows for good lighting. Each echelon had a class building of its own. There were several large hangers and a large number of twin engine navigation training planes.

Construction of the base had started in June, 1942 and the first class graduated in June, 1943. Training took 18 weeks with a class graduating every three weeks. It took less than 8 months to construct the base and organize the staff so it is no wonder that some of the amenities that we found at the older bases were missing. I was in the 12th class to enter the school training program.

When we arrived at San Marcos we all slept in double deck bunks with our barracks bags and gas masks fastened to the braces at the end. As students washed out, they removed their beds and by midtraining there were several of the fellows sleeping in single beds. When we went to our first class meeting we found the equipment that we would be using on our desks. We had a E6B computer (circular slide rule with a sliding section for computing course), a Weems aircraft plotter(a special combined protractor and ruler), a pair of dividers, another circular slide rule, a wrist watch, a stop watch, a triangle, several textbooks, a leather brief case, and a large empty notebook with a package of notebook paper. This was the equipment that we would need to navigate by dead reckoning. They told us that we would get our celestial navigation equipment in 9 weeks if we were still around at that time. On the first day, the echelon commander started his speech with this statement "Gentlemen, from this time on you will eat, live, and sleep navigation". To cheer

us up he told us that we could expect a 50% wash-out rate, but that he and the instructors would work us very hard and try to reduce that percentage.

They kept us very busy. We got up at 0500, had breakfast, then went to class from 0700 to 1030 At 1030 we changed and went out to have PT (calisthenics and cross country), then a shower, lunch and back to class by 1300. At 1730, we stood retreat (everyone was in formation facing the post flag pole as the colors were retired for the day). We had supper and then back to class from 1900 to 2130. We went everyplace in echelon formation and for the first three weeks we double timed (jogged). We followed this schedule for 3 weeks and after that we had Sundays off and were able to stop jogging in formation. We still marched everyplace we went. Once in a while they would schedule a parade and then cancel it. That gave us a little time to write letters. We had to shave between 2115 and 2130 and that made it a little crowded in front of the mirrors.

Each echelon started with 50 cadets, a commander and 6 instructors. The instructors were all Lieutenants who had graduated from the navigation schools near the top of their classes. Rather than going to combat themselves, they were assigned to teach others all that they had learned. Our instructors were well qualified and they worked hard to get us through the program.

On November 24, they took us to the flight line and introduced us to the Beechcraft AT-7 Navigation training planes that we would fly in for 100 hours. These ships had twin-engines and dual controls. There were three desks down the right side of the fuselage as work stations for the cadets. Each desk had a magnetic compass, an air speed indicator, a drift meter, and a radio compass for the cadets to work with. There was only room for three cadets in these planes so our echelon was divided into groups of three for flying. There were three tasks on each mission. The cadet sitting at the first desk directed the pilot as to direction and time, the cadet sitting at the second desk used his instruments to follow the course of the plane and the third cadet sat in the copilots seat and followed the course of the plane on aircraft maps that he held in his lap. The cadets at the desks had to fill out flight logs and charts and the cadet in the copilots seat just filled out a log recording the check points. If the instructor was along, he sat at the rear desk and walked up the aisle to check on the progress of the students during the flights.

We got a little breather on Thanksgiving in spite of earlier announcements that it would be training as usual. Church services for everyone in the morning and then a great dinner with turkey and all of the trimmings. They even decorated the mess hall in keeping with the day.

The navigation training was finally beginning to make sense to us but it looked like we would have to learn to work a lot faster to keep ahead of the situation. If you got

behind when navigating you couldn't call the pilot on the intercom and tell him to park the plane for a while until you caught up

On December 4, we had our first training flight and I was assigned to sit in the copilots seat. After we had been in the air for a while the fellows in the back started to get air sick so I guess the pilot decided to see just how sick they would get. He started to do a lot of turns and banks and the result was that I got sick too. I guess the purpose of this exercise was to find out if we could perform our duties in situations where the air was so rough that we got sick.

When we had completed the first 3 weeks of training some of the slower learners were given a warning that they might be washed out if their performance didn't improve. We were scheduled to fly four hours a day, but the weather didn't always cooperate.

When we got to go into San Marcos I found that it was a lot like Ashland, Oregon in many ways. It was a small college town surrounded by hills with a population similar to that of Ashland. It was getting close to Christmas and I went to chapel in the morning and again in the evening for a program of Christmas carols.

We had a small tree in the barracks to help us get into the Christmas spirit. Most of us received packages from home that we kept in our barracks bags, the only place that we could keep items that were not GI (Government Issue). The Post Commander had a change of heart and allowed everyone a three day pass for Christmas. Most of us were so far from home that a pass that short did not allow us to go home so we just stayed on the base. Some of us went to chapel on the base and to town for Mass with the Catholic fellows. They really prepared a fine meal for Christmas Day. They even had apples, oranges, and candy on the tables for us to take back to our barracks to eat later. Several of us got cakes from home but none was as good as the chocolate-prune cake that my mother sent to me. We shared our Christmas packages, the cakes, cookies, and candy. We used our three days off to get better acquainted with some of our classmates. I got out my photo album and shared it with the fellows from the midwest. They thought that living in the forest, felling trees and fighting forest fires would be great. Some of them had never seen a mountain with a peak. If those fellows went to Colorado or Idaho for crew training they got to see plenty of peaks.

By Christmas, I was getting along fairly well on all of my class work and my flying problems. On a mission to Oklahoma City I didn't get air sick even though it was a pretty rough ride. I got good marks on my log and chart and began to feel that I was really making progress in this job as aerial navigator.

When we arrived at class one day in the middle of January we found our celestial navigation equipment on our desks. We had a sextant (an instrument for measuring

vertical angles), chronometer(accurate watch), star charts, a stack of books that solved spherical triangle problems, pads of forms to use in recording star readings, and some other manuals. It all looked very intimidating.

We had a 4 hour dead reckoning final exam and after that they started giving lectures on celestial navigation.

We had to learn a whole new vocabulary before we could deal with celestial navigation. My head spun when I tried to remember what it all meant. As an example "the right ascension (RA) at any point on the celestial sphere is the angle at the pole between the hour circle passing through the vernal equinox and the hour circle through the point". It is measured in units of time. We had to learn how to identify the stars and the planets; how to deal with sextant error, atmospheric refraction, dome refraction and parallax.

When they finished grading our work on dead reckoning they dropped four more of our classmates. Our first test on the celestial navigation material had a class grade average of 47%. Only two in the class got passing grades and I was not one of them.

We had another nice dinner on New Years day but that was the end of our easy time. From then on it was working straight through, flying lots of training missions and trying to understand the theory and practice of celestial navigation. The weather was bad so often that we were getting farther behind on our flying. We had to get in our 100 hours and we only had 18 weeks to get done before another class would be in to take our places.

On January 4, I flew a 5 hour mission with good results. I only missed my destination by 1 mile going down and by 2 miles on the return trip of 250 miles each way. It was my best mission to date and it raised my hopes of getting through. It gives you a good feeling when things work out the way that they are supposed to. After returning to the base, I had to run 2 miles in a freezing wind for PT. By the time that I went to bed that night I had a sore throat and by the next morning I was too sick to fall out for roll call. An officer came in to check on me and he decided that I wasn't faking it. When it was time to report for sick call, I got up and trudged to the hospital. When I finally got there I found a long line of cadets waiting to have their temperatures taken. A medic came down the hall with a handful of thermometers and poked one in each mouth as he went by. After a while a doctor came down the line with a prescription pad in his hand. It was usually a prescription for a bottle of sulfa pills and back to duty. When he got to me he looked at the thermometer a couple of times and then instructed me to "go down that hall to the end, turn left and go until you get to ward 16. They have a bed for you". My fever must have been pretty high because I thought that I would never get to my destination. When I entered the ward, I found a room with 10 beds, a bathroom, and a small supply room. An orderly directed me to a bed and I got undressed and got in. The treatment was little white

pills and all of the liquid that they could force down us. We had water, fruit juice, milk, ginger ale, and a hot drink that tasted like it had wine in it. They wanted us to drink at least 6 quarts of fluid each day. Every time our nurse opened the door to the ward she would call out "drink your fluids, boys" and then go on to another ward. When we awoke on January 14, we had a surprise. There had been a 2 inch snowfall over night. If I had to be in the hospital I sure picked a good time to go. The hospital was a lot warmer than the barracks with the cracks in the walls and floors. Some of the nurses had never seen snow and they made a big deal out of the 2" blizzard. I was in the hospital for 9 days so I couldn't go back to my old class. Everything moved so fast in the training program that if you missed 4 days you had to drop back to the next class that was three weeks behind.

I guess I was lucky. I had the introduction to celestial navigation with my old class and I got it again with my new class. I missed being with Don, but we could still visit on our free time. He was a very good friend and he brought me some of my stuff when I was in the hospital. I couldn't figure out how I got so sick so quick. The doctor said that I had "nasopharyngitis, catarrhal, acute" whatever that means. I had two blood counts, a chest X-ray, white pills, and gallons of fluids to get me back to duty.

When I was released from the hospital I reported to a temporary echelon. I reported to the echelon commander, gave him a proper salute, and reported in proper military form. He hardly glanced up from his desk and it looked to me like he didn't want to be bothered with a salute. When I had finished, I decided not to bother him with another salute. He came to life and really gave me a dressing down. He got his proper salute and I made up my mind to never try to guess what these guys wanted. They were going to get a snappy salute every time whether they wanted it or not. I flew one mission with this echelon, but the results were not too good. My ears and sinuses really hurt, but I got through it.

On January 19, I was assigned to my new echelon and I really liked the instructors. This echelon had two Captains, and ten Lieutenants from other branches of the army that were studying to become navigators. It seemed strange to be in a class where many of the students outranked the instructors. On one of our flights it was so rough that I could hardly write in my log and chart. I guess we had to be ready for any flying condition when we got to combat so it was good experience. We had such poor weather at San Marcos that we flew over to Lubbock for a few days to get in some flying time. When we were flying out of Lubbock we were getting behind on our ground training. I got in 19 hours flying when at Lubbock and got more accurate with each mission.

I talked to Don when we got back to San Marcos and he told me that he was having trouble with celestial. My turn would come in 3 weeks. We practiced radio navigation problems on some ground training equipment that they had set up in a large room. We

learned the methods on the ground and then put them into practice when we were flying. The radio compass gives the direction to the radio station that you have tuned in. Our echelon commander told us that we were almost up to schedule on our ground school in spite of the time that we lost when we were at Lubbock. These instructors did of very thorough job of explaining every detail of our work. I didn't know if the fact that one third of the students were already commissioned officers had anything to do with it or not.

We had trouble getting clear nights for our ground celestial training sessions. We studied the star charts in the class room, but we had to be able to find a particular star in the night sky. After we located it we had to identify it in the eye piece of our sextant.

February 10 was a very busy day. We flew a 4 hour radio navigation mission in the morning and then returned to the classroom for a 3 hour ground mission in the afternoon. They did take pity on us and let us have the evening off. I had pretty good results on both missions. They taught us to Check-Check-Check. Not to take anything for granted and to use all tools at our disposal to cross check every position. I developed a habit of working hard all of the time that I was on a mission and being fully prepared before takeoff.

We practiced with our sextants every evening when we had clear skies. We knew it was going to be a lot harder identifying the correct star when we were in an airplane that was pitching and rolling.

By the middle of February we were getting close enough to graduation to start looking at uniforms. We could get them through a clothing store in San Marcos or from the PX. I decided to go ahead and order one so I would be sure to have it in time for graduation. If a cadet didn't graduate it didn't cost him anything. They just sold it to the next guy that came along that was the same size. The school graduated about 300 students every three weeks so there was always another buyer coming along. My grades were improving and I averaged 93% on my last three tests. Only seven weeks to graduation and I began to feel that I would be in the 50% that made it all the way through.

We put a map of the United States on the barracks wall with a pin for the home town of each cadet. My pin looked kind of lonesome way out west in Oregon. Most of the fellows in my echelon were from the Northeastern states. I got another box from home and had lots of help eating the fruit and nut bars.

I went into San Marcos on February 20 to order my uniform. Some tailors came in from a big store in San Antonio to do the measuring and take the orders. The uniforms were made by Hart Shaffner and Marx. I ordered a blouse, overcoat, hat, cap, 3 wool shirts and 3 pair of wool pants. The whole outfit cost $230.00. I bought the cotton shirts and ties at the PX.

We were all getting behind in our flying again so we packed our gear and got ready to go to Denver where the weather was better. We got in the plane and were ready to take off when the pilot told us that we had a radio problem. We went back our barracks while the rest of the echelon went on their way. In a couple of days they scheduled us for a flight to New York City, but a cold front cancelled those plans too. When the rest of our class came back it was classes as usual, but the three of us that flew together were still short several flying hours.

We had a hail storm one night that broke out the street lights and covered the ground with golf ball size pellets. It made a terrible racket when all that hail hit on the roof and we thought that the wind was going to blow the barracks over.

We began to fly night celestial training missions. It really kept us busy making observations and calculations and then directing the pilot as to course and time. My old class finished their flying and were spending the rest of the time working on ground problems to sharpen their skills.

On a day mission to El Paso, it was my turn to sit in the copilots seat and follow the route of travel on the aerial charts. Everything was going along fine and we could see our destination up ahead, surrounded by desert and barren hills that went up to 8,000 feet. The navigator that was directing the flight that day was off on his time and we went right by the city and just kept on going. We crossed the Rio Grande and on into Mexican airspace. The pilot wanted to let the cadet run out his mission, but I could tell that he was getting more nervous with every mile that we went farther into Mexico. All that we could see below us was a big sandy desert. To add to the tension, both engines quit without warning. The pilot had been so concerned with being over Mexico that he forgot to switch to his reserve tanks. It got awfully quiet and the ground started coming up very fast. The pilot inserted a short handle into a socket between the seats and ordered me to "pump". You had better believe that I pumped and soon the engines were running again. The pilot had enough of Mexico so he declared the mission at an end and we scooted back across the Rio Grande to El Paso. When we landed we saw all kinds of planes on the field, both army and navy. There was a bunch of WAAFs (Womens Auxiliary Air Force Pilots) there. They were ferrying planes from the factories to the different bases. They flew everything from the open cockpit primary trainers to the combat ready fighters and bombers. It seemed strange to us to see a couple of small women crawl out of a big bomber. They must have had a hard time handling those big planes on manual control.

I volunteered to be business manager for our echelon book. I had to get the pictures and the names of all of the cadets and officers and take orders for the books.

My old class graduated on March 18. I wished that I could have been with them, but I only had 3 weeks to go. Don did very well and came out number four in his class. Quite an accomplishment for a kid from Gold Hill, Oregon. Many of the cadets in that echelon were really smart, but I guess he just worked a little harder. Before he left the base Don came to my barracks to tell me good-bye. We had been together ever since we arrived at Sheppard Field on March 29, 1943. It was good to have someone to buddy with through all of our training. He got a 10 day furlough before reporting to a bombardier training school in New Mexico where he was going to instruct student bombardiers in navigating by dead reckoning.

We had been using several types of sextants in our training, but on March 23 they issued us some new ones to take with us. They were different from any that we had been using in training and they wanted us to have a chance to use them before we left school.

We were getting close to graduation and the three of us that flew together still needed several hours of flying time to fulfill our requirements for graduation. To solve the problem, the echelon commander assigned a pilot, an instructor, and a plane to go someplace and get in enough flying hours to catch up with the rest of the echelon. The pilot came from Huntington, West Virginia so for the first flight we went to his home town. His girl friend arranged dates for all of us and we went out for the evening. The cadets visited with one of the girls parents and then we went to a night club in Ohio. The next morning when we were walking around the town we ran into some students in a CTD (Colledge Training Detachment) at a local college. They all wanted to know what lay ahead of them in the cadet program. In the afternoon, the girls came down to the field to see us off on a night flight back to San Marcos. It was my turn to direct the pilot. As the flight proceeded we hit some very rough weather so the pilot called flight control and we were diverted to Memphis, Tennessee as a safe alternate destination. On our way to Memphis, the intensity of the storm increased and we ran into severe lightning. We were diverted again, this time to Nashville, Tennessee. The winds were not as predicted and the lightning interfered with my use of the radio compass so I had two possible positions on my chart. I didn't have total faith in either one of them. I had to give the pilot a heading so I drew a line between the two positions and picked the mid point. I gave a heading from that point to Nashville. The plane was being tossed about like leaf in a wind storm. I was one very happy cadet when the lights of Nashville came into view and I suspect that the pilot and instructor might have been a little relieved too. It was after midnight when we landed and the cadets were directed to some double deck bunks in a large open hanger for our nights lodgings. We were awakened the next morning by a sergeant assigning his men their duty for the day. After breakfast, we took a short hop to Memphis. When we

arrived there we found how severe the storm that we flew through really was. They said that the hail was as big as baseballs. I can't verify the size but we could see that it did a lot of damage to the planes on the ground. I don't think we could have survived that kind of damage to our little AT-7. It was still stormy at San Marcos so the pilot decided to head for Wichita, Kansas. We made it to Wichita O.K., but they did not have quarters for us so we had to go into town where we got rooms in a big hotel for the night. When we woke up the next morning we discovered that Kansas had been hit by a blizzard and the airfield was closed by snow drifts. It was very cold and the light snow was blowing hard. We needed to get back to San Marcos to complete some ground school work, to pick up our new uniforms, and to turn in our GI uniforms and school supplies. Beside that we were almost out of money. We ordered the most inexpensive meals on the menu but the hotel room rate was about to wipe us out. This had been quite a trip. A visit to Huntington, West Virginia, flying through an electric storm, diverting twice on one flight, and now being snow bound in Wichita, Kansas. By March 27, our combined funds were almost exhausted. Between us we barely had enough cash for a bus ride back to the field. The pilot called in and finally talked the operations officer into allowing us to try to take off. The weather to the south was better but the field in Wichita was still covered with a heavy coating of snow and ice. We went out to the field, checked in at operations and then trudged through the snow drifts to our plane. We didn't see any other activity around except a few mechanics who were boiling a pot of coffee. All we had on was our uniforms and the icy wind cut right through us.

When we all got into the plane the pilot started the engines. It was my turn to follow our course on the charts so I was sitting in the copilots seat thinking ahead of all of the things that I had to do in the next 12 days. After the engines were warmed up, the pilot released the brakes and advanced the throttles. Instead of moving straight forward as he expected, the plane spun in a circle. One of the wheels must have gone through some water when we landed and the brake on that wheel was frozen solid. We weren't going anyplace until we thawed it out. The question was how. Then we remembered the mechanics and their pot of coffee. We begged a little of their brew and poured it over the brake drum. That did the trick and we were able to move the plane. After we started to taxi, the pilot held the brakes on to warm them up. He didn't want to ground loop again. When we got to the end of the runway we found a B-29 in position ahead of us. As the pilot ran up his engines it shook our little plane and threw chunks of ice all over us. It sounded like rocks striking our plane. The big bomber was the first plane to be allowed to take off after the field was closed by the storm. The tower finally gave them permission to go and they started their takeoff run. With throttles wide open, the plane started slowly

down the runway. It took the full length of the long runway before the pilots pulled it up, and then it disappeared from our view. We were very relieved when the plane finally reappeared in the distance. The tower gave us clearance to takeoff and the pilot started to roll forward. We were all very glad that the brakes released and we taxied into takeoff position. When we left the runway that morning, it was with a feeling of great relief. We were finally headed home. The farther south we flew the more bare ground we could see and as we neared San Marcos we had left all traces of snow behind.

When we got back to the base we returned to the routine of lectures, tests, and flying. By March 30, we had turned in our GI uniforms and were wearing our new officers uniforms with cadet insignia. I had spent so much money on our trip that I had to wire home for more. I still had to buy some things before graduation and I wanted to have enough cash for a train ticket in case I got a few days off before reporting to my next station. We had one third of our final exam and I tied with one of the officer students for the top grade. We only missed one question on the whole test. Not bad for not being able to review before the test. The rest of the test came over the next two days. The following Monday they told everyone if they would be 2nd Lieutenants or Flight Officers and we only had two Flight Officers in our echelon. Flight officer was a grade below 2nd Lieutenant.

They had a unique policy at San Marcos regarding the instructors. As each class neared graduation day, the students were instructed to write an evaluation on each of the instructors. If too many of the evaluations on an instructor were unfavorable, his name was added to the list of navigators to be sent to a combat assignment. It was a serious responsibility, but for me it was fairly easy. I could give all of our instructors a good rating without reservation.

By April 3, it was all over but the graduation ceremony. We still had a lot of papers to fill out but it was a great relief and a good feeling, after a little more than a year of working and worrying, to know that we had reached our goal. We knew that some of the fellows in the class ahead of us received furloughs before reporting to their next station and we hoped that we would get one too.

April 8, 1944 was graduation day. The weather was clear and we all gathered outside for the ceremony. We were sworn in as officers and presented with our silver wings as navigators. Some of the fellows had family members or girl friends there to pin their wings and bars on but I didn't have anyone. I just ducked into the nearest building where I could take off my blouse and pinned on the markings of my new rank and specialty. It was a tradition to pay the first enlisted man to salute you a dollar so when I left the building, I had my buck in my hand. It didn't take too long to fulfill the tradition.

Some guys just hung around the graduation ceremonies to increase their financial condition. There was almost $300 out there to be had for some salutes.

In the afternoon they ran our legs off. We had to go here to get papers signed, there to get a clearance from the base, to our barracks to check and recheck our luggage, and back to the orderly room to see if our orders had been cut yet. When we finally got our orders we found that some of the fellows got 7 days leave, some 14 days leave but 51 of us had two days to get to Lincoln, Nebraska. As soon as we had our orders in hand we had to take our gear out to the busses and head for the train depot.

We traded our travel vouchers for tickets and got on the train with all of our gear. They didn't check any luggage and when we got on board we found that all of the seats were already occupied. We put our bags on the floor at the end of one of the cars and sat on them for a while then we noticed a young Mexican couple with a baby that didn't have a seat either. We let them sit on the bags and we stood up the rest of the night.

In the morning, the train stopped at Waco and a lot of people got off. We finally got seats and I settled back to get some sleep. We had been up for over 24 hours and spent most of the night standing up in the end of a moving train car. I just wanted to sleep but the man in the seat next to me had another idea. He was a traveling salesman and he took that trip often so he wanted to show me all of the sights along the way. I wasn't interested in the guided tour but he insisted. I do remember the devastation caused by a tornado that he pointed out when we went through Fort Worth. He had been a balloon pilot in World War I and he told me all about his experience in France.

I got to Lincoln the day before I had to report to the base so I got a room in the Cornhusker Hotel. Quite a furlough, a night in a hotel just so I could get some sleep.

Replacement Pool - Lincoln, Nebraska

The first thing they told us when we reported in was that we would not get a furlough from that station, big surprise. The base was similar to San Marcos except that the tar paper shacks were on concrete floors instead of wood. We had 3 coal stoves in the center aisle instead of gas heaters along the outside wall to keep the buildings warm. The heat felt good but I didn't like the coal smoke that hung over everything like a blanket.

They didn't tell us what to expect next, but since there were pilots, bombardiers, navigators, and gunners there we assumed that they would make us up into crews and send us someplace for combat training. We all went to lectures together to learn about combat conditions from the fellows who had completed their tours. On April 17, it started to snow hard. It snowed all night and through the next day. It came down in great big flakes, not like the fine snow that we encountered in Wichita. Everything on the base was

black or white. Black buildings, white snow and no green anyplace. We just stayed in the barracks most of the time. Quite a change from the fast pace that we were used to in training. We did go to another pressure chamber session. This time we just went up to 30,000 feet and stayed there for an hour. No one was asked to remove his mask.

We finished all of the lectures and after that all we had to do was attend two formations a day and eat, sleep, and wait. It was sure cold, but I kept warm with my overcoat. It was made of two layers of balloon cloth with a wool blanket liner. The fellows that bought the fancy elastique coats spent as little time outside as possible.

On April 23, the 51 navigators that came from San Marcos received orders to go to Colorado Springs for crew training. It was gather up your gear and catch the base bus to the train depot where we were all assigned to one car. The first leg of our journey was to Denver, Colorado. We arrived early on a very cold morning. When the train crew uncoupled our car they told us that we would have a four hour wait before our train would be leaving for Colorado Springs. We could have waited in the car but when it was uncoupled from the train it would have no heat. We decided to go into town to see if we could find someplace where it was warm. We finally found a barber shop that was open where I got a hair cut and a mud pack. The mud pack was to clean the coal soot out of the pores on my face. It took a while so I stayed warm longer. After the barber shop we went out on the street again and I spotted a open 2nd hand store. I went in to look around and found an old box compass. I thought that it might come in handy some day so I made a purchase. It was old in 1944 so it must be an antique by now. I still have it and use it occasionally.

We went back to the depot before the departure time and got into our car that was now at the end of the train. By the time that the train was ready to leave the station everyone was on board but one man, the one who was carrying all of our orders. In army troop movements, the highest ranking person whose name comes first alphabetically is designated as troop commander. The commander carries all of the orders and turns them in at the new post The train started to move and was several hundred feet from the station when we saw our orders coming down the track in the arms of our commander. The next thing we knew the train came to a screeching halt Someone had pulled the emergency cord. Soon a very irate conductor charged into the car and wanted to know who had pulled the cord. No one would admit to the deed and the train eventually got under way again, this time with our orders on board. After traveling south along the east slope of the Rockies for about 90 miles we arrived at the resort city of Colorado Springs with Peterson Field located at the south-east outskirts.

Replacement Crew Training Center - Peterson Field, Colorado.

When our train pulled into the station at Colorado Springs we found some GI busses waiting to take us the short distance to Peterson Field where we found 51 crews waiting for their navigators. They had been going through ground school training and flying in the local area awaiting our arrival. When we got off of the busses we found some more tar paper shacks, but at least this time our barracks were partitioned into two man rooms with a bathroom in each building.

When were finished checking in I was assigned to George Koehn's crew. The crew members came from all over the United States.

George Koehn	Pilot	Wisconsin
John Tucker	Copilot	Louisiana
Jim Soesbe	Bombardier	Illinois
Lawrence Fick	Navigator	Oregon
Merlin Ash	Flight Engineer	California
Anthony Corlito	Radio Operator	Massachusetts
Bob Shea	Tail Gunner	Massachusetts
Clifford Gowan	Waist Gunner	Kentucky
James Southern	Waist Gunner	South Carolina
Billy Hudson	Ball Turret Gunner	Virginia

George and I roomed together and John and Jim shared a room. John and Jim were both married and their wives shared an apartment in town so they could be near their husbands until our overseas shipping orders came.

I got acquainted with my crew and liked them very much. George fitted the roll of aircraft commander to a "T". He was an imposing man, 6' 4" tall. He had plenty of strength to handle the controls of a B-24. John had a lot of four engine time. Jim was near the top of his class in bombardiering school, and Merlin worked in an aircraft factory before going into the service. I was confident that this crew could be one of the best if we worked hard and had a bit of luck.

After I had been on the base for a couple of days I was able to go down to the flight line to examine the ships that we would use during our replacement crew training. They were early model B-24s with OD (olive drab) paint jobs. Some of them had started out at training bases but most of them were war weary birds that had returned from the combat zones. I was impressed by the size and complexity of these ships. The cockpit had many more instruments and controls than the much smaller AT-7s that I was used to.

To enter a B-24 we had to stoop down and go through the open bomb bays. The four gunners in the back could enter through the bomb bays or through a hatch in the bottom of the plane near the tail. I was told that for takeoffs and landings the nose gunner, the bombardier, and the navigator had to stand on the flight deck behind the pilots. As soon as the plane was airborne they had to crawl along the side of the nose wheel and up into the nose compartment. Before landing they had to go back up onto the flight deck again. Crew members were not allowed to be in the nose compartment during takeoff and landing for safety reasons.

When I crawled up into the nose compartment I found that I would have to stand up all of the time that I was navigating. My work table was at the rear of the work space and my instruments were arranged above the table within easy reach. The controls for the bomb racks were on the left side of the compartment and the bomb sight was on the floor in the front. A metal box for the .50 calibre ammunition for the nose turret was on each side of where I had to stand. The astro dome (a bubble window for making celestial observations) was in the top and a small flat window was on each side. I could also see the ground we were flyng over by looking under the nose turret and over the bomb sight. The nose gunner would be in his turret out of the way when flying so the bombardier and I would share the remaining space. All of those windows would make it easy to do pilotage (navigate by looking for landmarks).

On my first training flight I was able to wander about the plane and observe. It was pretty rough that day and I was amazed to see how flexible the wings were. After we had been up for a while we climbed to 20,000 feet. It was my first flight in a B-24 and my first actual flight on oxygen so I was a little nervous at first. It didn't take long to get used to working at that altitude, but it did get a little chilly. You could sure see a lot of country from four miles up. On my first night flight, I was concerned by the blue flame that was shooting out of the engine superchargers until I found out that it was normal operation for the Pratt-Whitney engines that powered the B-24s.

The section of the B-24 just behind the bomb bays was called the waist. To get there from the flight deck you had to walk on the narrow beam between the bomb racks in the bomb bays and go through a plywood door Behind that door there was more room to move about. The ball turret came first, then the two waist guns (a single gun in each window) and the rear turret was clear at the end. All of the turrets had twin .50 calibre machine guns. A total of 10 guns in all. The flight engineer operated the top turret that was reached from the flight deck. The radio operator sat behind the copilot with his radio equipment and did not have a gun.

Each duty station had an oxygen regulator with a window in the center. We could see two metal plates that would open and close as we breathed. To make the plates visible at night they had a phosphorescent spot painted in the center. At night we could see the "eye" winking out of the dark to reassure us that we were getting oxygen. You couldn't tell if you were getting oxygen or not by the way you breath. To move around the plane when at high altitude we had "walk around" bottles that we could carry with us to supply oxygen for a short period.

They told us that we would receive about 6 weeks of flight training at this base before heading overseas. As could be expected, inexperienced crews flying old planes often ran into difficulties. Most of the problems were minor and the planes were able to land at a nearby field safely. At other times the problems were more serious resulting in crashes, sometimes with the loss of life.

The pilots were nervous at first about the ability of their new navigators until we proved ourselves. With a wall of high mountains to the west of the base we had to make sure that we were right on course for the night missions. In spite of all the warnings, some of the planes crashed into the mountains as a result of navigation errors. If a pilot was not comfortable with the skill of his assigned navigator, that navigator was removed from his crew.

We attended lectures, got more familiar with the B-24s and flew day and night training missions. Sometimes we would attend lectures as a crew and at other times the navigators from all of the crews would be together for some more ground schooling.

To get ready to go overseas, we had more dental check ups, physicals, and shots. It took about a week to get our shots for yellow fever, cholera, and typhus. Some of them made my arms pretty sore.

Colorado Springs was a very pretty town with wide streets and lots of trees with Pikes Peak forming a nice back drop. When in town I bought a new wrist watch with a sweep second hand that stops when you pull out the stem. We called that type of watch a "hack watch" and it was similar to the one that I had been issued. I also bought a spare E-6B navigation computer (circular slide rule adapted for navigation), a Weems Aircraft plotter (a special protractor), and another pair of dividers. I wore both watches when I was flying and carried the extra navigation equipment on all flights. A navigator cannot do his job without accurate time and all of his tools. I guess it was just my Boy Scout training coming through by living up to the motto. "Be Prepared".

Navigating from the work station in the B-24 was a lot easier than from the AT-7. We had a bigger table, better instruments, and better visibility and I was so busy that I didn't worry about having to stand up all of the time.

By April 29 it was still winter in Colorado. Regular storms with lots of snow and sleet.

My pay as a 2nd Lieutenant on flight duty increased to $246.00 a month. I didn't need that much for walking-around money so I had most of it home sent home for safe keeping.. The government took $48.00 out for insurance, officers club fee and mess charges. The tar paper covered officers club was very nice on the inside. It had a dining room, barber shop, main room, bar, fountain, dance floor, pool tables, and a reading room. It was a good place to spend a little time away from the barracks when we were not going to class or flying.

By May 9th, we were deep into training, flying three days out of four and taking classes the other day. We got 24 hours off every eight days. I still practiced using my sextant every time we had a night that was clear enough for me to see the stars. The weather was odd, clear in the morning, cloudy by mid-day and clear again in the evenings. The mornings were the best times to fly but 03:00 came awfully early.

They told us that we were scheduled to finish our training at Peterson by mid-June, then we would go someplace else to get some more equipment and our overseas assignments. We hoped to be assigned to the E.T.0 (European Theatre of Operations). This time there was not even a hint that we might get a few days leave to go home.

By May 21, they increased our rate of training. We switched to a 4 day cycle with every day different. I usually ate two meals a day and slept through the other one. I seemed to be sleepy all of the time, flying at high altitude so much just wears you down. This schedule was necessary for us to get in the required day and night missions in the time allotted There were more crews than planes so as soon as a crew came down, the ground crew would service the plane and another crew would take it up again.

George and I had to attend some training sessions in the navigation Link trainer. The trainer was actually a building with a section set up like the cockpit of a B-24, a section set up like the navigators station and a station underneath for the operator. There was a chart in the operators station and a "bug" (a device that traced the course of the flight on the chart). We couldn't see each other but we could communicate with an intercom system. The training sessions lasted for 3-4 hours of very intense work. When we got to the trainer, the operator would hand me the navigation problem. George and I would go to our stations and get set up. George would go through the takeoff check list and get ready to go, I would set up my work station and check my instruments At the scheduled time we would "take off" and I would give George the initial heading. The instruments reacted as if we were actually flying. A session would usually include navigating by dead reckoning (using compass heading, air speed, and wind velocity and

direction); by radio compass (taking bearing from radio stations); by pilotage (observing the area we were flying over); and by celestial (taking observations of stars, sun or moon). In some problems they ran out of the photo strip that simulated the terrain we were flying over and they substituted an aerial map. The real trick was the celestial part of the flight. I could look out of the astro dome and see a simulated sky full of stars. It was all controlled by some kind of a mechanism that placed the stars in the right position in relation to time. First, I had to identify the star that I wanted to shoot (observe) and then find its elevation in the sky. After I had taken observation on three different stars, I had to make my calculations, plot the shots, and correct them for the elapsed time. The results were plotted on my chart. When we came to a turning point, I would give the new heading and George would change the course accordingly. I was supposed to call my location (according to my calculations) down to the operator frequently so he could compare it with the mechanical bug that was tracing the course on the chart at his work station. I don't know how hard it was for George or the operator, but I know that I was exhausted when the problem was over. During one session in the trainer I got very involved in my work and forgot to call my locations down to the operator. We had started at 02:00 and when I didn't call my positions down to the operator he must have assumed that I had gone to sleep. I gave him a bunch of locations and then went back to my problem.

One day we went to the aerial gunnery range where we fired the top turret at a target sleeve towed by a B-26 flown by some WASPS (Womens Air Force Service Pilots). We were flying a new B-24J and were each to fire 350 rounds. I don't think that I was able to put a single hole in the sleeve because it was always behind our number one engine or our wing tip. I would ask George to drop down a bit so I could see the sleeve and the B-26 would drop too at the same time. I finally just raised the guns high enough to clear our ship and fired my allotted rounds at a very empty sky.

We had some ground training in clearing jams in the .50 calibre machine guns. They put faulty parts in guns that were mounted on steel pipes. We would go to our assigned gun, examine it to find out why it wouldn't fire and then run back to a parts box and get a workable part. After we installed the replacement part in the gun we would fire about 5 rounds at the base of the Rockies and then the instructor would take over and put another broken part in the gun for the next man. We also took our turn firing the .30 calibre carbine, the Colt .45 autoloading pistol and the Thompson submachine gun.

One day when we were flying in the local area Jim gave me some instructions on the use of the Norden bomb sight.

Our cross country training flights were usually flown in a triangular pattern, to the south and east, so we didn't have to fly over the Rockies. The longer flights would be

more than 1,000 miles. Unlike navigation school, I was able to use all of the methods of navigation on each flight. It was always calculate, check, and cross check. Recheck the math again and compare one method of navigation with another. On one flight, we were heading for Big Springs, Texas at 18,000 feet when we saw a dark cloud ahead of us in an otherwise clear sky. When we got into it we discovered that we were in the top of a Texas dust storm.

One day we went out to the gunnery range to fire at some targets on the ground from the flexible nose gun. The targets were like roadside bill boards. One problem with this type of target was that the cattle in the area would bed down in the shade behind the signs where they couldn't be seen from the air. Several of the cattlemen would come to the base demanding payment for some prize steers that got in the way of the .50 calibre bullets. After I fired my 200 rounds I went to the flight deck and the copilot went down into the nose to take his turn. I sat in his seat and flew the plane around the course 4 or 5 times at an elevation of 500 feet and an air speed of 200 miles per hour. George made sure that I didn't get into trouble, but I flew the airplane. It was sure a lot different that the Interstate Cadet trainers that I flew at Texas A&M.

They explained how to use a parachute and how to exit the aircraft in an emergency, but we never made any training jumps. I guess they figured that it was something that you had to do right the first time. We didn't even go to a jump tower to learn how to land without breaking our legs.

By May 27, we had reached the minimum number of flying hours for our training (100) so we knew it wouldn't be too long before we would ship out. They scheduled a show-down inspection and told us that we would have to throw away, or ship home, everything that was not on the approved list.

I went into town to a photograph studio and had some pictures taken. I was afraid that I might not be able to pick them up so I paid for them and told them to pick the best pose to make up.They promised to mail them to my home when they were finished. . It was over a year before I saw how they came out.

Some WASPS flew in a bunch of new B-24Js for us to use so we knew that we would be flying to war in our own ships. We started flying the new ships so we could log 40 hours on them before making the long flight to one of the combat zones.

We finished all of our training except flying the Link trainer so we had a little more free time. On our fifth time through the trainer I came out right on our destination and the instructor didn't even bother to check my calculations.

June 6, 1944 D Day

The long awaited invasion of Europe had finally started. From the newspaper accounts we learned that the cost in lives and equipment was very high but that a foothold had been established. With our training nearly over we knew that we would be over there soon to help.

They announced that we were one of the two top crews in our group and they gave us some time off while the other crews were flying daily to catch up. We went to Manitou Springs and rode some horses in the Garden of the Gods, a very pretty area at the base of Rockies. There we saw huge brightly colored rocks, scattered trees, and green grass. We also went to the Broadmoor hotel to look around but decided that it was a little too expensive to consider on a 2nd Lieutenants pay.

One evening George and I went into town to visit with the Tuckers and Soesbes. We all knew that we would be leaving soon and everyone was pretty quiet. Most of the fellows were sending their wives home because after the shipping orders came we would be restricted to the base. (That was the last day that Mrs. Tucker and Mrs. Soesbe ever saw their husbands.)

On June 16, we were restricted to the base and had our graduation ceremony with the "Go over there and give them Hell" speeches. The only good thing about it was the 35 piece army band that played some marches. After the ceremony was over we were all supposed to get into formation by crews and march from the building to another area to disband. Everyone felt that another parade was a bit of overkill so we just walked back to our barracks. The brass may not have liked it but there wasn't much they could do about it. We were already confined to the base and were headed to one of the combat zones in a few days.

Lincoln Army Air Field (Second Visit)

On June 18, they handed us our orders to our next station, no more troop trains for us. This time we would be traveling in our shiny new airplane. On the next day, all of the crews that had completed Replacement Crew Training went out to their planes and made ready to leave. When our turn came up, we took off, circled the field one more time and headed east, leaving Colorado Springs and the Rocky Mountains behind.

It was an easy trip. The ship ran well, the weather was clear and warm and we could see for miles. As we neared Lincoln, Nebraska we could see the bright gold dome of the state Capitol building, so it was just head for the dome and then turn toward the orange and white water tower at the field.

I was already acquainted with most of the facilities on this base so all I had to do was to learn about the flight line and the facilities there. After we landed, they assigned a spot for our aircraft and we went to the housing area to get settled in. We had some lectures about what they expected of us at the base and then we had to fill out some more papers. They made all of the officers purchase 6 sets of summer uniforms and then they told us send them home. That cinched it, we were going to Europe for sure. They issued each of us cold weather flying gear, sheep skin jacket and pants, leather helmet, sheep skin lined flying boots, and leather gloves.

Whenever we didn't have some duty we spent our time down at the flight line going over our ship. We wanted to make certain that everything was in readiness for our flight overseas. If we wanted some tools or supplies the ground crews furnished them to us without hesitation. The base mechanics checked over the engines, the controls and the radios.

There were some artists at the base that painted figures and names on the planes for a fee. George arranged for one of them to paint a wolf in a tuxedo standing against a street sign that read "Hollywood and Vine" on our ship. The wolf was admiring a young lady but all that you could see of her was a shapely leg, high heeled shoe and the edge of her skirt ending at the nose turret. Pretty soon all was in readiness. Our training was over and we had been given our orders for travel to the ETO. All that remained was to wait for our turn to fly on the ATC (Air Transport Command) routes to our next station.

OUR TRAINING IS OVER

Off To The War Zone At Last

Early in the morning of June 30, 1944, we took all of our gear down to the flight line and put it in our B-24J Number 42-50686. We checked everything over one more time, then got into our take-off positions. George started the engines and we were off to Grenier Field, New Hampshire.

Our assigned route took us north of Chicago and over Lake Michigan. We were looking forward to seeing the baby flat tops that the navy pilots were using for training, but when we approached the lake we found that the entire area was covered with a big pool of fog. After we left the lake area, we left the fog behind and could see the ground once again. As I had expected, we saw a large number of cities along our route but I was surprised by the amount of fields and forests. Growing up in the West, I half expected the East to be border to border cities with very little open space. When we got to the Grenier Air Field we were in for another surprise. Everything had been painted with camouflage paint in tan, green, and black. They even painted the runway to look like farm fields. I don't know if they expected a bombing raid from Germany or not, but the paint job sure made it hard to find the base. You could usually see an army air base in the states for miles by the orange and white checkerboard painted water tower, but not at Grenier.

Grenier Field, New Hampshire.

As soon as we landed, they took our new high altitude sheepskin flying suits away from us and issued some cloth gear. The sheepskin suits were good, but the cloth outfits were much better. The new outfits had four units. The material was heavy green cloth with a fiber pile lining. The jacket had a fur collar and the parka had a sheepskin hood. The outer pants were cut like bib overalls, and the inner pants were like regular trousers held up by suspenders. They also issued us some electric heated suits to wear under the flying suits. They looked like one piece, long handled underwear, in a light blue color. There was an electric cord attached to the suit that we could plug into an outlet at our duty station. The electric suits had some wires sewn into the lining similar to an electric blanket. The aircraft electrical system operated on 24 volt DC. The electrical outlets had a rheostat control so we could adjust the amount of heat needed for comfort. The sleeves on the suits had tabs that we could snap onto our gloves to keep our hands warm and the legs had tabs to snap onto the felt lined boots that we wore under our sheepskin lined flying boots. The gloves were leather on the outside with a coarse woven wool liner. The electric elements were in between the two layers. We also had two layer silk gloves to

wear under the leather gloves. They were for emergency use if we needed to be able to have more finger dexterity than possible when wearing the leather gloves.

They also issued us our side arms and sent us out the gunnery range to try them out. All went well until it was George's turn. He took his place at the firing line and pulled the trigger. Pandemonium ensued. His pistol was defective and instead of firing one round he fired the entire clip of 8 rounds. It was a good thing that he was strong enough to keep the muzzle up in the air so no one was injured. You can be sure that they gave him another pistol in a hurry. The rest of the firing went smoothly. They still had more papers, including our wills, for us to sign at this base and then they gave us our sheaf of orders to go to Goose Bay, Labrador. We left Grenier Field on July 2 with all of our new gear, flying low along the Atlantic Coast and over Portland, Maine. Portland was a fairly large city perched on a rocky bluff overlooking the Atlantic. The harbor was filled with an armada of commercial fishing boats. It seemed strange to me that I had lived in Oregon for 21 years, but I saw Portland, Maine, before I saw Portland, Oregon.

We were flying over the St. Lawrence Waterway when we received a radio message to divert to the Army Air Field at Bangor, Maine. We were beginning to get the picture of just how complicated the movement of the crews overseas was. Each base had a limited capacity for planes and crews so when any segment of the route was closed by bad weather, the crews that followed had to return to their last base or go to an alternate. We had finished our work at Grenier so they sent us to Bangor.

The next day, the weather improved over the North Atlantic, the crews at Goose Bay started out again, and we headed north. This time we made it. It was very interesting, flying over Eastern Canada. First, we saw huge rafts made up of small logs stored in the St. Lawrence Waterway. The logs looked so small that they must have been pulp logs for the paper mills. The area north of the St. Lawrence was heavily forested. In time we left the tree zone and started to fly over some very rough country. We could see several white water rivers at the same time separated by rocky ridges that had no vegetation visible from our altitude. Not a place for an engine to cut out. I had taken a course in historical geology when I was at Oregon State College and we had studied that area. It had some of the oldest rock formations in North America. The real thing was much more impressive than the pictures in the text. By the time that we arrived at Goose Bay we were flying over another forest of small spruce trees.

Goose Bay, Labrador.

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Goose Bay, Labrador.

After we landed and parked our plane, we saw one of the ships that left Lincoln ahead of us. It looked pretty forlorn, sitting way off to the side of the flight line with half of

the tail assembly missing. We met the crew in the mess hall and heard the story of their adventure. When they were well on their way to Iceland with the plane of autopilot, the pilot went back to the waist to see how the crew back there was getting along. Suddenly, the auto-pilot malfunctioned and the plane started to swing from side to side. After a couple of cycles it rolled over and headed straight down toward a very cold ocean filled with huge icebergs. In spite of the situation the engineer was able to pull himself into the pilots seat and he and the copilot were able to bring the plane out of the dive. The force of the maneuver tore off half of the tail assembly. When they were plunging toward the ocean, the navigator opened the nose wheel doors so the fellows in the nose could bail out. In his haste to put on his parachute he grabbed the chest pack by the metal rip cord handle instead of the web handle. The chute immediately billowed out in the crowded nose compartment and was sucked out through the open nose wheel doors. The fellows in the nose were fortunate that they did not get tangled in the chute or they would have gone out too. After the plane was under control, the crew headed back toward Goose Bay and assessed their situation. They were in a severely damaged bomber, over a very cold ocean, a long way from land and only 9 parachutes for 10 men. They were lucky that the designers and builders had constructed a sturdy aircraft. They made it back to Goose Bay without further incident and made a safe landing, but the plane was never to fly again. They were told that it would be torn down for the salvable parts. The crew had to go the rest of the way to England in an A.T.C.(Air Transport Command) DC-4.

When we walked around the base, we found that the barracks were two story buildings like the ones that we had started out in at Sheppard Field. The permanent personnel told us that they were not able to get supply ships into Goose Bay during the winter so all of the heavy supplies came in during the ice free period. The rest of the year, the supplies came in by air. To construct the base, they had brought in a sawmill to cut much of the lumber from the small spruce trees that covered the area.

The station personnel celebrated the 4th of July in grand style and they included us in the festivities. We had fried chicken and ice cream. The base band provided the entertainment.

I walked all over the base and enjoyed looking at the forest and the buildings scattered about. I don't remember how they heated the buildings, but I imagine that it was by coal furnaces. It was a pleasant place to visit in the summer, but I think that it was probably a pretty harsh place in the winter.

Our turn to take the long over water leg of our journey came on July 5. Our fuel tanks, including the two 450 gallon tanks in the front bomb bays, were topped off (3,600 gallons in all). We were briefed as to the course, weather, and winds, and they

gave us some sealed envelopes marked "Secret, do not open until one hour after departure". Fifty years after the event, I don't remember just what those envelopes contained. I am sure that it wasn't our next destination. When it was our turn to take-off, George stood on the brakes, revved up the engines to maximum takeoff R.P.M.s and started down the runway. He wanted to make sure that we would be airborne before we hit the end of the runway with our heavy load of fuel. We left the runway smoothly and headed out over the neck of water that connected Goose Bay with the ocean. In a few minutes we were over open water with a long way to go.

Our destination was an airfield on the southwest shore of Iceland. We were going to fly by the southern tip of Greenland, but we were never to be close enough to see land (or ice). When we were several miles from the Canadian shores we began to see icebergs. It would not have been a good place to go swimming. The part of the floes that was above the water was huge and we could only imagine how much ice was under the water and not visible to us.

As usual, I kept very busy, taking shots of the moon and the sun with my sextant and calculating our position. When we got closer to Greenland I started to cross radio bearings from the stations there with the sun shots. The plane was on autopilot so the rest of the crew had a lot of time to worry about my skill, the fuel supply, and the operation of the aircraft. This was the longest flight that we had attempted and the only alternate airfields in the vicinity were some rather primitive ones in Greenland.

When we had been flying for quite a while, George called me on the intercom and asked me when we would be getting to Greenland. I told him that we were going to Iceland and that we would not even see Greenland when we went by. He blew up and gave me heck. I was so busy making my position calculations that I didn't have time to argue with him so I just pulled out my radio cord and kept on working. Looking back on the incident, I can see that the rest of the crew must have been worried about getting across all of that water safely. When we hit Meeks field, near Reykjavik, right on the nose, we all relaxed and the crew's confidence in their navigator went up a notch. George never mentioned the incident at mid-trip and neither did I. The flight from Goose Bay to Meeks Field took us a little over eight hours and thirty minutes.

Meeks Field, Reykjavik, Iceland

The British and American Airfields shared a level area at the edge of the ocean near the capital city of Reykjavik. The American base provided a vital link in the movement of bombers from the States to the European Theater during the summer months. During the winter, most of the bombers traveled to the war by the way of South America and Africa.

The weather was clear when we arrived at Iceland so we were able to land without any problems. A flight of B-26s that made the trip earlier in the week wasn't so lucky. The base was completely fogged in when they arrived so they had to fly over the radio beacon and bail out, leaving their planes to crash in the ocean. On July 15, 1942, one flight of P-38s and their B-17 navigation ship encountered fog forcing them turn back and crash land on the ice cap in Greenland. All planes were lost but the flyers survived the landings and were rescued by personned stationed at Greenland. Some of the planes were recovered in 1995 from where they landed. They were covered by many feet of ice. In spite of the hazards of those trips across the North Atlantic in fighter aircraft, only seven of the 186 P-38s dispatched failed to reach their destination and six of them returned to Greenland and made emergency landings on the ice cap.Meeks Field is located at 65 degrees North Latitude, only 150 miles from the Arctic Circle.

According to the Encyclopedia,"The climate in that area is fairly mild, being warmed by the Gulf Stream". The temperature was supposed to be 50 degrees in July, but with the fog it was very cold and we were very glad to have our parkas to wear when we had to be outside. One of the planes in our flight landed at the R.A.F. base, but no problem, they just taxied on over to our base where they belonged. We were fascinated by the small flying boats that the Royal Navy was using to patrol the sea lanes around Iceland. They had a single engine mounted on top of the wing as a pusher. I would not have wanted to trade places with the air crews flying those small planes, with only one engine in all of that fog and bad weather. Their assignment was to search for German surface ships as they tried to slip between Scotland and Iceland on their way into the North Atlantic.

We were confined to the base for our stay there so we were never allowed to go into town or visit the English bases. At Meeks Field we were introduced into a new type of housing called Nissen huts. (The same structures were called Quonset huts in the Pacific). They were made of sheets of corrugated steel material fastened to steel bows with a wall at each end to complete the structures. They were well insulated and heated by a stove in the center of the floor. They looked like big corrugated pipes, cut in half lengthwise, and put on a base. They were partially covered with earth. A measure that we assumed was taken to prevent them from blowing away during severe winter storms.

Before we could takeoff on the next leg of our journey, the fog set in again. That was when we found out what the ropes connecting the huts were for. We had to hold onto them to find our way and keep from wandering into the nearby ocean. The fog was so thick that you couldn't see anything of your surroudings.. We stayed inside most of the time and waited for it to lift. We did get some Icelandic money to go on our "Short

Snorters". A collection of money from each country that you visited. The bills were fastened into a strip with scotch tape and if desired they were signed by the people you were with at the time.

After a couple of days of very heavy fog, we got a break and were off again. This time we were to fly south over the North Atlantic, then over the Irish Sea and land at the American base at Valley,Wales. After we were airborne we encountered a low cloud layer so we flew in the clear above the clouds until my chart indicated that we were over the Irish Sea. I had to depend on the forecast winds that they gave us when we were briefed in Iceland and I wanted to verify our position. I asked George to go down through the cloud layer to see where we were. When we broke into the clear we were at about 5,000 feet of elevation over Bangor Harbor. That would have been just fine, except that a convey, complete with a cruiser and destroyers, was using the harbor for an assembly point. The ships started to signal us with lamps demanding the code of the day. I knew the code but our Aldis (Signal)Lamp was in its box and was not plugged in. To solve the immediate problem, I had George go back up into the clouds and we passed by the port without getting shot at by our own Navy. The next time that we let down through the clouds we discovered that we did not have the sky to ourselves. There were two fighters off to the left at our altitude. They were either in actual combat or were in a practice dog fight. They were close enough that we could tell that they had inline engines, but not close enough for positive identification. On the outside chance that one of the fighters might have been a German Me-109, it made us a little nervous. Especially since we only had 500 rounds of ammunition on board. In time they faded into the distance and we proceeded on to the base at Valley. They had warned us when we were briefed at Iceland to make sure that we did not fly beyond the Valley radio beacon. The Germans had set up a very powerful radio beacon on the continent to lure unsuspecting Allied planes within reach of their anti-aircraft batteries. The German radio was operating on the same frequency as the one used at Valley. We found the base without trouble and landed.

Valley Air Base, Wales.

We were in for a big disappointment when we got out of our ship. They told us that it was no longer our ship and that we would have to unload all of our gear. The plane was to go to a subdepot for combat modification and the crew was to go to Ireland for combat crew indoctrination.

While at Valley, we learned the value of English money and exchanged our American dollars for the British equivalents. During the war, the British pound was worth $4.03, a ten shilling note, $2.01, a half crown coin, 50 cents, a two shilling coin, 40 cents,

a one shilling coin, 20 cents, 6 pence was 10 cents, 3 pence (thrupnibit) was 5 cents, a penny was 1.7 cents and a half penny (ha-penny) was .8 cents. The one pound note was too wide to fit into our billfolds so we either had to fold them or purchase a billfold that would fit. The problem with the bigger billfolds was that they didn't fit a pants pocket. The 5 pound note was printed on lightweight white paper and it had to be folded twice to go in a billfold. Most of us took the easy way and just folded the British paper money.

I had grown up in a period when the privy or outhouse was the norm for a toilet but I was unprepared for the accommodations at the base in Wales. There was a room in the barracks for a toilet but instead of a porcelain fixture that you could flush they had a box on a sled under the floor. The farmers would take the sled out to the fields during the night and use the contents for fertilizer. They warned us not to eat any raw vegetables for obvious reasons.

We stayed at Valley for a few days until more crews came in and then we all got on a train and headed east.

US Army Base, Stone England

After a short ride, we pulled into the station at Stoke-on-Trent where we were met by some 6X6 army truck for our trip to the base at Stone.

The English trains were quite different from the ones that we were familiar with in the States. The engines were smaller, the coupling devices between the cars were chains and bumpers, and you got into your car from the platform rather than entering from the end. The windows in the compartments could be opened by unhooking a leather strap and allowing the window to slip down inside the panel.

We didn't have any duty at Stone. We were just waiting until the class ahead of us in Ireland completed their training.

We did get a pass to go into town to see the sights. Most of the houses were made of brick or natural stone with red tile or thatched roofs. There was a huge church in the center of town with a very tall steeple. The crooked narrow streets were surfaced with cobble stones. We were fascinated by the red, double decker busses that were slow, not too regular, and looked like they would turn over at every turn. The drivers were apparently used to them because we never saw a mishap. Nearly everyone rode black bicycles with small tires. When we rode through town in the trucks we could see flocks of people on bikes going as fast as we were.

In time, our turn came up and we hauled all of our gear out to an airbase where we got on a DC-3 troop carrier to go to Northern Ireland.

Cluntoe Army Base, Northern Ireland.

When we landed, the crews were split up. The officers and the radio operator stayed at Cluntoe and the gunners went on to Greencastle. Both bases were on the shore of Lough Neagh.

The first thing that they did when we landed was to lock up our pistols. They said that any kind of weapons brought a big price along the Irish border. There were civilians working on the base so, just to be safe, all of the sidearms were locked up on arrival and reissued on departure.

All of the instructors at the base were combat veterans who had completed their tours of duty. Some of the lectures were general such as how to survive in temperatures of 40 to 50 degrees below zero. To emphasize the need for care they showed pictures of the results of exposure and frost bite that weren't pretty.

Some classes were by specialty where the veteran pilots talked to the new pilots on how to deal with formation flying, radio procedures, assembly procedures, and the like; bombardiers talked to the new bombardiers about the use of target maps, bomb loads, and formation bombing; and navigators talked to the new navigators about navigation in the ETO (European Theatre of Operation). We had to learn how to use the British navigation system similar to the US system of Loran. It was called "Gee". With the Gee system, we could take and plot a fix very quickly. It was very accurate when the aircraft was close to the sending stations, but the farther the ship was from the transmitters, the less accurate the fixes were. The system was made up of several series of ground radio stations that sent out signals at regular intervals. Each series was made up of three radio transmitters. One transmitter was the master that would trigger a signal from the other two transmitters, called slaves. The information was displayed as "blips" on the cathode ray tube in the "Gee" box. We had to adjust the set to stop movement of the blips. To find our position we threw a switch that locked in the information. The tube then showed two lines of markers that looked very much like rulers with no numbers. We were able to put values to the markers and then transfer the numbers to special maps that we carried. Where the two lines crossed was our location at the time the fix was locked in. We were introduced to the British maps that were amazing in the accuracy and detail. We were used to American aircraft maps that showed rivers, cities, roads, and railroads very accurately, but the British maps also showed the shape of the forests with such detail that you could pinpoint a location by the particular shape of a forest.

The radio operators had to learn how to deal with the radio system used in the ETO. They had to be alert to any messages concerning the mission in voice or Morse Code. The radio operator in the lead ship had to transmit the strike message to the base as soon

as the bombs were dropped.

The instructors had flown their missions during the early days of the war when there were only a few bombers on a mission and the Allied fighters did not have enough range to accompany the bomber stream all of the way to the target. The Allied fighters would stay with the bombers as long as their fuel held out and then return to their bases to refuel and take off again to meet the bombers on their return trip. This procedure left the bombers on their own when they were making the deeper penetrations. In those early days the Germans fighters waited until the cover left and then attacked the bomber formations. The instructors told us that the British had tried daylight bombing but that they had suffered such heavy losses that they copied the German procedures and switched to night saturation bombing. This was not a comforting bit of information to the new crews.

A tour of duty in the early days of daylight bombing was 25 missions, but with heavy losses, sometimes exceeding 10% of the aircraft, completing a tour of duty was far from a sure thing. Only 25% of the first crews were able to complete their tours, but many of those that failed to return from missions spent much of the war as guests of the Third Reich in POW (Prisoner of War) camps. If an airman survived the bailout procedure and was captured by the Luftwaffe or Wehrmacht, he had a good chance of surviving the war. If captured by civilians or SS troops, many did not live to get to a POW camp. By the time that we arrived on the scene, a tour was raised to 35 missions with 30 missions for the lead crews.

We spent a lot of time on aircraft identification and German attack procedures. Some of the German fighters were similar to our escorts so identification was crucial. We couldn't let an enemy go unchallenged nor could we fire on a friendly fighter if we were to survive.

We had some gunnery practice firing from the Emerson nose turrets that were mounted on the shore of Loch Neagh. They had anchored some targets out in the water for us to fire at. A .50 calibre round will travel a long way and we were concerned for the safety of the people that lived across the lake and those in the fishing boats that disregarded the warning signs and were on the lake when we were firing.

We lived in Nissen huts when we were in Northern Ireland with supplies furnished by the British Army. Our mattresses were 3 sections of hard, straw filled, pads called "biscuits". They kept sliding apart when you laid on them so you spent a lot of time laying on the springs. Our blankets were British Issue wool complete with the burrs, not like the soft American wool blankets that we were used to. We could have used some pajamas to cover our arms and legs. We sympathized with the British troops that had to use them all of the time, and I suspected that their uniforms were made out of the same material.

One evening we were able to go to a nearby base where they had a quartermaster depot and bought some more wool uniforms. We needed to have something to wear when our good uniforms were in the cleaners. I purchased a blouse and a pair of green pants for 8 pounds (about $32.00)

We saw how the Irish farmers harvested their crops of flax, oats, wheat, and rye. They cut the crop with a horse drawn mowing machine and then went through the fields and tied everything into bundles using strands of the crop as tie material. It must have been very hard on hands and backs.

On July 31, 16 crews got ready to leave Northern Ireland for their assigned combat bases. Four of the crews were on the orders to report to Horsham St. Faith, the 458th Bomb Group, located on the outskirts of Norwich. We got all of our gear together again, retrieved our side arms and reported to the flight line where our crew was assigned to a B-17 for our trip to England.

Our Training was Finally Over, We Were Ready to Join the War Effort

They had installed some plywood panels in the bomb bays so that was to be our plush accommodations for the final leg of our journey to our combat base. There were no windows so we couldn't see where were going on the trip from Cluntoe to Norwich. Later, we could tell by looking at charts that we must have flown over Belfast, Manchester, Nottingham, Kings Lynn, and into Norwich.

Introduction to our Combat Base

It was late afternoon when our pilot eased the B-17 down on the runway at Horsham after a trip of about 300 miles. We were lucky that we got down when we did because the planes from the days mission had just started to arrive. Several of the planes were firing flares to get priority in the landing pattern; yellow for mechanical problems and red for wounded on board. The ambulance crews went out to the planes that were firing the red flares and tended to the wounded. One of the 32 planes on the mission took a direct hit and broke apart over the target, a chemical plant and Ludwigshafen.

After the crews returning from the mission had been taken to the briefing hut, they sent a truck out to the flight line to take us to our quarters. It was getting dark and under black-out conditions we couldn't see much of the base. They dropped us off in front of a two story brick building and we went in to see where we would be living at this base. This building was for flying officers and we were assigned rooms upstairs. The enlisted men had quarters in another building. George and I shared one room and Jim and John were in another. Crew members roomed together so they would be easier to find in the middle

of the night. We looked around, unpacked some of our gear, and went downstairs to see if we could find something to eat. By that time the mess hall had been set up to feed the crews that had returned from the mission and we were able to listen in on their conversations, a preview for what lay ahead for us.

The next morning we ate breakfast, reported to Group Headquarters, and were assigned to the 752nd Squadron. The 458th Bombardment Group (H) was divided into four squadrons; 752nd, 753rd, 754th, and the 755th. A bombing mission usually consisted of three squadrons of 9 to 12 aircraft . The 755th squadron was designated as the lead crew squadron. The squadron navigators of the 752nd, 753rd and 754th squadrons and their crews also flew leads. As we walked around the base, we began to appreciate just how lucky we were. Horsham St. Faith was a prewar, RAF base with paved streets, permanent buildings, and even big concrete and steel hangers for the planes when they were being repaired. They were large enough to hold three B-24s at one time. The asphalt runways, taxi ways, and hard stands (parking places for the planes) were surrounded by grass. No mud like they had at the new bases that had been recently created out of the farmers fields. They told us that the base was at the edge of Norwich, a city of about 100,000 people and that city busses ran by the front gate on a frequent schedule.

We got a warm reception from the old crews on the base. Many of them had completed their tours, but due to regulations couldn't start for home until their replacements arrived. They had flown in the early days where mission losses were high due to attacks by German fighters. They were a wild bunch, just very happy to have survived their quota of missions and ready to go home.

Compared to the living quarters at the new bases, we were going to be living in the lap of luxury. Those fellows were living in Nissen huts. We had nice rooms, central heat, a large bathroom just down the hall, and a club room downstairs with a piano, bar, and card tables. The mess hall was across the hall from the club room.

When I got a chance, I went down to the flightline to see how the planes had been modified. I really liked the way that they replaced the small flat windows, put in at the factory, with plexiglass bubble windows. They were large enough for the navigator to stick his head out and look straight down. It would be great to get a good view of the country that we were flying over. They had mounted the "Gee" box over the table where it was easy to get to.

In a day or two the new crews went up on a single squadron training mission to practice formation flying and navigation. We needed to become familiar with the country surrounding the base and the takeoff and landing procedures.

They issued us the rest of our flying gear such as Mae Wests (inflatable life vests), parachutes, steel helmets, goggles, throat mikes, and black, high top civilian shoes. The throat mikes were held to our throat by an elastic band. Each unit had two small microphones that fit against the sides of our throat, one on each side of our "Adams Apple" The radio system in the planes had feedback so we could hear how our own voice sounded. That way we could learn how to speak so that the others could understand us. The mike cord had a switch that we could depress when we wanted to talk. The pilots mike buttons were fastened to a spoke of the control wheel. This way we all had our hands free to do other things. The black shoes were to be carried each time we were over enemy territory. They were tied together with parachute shroud lines and fastened to the parachute harness with a metal snap in case we had to bail out. Those shoes had two purposes. One was that the flying boots were not suitable for walking. The other was that if we got down safely and undetected, we were less apt to be spotted in black civilian shoes than in brown army issue shoes. They also gave us a large canvas bag, called a parachute bag, to carry the gear out to the plane in. They assigned each of us a locker in the briefing hut to keep our flying gear in. The briefing hut was an extra large Nissen hut where crews met before each mission to get instructions for the mission. It was also the place where everyone came back to at the end of the mission to change clothes and be debriefed. (questioned about the mission)

COMBAT DUTY

Our First Mission

Our crew was listed on the mission board at 22:00 on August 5, 1944, 16 months and 7 days after our rag tag bunch of enlistees rolled through the gates of Sheppard Field, Texas. We laid out our clothes and went to bed early, hoping to get some sleep. In the middle of the night we were awakened by a flashlight shining in our faces. The holder of the light announced that the mission was on and stayed until our feet hit the floor. Then it was get dressed as recommended by the old timers: Tee shirts, shorts, two piece wool underwear,wool sox, wool shirts and pants (insignia on the shirt) and a B-13 flying jacket. No billfolds or papers in our pockets. We always had 2 dog tags (aluminum tags with name, serial number, blood type, religious preference and next of kin) on a steel bead chain around our neck.

Then it was shave, a bathroom stop, and downstairs to a breakfast of powdered eggs, toast, and coffee. After breakfast we stumbled through the dark to the briefing hut that was quite a distance from our quarters. No street lights during blackout conditions so we only had the faint glow of a few flashlights to light our way. All personnel that were scheduled for the mission gathered in the main briefing room facing the stage. The back wall was hidden by a drawn curtain covering the map of the continent. When we were all seated the CO, Colonel James Isbell, strode to the platform and pulled the curtain aside, exposing the target for the day. The course, the turn points, and the target were marked by a length of heavy yarn. The target for that day was the Rheuania oil refinery near the large city of Hamburg. I learned some years later, that my Grandfather Fick's birthplace was a small village just a few miles northwest of the target. Our course was over the North Sea for most of the way with the penetration to the initial point, the bomb run, the bombs release, and back out over the water. There was a general briefing about fighters, and antiaircraft batteries to expect, weather, aircraft assignments and a time check.

As soon as the general briefing was over, we broke up for specific briefings. The pilots, bombardiers, navigators, radio operators, and gunners all went to separate rooms. The pilots were briefed on fuel load, bomb load, takeoff order, position in the formation and assembly point. The bombardiers were briefed on the identification of the primary and alternate targets, bomb load, bombing altitude, target weather, and smoke screens that might be encountered in the target area. The navigators were given the times, course turn points, altitude, wind direction and speed, target and alternate target information and the location of anti-aircraft batteries enroute and in the target area. The radio operators were given the codes of the day, the frequencies to monitor and to use when transmitting a

message. The gunners got dressed and went to the armory and picked up the barrels for their guns. There was always a chaplain in a room to meet with any of the crew members before they went out to the planes.

When the briefings were over, we went to the locker room to finish dressing. We put on the electric flying suit over our uniforms, then the heavy pants, the B-13 jacket, the leather helmet, and the flying boots. The parachute pack, the black shoes, the parachute harness, the Mae West, and the steel helmet went into the parachute bag to be transported to the plane. A last trip to the bathroom.

As we left the briefing hut they gave us a box of hard candy (our carbohydrate ration), to provide energy during the mission. It was in a waxed cardboard box about 2"x3"x4". We each had a packet of maps of Europe printed on both sides of pieces of silk material and a small compass to aid in evading capture if we were to be shot down and not captured. We also carried passport type photos of us in civilian clothes, front, left, and right views, to be used on forged papers if the need should arise.

When all was ready we went to the back door of the briefing hut and got into the first truck that came by. We gave the driver our squadron and plane numbers. The trucks were 2 1\2 ton, canvas covered, 6X6s with benches along the sides. The tail gate folded down so we could get up into the bed. When the truck was loaded, the driver made his rounds and dropped us off as he went by each aircraft.

By the time that I reached our ship, the bombs had been loaded, the gasoline had been delivered, and the gunners had installed the barrels in their guns and checked the ammunition supply. The crew chief and the pilots had checked the aircraft and the engines had been pulled through. (propellers turned).

Each bomb had a fuse in the nose and the larger bombs had nose and tail fuses. Each fuse had a small propeller that had to turn a certain number of revolutions before the bomb was armed. Steel wires fastened to the bomb racks and through the fuse assembly, prevented the propellers from turning until the bombs left the bomb bays. Once free of the plane, the wind turned the propellers until they spun free of the fuse. After that, the bombs were armed and would explode on impact. Each fuse also had a cotter pin in the propeller to prevent it from turning during handling. The pins were attached to shipping tags with a piece of string. The tags, with the attached cotter pins, had to be turned in on return from a mission to prove that the bombs had been armed. Apparently some crews forgot to pull the pins and the bombs failed to explode when they hit the ground.

As soon as I got to our plane, I put on my Mae West and parachute harness and crawled up into the nose compartment to get all of my other gear organized. I fastened my chart to the table, and arranged my navigation equipment where I could reach it easily.

I put my parachute pack, my steel helmet, and my black escape shoes on an ammunition box, and made sure that there were enough flak suits in the nose for everyone. I checked the "Gee" box and the compass to make sure they were working. When all was in readiness, the bombardier, the nose gunner, and I went back up onto the flight deck.

At a signal flare from the tower, the pilots started the engines and taxied to the end of the runway to be used that day. The first plane started to roll down the runway when the pilot got a green light from the person in the caravan. The other planes followed at 30 second intervals until the entire group was in the air heading for the assembly point. A red light from the caravan would have meant that the mission had been delayed or cancelled.

The caravan was a four wheeled trailer that was painted with large black and white squares. They were actually mobile control towers that were used most of the time for combat mission takeoffs and landings. They were located at the end of the active runway so they could provide on the spot signals to the aircraft as they tookoff and landed. The bad weather, the need for silence and the distance from the main control tower to the end of the runways, made the use of the caravan a necessity.

The first plane to takeoff was the formation ship. An old, Model D, B-24 with the front half painted white and the rear half left in the original olive drab color. To make it still easier to identify, an artist had painted large contrasting color polka dots all over the fuselage, a large red circle on the sides and a sharks mouth at the nose. A vertical line of red lights on the fuselage in front of the waist gunners windows and a number of flare sockets in the roof on the flight deck completed the identification modifications. We called this ship the "First Sergeant". As soon as it reached the assembly point and got above any clouds or fog in the area it started to circle and a couple of fellows on the flight deck started firing the flares. The assembly points were a number of nondirectional radio beacons, called splashers and bunchers, that the British had set up to be used as navigation aids. In spite of the best laid plans, assembly often took a high toll on ships and men as thousands of aircraft wandered about in the darkness and fog seeking their groups. Sometimes it was a single aircraft crossing in front of another and sometimes it was whole formations that would get tangled up. It was always nervous time until all formations got straightened out , especially when a plane hit sudden turbulence and the crew knew that it meant they were in a space that had been occupied by another plane just a few seconds before. The crew that was leading the mission for the day fell into formation with the "Sergeant" and both ships fired flares to assist the other ships from the 458th in getting together. In the dark or half light of early morning, the colored flares and the lights on the sides of the assembly ships enabled the planes to form into their proper groups. When the formation was complete, the "First Sergeant" dropped out and went back to the

base. By that time the group was flying together with the squadrons in their proper positions as assigned at briefing. Each group used different colored flares. Ours was double red, other groups in our wing used single or triple red. Other wings had different colors such as yellow or green. The flare shells looked like oversized shotgun shells and were marked with colored bands to indicate the color of the flare and the number of balls in each. It usually took about two hours from the time that the planes started to take off from their various airfields until the lead plane departed from the English Coast.

When the time to depart arrived, the 8th Air Force Group that was leading that day flew over the departure point and the other wings and groups fell into trail. This formation of aircraft was called a bomber stream and sometimes was made up of more than 2,000 planes (B-17s and B-24s).

As soon as the planes were over the North Sea, the pilots ordered the gunners to check their guns (fire a few rounds) to see if they were all functioning properly. That gave them some time to correct any problems that they might have before reaching the continent. At the same time, someone had to go into the bomb bays to pull the cotter pins out of the bomb fuses. That required walking on the narrow beam between the bomb racks and making sure that all pins were collected. If the bombs were 100 pounders, that meant 52 pins. The pins were removed before the crew went onto oxygen so the person in the bomb bays didn't have to deal with a "walk-around" oxygen bottle. As the formation reached 10,000 feet everyone put on his oxygen mask and checked it. Before going over enemy territory everyone put on the flak suits and helmets to be ready for the flak that we knew would come in our direction. Flak was an abbreviation of a number of German words describing their antiaircraft artillery, "FliegerAbwehrKanonen". In English it meant "flyer defense cannon". The most common size was the 88mm that could hurl 22 pound explosive shells up to 25,000 feet at the rate of 15 to 20 per minute. The guns were radar controlled and could fire at individual ships or fill the sky with bursting shells where they anticipated a formation would be. The Germans also used 90 mm, 105 mm and 128mm guns around some of the target areas.The flak suits were vests made of overlapping, horizontal, strips of hardened steel sewn into a heavy canvas cover. They consisted of the back, the upper front, and the lap piece. The lap piece was fastened to the upper front portion by some brass studs. The front and back pieces were fastened together over the shoulders by the same type of stud. The suits were very heavy and added to the fatigue factor of combat flying. Most of the helmets were regular infantry issue with sections cut out to accommodate our earphones. An extension was welded to the side of the helmets to protect the ear area. Some helmets were special made and had hinged flaps to accommodate the earphones.

For protection from the German fighters, the bombers stayed in the bomber stream as long as possible, but in time the groups had to leave to go to their assigned targets. Following "bombs away" the groups tried to get back to the bomber stream quickly so the fighter cover would be able to provide better protection. In addition to the protection provided by our fighters, the bombers tried to fly a tight formation to provide maximum protection from their own guns. Ninety to one hundred .50 calibre machine guns in each squadron could take a heavy toll on the enemy fighters. The bomber formations shot down more German fighters than our fighter cover but most of that score was in the early days of the war when the fighters could not accompany the bombers all of the way to the target.

On this mission, the course was along the coast of Holland and Germany and then turned inland to the oil refineries near Hamburg. Following bombs away we were to go back to the North Sea, then home. When we were still over the North Sea we could see bombers off to our right in heavy flak. The bombardier came on the intercom and said he was sure glad that we weren't going there. He was pretty quiet when I announced that it was our target too, and that we would be turning inland in a few minutes. The closer to the target that we got the more flak we encountered. We could see the black puffs of the exploding 88mm shells and hear the explosions over the roar of the engines. When we saw the red of the explosions between us and the next plane we knew that they had our range. As the shell fragments hit the ship it sounded like someone was throwing rocks at us. One time I looked out of the window to check our position and then turned back to my chart only to find that a piece of shrapnel had gone through the bottom of the plane, through my table and between the pilots. We were very lucky that it missed all of us.

On this mission we didn't have any clouds to worry about so the bombardiers in each squadron dropped visually using the Norden bomb sights. When the lead ships opened their bomb bay doors, the others followed suit. As soon as the bombs left the lead ship, the other crews dropped their bombs in order to assure a small pattern. There were two smoke markers attached to the bombs in the lead ships to mark the point in the sky where the bombs were released. If we had been flying over clouds we would have had to depend on the Mickey (radar) operator in the group lead ships to determine the spot to release the bombs. When I flew my first missions they only had a few Mickey (radar) ships and they were reserved for the group leaders. The other squadrons moved into trail on the group lead and dropped when they flew through the smoke markers. This bombing by groups was not as accurate as dropping visually by squadron using the Norden bomb sights but it was the best that we could do at that time. After bombs away, we made a sharp turn to the left to get away from the concentration of flak batteries in the target area as soon as possible.

As we reached the North Sea we could see a lone squadron flying several miles to the right of the reforming bomber stream. They must have failed to drop their bombs on the assigned target and were headed for the heavily fortified submarine base on Heligoland, a small island less than one mile square, located 30 miles from the German coast. It had been a German naval base during World War I; destroyed after that war, rebuilt and used as a submarine and artillery base for World War II. The submarine pens were protected by many feet of reinforced concrete, and the bombs for an oil refinery (250 lb) would have done no damage if they had been hit. The German gunners hit the two lead planes and they blew up with no visible parachutes. The other planes escaped but dropped their bombs harmlessly in the sea. Someone had made a serious mistake and it had cost at least 20 lives and two aircraft for no gain.

The long trip home was uneventful and in due time we went past our base and then turned right and flew over the base on a north heading. As soon as we went over the base, one plane peeled off to land. Another peeled off every 30 seconds until all were heading back toward the base approximately one mile apart. When we landed and parked our aircraft in the assigned spot we were met by a very unhappy crew chief. He was upset that this green crew had got his airplane all shot up. After the stories we heard in Ireland, we figured that we had a pretty easy mission. We did have a lot of holes in the plane but no one had been injured and all four engines were still turning. We had been up 6 hours and 45 minutes and had reached an altitude of 23,000 feet on the bomb run. One of the planes from our group failed to return from the mission.

After our discussion with the crew chief, and a thorough examination of the holes, we gathered all of our gear and waited for a truck to take us to the briefing hut. The gunners had to pull their gun barrels and take them back to the armory to clean and store them for the next mission. When a truck came to our plane, we all climbed on board. As soon as we got in the building, we went to the locker room and removed our flying gear and stored it for the next trip. Then it was a trip to the latrine (toilet). The bombers were not equipped with rest rooms and it had been a long time since we left the briefing hut in the morning.

The next step was to return to the main briefing room where they gave us some cookies and hot coffee to tide us over until supper. Everyone got a shot of rye whiskey to help us wind down from the events of the day. Whiskey in a cup of hot coffee was a great tranquilizer. A staff officer talked to each crew to find out all of the details of the mission from takeoff to landing. He asked about operational problems, mechanical problems, enemy aircraft, gun locations, flak density, smoke screens, target information, bomb run, planes leaving the formation, parachutes and sightings of American planes that might have

been operated by German crews. At the close of the debriefing, they showed us the strike photos for the days mission. Several of the planes in each squadron had cameras that started to shoot pictures as soon as the bombs left the bomb bays and continued to run until they ran out of film. That was enough time to show the bombs hitting the ground. The photo lab crews removed the cameras as soon as the planes were parked. The film was processed and the strike photos were printed quickly so we could see if we had destroyed our target or not. On the next day we flew a mission to an oil refinery storage facility at Ghent, Belgium, but due to heavy cloud cover we were not able to drop our bombs. When bombing targets in the occupied countries we had to be extra careful to identify the target before dropping. One squadron was able to drop on a target of opportunity through an opening in the clouds. We brought our bombs home. Landing with more than 6,000 pounds of bombs on board made us a little nervous but all planes were able to land safely.

Sometimes the wing crews would leave their bombardier at the base. If the bombardier was along, he flew in the nose turret.On our third mission I had a mishap that could have ended my career as a combat navigator, before it really got started. As we neared the coast of Europe, Jim got in the nose turret and I helped him put his flak suit on. In putting his armor on, or in putting mine on, I pulled my oxygen hose loose. Pretty soon I realized that I was having trouble and grabbed the two ends of the hose. My brain said to put the hose back together but my body could not obey. It was lucky that I had not fastened the doors on the nose turret so Jim was able to twist around and see my problem. He fastened the hose sections together. In a little while, I regained my faculties and was able to close the doors on the nose turret. The rest of the mission was normal.

On August 9, we went to the railroad marshalling yard (many railroad lines where they made up or stored trains) in Saarbrucken and had to drop our bombs by radar because of cloud cover. On August 12, we went to an airfield in Mourmellon, France. This time we had good visibility and the bombardier put our bombs right on the target.

The newest crews were always assigned the oldest aircraft and if they survived several missions they eventually started to get some of the newer planes. On one of our early missions we lost an engine (it just stopped running) so we had to abort (return to the base without completing the mission). That old B-24 couldn't keep up with the rest of the formation on only 3 engines so we dropped out and headed back toward England. As soon as we reached the Channel we started to let down to a lower altitude to make it easier on the remaining three engines. By the time that we neared the English coast we were pretty close to the water. George decided that the plane was not operating well enough to risk a landing with a load of bombs so he ordered them to be dropped into the channel. When they hit the water we got a big surprise. The explosion gave us an unexpected boost

toward home. No damage, but a lot of excitement. Everyone had been so concerned about aborting the mission that we forgot to put the pins back in the bomb fuses. When we got back to the base, we landed safely on three engines. We didn't get mission credit for that trip across the channel.

On August 18, our target was the Woippy Aircraft factory and on August 24, we went after an oil refinery at Hannover. This time the results were good. Our targets seemed to be oil, railroad marshalling yards, ball bearing factories, and aircraft factories. We were out to deprive the German forces of the fuel and equipment that they needed to carry on the war.

Life on an Airbase in England

It didn't cost us much to live on the base. Our meals, room and club dues were only 12 pounds ($48.00) a month, and we were only allowed to spend $1.00 a week at the PX (post exchange). The movies on base were old, but they were free. We could go into Norwich to a show, ride a bus and spend a little that way, but we hated to eat off base because the people there had so little for themselves. The fellows that went to London reported that they could spend money quite easily there.

There was a lot of poker playing on payday, but I just watched. On payday there were several tables full of players but it only took about 3 days to cut the number of players down to the same ones sitting around a single table. Somebody was making a lot of money and I made sure that none of it was mine.

We were settling into a strange way of life. We might fly several missions in a row and then have several days off with nothing to do because of bad weather. Sometimes we flew training missions around England when the weather in the local area was better than that on the continent. Some of the fellows got acquainted with the people around the base, went to the pubs, and met the local girls. Others stayed in bed until midday, but I wanted something productive to do with my free time.

I went down to the squadron navigation office and asked Captain Granholm, the squadron navigator, if he had anything for me to do. He said that he could use some help so I had a job to occupy my free time. I checked the mission logs and charts for all of the navigators in the 752nd squadron and calibrated the navigation instruments in our ships. Before long I was officially designated as the Assistant Squadron Navigator.

The Allied Bomber Offensive on Fortress Europe

By early 1944, the Allied aircraft were attacking the German forces by day and night. The RAF planes went out at night, each plane flying by itself, due to the difficulty

of formation flying in the dark. The American bombers might take off in the dark, but by the time that they had completed assembling into their groups it would be daylight. It was common for us to meet the RAF bombers coming back from their nights work as our formations were heading for our targets. On many missions, we would see great columns of black smoke reaching to the sky proving that those RAF fellows were finding their targets in the pitch black. They had special maps that indicated the features that would be visible at night such as rivers and bays to guide them to their assigned targets. Except for extreme weather conditions there was very little time when Allied planes were not flying over German occupied territory.

Our heavies, 4 engine bombers, usually flew at altitudes of 18,000 to 30,000 feet and the medium bombers, 2 engine, usually flew at a much lower altitude. Occasionally medium bombers and fighters were scheduled to go to the same targets as the heavy bombers, but at a different time. If any group got off schedule over the target the heavies could drop through a formation flying at a lower altitude with disastrous results.

A Break in the Action

The weather was so bad that the 8th Air Force didn't fly any missions during the last week of August. I took advantage of the opportunity to go into Norwich on the bus to see the sights. The narrow crooked streets, the big churches and the castle up on the hill were all very interesting but the grocery stores and meat markets where the customers stood out on the sidewalks and told the clerks what they wanted to buy intrigued me the most. The meat, fish, and poultry were hung in the open with no refrigeration and the poultry came complete with feathers. The was a large square in the center of town that was filled with pushcarts during the week days but at night, and on Sundays, it was empty. If we were looking for the center of town all we had to do was to follow our noses. The smell from the fish market was as good as any compass. Soesbe and Tucker bought a used radio for 20 pounds ($80.00). It looked like an American made Philco, but it had been made in Italy. The store had some English made radios for sale but they were not as good as the one they purchased. Soesbe, Tucker, and I all purchased used bicycles to ride around the base. They were all painted black, with coaster brakes and small diameter tires. We kept them in the bike racks in front of the barracks with lots of other look alikes.

Since we weren't flying, Soesbe and Tucker decided to get a pass and go to London for 2 days. They had just got their passes and headed for Norwich to catch the train to London when George asked me where Soesbe was. He was scheduled to go to a training session for bombardiers the next morning. When I told George that he was on a pass to

London with Tucker he said that he would just have to pay the consequences for not checking the training schedule. I hated to see Jim get into trouble so I decided to try and stop them at the train station. I had only been into town once, but I had a general idea of the layout. I put some candy bars in my shoulder bag, got on my bike and headed out the front gate. The bicycles far outnumbered the cars, trucks, and busses, so I felt at ease on the streets. When I got near the center of town I asked a Bobby (English Policeman) for directions to Thorpe station. I found it easily and located my crew members in the crowd of mostly servicemen. I delivered the message and they decided to stay in Norwich that night and go back to the base in the morning in time for Jim to attend the training session.

After I had completed my mission, I looked around town for a while and then started my trip back to the base. On my way into town I had been riding fast and watching for signs to the railroad station, so I had paid little attention to the landmarks along my route. After I had been riding away from the center of town for a while I realized that I hadn't seen anything that looked familiar. I felt that I was going in the right direction but I would have been more comfortable if I had seen a familiar landmark. Finally, I stopped and asked a young boy, that was walking along the street, if he knew where the airbase was. He said that he didn't but he did appreciate the candy bar that I gave him out of my pack. As we were talking, one of our planes went overhead with the landing gear down. That told me that I was close to the base so I just continued on the road that I was on. In a few minutes I arrived at the back gate. I finally figured out what my trouble was. The streets in Norwich all led to the center of town and radiated out like the spokes of a wheel. Toward the center of town, they had some one way streets so I wasn't able to leave the station on the same street that I was on for my trip in. The farther I got from the center of town, the farther I got from route into town. It was no wonder that nothing looked familiar.

My First Squadron Deputy Lead

On September 9, we flew as a deputy squadron lead on a mission to the railroad marshalling yards at Mainz, near Frankfurt. The deputy lead crew had to be prepared to direct the course and initiate the squadron bomb drop if the lead crew had to drop out for any reason. As a deputy lead, we flew with a Soesbe on the bomb sight and Gowan in the nose turret again.

Lost, One Propeller

On September 11, we flew as deputy squadron lead again. This time to an oil refinery at Magdeburg. On this mission we were in the air for 7 hours and 20 minutes and we lost one plane from our squadron. The German gunners got us in their sights too and

we took a heavy hit in number 3 engine (inboard engine on the right side). The damage included the feathering mechanism which prevented the pilots from stopping the engine from turning.. After what seemed like a very long time the engine froze and the shock broke the propeller shaft. The remaining stub was too short to keep the propeller in position and the spinning blades started to tip erratically until they cut the front engine cover off exposing the cylinders. Eventually the propeller came loose and drove one blade through the fuselage below the copilots seat leaving a big gash. That was the part of the plane that the crew from the nose compartment had to crawl through to get back to the flight deck for landing. That day it was a bit breezy making that trip through the tunnel. The crew flying beside us saw the incident. They said that the loose prop struck the side of our ship, spun underneath, and then up over the top of the fuselage between the wing and the tail assembly. It was lucky that it did not hit us again or any other ship in the formation. Our plane started to fly better as soon as the wild prop left the engine and we made it back to the base without any other problems. That September 11 mission was our ninth in 37 calendar days, but because of the weather the group only flew 19 missions during that time.

Our Introduction to Radar Jamming by Using Chaff

The Allies knew that the Germans were controlling their anti-aircraft batteries by radar and some RAF personnel came up with an idea to reduce their accuracy. It was long before the days of electronic jamming devices so they worked with what was available at that time. The idea was to drop bits of aluminum from the lead planes so the radar signal would reflect off of it and give a false reading of altitude to the German radar equipment. As more lead planes flew over the radar stations and more "chaff" fluttered toward the ground, the more confusing the picture of altitude became. By the time that I started flying in the lead planes, the system had been refined and the individual pieces of aluminum were bonded to paper and cut into strips about 1/8" x 8". The length of the strips matched the wave length of the radar that the Germans were using. The strips were packaged in cardboard folders and then packed in large cardboard boxes for delivery to the planes. We called the material "chaff" and the RAF called it "windows". To complete the delivery system, the mechanics installed chutes in the skin of the planes in front of the waist windows. The gunners started slipping bundles of "chaff" through the chutes as soon as the navigator announced that the formation was approaching an area where flak could be expected. The packets opened as soon as they hit the slip stream scattering thousands of individual strips behind and below the planes. To counter this form of radar jamming, the Germans would sometime fly a captured American bomber along side of the formation

and radio the altitude information down to the German Gunners. The first planes in the bomber steam didn't get too much protection from the "chaff",but the planes that followed were being protected to some measure. Those little pieces of aluminum and paper saved many lives among the bomber crews. The use of "chaff' by the Allies so frustrated the German High Command that they offered a reward of 165,000 reichmarks ($65,000) to anyone who could provide an effective counter measure. None of the schemes that were submitted proved to be effective.

Hauling Gasoline to Patton's Third Army.

On September 12, the 96th Combat wing (458th, 466th, and 467th Bomb Groups) were shifted from hauling bombs to the enemy to hauling fuel for the rapidly advancing 3rd Army. Patton's armored forces were moving so fast that ground transportation could not keep them supplied. The three groups in the 20th wing hauled food and medical supplies to a field near Paris from August 28 through September 9. On September 17th, the 14th and 20th Wings (7 groups of B-24s) were assigned to drop supplies to the Allied advance forces at Arnheim, Eindhoven, and Nijmegan. It was a dangerous, low level mission that involved 252 aircraft. Seven ships were lost on the mission and 70 that returned had suffered heavy battle damage, The returning planes had 30 wounded on board. The B-24s had a much greater capacity to haul all types of freight than the B-17s so we drew the cargo hauls of all types. The 1st and 3rd Divisions (B-17s) stayed with the bombing missions.

Our group leaders decided that the time set aside for gas hauls would be a good opportunity for the lead crews to sharpen their leadership skills so it was navigation missions over England for us.

The first attempt at hauling gasoline involved putting a lot of 5 gallon cans in the waist and using two sections of the wing tanks. With this arrangement the crews could only haul about 1,000 gallons in each plane. It was obvious that changes had to be made if the operation was going to be effective, so a lot of people went to work on the project and came up with some improvements. It was to use two bomb bay tanks (450 gallons each) in the front bomb bays. We had used these tanks on our trip over from the states so they had a good supply. They hung P-51 drop tanks (75 gallons each) from the bomb shackles in the rear bomb bays, and tied down two P-38 drop tank in the waist. Once the method of converting the bombers into gasoline tankers had been determined, all of the tanks had to be located and hauled to the bases. After the tanks had been delivered it was up to the ground crews to install them in the planes. Then, all that remained was to fill the individual tanks with 80 octane gasoline and wait for good weather. Between converting the

bombers into tankers and cloudy weather, it took 5 days to get the operation really rolling. We put 6 planes up on September 18.

Once the problem of loading the planes had been taken care of, my Squadron C.O. (Commanding Officer) Colonel Williamson, wanted to see how his crews were functioning on the continent. Instead of hitching a ride with one of the crews already hauling gas , he decided to make up a crew out of the squadron staff. He flew as pilot, the executive officer, as co-pilot, the squadron clerk, a flight engineer who had completed his tour, as flight engineer and I flew as the navigator. I don't remember if we had a radio operator or not.

On September 19, we took our first load of gasoline to Clastres France (68 miles NNE of Paris). On our way to the field we flew over the Thames estuary, east of London. We had to stay high enough to clear the barrage balloons that protected the docks in the estuary from low flying German planes and at the same time stay out of the way of the groups of tow planes and gliders that were heading across our path. The boxy gliders were being towed by C-47 cargo planes. It was a very interesting sight, even if it was a little crowded. Those tow planes and gliders carried the 101st airborne troops that were headed for some bridges in the Netherlands. We were glad that we were not with them heading for an uncertain landing in rough terrain in area that was occupied by enemy troops.

We didn't know it at the time but the transport planes and gliders that we saw were a part of a complex operation that started on September 17, with the code name of "Market Garden". On the first day of the operation the 8th Air Force dispatched 200 P-47 fighters to fly at 2,000 to 2,500 feet elevation along the course that the tow planes and gliders were going to follow. As soon as the German gunners opened up on the formations of P-47s, some of them would drop down and dive bomb and strafe the gun emplacements. The neutralization operation was so successful that only 12 troop carriers were shot down by guns that the fighters could not find. Without the fighter sweep, the Germans would have had a field day shooting down the slow, low flying towplanes and their gliders. The fighters paid and heavy price with some squadrons being nearly wiped out. One of the P-47 pilots on that mission spoke to our 8th Air Force organization in Beaverton in 1997 describing the mission. He felt that if they had been alowed to fly a little higher, they could have accomplished the mission but suffered fewer losses.

On September 21, the Luftwaffe decimated the troop carriers going to the Arnheim-Netherlands area. "Market Garden" was a very costly operation for the Allies. The British airborne units lost 6,600 men out of the 9,000 engaged and the Americans lost 3,500 men. The Allied gain was only a 65 mile corridor into Holland.

The Gee box in the plane that we were flying that day would not function, so I had to rely on dead reckoning to find my way. We were flying low where it is much harder to identify landmarks than when flying higher. When I calculated that we should be able to see the field, I could not pick it out in the haze. I did see a church steeple in the town of St. Quentin, so I told the Coloned to keep that steeple in sight until I got my eye on the field. When you were flying toward the battle lines you didn't want to go too far. I soon spotted the grass field and we went in for a landing.

The field at Clastres had been a fighter base used by the Luftwaffe (German Air Force). It didn't have many taxiways that would hold up a heavily loaded bomber so we had to park our planes, nose to tail, in the available space. A German fighter could have wiped out a lot of our planes on the base with one pass. If the German fighters that attacked the troop transports on September 21, had found us we would have been defenseless. We only carried one extra person to man the guns and I don't think they ever bothered to put the barrels in the guns anyway. We never saw any anti-aircraft batteries around the field either.

After we checked in, I joined some fellows that were walking into the village. The war had been very hard on the area. Buildings had been destroyed, and the streets damaged. There were two German fighter planes lying in a street that had apparently been shot down while trying to takeoff from the air field. One was a Me-109 and the other was a FW-190. Neither plane had burned and the kids were stripping them of anything they could get loose. They were even playing with the live ammunition and some of it was explosive cannon shells. We didn't speak French and they didn't speak English but they left no doubt on how they felt about the recently departed Germans as they struck the planes with sticks and snarled "Bosche". We met some Free French fighters that were going through the countryside looking for hidden German soldiers and Frenchmen that had collaborated with the German troops.

Some of the fellows got the usual souvenirs and French wine when visiting the village. I picked up a rifle shell that had a red colored wooden bullet that seemed strange to me. I heard later that this ammunition caused severe wounds rather than killing a soldier, requiring long term care. I also found a German soldiers record book, It listed his military record, his home town and included a photo and pictures of a street in Saale, that may have been his home town.

When we got back to our planes we found out that they wouldn't be able to unload us until the next day so we ate a box of K rations that we had with us and tried to figure the best way to spend the night. They had given each of us one blanket and a piece of canvas to serve as our bed roll. At first I tried to lay down in the waist section of the plane but the

corrugated aluminum deck was not a very satisfactory substitute for a mattress. Next, I tried sleeping in the pilots seat. That was a little better and I finally got a few winks. However, I got a quite a start when I woke up in the middle of the night and saw all of those gauges staring at me. It took me a minute to figure out where I was. I determined to make better arrangements if I had to camp out again. The next day some American Troops unloaded our gasoline into 5 gallon "Jerry Cans", the German equivalent to our "Jeep" cans. and we headed back to Norwich.

We stayed at Horsham on the 21st to make sure that everything was going smoothly there and on the 22nd, we started out again with another load of gasoline. This time our destination was Lille. This air base was much larger than the one at Clastres and there was room to keep the planes a little farther apart. The method of unloading was about the same, but at Lille the troops unloading the planes were from a British unit. .

I was in charge of unloading our ship while the pilots carried out their command duties. I was watching the operation when I heard the sound of metal striking on metal coming from under the ship When I investigated, I found one of the soldiers striking the lid on the "Jerry" can with his large knife to get it to turn. At the time, several steams of gasoline were running under the ship and the bomb bay and the surrounding area was filled with explosive fumes I didn't take time to look for their officer. I just called a halt to the operation and had a heart to heart talk with the troops. They got the message.

We were able to buy one carton of cigarettes a week at our PX, but I didn't smoke very much. I gave most of my rations to others, especially the ground crew that tended our planes. I figured that the guys on the continent couldn't get supplies very easily so I took some of my rations with me and gave them away. One fellow did give me a German bayonet in return. In light of todays knowledge about smoking cigarettes, I guess that I really didn't do those guys a favor. The bayonet that I got that day was to come in very handy later in the winter.

A Group of Free Polish airmen, flying British Typhoon fighter planes in close support of ground troops, were operating across the field from where we were parked. They were really a dedicated bunch. They never came back to the base until they were almost out of fuel and much of the time, their aircraft was showing heavy battle damage. It was common for an engine to cut out when the pilot was landing. The Polish people had suffered so much at the hands of the German soldiers earlier in the war that these fliers were eager to take revenge.

By the time that the troops had completed unloading our ship, it was too late to head back to Norwich so we were stuck with another night in France. This time we had some French bread sandwiches made with white flour to go with our K rations. The sandwiches

came from the mess hall at an American fighter Group that was using the field at Lille. All of the bread in England was made with graham (finely ground whole wheat) flour, so the white bread was a treat. The English bread was heavy and looked gray, but it sure was filling.

This time the crews were allowed to go into Lille as long as one man stood guard at each aircraft. I didn't have any desire to go into the city at night, so I volunteered to stay with the ship. I laid my bedroll down by one of the main landing gear tires and stood watch with my .45 pistol until the other returned. Then I settled down on the concrete to try to get some rest.

The next morning, we got up and waited for the planes in front of us to take off, then we started back to our base.

I Lose My Crew

When we got back to Norwich, I discovered that my crew was gone. I checked and found that the commanders had decided that the lead crews should join the others in hauling gas after all and in my absence they had assigned a new navigator to my crew. They left Horsham on the day that we returned from Lille. At first I just figured that they had stayed over in France waiting to get unloaded. After a couple of days I really got worried and had the Group send a radio message to St. Dizaire (their destination) to see if they were still there. We were informed that they had departed that base on the 24th of September. After sending radio messages to the other fields along their route and receiving no information, it was assumed that they had gone down for some unknown reason. I never learned the whole story, but after the war I was told that the plane had been hit by antiaircraft fire, and blew up. Apparently the only person to survive was Billy Hudson, the ball turret gunner, who was standing in the waist. He was badly burned, captured by the German forces, and spent a lot of time in a hospital. I don't know how they strayed over the enemy occupied territory. St. Dizier was very close to the lines, but they did get there safely. If they had left there on a westerly heading, they should have been safe. Their navigator that day had just arrived from the states and he probably didn't get a very thorough briefing. The rest of us had been flying several gas hauls and he was probably overlooked at briefing time.

The Group rule allowed two nonessential crewmen to go on each flight as passengers. The crew had drawn straws to see who could go and Bob Shea and Jim Soesbe won. Bob didn't care to go so he let Billy go in his place. It was one of those little things that changed the life for two men forever.

On the 28th, we got an early start on another trip to Lille. By this time, the loading

and unloading operations were going much more efficiently and we were able to make two complete round trips, with eight and one half hours of air time. That day our group dispatched 67 flights and delivered 90,498 gallons of gasoline to the ground forces. Our group hauled 727,250 gallons of gasoline to the troops on the continent in 13 days. The planes carried over 1,600 gallons of 80 octane gasoline in a combination of tanks. It was not a very efficient way to supply fuel to the front lines, but we did the best that we could with the equipment that we had. Each trip consumed almost 500 gallons of aircraft fuel to deliver 1,600 gallons of tank gas.

After a few days, the quartermaster guys came in a completely packed up the belongings of the missing men. I was moved to another room that I shared with a bombardier that didn't have a crew either.

A few days after my last gas haul, the ground forces took the port of Antwerp and the transportation of supplies, including gasoline, was left to more conventional methods. The bombers returned to the business of delivering bombs to the German military forces on October 3.

A Period of Uncertainty

I had no idea what was going to happen to me. I was afraid that I would have to spend the rest of my tour filling in on any crew that was missing a navigator. It seemed that my suspicions were correct when I was assigned to fly on October 4, with a crew that I had never met. We were briefed and went out to the ship. When I got up into the nose compartment, I noticed that there was no flak suit for me to use. I am afraid that I got a little gruff with the crew chief when I demanded a suit right away. I was greatly relieved when the mission was scrubbed (cancelled) so I didn't have to fly with that crew. I guess I was more nervous than I realized and took it out on the crew chief. I am glad that I went through the experience because it made me appreciate what the gunners had to go through on every mission. The pilots, navigators, bombardiers, radio operators, and flight engineers all had duties to keep them occupied, but once the gunners had installed the barrels in their guns, all they could do was wait and worry. I had felt comfortable with my original crew, but the thought of flying with a bunch of strangers made me very nervous. I was pretty blue over the loss of most of my crew, but my job at the squadron office kept me busy during the day.

It was ironic that after we had completed 9 combat missions over enemy territory with all of the flak, that the guys should be lost on a mission that was supposed to be entirely over friendly territory.

A Glimpse into my Future Duties.

My name came up again on the flying roster for October 6, but this time I would be flying on Hayzlett's crew to replace Jackson Granholm, my squadron navigator, who was in the hospital. I left my nervousness behind and got ready for my first squadron lead. It was a strange mission. I didn't know any of the crew very well, but Colonel Williamson, the Squadron CO was flying with us as command pilot. As soon as we got into the Group formation and headed for the continent, Hayzlett announced that he could not control our plane at the speed the others were flying and that he was going to have to fly faster. That meant that he would have to dog leg (fly away) from the bomber stream and then come back. By flying this extra distance, he hoped to compensate for our speed, but it sure made a lot of extra work for me. Not only was he continually changing course, but he was also climbing to a higher altitude.

We could see the other bombers all of the time, but when you are behind a B-24 you can't see the identifying colors on the tail fins. When we were on one of our dog legs away from the formation they apparently turned toward us and when we rejoined them we couldn't tell that were ahead of our group. When the planes that we were following flew past our assigned turning point, I informed the command pilot and asked what he wanted to do. We didn't know where that formation was going, we didn't have the target information and we may not of had enough fuel to follow them and still return to our base. Gasoline supplies were based on bomb loads and distance to targets.

The Colonel asked me for the course to the target and we turned onto the bomb run, heading for the target. By that time the bombardier (Eddie Gniewkowski) should have been directing the course of the ship through the bombsight. What I didn't notice was that Hayzlett was dropping down to our assigned bombing altitude while we were on the bomb run. Since Gniewkowski had already set his bombsight for the higher altitude, he was busy making adjustments for the new altitude. As we approached the target we seemed to be off to one side so I pointed it out to the bombardier. By that time it was too late to correct and we just sailed on by.

I told the Command Pilot what had happened and asked for further instructions. We could either circle and take the bomb run again or go to the alternate target. He chose to go to the alternate where we scattered our load of incendiary bombs on a fighter airfield. I have often wondered if I had been used to flying with Hayzlett's crew if we could have communicated better and avoided our mix up. By the time that we dropped our bombs we were out of sight of all of the other bombers so we just headed for home. There was just 9 planes flying alone for a long time over enemy territory. I directed the formation away from the flak installations by using my map that had the known flak positions marked.

Lt. Colonel Harry F. King of the British War Office Staff was assigned to the 2nd Division to map flak emplacements for us. He had served as an antiaircraft artillery officer during the Battle of Britain and was familiar with the capabilities of antiaircraft artillery. As soon as potential targets were selected, Colonel King's staff would go to work marking the fields of fire of the German Guns in the vicinity of possible routes. On the day of the mission, the route to be taken was chosen based on the predicted weather conditions. All of the navigators carried aerial charts that showed gun positions that we could rely on if we had to leave the briefed course. Of course, Colonel King and his staff had daily up-dates on their charts and sometimes the Germans added some new guns.

After we returned to the base we found out that German Me-262s, twin jet fighters, were attacking formations that day. We were very lucky that we were not discovered because there were no friendly fighters close by to help us. We were on our own. We were at our home base before the rest of the group arrived. My first squadron lead was not all that I had hoped it would be, but apparently the Colonel figured that I had carried out my duties satisfactorily. We had found the targets and all planes returned to the base.

Duty Navigator

When Jackson was sick, I had to take his turn as duty navigator. One of the squadron navigators, that wasn't scheduled to fly the next day, had to stay up all night at the Group Headquarters to take the mission information off of the teletype. Following the general mission briefing, the duty navigator met with the navigators that were scheduled for the mission and gave them the course information, weather, time schedule, and location of antiaircraft artillery.

My New Crew

On October 12, 1944, I was assigned to a lead crew that didn't have a navigator. My pilot was Captain Chuck Lockridge and since we were to fly leads all of the time, we didn't have a copilot. The Command Pilots that flew with us were Majors and Colonels from Squadron or Group staffs. We didn't have an assigned bombardier either as we were to fly with some of the best bombardiers in the group.

Lockridge had an upstairs room in some buildings across the field from the flying officer quarters, that had been originally used for family housing by the RAF. I was given the room next to his. The apartments had a kitchen and a living room downstairs and two bedrooms and a bath upstairs, but the air crews used all of the rooms as bedrooms. The rooms were very nice with all of the comforts of home (almost). My room had a cot, a bed lamp (improvised), a dresser with a mirror, a small corner fireplace and a place to hang my

uniforms. We even had a bathroom with a tub, but in that building there was no warm water. We walked about 1/4 mile to the officers club to eat and get hot water for shaving and bathing.

The only problem I had was getting my room warm at night. They delivered our ration of coke and coal once a week. I was either flying or working at the office when the fuel delivery was made so I never got any of the coal that we were supposed to use to get a fire started. The coke burned with a hot bright fire, but was very hard to start. After some futile attempts at fire building, I went out to the bomb dump to see what I could find. I got some pine boards from the incendiary bomb crates and waxed paper rings (like big rolls of masking tape). The rings had been placed around the bombs at the factory to keep them from knocking together during shipment. Most of the bombs that we were using were filled with an explosive charge called RD-X and it was a little sensitive to bumping around. I used a block of wood and the German bayonet that I got while in France to break the slats and rings up into small pieces for fire starters. Once I got the coke burning it gave off quite a bit of heat and no smoke.

A couple of the fellows that lived in our building decided to make their room a little more comfortable. They acquired some beautiful white wool blankets, some small furniture items, and a kerosene space heater. They were really settling in and bragging about their posh quarters. One evening when it was geting pretty cold, they turned the wick on their heater up too high and went to the officers club for supper. When they got back to their room about midnight, they found that everything was covered with long streamers of soot. What a mess. We didn't hear any more about their fancy diggings.

While we were living in permanent housing at an old RAF base, most of the 8th Air Force crews were living in quonset huts and all of the flyers were very lucky when comparing our lot with that of the ground forces on the continent. Those fellows had to rout the Germans out of civilian homes and other buildings and then try to get some shelter in what was left. We had meals cooked in a permanent kitchen while they had to get by on cold field rations with an occasional hot meal.

I didn't spend too much time in the room. When I wasn't flying I would get up and dress, walk over to the officers club and shave, eat breakfast and go to the office. Lunch and supper were in the mess hall and after supper I usually stayed in the club room and talked to the others, listened to one of the fellows playing the old piano, or watched the card players. We bathed at the officers club, where they had the biggest bath tubs I had ever seen. We all had to check the mission roster for the next day to see if we were scheduled to fly. At about 22:00 they set out trays of bread, lunch meat, and cheese for a snack. I would get the makings for a sandwich, go back to my room, build a fire, grill a

sandwich, write a letter and go to bed. I got so I could make a rather tasty grilled cheese and salami sandwich on generous slices of graham bread.

I wrote to the mothers and wives of the fellows that were lost when I got the official OK but I couldn't tell them much that they didn't already know. I took the radio that John and Jim had bought and sent the money that they had paid for it to their wives. I figured that if they returned they could have it back. If not, I would have the BBC (British Broadcasting Company) and AFN (Armed Forces Network)to keep me company.

Lockridge had 19 missions when I started to fly with him and I only had 10 so I knew that I would have to find another crew someday before I could finish my tour. By mid-October it was getting pretty cold in our part of England. We were wearing wool underwear and wool uniforms and wondering how cold it was going to get when winter arrived. It was getting much colder when we were flying too. On one mission to the marshalling yards at Mainz we had to go to 27,000 feet to get above the clouds where the temperature was 43 degrees below zero.

On October 30, we had a squadron lead on a mission to Harburg. As we flew toward the target we encountered a layer of stratus clouds that forced us up to 28,000 feet to stay in the clear. At that altitude a B-24 is hard to control and to make matters worse the tops of the clouds were not level so it gave the pilots a false horizon. As we continued to climb, the plane on our right wing stalled out and swooped across the top of our ship with only a few feet of clearance. When the pilots got their ship under control they came back across again as they regained their position in the formation. As we approached the bomb run the clouds swallowed the formation and the lead squadron disappeared from our view. We followed through on the mission plan as scheduled and eventually topped out above the clouds again after bombs away. We couldn't see the group leader so we just headed toward home and another squadron fell in on our wing It was probably solid clouds all of the way up to 28,000 feet so there were no German fighters to deal with. Only flak.

Our Turn for a Rest Leave

The 8th Air Force commanders decided that the air crews could perform their duties more efficiently if they were given a week off midway through their tours. To make sure that the crews actually rested, the Air Force leased facilities from Scotland to Southwest England as Rest Homes. Our turn to have a "Flak Leave" came in the first week in November based on the number of missions that Chuck and the rest of the crew had flown.

They took us to Norwich and let us off at the train station where we caught the next train headed for London. Following our arrival at Waterloo Station in London we went to our assigned hotel that was leased by the Air Force. It was located across the Thames

River from the Parliament buildings. We didn't know the original name of the hotel, but the Air Force had renamed it "Princess Gardens". The first night in London we walked down the street to a regular hotel for supper. When we finished, we discovered that the legendary London fog had enveloped that part of the world. It was only a little way back to our lodging hotel, but we had no idea how to get there in that dense fog. We may have been able to feel our way along the wall of a building but that wouldn't help a bit at the intersections. The doorman finally got us a cab and we all piled in. When the cabbie asked us where we wanted to go to we found that we had another problem. He had never heard of the "Princess Gardens", and we didn't know the original name of the hotel or any landmarks other than across the Thames from Parliament which wasn't much help. He finally worked it out and somehow managed to get us where we wanted to go. We were very relieved when he pulled up in front of our lodgings for the night.

By morning, the fog had lifted and we set out to see the sights of London. We rode the double decker busses for a while and then tried the "Tube", their subway system. We found the trains very efficient and fast. You just walked down a lot of stairs into a station and for a few pennies you could ride all over the city. There were maps of the districts and the stations on the wall of each station and inside each car. If you went past your desired station you just got off at the next stop and caught the next train going the other way. When the trains approached a station, they were preceeded by a blast of air. The trains acted as a giant plunger as they sped throught the tunnel.

There was evidence of the bombing raids everywhere, but life went on. Before the bombing raids the railroad stations in London had massive roofs of glass panels to keep out the rain in that very rainy city, but the bombs took care of those. The tracks and walkways at Waterloo station had been repaired, but most of the roof was still missing.

The subway stations and building basements all over town were used by the people of London as air raid shelters and when the big sirens sounded, everyone headed for the nearest one. They just piled into any available space underground and sat or slept on the floors. We heard several explosions while we were there, but none came close to where we were staying. By late 1944, the Germans had switched from bombers to rockets to attack the English cities. They were using two kinds; the V-1 (Buzz bombs) which flew fairly slow and were propelled by a ram jet engine mounted on the top of the body, and the V-2 which was the forerunner of the first American rockets in our space program. The RAF fighter command planes could intercept some of the V-1s and tip them over or shoot them down into the channel, but the V-2s just came out of space with no warning.

I wasn't fond of crowds so I walked over to Hyde Park and enjoyed myself. Just a country kid in a very big city.

Early the next morning we got on the train again and headed southwest to the town of Exeter where we were met by some army trucks for the remainder of our trip to the rest home. Our vacation facility was an English Manor house complete with a staff of English servants. The estate was owned by Lord and Lady Avery who moved out to the 14 room servants quarters when the Air Force took over their home. The main house was a beautiful, ivy covered, brick building surrounded by green grass and many trees, overlooking the small village of Tiverton. There was a huge fireplace in the great room just inside the front entrance. It was recessed so that 6 people could sit on benches in the alcove in front of the fire to warm themselves. The firebox could accommodate fairly large logs. The other rooms had more conventional fireplaces of sandstone or marble to provide heat. I don't think that there was any central heat in the building. The furniture was appropriate for the room that it was in, from the massive furniture in the great room to the more stylish furniture in the drawing room, dining hall, and library. Some of the rooms had satin brocade wallpaper and heavy satin curtains. The walls in the library were covered with embossed leather, and the woodwork in the building was either oak or walnut.

To give us a relief from the military scene, they loaned us wool sweaters, tweed jackets, and slacks. We had access to tennis courts, a putting green, an archery range, pool tables and we could just go for a walk in the countryside. One day they took us to an old castle that had been built in about 1,000 AD where we looked at the weapons of war of that period. We went horseback riding using English saddles and we even went on a fox hunt (as observers riding in a jeep). The men and women riding on the hunt had the fancy red and black riding outfits. We saw the fox several times and he lived to run another day. They arranged for some nurses from a nearby army hospital to come over one night for a dance and there were four Red Cross girls assigned to the rest home.

In spite of the country gentlemen clothes, the fancy estate, and the surrounding countryside guess what the topic of conversation was. The war and flying. There was a mix of bomber pilots (B-17 and B-24), fighter pilots (P-47 and P-51), bombardiers, and navigators. It led to some lively discussions.

The week ended too soon and we retraced our travels back through London to our home base. I felt really rested after our time off. I didn't know how tired I was until I had a chance to let down. I had been flying or working in the squadron office every day for months and I had lost most of the fellows from my original crew. It was nice and warm down at the rest home but when we returned to the base we discovered that winter had arrived in that area of England.

The Second Half of My Tour of Duty in England

We arrived back at the base on November 13 to resume our duties.We had been away for 12 days, but the weather had been pretty bad and the group had only been able to put up 6 missions in our absence.

Soon after our return from our leave, Jack Granholm was selected to be the new Group Navigator, and I had to fill in as the interim 752nd squadron navigator. It was one thing to help Jack managing a group of over 20 navigators, but being on my own was something quite different.

I was promoted to first Lieutenant on November 22. That gave me about $25.00 more in my pay envelope. I started looking for someone to work with me and share the load in the navigation office. Checking all of the mission logs and charts for the navigators in our squadron took a lot of time and I still had my flying to do. Now that I was acting as the squadron navigator, I had to work more closely with Colonel Williamson, the Squadron Commander. He was a West Pointer and was pretty strict, but I just carried out my duties, didn't fool around and we got along just fine.

Our first mission after our return from the rest home was a squadron lead on November 25. Our target was three Panzer (Tank) divisions that were reported to be in the marshalling yard at Bingen. A layer of clouds covered the target area so we had to drop our bombs when we went through the smoke markers left by the Group leader. We encountered heavy flak on our return trip when we got too close to the Ruhr valley but we didn't lose any ships. On December 10, we returned to the marshalling yards at Bingen for more army supplies. On this mission we were leading the Group and had the radar equipment in our ship. This was the first mission that I flew with Major Vacek, the Group bombardier. We had total cloud cover so we had to drop by radar again. We didn't get any photos of the damage inflicted by our bombs on the day of the mission, but photo reconnaissance planes went back when it cleared up and took photos of the area. The railroad yards were pretty much of a mess.

As a group leader, we had one of the best bombardiers in the group on the bomb sight, a navigator flying the nose turret checking landmarks on the ground, and a radar operator to assist with check points in the case of clouds. The radar operator could also drop the bombs if the bombardier could not see the target. I put all of the information together and gave the course information to the pilot.

On December 6, we were assigned to fly a night practice mission down to the area southwest of London. We were cruising along at 22,000 feet and I was taking star shots when one of the engines quit. Lockridge decided that we had better head for home by the most direct route so we got permission to start losing altitude and fly across London.

There were RAF bombers and night fighters up in that night sky and we were not following our flight plan so we wanted to make sure that everyone knew where we were and who we were. When we got to the edge of London, the first search lights found us. As we proceeded across the city, one battery would hold us for a while and when we got out of their range another battery would pick us up. We knew that those lights were connected to antiaircraft guns and we hoped that the crews were good at aircraft identification. We were at 18,000 feet as we crossed over London and I could read my charts and instruments by the illumination from those powerful lights. In time, we left London and all was dark again. By the time that we got back to Horsham we had descended through several layers of clouds. At 22,000 feet, it had been very cold and the moisture in the clouds formed a thick layer of ice over the pilots windows severely limiting their visibility. Due to our situation, the control tower gave us permission to make a straight-in approach. When were about to touch down, the pilots discovered that we were coming in to the right side of the runway, in an area where equipment was normally parked. Chuck slipped over onto the runway and made a good landing. It was a little exciting for a while and a time that made you thankful that you had a good pilot.

They issued us some new electric flying suits and we turned in the fuzzy, blue "bunny suits" that we had been wearing. The new outfits were two piece suits that had pants cut like bib overalls and a short jacket. They were made of a smooth, shiny green fabric and they were a lot more comfortable than the one piece suits that we had been wearing. With the temperatures that we were dealing with we appreciated the warm clothing.

Winter in England

The officer's club was warm and my coke burning fireplace took the chill off of my room, but our offices were getting pretty cold. They were located along the outside walls of our hanger and had concrete walls and floors. When we were in the office we had to keep our coats and gloves on all of the time and we were still cold. It was pretty hard to concentrate on paper work under those conditions. We were looking for some kerosene heaters to provide a little relief when one of the crew chiefs came up with a good idea.There were some engine heaters on the base that had been designed to warm up aircraft engines in the arctic. They burned gasoline and had a heat exchanger unit to generate hot air. The air discharged through four 8 inch flexible tubes that were designed to connect to a canvas cover over the engines. The mechanics set up enough heaters to allow one tube to go into each office through windows. By using the heaters, we were able to take our coats and gloves off and get some work done. After the heaters were

operating we were more comfortable, but the warm air dried out the membranes in our noses and throats. We wound up with sore throats that were a problem when we were breathing oxygen. I usually had to go to the hospital the night before a mission to have my throat dusted with sulfa powder. The heat exchangers must have been in pretty good condition because none of us suffered from carbon monoxide poisoning.

They say that it is always darkest just before the dawn. Visualize a bomber base in England in the winter of 1944. Thirty planes are dispersed about the airfield, bombs, gasoline, and ammunition have been loaded. The ground crews are making their final checks on their charges by the dim glow of their flashlights. The air is still and very cold. The stars are bright.

Pretty soon the 6X6 trucks rumble out from the briefing hut making their rounds delivering the flight crews. The gunners with their gear and barrels for their machine guns, smelling of cleaning oil, are the first to arrive. Soon the other crewmen start to join them, the radio operators, pilots, bombardiers, and navigators. As they make small talk before going to their flight positions they notice a flash of color in the sky. All eyes are turned to the east and in a few minutes it becomes apparant what they had seen. There, over the continent, was the pink smoke trail of a German V-2 rocket streaking toward the sky and then disappearing. The rockets were being fired from over the curviture of the earth into the early morning sunlight. Most of those rockets were headed for London where they would hurtle out of the sky without warning. After observing the launching of several more rockets the crew members start to go to their stations.

When we were in England in 1993, we noticed some odd clumps of trees growing out in the farmers fields. When I asked the guide what they were, I was told that the trees and brush was growing in the craters formed when V-2 rockets exploded. The craters were so large that the farmers just left them and farmed the surrounding area.

The V-2 rockets that the Germans were using against England from September 1944 to March 1945 were 46 feet long, 5 1/2 feet in diameter, weighed 14 tons, and carried a 2,150 pound warhead. They were fueled with liquid oxygen and alcohol. They had a range of 200 miles and a speed of 3,000 miles per hour.

Following the mission to Hanau on December 12, the snow and fog shut down all aerial operations. Five missions had been scheduled but were scrubbed when the fog didn't clear.

On December 17, the German army had mounted a massive counter-attack under the cover of the snow and fog to try to break through to the channel. The fog kept the Allied planes grounded the they hit our ground troops where they were the weakest. The sector where the attack came was manned by two green divisions and two divisions that

were so weary that they needed rest and refitting. The objective was to split the Allied armies and take the port of Antwerp depriving the armies in the area of supplies. The Germans had kept fresh units in reserve and brought other units back for the Russian front to make a dash through the Allied lines when the conditions were favorable to them. The battle that raged for the next month was the 2nd bloodiest battle in the history of the American Army. The bloodiest battle had been fought in the Meuse-Argonne in World War I, only a few miles from the 1944 battle.

I had Bob Shea over to my room on December 20 and we opened a can of fudge that my mother had sent me. It was fresh and tasted just like it would have out of the Karo syrup can at home. The county extension office would seal things that the folks wanted to send overseas in regular cans to protect the contents from the moisture in the holds of the ships. The first package of hard candy that my mother sent me ended up as a solid glob of variegated sugar. We ate it anyway. Bob was the tail gunner on my original crew and I looked out for him and Cliff since they hadn't been assigned to a regular crews.

Our crew was scheduled to fly in the formation ship for the mission on December 24. No one came to wake me, and when I did wake up I heard the drone of hundreds of airplanes overhead. I dressed quickly and went outside to see what was going on. The fog was all gone and there were thousands of bombers overhead, headed east. Our group put up 56 aircraft that day. The operations order called for a Maximum Effort so the formation ship was loaded with bombs and sent on the mission Our group went to 5 different targets in support of the ground troops that were engaged in the "Battle of the Bulge". It was the largest bombing raid to that date with 2,055 aircraft dropping 4,302 tons of bombs in close support to the ground troops. The bombers were escorted by 803 fighter aircraft from the 8th Air Force. The 9th Air Force attacked targets in the Ruhr Valley.

Christmas in England, 1944

We were scheduled to lead the mission on December 26 so we took our ship up to high altitude on Christmas Day for a couple of hours to check everything out. After we returned, we had lunch and I went to my room for a while to write letters and open some packages. The mission on Christmas day was to Pronsfeld where our group hit railroad tracks and roads in support of the troops in the Bulge. I went back to the club again after the planes had returned and we had a fine Christmas dinner with all of the trimmings. In the evening, I listened to Christmas music on the AFN (Armed Forces Network) by Major Glenn Millers band. I read a nice letter that I received from Mrs. Dake Tucker (the copilots wife).

The weather turned sour again on the 26 but it cleared up on the 27 and we led the group to the railroad yards in Neuenkirchen. Eddie Gniewkowski was our bombardier for that day and he put the bombs right on the target.

An Unusual Vehicle Accident

We had a very close call on December 29 when we tried to put up a mission in spite ice, snow, and very dense fog. They called the fog "snow Fog" and the visibility was very limited. We needed to get up some more missions so we were briefed and went out to our planes. At the scheduled time, the pilots started their engines and began to move slowly along the taxiway to the end of the takeoff runway. Soon all of the planes were in position, nose to tail, but the plane ahead could barely be seen from the flight deck of the next plane in line. As we were waiting to start the run down the ice covered runway, they fired red flares from the caravan at the end of the runway. That signal meant that the mission had been scrubbed for our group. The reason to call off the mission was that the group next to us had already sent off four planes, two of the four crashed on take-off ,the third and fourth planes hit some obstacle damaging the aircraft so severely that they could not be landed safely. One of the planes crash landed and the other one was headed out over the Channel and the crew bailed out. We don't know if it was ice on the aircraft or poor visibility that caused the crashes, but whatever the reason was we were very glad that we didn't have to make the takeoff run down that ice coated runway. In spite of the loss of 4 aircraft on take-off, the 467th sent their planes on the mission.

The fog was so dense that Colonel Isbell decided to have the pilots leave the planes where they were until the visibility improved. Chuck cut our engines and we got all of our gear out of the plane and waited for a truck to take us back to the briefing hut.

It seemed like we waited for hours in the snow and we were getting pretty cold in spite of our heavy flying gear. We were too far from the briefing hut to walk and we had too much gear to carry anyway. When a MP (Military Policeman) came by in his jeep, four of us hitched a ride with him. We put all of our gear in the back and two of us got in on top of the pile. Our heads were up against the canvas top. The pilots got in the front seat and we started for the briefing hut. The driver drove along the side of the taxiway until he passed the last plane and then he started to drive on the hard surface.

We hadn't gone very far until I saw the fellows in the front stiffen and the driver spin the steering wheel. I knew we were in trouble but I couldn't see why. It didn't take long to find out. The hood on our Jeep rammed into the nose of a taxiing B-24, just under the bomb sight. The pilots couldn't see our Jeep so they didn't know anything was in their way until they felt the jar of the collision. They cut their engines and got out to see what they

had hit.

It was a good thing that we didn't have much traction on the ice because if the driver had been able to steer around the nose of the plane we would have gone through a propeller. Our guardian angel was most certainly riding with us that day. After a discussion at the accident scene, we eventually made it back to the briefing hut, very happy to get into the warm building at last. I'll bet that was an interesting accident report. Jeep rams taxiing B-24 in fog. (Go to page 84a and 84b)

Our Lifeline Was Called Flight Control.

Taking a heavily loaded airplane off from a fog shrouded airfield was risky business, but bringing 2,000 American bombers and 1,000 fighter aircraft back to 116 air bases at dusk in heavy fog was downright frightening. The bases were concentrated in an area no larger than the state of Colorado. To make the situation more difficult, the RAF had planes up and the Free French and Free Polish flyers sometimes had to look for anyplace to put their fuel starved fighters down. To compound the problem few of the French or Polish flyers could speak English. They had their own flight controllers at their bases.

The winter of 1944 was one of the worst to hit England and Northern Europe in years. The cluster of bases occupied by the 8th Air Force was within a few miles of each other, making air to air collisions in fair weather a risk. In dense fog it was a certainty that some planes would come together. The return from a mission sometimes claimed as many lives as the enemy action over Europe.

We were very fortunate at the 458th. We had dedicated crew in Flight Control led by a man who was constantly working to improve the chances of the air crews for survival. Captain Bob Sellers had gone to England with the first American Air Force personnel to study the RAF system of air traffic control that they called Flight Control. The system was unlike anything that we had in the states. The American system was called "base operations" but the RAF system of "Flight Control" encompassed much more than our system.

"Flight Control" (I) served as each airport's manager, (2) controlled and managed the national airways and navigational systems. (3) controlled all flight clearances. (4) provided emergency services in all categories for aircraft lost or in distress. (5) coordinated all aircraft activity with the RAF, the Royal observer corps, the RAF/AAF/Fighter, bomber, and coastal commands, air/sea rescue units, and the Army's antiaircraft air defense units. In addition to all of those duties Flight Control maintained liaison with Allied naval commands operating vessels in the coastal waters surrounding the United Kingdom.

It was obvious that a complex system like that would have to have one central

The December 29, 1944 Mission of the 467 Bomb Group
Rackheath, England

Information from John Stewart, Allan Healy, John Belingheri, conversations with 467 BG crewmen at conventions and my own memory of the events of that day.

It was very cold, there was a blanket of snow over everything, and the fog seemed to be thicker than ever. The layer of ice on the roadways made travel risky and the ice on the trucks and aircraft compounded the problems of visibility. Our troops on the continent were in serious trouble and we needed to get up missions to slow down the German offensive. The target for the day was Prum, Germany, a tiny village that was raised to target status due to the road and railroad that passed through it. The Germans were using the route to move supplies to their troops that were attempting to break through to the Port of Antwerp and the North Sea. Also the Germans were using any buildings that they could find to get shelter from the intense cold.

The crews were awakened at the usual time, fed and briefed in hopes that the fog would lift by takeoff time. Following briefing all of the crews went out to their assigned aircraft to await the decision to fly or not to fly. The members of Belingheri's crew were surprised when they saw the flare signaling the pilots to start engines. The fog was so thick that they had assumed that the mission would eventually be scrubbed and they could go back to bed. They had apparently neglected to scrape the ice off the pilots windows as they waited. When they started their engines and moved from the hard stand (the concrete pad where the airplane was parked) out onto the taxiway they discovered that they could not see either the taxiway or the plane in front of them. The pilot turned the duty of taxiing over to the copilot and opened his side window so he could scrape the ice off of the front window. The copilot couldn't see any better than the pilot so he opened his side window so he could see to follow along the edge of the taxiway. By using the right edge of the taxiway as a guide he found that he had gone into another hardstand. Luckily there was no plane there at the time. Two planes passed them before they could get back into line. All of the planes moved slowly down the taxiway until they were all in position. Half of the group on each side of the take off runway.

At the assigned time, the first plane started down the runway with the other planes following at a 30 second interval. After six or seven planes had started their take-off run the fog settled in thicker than ever and the next four planes failed to clear the trees at the end of the runway. It took a little time for the crew in the control tower and the caravan to realize what was happening and stop the remaining planes from starting their take off run. Of the four planes that struck the trees, all ten men on Shallhas's crew were killed, five men on Foster's crew were killed, the next crew was able to get into the air but crashed landed a little way from the field, injuring several crew members, and the fourth plane was able to get away from the field but suffered so much damage that they headed it toward the North Sea and bailed out.

When the crew in the control tower realized what was happening, they ordered the fellows in the caravan to give the next plane the red light and instruct all planes to shut down their engines. At the time of shut down, Belingheri's crew was number one to take off. During the shut down period someone on his crew dumped the gas from the engine that powered the auxiliary generator (APU) and the spare can of gas. When the signal came to resume the takeoff. the crew could not restart the engines. (starting an engine required the aircraft batteries and the auxiliary power unit) While waiting for someone to bring out some more gas, the base

commander decided to cancel the mission for the planes still on the ground and the ships were returned to their hardstands. The planes already in the air must have joined another group to continue the mission because the record of missions flown by the group included the one on December 29. My group, the 458th, cancelled the mission before the first plane tried to take off and the pilots were instructed to leave their aircraft on the taxiway until the fog lifted later in the day. The one short squadron from Rackheath may have joined with the 466th or the formation from another wing.

No one will ever know, if the cause of four aircraft in a row to crash following the successful take-off by seven aircraft was due to a sudden increase in the fog or some other factor. Would Belingheri's crew have crashed if they had not made a detour into the hardstand and lost their place in line. Could the rest of the group have made in into the air safely if someone had not disabled the auxiliary power unit on Belingheri's ship or would there have been more bodies at the end of the runway.

control, so General Arnold mandated that the United States Air Force adopt the RAF system with the overall control remaining with the Air Ministry. Many of the American bases operated with RAF personnel providing their Flight Control services, but we had an All-American crew led by Captain Sellers.

Horsham St. Faith was a RAF base before being assigned to the 458th Bomb Group, so I imagine all of the Flight Control equipment and procedures were in place before our crews moved in. Sellers used the standard system, but soon set about to make improvements. He flew on combat missions (contrary to Air Force Policy, but with the blessing of his Commanding officers) so that he could know first hand what the air crews were facing and try to devise ways to make all procedures safer. To be able to fly on combat missions he was trained as an aerial gunner and usually flew on one of the waist guns.

He flew with my crew on one of his discovery trips. Colonel Isbell wrote a letter recommending him for a permanent commission after the war in which he noted that Sellers flew more combat missions than most of the combat crewmen.

The personnel in the control towers at most of the bases in England could not see the end of the runways for several reasons. The control towers were only two stories high, there was often high spots on the fields, and the fog very often limited the visibility. To deal with these problems the RAF devised a mobile control tower that they called a "Caravan". It was a boxlike structure mounted on a four wheel trailer. It was painted black and white in a checkerboard pattern. It had a door but no windows, and a plastic dome in the roof from which operator on duty could observe aircraft. The pilots were able to see the signal lamps used by the Caravan operator. There would be a red lamp shown until time to takeoff and then it was changed to green. For incoming aircraft a green light meant that it was OK to land and a red light meant to go around. The caravan was supplied with boxes of aircraft flares and "Very" pistols to fire them. When planes were trying to land at night in heavy fog, the fellows in the caravan would get out to the end of the runway and fire flares parallel to the runway to help the pilots get lined up. It was very risky duty for everyone involved. The caravan also had aircraft radios and a land line to the main control tower for communications that we did not want the Germans to hear. They were pulled by a Jeep or other small vehicle from one runway to another. Sometimes when there was a crash on a runway during landing a mission, the caravan had to be towed quickly to the alternate runway to continue bringing the ships in. They were described as being similar to the lifeguard tower at a crowded beach. "a place where alert and caring people rescued the tired, the torn, and the terrified". The crew lived on the brink of disaster when planes were coming in, especially after a rough mission and in the

fog. Their only safety line was a fox hole by the door into which they could escape at the last minute. One plane sheared off the radio mast on the caravan. They were manned 24 hours a day because lost and damaged aircraft could be looking for a place to set down at any time. We flew day missions and the RAF flew night missions and there were special missions out at all times of the day and night. Two teams of two noncommissioned officers manned the caravan in 24 hour shifts.

To deal with the heavy fog, the RAF tried several versions of FIDO (Fog Dispersal System) The concept was to heat the air in the vicinity of the end of the landing runway so that the fog would disperse in that area. At first they tried burning gasoline in trenches along the runway. Then they installed pipes with holes bored in the top where the fuel was pumped under pressure and ignited. Finally, they switched to some devices similar to a smudge pots (called Goosenecks) that were fueled by kerosene. The system could not eliminate the fog, but it sometime created a fog-free tunnel for a short distance that would permit a pilot to put his aircraft down safely.

Ground Control Approach System

Captain Sellers was looking for something better to help the crews land in fog conditions so he joined forces with Captain Arthur Goldberg, the group radar officer, to take an APQ-13 airborne radar set (Mickey) and install it in the caravan. The dome was mounted in the roof of the caravan and the set was in the trailer. A plastic grid was devised so the controller could advise the pilot of his alignment and distance from the end of the runway. Working with the information from the caravan operator and the altitude information from the aircraft altimeter the pilots were able to bring the aircraft to the end of the runway and make a safe landing. To check the system out, pilots would practice landing in clear weather following the instructions from the caravan. After they were convinced that the system worked satisfactorily they had a visit from General William Kepner, the commander of the 2nd Bomb Division. His recommendation was that the system be replicated in all 8th Air Force bases in England. We don't know how many lives the system saved, but it does have the distinction of being the first ground controlled approach system in the U.S. Air Force.

England had a total of 600 air bases. For the RAF there were 165 operational bases and 156 training bases, The U.S. Air Forces had 116 operational bases and 7 air depots. Some bases were so close together that the traffic patterns crossed. Most of the bases were similar in design so identifying a particular base at dusk in the fog was difficult. A pilot talking to one control tower and landing at a nearby base was a formula for disaster.

Our Close Call

Our closest call came when we were returning to the base after a mission in a heavy fog. I knew we were very close to the base but we couldn't see the ground. We kept letting down and the first thing that we saw were the smokestacks from the shoe factories along the river in Norwich. We were looking up at the tops of those stacks and we knew that we had hills and a couple of church steeples close by that were taller than the smoke stacks. The glimpse of those obstacles helped us get oriented and we were able to find our way to the traffic pattern of the base. We made it OK but it was just a little too close for comfort.

After our experience with the smokestacks, Chuck and I decided to do a little innovating on our own. I determined the exact "Gee" coordinates of our main runway and found that one of the coordinates ran parallel. After that, every time we came in for a landing on the main runway we tried to find the touchdown point by using the navigation system. After several tries we got pretty good with our version of blind landing approach. I also recorded the "Gee" coordinates of the emergency fields near the coast in case we had to use one of those fields. The runways at Woodbridge, Manston, and Carnaby were extra long and wide, but they were for emergency use only and we could not make any practice runs there.

By January 8, Lockridge only had four missions to go before he would complete his 30 missions and go back to the states. I hated to see him finish before me because he was the calmest pilot under stress that I had the privilege to fly with. Toward the end of his tour he began to feel that he was losing his touch and was landing too far down the runway. One day when we were up on a trip to check out a plane he announced that he was going to land right on the end of the runway. As we passed over the perimeter fence he cut the power and started to pull the nose up, and up, and up. When we reached the end of the runway we landed all right, tail first. The impact smashed the bottom edges of both vertical stabilizers, knocked the rear hatch door out of the fuselage and punched the tail skid up through the bottom of the plane. I fully expected the nose wheel gear to collapse when the plane rocked forward, but it held. I guess the ground crew was able to repair the damage to the aircraft but we never used it again to lead a mission. Chuck never mentioned landing on the end of the runway again. We never did find the hatch door, we figured that it fell out through the opening and the MP on duty there picked it up. The only thing that we were sure of was that it wasn't in the plane.

I had been flying almost every day and was getting behind in my office work before I finally got a few days to catch up. I liked my work and it kept me informed on what was going on in the Group.

A Special Treat

The group and deputy group lead crews had to take their planes up the day before a mission to make sure that all was in working order. If a new engine had been installed, the procedure included several hours at about 20,000 feet. When the Mess Officer found out that a crew was going up to "Slow Time" a ship (break in a new engine) he arranged to have a large can of ice cream mix (powdered milk, sugar, flavoring and some secret ingredients) delivered to the flight line. The can was placed in the waist and taken up to an altitude where it was very cold. I don't know if the can had a stirring paddle in it or not, but knowing the ingenuity of the ground crews, I suspect that it did. When the plane came down, the container was placed in an insulated packer and delivered to the mess hall. Believe it or not, it tasted pretty good.

A Break in the Weather

By January 14, most of the fog had cleared, the Allies stopped the German counter-offensive, and the ground forces started moving forward again.The German army did not collapse. They made the Allies pay dearly for every mile that they advanced.

The 8th Air Force returned to the strategic targets and we led the group on a raid to the Harburg oil refinery on January 17. Eddie Gniewkowski was our bombardier for the day and our bombs fell on the target. We stayed clear of the anti-aircraft batteries that were shown on our charts until we got in the target area. There was no way to avoid flak on the bomb run and over the larger cities that led to the bomb run.

What a Difference a Few Months Made

The rank of the officers that I worked with every day never ceased to amaze me. When I was a cadet, a 2nd Lieutenant was King Pin with a few officers of higher rank on the base that we didn't see much. As a combat squadron navigator, I was a 1st Lieutenant, working for a Lieutenant Colonel, and Captains and Majors. I even contacted a Full Colonel and a Brigadier General occasionally.

Our bombing accuracy was so good on our mission to Harburg (January 17) that Eddie Gniewkowski was up for some kind of award. After all of the work involved on the mission, it was good to see the strike photos marked "Target Destroyed".

By January 20, things were running pretty smoothly and I seemed to have a little free time. The Government offered to pay for I.C.S. (International Correspondence Schools) courses if anybody wanted to participate. I signed up for a course in Civil Engineering. The I.C.S. send me a stack of paper bound text books, some instructions, and the first series of tests. I studied the first section, took the test and mailed it in for

grading.

They finally assigned another officer to share my room which helped out a lot. He would build a fire in the fireplace in the afternoon and the room was halfway warm when we got back there in the evenings.

They gave us sulfa pills every day to keep us healthy and I didn't miss a single mission. I did have some colds and I would go to the infirmary to have my throat dusted with sulfa powder the night before a mission.

Some More Cold Weather

We had some more snow and cold weather by the end of January, and this time all of the plumbing fixtures in our building froze solid. The pipes were all made of lead so they did not break. We had a toilet with a cast iron tank up on the wall that had a pull chain to flush. I got my tooth brush wet by using the bayonet to break a hole in the ice and dipping the end of the brush into the water. All of the other water came from the officers club.

We were well equipped to deal with the cold that we encountered at high altitudes. Our wool uniforms, alpaca flying jackets and pants and electric heated suits, gloves and boots kept us comfortable and safe from frostbite. We did learn a lesson in how the human body functions under stress. We noticed that when we were on the way to the target and until we left the major flak zones we could leave the electric suit control set on low, but as soon as we headed home we would get very cold. A condition that we had to correct by turning up the rheostat. The nervous tension kept us warm until we had dropped our bombs and headed home.

A Benchmark

The AFN (Armed Forced Radio) announced that the 8th Air Force had been in England for three years by the end of January. Those early missions were far different than the ones that we were flying in late 1944. In those early days, there were only a few bombers on a strike and the enemy fighters had the run of the sky after the American fighters had to return to base to refuel. By December 1944, our "Little Friends" could go all of the way to the targets with the bombers. This extra range was accomplished through the use of drop tanks (auxiliary gas tanks carried under the wings). The fighters used the fuel in the extra tanks first and dropped them before engaging the enemy. I often wondered what happened when a bunch of partially filled drop tanks hit the ground. That innovation sure changed the complexion of the air war over Europe. Our cover usually engaged the enemy fighters before they got close to our formations. We often saw con (condensation)

trails high above our formations, but we couldn't tell if they were friend or foe. We really owe those fellows in the P-47s and P-51s a lot. It was reported that Field Marshall Goering told his people that if he ever saw P-51s flying over Berlin, he would know that the war would soon be over.

Our group only flew three times between January 17 and 31 so I was able to catch up on all of my office work and even get in a little rest.

I started to function as the 752nd Squadron Navigator in November when Jackson was promoted to Group Navigator, but it was January 23 before they cut the orders officially designating me as the Squadron Navigator.

Aircraft flying at high altitudes through very cold clear air usually created con (condensation) trails. The first planes going through an area flew in the clear, but by the time that a thousand planes had passed, the last ships would be flying in the clouds. Early in the war the bombers were given a coat of paint to serve as a camouflage, but as the tide of the air war changed, there was very little chance of German aircraft making a daylight raid on bombers stationed in England. Also it became obvious that we could not hide in a clear sky with con trails pointing at the formations for everyone within 50 miles to see. By 1944, the planes going to the war zone were left unpainted, a condition that reduced the weight and increased the speed of the aircraft.

A Peer Compliment

I was working at the office one day when a navigator who had been flying on a lead crew two months before I arrived in the ETO (European Theatre of Operations) came over for a visit. He wanted to know how I handled the problems encountered in leading missions and supervising the navigators assigned to my squadron. He had been assigned as squadron navigator for one of the other squadrons. Apparently Jack Granholm, the Group Navigator sent him to see me for some advice. We discussed how my assistant and I checked every flight log against the log of the navigator that was leading the mission; how we insisted on many log entries to show position of the plane at all times; and how we helped those that were not performing satisfactorily. I explained that the squadron navigators job carried a lot of responsibility. It got ticklish when I had to grade officers older than myself and in many cases fellows that had more missions than I did. I had to ground some of the navigators and break up some of the crews when the pilot and navigator couldn't get along. At times, I had to be pretty diplomatic to get away with some of the things that I had to do. I couldn't fall back on rank because we were all were Lieutenants.

I shared some of the tricks that I used in leading missions such as starting to turn

the formation early before we got to a designated turn point. This made it possible for the formation to roll out on the briefed course for the next leg of the mission. I gave him a copy of the calculations that I had developed with my pilot. By planning ahead, I was able to concentrate on the unexpected and not have to worry about calulating a new heading from someplace past the turn point.

The crews that were assigned to flying group leads had two or three navigators thereby creating a shortage of navigators for the other crews. I checked the records on the gunners in our squadron and found that some of them had started through navigation school but washed out after completing the part on dead reckoning. I asked several of them if they would like to fly as enlisted navigators. I worked with them helping them brush up on their skills and gave them the training that I had received in Ireland. In time they started to fly with crews that did not have a navigator. Once they got the hang of using a "Gee" box and filling out a complete log, it was fairly easy. I also checked the commissioned navigators and determined the ones that should be designated as lead navigators.

I taught quite a few courses on "combat crew navigation in the European Theatre" to the new fellows that were assigned to our group. It was the same training that we received in Ireland when we arrived in the ETO.

The Bouncing Red Balls

One of the missions where we were leading the group almost ended for us with a big bang when we were still over England. We had joined the formation ship and were adding our double red flares to theirs to get the group together in the night sky. A couple of the fellows were taking turns loading and firing the Very (Signal) pistol. A single shot device that had a hinge and latch mechanism for loading. It was secured to the top of the plane by pushing it into a socket and giving it a half turn. The flares looked like an oversize shotgun shell about 2" in diameter and 4" long. Somehow the pistol came loose from the socket just as it was fired causing two very hot pyrotechnic balls to hit the roof and start bouncing around on the flight deck. Our very alert engineer grabbed the carbon dioxide fire extinguisher and ran down the elusive red balls before they set the plane afire. A plane with about 2,500 gallons of high octane gasoline on board would have made quite a light in the early morning sky. As soon as the flare was put out, the crew replaced the Very pistol in the socket and resumed firing, being very careful not to repeat the experience.

The Air Raid

One night in February we were roused out of a sound sleep by the wail of the big air raid sirens in Norwich and on the base. It took us a few minutes to realize what was going on because it had been a long time since there had been a German plane over Norwich. We got up quickly, threw on some warm clothes and headed out to the bomb shelter that was in front of our quarters.

Our shelter was an underground concrete bunker with an open stairway leading down into it. When we neared the bottom steps we made an unpleasant discovery. There was several feet of water in the shelter and to get the protection that it offered we were going to have to get very cold and wet. We didn't hear any antiaircraft guns or bombs exploding so we all stood in the stairway trying to decide what to do. Then we heard the drone of a single, multiengine airplane coming our way. If there had been as much as a backfire of a Jeep we would probably all have got very wet. It was a clear night and as the plane came over our base it passed in front of the bright full moon showing us that it was a B-17. We heard no other planes and in time the "All Clear" sounded sending us back to bed.,

Fifty years later I met the pilot of that B-17. He had been up on a night training mission when they closed down all of the airfields. He was stuck up there for quite a while before the "all clear" was sounded, hoping that no antiaircraft gunner would mistake him for an enemy intruder.

My New Crew

By the middle of February, the Colonel had picked my new crew. Jack Moran and his crew had been shot down but were able to get back across the front lines before they had to bail out. The navigator broke his leg when he landed on a roof of a house so I was going to take his place. I hadn't met the crew before but Jack had gone through advanced pilot training with George Koehn. Our two crews came over from the States in July of 1944, so I felt that we had some connections already.

The End of My Correspondence School Studies

I had just finished my first lesson in surveying and mailed it in to have it graded when my work load jumped again. During February, I learned how to use the navigation equipment to drop the bombs. The system took a lot of coordination between the navigator and the pilot so we did a lot of flying. One day we went up to the bombing range that was set up in a swampy area called "The Wash" to drop some 100 pound practice bombs on a target barge. They had given me the map coordinates for the barge but I couldn't see it

because I had my eyes glued to the signals on the "Gee Box". After a couple of drops, the range officer called the pilot on the radio and told him that the range was reserved for radar bombing and to quit using it for a visual target using a Norden bombsight. I guess they couldn't believe that anyone could get that close using a "Gee Box". Unfortunately the system was not as accurate over the continent due to German jamming and distance from stations. I only used it once on a combat mission and I had the plane on course toward the target when we broke out of the clouds. The bombardier finished the run and dropped the bombs. At least I was headed for the target. We will never know how close I could have come.

Lockridge Completes His Tour

We were doing a lot of flying during the last week in February bringing my total missions up to 22. On my 21st mission, we led the 96th Wing (about 100 planes) on a raid to the railroad yards at Nurenburg and had fairly good results. On my 22nd mission, we led the 2nd Air Division (about 450 planes). On that mission, we were also first in line in the bomber stream for the entire 8th Air Force. Each group leader was assigned a specific target so after we got close the groups or wings began to leave the bomber stream and go to their individual assignments. We had nearly a perfect mission. We were on course all of the way, the bombs fell on the target, and no planes were lost from our group. Everything in our plane went smoothly too until we picked up some flak in one engine while we were on the bomb run. We were the first plane over the target so the "Chaff" didn't do us any good. The German gunners were good and they put a burst close enough to our plane to knock out an engine. In spite of the loss of power, Chuck was able to keep our position in the formation until Major Vacek dropped the bombs. As soon as the bombs were away, we fired our flares, a signal to the other planes in the formation that we were dropping out and that the deputy would take over the lead. Since we were leading the Division that day we were able to follow under the bomber stream for a long time on our remaining three engines. Our command pilot, Colonel Hogg, knew several of the fighter pilots in our cover for that day so we had an escort of P-51s and Mosquitoes (RAF twin engine bombers used by the 8th Air Force) all of the way back to the Channel. The Mosquitoes in our escort were flown by heavy bomber pilots that had completed their tours and had signed up for a second tour in reconnaissance.

I hated to see Chuck's crew complete their tour ahead of me because we worked so well together, but they had put in their required missions and I still had eight to go.

The next night, we had a party in my room to celebrate their surviving a full tour. By using my room we were able to have the officers and enlisted men together. We had

a keg of English beer, some of the mission whiskey that we had stockpiled for the event, and some sandwiches from the officers club. We relived our experiences together and had a good time. We felt that we had made a significant contribution to the war effort when we were flying together. We flew twelve missions from October 17 to February 24 during one of the most severe winters in recent history. We flew four Squadron leads, six Group leads, one Wing lead and one Division lead. We received two lead crew commendations for missions that we led during that time.

After everyone left, I went to bed without cleaning the place up. In the morning, I awoke to the aroma of stale English beer and a cluttered room. I walked over to the Officers Club for breakfast and on to the office. When I got back to the room in the evening, I found that the enlisted men had cleaned up the mess and things were back to normal. After Chuck flew his last mission, they moved me back to the officers club. Since Moran didn't have a regular bombardier, I shared a room with a bombardier from another crew.

A Get Acquainted Flight

I visited with Moran's crew for several days before we checked out a plane and took a shakedown flight over England to see how we could work together. It was the first time that they had flown in a bomber since being shot down so they were a little nervous at first. On March 2, we led the 2nd section of our group on a mission to the Krupp Ammunition works at Magdeburg with Major Vacek on the bomb sight. Very high winds caused poor bombing results and we took a hit in Number 3 engine. After the bombs were dropped, we left the formation and headed home. By the time that we neared the English coast we were pretty close to the water, and I spotted a floating mine (the round kind with the contact horns). I took a fix on it and reported it to the officer that debriefed us after the mission hoping that the English Navy could destroy it before some ship ran into it in the dark.

Our 200th Mission Celebration

Our group completed the 200th mission on March 9, 373 days after the first mission to Frankfurt on March 2, 1944. That was a pretty good record to be able to fly more than one mission every two days in spite of the bad weather. The 8th Air Force had an order granting the groups a day off when they completed 100 or 200 missions. During the day, a flight of P-47s and one of P-51s came to the base and gave us an air show. The P-47s had practiced together so they did some team aerobatics but the P-51s were not prepared for team maneuvers. They did not want to be outdone by the P-47 pilots so they gave us

a good buzz job (low level, high speed flying, close to the ground). One of the P-51 pilots kept flying around our hanger. Both doors were open and he could see that there were no planes inside. I was afraid that he was going to try to fly through, so I lined up a bunch of guys across the doorway to warn him to stay out. The hangers were large and the door openings were quite wide. The only problem was that there were cables hanging from the top of the structure that were used to lift parts of the airplanes when they were being repaired. Any plane trying to fly through a hanger would have hit those cables and crashed. I later found out that a P-51 had crashed when the 467th Bomb Group had their 200 Mission Party.

In the evening we had a great meal complete with champagne and entertainment. Some English performers came to the base and put on a very good show.

The next day, it was back to the rest of the war.

A Visitor From Home

John M. Saulsberry, a friend from my home town, called me from his base and we made arrangements to meet in Norwich for a visit. It was sure good to talk to someone from home. The last time that we were together was at Sheppard Field in April of 1943. He hadn't changed a bit. When we were talking on the phone he said that I was "looking" fine (as if we had phonevision).

The cleaners got our uniforms clean, but they didn't do too good a job on the pressing so I borrowed an iron and pressed my blouse and trousers so I would look presentable in town. We spent a couple of days together in Norwich and at the base. We enjoyed ourselves, talking about old times in Jacksonville and at Oregon State College, comparing war stories and seeing the sights of Norwich. We went through two beautiful Cathedrals and a castle that was complete with a moat and draw bridge. The castle had been turned into a museum and they displayed examples of things from the long distant past. The tour was listed as "dungeons to battlements" and we saw the whole thing. In the dungeon they had torture racks that were used to get information from a criminal or enemy. They had several examples of the metal frames that the Romans had used to display the bodies of robbers that had been executed as a deterrent to others. They would hang the bodies on poles along the main roads. We saw a good stage show in town and we came back to my base at night.

I was able to show John where I lived and worked. He was a bombardier and was stationed at one of the new bases. He thought that I had pretty plush accommodations at Horsham.

News of My First Crew

On March 11, I got a letter from Betty Soesbe (the bombardiers wife). She wrote that the Government had notified her that the ship my crew was flying had come down behind enemy lines and that at least one of the men on the crew was a prisoner of war. The airfield at St Dizier, where they delivered the gas, was close to the enemy lines but we had been told that the ship had arrived safely and had taken off for England when unloaded. Even if the new navigator got confused, I can't believe that George would have gone any farther east on his return trip. As it turned out, the message just gave six of the families false hope.

Scratch One Squadron

When we were being briefed for our mission on March 14, we had a little more excitement than usual. The officers were still in the briefing hut when we heard a report that there was a fire in one of the aircraft. The enlisted men had already gone out to the flight line and were installing the barrels in their guns.

In violation of regulations, one of the nose gunners had charged his guns (pulled rounds into the chambers). One of the guns malfunctioned causing it to start firing on its own. The gunner had to pull a round out of the belt to stop it. The ships were parked so the runaway gun fired into the wing tanks of the plane ahead of it setting one of them on fire. The planes were ready to go on the mission with full gas and bomb loads. The British crew that worked on the fire thought that they had put it out and returned to their station.

After they left, the crew chief went onto the top of the wing to examine the damage. When he saw a wisp of smoke coming from plane he knew he was in the wrong place. The other ground crew personnel said that he ran the length of the wing and off into space, a drop of about 11 feet. I didn't hear if he was injured, but I imagine that the sudden stop sure shook him up.

At the same time that the crew chief was trying to fly without an airplane, we were in a truck coming around the end of one of the hangers where we were greeted by a very loud explosion. The driver made a fast 180 degree turn and we were back at the briefing hut. We were lucky that the bomb load for the day was 4 pound incendiaries. It was the gasoline in the plane that caused all of the damage. However, the fact that the planes were loaded with incendiaries caused another problem. The 753rd Squadron was parked near the bomb dump (the area where all of the bombs were stored) and the blast scattered the incendiary bombs among the high explosive bombs of various sizes up to 2,000 pounds. The ground crewmen immediately took sticks to push the incendiaries away from the high explosive bombs before they burned through the casings and into the charge. If

one of the bombs had exploded, the resulting blast could have leveled a large portion of the base. Some of the incendiary bombs had an explosive charge in them making their task all the more dangerous. Those ground crewmen that prevented a catastrophe surely earned some medals that day, but I don't know if they got them or not.

After some time passed with no more explosions we finally convinced the truck driver to take us out to our ship. We were flying deputy group lead that day and I needed to be able to get ready to go. They weren't going to stop the war just because a couple of planes had blown up. There were so many holes in the 753rd squadron aircraft that none flew that day, and two planes were totally destroyed. We flew the mission with just two squadrons from our group. The rest of us got off and flew the assigned mission without further mishap.

The Promotion

Jackson Granholm called me one day on the phone to tell me that some other guy was up for a promotion as the 752nd Squadron Navigator. I had been functioning in that position for about 4 months and at that time I was very tired from all of the work. When I heard that the promotion was going to somebody else I just marched over to the Squadron office and suggested to Colonel Williamson that if this guy was going to get the credit that maybe he had better show up and start doing the work. I was dong the job because I liked it but I sure didn't want somebody else getting the credit. I offiered to continue working until I could break the new man in. He showed up for a couple of days and then I didn't see him any more. I don't know if he got the promotion or not.

My 22nd Birthday

I celebrated by 22nd birthday by flying my 25th mission to a tank factory at Hannover as the Deputy Group lead. It was a pretty rough mission but we got through without losing any planes from our group. We saw several other groups that were not so lucky.

My new crew had done pretty well during the month. We flew three missions, and took some new training. It was getting a little warmer, so it was only down to -40 degrees C at bombing altitude when it had been -60 C during the winter.

Our Turn to Take Over the Lead

On March 23, we flew another deputy wing lead. The lead ship was hit on the bomb run and had to drop out, so we took over and led the wing back to the bomber stream and started for home. The visibility was very good and we could see a long way ahead. I could

see that the wing ahead of us was going to fly between two cities that my flak map showed would cause them to come within the range of antiaircraft batteries. Since we had about 90 planes in our formation and no German fighters in sight, I asked the command pilot for permission to go around the city on our left. He gave the OK and I gave the new heading. The wing ahead of us picked up flak where the chart said they would and we slipped on by without a single burst near our formation. We rejoined the bomber stream after we passed the batteries.
We were very thankful for those accurate flak maps.

The Air War in March

March was a very busy month. We flew 6 combat missions and 7 flights over England by the 28th, for a total of 62 flight hours. I had completed 28 missions and only needed two more to complete my tour.

My new crew worked out well. I liked all of the fellows and they seemed to have confidence in my work. They got a kick out of the time that I called the Group leader on the radio and suggested that he get back on course. We were flying as the deputy group leader and I knew that we were off course. I just had to figure out how to diplomatically suggest that the guy in the lead plane get on the ball. We were going across southern France and the formation was still headed toward London. I was tired and just wanted to get back on the ground as soon as possible, I wasn't interested in a tour of the southern regions. I just told him that I had a good "Gee" box and that we needed to turn right to get back to our base. He changed course. He didn't punch me in the nose when we got down so I guess I didn't make him too mad.

My Last Combat Mission

On April 5, 1944 we were assigned a Squadron lead on a mission to the city of Plauen, about 50 miles south of Leipzig. The weather was so bad that we assembled over the continent and we were in the clouds all of the way to Frankfurt before we got in the clear. As we continued farther east we were flying over a solid layer of clouds so the Mickey operator had to find the release point for the bombs.

On our return trip , we started to let down as soon as we crossed the front lines and we got back into the clouds. When we reached 10,000 feet, we took off our oxygen masks and relaxed a bit. I ate some of my carbohydrate ration (sugar candy) and kept track of our position by taking fixes on the Gee box. We eventually got down to about 1,500 feet and the air was getting pretty rough. Soon we were flying between two cloud layers and Moran lost sight of the Group leader. He immediately called for the next heading. By that

time I was beginning to get air sick, but I kept on working and giving him the course changes as we came to them. I am glad that the rest of the crew never knew just how sick I was that day. I directed our course to the base and we all landed safely. Our Combat Days Were Over.

A Plane Just Falls Out Of The Sky

We usually lost planes due to enemy action or weather, but sometimes a plane would just fall out of the sky for no apparent reason. One day we were standing in front of our quarters watching a lone B-24 from another base in our traffic pattern. As far as we could tell it was a routine approach for a landing. Then, all four engines stopped. The plane fell silently from the sky and disappeared from our view behind a grove of trees. There was a loud explosion, then all was quite again. We never learned what caused all four engines to stop at the same time, but the crew may have been aware of some problem and were trying to get down at the nearest base. They didn't quite make it.

A New Rating

As a result of the training that I had taken in dropping bombs using the "Gee" navigation system I was rated as a Radar-Navigator-Bombardier on March 28. .

The Final Days of the War

The war seemed to be coming to a close, but I was busier than ever. I never seemed to have any time to myself. They kept adding more duties to my staff job until it took all of my time. Pretty soon I was the only old member left on the squadron staff. Colonel Williamson was assigned to the Group staff and the others were assigned other duties. Major Hensler was assigned as the new Squadron Commander.

Chuck Lockridge and I each received the Distinguished Flying Cross for work that we had done when we were flying together.

We were all saddened to hear the news that President Roosevelt had died. We knew that he was in ill health, but the news still came as a shock. He played such an important roll in the conduct of the war in Europe, that it seemed so unfair that he could not be there to see the successsful conclusion.

The war news was good and it seemed strange to read about the ground forces taking targets that we had bombed just a few days previously.

Spring had arrived on the continent, the trees were leafing out, and the fields were green. From the air everything looked so peaceful in the agricultural areas with the poplar lined lanes and the small winding streams. It was shirt sleeve weather in England too, but

it was still a little chilly when we got up at 0400 in the mornings.

The Last Days

By April 24, it looked like the war was almost over. I had stopped flying combat on April 5 at 29 missions. I could see why they drew the line at 30 missions for the lead crews. After that many missions you were so tired that you could easily make mistakes that could get people killed. The group hadn't flown a mission in four days and it didn't look there would be many more. We briefed the crews for several missions only to have them cancelled or recalled because the ground forces were so close that it wouldn't be safe to drop.

After the ground troops discovered the conditions in the concentration camps, I think that the old idea of "it was all Hitler's Fault" was fading. The people of the world began to realize that the war was not the work of one man and that he had lots of help from a segment of the German people.

With both Mussolini and Hitler dead, we knew it was only a matter of time before we could start packing up and heading home. I hoped that the captured Nazi records would reveal what happened to my first crew.

Our lovely summer weather changed and we had cold rain, sleet, and snow again. I didn't have any idea when I would be going home, but after of the promises of leaves in the past, I made up my mind not to plan ahead.

I had a bit of good luck. One of the guys raffled off a camera and I had the winning ticket. It was an old German-made camera that had seen lots of use and it used an odd size film. It was much more complicated than the old Kodak that I was used to and it was really the beginning of my interest in photography.

I had to continue to brief the crews for practice missions. Even though the war was almost over we still had our practice missions. I don't know if they were trying to use up all of the fuel that we had over there or were keeping us sharp for duty in the Pacific.

My Promotion

I had a pleasant surprise on May 5. I was at the officers club waiting to go into supper, when one of the guys came over and called me "Captain". I didn't know what he was talking about. He said that he had seen my name on the latest promotion list. I didn't even know that I had been put in for a promotion. I still wouldn't believe him until I saw the orders, then I had to borrow a set of captains bars from my pilot until I could get some of my own. There were two of us on the same orders so we bought a keg of beer to celebrate our promotions. There were a lot of guys there to congratulate us after supper.

COMBAT DUTY ENDS

Victory in Europe Finally Arrives

May 8, 1945, it was finally official, the war was over. Our group hadn't flown a mission for 13 days, so it had been over for us for quite a while.

There wasn't much rejoicing at our base. I guess it was because we knew that the job was only half done. There was still a very big war out in the Pacific to deal with.

We flew a training mission up over Scotland that night and listened to a news commentator in London describing the celebration down there. It sure sounded like they were having a big time and I didn't blame them a bit after all that they had been through in the past five years. Every air base that we flew over was illuminated by signal flares that the servicemen were firing to celebrate the end of the war.

It was the first night navigation mission that I had flown for a long time and to make it more difficult, the stars that I was using kept going behind the clouds. I finally got a couple of good fixes and made my way back to the base. It was kind of fun to review the celestial navigation that we learned at school. We had been using "Gee" for the past year and it was very fast and accurate. I could do a dozen fixes by "Gee" in the time that it took to take one by shooting the stars.

We didn't know when we would be leaving England, but we did know that we couldn't all leave at one time. Most of the crews that I came over with had already gone home, but it took a lot longer for a lead crew to get in their required missions. I also got further behind because I had to fly on four different crews. We spent our time working on records, getting our gear together, and preparing the planes for the trip home. When we flew over to England, all of the planes were new. By the end of the war many of them had flown a lot of missions and suffered battle damage, some of which may not have been detected and repaired. We did not want to have any crews lost because of undetected battle damage showing up in the middle of the north Atlantic.

Trolley Missions

We started another kind of duty that they called "Trolley Missions". The purpose was to give the ground personnel a tour over the heavily bombed parts of Western Germany. We flew in 3 ship formations over Frankfurt, Mainz, Koblenz, Dusseldorf, Mannheim, Aachen, Bastogne, and the length of the Ruhr valley. Germany must have been a beautiful country before the war, but by wars end it seemed that most of the cities were in ruins. Each city seemed to have at least one huge cathedral, some of which suffered from the bombing even though we tried to spare them.

Everything looked so peaceful in the rural areas and most of the land was being cultivated. We saw farmers plowing and sowing their land. It looked strange to see them with their horses, farming around the tanks and other machines of war that had been destroyed as the Allied armies struggled to advance across their land just a year previously.

You have heard of the castles on the Rhine. Well, we saw lots of them. They were very beautiful and apparently undamaged. Each one seemed to be on a hill of its own. On our first trip through the Rhine valley we were flying very low looking up at the hillside vineyards and the castles when I checked my map for the course of the river. I discovered that there was a very sharp bend just ahead. I told Moran to climb above the level of the banks, immediately and we just cleared the top in the nick of time. We had a plane on each wing so we couldn't maneuver very fast. When we got to Cologne, we circled the big cathedral for a closer look. We could see that the surrounding buildings had been destroyed, but the cathedral seemed to be pretty much intact. At Bielfeld, where we had bombed the railroad line across a big swamp, we could see kids swimming in the craters made by the bomb blasts. The ponds made by our bombs looked very small when compared to those lakes created by the huge bombs used by the RAF. We wondered what those kids were thinking as we went over.

Getting Ready to Go Home

We had another physical, the first since we left the states a year previously. My blood pressure was a little high again and I weighed 178 pounds. Nothing to worry about.

When I could find a little spare time I learned about photography from my roommate and my pilot. I was using 35mm gun camera film loaded onto some spools that came with my raffle camera. I was able to use the base dark room to do the processing. No spectacular pictures, but at least I was learning some of the basics of photography.

By May 29, we were hearing about outfits heading home, but we were still flying practice missions. I had been up ten times during the month. It was sure strange to be flying at night and seeing all of the lights where just a few days previously all was dark. By the end of May, there were so many lights that I could tell our position by the patterns.

I hoped that I wouldn't be writing too many more letters from APO 558, % Postmaster, New York, N.Y.

It seemed that we were working day and night down at squadron operations ever since VE Day and it finally looked like we had everything about ready to pack up and head for the States. Our departure time must have been getting close because they told us to notify everyone not to send us any more letters. I guess the army didn't want to spend

years chasing us around with a bunch of mail.

I heard that the fellows going back to the states were getting a leave. I sure hoped that it was true and that they wouldn't change the rules before I got there. I was looking forward to fresh milk, fresh fruit and vegetables, coke with a little fizz in it and real ice cream. We always had plenty of good food, but we missed the fresh fruit, vegetables, and milk.

Toward the end of the war a B-24M was assigned to our squadron and we got it for our trip home. One of the perks of being on the squadron staff. We used it for training missions after the shooting ended and I had a drift meter and Loran set installed in it. If it wasn't the best B-24 in the ETO, it was at least one of the best. It was the latest model and we had extra navigation equipment.

Final Preparations For Leaving the ETO

It was finally time for the crews in our Wing to start home. The 96th Combat Wing Headquarters were at Horsham St. Faith so all of the planes from the 466th and 467th Bomb Groups had to come to our base before going to the departure points at Valley, Wales, and Prestwick, Scotland. We received word from the departure bases each day regarding how many ships we could dispatch. The weather on the routes across the Atlantic determined when planes could fly. The planes that went to Valley, flew across the Atlantic, with a stop-over at the Island of Pico, in the Azores. The planes that went to Prestwick flew home on the route that we took coming over, via Iceland. The squadron staff was flying with our crew so we knew that we were going to be on the last plane out of the 752nd squadron to leave Horsham St. Faith.

A Delayed Combat Loss

One day when about half of the planes had been dispatched and most of the mechanics tools had been sent to the port for shipment stateside, we got a return. The crew flying ship No. 340-N was on their way to the states via the Northern route when their plane developed a gas leak. Instead of fixing it at a subdepot, they sent it back to our base. Our hanger was empty so they towed it inside and some mechanics started to work on it with what few tools they had left. When they pulled an inspection plate off of the bottom of the wing, many gallons of aviation fuel came gushing out. They immediately washed down the floor to reduce the chance of a fire and then pulled out the leaking tank. It had taken a hit and the piece of flak was still imbedded in the self-sealing material. It finally gave way. The ground crew installed a new tank and the crew started out again. (Reynolds book on the History of the 458th Bomb Group indicates that aircraft 41-29340-N

crashed in Scotland in June of 1945. The book did not indicate if there were any casualties.

Our Trip To Scotland

The air crews were getting ready to fly home in the bombers, the ground personnel were getting ready to go to a seaport and the nurses on our base were scheduled to fly home on a ATC (Air Transport Command) DC-4. One of the pilots in our squadron volunteered to take them up to the airfield at Prestwick, Scotland where they could board a plane for the overseas flight.

The B-24 that he was going to use that day was parked in front of our hanger and the crew and their passengers got on board. The pilots started the engines and taxied pretty fast by the corner of the hanger. They almost went by the hanger,but they turned a little too soon and struck the iron door tearing off the wing tip. A very embarrassed pilot turned around and brought the plane back to the space in front of the hanger with its damaged wing tip. I suspect that the pilot was showing off for the nurses and misjudged the distance to the hanger door. I heard later that the flight crew had to repair the damaged wing.

The nurses still had to go to Scotland so our crew was assigned to make the flight. Moran made sure that we didn't repeat the mistake of the first crew. We had a smooth flight to Prestwick and had lunch at the officers club. As we walked back to our plane we passed by a DC-4.We asked the crew if we could tour their ship and they obliged. We went up the stairs into the passenger section and then went through a set of doors into what I expected would be the cockpit. It was a section of fuel tanks that had been installed for long flights. In domestic use that section would have been filled with seats. We finally reached the cockpit and Moran and the DC-4 pilot compared controls. Both planes used the same engines. Following our tour we returned to Horsham and went back to getting ready to fly home ourselves.

When the planes from the 466th Bomb and 467 Bomb Groups came to our base I would go out to the flight line and check them over. One day, the plane that I flew in coming over from the states arrived. I checked the flight log and found that it had been on 58 missions during the same time that I got in 29. I was on some of the same missions as that ship. Quite a coincidence.

I had to see that all of our crews had their issued equipment when they left our base. When the last plane was outfitted there was still a lot of items left over, so I had to take some of them in our ship. We had a whole box of 10x50 binoculars with us.

OUR DUTY IN ENGLAND IS OVER

Going Home At Last

Our work in Europe was finally over, the Nazis had been defeated, the paper work was done, and all of the other planes in our wing had already departed. Now it was our turn. Twenty men climbed into our plane and headed down runway 05 for the last time. There were more crews than planes so each aircraft carried several extra persons. Our personnel list consisted of:

2 Majors
6 Captains
2 1st Lieutenants
2 Master Sergeants
3 Staff Sergeants
1 Tech. Sergeant
1 Sergeant
3 Corporals

As we flew low to the west, the English countryside slipping below our plane, we could see the familiar villages, the narrow crooked roads, the tall churches, and the odd shaped fields with their hedge rows. In spite of the massive German air raids, the rocket attacks, and the disruption caused by the construction of the military facilities for the Americans, the English countryside was still beautiful and it looked very peaceful in the morning sunlight.

As we approached the airfield at Valley, Wales, we flew over the Welch countryside that appeared to have been unchanged for centuries. We landed at Valley on the shore of the Irish Sea and spent several days there before continuing our trip home. When our time to depart arrived we headed south over the Irish Sea and by Lands End, the vacation spot of England. When land faded from view, we were back over the Atlantic again after a very eventful year in Europe.

The Trip Back to the States

Our first destination Pico in the Azores group of islands. We stayed far to the west of Portugal, and struck out across the Atlantic. The Azores belong to Portugal, but the United States maintained an air base on Pico. When we left England we were enjoying clear weather, but after a while we encountered a storm that extended higher than 10,000 feet. We had to fly into the clouds since we didn't have enough oxygen masks for everyone. We were in solid clouds for a long time and I was beginning to worry that we

would have a hard time finding our destination when we broke into the clear and saw our destination just ahead of us. The island had been drenched by the storm that we had been flying through and everything was fresh and bright. The islands are like Hawaii, just the tops of under the ocean volcanos. Pico juts 150 feet out of the ocean and has a flat top. The buildings were white with red tile roofs. It was sure pretty out there in the sun, all green, red, and white. That is sure a big ocean and we were very glad to get through the storm before we reached our destination.

When we got on the ground, we discovered that we would be staying in tents and sleeping on canvas cots. They had a good PX there with no import duty. I bought some jewelry for my mother and a pocket watch for myself. My personal wrist watch had conked out and I knew that I would have to turn in my GI watch when we reached the states.

As we walked around the base we saw the fellows that were stationed there carrying stalks of bananas. I guess we were far enough south to grow tropical fruit. They warned us to watch out for rats because some of them carried the plague. I don't know if that warning was supposed to keep us on the base or if they really had a problem with the plague.

I ran into several of the fellows that I went through cadets with and we had a good time comparing our adventures. One of my friends had gone to North Africa and had been stationed in Italy later.

Jack Teagarten's army band was there when we arrived and they put on a good show for us in one of the hangers.

One night I had an unpleasant surprise. We were sleeping on canvas army cots and our bedding was just a single wool army blanket, sewn across the bottom and half way up one side. I awoke with a terrible pain in my back. It was dark and I didn't have a flash light, but I finally figured out what the problem was. The cot fabric had split from end to end and I was lying draped over the center support of the cot. As soon as I figured out what the problem was I got up and finished the rest of the night on the next vacant cot.

We had to wait at Pico until the high westerly winds died down so we would have enough fuel to reach our next destination. For a while, they talked about Bermuda but we eventually were briefed to go to Newfoundland. We started out in clear weather and were doing just fine until we looked ahead and saw an ominous cloud bank towering above us. Just as we were about to enter it, a B-24N (Single Tail) come out so close to us that we could see the expression on the faces of the other crew. Neither crew knew the other was there until we passed, far too close for comfort. I am quite sure that we were at our assigned altitude and we should never have even seen a plane going the other direction. It could have been a Navy patrol plane heading for the Azores. If the two planes had come

together, we would have ended our war as a line on an Aircraft Report as Missing In Action.

We eventually got in the clear again and I was able to use the sun and my Loran set to keep track of our progress. The first indication that we had of land ahead was the birds, then we saw a few small fishing boats and finally we could see land. We went into the field at St. Johns, Newfoundland, spent the night, and then flew on down to Bradley Field, Connecticut the next morning.

When we arrived at Bradley, we all had to go through a big hanger, where we turned in our flying gear and got a receipt to clear our records. When we were through, we found a Red Cross lunch cart where we could get a bite to eat. I chose a BLT sandwich with a real coke and thoroughly enjoyed the taste of American food.

We eventually were taken to the barracks where we would be spending the night and then headed for the mess hall to have the steak dinner that they promised us. When we got there we found that all of the steaks were gone and they served us hot dogs. We hoped that this was not an omen of broken promises to come. We traveled to Camp Miles Standish by train the next day for further orders and to be lectured on how to act now that we had returned to the United States (they called it the Department of Interior). It was a very big camp and a lot of men returning from overseas were there. They also had a lot of very healthy looking German prisoners of war that had been in the Afrika Corps.. The prisoners were tending the grounds and working in the mess halls. We ate off of trays and went down a serving line to get our food. After one of the meals, an officer forgot to pick up his tray and a German prisoner grabbed him to make him do it. The officer was a pretty big guy and was in no mood to be pushed around by a German POW. During our lecture the next morning, the base commander referred to the incident and said that he would appreciate it if we didn't beat up his help because he had to rely on them to do a lot of the work around the camp.

<u>The Train Trip to Fort Lewis</u>

They gave us a whole bunch of travel orders and my name was listed as Group leader for the Air Force troops. There were 3 captains on the order and I was picked as leader because F came before G and P. I just read the page where the names of the Air Force personnel appeared and didn't go through the rest of the documents very carefully. Hidden on another page was a two line entry indicating that I was in charge of all of the troops on that train, not just the Air Force.

Our car was very different than the relic that I rode in from San Francisco to Sheppard Field in 1943. It was a pretty new and air conditioned. Most of us were from the

8th Air Force, but some were from the 15th Air Force and the rest of the seats were taken by some fellows from an infantry company heading for redeployment in the Pacific Theater. The rest of the infantry unit was in other cars.

Eventually, we pulled out of Camp Miles Standish and traveled to New York City where we spent several hours on a sunken siding someplace in the city with people looking down at us from street level. After we left the city, I began to notice the people that stood along the tracks and waved. You could tell that a lot of them wished their "Johnny" was on board and coming home too. You could see the Moms, Dads, Wives, Sweethearts, sisters, and brothers. The whole American family. I don't know how they did it but they seemed to know when a troop train was coming through their area.

In the late afternoon, we finally started up the Hudson River. It was very a very pretty area with the sunset on the river but the mood was spoiled as we went by Sing Sing Prison,.

When we got to Chicago, we stopped long enough to pick up several cars of sailors from the Great Lakes Training Station. After we pulled out, the Lieutenant in charge of the infantry unit came looking for me. He reported that one of his men had got off to make a phone call and hadn't made it back to the train before it pulled out. I took the man's name and then located the spot in the orders where I was designated as officer in charge of all groups proceeding to Fort Lewis. As far as I was ever able to determine, my only duty was to carry the orders and report to the Commanding Officer at Ft. Lewis I also had to report any problems encountered enroute such as missing people. I sure didn't have anything to do with the train scheduling or feeding the men. That was all taken care of by the railroad crew and the fellows in the mess car. The cooks put out pretty good meals. The conductor did keep me informed of where we were and the schedule for the next stops.

The first stop after leaving Chicago was Freeport, Illinois. We were several hours late, it was almost midnight, and it was raining hard when we pulled into the station. I pulled up the curtains to see where we were and saw a large crowd of people on the platform. The women and girls had baskets. We had made ourselves comfortable for the night, so the women came on board with doughnuts, sandwiches, cookies, fruit, milk and coffee. It seemed that the whole town had turned out to meet us. It sure made us feel good, both for the refreshments and the fact that those people cared enough to come out in a stormy night to give some refreshments to a group of people from the west coast that they did not know. By morning, the rain was over and everything was fresh and green. The corn was only a couple of inches tall, but the grain had headed out. The farmers had a lot of hay down and I was sure that the rain hadn't done it any good. At Minneapolis they hooked our cars onto a passenger train that would take us to Seattle. The next morning

I awoke to see a coyote looking in the window. From the green fields of Minnesota we had gone to the yellow clay of Montana. We were on a single track line running through barren country with very few towns along the route.

When we were about half way across Montana, I went back to the baggage car to check on something and discovered the strong odor of Scotch Whiskey in the compartment. There was quite a bit of money left in our mess account when they closed the base so the Mess Officer decided to buy everyone a bottle of Scotch whiskey instead of refunding the money. I didn't have any use for mine so I thought that I would take it home to my uncle. I put it in a cloth bag that had my name on it, along with some underwear to keep it from breaking. I put the whole thing in my B-4 bag (folding suitcase). I opened my bag to see if the odor was coming from my bottle. It was. The cork had come out and about half of the contents had spilled.onto my uniforms. I poured the remainder down the sink and threw the whiskey saturated underwear, the empty bottle, and the bag out of the train when were at a stop in open country. I thought that would be the end of the mess except for cleaning my uniforms when I got home. Wrong. In a little while a trainman came looking for me with the bag. He had been walking along side of the train and saw the bag. He picked it up and noticed the name. He had a friend, Otto Fick, who had a son in the Air Force. He wondered if the bag belonged to him. I assured him that I did not know Otto and that I had thrown the bag away for obvious reasons. He asked if he could keep and I told him that it would be fine with me. I was just glad to get rid of that albatross. For the rest of the trip my bag smelled like a bar.

The conductor came through the train and told us that we would get to Fort Lewis at 4:30 the next afternoon. He said that the army would meet us with a band and all of that fancy stuff. That would have been something new to us. Up to that time all of our troop movements had been on the QT.

When we were going through the Rockies, I spent a lot of time on the platform of the last car looking at the scenery. It must have been a very difficult task constructing the grade through that rugged country. In time we traveled through Spokane and on to Seattle where they hooked us onto a train that delivered us to the side of a warehouse at Fort Lewis. It was almost midnight when we arrived and instead of a band, we were met by some trucks and a staff car. I took all of the orders for the men whose destination was Fort Lewis in the staff car and went to meet the base commander. I turned the orders in and was asked if we wanted to be processed immediately or wait until morning. It had been years since any of us had been home so I asked for immediate processing. They ran us through in a hurry and we all went out to the bus station there on the base to catch transportation to our various final destinations.

The Final Leg of the Trip Home

My next stop was Portland where I made a phone call home and then on down the line to Medford. My folks met me at the bus station just 27 months after we said our good-byes at the same place.

A Period of Rest and Recuperation

I had 30 days to rest, visit, and just have a good time. I took the bus down to Los Angeles to visit my high school girl friend for a couple of days.

MY LAST DUTY ASSIGNMENT

Sioux Falls, South Dakota

After my leave was up I got on a Greyhound bus and headed back to Fort Lewis. As the bus approached Portland, I found the Willamette Valley choked with smoke from the 1945 Tillamook Forest Fire. Little did I know at the time that I would spend most of my working years bringing the forest back to life in the aftermath of repeated fires that had comsumed over 350,000 acres of prime forest. When we reported in at Fort Lewis we were given travel vouchers for our trip to Sioux Falls, South Dakota. This time there was just 11 officers and we traveled on a regular passenger train. Sioux Falls had been a training base of some kind and it had the all too familiar one story tar paper shacks, with double bunks, for barracks. The bunks were crowded so closely together that you had to signal before you got out of bed.

I finished my initial processing in one day and was classified for duty at an army post in the States until the war with Japan was over. I had enough points for immediate discharge but I elected to stay in the service until final victory. I figured that I would let the married fellows out first.

There were from 35,000 to 40,000 men at the base with more arriving every day. Things were getting pretty confusing so the War Department sent in a General to get things moving. I couldn't see too much improvement. Before the General arrived, once you had been through processing, your only duty was to check the discharge list each day. After a name was posted, there were several days before discharge papers were completed. As a result, there were lots of men from the base at their homes without orders. Before anybody left he would arrange to have someone who was going to stay on the base phone him when his name came up so he could return to the base to be discharged.

We could go to town and see movies or visit the bars, go pheasant hunting or just

sit around the base. The base did have a PX with a lot of the items that we could not get in England. Believe it or not, each of us used to eat I quart packages of ice cream when we were sitting around the barracks. Later on, we would buy the quart size containers and cut them in half. We finally got our fill of good ice cream and big chocolate bars.

There was a group of people on the base that was doing the processing, but everyone else was just marking time. Before the General arrived, you could get up in the morning when you wanted to. Lots of the guys stayed in town very late and stayed in their bunks until almost noon. I was sleeping in later too and got so I couldn't get to sleep at night. I decided to start getting up the 7:00 in the morning, eat breakfast, and do a lot of walking on the base and in Sioux Falls. I soon got to feeling a lot better.

When General Travis had been on the base about a week he announced that everyone would be out within two weeks. By the end of the second week, there were more men there than when he made the rash declaration. I guess the General figured if he couldn't speed up the shipping process he could at least give the people something to do. We had to get up at 05:30 and stand a formation in front of the barracks, like we used to do when cadets, then go to breakfast. After breakfast we went out to the drill field to march until noon. In the afternoon, we had calisthenics.

I was the senior officer in my barracks so they gave me a big brass whistle to get my fellow officers up in the mornings. I got up first and then went up and down the aisle blowing my whistle. Some of the fellows still wouldn't get up so I gave their bunks a good shaking. If that failed I left them alone. I wasn't going to pull them out by force. I always had a faithful group that got up and stood formation with me when the General went by in his staff car. One morning I had a lot of new faces at formation. I found out later that the General had come through the back door to the barracks and shook the bunks to get the rest of the troops up. At first the guys thought it was me giving them another shake, but when they saw the star their feet hit the floor in a hurry.

There was no officer of higher rank than Captain in our area so I had to drill a large formation of men in the mornings. It was a new experience for me but we eventually started to look something like a military unit. There were too many men to do anything fancy.

V.J. Day at Last, Maybe I Can Go Home

V.J. Day came quickly after the atomic bombs were dropped on Japan. If we had been forced to invade the Japanese homeland it would have taken a long time and many lives on both sides. I am certain that we would have eventually won but at a very high cost. I might have been retrained to go to the Pacific in B-29s or just go with a B-24 outfit.

There wasn't much celebrating on the base. The General did give us a brief holiday, we didn't have the 05:30 formation for three days. A couple of us went into town during the break to see some movies. We saw 7 movies in three days. Quite a celebration, but at least we didn't wind up with a hangover. After the Japanese surrender I began to have hopes that I might be discharged soon. By September 10, I had been at Sioux Falls for 6 weeks with no indication of shipping orders. They did make a change in the processing procedure. Instead of people being discharged from Sioux Falls, they set up discharge units all over the US and the people were sent to a base close to their homes.

I finally got tired of just waiting for my name to show up on some kind of a list so I started standing in line in front of the building where they kept the records. It took me two days of waiting until I finally got to talk to a corporal in the records section. He told me that I was supposed to have shipped out earlier and that I was listed as AWOL. I had looked at every shipping list for over 6 weeks so I demanded that he show me a copy of the shipping order that had my name on it. He looked up the number and pulled the document out of the file. It wasn't even a shipping order. There were no names on it. Someone had fouled up. Most of the fellows had chosen immediate discharge and I elected to stay in the service until the final victory so they probably put my file in a separate pile and lost it. Anyway, they put my file back in the active pile and promised to process it within 14 days. I had heard that song before, but at least it gave me a little hope. I was supposed to be shipped to the Portland Air Base for processing and discharge.

To kill some time, I went to the dental clinic to see how my teeth were coming along. The dentists there were waiting for their discharges too. The one that I was assigned to only found two cavities. He filled one and was working on the second one when someone called out that his name was on the shipping list. He just put in a temporary filling, said Good-bye, and took off.

Discharge Was Finally a Reality

I finally received my orders to go to the Portland Air Base for discharge. Two of us were to leave Sioux Falls and to arrive at Portland no later that September 29. We went down to the train depot and exchanged our travel vouchers for tickets to Portland. For the first leg of our journey we traveled on a very unique train. The back half of the engine was the passenger space and the rest of the train was freight cars. We transferred to a regular passenger train at Minot, North Dakota to go to Portland. We got to the Portland Air base OK and then went through more paper work and another physical. The doctor found that I had a hernia and wanted to repair it before signing my physical for discharge. After the experience with the dentist in Sioux Falls, I wasn't about to let some army doctor do any

surgery on me. I signed a waiver not to file for an operation at some later date and they completed my physical papers. They finally finished with all of my records and my orders for discharge were typed on September 30, 1945. I had earned 48 days leave during my period of military service. I got all of my pay in my last check and the vacation time counted as active duty time. All that remained was a bus trip into Portland and then a trip on the Greyhound back to Medford.
My service in the Army was over.

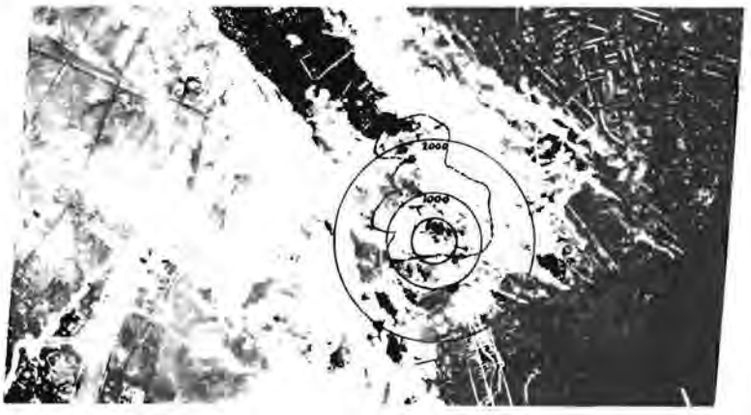
PHOTOGRAPH AND DOCUMENT SECTION

Lead Crew Commendations
Photo Pages
My Commission
Separation Record
Distinguished Flying Cross
Certificate of Appreciation

Lead Crew Commendation

On this 17 th day of January, Nineteen hundred and forty-five, the members of the following crew of the 458 th Bombardment Group are awarded this token for their meritorious achievement of leading their Group in the destruction of the target at Harburg, Germany —

PILOT - CAPT. C. L. LOCKRIDGE
BOMBARDIER - I/LT. E. F. GNIEWKOWSKI
PIL. NAVIGATOR - I/LT. G. A. KOVAKA
ENGINEER - T/SGT. W. F. COOK
GUNNER - S/SGT. L. C. OTTNEY
GUNNER - S/SGT. A. J. LOMBARDOZZI
NAVIGATOR - I/LT. L. R. FICK
MICKEY OP. - I/LT. A. CIRALDO
RADIO OP. - T/SGT. T. A. ZUBIK
GUNNER - S/SGT. R. A. STAMM
GUNNER - S/SGT. C. R. FLORES
COMMAND PILOT - MAJOR R. H. RUE



Walter R. Peck
COMMANDING GENERAL, 96 th COMBAT WING.

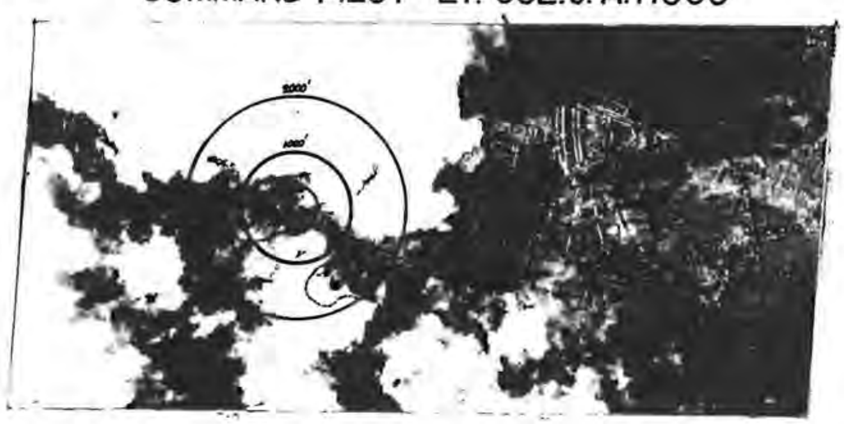
James H. Isbell
COMMANDING OFFICER, 458 th BOMBARDMENT GROUP

Lead Crew Commendation

On this 24th day of February Nineteen hundred and forty-five, the members of the following crew of the 458th Bombardment Group, leading the 2nd Air Division are awarded this token for their meritorious achievement in the destruction of the target at

Bielefeld, Germany

PILOT - CAPT. C. L. LOCKRIDGE
NAVIGATOR - 1/ST. LT. L. R. FICK
BOMBARDIER - MAJ. F. J. VACEK
RADIO OP. - T/SGT. T. A. ZUBICK
ENGINEER - T/SGT. W. F. COOK
GUNNER - S/SGT. R. A. STAMM
GUNNER - S/SGT. C. R. FLORES
GUNNER - S/SGT. L. C. OTTNEY
GUNNER - S/SGT. A. J. LOMBARDOZZI
PILOT. NAV. - 1/ST. LT. R. E. PREIST
MICKEY NAV. - 1/LT. A. CIRALDO
COMMAND PILOT - LT. COL. J. A. HOGG



Walter R. Peck
COMMANDING GENERAL - 96th COMBAT WING

Allen F. Herzberg
COMMANDING OFFICER - 458th BOMB GROUP

(C195 - 1 - 458) 19-3-45) LEAD CREW COMMENDATION)

LAWRENCE. R. FICK

MAY 1943

DECEMBER 1943

MAY 1944

JULY 1945

MY PILOTS

LT. GEORGE J. KOEHN

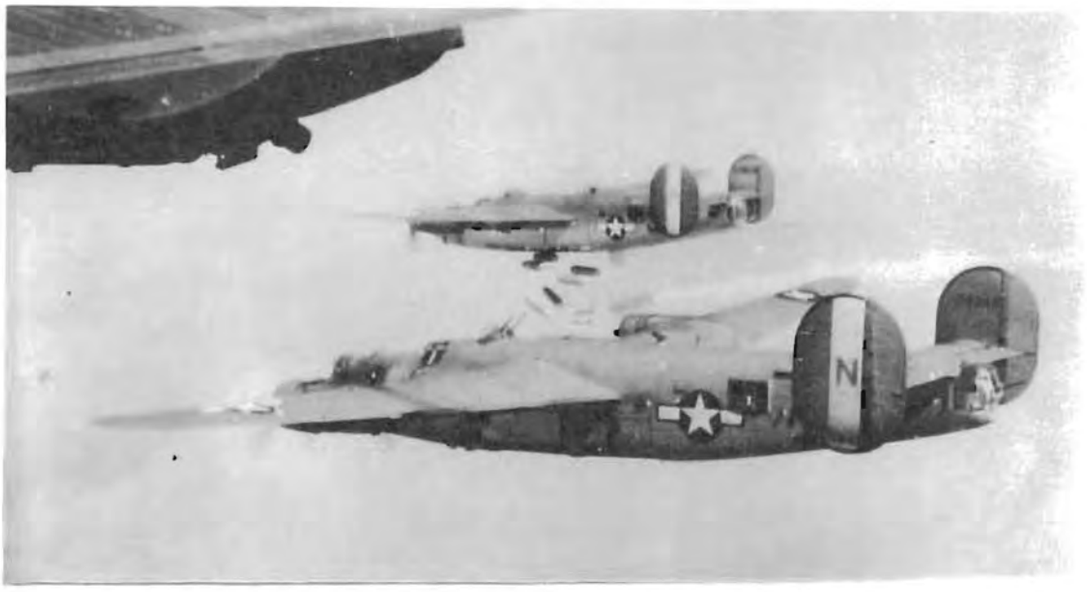
CAPT. CHARLES. L. LOCKRIDGE (CENTER)

CAPT. JOHN W. MORAN

THE GANG AT THE REST HOME

THE WAY WE DRESSED FOR THE COLD

HORSHAM ST. FAITH (OUR BASE)



NAPALM BOMB DROP

OUR FIRST SHIP

HEADQUARTERS
ARMY AIR FORCES GULF COAST TRAINING CENTER
Office of the Commanding General

Randolph Field, Texas

September 18, 1943

Mr. and Mrs. Peter J. Fick,
Box 116,
Jacksonville, Ore.

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Fick:

In a memorandum which has come to my desk this morning, I note that your boy has been classified for training as a Navigator and that he is being appointed an Aviation Cadet in the Army Air Forces.

In order to win this war, it is vital to have the best qualified young men in charge of navigating our bombardment airplanes. Upon them will depend in large measure the success of our entire war effort.

The position of Navigator calls for a high degree of intelligence, alertness and coolness. Not only the success of the mission, but the safety of his crew-mates, depends on the speed and skill with which he performs his calculations. Men who will make good material for training as Navigators are rare. The Classification Board believes that your boy has the necessary reliability, character and mathematical aptitude.

If he shows the progress we confidently expect of him, he will in all probability win his wings as a qualified Navigator. Considering the rigid requirements for this training, you have every reason to be proud of your boy today. I congratulate you and him.

Sincerely yours,

G. C. Brant

G. C. BRANT
Major General, U.S. Army
Commanding

R E S T R I C T E D

HEADQUARTERS
273RD AAF BASE UNIT (SB)
Lincoln Army Air Field
Lincoln, Nebraska

370.5-503 (188-52) 28 June 1944

SUBJECT: Movement Orders, Heavy Bombardment Crew, Number FB-333-BJ 21, To Overseas Destination.

TO :	P	2nd Lt GEORGE J. KOEHN	0-699679
	CP	2nd Lt JOHN R. TUCKER	0-767914
	N	2nd Lt LAWRENCE R. FICK	0-719042
	B	2nd Lt JAMES A. SOESBE	0-716983
	APMG	S/Sgt Merlin T. Ash	39278839
	ROMG	S/Sgt Anthony J. Corlito	31203718
	AG	Sgt James R. Southern	34772775
	CG	Sgt Billie Hudson	6972473
	CG	Sgt Clifford Gowin	35483385
	CG	Sgt Robert C. Shea	11057836

1. You are assigned to Shipment No. FB-333-BJ, as crew number FB-333-BJ 21, and to B-24 airplane number 42-50686, on aircraft project number 92733R. You are equipped in accordance with the provisions of the movement order.

2. You are relieved from atchd, unasgd, 273RD AAF Base Unit (SB), this station and WP via mil acft and/or rail to North Atlantic Wing, ATC, via Grenier Fld, Manchester, New Hampshire to Dow Fld, Bangor, Maine, or such other Air Port of Embarkation as the CG, ATC, may direct, thence to the oversea destination of Shipment FB-333-BJ. Upon arrival at the Air Port of Embarkation, control of personnel is relinquished to the CG, ATC.

3. This is a PERMANENT change of station with TD en route. You will not be accompanied by dependents; neither will you be joined by dependents en route to, nor at, the Air Port of Embarkation. You will not discuss this movement except as may be necessary in the transaction of official business. You will not file safe arrival telegrams with commercial agencies while en route and at domestic or oversea destination.

4. You will use APO 16209-BJ, (followed by the numeral ending of your shipment crew number to which assigned, referred to in par 1 above) c/o Postmaster, New York, New York. Upon arrival at final oversea destination, you will use the mailing address of the troops at that place. Advise your friends and relatives of your permanent APO by forwarding a completed V-Mail WD AGO Form 971; also notify the postal officer of the theater by forwarding a completed WD AGO Form 204.

5. a. In lieu of subsistence, a flat per diem of seven dollars ($7.00) is authorized for officers and flight officers for travel, and for periods of temporary duty en route to final destination, when necessary, in accordance with existing law and regulations. Payment of mileage is not authorized. Per diem will be suspended for such times as the individual is billeted and subsisted, as outlined in W.D. Memo. W35-2-42, dated 30 September 1942.

ORDER 14 dtd 30 December 1944 was the last Order issued by this Hqs

752ND BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H)
458th Bombardment Group (H)
AAF Station 123, APO 558

23 January 1945

ORDERS)
:
NO 1)

1. 1st Lieut. LAWRENCE R FICK, O-719042, is hereby appointed Squadron Navigator, vice Capt JOHN R. EKBERG, O-810528, transferred.

Walter H. Williamson
WALTER H. WILLIAMSON
Lt Col., Air Corps
Commanding.

755TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H)
AAF Station 123 APO 558
Office of the Navigation Officer

28 March 1945

SUBJECT: Rated Navigator--Bombardier Radar.

TO : Whom it May Concern.

1. This is to certify that 1st Lt LAWRENCE C. FICK, O-719042, has been engaged in operating radar equipment since 1 March 1945, and has been thoroughly checked out by a rated radar navigator--bombardier. Thereby being authorized the rating of navigator--bombardier radar.

Valin R Woodward
VALIN R. WOODWARD
Major, Air Corps
Commanding

THE

PRESIDENT

OF

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

To all who shall see these presents, greeting:

Know Ye, that reposing special trust and confidence in the patriotism, valor, fidelity and abilities of Lawrence Robert Fick,

I do appoint him, temporarily, Captain,

in

The Army of the United States

such appointment to date from the second *day of* May,

nineteen hundred and forty-five. *He is therefore carefully and diligently to discharge the duty of the office to which he is appointed by doing and performing all manner of things thereunto belonging.*

And I do strictly charge and require all Officers and Soldiers under his command when he shall be employed on active duty, to be obedient to his orders as an officer of his grade and position. And he is to observe and follow such orders and directions, from time to time, as he shall receive from me, or the future Presidents of the United States of America, or the General or other Superior Officers set over him, according to the rules and discipline of War.

This Commission to continue in force during the pleasure of the President of the United States, for the time being, and for the duration of the present emergency and for six months thereafter, unless sooner terminated.

Done at the City of Washington, this nineteenth *day of* June,

in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and forty-seven, *and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred and* seventy-first.

By the President:

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
WAR OFFICE

Edwin D. Watson
Major General,
The Secretary [illegible]

Army of the United States

SEPARATION QUALIFICATION RECORD

SAVE THIS FORM. IT WILL NOT BE REPLACED IF LOST

This record of job assignments and special training received in the Army is furnished to the soldier when he leaves the service. In its preparation, information is taken from available Army records and supplemented by personal interview. The information about civilian education and work experience is based on the individual's own statements. The veteran may present this document to former employers, prospective employers, representatives of schools or colleges, or use it in any other way that may prove beneficial to him.

1. LAST NAME—FIRST NAME—MIDDLE INITIAL	2. ARMY SERIAL NO.	3. GRADE	4. SOCIAL SECURITY NO.
FICK, LAWRENCE R.	0 719 042	Capt.	[redacted] Unknown

5. PERMANENT MAILING ADDRESS (*Street, City, County, State*)

Box 116, Jacksonville, Oregon

6. DATE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE	7. DATE OF SEPARATION	8. DATE OF BIRTH
8 Apr 1944	20 Nov 1945	17 Mar 1923

9. PLACE OF SEPARATION

Separation Center, Portland Army Air Base
Portland 19, Oregon

MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS

10. MONTHS	11. GRADE	12. MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY
16	Capt.	Navigator (1034)

SUMMARY OF MILITARY OCCUPATIONS

13. TITLE—DESCRIPTION—RELATED CIVILIAN OCCUPATION

Navigator: Combat navigator, B-24 type aircraft. Make dead reckoning and dead reckoning navigation. Has knowledge of navigation and flight instruments, including radar.

Squadron Navigator: Administered records and training for navigators of a combat squadron. Acted as lead navigator on combat missions.

WD AGO FORM 100
1 JUL 1945

This form supersedes WD AGO Form 100, 15 July 1944, which will not be used.

MILITARY EDUCATION

14. NAME OR TYPE OF SCHOOL—COURSE OR CURRICULUM—DURATION—DESCRIPTION

Texas A & M. 3 mos. CTD, studied physics, math, geogrophy, etc.,
Ellington Fld, Tex. 2½ mos. Pre-flight navigation tng.
San Marcos, Tex. 4½ mos. Advanced navigation.

CIVILIAN EDUCATION

15. HIGHEST GRADE COMPLETED	16. DEGREES OR DIPLOMAS	17. YEAR LEFT SCHOOL
2 yrs Coll.	H.S. Diploma	1942

18. NAME AND ADDRESS OF LAST SCHOOL ATTENDED

Oregon State College, Corvallis, Oregon

19. MAJOR COURSES OF STUDY

Forestry

OTHER TRAINING OR SCHOOLING

20. COURSE—NAME AND ADDRESS OF SCHOOL—DATE	21. DURATION
None	

CIVILIAN OCCUPATIONS

22. TITLE—NAME AND ADDRESS OF EMPLOYER—INCLUSIVE DATES—DESCRIPTION

Cartographer BEP 9, U.S. Forestry Service, Oregon
Made maps of area's to be worked over by forestry service. Worked for Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine. Inspected area's to see that they had been cleared of plants carrying plant disease.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

23. REMARKS

Awarded Air Medal and three Oak Leaf Clusters.
Awarded D.F.C., and four Bronze Stars on EAME Ribbon.

24. SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING SEPARATED	25. SIGNATURE OF SEPARATION CLASSIFICATION OFFICER	26. NAME OF OFFICER (*Typed or Stamped*)
[redacted]	[redacted]	FRANCIS A. KLUCZ, 2D LT, AC

R E S T R I C T E D

HEADQUARTERS 2d AIR DIVISION
APO 558

GENERAL ORDERS)
NUMBER 106)

25 March 1945

E X T R A C T

Under the provisions of Army Regulations 600-45, 22 September 1943, as amended, and pursuant to authority contained in Paragraph 2b, Section I, Circular 56, Hq European T of Opns U. S. Army, 27 May 1944, and Letter, Hq Eighth Air Force, 23 September 1944, File No. 200.6, Subject: "Awards and Decorations", the DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS is awarded to the following named Officers and Enlisted Men:

Citation: For extraordinary achievment, while serving as Lead Navigators on many heavy bombardment missions to Germany and enemy occupied territory. The following Officers have displayed superior navigational ability in overcoming adverse weather conditions to lead their formations to successfully bomb targets requiring deep penetrations. The skill and devotion to duty exhibited by these Officers on these many occasions reflect the higest credit upon themselves and the Armed Forces of the United States.

* * *

LAWRENCE R FICK 0719042 1st Lt Jacksonville, Oregon.

* * *

By command of Major General KEPNER:

FRANCIS H. GRISWOLD
Brigadier General, U. S. A.
Chief of Staff

OFFICIAL:

GEORGE L. PAUL
Lt Col GSC
Adjutant General

"A TRUE EXTRACT COPY"

R E S T R I C T E D

ARMY AIR FORCES

Certificate of Appreciation

FOR WAR SERVICE

TO

LAWRENCE R FICK Capt

I CANNOT *meet you personally to thank you for a job well done; nor can I hope to put in written words the great hope I have for your success in future life.*

Together we built the striking force that swept the Luftwaffe from the skies and broke the German power to resist. The total might of that striking force was then unleashed upon the Japanese. Although you no longer play an active military part, the contribution you made to the Air Forces was essential in making us the greatest team in the world.

The ties that bound us under stress of combat must not be broken in peacetime. Together we share the responsibility for guarding our country in the air. We who stay will never forget the part you have played while in uniform. We know you will continue to play a comparable role as a civilian. As our ways part, let me wish you God speed and the best of luck on your road in life. Our gratitude and respect go with you.

H. H. Arnold

COMMANDING GENERAL
ARMY AIR FORCES

APPENDIX

Statistics Regarding the 8th Air Force in Europe During World War II

The First Bombing Mission (12 B-17s)	August 1942
The Last Bombing Mission	April 25, 1945
Time Elapsed	966 days
Bomber and Fighter Operations in the ETO	459 Days
Bomber Crew and Fighter Pilot Casualties (Missing in Action, Wounded, Killed)	46,456 men

8th Air Force Aircraft Losses (Failed to return from combat missions)

B-17s	3,093
B-24s	1,099
P-47s	529
P-51s	1,235
P-38s	266

German Luftwaffe Aircraft Destroyed by 8th Air Force

	Air Combat	On the Ground	Total
By Bombers	6,259	3,079	9,388
By Fighters	5,222	4,250	9,472
Totals	11,481	7,329	18,810

Air-Sea Rescue Results (Men who ditched or bailed out over the channel)

B-17	3,336 crewmen	37.9% Rescued
B-24	1,025 crewmen	26.5% Rescued
P-47	69 pilots	39.1% Rescued
P-51	131 pilots	42.7% Rescued
P-38	27 pilots	44.4% Rescued

2ND AIR DIVISION (B-24s)

First Combat Mission	November 7, 1942
Last Combat Mission	April 25, 1945
Maximum Strength	54,000 men and women
Total Personnel Serving in the Division	150,000

The bombers in the the Division were organized into:

5 Wings (Approximately 850 Aircraft)
14 Groups
56 Squadrons

The bombers from the Division attacked 1,049 separate targets.

The fighters in the Division were organized into:

1 Wing
15 Groups
45 squadrons

The 2nd Air Division lost 6,674 men through enemy action.

The 2ND AIR DIVISION ASSOCIATION

The idea for an organization of 2nd Air Division veterans was conceived at a meeting of 7 men from Headquarters in August of 1946.

The first convention was held in Chicago in October 1948.

The Association has grown from that small start to over 8,000 members today and a Heritage League Organized to carry on when the last 2nd Air Division veteran folds his wings. Annual meetings are held in major cities in the United States and in Norwich, England.

My Group

The 458th Bombardment Group (H) was divided into four squadrons (752nd, 753rd, 754th, and 755th). We normally flew combat missions in a formation made up of three squadrons of 9-12 aircraft but on December 24, 1944 the Group put up 59 aircraft in six squadrons. The 755th Squadron was designated for lead crews and did not fly as an individual squadron. The squadron navigators for the other squadrons and their crews also flew leads.

458th Group Mission Record

Month	Missions Flown	Planes lost to Enemy Action	My Missions
March, 1944	15	10	
April, 1944	16	9	
May, 1944	21	3	
June, 1944	28	5	
July, 1944	17	7	
August, 1944	21	3	7
Sept. 1944	5	4	2 (Gas hauls)
Oct. 1944	13	2	4
Nov. 1944	12	0	I (Flak leave)
Dec. 1944	11	1	3
Jan. 1945	14	0	2
Feb. 1945	16	2	3
March, 1945	24	0	6
April, 1945	14	1	1
Total	227	47	29

Airmen Killed in Combat 273
50 Aircraft were lost in non-combat situations.

Between September 18 and September 30, 458th Bomb Group aircraft completed delivery of 727,160 gallons of gasoline to General Patton's 2nd Armored Division.Two aircraft were lost on these missions, including my crew.

My Missions

Mission Number	Date	Pilot	Duty	Target
1	8-6-1944	Koehn	1	Hamburg Oil
2	8-7-1944	Koehn	1	Ghent, Oil
3	8-9-1944	Koehn	1	Saarbrucken M/Y
4	8-12-1944	Koehn	1	Mourmellon A/F
5	8-14-1944	Koehn	1	Tavaux A/F
6	8-18-1944	Koehn	1	Metz A/C factory
7	8-24-1944	Koehn	1	Hannover Oil
8	9-9-1944	Koehn	2	Mainz M/Y
9	9-11-1944	Koehn	2	Magdeburg Oil
10	10-6-1944	Hayzlett	3	Stade A/F
11	10-17-1944	Lockridge	3	Cologne M/Y
12	10-19=1944	Lockridge	3	Mainz M/Y
13	10-30-1944	Lockridge	3	Hamburg Oil
14	11-25-1944	Lockridge	3	Bingen M/Y
15	12-10-1944	Lockridge	5	Bingen M/Y
16	12-27-1944	Lockridge	5	Neunkirchen M/Y
17	12-30-1944	Lockridge	5	Neuweid RR Bridge
18	1-7-1945	Lockridge	5	Rastatt M/Y
19	1-17-1945	Lockridge	5	Harburg Oil
20	2-3-1945	Lockridge	5	Wesermunde Oil
21	2-21-1945	Lockridge	7	Nurenburg M/Y
22	2-24-1945	Lockridge	8	Bielfeld RR bridge
23	3-2-1945	Moran	5	Magdeburg Ammo F.
24	3-14-1945	Moran	4	Dortmund M/Y
25	3-17-1945	Moran	4	Hannover Tank F.
26	3-20-1945	Moran	6	Hemmingstadt Oil
27	3-23-1945	Moran	6	Osnabruk M/Y
28	3-24-1945	Moran	5	Kirtoff A/F
29	4-5-1945	Moran	5	Plauen M/Y

Gas Hauls to France

9-19-1944 One trip to Clastres (returned 9-20-44)
9-22-1944 One Trip to Lille (returned 9-23-44)
9-28-1944 Two Trips to Lille

Duty (1) Non-lead,(2) deputy squadron lead,(3) squadron lead,(4) deputy group lead, (5) group lead, (6) deputy wing lead, (7) wing lead, and (8) division lead.
Targets (M/Y) railroad marshalling yards, (A/F) Airfield (F). Factory

8TH AIR FORCE FIGHTER FACTS

The earliest fighters to escort our bombers were British Spitfires flown by American pilots. The Spitfires were very effective when attacking German aircraft over England but they lacked the range to escort our bombers. When the American made P-47s and P-38s arrived in England they replaced the Spitfires. The P-47s had a greater range than the British planes but it was still not adequate to accompany the bombers all the way on their missions. The P-38s had a long range but they had problems at the very cold temperatures encuntered at high altitudes. The P-38s could go all of the way to Berlin but equipment failed and pilots could not stay warm enough to function well. The electrical system on the planes was not adequate to supply electric flying suits.

As soon as pressurized drop tanks became available the tide of the air war changed.

The Range of our Fighter Aircraft

Aircraft type and tank capacity	Range
P-38 with 2-165 gallon drop tanks	550 miles
P-47 with 2-108 gallon tanks	475 miles
P-51 without extra tanks	475 miles
with 2-75 gallon tanks	659 miles
with 2-108 gallon tanks	850 miles

Eighth Air Force fighters shot down 752 German Aircraft on April 16, 1945 while losing 34 of their own. By the end of the war, the German Luftwaffe still had many fighter aircraft but they lacked the trained pilots to fly them. They would often fly in groups of 50-100 aircraft while attacking the bombers but they could be broken up by a few P-51s. Some German pilots would bail out as soon as an 8th Air Force fighter got on their tail rather than to turn and fight.

A Safety Valve

When you take young men and put them in machines for which the only purpose is to destroy and kill , you put them under tremendous pressure. To relieve some of that strain they would sometimes do foolish things on the ground and in the air. Some examples are:

The fighter pilot who returns from flying a very dangerous low-level mission destroying Nazi trains and convoys and does a buzz job (flys very low and fast) over his commanders quarters.

The bomber pilot who having just completed his tour of combat missions flies right at the control tower, pulling up only at the last minute, barely clearing the structure.

The crewman who fires flares inside living quarters, or puts live ammunition in the stove, or shoots out the tires on the bicycles parked in front of his quarters with his .45 pistol.

The bomber pilot who having finished his tour, signs up to do a second tour for reconnaissance in twin engine RAF Mosquito bombers comes back to his original bomber base and drags the runway. He gets just a little too low and splashes his plywood aircraft all over the field.

My crew wasn't immune from antics that were not exactly sanctioned either. One day when we were flying in the canyons and valleys of some puffy clouds that looked like big piles of cotton, we noticed a Navy PBY-5 flying boat doing the same thing. Jack decided to fly formation with the Navy plane and dropped our flaps to match the speed of the two aircraft. He eased our wing in close to our unknowing flight leader and stayed there for quite a while before they discovered our presence. When they saw us so close to them they got pretty excited. Their duty did not include formation flying like we had to do every time we were up. After they saw us the fun was over so we pulled out and let them have that piece of sky.

The Americans were not the only ones that participated in Hijinks. One day when we were flying in a squadron formation on a training mission over England a RAF Lancaster came up on our right side, dropped his wheels and flew by us like we were standing still. The Lancaster, one of the RAF's newest bombers had a rated air speed of 275 miles per hour while the B-24 was rated at 300 miles per hour. The RAF crew must have been flying high above us and decided to have a little fun at the expense of the Yanks.

In Retrospect

When the records of the German Military Forces became available to the Allies after the war was over, it was discovered that in the closing months of the war, the Luftwaffe had suffered more from a a shortage of fuel and well-trained pilots than from a shortage of airplanes. They had been able to disperse their aircraft factories all over the Third Reich and continued production after we had bombed their original factories.

In spite of all of the raids that we mounted against the German aircraft and ball bearing factories, it was those against oil and the steady attrition of the veteran fighter pilots caused by the bomber gunners and allied fighters, that finally wore the Luftwaffe down. Toward the end of the war, the German fighter aircraft flew in large formations and were reluctant to break and fight. Even when there were repeatedly attacked by the Allied fighters. There were numberous reports of German flyers bailing out when being chased before being shot at. The Germans were apparently sending their new pilots into battle before that had sufficient training to cope with the Allied fighters.

The veteran German fighter pilots shot down many Allied bombers. I suspect that they had no rotation plan and if they survived being shot down, they just went back to their base, got another airplane and went back on the attack. Some of the older pilots flew as many as five missions a day and over 500 during the war.

The three top German Aces each shot down over 100 Allied planes. The younger German pilots went into combat with a minimum of training and fared poorly when up against the better trained Allied fliers.

A Tribute to the "Little Friends"

From the mission in August of 1942 when the first FW-190 fell to the guns of a VIII Fighter Command Spitfire until the end of the war when more than a hundred German planes were being shot down in one day by the P-47s and P-51s of the 8th Air Force, the "Little Friends" provided cover and support for the bombers (Big Friends). From the first contact, the American pilots fresh from the training bases took on the experienced and better equipped Germans whenever they could be found. Sometimes the losses were even on both sides and often they were in favor of the Luftwaffe. In time the tide of battle turned in favor of the Americans.

As the pilots and their leaders gained more experience and the American aircraft performance improved, the "Little Friends" were able to provide better protection further into Germany. The development of the drop tanks extended the fighters range so they could protect the bombers all over Germany. Water injection in the P-47 increased their speed.

The primary duty of the fighters was to protect the bombers which they did with skill and dedication. Some times the odds were even, but often a flight of Americans would attack large numbers of Germans that were threatening or attacking the bombers. When the German jet (ME-262) started to attack the bombers, the P-51 devised tactics to meet the threat.

From the first days of shallow penetration over the low countries to the end of the war when the Germans were using ramming as an attack technique, the Little Friends made it possible for the bombers to attack the targets all over Germany and Survive. They often prevented the German aircraft from reaching the bombers, broke up attacks, and excorted damaged bombers back to England.

We owe our lives to those fellows that we ofted did not even see--Just con trails far above us--Like Guardian Angels.

HEADQUARTERS 2d AIR DIVISION
APO 558

TO THE MEN OF 2D DIVISION:

The plan for the erection of a memorial to the men of 2d Division who have given their lives for their country has, I know, a universal appeal. All of us have friends and comrades who have been lost in action against the enemy or who have died in performance of their duty as American soldiers. These are the hard and bitter facts of war. These men live in our memory not only because of our sense of personal loss but also because of the admiration and respect we have for them and for the supreme sacrifice which they have made for their country and for their comrades. Their loss has been even more deeply felt by their loved ones at home to whom they will never return.

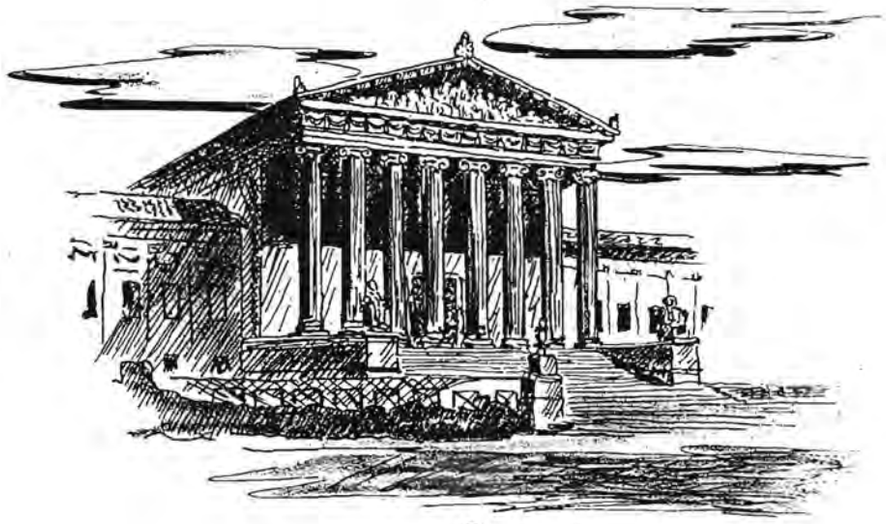
This memorial will be a shrine to which the families and loved ones of these gallant comrades, and indeed many of us, may return in years to come. It will be in every way worthy of the men whose memory it perpetuates and of the cause for which they gave their lives. The stately and beautiful hall of memory will furnish a harmonious setting for the Group plaques to be placed on its walls and for the bound volumes containing Group histories and the Group Rolls of Honor. More than that, however, it will be a memorial of living spiritual significance for, through the American Reference Library and the American Reading Room, it will bring a daily influence of American thought and ideals to the people of the Norwich community with whom we have been so closely associated during these difficult years.

I know that all of you will welcome this opportunity to express in concrete form what so many of you already have in your minds, and the collection of the sum required will not be difficult if the response is as enthusiastic as I expect it to be.

Together we have built the 2d Division into one of the greatest aerial striking forces in history. Together let us build this fitting memorial to its officers and men who have sacrificed their lives to overthrow the enemies of our country in order that the ideals of our American democracy, and indeed all democracy, shall endure.

W. E. KEPNER,
Major General, USA
Commanding

SECOND AIR DIVISION MEMORIAL



NORWICH, ENGLAND
1945

The Flame Must Burn On!

When the last bomb has been dropped, the last shot fired; when the winds aloft have washed the last traces of this holocaust from the skies, we who are left will go home. As some returning soldier so aptly put it: "If the Statue of Liberty wants to see me again, she'll have to turn around!"

But what of those whom we must leave here? We all have memories of gallant comrades who paid the supreme sacrifice in war-torn hostile skies and those who died honorably in line of duty. In order to perpetuate their memory, we propose to erect a Memorial to these honored dead—*your* Memorial to *them*. This Memorial must be a spiritually living thing. The deep and sacred feeling giving birth to this Memorial, their spirit of youth, hope, and desire for a world of decency, freedom, and peace must live on—must imbue this Memorial with that same sacred spirit dedicated to oncoming generations whose way of life they died to protect. This Memorial must be a haven wherein the flame of their principles must burn brightly and eternally, wherein the bewildered, stumbling footsteps of succeeding generations can be unerringly placed on the right paths.

The Memorial will be in Norwich, England, [redacted]. It is proposed, in agreement with the Norwich City Council, who have agreed to furnish the site and build the main library building, to construct a Memorial Entrance Hall to this proposed Municipal Library, fitted with commemorative sculpture, art, plaques, and decorations, and setting forth in detail the history of the Groups of the Second Air Division, with the names of our comrades and records of the organizations.

This Hall will be flanked by two rooms fitted with literature, art, music, etc., written about America by Americans, and endowed for its continuous upkeep for generations to come. The sole entrance to the library will be through this Hall.

The estimated cost of this Memorial is £20,000 or $80,000, which, divided among the [redacted] personnel of this Division, brings the individual contribution to a comparatively small amount. All contributions will be voluntary and each one permanently recorded. Again . . . it is *your* Memorial to *your* friends.

Depending upon labor conditions and supplies, and priority of construction, existent in England after the War, it should take about three years minimum to construct a Memorial of this magnitude and importance. However, should the library for some unforseen reason not be built, the funds collected will remain in trust, and if another suitable memorial can not be decided upon by the trustees, the entire sum will be turned over to the United States Army Air Forces Relief Fund

For those who survive this conflict, this Memorial will be a source of pride and enjoyment for our accomplishments. It will be a place where we can bring our families and friends in years to come and relive these days of our years.

For those who have paid the supreme sacrifice, and for whom there can be no permanent resting place, such a Memorial to their families and friends will represent tangible living evidence of the heart-felt gratitude and love of their country and comrades with whom they lived and fought—for when the airfields are plowed up, and all vestiges of the chaos of war have disappeared in time, this will remain a perpetual tribute to their memory—to their faith in an ideal.

Second Air Division Memorial Committee

[redacted]

(Obliterations made for Security Reasons)

THE 2ND AIR DIVISION MEMORIAL LIBRARY ROOM

In the Norwich Central Library

The idea for the creation of a living memorial to the nearly 6700 men of the 2nd Air Division who were killed in combat during World War II was conceived by three senior staff officers of the 2nd Air Division. They were Colonel Fred Bryan, Headquarters, 2nd Air Division, Brigadier General Milton Arnold, Commanding General, 2nd Combat Wing, and Lieutenant Colonel Ion Walker, 467th Bomb Group.

The concept was endorsed by Major General William Kepner, and an appeal went out to all units in the Division just prior to our departure for the United States. Within three weeks, the sum of $83,664 was collected and deposited with the British Charity Commission. In June 1945, the Memorial Trust of the 2nd Division USAAF was created under British law. The income from the trust was to be used for the purchase of books, periodicals and other supplies for the Memorial Library. Other expenses for the operation of the Library Room were to be borne by the Norwich Central Library.

At a meeting of a number of 2nd Air Division veterans from Headquarters in 1948, it was decided to create a 2nd Air Division Association as a non-profit, veterans organization. The objectives of the association were to perpetuate friendships between 2nd Air Division veterans, advocate an effective military establishment and support the memorial in Norwich.

Due to the shortage of funds and materials in post war England it was eighteen years before the Norwich Central Library could be rebuilt with our Memorial Room at the entrance. The annual convention of the Association in 1963 was held in Norwich so the members could attend the dedication of the library. The 13 members of the Board of Governors had invested our funds wisely and the value had doubled before the books and periodicals were purchased to stock the shelves for the opening. Two members of the Board are appointed by the American Ambassador to Britain and since 1971, one of the governors has been a representative of the 2nd Air Division Association.

For several years after the opening, the memorial was just a dignified, quiet reading room at the entrance to the Norwich Central Library. Members of our 2nd Air Division Association continued to contribute money to the memorial fund and purchase books for the collection. These additional books and funds enabled the Board of Governors to expand the use and purpose of the memorial. The staff of the library served as librarians for the collection of books for a number of years.

In 1985, Phyllis DuBois , an American librarian was added to the central library staff to better serve the memorial. Tony North of the Central Library staff worked in the memorial room half time. Tony was a young boy during the war and spent much of his spare time out at the air base. He was able to relate first hand experiences to the visitors who had not been in the area during the war.

In 1986, the Board of Governors was able to obtain a grant from the Fulbright Commission to fund an American Librarian for the 2nd Air Division Memorial Room. Fulbright Fellowships are awarded to Americans for study and teaching abroad. Following two years of work by Bertha Chandler, the Fulbright Scholar and Tony North the library aide, it was determined that the Trust had reached a crucial point in its development. If the memorial was to be more than a small specialist collection of books in a foreign land, administered anonymously with the use of grants available from trust

income, there had to be an American librarian working in the library and in the surrounding area. From that point on, the memorial room started to grow into a true living memorial.

The trust funds have continued to grow, more books were donated and a number of people living around Norwich formed an organization called "Friends of the 2nd Air Division Association". The friends volunteer to meet members of the Association as they return to Norwich and take them out to their old bases. The memorial room is the meeting place and library staff makes the arrangements.

Books from the memorial collection, with appropriate nameplates, have been placed on shelves in the Norwich Central Library and in four county libraries for a further distribution. The Friends hold special events to celebrate American holidays and sponsor 40s period dances in the hanger at Horsham St. Faith, our old base. They raise funds to increase the Memorial Trust and they assist the Board of Governors with the logistics for the conventions that are held in Norwich. As American military bases in Britain are closed some of the library collections are sent to the Memorial Library for shelving and distribution.

Bertha Chandler, the Fulbright Scholar Librarian recommended that a full time librarian and a full time library aide be placed in the memorial. She also recommended that a new capital fund of $500,000 be established in the United States to provide funds for the two individuals. The Association accepted the recommendation at the 1988 convention in Colorado Springs. The Fulbright Commission agreed to manage the funds and make disbursements for periodic, one or two year, contracts for librarians.

The Fulbright Commission selected an archivist during 1991-1992 to inventory and properly store the more than 3000 pieces of archival material that had been sent to the Memorial Library by veterans and their families. Dr. Levitt received the award for the assignment which was funded in partnership of the Fulbright Commission and the 2nd Air Division Memorial Trust.

The money in the American Trust reached $568,000 in 1992 and in 1993 there was an American 2nd Air Division/Fulbright Scholar Librarian in place in the Memorial. The Memorial Trust Funds and the American Librarian funds have continued to increase, but with the reduction of interest rates it is recommended that additional funds be raised on both sides of the Atlantic. In the spring of 1994, the library had undergone several major improvements, including providing more usable space in the memorial room. The number of visitors to the library was increasing dramatically and the local users were bringing in their friends and relatives. The funds in the Memorial Trust had increased to 400,000 pounds.

At the 1994 annual meeting it was decided that the 2nd Air Division Association/Fulbright Commission librarian should be the senior librarian and if funds are available, there should be an American aide in the library.

Just when everything seemed to be going so well at the memorial, disaster struck. An early morning fire on August 1, 1994 destroyed the Norwich Central Library and our Memorial Room. Fortunately, the archival material identified by the Fulbright archivist, Dr Martin Levitt, had been transferred to the records office store in another part of the library and was saved.

The Norfolk County Council immediately announced that the library would be rebuilt and it would include a larger memorial room. Space for a temporary memorial

was found a short distance from the old Central Library site and it was soon filled with books and periodicals. The work of the memorial continued with little interruption as soon as everything that could be salvaged was removed from the old building and new materials were acquired. Our old Memorial Room had space for 3,500 books on the shelves and the temporary room soon had over 2,000 books. By the spring of 1996, the substitute Memorial had a circulation and visitor count greater that it was before the fire. This increase was probably due to the publicity about the fire and the Memorial that went world wide. Veterans from other military units started to drop by with their families. They went away impressed stating that they wished that their organizations had a similar memorial.

Norfolk County came up with a bold plan for the rebuilding of the library. It was to be called a "Technopolis". It was to have a library section, visitors center, meeting place, shops, restaurants, hi-tech business center, a computer net work and a large parking garage. Of course, the library section was to include our Memorial.

Such a venture was going to require a lot of money, so Norfolk County turned to the Millennium Commission to see if they could qualify for a grant from the lottery funds managed by that commission. The request was for 39 million pounds to be matched with an equal sum from other sources. The Millennium Commission saw the merit of the project but turned it down because they doubted the long term viability of the project and the realism of funding plans for matching funds. In spite of the disappointment at not receiving the grant, the plans to rebuild a smaller library with the funds available went ahead. The decision was also made to revise the amount to 32 million pounds and re-submit it to the Millennium Commission. This time the application was successful. With the approval of the Millennium grant, the work for the new library proceeded rapidly. After the debris left by the fire was removed, a six month archaeological examination of the site was started. It revealed 900 year old foundations of the homes of affluent Norman families, a well, jewelry, food remnants and the only Viking gold ingot ever discovered in Britain. During the summer of 1999, the excavation for the underground car park was nearly completed and foundations were being poured. By winter of 2000, the work was well above ground and by August 2001, the massive building was complete.

During the period of construction, the Memorial Trust was raising the matching funds to pay for the expanded memorial room to be divided as follows:

Insurance	90,461 pounds
County Council	223,709 pounds
Millennium Commission	170,916 pounds
Memorial Trust	125,000 pounds
(2nd Air Division Assn. Share $100,000)	
Total	610,086 pounds ($1,037,146)

When the fund raising was over, the Memorial Trust and the 2nd Air Division Association had exceeded the 125,000 pounds that was designated as their share.

When the new library neared completion it was decided to name it "The Forum" and the address is to be Millennium Plain, rather than the first name suggested of "Technopolis". The main library was opened to the public in August 2001, and the 2nd Division Memorial was dedicated in November 2001 during the 2nd Air Division Association Convention in Norwich.

To give some idea of the plans for the future of the Memorial, an agreement was signed for the Trust to occupy space within the new Library Complex for the next 125 years.

The purposes of the Memorial, as set out in the 19445 request for funds, have been realized through the efforts of our friends in Britain and the 2nd Air Division Association.

At the present time there are two librarians caring for the Memorial. The 2nd ADA/Fulbright Librarian and the Memorial Trust Librarian are both working hard to serve and improve the library. The expenses for the Memorial are paid with income from investments of the Memorial Trust in Britain, the 2nd Air Division Association/Fulbright Trust in the United States and by Norfolk County.

It has been estimated that the Capital Funds in Britain will have to be increased by 500,000 pounds to properly serve the new enlarged library. The Governors are preparing to launch a fund drive for that purpose. The American funds administered by the Fulbright Commission will also need to be increased.

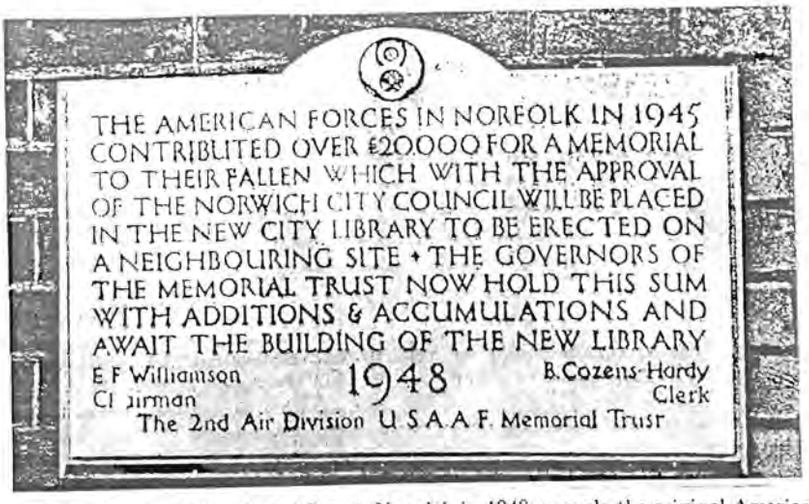
The Memorial Library is supported by the Governors, the "Friends of the 2nd Air Division Association and the 2nd Air Division Association. The three primary purposes for the memorial are:

1. To be a 2nd Air Division World War II Memorial.
2. To tell the story of the 2nd Air Division and to be a place for veterans to meet their friends.
3. To be a source, in Britain, for information on American life and culture.

January 2001, the Norwich City Council granted the award of the "Freedom of the City" to the members of the 2nd Air Division Association for "services during the war and continuing contributions since 1945"

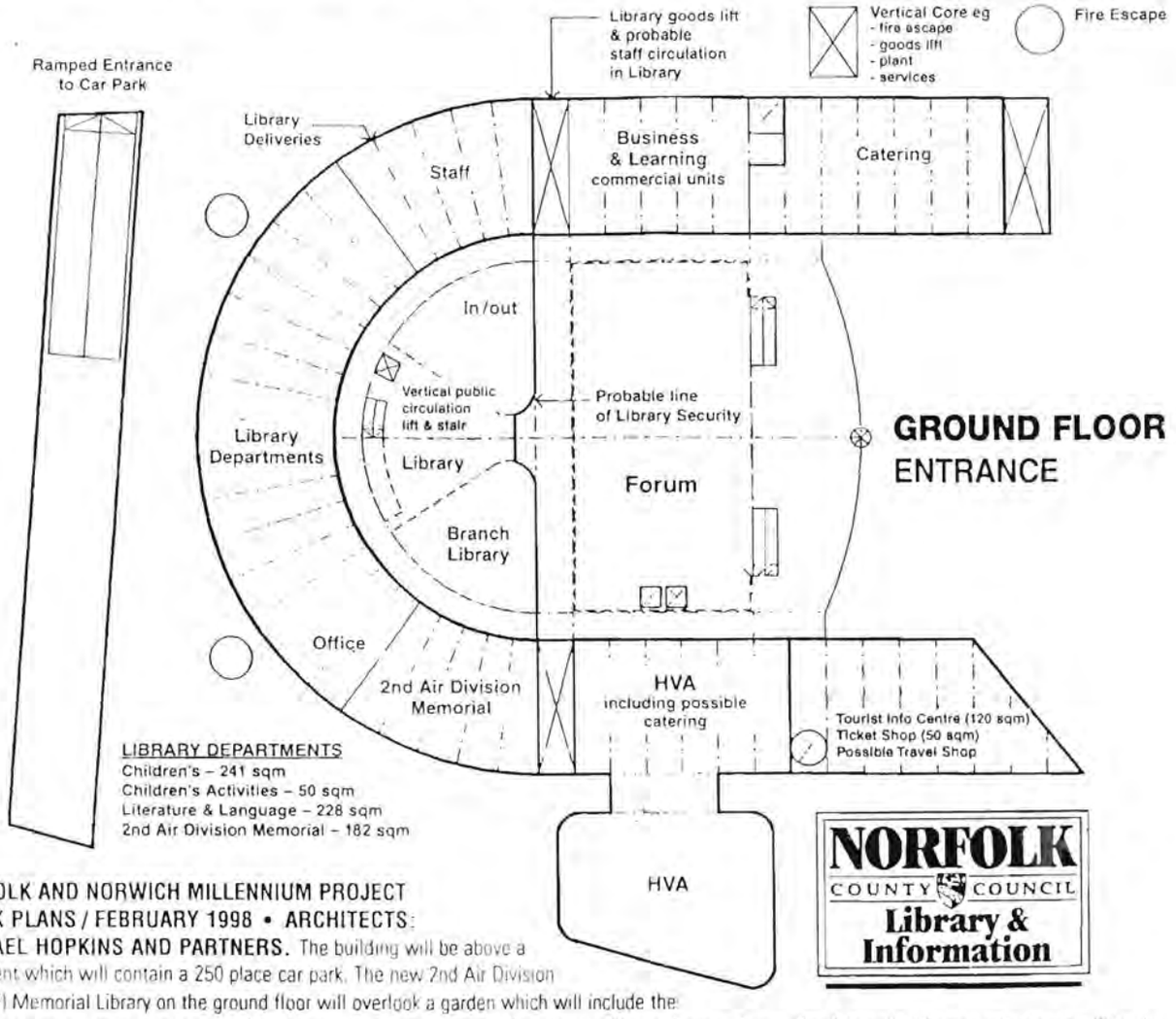
The Honor Roll containing the names of all those killed in combat was destroyed in the fire. It has been reproduced on acid free vellum with hand lettering. The original will be on display in the Memorial Room in a protective case. There will be a photocopy for visitors to view in the memorial room, another copy will be kept in a different location in Norwich. There will be two additional copies made. One will be for continued reference and safe keeping and the last one will be displayed in the 8th Air Force Heritage Museum in Savannah, Georgia.

The success of the Memorial Library over the 38 years since it was dedicated in 1963 comes from the dedicated work of the Memorial Trust Governors, the Norwich Central Library Staff, the Fulbright Scholar Librarian, the Archivist, and the 2nd Air Division Association officers and members.



This plaque, erected in Bethel Street, Norwich in 1948, records the original American cash contribution and the intention to open a memorial library.

NEW MEMORIAL LIBRARY FLOOR PLAN RELEASED



NORFOLK AND NORWICH MILLENNIUM PROJECT BLOCK PLANS / FEBRUARY 1998 • ARCHITECTS: MICHAEL HOPKINS AND PARTNERS. The building will be above a basement which will contain a 250 place car park. The new 2nd Air Division (USAAF) Memorial Library on the ground floor will overlook a garden which will include the memorial fountain base as a feature of some sort. It is about opposite Paul King's office on Theatre Street. The Memorial Library's neighbours will be the Branch Library, which as a popular collection of books and audio visual material will be heavily used, and either the Children's Library or the Literature and Language Department, which will contain adult fiction books for loan and will also be very popular. The HVA is the Heritage Visitor Attraction, which will attract tourists to the building, so the 2AD Memorial Library will be well placed to attract these visitors. FOR FURTHER DETAILS PLEASE SEE PAGE 4.

the forum

Shot of Norwich's newly named "Forum Millennium Plain" in the centre of the city gives an indication of its scale. It will open in September.

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF OREGON

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS: The Eighth Air Force was formed and dispatched to England in 1942 to become the largest military unit in World War II, and the largest bomber force of all time with over 350,000 serving in Europe, and continues today as an operational combat unit with over one million serving the country; and

WHEREAS: No Mighty Eighth mission was ever turned back due to enemy action, but losses were heavy: 26,000 killed in action, and over 20,000 prisoners of war. In a one-week period of October 8-14, 1943, the Eighth Air Force lost over 100 Heavy Bombers over the skies of Europe, and despite these heavy losses, this was the turning point for daytime strategic bombing. The targets and losses for that week were:

October 8, Bremen, Germany:	14 Bombers, 3 Fighters
October 9, Anken, Germany:	6 Bombers
October 10, Munster, Germany	30 Bombers, 1 Fighter
October 14, Schweinfurt, Germany	60 Bombers, 1 Fighter

WHEREAS: The Eighth Air Force Historical Society holds it annual reunions every October, and today its 20,000 members are seeking to inform later generations of their sacrifices made to preserve our freedom; and

WHEREAS: Every year during the week of October 8-14, we will ask every Eighth Air Force Veteran and friend of the Eighth to wear items identifying them with The Mighty Eighth to honor and remember their comrades, and especially those who made the supreme sacrifice.

NOW,
THEREFORE, I, John A. Kitzhaber, Governor of the State of Oregon, hereby proclaim October 8-14, 2001 to be

MIGHTY EIGHTH AIR FORCE WEEK

in Oregon and encourage all citizens to join in this observance.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I hereunto set my hand and cause the Great Seal of the State of Oregon to be affixed. Done at the Capitol in the City of Salem in the State of Oregon on this day, January 23, 2001.

John A. Kitzhaber, Governor

Bill Bradbury, Secretary of State

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