

Preface

This memoir was written by my father Ernest Mason Demaray, during the 1990s, with help from my mother Elois E. Demaray. The original machine-readable document was lost. I have re-keyed it here, with no revisions or editing, from a printed copy. At the time of writing, my father did not have access to optical scanners for visuals, and so, physically inserted black and white copies of various noteworthy pictures, maps, and articles. Since I am able to insert graphics into this document, and since I recently scanned many family pictures from the WW II era, I have insert pictures as I see fit. Anyone wishing to inspect the original document is welcome to do so.

This is a valuable record of Ernest's experience as a bomber pilot during World War II. He was a brave and highly-skilled flier. He endured great physical risk and hardship, to defeat the enemies of freedom. He witnessed events that we can scarcely imagine. I hope you enjoy his memoirs, and pass this along to your heirs.

Milton W. Demaray
Davis, CA
December 3rd, 2009

Introduction- 452nd Bomb Group, 730th Squadron

Copyright 1998 Ernest M. Demaray

In writing this narrative I am attempting to portray the 'unglamorous' life of the bomber pilot in an accurate and interesting manner. No embellishments are use to accent this narrative. I am sure those who are left of my fellow squadron members will substantiate my account. Any success in this direction is only due to the hazardous life we led, made very obvious by the fact we lost so many good friends along the way. Those of us who survived would all have been very gratified to know we were going to die gray-haired old men.

There are three publications that will help verify the facts presented herein. They are as follows:

- Eighth A.F. News, P.O. Box 3556, Hollywood, FL, 33083.
- Freeman, R., The Mighty Eighth, Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1970
- Barnes, M.E., 452nd Bombardment Group, Roanoke Rapids, N.D.

The latter publication includes a complete list of all the missions flown by the outfit just as taken from the War Dept. records of World War II when combat aircraft were still affordable. It is available for \$28.00 by writing to Opal E. Barnes, 920 Gray St., Roanoke Rapids, N.C. 27870.

Mr. Rom Baylock is secretary-treasurer of the 452nd Bomb Group, P.O. Box 2526, New Bern, N.C., 28561. Blaylock has accumulated more loot than any non-profit club has any right to. It's amazing what a little money will do for his disposition. One would think it was all his very own.

Many of us think we should throw a gigantic party, just like the one the Boeing Co. threw for us in Seattle on the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Flying Fortress in 1985, while there are still some of us left to enjoy it.

364 N. Charmwood Loop, Otis, OR 97368
Ph. (503)994-4142

Ernest M. Demaray

RECORD OF MISSIONS

ERNEST M. DEMARAY:

Pilot 452nd Bomb Group, 730th Bomb Squadron

Station 142

Mission No.	Date	Target
1.	4/27/44	Crossbow, buzz bomb site, Pas de Calais
2.	4/29/44	Berlin
3.	4/30/44	Clermont-Ferrand
4.	5/7/44	Berlin
5.	5/1/44	Brussels, airfield
6.	5/8/44	Berlin
7.	5/9/44	Juvin-Court
8.	5/11/44	Brussels
9.	5/13/44	Osnabruck
		Two week Flak Leave – Southport
10.	5/28/44	Madgeburg
11.	5/29/44	Leipzig, Ger.
12.	5/30/44	Reims, Fr., German Airfield
13.	6/2/44	Pas De Calais
14.	6/3/44	Wimereaux, buss bomb site
15.	6/4/44	Le Chatelet, buzz bomb site
16.	6/6/44	Caen, D-Day
17.	6/7/44	Nantes
18.	6/11/44	Pontabault
19.	6/14/44	Bursels, airfield
20.	6/15/44	Mitsburg
21.	6/19/44	Chateau-Benard
22.	6/20/44	Madgeburg
23.	6/20/44	Secret (Russia)
24.	7/7/44	Leipzig
25.	7/11/44	Munich
26.	7/12/44	Cadillac, Parachuted supplies to the French.
27.	7/18/44	Keil, Group's 100 th mission
28.	7/19/44	Schweinfurt, ball bearings plant
29.	7/20/44	Merseburg, synthetic oil refinery
30.	7/21/44	Regensburg, aircraft factory
31	7/29/44	Merseburg, synthetic oil refinery

A total of 31 Missions with a total of 240.5 hours.



Figure 1: Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress and Crew – E. M. Demaray at bottom center.

SIX MONTHS OF HELL IN THE HEAVENS OVER GERMANY

We were the second set of replacements for the 452nd Bomb Group, comprised of the 728th, 729th, 730th, and 731st squadrons, arriving in England on Easter Sunday, April 8, 1944. As we were leaving the train in Attleborough, about mid-afternoon, the squadrons were just returning from a mission. We could see very clearly that most of the Fortresses were firing double red flares as they circled to land. Even we, as green as we were, knew that meant they had wounded aboard. Far more flares were being fired than we were prepared to see, not to mention the feathered props. It was just as if they knew the new troops were down there and they were firing the flares as a ruse to worry us, which they certainly succeeded in doing.

All of this was a very sobering experience. Of course, we did not know where they had been and how far they had flown. As a matter of fact, flying at 15,000 feet over the Baltic, they had penetrated all the way to Posen, Poland to a fighter plane factory which the enemy thought was out of our range. They used to

say our bombardiers never missed a fighter plane factory. Five aircraft and their crews were lost to German fighters on this mission and one took refuge in Sweden. They were attacked near Hamburg by ME 110's, twin-engined jobs, on their way home.



Figure 2: "Return to [Deopham Green - April 9th 1944](#)" Copyright John Gribbin

Our crew was one of four assigned to the 730th Bomb Squadron and before any of us had flown ten missions, two of those crews had been shot down. About that time the mission quota was upped to thirty-five. The law of averages didn't seem to be on our side with twenty-five yet to go.

However we both lucked out and finished up. F.R. "Bud" Hill's crew was the other one. In many outfits it would not have worked out that way. Our group had over 300 on the K.I.A. (killed in action) list in fourteen months of combat flying, whereas the 100th Bomb Group lost over 700, not to mention the many M.I.A.s, the wounded and prisoners of war, in twenty-two months. They began operations of course long before the Luftwaffe lost control of the air over the continent.

After almost ten missions we were given a short leave to go to London. While there, some of us attended the movie "Memphis Belle" which contained combat footage in color of a very rough mission with many forts lost. We all came out of the movie shaking like leaves, but laughing at ourselves.

Missions came fast and furious, far faster than our energies were prepared to accept. The long hours, frequent flights and fear added up to combat fatigue, something the brass never experienced, and had little sympathy for. We used to say, "Shot at and missed; shit at and hit!".

Of course it took more finesse to fly squadron lead, which ultimately became our lot, than group lead because the former had to be done by hand as compared to auto-pilot. But, Group lead paid automatic captain's pay and Group lead pilots usually flew less often than once a week, so was the ultimate answer to the combat bomber pilot's dream. The positions of navigator and bombardier were of equal importance in the lead airplane and were usually awarded captain's bars as well. Squadron lead pilots were shown no quarter as far as mission scheduling was concerned and remained lieutenants for the most part. Mighty few were ever promoted to group lead because their skills were needed where they were!



Figure 3: B-17 Cockpit Instruments and Controls Composite

Leading the low squadron, which was usually our lot, was not the healthiest place to fly, because both the flak and the enemy fighters were most likely to frequent that area. Flying tail-ass-Charlie in the high squadron would have been a whole lot safer, but probably harder work as well. I never in my day saw the Luftwaffe attack from anywhere but head-on. The high rate of closure was what they liked as it gave them the element of surprise and quick hit and run on the first attack at least.

In order to do an acceptable job of flying squadron lead the controls had to be handled with fingertip pressures so as not to over control. We always tried to make life as easy as possible for our wingmen as well as those in the second element. A good element leader could dampen out a lot of over control which is good practice for flying squadron lead. This all helped win the war, but I remember thinking more than once, "I'll have to be satisfied if I am able to get out of this war with a whole hide and little else". Thank God we made it!

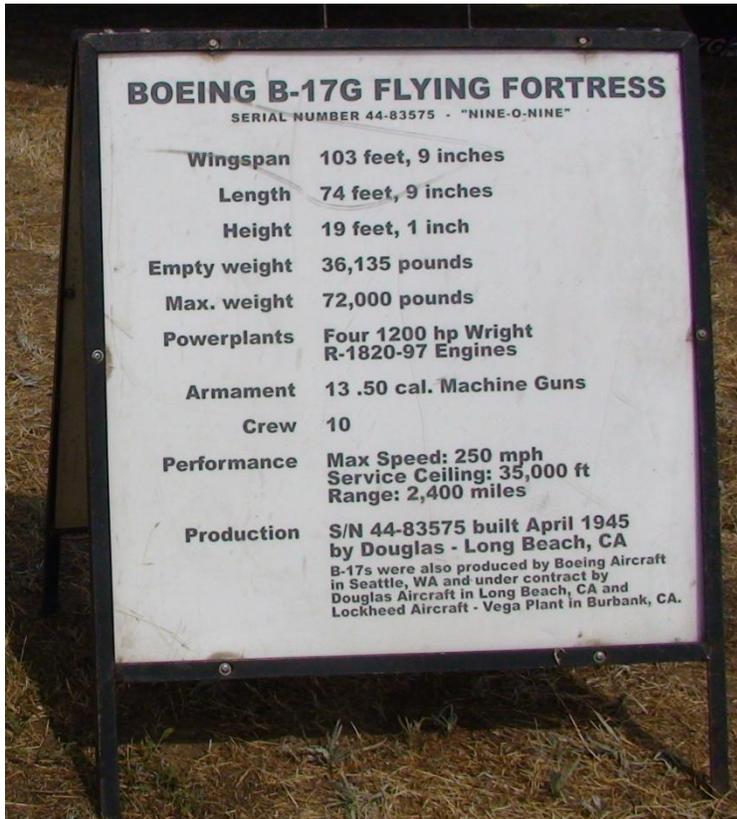
I never could understand how some of the German pilots could continue flying combat missions for so long. They must have had nerves of steel. Maybe, being able to shoot back would have helped us out.

One Sunday when weather over the continent prevented a mission our Commanding General, who had just recently received his first star, called for a practice mission over England. We flew this one at ten thousand feet without a bomb load. Some practice! He just wanted to cuss us out on the radio, which he proceeded to do, until someone told him where to blow it out. Then all was quiet on the Western Front. He probably bit his cigar in two. I'll bet he never pulled that stunt again. I never did hear even a rumor as to who uttered those naughty words. However, the general landed at our base afterwards and was his usual charming I.A. self.

This mission must have been comprised of almost fifty forts from three groups of the entire Forty-fifth Combat Wing, Third Bomb Division of the 8th Air Force; the 452nd, 388th, and the 96th. Just think of the gas that was burned in at least two hours of flying and of how much more beneficial a day's rest for those crews would have been. I guess this is the kind of foolishness that generals could get by with in wartime while gasoline was strictly rationed stateside.

The mental and physical toughness to hang in there and fly formation, (with caged eyeballs, we used to say) whatever position, and no matter how badly in need of sleep was what it took to win the war in the air. But it didn't win promotion in most cases. As a result many experienced pilots chose not to remain in the Army after the war. Maybe civilian life didn't offer opportunities either, but it was much more desirable. These things haven't been said, but need to be, as many of us veterans know they are true! War is Hell, even in the air.

Of course it was unthinkable to have out-ranked the hometown neighbors' older and more handsome kids, or some W.W. 1 veteran who had watched you and your brother, who became a Marine Corp pilot, grow up in a small town environment, even though you may have been better athletes and were willing to stick your necks all the way out in performing your patriotic duties like flying over Berlin.



Demaray – 8th Air Force – Missions

On April 27, 1944, we flew a mission, which was my first, to the Pas-de-Calais. We broke up into three plane elements and bombed from 15,000 feet. Some fun! A good friend, Captain Boyer, then still a lieutenant, was shot down while bombing these buzz bomb sites on his first mission and spent almost an hour in the cold water of the English Channel before being picked up by British Air-sea Rescue. He then flew another mission the very next day. I never resented his promotion and making lead pilot.

The flak was very accurate because those German gunners got lots of practice every day. We used to say they went to post graduate school. We would dispense chaff. This was

shredded tin foil which the radio operator released through a special chute in his side window. It didn't take much to encourage him as one or two bursts of flak would usually start the chaff coming. The idea of this was to confuse enemy radar which couldn't tell the difference between the airplanes and falling tinfoil. It would cause their fire to burst below us, we hoped. Of course this didn't always work perfectly. But the radio operators were always willing to give it a try.

The briefing officer must have taken drama lessons from the way he spoke his message the morning of the 29th of April, 1944. "Gentlemen your target for today will be the Wilhelm Strass Station in the center of the City of Berlin." That was to be our second mission, our real baptism of fire.

We were lucky enough to fly on the group leader's left wing. We had to fly on the straight and level for the time it took to fly from the initial point to the target. This usually took at least five minutes and would usually be at 27,000 feet over a major target. By the time we had dropped our bombs the oxygen system to the rear of the airplane was rendered useless by flak. It was necessary to descend immediately to 15,000 feet so that everyone could continue to breathe. We had to have been the first ones to be so afflicted, because we ended up leading a formation of six or more others apparently all in the same fix as ourselves.

A squadron leader on our second mission? Not yet. We did it though after about a dozen missions. We soon ran into more flak and it was even more accurate. Maybe we couldn't take evasive action on the bomb run, but there was no real reason not to now. In following our group above we had accidentally

flown over another large city because we couldn't see through the solid cloud layer below us. It was probably Magdeburg.

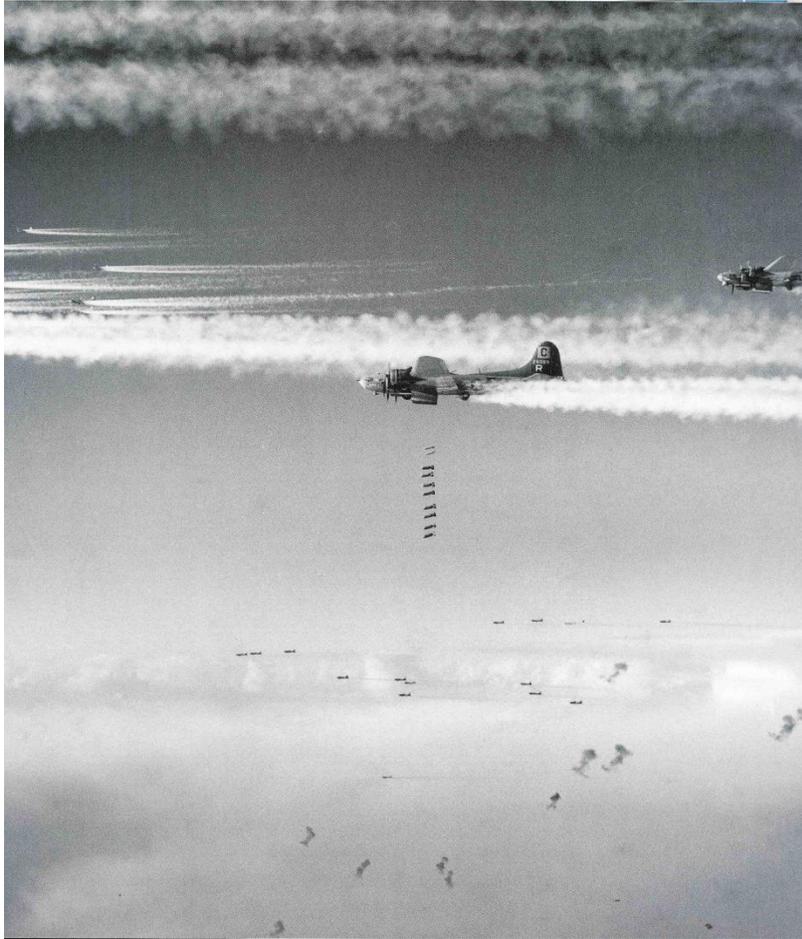


Figure 4: B-17 Releasing bombs (note contrails and flak bursts)

We were forced to make alternate right and then left ninety degree turns and just after each turn the shell fire would burst where we would have been if we had not turned. It was fantastic. We never again saw anything like it. It was very apparent that we would have been "gonners" if we had continued straight and level. An ex-R.A.F. instructor pilot at Pyote, Texas put us wise to this practice. Of course the formation broke up and we were so busy we never noticed what happened to the others. It was every man for himself. They used to tell us that we were working for Uncle Sam on the way to the target and for ourselves on the way home. This was one mission we felt we really earned, in spite of the fact that the group historian termed it "a routine mission". England never

looked better on our return, green and sunny. It could look like Home Sweet Home after a rough mission. Bet I'll get no static on that score.

There were more flak guns in the vicinity of Berlin than anywhere else except the Ruhr Valley. We left the Ruhr for the British to bomb at night with their many single plane attacks carrying one very heavy 'block buster' bomb. Hermann Goring swore, "The Vedarnt Yankees would never bomb Berlin!" As a result the Luftwaffe came out in force to meet the B-17s on the first few missions. At the war's end Admiral Speer said they had a total of 10,000 AA guns larger than 88 m.m. that would reach our altitude and the 88's would also. They had a great many of them as the dual purpose 88 was standard equipment for the German Army.

The Eighth Air Force was never forced to turn back by the Luftwaffe. They were whittled down to just one airplane once. The 100th Bomb group, I believe. That airplane joined up with another group coming by and dropped his bombs with them.

On the May 11th mission to Brussels we carried a black box under the floor of the radio room. This was our first and only experience toward flak suppression. The fact that there was none made believers out of us. "Give us more" was our reaction. It was our impression that they had to know the radar frequencies of the gun batteries ahead of time.

On another mission to Brussels we had a 'turbo' go out after reaching altitude, but we were determined to drop our bombs and to tag along without feathering the prop so as not to advertise the fact that we were crippled. We got credit for the milk run after seeing F.W.s being chased by T-Bolts. Never a dull moment.

We never aborted a single mission that I can recall. However the one to Brux, Czechoslovakia on May 12th was something else. It was our turn to fly as a spare and fill in for anyone who might be forced to abort. I never heard of any bomber going along just for the fun of it unless someone was forced to turn back with mechanical problems. Anyway, someone did abort and we were called on to fill in.

From our position it was impossible to tell which group was ours as many, many of them were passing by and our group did not respond when we asked them to fire a flare! We were never questioned about our failure to join up with the mission.

This was the beginning of the long delayed oil offensive. The enemy must have known because the Luftwaffe was at its best that day. They were flying the FW-190 and in an entirely different manner. They would attack from head on, but while flying inverted and would pick on the lowest planes of the low squadron with their cannon fire and work their way up, thereby avoiding the gunfire from our top turrets and taking advantage of our Achilles Heel, the chin turret. Clever those Huns. It was a very simple matter for them to break off the attack by split-essing down, away, and out of range. Then to move forward in yet another pass on the 12 o'clock position. Those who survived told of seeing their tracers bounce off the fighter's armor-plated bellies. Luftwaffe General Adolph Galland claimed that they bagged 72 Forts for 65 of their fighters that day.

Thirteen of our planes failed to return from this one, and two of those that did never flew again. We thanked our lucky stars that we missed this mission which proved to be the highest casualty rate the group was to ever experience. Our 'little friends' didn't allow this to happen often, but they couldn't be everywhere at once and they hadn't yet reached the height of their efficiency in long-range escort.

I lost two friends, Lts. Bruce Davis and Ralph Scott on the disaster that was the Brux Mission and many others are still M.I.A.s. Davis and Scott were in different planes, both in the same group of replacements and both survived to eat cabbage a prisoners of war which was not much worse than a steady diet of Brussels Sprouts, bully beef and boiled potatoes, which was our daily fare. K-rations as a variation tasted better! You can bet your life we would never have been willing to trade places with them.



Figure 5: Photos taken for French IDs in case forced down over Europe.

An original Group member and hut-mate, Lt. Roger Miller, had told us about “Antoines”, a French restaurant in London, that served fresh vegetables. We found it on our first visit and loved it, only to hear later that a German Buzz-bomb had hit the place and totally demolished it. Most of us stopped visiting London about this time and many took their leaves in nearby Norwich instead.

We did get to eat all the fried eggs we wanted on the morning of a mission, and got a straight shot of medicinal whiskey on our return to help us relax. This was often just an excuse to really forget everything.

Many of us were asked to volunteer for further combat duty on completion of our tours of duty. Lt. F.R. “Bud” Hill, whose crew said he had nerves of steel, was one of the few that ended up flying another tour in P-51’s with the 352nd Fighter Group with the leading P 51 ace, Major George E. Preddy, as his squadron C.O. of the 328th. Lt. Hill held Major Preddy in very high esteem and said he found the Major to be one of the least self-assuming persons to ever be a squadron C.O. and very much regretted that he was lost in action.

Later on Hill had the distinction of flying on the wing of Major John C. Meyer, another leading ace who went on to become a Lt. General and bagged two Mig-15s in the Korean War. Hill emphatically stated that he enjoyed the life of a fighter pilot much more than flying bombers because he was not continually tired, worn out and overworked as a fighter pilot. This left him with energies for other purposes than just flying and sleeping. He married Phyllis, a lovely English girl, and remained with the outfit for many months after the war.

Hill is presently operating a large feed milling business in Terreton, Idaho along with his sons Bob and Bill. My wife Elois and I had the pleasure of visiting with Phyllis and Bud in their luxurious home. We were made to feel like a part of the family.

As I remember, it was the May 29th, 1944 mission to Leipzig, on which the Luftwaffe attacked the lead Group of our bomber stream head on as we approached the target. From our vantage point, third or fourth group back from the leaders, we could clearly see them all racked up in forty-five degree banks away from the left turning Germans in order to avoid the enemy attack. This sudden unexpected action

took the twelve enemy fighters so completely by surprise that they broke off their attack and passed by on our right out of 50 cal. Range.

It may have been their intent to fly our full length firing as they went. That could have created a chaotic situation, which was very ably avoided by our quick thinking, fearless leader.

Another time such commendable action was taken, a swarm of enemy fighters was attempting to pass by this lone group of Forts in order to pull into position for a head on attack. Smart action was taken by this Group Leader as well. He started a turn away from the enemy and thereby kept continually off his wing tip and so foiled from his intended action. The Hun broke off and went looking for other fair game. After which, our resourceful friends continued on their former course.

My twelfth mission on my 25th birthday, May 20, 1944, was to the airfield at Reims, France. The Luftwaffe occupied the airfield. We dropped fragmentation bombs in hopes of cutting up as many fighter planes as possible, but the Brass was most highly concerned with even the remote possibility that we might hit the Reims Cathedral and do more harm than good! On our way to the target another Group heading home flew directly through us. Everyone must have observed what was happening ahead of time because no one clobbered anyone! A definite case of the lead plane failure! In both cases this should never have happened, as well-rested lead pilots should have been bright-eyed and bushy tailed. Captains were paid to not goof up! Not to mention the highly paid guy riding in the right seat!

As "D" day approached it became a big game to keep Jerry guessing just where and when the big event would take place. Our pre-dawn assemblies undoubtedly cluttered up his radar screens and must have made him edgy. We did that three mornings in a row. The first two, of course, were just for fun. We'd bomb the Buzz Bomb sites on the Pas de Calais to make the trips pay, but the third morning was for real. We went for Omaha Beach that trip and the big event was under way for good. We kept our fingers crossed in hopes the invasion would succeed. We didn't get to see the big show because of a complete cloud cover and this was one of our biggest disappointments of the war.

The invasion didn't seem like much of an effort, but it caught the German General Rommel off guard and in Berlin so we must have fooled somebody. The weather helped and of course we all know how it finally ended after the big counter attack at Bastogne where Jerry came through the Ardennes under cover of bad weather, pulled the biggest surprise of the war and caught us with some of our generals on the golf course. We should have been on guard for such a move, as this is the same path the Krauts used to attack during the fall of France in 1940.

On one of our earlier missions we were coming home alone across the water. When one of our "Little Friends", a P. 38, showed up with one prop feathered. After making sure we recognized him as friendly he swung underneath us and we flew top cover for him the rest of the way back to Jolly Old England. We all felt like maybe we had paid him back in kind, as surely we had. We wished him well in our thoughts as he took his leave.

Contrails are a phenomenon that certainly deserves mention here. As many of us know they are man-made clouds caused by the condensation of the moisture from our engines exhaust gases. They will

probably never again be as extensive as they were in WW II particularly with the large number of aircraft of the 8th Air Force!

I have noted on at least one occasion where the contrails of the thousand plus four-engined aircraft on a mission would cause the sky to become completely overcast when it had previously been clear. Atmospheric conditions must certainly need to be exactly right concerning temperature and moisture. The enemy surely must have taken comfort in the fact the contrails made us more visible on a clear day and the British, likewise, on a clear moonlit night, when, I'm told, some of the British casualties were the highest. Some enemy night-fighter pilots were so 'gung-ho' they were awarded the Blue Max, one of their highest awards. One night-fighter pilot got credit for shooting down 121 British planes.

Demaray – Early Missions

Congressional Medal of Honor recipients, Lts. Donald J. Gott and Wm. E. Metzger, both all American boys only recently turned men, and obviously of Teutonic ancestry, died more certainly perfect gentlemen than most of us will ever be. They attempted to save the life of a wounded comrade, a crew-member in their burning bomber. Lt. Metzger even gave his parachute away. In so doing both gave their own lives when time ran out by only a few minutes. It's men like these that it was a pure pleasure to serve with.

I would also like to recommend for the Medal of Honor Johanna M. Krueger, a very gracious, lovely lady, for her part in helping our crew members escape from the enemy. (Pictures and articles enclosed.)

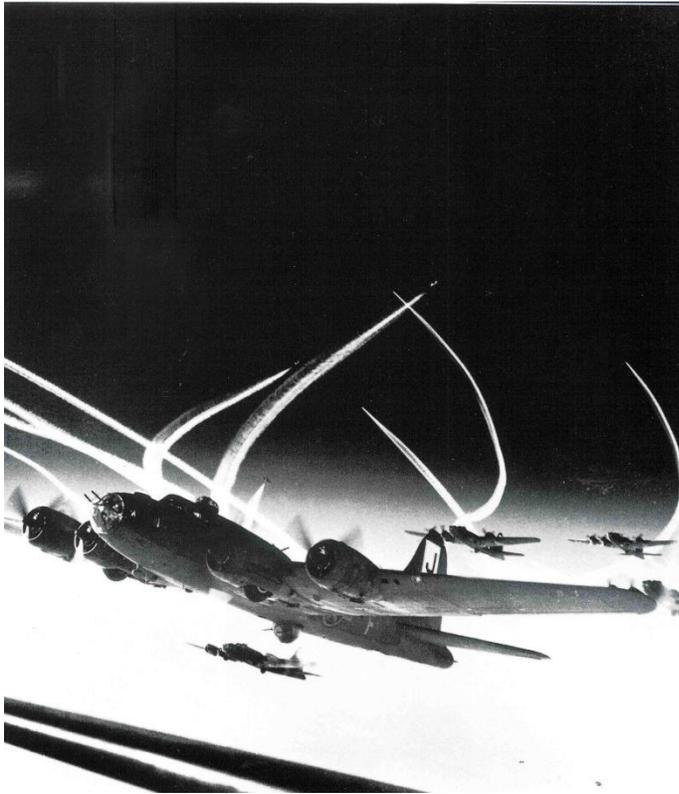


Figure 6: Contrails of Fighter Escort (Little Friends) Forming Above

While flying one of our first missions, the weather turned sour over England. It was raining with about a 500 foot ceiling on our return. We had become separated from the rest and were flying low over Ipswich, when we heard the unmistakable BEEP-BEEP-BEEP on our radio. This was the warning to be on the lookout for the British barrage balloons. We didn't think there was much need for them in that kind of weather, so we bored right on through. Leave it to the British! They may have even laughed considering our predicament.

Probably my most interesting mission was my 26th, on July 12th, 1944, to the mountains of Central France where we parachuted arms and supplies to the underground forces. They were called the Marquis. We

flew low up this large vineyard filled canyon, in formation, just like on a bomb run. The people would wave to us from the doorways of their houses about 50 yards off our wing tips. It was very soul satisfying to see such friendliness from those we were "bombing".

Our "Little Friends", the fighter jocks, are the ones we shall all be eternally grateful to. They gave everything it took to win, including taking on the enemy, regardless of their numbers and with complete disregard for their own safety. They flew mission after mission until the final outcome. My hat is off to all of that fearless bunch without whom we would never have survived! Later on I lost more than one game of Hearts to some of those guys who were kind enough to teach me the game. The "G" suit and the computer sight, along with all else, proved to be a deadly combination, as some of the scores our aces rang up, like five on one mission, indicated.

British Air Sea Rescue deserves much more than casual mention, as they used to venture into range of the German shore batteries time after time to pull our people out of the drink, and saved many a “Yank” to fight again. They were underpaid at any price!

The greatest loss we ever suffered was on July 28, 1944 when we lost our Group C.O. of just a few days, Col. Archie Y. Smith on his very first mission with us. Also lost were Major Gerald Carris, my Squadron C.O. and good friend and Squadron Member, Lead Pilot, Capt. Boyer, whose first name escapes me.

It was thought at the time that the auto-pilot malfunctioned on the bomb run to the Merseburg Oil Refinery and caused a collision between the lead plane and the deputy lead.



Figure 7: 452nd Bomb Group Memorial Fly-over

We all liked the Major. He was a caring man who saw to it we were put in for promotion on time, not that they always came through. I only had one observation of the Col. And that was very good. I think he deserves my mentioning it. He thought it was very funny when a friend, Joseph G. Kriss, and I, (It was my friend’s idea.) stole two drinks off a sill of an open window, from the Col. and an apple polishing benefactor. They had four extra drinks lined up there. At least the Colonel was almost holding his sides laughing when we looked in from a distant window. It appeared that he might have even given us an assist by distracting his drinking companion, the P.R. major.

So he was O.K. in our book.

Col. Smith had commanded a similar Group in the North African campaign and was the fifth of nine to head our Group, which had the most C.O.s of any outfit in the entire Eighth Air Force, losing three to misfortune. The bar was three deep everywhere after that 100th mission party of July 18, 1944.

The U.S.O. troop that performed at our 100th mission party was tops. I remember there was a fabulous juggler and a ventriloquist that I was personally able to congratulate after the show. Only Bob Hope and his delightful girls could have topped this. You didn’t think it was your jokes, did you Bob? Back to Earth again.



Figure 8: 452nd Bomb Group Memorial at Deopham Green

General Doolittle flew his B-26 to Deopham Green for the occasion and left right after the show. He told us, “We have the enemy on the ropes. Don’t give him a chance to catch his breath.” I know he was worried about the German jets. Who wasn’t? They were way

ahead of us on that score, but were too late with too little. Thank God.

We won by sheer weight of numbers. Hitler didn't realize just how keen our girl friends were to become skilled in the use of the rivet gun. They were fantastic and produced far more aircraft than the enemy ever dreamed they could.

One evening a bunch of us were sitting around waiting for chow. I started fooling around with the console radio. This was in the days before T.V., of course. No one was more surprised than I when Guy Lombardo and his Royal Canadians started playing from , of all places, the Jantzen Beach Ballroom in Portland, Oregon, my home town. What a pleasant surprise! I must admit a tinge of homesickness was experienced. Lombardo could probably be called the Lawrence Welk of radio.

Camera bombing was supposed to be the ultimate answer to our bomb aiming practice during our training days in Texas. The picture was supposed to show the exact spot the bomb would have landed. In our case the round house in El Paso made an excellent target. This all seemed to work out very well, until some guy brought back pictures of the bull ring across the river in Juarez, Mexico.

Standard operating procedure finally dictated lead plane power settings of no more than 2300 R.P.M. and 38 inches of manifold pressure. This gave us an indicated airspeed of 150 M.P.H. at a climb rate of three hundred feet per minute at a gross weight of 65,000 lbs. and would burn gas at a rate of as much as 300 G.P.H. for those catching up.

The above restrictions were necessary when assembling while climbing on course which was possible only in good weather. Otherwise airplanes would be strung out forever and might never catch up before the enemy coast was reached. This method worked best overall of all assemblies.

Test firing was usually done mid-way across the North Sea and on a prearranged signal from the Leader. This practice had to be discontinued entirely as we were doing too much damage to each other with our own 50 caliber fire!

I remember once when we were flying number four position about fifty feet below and somewhat behind the squadron lead, just the right place to catch his tail gunner's four inch long brass shell casings on our windshield. No damage was done except to our nerves.

Prop wash was the greatest hazard during assembly and would result in a spin under certain conditions. More than one 17 was lost to this danger as their wing loading was very heavy at gross weight.

In choosing our crossing points of the enemy coast, we were able to find the Zider Zee and the mouth of the Elbe River, neither of which had any guns that could reach our altitude of 15,000 feet. This enabled us to climb on course, save fuel and keep damage to a minimum. Of course, we would be almost sure to catch it on the bomb run for any large city. I lost a lot of good friends who gave it all. Names like Manning, Gall, Blust, Arm, Boyer, Slusser, Palmer, Dyer, Sion and many more come to mind. All of whom are still M.I.A. after more than forty-four years! Helgoland, an island offshore near the mouth of the Elbe, was armed. The enemy gunfire from there often provided us with a handy check point when clouds covered all others. They never even came close to hitting anybody.



Crossing Holland at our altitude on a clear day gave us an excellent view out across the continent. Sometimes we could see the white smoke of hard working R.R. locomotives. As soon as they saw us they would stop making smoke. They wanted no part of our fighter escort, and that suited us fine. We liked to keep them nearby whenever possible. We used to watch them high overhead, their large wing tanks

would extend beyond both edges of the wing and would make them appear to be twin-engined types and maybe not ours. Tell me they were ours, they never attacked so we continued to believe them to be friendly, and still do.

The German civilians often called our crew members Gangsters and Murderers, after they had bailed out and were being taken prisoner. I wonder what they thought their own troops were when they invaded Poland and the low countries without provocation, not to mention the way they treated some of their own people.

Once while we were being shot at, the top turret engineer-gunner, Joe Lovett said, "Hey, a piece of flack just bounced off my leg!" and when he came up with a piece about three-quarters of an inch cube wise, we all had to believe him. I'll bet he still has it. He was wearing heavy electrically heated clothing which undoubtedly helped protect his tough hide.

I never told Joe about the following and I hope he will forgive me now for relating this incident. I happened to censor a letter of his that must have been written shortly after his promotion to Tech. Sergeant. It went something like this. "Hey Mom, I'm making more money than a second Louie!" I may not have agreed, but I left it undisturbed.

Upon returning from a mission some ball turret gunner accidentally fired a few rounds from his 50 cal guns while on our airfield. As fate would have it some of the slugs happened to hit the Headquarters Building. This very soon gained the attention of our commanding officer and combat veteran Col. Robert Satterwhite. No one was injured, luckily, but the probability was such that he took immediate action. "I have an aversion to being killed by a 50 cal." He said at the next briefing. "The next gunner that fires his guns on the ground will become an automatic buck private!" I never knew it to happen again. As most of the gunners rated between buck and tech sergeant, that would have been quite a loss.

Another time I thought Col. Satterwhite came through with the right answer. A squadron member and friend of mine, Lt. Eakin, found one of his men had forgotten his oxygen mask after taking off for a mission. He had little choice but to land and secure one. Being a top-rate pilot this gave him little trouble, but it was not standard operating procedure to land with a gross weight of 65,000 lbs. and needless to say it was a very dangerous practice. The Colonel's answer was simple and effective. Fly over the airfield, bail him out and fly the mission without him. This solution worked very well too, as you can probably imagine. Of course, this sort of thing eventually resulted in a strict procedure of inspection for everyone before T.O. (take off).

Lt. Eakin's crew was also the first one in the Group to finish up its required number of combat missions. This called for a buzz job to celebrate the occasion and usually entailed the firing of many flares in the process. Along with a feeling of having a partial sentence of death lifted from your head, survival was a heady wine and gave you a feeling of extreme relief, at least for the ones with a special loved one to return to.

This business of celebrating the end of a tour of duty resulted in each crew, in turn, trying to out-do the preceding one. So they would try and get a hold of as many flares and flare guns as possible before that

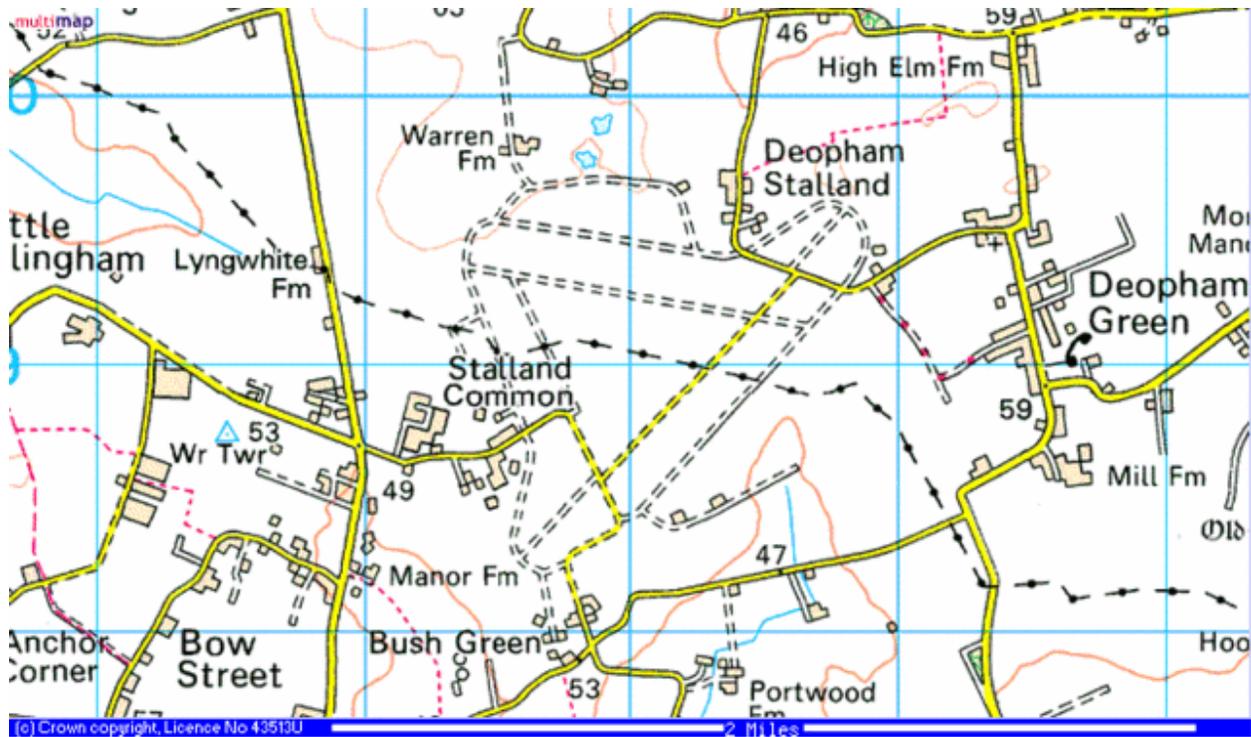


Figure 10: Deopham Green Airfield Runway Locations

Shuttle Mission to Russia, June 21st, 1944

Of course we were all highly pleased to find that we were one of the B-17 crews chosen to fly the first shuttle mission from England to Russia with the 452nd Bomb Group. Little did we know what was in store for us and just how badly everyone was going to underestimate the enemy. This would be our twenty-third mission and it took place on June 21, 1944. We were briefed for this one and then waited at least ten days for suitable weather! Absolute nonsense!

The 15th Air Force had already used the airfield at Poltava in a similar caper from Italy in which they got by scot free. So I imagine the Jerry brass was just waiting. In retrospect it is all quite easy to see.

We had flown to Magdeburg the previous day and got no sleep in between missions! We only had time for the usual after-mission drink because of the nonsensical scheduling of a very early briefing for this never-before-flown jaunt from Britain to Russia. Imagine our physical state as we took off on this twelve hour ordeal without our customary night's sleep!

So, when here we came again at 15,000 feet, we regularly bombed from 27,000 feet, a lone ME 109 was waiting for us, but he never came into 50 caliber range. He might as well have thumbed his nose at us, fighter escort included. He pulled a beautiful split-ess right out in front of us where all could see and then dove sharply away. When no one, not one, of our escort dropped their wing tanks to chase him, he knew we were headed for Russia, I say! The Luftwaffe later became very adept at tempting our 'little friends' to drop their wing tanks prematurely and thereby limiting their range. Incidentally we extended our range for this twelve-hour mission by perhaps as much as three hours by carrying a four hundred gallon bomb bay tank, which, however, severely limited our bomb load. We bombed a synthetic oil plant near the southern border of Poland and were later jarred totally awake by 20 MM cannon fire.

The enemy fighters had undoubtedly been radar vectored into our twelve o'clock position through broken clouds and were on us very suddenly. I was flying with the group leader as my reference off to the left and I saw this FW 190 attacking them just as the 20 mm cannon shell exploded in our nose section. Believe me if 20 mm fire doesn't kill you, it will scare you to death! This one had my name on it gut it was stopped by the armor plate in front of the instrument panel where two large dents appeared in front of me. It made an eight inch oblong hole in the aircraft skin just to the left of the astro-dome where the navigator used his sextant for celestial navigation.

This was just the chance our comedian Bombardier Roger Soth, a 200 lb. college football player from Erie, PA., was waiting for. He lit up his ever-ready cigar and started blowing smoke out the 20 mm hole. He was trying in repeated efforts to make us believe the aircraft was on fire, of course. Then he would look back at us through the dome and grin from ear to ear. He had us in stitches in no time. Which was just what we needed after all the excitement. I wish he were still alive today to read this as he was a really great guy. He was not lost in combat, however, and lived for many years after the war. He succumbed to a heart attack in 1983.

P-51 Pilot Lee Northrup may have shot down the Jerry FW 190, that winged us after they made repeated head-on passes at each other. Lee, a member of the 20th fighter group, was finally the lucky winner. He

and I both returned to the zone of the interior (U.S.A.) on the same old British ship, the Mauritania which carried more German prisoners of war than Allied personnel on that trip.

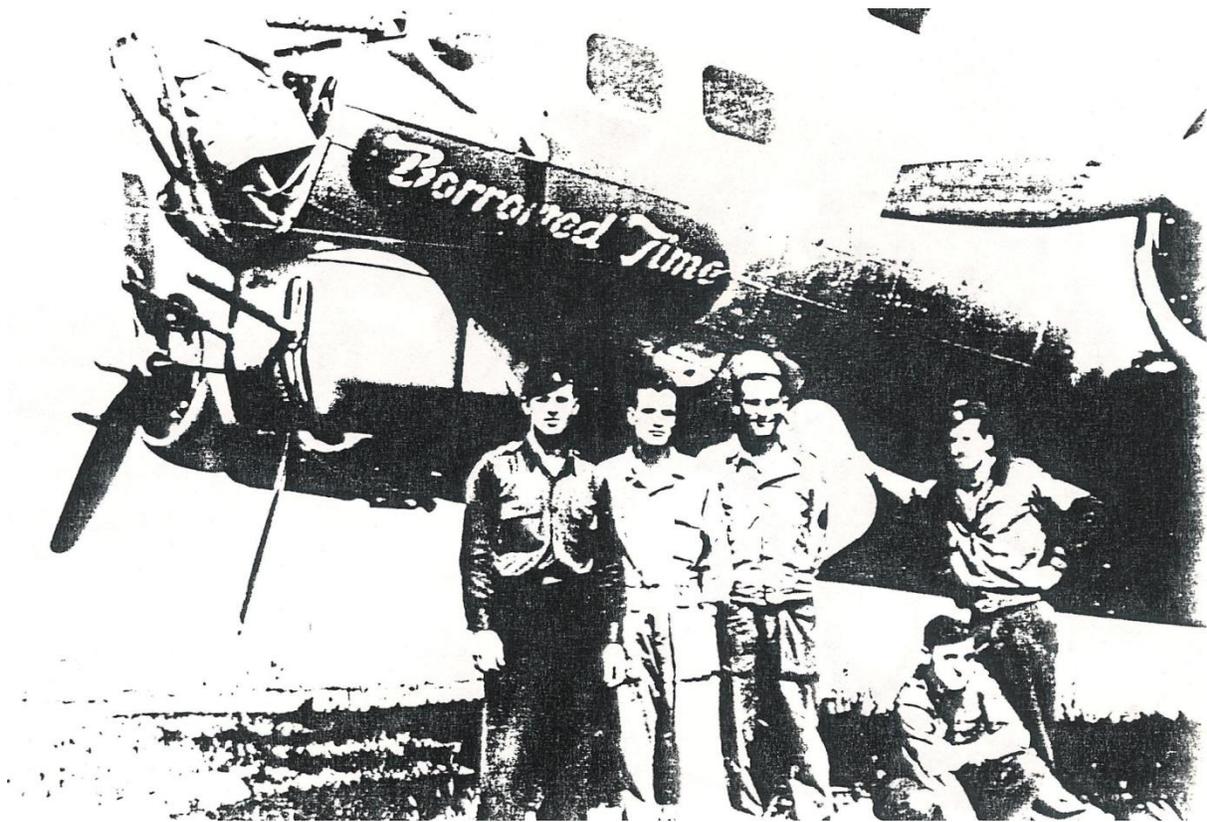


Figure 11: On the ground at Poltava (Demaray far right)

Demaray/Russia

We landed at Poltava, 500 miles deep in the Ukraine, on a perforated steel mat that rattled, with one prop feathered and without hydraulic pressure, so that the landing roll had to be ended with a ground loop in order to stay on the air base without brakes.

While standing in the chow line at the field kitchen, about dusk that evening, a ME 109 flew over up high and then made a 180 and flew back toward Germany. So we all knew good and well we'd had our picture 'took' and to expect company soon!

A detailed inspection of our slit trenches, which were just behind our tent area, took place right after chow.

The Enemy arrived shortly before midnight and announced their presence by dropping two parachute flares, which lit the landscape brighter than a full moon. As all of our new airplanes were without camouflage paint they must have shown up brilliantly.

I was awakened immediately as the flares lit the inside of our open pyramid tent. On preparing to leave I called to my comrades, "Jerry's dropping flares!" "We better get out of here!" but they didn't think the war was for real yet, so remained in bed.

On arriving at the slit trenches I found them already well occupied, but managed to make room, and then the bombs started falling. They made an eerie whistling sound which grew louder as they fell, of course. It wasn't long before my fellow crew members decided to join me and how! They resembled Olympic high hurdlers and long jumpers in their haste. I should have laughed at any other time.

We really expected to be in for a taste of some of our own medicine; however, we ended up with a ringside seat albeit a little too interesting. The bombs fell for what seemed an hour. Their accuracy was excellent and was confined to the aircraft, the bomb dump and gas storage tanks. Thank God!

One of the last bombers to leave buzzed us to let us know they knew where we were. We lost only one of our fliers to the action. The Russians were not so fortunate, however. Over sixty of our 17's were either destroyed or badly damaged. I know there were attempts to minimize this figure, however, I have read an official U.S. intelligence report that upheld it.

The Russians would not allow our fighters, which had landed at nearby Piryatin, aloft, because they were not equipped as night fighters. I say that was a mistake! They should have asked for volunteers. Our 51's would have given those Jerry HE 111's and JU 88's a bad time on their bomb runs and on the way home as their fuel was in very short supply, we learned afterwards. I know I would have been happy to volunteer for a chance like this. They could have worked out a relay schedule giving each pilot a few minutes each so as not to shoot at each other in the dark. I doubt very much that Jerries lost anybody at all.

I have never heard any mention made of the escape kits we were issued. They contained seventy-five dollars, U.S. each along with a map, compass and concentrated food for use in case we were shot down, of course. I gathered up ten of them soon after we landed which pretty well filled a musette bag. I never heard what happened to that bag. We were so dead from lack of sleep. Who cared? Fortunately we were not held responsible for them. I think I know who got them. As long as it was my own crew members it was O.K. with me.

The next day a butterfly bomb (anti-personnel type) was found in the outfield where we had been playing softball a few hours before.

The planes of the other wing which landed at Mirgorad were moved to Zaporozhe, 150 miles South, and were spared a fate similar to ours as Jerry paid them a visit and bombed the gas storage and the bomb dump the next evening.

Before leaving on this junket, I wrote to my wife on June 20th and told her not to be concerned if she didn't hear from me for awhile because I would be away working. I should have said "loafing" courtesy of the Luftwaffe. She was not expecting to hear for a couple of weeks and so was really surprised when

she received a letter from Russia only a few days later, dated June 24th. Almost all mail traveled by airmail which cost 6 cents.



Figure 12: Russian Military Greets Bomb Crew (Demaray center)

This area of Russia had all been fought over twice and had only recently been re-captured from the Krauts. So a lot of things the Russians had were like American 6X6 trucks, some of our best airplanes as well as a lot more implements of war. The Russians liked the P-39 Bell Aircobra with the 37 mm Cannon that fired through the propeller shaft for use against German armor.

On the second evening they showed us one of their Charlie Chaplin type movies, in a one story brick building the roof of which had been burned off. Undoubtedly the building was a victim of the Russian scorched earth policy which made the cold winters so difficult for the German invaders. We sat on heavy plank benches which the bare footed peasants insisted we take while they stood. We protested but they insisted.

Charlie was a Czech and a real fool so all could laugh and laugh so that all would know what fools the industrial-wise Czechs really were. We didn't laugh enough so they tried to tell us what the true picture really was. All this was done by sigh language.

Before long some American C-46s, large twin engine transport planes, were brought in. They had U.S. Army pilots, but Russian navigators who did only VFR navigation by dog-legging from one big city to another. Any radio aids to navigation were obviously non-existent.

They loaded a bunch of us up and took us south to Rostov, where we were forced to stop because of bad weather farther south, they said.

Before landing we could see the trenches that surrounded the city as much heavy fighting had taken place there. Many of the buildings that had been destroyed were being rebuilt using the same old bricks over again.

We were quartered in large older wooden houses that had somehow escaped being burned. The tongue and groove fir flooring was the same type as was used in my old school building back home. These houses were obviously built before the Revolution and were certainly not for the peasants.

We were assigned a very military, English speaking Russian Major to keep us in line. He tried to get some of the gunners to sleep in the fresh straw of a nearby stable, but they were much too good for that kind of treatment, so slept in the airplanes instead. He was very disgusted at their lack of discipline and expressed himself by saying "Soldiers, Huh!" I had often heard it said that the Army Air Force of those days was little more than a controlled mob. I'm sure the Major would have agreed in this case.

Whenever they took us anywhere it was by way of the six wheeler G.I. trucks which we had sent them Lend-Lease. This was an outright gift of course. The Russians performed the largest role, manpower wise, in defeating the enemy ground forces so they fully deserved all the help they got. I have heard it said that they lost over two million men in defeating Jerry and driving him back home!

America was described as the "Arsenal of Democracy". We spared no expense in supplying all the allies, in addition to our own Armed Forces, with all the weapons needed to help defeat the Axis powers, Italy, Germany and Japan.

The next afternoon we were all taken on an outing to the City Park which was surrounded by a high steel picket fence and was about the size of a city block.

Considerable effort was made to keep us from mingling with the civilian population, which didn't always work out too well, as two young fellows took off running in the direction of G-I-R-L-S. We were entertained by listening to one of our members play the piano while being confined in the park.

One evening our tail gunner, who could speak German, traded his leather jacket for a jug of vodka. He then proceeded to tell all who would listen how we had bombed Berlin. Many of the people understood him well enough so that a crowd soon gathered. The police arrested him and his buddy for holding a public meeting and hauled them off to the 'klink'. They were released shortly after and that was that.

The only M.P. that I ever thought remarkable was a lovely, young blond Russian woman, with an old rifle of Revolutionary vintage slung over her shoulder, directing traffic at a busy intersection in Rostov. She probably wore that heavy rifle all day long, but never let it show. She could have held down any lead part in one of today's T.V. soap operas very well. She was quite a surprise to say the least. I never saw her equal in the service of any country.

The Russians Threw a banquet for us one evening that started out with a water glass of straight vodka and they proceeded to feed us much better fare than we had any right to expect in war time. During the meal a gray haired old man played the accordion for us which we enjoyed very much. Afterwards we all filed by and shook his hand and I gave him a pack of Chesterfield cigarettes.

The journey south turned out to be a short wartime vacation on the Russian Riviera and a very welcome leave from flying combat missions. After another stop at Armovir in the Caucasus area we were flown south over the Caspian Sea to Tehran. There we enjoyed a tasty box lunch at the airport never suspecting what a place in history this area would someday play.

At our next stop in Cairo that night we were very much surprised to find that Olympia beer was being sold in the P.X. and we smuggled some of it home with us. Not nearly enough, it turned out.

We could have spent many days in sunny Casablanca. I bought some leather goods from the pretty French girls in the P.X. to take home to my glamorous wife.

Of course the strictest security was maintained about who we were and where we were from. All shoulder patch I.D. was removed. They didn't even want us to tell our buddies back at home base what had happened to us. It was general supposition at the time that the brass was afraid Jerry might start in our bases in England in this same manner before we obtained night fighter protection, and it might really upset the old apple cart if they found out how successful they had really been.

After the long rough ride across North Africa in a bench seated C47, the overnight C54 flight was the best ride we ever had, but took us in the wrong direction, back to the war and G.I. food again! We landed at Preswick, Scotland in almost Zero-Zero weather conditions.

It was still wartime with several missions yet to fly, so it was back to getting shot at again many times before the final welcome relief of being sent home with no thanks from anyone. Oh! I forgot, they gave us a medal. The heady wine of survival and the fact that we had survived was enough to sustain us.

Best of all I was going home to that certain special person I'd married only a year before. She had saved every dollar I'd sent home and had written me a letter almost every single day. This was my real reward.



Figure 13: Return to Dayton Oregon - Electa, Albert, Dorothy, Mason, and Elois Demaray

I had lost more than 10 lbs. and it took me many months to shed all the anxiety neuroses I had developed. I am sure I was not alone on that score. I was however able to get checked out in four other multi-engined types before being discharged one day after V.J. Day. I later declined an invitation to join the reserves and fly C-46s at Portland, Oregon.

The Statue of Liberty was never to look better to anyone. "Look guys!" someone said, "King sized automobiles!" The world had once again been made safe for bureaucracy!

According to an article in the May, 1988 Airforce Magazine, "The Air Force plans to deploy 132 B-2s in the 1990's at a program cost of \$36.6 billion." How can we possibly afford this when we are already overdrawn at the bank? (Latest mid 1989 report puts the present price near one half billion each, or an overall program cost near 70 billion dollars!!!!)

Cal-Aero Academy

Lawrence "Doc" Downey of Oakland, Cal. and I were room-mates in Primary School at Cal-Aero Academy, the country club of the west coast. We had venetian blinds at the windows, only four cadets to each bathroom and beds, not bunks. There were Oleanders blooming all over the place. It was really special. We could even go AWOL without getting caught, well almost always. We had a Commandant of Cadets by the name of Capt. Kelly who wasn't out to get anyone. All of us were very fond of him. It was the Army check pilots we were scared to death of. I heard one of them say he wasn't an I.A., but I thought he was.



Figure 14: Cadet Demaray

We each had to give the Army pilot assigned to our squadron a ride at sometime during our stay at Primary School. Most of us feared the thought of this more than anything else. He might even wash us out! One day after we had all soloed he showed up at the auxiliary field where my squadron was doing its flying. He started giving check rides. He only required one take off, a flight around the traffic pattern and one landing. About five minutes was all. This sounded too good to be true. So I gave my name to Mr. Clark, the dispatcher.

It must have been quite a surprise for the Check pilot to find an extra name on his list! He evidently didn't believe that enterprise should be rewarded, because he gave me the works. We did climbing turns to altitude, stalls and spins. He didn't like my spin recovery and asked me who my instructor was. Not wanting to get my friend Mr. Jowett in trouble, I tried to tell Lt. Tack that my spin recoveries were usually O.K. His reply was curt,

"Are you arguing with me?" I wouldn't dare! My reply was a meek, "No, Sir."

Civilian flight instructors were mostly real easy going except for my Squadron Commander, Mr. Andrews, who turned me down for my first solo flight because of too much cross wind drift on the final

approach. I told him, “One spot looked just as good as another.” He just wanted to throw his weight around, which he often did. He was the Hermann Goering type!

Ground loops were the thing to avoid. With Stearman’s they were built in if the pilot didn’t always take care on the landing roll. It was damage to the wing tip that must be avoided. I knew a cadet by the name of Hess who had to write a 5,000 word essay on the subject. He eventually became a navigator, which of course was a much easier life in combat. Not easy, but easier than the pilots who had to constantly wrestle that heavy airplane while flying formation, and most pilots traded off every fifteen minutes whenever possible. After the bombs were dropped it became a different airplane and was much easier on the elbow grease.



Figure 15: Stearman Biplane and Cadets – E.M. Demaray seated on wheel.

Downey and Dulla took a day off once on a week day when nothing was scheduled for them because of cloudy weather, but they made the mistake of going to Long Beach. The M.P.s thought they were from nearby Santa Ana Pre-Flight School which didn’t give week day passes. So they got caught. They were each awarded fifteen “tours” at an hour each marching with a seat pack parachute on. It was nearly time to move on to basic school. They only had time to march off a few before leaving. At basic they lived in mortal fear that the tours might have been sent on with them, but lucked out after all.

Doc and I both had the same flight instructor, an Australian by the name of Mr. Jowett. He was the greatest and somehow even managed to teach us both to fly the Stearman.

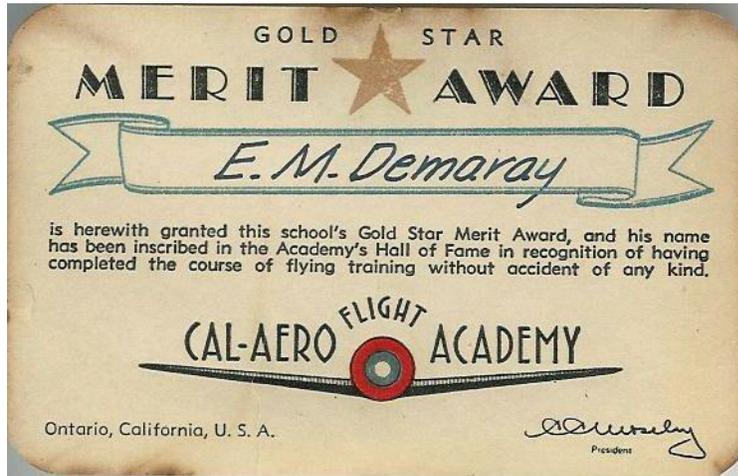


Figure 16: Cal-Aero Award

One time he happened to call Doc "Ace" in a weak moment, Doc asked, "How do you spell that?" He replied, "A.S.S.". "Just as I thought" Doc said.

Doc and I always seemed to run into each other. Once it was on Market St. in San Francisco, right after graduation even though we had attended different advanced schools. He graduated from Douglas, Ariz. And I form Stockton, Ca. in the class of 43-K, Dec. 5th, 1943. We met purely by chance. Much later at Bovingdon,

England, we met at an air base just north-west of London which was within buzz-bomb range as we were both to witness.

The buzz-bomb flew directly westward over the airfield. It sounded just like a single cylinder outboard motor, but traveled about as fast as a fighter plane. I later learned that many were shot down by fighters. The engine quit and it dove straight down. When the explosion came it left no doubt, even at about a mile distance.

After banishing my combat tour I flew a plane load of casual personnel down to Bovingdon for an overnight stay where P.X. privileges were enjoyed. I was sitting in the mess hall when in walked Doc. While eating together I heard about how Davidson had landed an advanced trainer hard enough to lose both engines, literally. They both rolled down the runway ahead of the plane. He must have landed about ten feet too low. Just then in walked Davidson. We had quite a reunion from primary days. Then, guess what? Doc was sent to my bomb group as a replacement for the 731st Squadron in the month of August, 1944. We saw each other once or twice more before I left. He asked me how to tell our base from all the others. I said, "Ours has a red dirt road running across the middle. That's how I identify it for sure."

Few of us were destined to be Chuck Yeagers or Neil Armstrongs and some of us even got by without being shot down but it was not Doc's good fortune. I learned much later that he flew east once too often and failed to return. I really hated to hear that. We seemed to always run into each other.

One of the president's sons was a Colonel in the Army Air Corps., and at one time was C.O. of the Photo Recon. Outfit. I wonder how many combat missions he flew?

One of our own generals was flying as an observer with an experienced crew over Germany when an engine caught fire. They said he was the first one to bail out. The crew then was able to put the fire out and fly home, less one general. I've never heard his name mentioned.

The weatherman today tells us about the jet stream and draws its location on his weather map. Not so in 1944. Little was known about such things at that time. When an early shuttle mission to North Africa, which flew at 30,000 feet, encountered high head winds at that altitude, several Forts splashed down in the Mediterranean for lack of fuel. The Jet Stream was blamed. From that time on lower altitudes were used, even over the larger German cities where flak was the heaviest. Flirting with the jet stream over the target could be disastrous. A strong head wind could allow the flak to riddle us whereas a tail wind could destroy our bombing accuracy. So bombing from 27,000 feet was settled on as an unhappy medium.



Figure 17: Cal-Aero Class Picture (EMD is 7th from left in 3rd row up)

Basic and Advanced Training and More About Later

Going from Primary to Basic Flying School was just like jumping from a model "A" Ford into a Cadillac. With double the horsepower at 450 we felt like real fighter pilots, although we were far from it.



I lucked out again and became a student of 1st Lt. Gamby, a kind and patient man, who never spoke a cross word, and such a contrast from most of his fellows. Our Squadron C.O. was just the opposite, a short, tyrannical demon, who would stick-whip your knees if given half a chance. He was just full of surprises as I found out on my forty-hour check ride. He couldn't shake me up, although he certainly tried. Even after landing he had his Lt. almost run us down, while starting a T.O. run from an entirely unauthorized position. If I hadn't pulled up short and wait him out, I'd have been in trouble.

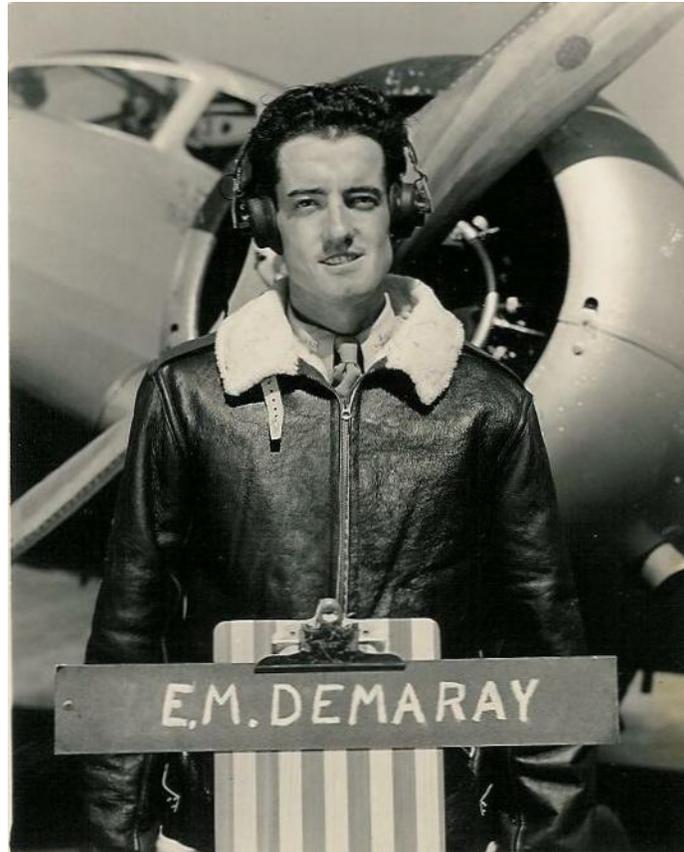


Figure 18: Twin Beach Trainer

Montgomery A. "Monty" Coddington, a fellow student, was the best man at our wedding. He went on to become a P-38 pilot and was unfortunately lost somewhere over the continent, as was Chester Granville who was shot down by ground fire on a dive bombing mission.

Probably my most unusual experience while at Taft among the oil fields, just north of the Tehachapis of Central California, was landing at the Bakersfield Airport which was really well camouflaged. The runway was painted to resemble truck garden farm land. We would never have known it was there, unless we had been told it was and to land there on one of our cross country flights. I had to see one of my own flight rolling down the runway before believing it was there! Then I landed! It certainly would have fooled any Jap invader.

The most important thing that happened during basic training was our wedding on August 21, 1943.



Figure 19: Elois Coats Weds E. Mason Demaray

Alas, my wife Elois soon found out that I was married to the Army Air Force with which I was not in love. But, like a lot of other kids I'd always wanted to learn to fly and this chance was too good to pass up. Thousands of us accepted the challenge with little thought of what would be asked of us at some future date. Most of us felt obligated to perform to the very best of our ability whatever the flying job that became our lot. Uncle Sam had spent thousands on teaching us to be pilots. Now it was up to us to pay him back and do our best to help win the war. We felt that all pilots should have the same opportunity. Some were being held stateside and not allowed to help fight the shooting war. We felt that was unfair to them and their patriotism.

Advanced Flying School was a big snap as far as the flying was concerned. The light Cessna twin was easy to fly. The food was the best yet and the instructors friendly, teaching us night cross country, instrument and formation flying. I felt that I had excelled in the last two. I only had a run-in with one instructor and that was at least partly his fault!

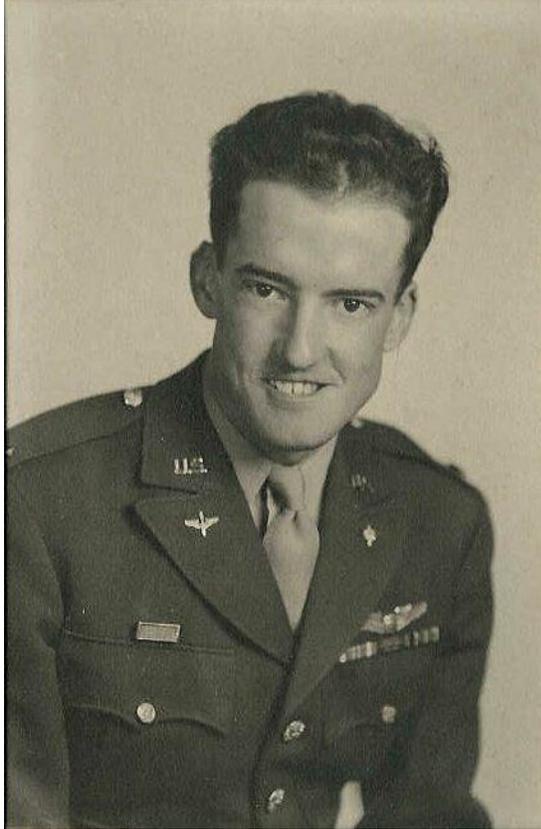


Figure 20: Lt. Demaray with Wings

First Lt. Peterson was leading a night cross country and flew right across in front of my airplane which was on the down-wind leg of an auxiliary field where we were shooting landings. Knowing of course it could only be another wild cadet, I picked up the microphone and said, "Scram!" Even though he was one hundred percent wrong, he took offense and flew alongside and got our number by the use of his wing tip light, another violation of traffic pattern flying. To top things off "Old Chicken" had his electrical system go out, and he had to crank his landing gear down by hand before dealing with us. A/C Dagget, with whom I had been trading off flying duties all evening, and I awaited the Lts. Wrath without anticipation. He really couldn't chew us out because we had done nothing much wrong, but we knew he was mad before he got through. He could talk better than he flew and was gone, transferred when a little more than a year later I was assigned to Stockton Field as an instructor pilot. Some of my former instructors were still

on hand.

Many of my comrade combat returnees were in worse shape than I and all were very lucky to still be alive. Most were fighter pilots and still very nervous and with good reason.

Some of the stateside flight instructors had trouble understanding why we Combat veterans found the light weight Cessna AT-17, a tail-wheel airplane, so difficult to land. Several of them had been used to flying the Lockheed P-38 with its tricycle gear. Any pilots used to flying both types will understand the difference.

On one occasion at least two dozen of us were involved in a classroom situation where a P-38 pilot mentioned an experience with compressibility while diving away from a Messersmitt. One of those AT-17 instructors made a dumb, insulting remark intimating that there was cowardice in running from the enemy. That was more than I could take. Pointing at the novice instructor pilot I said, "You just wait big boy. Your turn is coming!" A riot may have been averted by my timely remark. My squadron C.O. Major Adams, who was a P-38 pilot himself, was present. He later offered me a promotion. It wouldn't have been approved however, as I didn't have the required one year in grade. I thanked him anyway.

Upon being sent to a Gunnery School, at Yuma Arizona, after our combat tour we resented being pressured into volunteering for another tour of duty overseas, when many had not had their first. The Army was looking for night fighter pilots. It was obvious this meant more overseas duty. When it came my turn to be tested for night vision, I must admit to being very nearly blind.

It eventually became my lot to serve as a pilot for the A.T.C. (Air Transport Command), delivering various types of aircraft to many locations, some overseas. We delivered one new C-47 to the Alaska Division at Great Falls, Montana that had big red Russian stars painted on it.

Ferrying airplanes was a top flight job for a wartime pilot. I could have continued doing it forever. We saw a lot of new countries, Panama, Iceland, Central America, Mexico, Cuba and Greenland, as well as a lot of the U.S. of A.

We would wake up early in a hotel room, reach for the phone and call the Weather Bureau. If we didn't like the forecast, it was roll over and back to sleep. We were never challenged on our logic of laying over except once when we spent almost a week in the Canal Zone. That's what happens when you stretch your luck. Strength in numbers meant nothing to a bird colonel who after a few choice words got us all heading north, dead heading on a Gooney Bird (C-47). We landed at two different countries in Central America with smoking volcanoes before reaching Brownsville, Texas for customs.

Once, while flying home on a Western Airways DC-3, we were struck by lightning. This happened between Sheridan, Wyoming and Billings, Montana, almost over the exact spot where General Custer made his last stand against Sitting Bull. The lightning strike sounded just like a loud pistol shot. But everyone remained calm. After landing we found that a hole about a foot in diameter was burned through both surfaces of the fabric covered rudder.

During training we were always told that lightning would never strike an aircraft because it would be charged either positive or negative, the very same as the atmosphere through which it was flying. Like charges repel, etc., etc. I guess it took Western Airways in this case to disprove that theory and luckily by receiving only a strike on the tail surface. It was only a mild storm with little more than fifty percent cloud cover, as I recall. Thor was probably only feeling a little playful at the time. Thank God! Custer and his troopers should have been as fortunate. We were held up about one hour for patching, then on to home base at Great Falls.

I have written this account of my World War II experiences mostly for the benefit of my descendents, especially my grandchildren; Elizabeth Ann, Monica Lorraine, Hunter Robert, Aubert Mason, and Katherine Eleeta Demaray. (I wonder how many of them will ever read it.) It may be of mild interest to others. It is, I swear, one hundred percent authentic. I deplore the lack of more humor. No one enjoys levity more than I. However, warfare leaves little to laugh about. What a hilarious world we would have if we could all learn to laugh at our mistakes.

Last but not least, I dedicate this to my loving school teacher wife who has given me two fine sons, has done most of the typing on this manuscript, and deserves the credit for making it somewhat readable.

Postscript – Midair Collision

Writing about the following unbelievable nightmare has been put off to the very last, and was only done at the urging of my sons. It is a very stressful experience to write about.

The morning of May 14th, 1944, our crew, a member of the 730th SQ. 452nd B.G., was assigned to fly as a spare and fill in for any aircraft that might have to do with mechanical problems, which proved in this case to be a very hazardous duty. We assumed, as I'm sure most flyers would, that each pilot would keep clear of all planes below and in front of us and we would expect the same consideration from all others to our rear and above.

Well, as it turned out, such was not to be the case. Somebody went to sleep. Another B-17, flying spare as well, was located directly over our tail section. It must have encountered our prop-wash about this time. This probably caused it to descend and encounter our vertical fin with its left wing. The other airplane's propellers cut our tail section completely off and we ended up in a hammerhead stall and fell off into a spin.

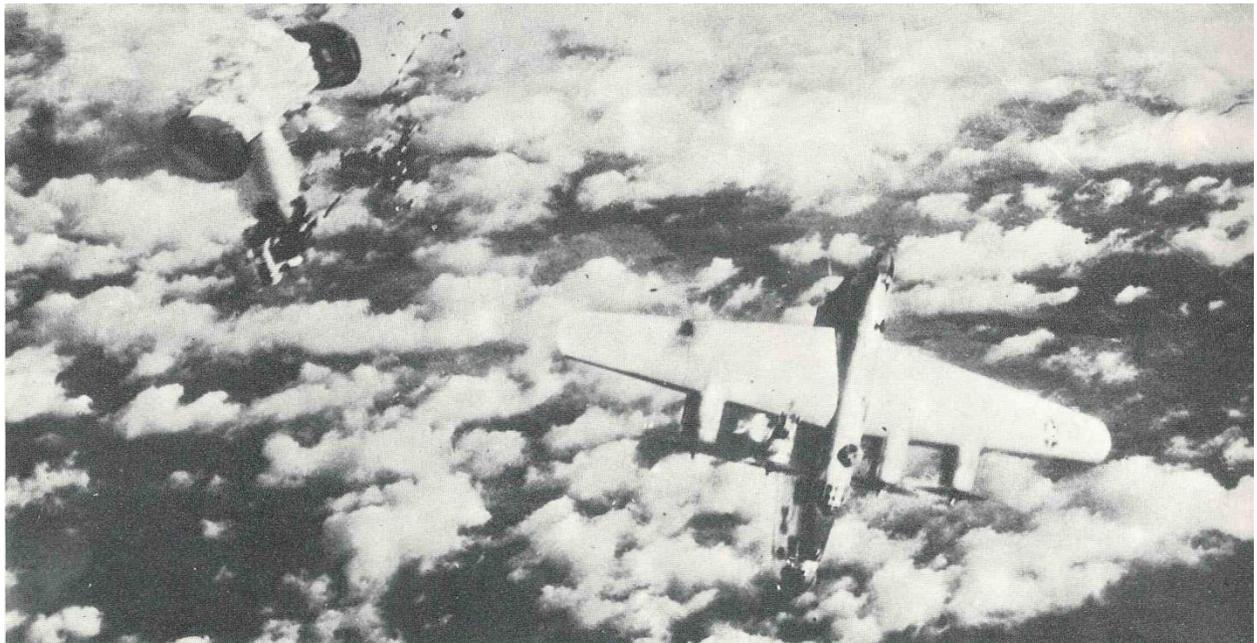


Figure 21: B-24 Liberator falls from sky after tail section blown off by ME262

No one was injured just yet, however. All this happened at 18,000 ft. during a high altitude assembly before leaving England. To bail out of a spinning crippled airplane at that altitude was not the reason I had joined the Air Force. However, thoroughly convinced that the only route to long life and happiness lay in doing just that, I jumped after watching the others leave. It was a good chance to practice a free fall as we had all been instructed to do as that was the best way to avoid capture when bailing out over the continent.

While falling flat on my back, with the sheepskin collar of my flying jacket up around my ears, I was extremely fortunate to be aware that a thin layer of clouds lay at about 3,000 feet. I had noted their

height while we were climbing up through them. I fell through the clouds in the blink of an eye, but decided not to wait any longer so pulled the rip cord. The chest pack opened but continued to cling to my chest in the partial vacuum caused by my falling body. No pilot chute nor spring loaded device was observed, so I grabbed hand fulls of silk and propelled them outward. This finally resulted in the parachute stringing out above me, but not opening. I believe this is called a Roman candle in the parlance of the present day expert. However the chute took its own sweet time opening. It must have slowed my descent some even in its unopened position, because even after a free fall of approximately three miles I cannot remember any kind of a severe jolt caused by the parachute's opening.

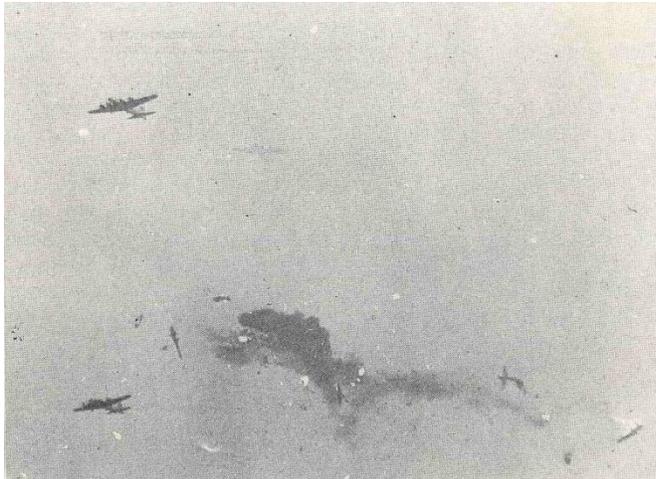


Figure 22: 23 Dec. 1944 two B-17s collided over Thurleigh with no survivors.

When the chute did open, the wrecked airplane was burning just below me and was framed between my dangling feet. My first reaction was that I would land on top of the flaming wreckage. As a result I tried to slip the chute, but could not as both risers were twisted around each other just like a single piece of rope. I looked again at the fire below me, then back up at the chute and then I hit the ground which I was totally unprepared for.

I won't attempt to guess how high I was when the parachute opened. I only know it was far too low for comfort. It had to have been a

defective packing job, or an attempt to sabotage the war effort. In either case it almost succeeded in eliminating one pilot.

The occupants of a passing jeep happened by in time to witness the crash and my late opening chute. They anxiously inquired as to my safety, not realizing they were talking to the body they had seen falling so rapidly towards the ground. I had landed a safe distance away from the fire because of the wind drift, but not from the exploding bombs which propelled wreckage beyond my position. I had removed the parachute harness and left it and the chute laying where it fell, not wanting to ever see either one ever again. To say the least my blind faith in parachutes was grossly violated.

The reader may question the fact, as I did, that the stricken aircraft came to earth before my free falling body. It had to dive in a vertical path in order to crash near my point of landing. It was still carrying climbing power on its engines, of 2300 R.P.M. and 38 inches of manifold pressure. You'd think that I would have heard it go by as it could not have missed me by very much. That had to be some power dive!

We lost two good men as a result of this fiasco. One never opened his parachute, and the airplane snagged the chute of the other and took him down with it. He was one of the first men out and obviously opened his parachute too soon.



Figure 23: B-17 Tail-gunner position

What happened to the aircraft that ran us down? I wish I knew.

The tail section of our 17 came tumbling down a few minutes after we had landed. We were worried about the tail gunner, Robert Salstrom, but found no sign of blood inside, so we were much relieved for him. The tail section had been severed somewhat ahead of the horizontal stabilizer. It was otherwise pretty much still intact. It landed on a steel picket fence, which surrounded a country church cemetery. We passed by it on the jeep ride back to our base.

We all congregated at the squadron operation office and congratulated each other as we each put in an appearance. The afore mentioned Salstrom showed up with a big grin on his nineteen-year-old face and not a scratch. At the time of the collision he had been laying back on his side relieving himself in a tin can he kept for that purpose. He never saw the airplane that hit us. He was thrown through the open end of his tail section. His rip cord was caught on jagged metal and pulled for him. He found himself dangling on his open parachute and he didn't even have to bail out. His exit was surprising but painless. Maybe even miraculous!