

OVERPAID, OVERSEXED, AND OVER HERE !!!!

Tales of the 8th U.S. Air Force in England, during World War II
(As our British Allies characterized the American G.I's stationed there)

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FOREWORD

These vignettes in the life of an officer in the Eight Air Force located in England during World War II, show the lighter side of the life and death struggle of the fliers who took on Hitler's Luftwaffe in the battle for air superiority over mainland Europe in the period from 1942 to 1945.

Allied leaders in January 1943 agreed upon a Combined Bomber Offensive, with the British Royal Air Force blanket bombing targets in Germany at night with their Lancaster and Wellington heavy bombers, and the U.S. 8th Air Force doing precision bombing with their B-17 Flying Fortresses and B-24 Liberator heavy bombers during the day.

This U.S.- British initiative sought to destroy Germany's industrial and military muscle and demoralize their civilian population before Allied forces attempted to invade mainland Europe from their bases in England.

The United States Air Forces in Europe (USAFE), was under the command of General Ike Eisenhower, the Supreme Commander of Allied Expeditionary Forces in Europe (SHAEF), the joint command of American, British, French, Polish and Norwegian forces who were allied against the AXIS forces in Germany and Italy.

The 8th Air Force, under the command of General Doolittle, was one of the main components of the USAFE, which included the tactical 9th Air Force and the strategic 8th Air Force in England, and the 15th Air Force in Africa and Italy.

The organization of the 8th Air Force was done in 1942-3 by General Ira Eaker, but was ultimately taken over by Doolittle at his headquarters at "PINETREE", formerly the Wycombe Abbey Girls Finishing School, located halfway between London and Oxford in High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire.

The 8th Air Force consisted of three Air Divisions, each headquartered in various locations in East Anglia. The 1st Air Division was located at Alconbury, and included 19 B-17 Bomb Groups and 9 P-51 Mustang Fighter Groups. The 2nd Air Division was headquartered at Horsham St. Faith and consisted of 14 B-24 Bomb Groups and 5 P-47 Thunderbolt Fighter Groups. The 3rd Air Division was located at Honington and included 15 B-17 Bomb Groups and 5 P-51 Fighter Groups..

These 67 Groups included approximately 200 squadrons, over 2000 aircraft, with 15000 flight crew members and a similar force of ground crew---a formidable fighting force.

In support of this massive effort to produce aircraft and component parts, U.S. manufacturers scrambled to make both bombers and escort fighters to penetrate deeply into Germany.

By Christmas 1943, the personnel of the Eighth Air Force had grown to 200,000 strong, with the ability to marshal 2000 four-engine bombers and their fighter escorts in its daylight strategic bombing campaign against Germany. The advance party of history's greatest air armada arrived in Britain in February 1942, flew its first combat mission over occupied Europe that July 4th, and sent its first heavy bombers into action, over Rouen, France in August. The lead pilot on that mission, Colonel Paul Tibbets, would play a major role in the B-29 bomber, the Enola Gay, in the atom bombing of Hiroshima, Japan in 1945.

A typical text-book raid was made by the Eighth Air Force on October 9, 1943, when their aircraft flew feints at the Low Countries, while simultaneously making a diversionary strike at the aircraft factory near Anklam, Germany adjacent to Peenemunde on the Baltic Sea, East of Denmark. The main bomb loads were delivered by 246 B-17 and B-24 bombers that struck at Gdynia and Danzig in Poland and destroyed a Focke-Wulf aircraft plant at Marienburg in East Prussia.

That raid was a prime example of the deception and high-altitude precision bombing, on a mission that required a 1500 mile round-trip, taking ten hours in the air, with anti-aircraft flak and German fighter opposition along the entire route.

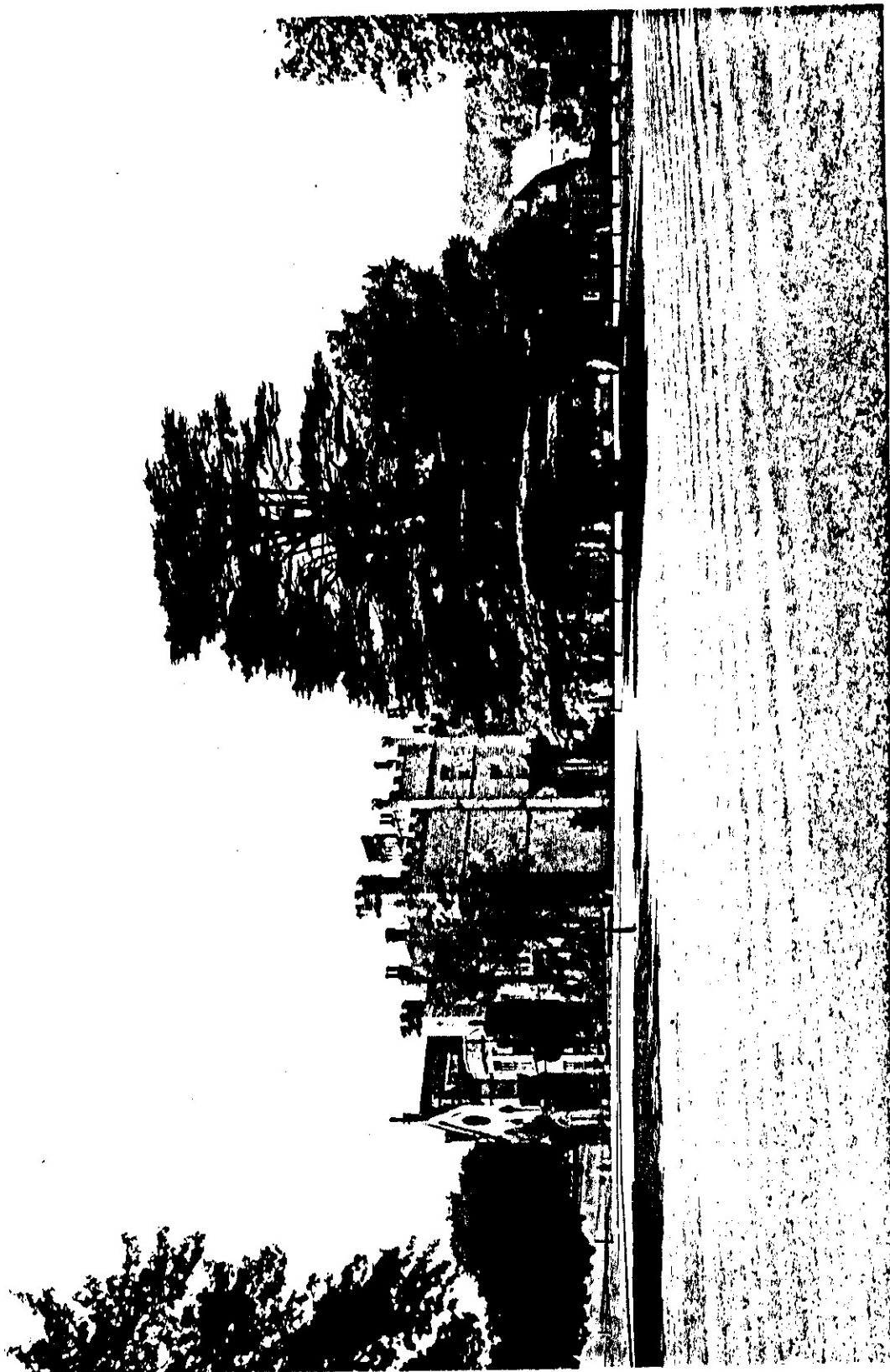
Was it any wonder that these guys looked for something to laugh at when they got back home to Britain from such a mission?? These stories intend to show the more human side of the brave men who risked their lives to undertake this type of raid upon Germany every day.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Organization Chart, Eighth Air Force.....	Appendix "A"
Organization of the Eighth Air Force.....	Appendix "B"
	Page No.
Wycombe Abbey, Hq. 8 th Air Force.....	1
Lt. Gen. James H. Doolittle, Commanding General, 8 th Air Force.....	2
Major General Curtis E. LeMay, Commanding General, 1 st Air Division...	3
Details, B-17 and B-24 Heavy Bombers.....	4
Battle Damage, B-17 Bomber.....	5
The B-17 Flying Fortress.....	6
The B-24 Liberator over Holland.....	7
Bombs Away.....	8
Heavy Flak over Target.....	9
The Air War Arena over Europe.....	10
The Authors.....	11
Eternal England.....	12-17
Trickery.....	18
Shades of the Red Baron.....	19
The Devil His Due.....	20
Rules of Combat.....	21
The Beginnings.....	22
Breaking In.....	23
Friendly Rivals.....	24
Whatever Turns You On, Baby.....	25
Yankee Ingenuity.....	26
Yankee Ingenuity II.....	27
Yankee Ingenuity III.....	28
Quick, Sergeant, the Windex.....	29
A Thermite Bomb.....	30
Lend Lease, Indeed!!!.....	31
Napalm's Nanny.....	32
Chin Music.....	33
The Hot Seat.....	34
Hollywood and Vine ????????.....	35
The Nissen Hut.....	36
The Raffish RAF.....	37
Buck Rogers and Killer Kane.....	38-39
Lemon Ice.....	40
Blood, Sweat, and Sweat and Sweat.....	41
Acce Duecy.....	42-43

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

The Bell	44
Pin a Rose On Me.....	45-46
Water Wings.....	47
Bombs Away II.....	48-49
Coffee Lady????.....	50
How Many Poles Does It Take ?.....	51
Napoleon Brandy.....	52-53
Where Is Jerry Today?.....	54
Battle Zone.....	55
Supply A Thrill.....	56
Cocktails Anyone?.....	57-58
Mistress Please !!.....	59
The Red Lion.....	60-61
Red Cross Aid.....	62
Langford Lodge.....	63-64
English Pregnancy.....	65
Blackout.....	66
The Unassuming Agent.....	67-68
Cincinnatus.....	69-71
Canadian—Eh??.....	72
Night Fighters.....	73
Virginity.....	74
The Bard of Avon.....	75-76
Viagra.....	77
The Comet.....	78
What Language is It?.....	79
Slang-uage.....	80
English-isms.....	81
A Tropical Isle.....	82
More English-isms.....	83
Breaking In... ..	84
Anglo-American Relations.....	85
Keep 'Em Rolling.....	86
60 Minutes.....	87
Towel Racks.....	88
Lord Haw Haw.....	89
A Dip in the Channel.....	90
French Seventy Fives.....	91-92
Fried Green Eggs.....	93
The Baby-Faced Colonel.....	94-95
Rank Has Its Privileges.....	96
Neverbreak.....	97



WYCOMBE ABBEY

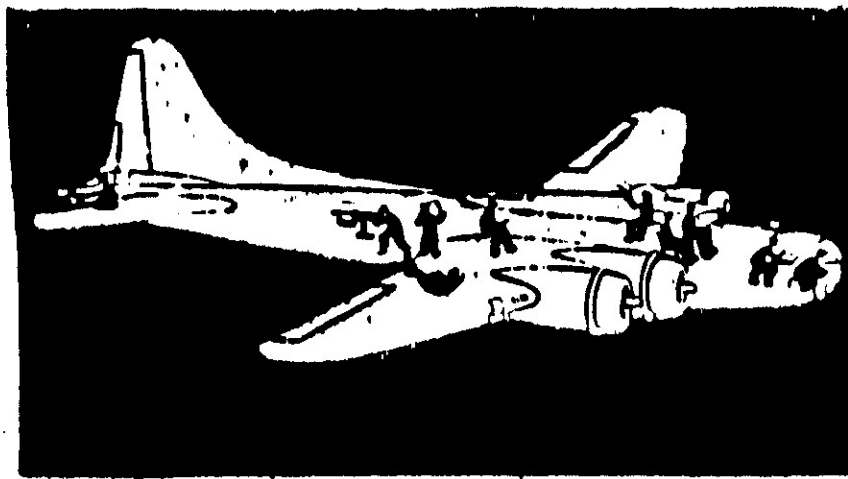
HIGH WYCOMBE, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, ENGLAND
Headquarters, 8th U.S. Air Force, World War II



LT. GENERAL JAMES H. DOOLITTLE
COMMANDING GENERAL
8TH AIR FORCE
European Theater of Operations
World War II

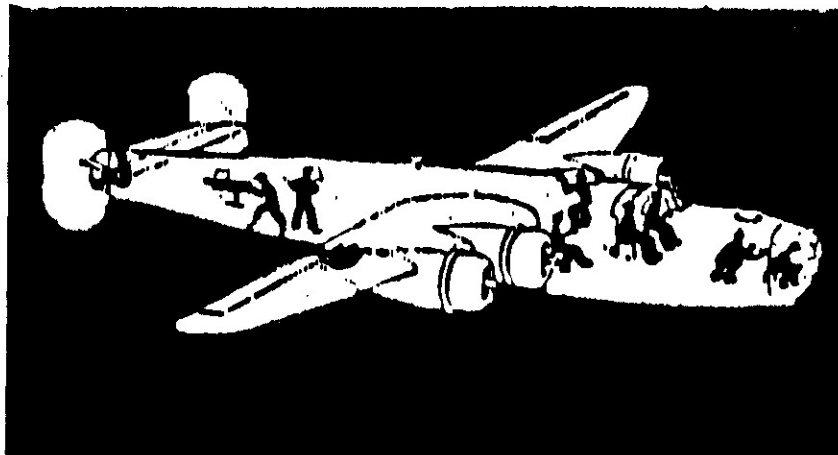


MAJOR GENERAL CURTIS E. LEMAY
COMMANDING GENERAL
FIRST AIR DIVISION
8TH AIR FORCE
European Theater of Operations
World War II



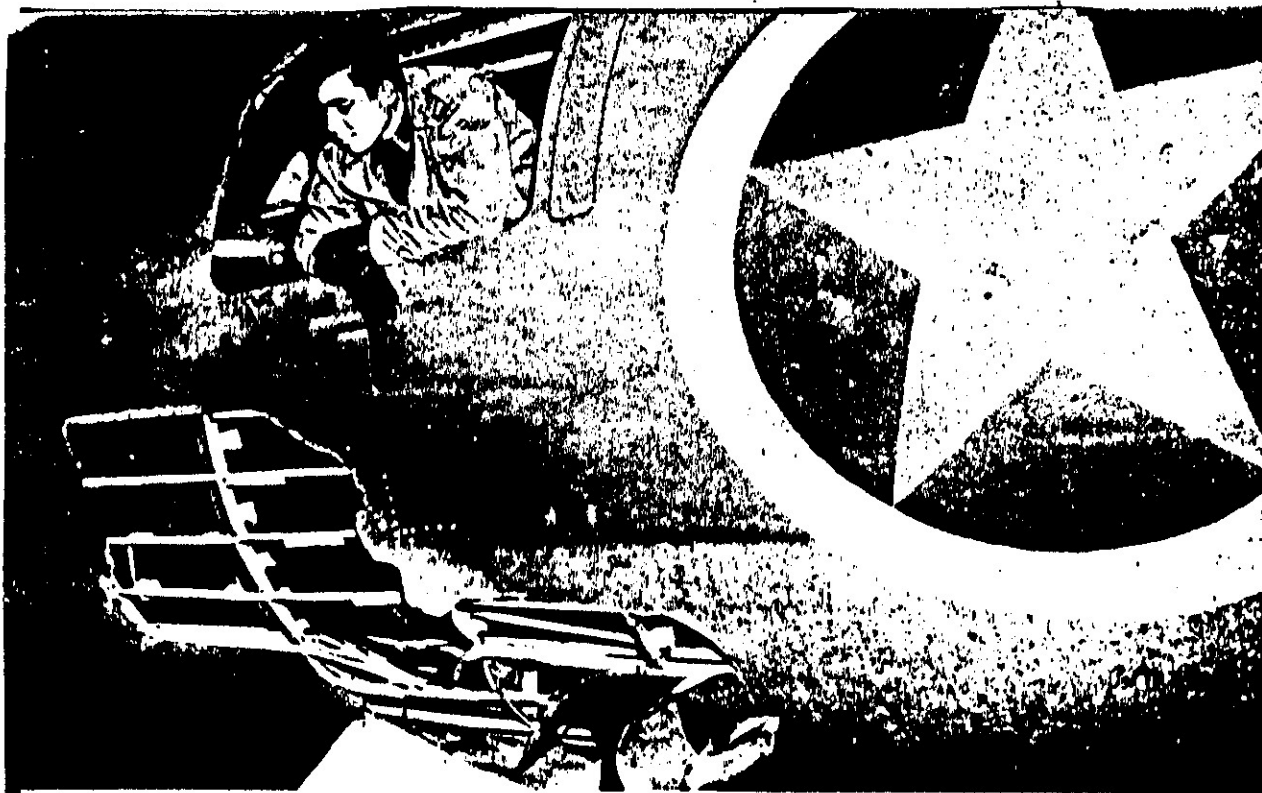
THE FORTRESS (B-17F)

Length.....74 ft. 9 in.
 Wing Span.....103 ft. 10 in.
 Height (Vertical Fin).....19 ft.
 Weight (Gross).....(approx.) 60,000 lbs.
 Bomb Load (Average)..... 5000 lbs.
 Speed (Cruising).....211 m.p.h.
 Horsepower..... 4800
 Armament (.50-cal. Machine Guns).....12



THE LIBERATOR (B-24D)

Length.....66 ft.
 Wing Span.....110 ft.
 Height (Vertical Fin).....18 ft.
 Weight (Gross).....60,000 lbs.
 Bomb Load (Average).....8000 lbs.
 Speed (Cruising).....225 m.p.h.
 Horsepower.....4800
 Armament (.50-cal. Machine Guns)..... 10



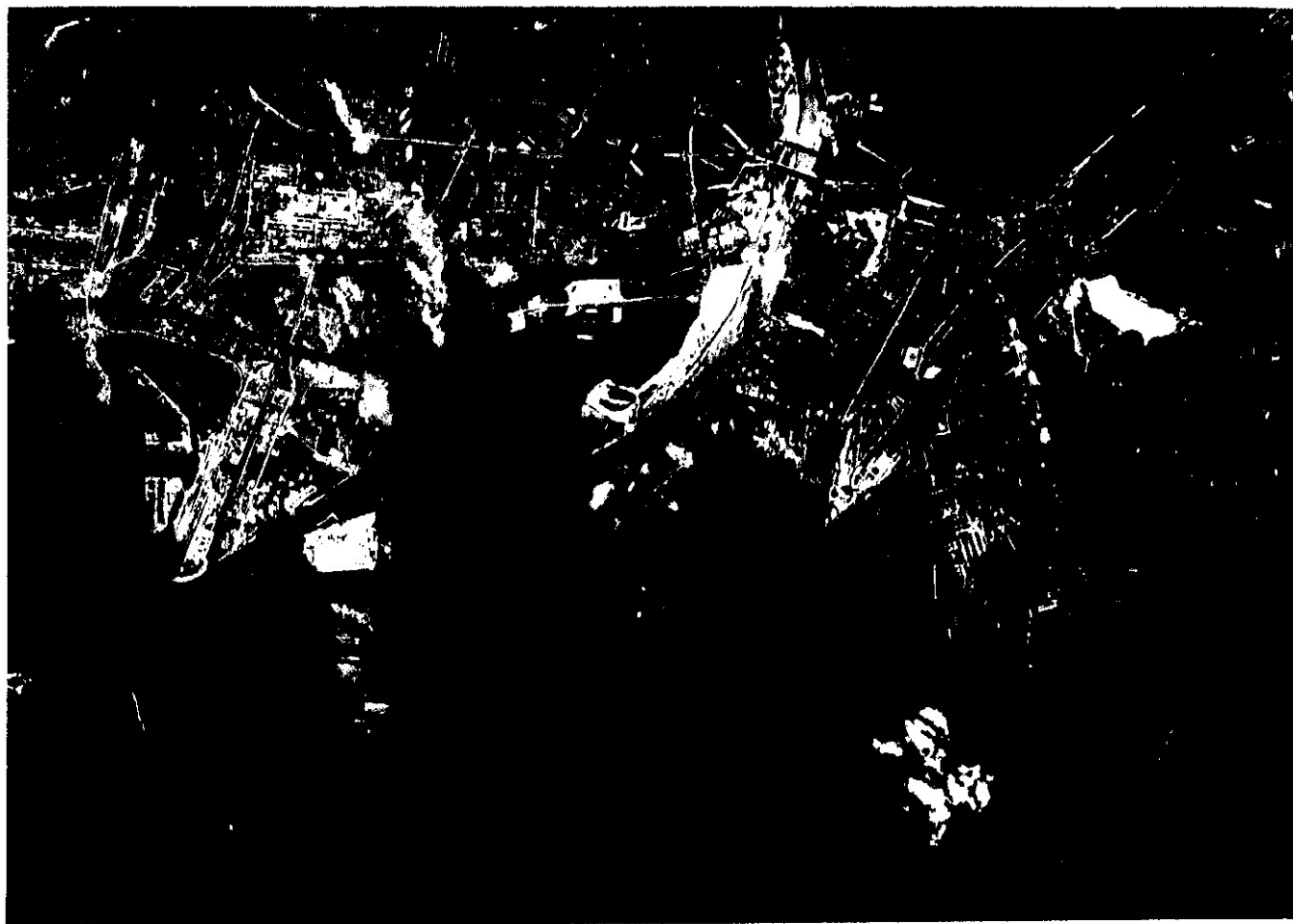
Battle damage: a German 20-mm. shell peeled the metal covering off this bomber like skin off an onion.



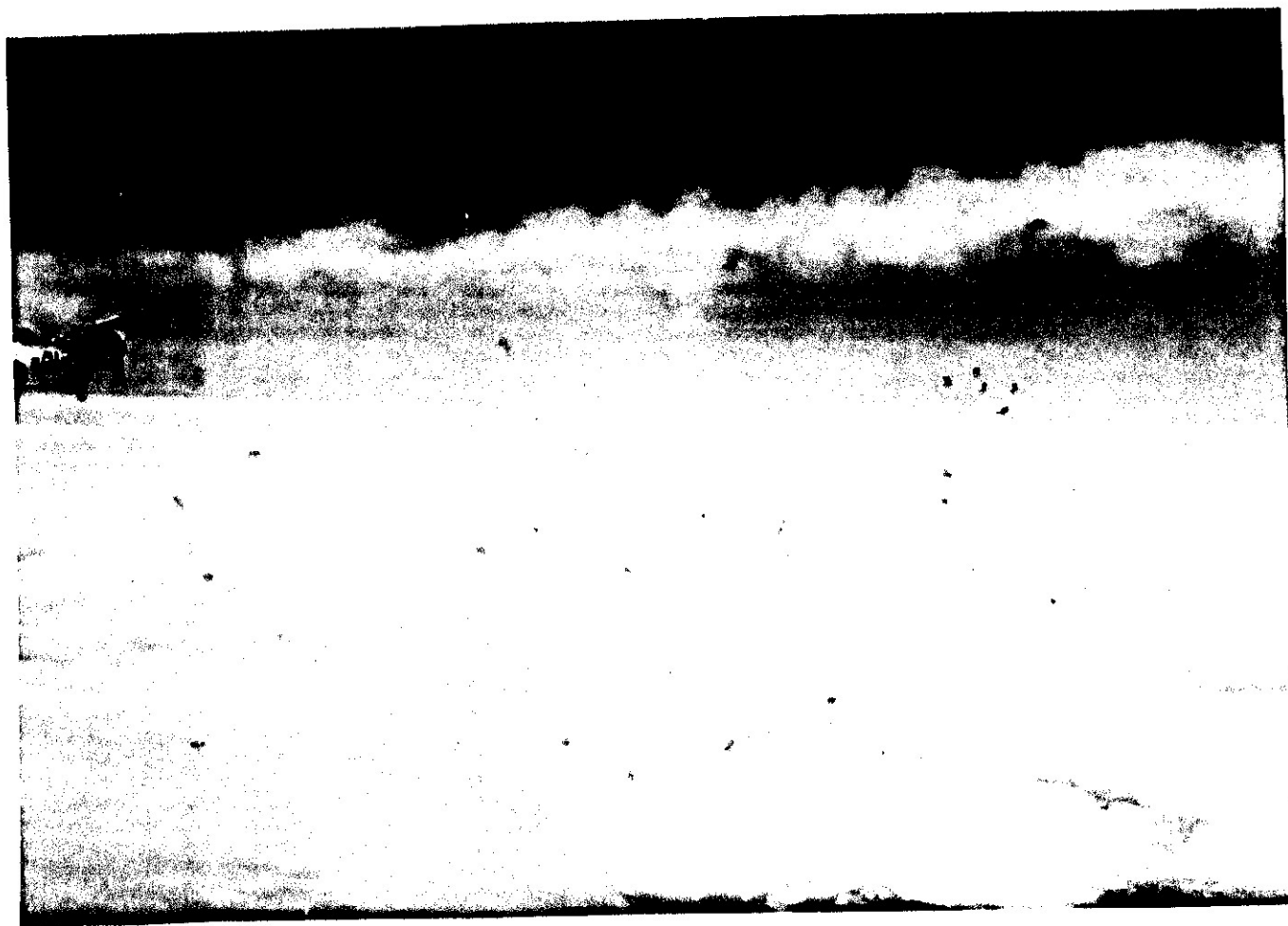
THE B-17 FLYING FORTRESS
(with 12 0.50 caliber machine guns)



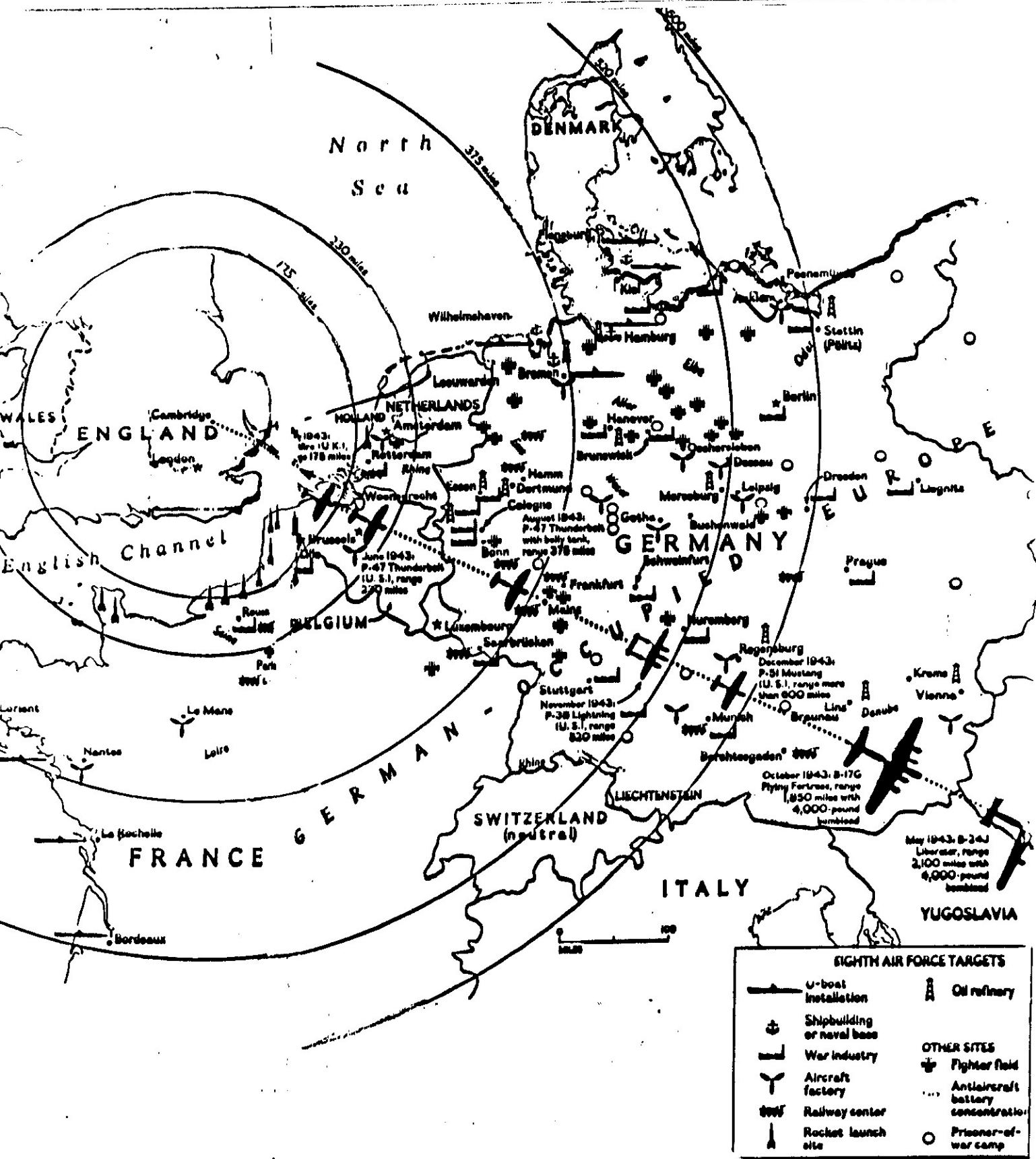
THE B-24 LIBERATOR
(over Holland on the way to Germany)



BOMBS AWAY !!!!
Over Germany



**HEAVY ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRE
OVER THE TARGET**



THE AIR WAR ARENA OVER EUROPE



THE AUTHORS

ETERNAL ENGLAND

I was among the first U.S. Army Air Force officers in the cadre of men chosen to activate the build-up of the Eighth Air Force during the formative years of 1942-43 to create a daylight bombing force in England for targets in Germany .

To perform this daunting task, we were allowed by the British to take over the prestigious Wycombe Abbey Girls Finishing School in High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, as the headquarters of the Eighth Bomber Command, which later became the Eighth Air Force under General Jimmy Doolittle of "60 Seconds Over Tokyo" fame.

The Wycombe Abbey school was a beautiful old stone building, located in a valley just outside of the bucolic village of High Wycombe. One of its claims to fame was one of its graduates, an American girl, named Anna Eleanor Roosevelt, who later became the First Lady of the United States as wife to Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

The village itself, seemed to be a part of 19th Century England and its biggest holiday was when the Lord Mayor of the town was publicly weighed, and the town was assessed his weight in gold, as their annual levy in lieu of taxes. Its location midway between London and Oxford, made it an ideal site for our headquarters.

The grounds of the Abbey were beautifully landscaped with stately old elm and pine trees, and a large lake in front of the "Castle", (as it was familiarly called,) stocked with ducks, geese and swans.

To the rear of our headquarters building, which was given the code name "Pinetree", for secret communication with our subsidiary bases, the terrain rose in a gentle hill where three dormitory buildings had been erected for the schoolgirls, and which we now expropriated as our Bachelor Officers Quarters.,

At the crest of the hill, known as Daws Hill to the locals, we were preparing to build a three story reinforced concrete underground building which would ultimately house our Operations Section (A-3) and our Intelligence Section (A-2).

While we were assembling airdromes, aircraft , parts and materiel for the flood of airplanes coming in from the States via Labrador and Greenland, we were also establishing subsidiary Bomber and Fighter Wing bases in East Anglia. These wings would ultimately become the core of our strike force against Germany.

During our frantic build-up, we were encouraged to establish friendly rapport with both the British military and citizenry, as part of a public relations policy set up by both Generals Eisenhower and Doolittle. This was of course necessary militarily since we relied so heavily on British support for our acquisitions in England. To that end, we had many Royal Air Force officers assigned to us by the RAF, to act as liaisons in procurement and acquisitions. To achieve this cooperation, I worked very closely with a typical Britisher, complete with a "ginger mustache", a rather corpulent Squadron Leader Way, a rank equivalent to our Major.

(2)

On occasion, S/L Way would invite personal friends of his to join him in our Officers Mess, since the citizenry had been deprived of nutritious food since war had started with Germany in 1939. Such things as soap, meat, eggs, fruit, liquor and nylon stockings were not to be found in the English stores in those days.

On one occasion, S/L Way brought into our mess to join us at dinner, two old friends of his from his civilian days. This couple was an aristocratic, typical "stiff upper lip" type whose names were Lambert and Kay Hanson-Abbott.

"Lam", as the husband was called, was a slim man about 5'-10" in height who had a rather saturnine facial expression and a dark weather-beaten complexion probably brought about by his service in India during the Raj. His facial complexion completely belied his obvious Viking ancestry attested to by his surname Hanson. He was an affable guy who smoked cigarettes incessantly, and became completely enamored of my ration supply of Camels from the Post Exchange.

"Kay", his wife was the epitome of the upper crust lady, which she indeed was. She was a Marchioness, a noble hereditary rank next above an Earl but below that of a Duke. Her brother, before his death, the Marquis Abbott, owned property in both Buckinghamshire and cattle ranches in Argentina.

One of the Marquis' bequests to his sister was a lovely one-story residence in the nearby village of Bledloe Ridge, called the "Rose Cottage", a beautiful stone building with a thatched roof, and scads of redolent perfume which arose from the tea rose beds which surrounded the cottage.

My fiancée, Cookie, a Womens Army Corps Lieutenant, and I came to enjoy the company afterwards at their home, and through some judicious wheeling and dealing with our Mess Officer, Major Neal Lang, were able to cadge some meats, eggs, milk and sweets to take with us on our many visits to the Rose Cottage.

On one of our rare days off, Cookie and I were bicycling along the picturesque country roads in Buckinghamshire, when we happened upon the off-base residence of General Doolittle.

Two of the Military Police, who stood on guard outside the Generals house, were familiar to us from the headquarters, and we waved a friendly hello to them as we rode past the house. Unfortunately, we failed to negotiate a curve in the road, and Cookie, on the inner side of our duet, impacted the cobblestone curbing, causing the handle-bars of her bike to swivel around sharply, causing one of the handles hit her in the stomach.

(3)

Some weeks later, Cookie, a Code and Cipher Officer, (assigned to the Intelligence Unit of Headquarters), and I had become engaged to be married at war's end, had begun to have severe abdominal pains, and after examination by the base Medical Officer, was assigned to the Churchill Hospital in Oxford, which we Americans had built in anticipation of the expected casualties that would occur in the invasion of Europe.

Cookie had developed ovarian cysts from her bicycle accident, and was successfully operated upon to relieve her symptoms by the surgeons at Churchill Hospital.

As part of her recuperation process, Kay and Lam offered to put Cookie up at the Rose Cottage, a usual procedure which we often used to billet American wounded in British homes.

Needless to say, we were delighted and I spent every spare moment I could visiting Cookie, Kay and Lam during Cookies recuperation at the lovely Rose Cottage, always, of course, accompanied by Cookies share of rations from the Officers Mess. During this period, our friendship with Kay and Lam became very deep and lasting.

Upon Cookies recovery, we returned to our duties at Pinetree, and became deeply involved in the preparations for the invasion on D-Day.

On June 6, 1944, D-Day came along and we became heavily involved in air support for the troops landing in Normandy with bombing and strafing of the German position by both B-17 Flying Fortress bombers, B-24 Liberator bombers, P-47 Thunderbolt fighters and P-51 Mustang fighters.

Later during the rout of the Germans, we used our bombers as fuel supply tankers to keep up with General Patton's meteoric tank drive toward Berlin .

When the war was ended on V-E Day in 1945, Cookie was reassigned to the Strategic Bombing Survey Staff in Washington, D.C., and I flew back to the U.S. in a B-24 bomber with all the documents of the headquarters, to be redeployed to the new Eighth Air Force location in Okinawa, anticipating a long war with Japan in the Pacific.

Foreseeing a long absence from each other, Cookie and I were married at her home on Long Island, and we both boarded a milk-train from Newark, to join my unit which was reassembling at Peterson Field in Colorado Springs, in preparation for our flight to Okinawa.

Kay and Lam kept in touch with us after our marriage, and in fact sent us ten blocks of British Colonial postage stamps as a wedding gift, since they could not send money out of England until that country recovered from the financial drain brought about by the war.

(4)

At one of our train stops in Chicago, Cookie and I decided to de-train to find a good restaurant where we could get a real meal instead of the box-lunches which the Army furnished for our trip to Colorado.

We walked all over down-town Chicago looking for a restaurant, and we found that all of them, plus all the other shops, were shuttered tight. Finally, we asked a nearby citizen why all the stores were closed, and seeing our uniforms, was surprised as he explained that we should be glad that they were closed, because V-J Day had come along---the atomic bombs had been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the Japanese had surrendered----!!!! And all of this occurred while were jolting along at 10 miles per hour by the milk train from Newark!!!

So I had the happy opportunity to spend a month or so at Colorado Springs, while I arranged to fly Cookie home in the nose of a B-17, where she was preparing to be discharged from the Army because of her pregnancy.

I was soon reassigned with my unit to the All-Weather Flying Division of the experimental station, at Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio, where Cookie later joined me after her discharge, and where our first son, Phil Jr. was born at the base hospital at the adjoining Patterson Field.

While we living in Dayton, we heard from Kay the bad news that Lam had died from throat cancer caused by his voracious cigarette smoking habit.

After two years of service at Wright Field, I became bored with the dull routine of the peace-time Air Force, especially since I became the nominated "gopher" who was sent out for pizza and coffee for all the Bird Colonels and Generals of our unit----I had become a Major acting as a messenger boy for the brass!!!

Accordingly, I requested my discharge which was granted and Cookie and I returned to my home state of New Jersey, where I rejoined my former construction company employer, who was engaged in the construction of The United Nations Headquarters complex at East 42nd St. and First Avenue in Manhattan.

We found that our contacts with Kay were becoming less frequent, but in one of her letters she told us that she had married her old school-time boyfriend, Douglas Hamilton, who had also been a boyhood friend of Lam's.

After her remarriage, Kay sold the Rose Cottage and bought a sweet apartment in Bournemouth, on the Channel Coast of England, overlooking the concrete promenade that paralleled the English Channel.

Kay explained to us in one of her letters, that her move to Bournemouth was prompted by her inability to cope with the upkeep of the Rose Cottage, and she was urged to relocate to Bournemouth by her good friend novelist Agatha Christie, who had a cottage at nearby Dartmoor on the River Dart.

(5)

Some fifteen years later, when our two youngest sons, Tony and David were in their pre-teens, we found we had enough money to take them on a Grand Tour of Europe, while the older children were in college.

We first renewed our friendships in England with Ivy Constable, who had billeted Cookie in Oxford while she was attending Code And Cipher School there . Ivy's first husband, Leslie, had since died, and she had remarried a baker from a little village North of Oxford called Bampton Castle, where she helped her husband run the local bakery. When we stayed with Ivy, we were awakened in the morning to the delicious aroma of bread being baked in the oven behind the shop---a most exotic and unforgettable aroma!!

After leaving Ivy, we made our way to Bournemouth to see our old friend Kay and her new husband "Duggy". They were most gracious to us and put us up at a beautiful resort hotel next door to their apartment..

In the evening, after the boys were put to bed, Cookie and I would return to Kay's place where we were regaled by Duggie with stories of his experiences during the war.

It developed that years ago, both Lam and Duggie were in love with Kay, and after Kay and Lam were married, Duggie, rejected and broken-hearted, took a position as supervisor of a British rubber plantation in Kuala Lumpur, in Malaysia.

While he was there, he of course became part of the British colony of expatriates in both Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, and established the first aero squadron of the Royal Flying Corps in the Malay Peninsula.

Duggy came to know the author Somerset Maugham, who was also a part of the British colony there, and he told us that Maugham had written a thinly-disguised novel entitled "The Letter", about the Britisher who was being blackmailed by his Malaysian mistress, after the Britisher had returned from England with his new English bride. Since his novel was based on that true scandalous event, his writing was considered a serious breach of etiquette, and was shunned thereafter by the expatriate colony, to such an extent that Maugham was forced to move back to England.

When war broke out in 1939, Duggy volunteered for service with the British Army, and was given command of a field artillery battery in Singapore. During the battle for Singapore with the Japanese, prior to the fall of Singapore, the incessant thunder of his cannon caused Duggy to be permanently deafened .

Duggy was ultimately captured by the Japanese when Singapore fell and was imprisoned in a stockade near Kuala Lumpur, near the rubber plantation where Duggy had spent most of his adult life.

(6)

As a result, he was able to frequently sneak out of the stockade through the bramble hedge that served as the security fence for the POW camp, and bargain for coffee, tea, sugar, food, liquor and cigarettes with his old Malaysian friends, and bring the goods back to camp to share with his fellow British prisoners. Of course, if he had been found out by the Japanese, he would have been summarily executed.

After the war, Duggy returned home to England, still unmarried, and decided to find his old friends Kay and Lam, only to find when he found Kay, that Lam had died. In a short while, still in love with Kay, they were soon married, and later moved from Bledloe Ridge to Bournemouth.

This wonderful turn of events made both Kay and Duggie finally happy in their declining years, and to be in their company at Bournemouth, was to feel a glow of pleasure to see these two fine people happy with each other after a lifetime apart.

During our last visit to Kay and Duggy, I begged Duggy to put his experiences in Malaysia on tape---we found it so engrossing, but unfortunately, soon after Duggie passed away, and Kay a few years later.

I am writing this story in memory of three wonderful people that we knew in England, who epitomized everything that makes England great, gentle people in times of barbarity; who finally found happiness in times of adversity.

Philip Del Vecchio
April, 1997

TRICKERY

We had a few tricks up our sleeves too to confound the German flak batteries. The anti-aircraft guns of the Germans were not that accurate in their direct fire against our formations of bombers. But the Wehrmacht put up a virtual blanket of shrapnel, which usually did not make direct hits, but the spent parts of the shrapnel in their downward fall, did the major damage to our planes.

To confuse the German flak batteries, the 16th Bomb Squadron of the 44th Bomb Group was especially modified to dispense radar countermeasures to the jam the German radar, who controlled to dispersal of their fighters and flak batteries.

The method chosen to confuse the Germans was the employment of strips of aluminum foil, paper thin about ½ inch wide and 6 inches long, which were thrown out of the 16th Squadron's planes early in our raid, at a point far removed from our genuine targets. The falling bits of foil, called chaff, gave an echo on the German radar, which simulated a large group of aircraft. Each piece of chaff was then believed to be an airplane, and the Germans directed their defensive means against an empty sky, filled only with pieces of aluminum foil, while the genuine bomb groups were miles away.

The Royal Air Force, too, was not above a bit of chicanery in their night bombing. Since the German targets were hard to detect at night, the RAF No. 8 Group under Air Vice Marshall Donald Bennett, created a Pathfinder Group which dropped fire bombs at nightfall over the German targets, the fires from which were then used as target markers to light the way for the RAF bombers at night.

The Abwehr, the German intelligence Agency, carried out an espionage web in England, with German residents who had lived in England since World War I !!!

Some of our repatriated troops or those who might have escaped to Spain, swore to our intelligence people, that they had seen German prostitutes in Berlin who had been in Piccadilly Circus in London two weeks before. (A slip of the lips sinks ships!!!)

SHADES OF THE RED BARON

Much has been written about the innumerable crimes that were committed by Nazi Germany in World War II.

It should be noted, however, that the bulk of these atrocities were performed by the Schutzstaffel, or S.S. Storm Troopers, a political arm of Hitler, militarized by him in his grab for power in Germany.

As much as the Storm Troopers were feared by the German citizenry, they were equally looked down upon by the regular pre-war armed forces, such as the Wehrmacht or army and the Luftwaffe or air force.

In fact, the Luftwaffe of World War II was commanded by none other than Hermann Goering, a formidable fighter pilot of the first World War of 1917. After the death of the ace of aces, Manfred (Freiherr) von Richthofen, the famed Red Baron of the first war, his red-nosed fighter squadron was taken over by Goering.

Unfortunately, Goering, a minor aristocrat, was under the thumb of the peasant Adolf Hitler, and was committed to follow his horrible war policies. Yet, Goering never forgot the chivalric precepts of his mentor, Baron von Richthofen, and attempted to instill some semblance of civilized behavior in his re-constituted red-nosed fighter squadrons of FW-190's of World War II.

They were told not to shoot at any Allied fighter pilot who had to bail-out in a parachute, nor to attack any Allied bomber that was about to abort its mission, who had signaled its intent to return back to England by opening its bomb-bay doors, and was not going to drop its bombs on Germany.

Major Peterson recalled an incident, when after a furious fighter battle between German Focke Wolfe 190's and American P-51 Mustangs, it became apparent to both sides that they had exhausted their supply of both ammunition and fuel, the German squadron commander warily approached his plane, wagged his wings, as to signal his willingness to cut off combat, and through his Plexiglas canopy, saluted Peterson, as if to say "well done", peeled off, and returned with his squadron to their German bases.

Even in the heat of battle, professional warriors respected a worthy adversary.

THE DEVIL HIS DUE

Because of the tight flight formations that the Eighth Air Force employed in the bombing raids over Germany, with both horizontal and vertical coverage of each other in their squadrons, the Luftwaffe found it exceedingly hard to penetrate the bomb squadrons. These tight formations, with their heavy armaments, completely non-plussed the Germans in their attempt to down our heavy bombers.

The B-17's got their nick-name, the Flying Fortress, because of the heavy 50 caliber machine guns that were used defensively against the Germans. They were equipped with two guns in the nose, two in the top ball turret, two on the port and two on the starboard waist positions, two in the belly turret, and two in the tail turret. This made a formidable deterrent against the German fighter attacks with the 12 guns in each B-17 coupled with the fire power of the adjacent planes, to the left and the right, and above and below, the bomber squadrons were well protected against the Luftwaffe.

This is not to say, that the Germans were completely at a loss, and we lost many bombers to mechanical failures, loss of fuel, flak fire and the occasional lucky hit by the Focke-Wulfes.

As a result, many of our bombers were forced to belly land in Occupied France, and the Germans took advantage of our mishaps. They carefully cannibalized the downed planes, and rebuilt a squadron of at least 12 B-17's, which bore the swastika of the German Reich. With this recreated squadron, the Germans were able to simulate our flight patterns and gave their fighter pilots a great insight in their tactical attacks upon our squadrons.

The Germans were highly technically efficient, and God knows what would have happened in WWII if that madman Hitler did not lead them.

RULES OF COMBAT

One of my favorite stories of aerial combat, was told by an 8th Air Force Fighter Command ace, Major Peterson.

He recounts the unwritten law between the 8th Air Force and the Luftwaffe, that any pilot of either side, who had to "hit the silk", after his aircraft was shot down, would not be shot upon in his parachute by the enemy, as a gesture of respect for the valiant fight put up by his opponent.

Since the parachutist was very vulnerable in his slowly descending parachute, it was considered ignoble by both sides to shoot a man in this situation.

Of course there was always one who is prone to break the law, whether written or not.

On one occasion, when Peterson was escorting the 8th Air Force bombers over Germany, the bombers ran into very heavy flak barrage, with chunks of heavy metal shrapnel clouding the route into the target. As a result, many of the bombers became disabled, forcing the crews to abandon the aircraft and "hit the silk."

The sky littered with slowly descending American parachuting airmen, one of the Luftwaffe fighter pilots decided to become a hero, and proceeded to shoot down as many American crewmen as he could, while they were slowly descending to Earth.

Peterson, seeing this blatant disregard of the "Gentlemen's Agreement", pursued the German FW-190 in his P-51 Mustang and deliberately avoided the most vulnerable portions of the German craft, since he wanted the German pilot to take to his parachute, as well. This is exactly what happened, and while the Luftwaffe pilot was dangling in mid-air, Peterson attacked him with all six machine guns of his P-51.

Suffice to say, the German became mince meat in minutes.

So much for breaking the law!!!!

THE BEGINNINGS

When the Eighth Air Force first began operations in England, the convoy supply ships crossing the Atlantic from the U.S. were being decimated by the German U-Boat Wolfpacks.

The U-Boats were operating out of reinforced concrete submarine pens located at Brest, Lorient, Nantes, La Rochelle and Bordeaux on the West coast of France.

As a result, these sub-pens became prime targets for the growing squadrons of B-17s and B-24's of the Eighth Air Force. But the formidable concrete structures of the sub-pens were too tough a nut to crack.

The Eighth then reverted to a skip-bomb attack, where the bomb was dropped ahead of the opening in the sub docks, skip along the water and into the openings of the pens.

These attacks were supplemented by a concerted effort by both the Royal Air Force and the Americans, to search and destroy the subs on the high seas of the Atlantic. Because the subs had to spend most of their time above water in order to conserve oxygen and fuel, they became sitting ducks for our air attacks, and ultimately forced the German Kriegsmarine to abandon their attacks on the American supply ships which England badly needed to resist the German attacks on England.

It was the first real cooperative effort of both the RAF and 8th Air Force that lasted until after D-Day.

BREAKING IN

During the early years of the build-up of the 8th Air Force and Eighth Bomber Command, the German U-Boat packs were raising hell with the convoys crossing the Atlantic with supplies for both the British and ourselves.

The U-Boat bunkers of the Kriegsmarine were located on the North coast of Occupied France at St. Nazaire, Brest, Bordeaux, Lorient, and LaPallice. The bunkers were huge concrete structures with roofs and walls of 24" reinforced concrete.

It became one of the first tasks of the 8th Bomber Command to try to cripple or impede the refueling and repair of the U-Boats at their nests.

One of the first groups to attack these targets was the "Ragged Irregulars" of the 91st Bomb Group located at Bassingbourne. This group included such later famous planes like the Memphis Belle, Shoo-shoo Baby, General Ike, and Nine-O-Nine. The 91st ultimately performed 3 years of aerial combat, including over 340 missions!!!

The main Luftwaffe Wing put up against these early bomber raids were quipped with Messerschmitt ME-109's and Focke-Wulf FW 190 fighters of the experienced Jagdgeschwader 26. This expert group of the Luftwaffe included such famous aces as Heinz Bar, Otto Kittel, Heinz-Wolfgang Schauer, Wilhelm Batz, Otto Weiss, Joachim Helfrig, And Ludwig Havighorst.

So these so-called "Milk Runs" against the sub pens were no picnics!!

Our bombers were given fighter escort by P-47C Thunderbolt fighters of the 55th Fighter Group, who later became the champion locomotive busters of the 8th Air Force.

Suffice to say, the German "Butcher Bird" FW-190D, (the liquid cooled variant of the earlier radial engine FW's) absorbed heavy punishment from the 8th Air Force fighters, who successfully stalled the U-Boat raids in the Atlantic until our air raids over the ocean upon the wolf packs took their measure.

FRIENDLY RIVALS

My squadron was stationed at a former Royal Air Force Airdrome located at Bovingdon, about midway between London and Oxford.

The squadron was created for experimental modifications on newly arrived aircraft from the United States, and was also a staging area for the newly arrived aircraft, after being modified for combat, in preparation for assignment to the various bombardment groups in East Anglia, as replacements for battle damage or losses.

These aircraft were ferried from the U.S. by the Air Transport Command, (A.T. C.), and after flying the aircraft to England would return to the U.S. for another ferry trip of new bombers from the U.S.

A related use of the airdrome was for the use of the CCRC, or Combat Crew Replacement Center, where the newly arrived crews from the U.S. were given orientation seminars about combat in the European theatre of operations.

Naturally, the combat veterans who acted as tutors for the replacement combat crews, were resentful of the ATC pilots, who were given the "milk runs" between the U.S. and England.

The combat veterans nicknamed the ferry pilots as Allergic To Combat (i.e., ATC),

And did everything they could to make their lives miserable, including stealing their English girl friends from right under their noses at the Officers Mess.

Friendly rivalry.....eh???????????

WHATEVER TURNS YOU ON, BABY

My Master Sergeant, a guy named Spadafora from Ohio, was a good-looking well- built fellow, who I gathered , had no difficulty in getting along with the local English girls.

So when he asked me, if I could let him have one of my bottles of Scotch, which each officer was rationed each month, I was only too glad to oblige him, because he was my solid right hand in the work of sorting out the battle damage at each station, and making sure that replacement aircraft were ferried down to the appropriate squadrons when needed for the next mission to Germany.

It seemed that the Scotch did the trick with Sgt. "Spad", because it became a monthly ritual that I would give him my quart of Scotch as soon as I got my ration. (besides, I couldn't stand Scotch, and Rye and Bourbon were scarce as hen's teeth)

After a while, Spad asked me if I could cadge a couple of oranges for him from the Officers Mess, since the NCO Mess did not have that fruit. This habit continued for a few weeks, when it became apparent to me that Spad was no longer interested in my Scotch ration

When I questioned him about this sudden change in supply, he explained that the English girls had not seen any fresh fruit in years, and that an orange for him was good for a roll in the hay with many of the local lovelies.

But, he disgustedly complained to me, that although the oranges had their desired aphrodisiac effect, the girls could not wait to munch on them, and proceeded to eat the fruit while he was making love to them!!!

YANKEE INGENUITY

Although the officers of the Eighth Air Force were allotted a bottle of whiskey per week from the Officer Club dues, the lowly G.I.'s had to find their booze wherever they could.

One ingenious mess cook, decided that every enlisted man was entitled to a daily ration of raisins to insure that they remained regular in their toilet habits. Accordingly, the Mess Officer requisitioned the allotment of raisins for the Enlisted Men's Mess, and it was duly delivered to the E.M.'s

It soon developed, however, that the G.I.'s never got the raisins to eat out of hand...instead the inventive men were donating their share of raisins to a clandestine still where the raisins collected were mashed and allowed to ferment in an improvised vat.

In due course, the sugar in the raisins was converted into alcohol, and decanted into bottles for consumption by the men who donated their raisins.

Hence, an English brand of Slivovitz brandy was being produced on a larger scale for all the enlisted people in the camp.

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YANKEE INGENUITY—II

The advent of the first group of Women's Army Corps (WAC) detachment at our airdrome at Bovington, was a welcome surprise to the enlisted men at the base, even though they certainly were adequately entertained by the local English girls. But the coming of the American girls was something that reminded the men of home.

This became obvious when the WAC girls were assigned to barracks a few yards away from the enlisted men's quarters.

My Tech Sergeant , an ingenious guy from New Jersey, was in charge of the fighter planes housed in our hangers, including the stripped-down P-38 Lightnings that were used by the Eighth Air Force Photo Reconnaissance Squadron under the command of Colonel Elliot Roosevelt, the President's son.

Under the pretext of routine maintenance, the sergeant would remove the gun cameras from the P-38's and from the lofty perch in a stately Elm tree that bordered the WAC quarters, he was able to take motion pictures of the girls as they were undressing or taking showers in what they thought was the private side of their quarters away from the men's quarters.

Every Saturday night, in the day-room of the Men's barracks, the developed films were shown to the G.I.'s for the sum of one English pound (\$4.80) each. My sergeant became the most popular guy on the base!!!!----(and one of the richest)

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YANKEE INGENUITY—III

The Master Sergeant of our aircraft maintenance squadron, was a heavy-set man from Illinois, who really had a brain in his head.

Realizing that the men in his squadron were prone to while away their leisure hours either gambling on the post or gamboling with the locals at the pubs in town, all of which would require money. Of course, most of the men soon ran out of dough before payday came along at the end of the month.

It was then that Sergeant Wrench would come to their rescue, and lend them money to tide them over, by merely signing an IOU with interest rates at 25%

When payday came along, and the Finance Officer paid the men their salary, Sgt. Wrench was there, with the IOU's in hand, to collect their debts, including the 25% interest.

Wrench's problem was not collecting from the men, but how to get it out of England into his American bank account, since there were severe restrictions on the amount of money the men could send out of England, in order to discourage black-market dealings. This little problem was handled by him with the help of a cooperating officer, who took his money into the Officers London bank, for transfer to the sergeant's account in the U.S.---all of this of course, for the minor 10% charge for handling, which Wrench willingly paid to the officer.

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QUICK, SERGEANT, THE WINDEX

Colonel Benjamin Scovill Kelsey, one of the heirs to the Scovill Manufacturing Co. fortune, (who made Hamilton-Beach kitchen products), was not your typical spoiled rich kid. In fact, as a test pilot for Lockheed Aviation before World War II, was the first person to test fly their P-38 twin-fuselaged fighter which performed so much yeoman duty in both Europe and the Pacific during the war.

He was a down-to-earth, not uppity commanding officer, who appreciated diligent work from his staff. As his Administrative Officer, I knew first-hand, that when he gave you a job to do, you damn well better do it!

One of our experimental planes at Bovingdon, was a green-tail painted B-24 Liberator, which we used in simulated combat conditions after we incorporated field modifications upon it.

Kelsey would often fly the B-24 on its test flights, and on a couple of occasions, he would caution its crew chief to make sure the windscreen was cleaned before its next flight, because it had become clouded by its engine exhaust fumes.

On his next test flight, Kelsey found that the windscreen, had not been cleaned, as he had ordered after its last flight. Without a word, he grabbed the fire-axe, that was located immediately to the left of the pilot's seat and which to be was used to enable quick evacuation from the plane in an emergency, and proceeded to hack away at the Plexiglass screen. Without a word, he climbed out of the plane, with the axe in hand, and said to the crew-chief, "Now Goddammit, will you clean the windscreen???"

A THERMITE BOMB

One would never think that a B-17 Flying Fortress, made entirely out of metal would ever burn up.

However, on one occasion, a battle-damaged B-17, after evacuating its belly-turret, had to make a wheels-up landing at our airdrome at Bovingdon.

The friction created when the aluminum fuselage of the plane, combined with the magnesium components of the engines, created a spark with its contact with the concrete runway, and caused the plane to become consumed with a thermite-like flame, which in minutes, resulted in a pile of ash on the tarmac....and nothing else.

Thank God, our guys were able to jump out of the plane before the hot fire consumed them as well.

LEND LEASE INDEED

In trying to be good allies and maintain a close rapport with the Royal Air Force, it was our practice not to charge the RAF when one of their fighters had to land at an American-manned airdrome when the RAF plane ran low on fuel after a mission, and could not make it back to their own base.

However, when our bombers, heavily battle damaged during a raid over Germany, had to make an emergency landing at an RAF airdrome, in due course, Squadron Leader Way, the RAF Liaison Officer at Pinetree, would present me with an invoice for the "petrol and hydraulic fluid" which they used on our plane to make it able to return to its own base.

To ^{RUB}~~be~~ salt into the wound, this was the gasoline which we had furnished to the British under Lend-Lease in the first place!!!

"There'll always Be An England, tra la tra la...."

NAPALM'S NANNY

The long range Allied plan for round the clock bombing of German targets with the RAF bombing at night, and the 8th Air Force bombing during the day, was on paper a sound scheme to cripple the German ability to make war, and hence shorten the conflict.

However, the German's soon realized that by relocating their vital war production facilities toward the interior of Germany, these plants would then become beyond the range of our B-17s and their fighter escorts.

At the time, the bomber formations were being escorted 400-500 miles into Germany, when they were forced to peel off and return to England because of expending their fuel supply. This left the bomb squadrons unescorted when they made deeper penetrations into Germany like the raids on the ball-bearing manufacturing plants at Regensburg, and aircraft plants at Peenemunde and Stralsund at the Eastern end of the Baltic Sea.

The fighter escort was performed by P-47 Thunderbolt fighters who were rugged heavy and durable fighters, but were not able to penetrate deeply into Germany with the bombers.

At about the same time, the British had entered into production with North American Aviation for their P-51 Mustang fighter to supplement their Mosquito and Spitfire squadrons. However, the P-51 was equipped with an American in-line Allison engine, which proved to be too underpowered to cope with the Luftwaffe's FW-190 and Me-109.

To counter this deficiency, the RAF began to successfully replace the Allison engines in their P-51's with the Rolls-Royce Merlin, the same engine that powered their Mosquitoes and Spitfires...a marriage that was made in heaven. Now the agile P-51 could easily hold its own with the Luftwaffe. Soon thereafter, Merlin engines were being made by Packard in the U.S., since the Rolls-Royce facilities could not keep up with the greater demand for their production.

However, the lack of range of the gas-guzzling Merlin engine required new thinking. So in desperation, a bullet-shaped fiberglass wing-tip tank was designed and installed under each wing of the Mustang, to hold an additional supply of gasoline for long-range flight into Germany. The escort problem for the American bombers was now solved!!

Little did we know then, that when the empty wing-tip tanks were jettisoned over Germany, it was found that the remaining gas in the tanks would explode and catch on fire that some genius in Ordnance would think of adding a gel into the filled wing-tip tank so that, when dropped created the first Napalm bomb used in combat!!!!

How ingenious we become in mayhem!!!

CHIN MUSIC

The B-17 Flying Fortress was given that nickname with good reason. When flown in a stepped Vee formation, its arsenal of machine guns presented an awesome array of defensive firepower.

The Fortress was equipped with .50 caliber guns in each side open waist position, and with two machine guns in rotating gun turrets located above the radio operators station immediately behind the cockpit, another turret in the belly of the aircraft just below the waist gunners, and a stinger turret in the tail of the plane.

But give the devil his due, the Luftwaffe soon discovered that if they could not successfully attack our bomber formations in the usual, side, rear, or upper modes, that the B-17 was exceedingly vulnerable to a head-on attack.

With this discovery, the Germans began to decimate our formations. To counter this new technique, we developed a nose turret, (called the "chin" turret), mounted in the Plexiglas nose of the B-17, which proved highly successful in their first runs with the aircraft so modified in England.

Without further ado, details of our jury-rigged modification in the field, were immediately relayed to the Air Materiel Command at Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio, and quickly incorporated in production aircraft coming out of the Boeing plant in Seattle.

Thus, another combat learning experience chalked up to save lives of our men.....

THE HOT SEAT

It was the usual practise for every officer at Pinetree, to take turns sitting at General Doolittle's desk in his office after hours, and to take any calls that might come in from the lower echelon bomb or fighter groups, and pass them on to the appropriate Headquarters Section Offices, or to the General himself at his off-base residence in West Wycombe.

One night, it was my turn to act as Officer of the Day and sit in Doolittles office overnight and to transmit any calls that may come in.

To make myself comfortable, I sat in his comfortable chair, put my feet up on his desk, and took out one of his cigars and lighted up.

Wouldn't you know, while was taking my ease, and reading the news in the Stars and Stripes newspaper, in walks Jimmy Doolittle himself !!

Of course, I dropped everything, and popped up and saluted him, and he graciously smiled and said, "Lieutenant, I don't think you would want to sit in that chair permanently. The guy who usually sits there has got an awesome responsibility. that you wouldn't want. But I know how boring it must be to sit here all night, so make yourself comfortable...I just want to get some documents out of my desk and I'll leave you alone again."

That incident impressed me and reminded me of the old adage that says, the bigger they are...the bigger they are!!!

HOLLYWOOD AND VINE ?????

The Headquarters of the Eighth Air Force in England during World War II, seemed to be a magnet for celebrities and movie stars, beginning with young Eleanor Roosevelt, the present Presidents wife who attended the Wycombe Abbey Girls School when she was a teenager, and which now acted as our headquarters building, after the British schoolgirls were safely relocated to a safer area in the Midlands.

As though it were planned by fate, Eleanor Roosevelt's son, Colonel Elliot Roosevelt, was the commander of the Eighth Photo Reconnaissance Squadron which was also located at Wycombe Abbey. His squadron flew P-38 Lightning, unarmed camera ships, over Germany after every one of our bombing raids, to assess the effectiveness of our daylight bombing.

Jimmy Stewart was a Lieutenant Colonel, was a real soldier and flew many combat missions and was a frequent visitor to Pinetree, our code name for HQ. 8th Air Force.

And of course, his opposite number, Clark Gable became a combat gunner in B-17's after the untimely death of his beloved wife Carole Lombard in an air crash while promoting the sale of Victory Bonds. Gable was often at our Officers Mess, and was a frequent player of the slot machines in our Officer's Club.

Captain Gene Raymond, a qualified pilot, was assigned to our Operations Section, and was often visited by his lovely wife, movie operetta star Jeanette McDonald.

Major Neal Lang was our Mess Officer, and at the time was married to the comedienne, Martha Raye, who sometimes visited her husband at Pinetree.

The biggest every-day star attraction, however, was that redoubtable little guy, Lt. General Jimmy Doolittle, who gave the American people a great morale lift by commanding a squad of B-25 Mitchell bombers on a raid over Tokyo, and who now was the Commanding General of the Eighth Air Force.

NISSEN HUT

The B-17 combat crew were invariably housed in semi-circular, corrugated steel Nissen Huts, that served as their sleeping quarters.

Because of their domed configuration, most sounds within the hut were magnified and re-echoed until they finally bounced off enough times to dissipate.

At one of our squadrons, most of the bomber crews had completed over 20 combat missions over Germany, of the 25 mandatory missions that they were required to serve, prior to their rotation back to the United States.

As you can imagine, after enduring fierce Luftwaffe fighter attacks and Wehrmacht ack-ack anti-aircraft missiles, not to mention the extreme physical fatigue that they endured by breathing pure oxygen over periods exceeding 5 to 7 hours, the men became particularly edgy as they neared the end of their combat tour.

All the combat crew officers were obligated to carry on their person during a mission, their G.I. issue Colt 45 caliber automatic pistol, in the event they were shot down over enemy territory and had to defend themselves. They were also obligated to keep their weapons in good working order before each mission, by disassembling them, oiling them and reassembling the gun.

One early morning, I happened to be visiting a friend of mine in his "digs", the typical Nissen Hut. At one of the bunks, two or three positions from where my friend and I were chatting, a combat pilot was cleaning his Colt, when apparently, he did not realize that one of the bullets had been inadvertently loaded into the chamber of the gun. As he started to dismantle the piece, the gun accidentally fired, but shot harmlessly off the curved ceiling of the hut, but resounded with a huge boom because of the acoustics.

The unexpected large sound within the hut, unnerved the pilot who was cleaning his gun, and he unabashedly started to cry and sob uncontrollably.

The tenseness of his finale toward a trip home, and the unexpected shot, apparently took its toll on the poor guy. His psychological breakdown from "battle fatigue" caused the pilot to be ultimately shipped home to a hospital for treatment, and he got to go home after doing only his 20th mission.

THE RAFFISH RAF

If anyone thinks that the British are a cold, stodgy people, ---then they don't really know the British.

To prove my point, I would like to recite a Royal Air Force song, sung to me by my good friend, Flight Lieutenant Fred Condren:

CATS ON THE ROOF TOPS

Donkey on the common is a solitary bloke
Very seldom dips his moke
But when he does
He lets it soak
As he revels in the joys of copulation

(refrain)

Cats on the roof tops,
Cats on the tiles.
Cats with their arse-holes wreathed in smiles
As they revel in the joys of copulation!

The old rhinoceros so it seems,
Very seldom has wet dreams
But when he does
He comes in streams
As he revels in the joys of copulation

Cats on the roof tops
Cats on the tiles
Cats with their arse-holes wreathed in smiles
As they revel in the joys of copulation

(And so on into the night.....)

BUCK ROGERS AND KILLER KANE

The German war machine relied very heavily on the petroleum products they got from the oil-fields at Ploesti, in occupied Roumania.

Ploesti was located about 25 miles North of the capital city of Bucharest in the Southeast section of Roumania, near the Black Sea.

It was decided by the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF), under General Eisenhower, that a strategic bombing strike at Ploesti by the Eight Air Force Bomber Command that could cripple the refineries there, would also hobble the Wehrmacht's activities in Europe, when we ultimately would land an invasion fleet from England.

The planned raid on Ploesti, however, would be very risky, since it would entail a flight from North Africa, North over the Mediterranean Sea, then threading the needle Northward over the Adriatic Sea between occupied Italy on the West and German controlled Yugoslavia on the East, before turning Eastward over Yugoslavia and most of Roumania before we could reach the oil-fields at Ploesti. And to boot, the flight had to be made at low level, to avoid interception by the Luftwaffe.

Nevertheless, it was agreed that the 44th Bombardment Group, equipped with B-24 Consolidated Liberators, assigned to the 2nd Bomb Wing of the Eighth Air Force Bomber Command, would be temporarily detached to a temporary air base constructed near Benghazi in Libya, to train for this mission.

The 44th Bomb Group was put under the command of Col. John R. Kane, affectionately nick-named Killer Kane by his men after the anti-hero of the comic strip character, Buck Rogers (of the 21st Century.)

To simulate the appearance of the Ploesti oil-fields, a scale model of the entire complex was built in the Libyan desert, to simulate the appearance of the actual target as it would appear from a low-level flight of 100 feet or less when the actual raid was accomplished. All the bomber crews were trained to fly over this desert model, in order to prepare them to drop their bombs when they sighted the target on the raid.

The 44th Group was instructed to fly up the Adriatic at low-level and proceed Eastward over land to a point North of Bucharest, in order to arrive at the refinery target site. It was explained that the anti-aircraft batteries at Bucharest and the Luftwaffe fighter squadrons there were manned by experienced German personnel, whereas the area in the vicinity of Ploesti was defended by the Roumanian military, who were known to be luke-warm about the German occupation, and who might not be as experienced as the German personnel.

On August 1, 1943, the 44th Group, under Killer Kane, left Libya enroute to Roumania. Unfortunately, through a navigational error, the group turned Eastward prematurely over land, and ran into anti-aircraft fire and fighter interception from the Germans stationed at Bucharest, South of the planned target at Ploesti.

About five miles from Ploesti, innocent farmhouses erupted in anti-aircraft fire and the air became filled with German Junker 88's and Messerschmitt M-110's, who the 44th Group had to defend against with low ammunition reserves depleted overland enroute to the target.

Over the target, the 44th dropped its bombs from a low altitude, but were burned by the flames arising from the burning refinery which rose upward into the planes through their open bomb-bay doors.

After eluding the attacking Luftwaffe forces by jettisoning all the loose equipment in their aircraft, the group eventually flew South from Roumania, over Bulgaria and Turkey to land at a friendly base in Cyprus.

The losses over Ploesti were tremendous, with over 80 B-24's lost over the target.

The raid was temporarily effective, and was quickly rebuilt by the German's with slave labor, and the refineries were finally put out of commission, after the Allies occupied Italy, and made a series of concentrated raids upon the oil-fields at Ploesti.

This, however, did not diminish the earlier heroics of Killer Kane and his men of the 44th Bomb Group.

LEMON ICE

The 8th Air Force combat crews were never without female company in England. In fact, the British armed forces used to deride the competition we gave them, as being "OVERPAID, OVERSEXED AND OVER HERE"

Regardless of this friendly rivalry, the GI's usually had no difficulty in setting up liaisons with the local girls in the countryside surrounding their airdromes.

It was the girl's practice, to wait on the tarmac of the bomber groups, to insure that their boy friends had survived the mission and greet them as they crawled out of their B-17s

On the long missions over Germany, when the crew members had to relieve their bladders, they employed a relief tube, which was a funnel-mouthed line, leading to the exterior of the fuselage.

Of course, returning back to England at altitudes of 20,000 feet, sometimes this effluent would freeze solid in a horizontal, yellow stream, which did not always melt before landing in England.

Then, when the English lassies would run up to the landed aircraft to greet their paramours, they would marvel at the "YELLOW ICICLES" that the plane had formed over Germany.

BLOOD, SWEAT, SWEAT, SWEAT AND TEARS

During the early phase of our creation of a formidable 8th Air Force in England, it was deemed important by the British that the Prime Minister, the Honorable Winston Churchill, come to visit our Headquarters in High Wycombe, eat dinner at the Officer's Mess, and shake hands with all the officers in the Officers Club Lounge after dinner.

We had a very pleasant dinner with the Prime Minister, where he regaled us with his amazing wit, interspersed with a gung-ho speech for an ultimate victory over "the Boche", as he called the Germans.

After dinner, we had a cup of tea and formed a line to shake Winnie's hand.

When I got up to the Prime Minister, I came to realize where he got the line for his praise for the "blood, sweat and tears" speech to the British people.....his hand, instead of being the strong, firm handshake that you would expect from that resolute hero...was a weak, meaty and SWEATY grip.

Although I was disappointed in his handshake, I never once thereafter failed to admire this GIANT, whenever he spoke to keep our spirits up over the British Broadcasting Company.

ACEY DUECEY

The Officer's Club at Pinetree, had a few gaming tables and slot machines, where the off-duty personnel could while away their off-duty hours.

The gaming room, in addition to warding off boredom, furnished enough profit to enable the Officers Mess to be self-sufficient, and allow the mess to be used by the officers without any monthly charge.

At one of the tables, a three-dice game was introduced by some of the liaison Royal Air Force Officers, where you would bet that after you had established a point by matching two of the dice, you could make your point in subsequent rolls before you rolled a triple and lost...when the three dice came up with the same number of pips.

The betters at the table, could make their own side bets, with the other participants at the table, by either betting with or against the shooter.

My two room-mates, Lts. Jerry Pope and Earl Gordon, decided this was an easy game to beat if we all engaged in the game as a syndicate and working together rather than participating against each other.

Consequently, we each pooled 500 British Pounds, for a total of 1500 Pounds..(approximately \$7500), and I was chosen to be the shooter, while Pope and Gordon would do the table betting.

On the first night, we were remarkably lucky, and had won over \$12000. The second night, we won another \$10,000 and became the talk of the Officer's Club.

Then, Lt. Coates took me aside at lunch and told me that she had heard that the other officers who usually played at the Acey-Deucey table, had set up a rival syndicate, where they were all going to bet in concert to beat our combine.

Of course, flush with victory and super-confident that we could not lose, we chose to carry on with our syndicate on the third night.

You guessed it, we lost the \$22000...plus another \$15000, wiping out our combine completely.

When I had to wire back to the U.S.A., for some money to pay off my gambling losses, I did not have enough in my home bank account to meet my debt. But, Cookie Coates came to my rescue, with another \$1500.....which I never repaid her. (After all, it wasn't right for a wife to demand repayment from her future husband...was it ???)

THE BELL

On of the stops on the railroad line between Oxford and London, was a pleasant, picture-card English town called Gerard's Cross. And one of its enticing attributes was a thatched-roof pub called "THE BELL".

The Bell was also an inn, with a restaurant and a few rooms that were let out to a selected number of guests.

The bar at The Bell served up a specialty of the house called a "PIMM'S CUP." This drink has a fruit-like base, which was poured into a large stein-like glass halfway, and then filled to the brim with the liquor of your choice---either whiskey, gin or brandy.

It was "da riguer" however, that after you had drunk half of the lethal mixture, you must submit your half-emptied glass to the bartender, who would then refill it with the liquor of your choice.

Then, over time, you would repeat this ritual, until you were found asleep at the bar, (or the floor)--and put to bed in one of the empty hotel rooms of the inn. (Who said the English were a stodgy bunch???)

On one occasion, Lt. Coates and I were eating lunch at the Bell's restaurant, when to our surprise, the head-waiter seated two familiar persons at the table next to us....Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh.

We chatted with them very amiably...they were very down-to-earth..and reminded us that they frequented The Bell because it was only a short drive from the Pinewood movie studios, where they were currently making a picture.

PIN A ROSE ON ME!!!

Soon after our reconnaissance aircraft had detected the tell-tale tracks made by the Luftwaffe to launch their V-1 "buzz-Bombs" over London from their base near Peenemunde in Pomerania, Colonel Hough and I were given the task of obtaining clearer photographs made from low-level in order to give our A-2 Intelligence people more detailed information on the German's newest terror weapon.

To accomplish this mission, we outfitted a P-38 Lockheed Lightning with a plexiglass nose, by removing all its nose armament. The P-38 was a very fast aircraft even when armed, however, without the dead weight of the machine guns, cannon and ammunition, it would be impossible to catch by any conventional German fighter plane.

Colonel Hough, who was one of the first test pilots at the Lockheed plant, to fly the Lightning, was the obvious choice to pilot this stripped-down P-38, which we had Christened the "Droop Snoot".

I was assigned to ride in the plexiglass nose, on my belly, and photograph the German installation from a very low altitude, when we were directly over the Luftwaffe base.

The mission was made remarkably without incident, probably because of our single-aircraft flight, our low-level "attack", our surprise approach and of course, our speedy retreat.

In fact we were so pleased by our easy success, that Cass Hough decided to land, in German territory, on a grassy meadow upon which Hough detected a suspicious, unoccupied building.

Sure enough, after landing, we found that the building was a warehouse, of sorts, for the Wehrmacht. We decided that the lock on the door was easily breached, and entered to find cases of new handguns, still wrapped in a type of Cosmoline, that were apparently laid away for emergency use by the Germans.

Suffice to say, we took some representative "samples" for our personal collections, including brand-new Lugers, Belgian P-38 Colt imitations, Italian Barrettas, German Walthers, and other hand guns from the Axis inventories.

After our mission to Germany, we landed at Orly, outside Paris, to refuel, when Hough picked up a radiogram, advising him that I had been promoted to Major's rank. He obviously knew that my promotion was forthcoming, because he had the gold oak-leaves in his pouch, removed my Captain's bars, and pinned the Major leaves on my tunic.

Of course, this did not sit too well with Cookie Coates back in England, because she too knew, from General Doolittle's secretary, that my promotion was coming, and wanted to have the opportunity to pin my leaves on me herself.

This stealing of her thunder, was the beginning of a long-time enmity between Lt. Coates and Colonel Hough.....

WATER WINGS

The grounds of Wycombe Abbey, which we had taken over as the Headquarters of the Eighth Air Force, contained many of the amenities left over from the days when the Abbey was an exclusive finishing school for girls.

One of the facilities was an in-ground swimming pool, which was frequently used by the officers on their days off. Amongst these was the squadron of Womens Army Corps, or WACs as they were called.

The commanding officer of the WAC squadron was a good-looking young lady, Captain Dottie Schwartz.

One day, while Lt. Coates and I were lolling at the poolside, Dottie Schwartz and her boyfriend, a Technical Representative of the Sperry Gyroscope Co., joined us at the pool, and decided to take a dip.

After frolicking in the water for a while, I noticed a couple of strange objects floating in the water, and I called it to Cookie Coates' attention.

She quickly ordered me to hush up...and advised me that they were probably rubber falsies that had floated away from Dottie Schwartz' bathing suit during her frolic with her friend.

Of course, I kept quiet, because after all, Dottie outranked me!!!

BOMBS AWAY -II

Our living quarters at Bovington consisted of a long, low one story Bachelor Officers Quarters, or BOQ, with cells separated by partitions, and a long corridor running down the spine of the building. Two officers shared each room.

At one end of the building was located the shower and toilet facilities, and at the other end, a two-room suite which was reserved for the Commanding Officer, when he did not use his off-base private house. One room of the suite was used as a sitting room, and the other as a bedroom.

Since there was no such thing as central heating at the base, each room was equipped with a pot-bellied Franklin stove, fired by Cannel coal furnished to us by the British. Each stove was then vented through a pipe stack projecting above the roof.

Of course, we junior officers objected to the Colonels quarters at the BOQ, since he had his own private house off base, and we could have used the two-room suite as our recreation room.

One night, the Colonel was entertaining a beautiful blonde British girl in his suite after dinner mess, and we fully expected that they would soon leave, and he would drive her back to London.

Consequently, we left our doors to our rooms slightly ajar so that we could see when the two had left, and allow us to run back and forth down the corridor to the toilet facilities with little or no clothes on, without fear of embarrassment from the young English girl.

At about 2:00 A.M., the duet had not yet left the BOQ, and it became apparent that the young lady was going to spend the night with the Colonel.

This was too much....we were not allowed to have female visitors in our quarters and here was this joker entertaining a girl overnight. For guys who lived like monks until our next leave maybe two or three weeks away, this was the supreme insult!!!

So Lt. Pawlowski and I climbed into our jeep, made our way to the maintenance hangar across the field, and opened the emergency chest of a B-24 to obtain a Very flare from the kit.

This flare, when ignited, temporarily bursts into flame, and emits a shower of brightly lighted sparks to attract the attention of rescue planes.

We then returned to the BOQ, and climbed onto the roof of the building from the jeep parked alongside, and made our way towards the end of the building where the Colonels quarters were located.

After locating the chimney flue to his Franklin stove, we ignited the flare, and dropped it down to his bedroom. We, in the meantime, jumped down from the roof, and quickly made our way back to our rooms.

Soon after, we heard this God-awful bang from the exploding flare, and out ran the Colonel and his paramour into the corridor, both clad in their night clothes. The clothes and they were all splattered with coal dust and ashes, created when the door of the Franklin stove blew open at the blast of the flare.

The Colonel furiously demanded to know who the culprits were who did that dastardly deed, but of course, none of the junior officers had any knowledge of this nefarious act.

After threatening all of us with a Court Martial, he and his girl returned to their room, cleaned up and dressed, and drove back to London.

Thus, justice was done.....

"COFFEELADY"

Lt. Cookie Coates and I were both avid fans of the English theater, and would go up to London to see each play or musical as it appeared on the English stage.

After the theater, we often went to a quaint little restaurant on Swallow Street, called Veeraswamy's Indian Restaurant.

The restaurant was guarded at its entrance by an enormous Sikh, complete with turban and sword, who after a while got to know us and welcome us.

The restaurant was located on the second floor, and although food was in short supply for restaurants, Veeraswamy's somehow always managed to set a great meal before us. The specialty of the house was a prawn, which may be described as a big shrimp or a little lobster, which they fished for in the English Channel daily.

Our waiter was little Hindu, who wore his hair in a top-knot, artfully combed and concealed within a tin can, which made him look like that old comic strip character "Happy Hooligan."

He was a great waiter, constantly hovering about our table to make sure that all our wants were met, and with the coffee urn in his hand, kept asking Cookie Coates if she wanted more coffee, with a sing-song question which sounded like "kaaaafffeeelayyyydeee?" Obviously, he became dubbed by us as "Coffeelady".

On one visit to the restaurant, he came out to greet us with his top-knot exposed without the usual comb and tin-can, and Cookie Coates asked him where his comb and can was that night.

He then became highly agitated and flustered, and ran back into the kitchen, from which he emerged a few minutes later with his usual headwear ornaments in place.

We never did find out the significance of these items, but always felt it had some sort of religious importance to our little friend, Mr. Coffeelady.

HOW MANY POLES DOES IT TAKE....????

During the Winter of 1994, the Germans started an assault upon England with their new "Vengeance" weapon, the V-1 unmanned, rocket propelled aircraft bomb-missile.

The V-1 was exceedingly fast, and our best defense was to try to shoot them down with anti-aircraft guns, as they crossed the English Channel. Their superior speed made it impossible to catch with the fighter aircraft of the U.S. Air Force and the Royal Air Force.

Because of its unpredictability, the V-1 became an indiscriminate terror weapon against the citizenry of London and its environs.

However, the RAF had outfitted a squadron of Spitfire fighter aircraft for a group of exiled Polish Air Force pilots, and who were doing heroic work in intercepting the traditional German aircraft who were attacking London.

The Free Poles in patrolling the Channel devised a scheme to compensate for their inferior Spitfire speed when chasing the V-1's that were crossing the Channel. They realized from examination of aborted and downed V-1's, that these little rocket ships were controlled in their flight by a gyroscopic mechanism which stabilized their path until its fuel was exhausted, at which time, the "buzz-bomb" would drop to the ground with its lethal bomb load in its nose.

The Poles figured out, that if they would gain sufficient altitude on an approaching buzz-bomb, that they could dive down on the missile and gain enough speed with the dive, to overtake the speedy unmanned craft.

Once the Polish fliers pulled up to the V-1, they would position their wing so that it was under the wing of the buzz-bomb, and then abruptly flip their other wing down, so that their first wing would rise upward to upset the buzz-bomb's gyroscope, and cause it to fall harmlessly into the Channel.

So much for Polish jokes.....

NAPOLEON BRANDY

On my days off, when I did not have enough time to tour the countryside by bike, I often took long walks alone toward the lovely English village of West Wycombe.

One day, as I was leaving our headquarters, there was an English girl, dressed in the traditional riding outfit, astride a beautiful horse, at the gate to our compound, talking idly to the M.P. on duty.

Being a horse lover myself, I stopped to stroke the horse's nose, and thus opened the door to a conversation with the English girl.

She dismounted when I told her I was going to walk toward West Wycombe, and she decided to walk along with me, since she lived in that town as well.

It developed that her mother was killed in the Big Blitz in London in 1942, and her father and she relocated from the city to their country home in West Wycombe.

Her father was a successful stock broker in London, but decided that life in the country would be safer than living in London. He was very crestfallen, she said, that he was not accepted by the British armed forces, because of his age. He wanted very much to join the fray because he was Jewish and wanted to rid Europe of Hitler's domination.

Upon visiting with the girl's father at their home, and chatting about the war and the States, he graciously invited me to join them for dinner the next Sunday evening,....which I promptly accepted.

That Sunday, I inveigled a tin of beef from the Mess Sergeant, and rode to West Wycombe to join my new-found friends in West Wycombe with the meat for dinner.

We had a delightful meal, full of pleasant exchanges about life in pre-War London and New York. After dinner, we repaired to their sitting room, where a large fire was raging in the fireplace to rid the room of it's Winter chill. In fact, the elderly gentlemen was so pleased to have some company, that he brought out a treasure he had been saving for years....a bottle of 1809 Napoleon Brandy!!!

He handed out three brandy snifters, wiped off the dust and wax from the bottle, and poured drinks for the three of us. As he raised his glass to his nose and sniffed the aroma, he proposed a toast to our continued friendship, and when he sipped the brandy, his face contorted and he spat out his mouthful.....his treasured brandy had gone bad and tasted like kerosene!!!

We felt awful for him , but it did not detract from the lovely evening we spent together.

WHERE IS JERRY TODAY?

Captain Jerry Pope was the lead bombardier of the 487th Bomb Squadron, who would lead his squadron through his Norden bomb sight to the target in Germany, and upon his signal, would allow the rest of his squadron to drop their bomb loads.

On one particular mission, Jerry had a bad strep throat, and had to stand down that day, to allow a substitute lead bombardier to take his place.

As luck would have it, his usual B-17 was shot down by the Germans that day, but the crew was able to crash land in Germany without any major injuries.

Upon being interned by the Luftwaffe, the crew was interrogated one-by-one, by their intelligence people, who of course merely replied with their name, rank and serial number.

As part of the German interrogation, the Luftwaffe officer, in order to entice the American crew members to reply, began to name the commanding officer of their squadron, when they left the States, where they were stationed in England, the number of aircraft in their squadron, and the names of all the regular crew members in Jerry Pope's plane.

In fact, after a prisoner exchange, the replacement lead bombardier told our Intelligence people that the last question asked of him was, "Where is Jerry Pope today?"

The German espionage web in war-time England was amazing. Many repatriated American prisoners swore that they recognized women in the Stalags, whom they had seen as street-walkers in Piccadilly Circus, a few weeks before they were shot down.

BATTLE ZONE

Lt. Evelyn Rowe and Lt. Cookie Coats were WAC officers assigned to the Code and Cipher Section, of the A-2 Intelligence Section of the Eighth Air Force

On their days off, they would repair to London, to shop and dine, as would many other WAC officers. In fact, the women officers had pooled together to rent an overnight apartment in one of the dead-end mews of the city, where they could stay if they missed their last train back to High Wycombe.

On one of these excursions into the city, Lts. Rowe and Coats were window shopping on the sidewalk outside of Selfridges Department Store, when one of the ubiquitous buzz-bombs, known as the V-1, was sent over by the Germans.

These pilotless aircraft were loaded with an explosive charge in their nose, were rocket propelled, and gyroscopically controlled. Whenever one of the buzz bombs ran out of fuel, the stabilizing gyroscope would kick out, and the buzz bomb would begin to fall erratically with its explosive warhead in its nose. Their fall was totally unpredictable, sometimes falling into a shallow glide, other times into a steep vertical fall and yet other times into a complete 180 degree U-turn.

On this fateful day, the buzz bomb involved fell perilously close to Selfridges, so much so that the glass show window that the female WAC officers were looking at, completely shattered.

As this happened, a shard of splintered glass flew at Lt. Evy Rowe, hit her in the leg, and caused a minor gash to bleed profusely. The cut was soon stanchied, and when she returned to headquarters, she reported the incident to the post medical officers.

Some time later, this WAC Code and Cipher Officer, was awarded the PURPLE HEART MEDAL, since she had been wounded and caused to shed blood resulting from enemy action !!!!!

SUPPLY---A THRILL

Lt. Earl Gordon, from Columbus, Ohio, was a Supply Officer, assigned to the A-4 Section, Maintenance and Supply department of the Eighth Air Force.

Earl was a personable young guy, but had a type of Casper Milquetoast appearance about him. He wore steel-rimmed glasses, and walked with kind of a mincing gait.

It soon became apparent, that Gordon, an officer in the United States Air Force, HAD NEVER FLOWN IN AN AIRPLANE IN HIS LIFE.

Of course, this would not do, so some of his fellow officers, in the A-3 Operations Section of the Pinetree headquarters, arranged for him to take a milk-run flight in a B-17 bomber to Brussels, Belgium. Belgium, at this juncture, was partially liberated, but other portions of coastal France were not.

Notably, Dunkerke, on the Channel Coast, was an enclave still held by the Germans.

On the morning of the flight, Gordon was driven by courier, to Bovington, which housed the headquarters flight. He was fitted with a heated flight suit, parachute, and oxygen mask, and was told to take his place at the right waist gunners position for his flight to Brussels.

Unfortunately, the ship's navigator, made a miscalculation in his flight route, and instead of making a landfall on the Belgian coast, flew directly over occupied Dunkirke.

Immediately, the German anti-aircraft crews in Dunkirke, started shooting at the errant B-17, which soon corrected their error and flew away to safety.

Not before, however, Earl Gordon got hit by a piece of falling shrapnel, which penetrated the parachute strap. He later discovered it had given him a black and blue lesion on his chest.

Earl Gordon never thereafter noised about his lack of flying time, but steadfastly refused to fly again while he was in England.

COCKTAILS, ANYONE ????

The German Luftwaffe, contrary to public opinion, were essentially not Nazis, but were proud of their Prussian heritage as gentlemanly warriors, even though they were out to shoot you down in combat.

One of the unspoken and unwritten agreements between the Luftwaffe flyers and those of the Allies, was to the effect that if one of the England-based bombers, enroute to raid Germany, encountered mechanical trouble, and had to abort their mission, they were to open their bomb-bay doors, and waggle their wings, to indicate to the Luftwaffe Focke-Wolfe attacking fighters, that they were disabled and were going to return to England without unloading their bombs upon Germany.

The German fighters, would then approach the B-17 formation, to verify that the disabled aircraft was about to abort, and the bombers again would waggle their wings as confirmation, and the Luftwaffe FW-190's would withdraw without firing upon it.

However, there was always a wise guy in the crowd. It was the policy for bomber pilots to paint swastikas on the nose of their aircraft, to indicate the number of German fighters that were downed by its crew. After the requisite 25 combat missions were completed, the bomber and its crew were allowed to return to the States, invariably used as morale builders to the civilians back home.

One of the bomb squadrons, the 318th, had as its leader, a Captain Martini from San Francisco, who of course, had a Cocktail Glass Logo painted upon his ship's nose, immediately above a bunch of swastikas.

Since he and his crew were slated to finish their tour of overseas duty with a couple more missions, Martini hit upon the idea of faking to abort his aircraft by opening his bomb bay doors and waggling his wings. When the Luftwaffe fighters flew in closely to verify the proposed abortion, he ordered his crew to fire upon them, which resulted in more painted swastikas on his aircraft, to which he could point with pride upon his return to the States.

He did not, however, count upon the fact that this latest tactic was played upon a squadron of Focke-Wolfe fighters, whose aircraft were painted a brilliant scarlet color, and who were the direct descendants of the squadron of the Red Baron, Rittmeister

und Freiherr Manfred von Richtofen, of World War I fame, and which was now under the personal command, in name at least, of Reichsmarshal Hermann Goering, a companion of Richtofen in the first World War.

On the next mission over Germany, Martini's squadron was singled out by the Red Baron's squadron, and in an unusual display of psychological warfare, decimated every aircraft of Martini's squadron,-----EXCEPT FOR HIS AIRCRAFT!!!!

Martini went home early after that mission, as a Section 8, psychologically unfit for combat by the guilt over his unthinking act, which caused the death of over 100 men.

MISTRESS---PLEASE!!!!

The headquarters of the fledgling Eight Air Force was located in Wycombe Abbey, at High Wycombe, in Buckinghamshire, a former exclusive finishing school for well-to-do British and American girls, before it was taken over by the Americans.

The administrative offices of the former school, were taken over by the staff of the Commanding General of the 8th Air Force, General Jimmy Doolittle.

The former sleeping quarters for the school girls, were taken over by the Air Force as Bachelor Officers Quarters. These BOQ's had been sectioned off into small cells for the girls, with dividing partitions between each girl's bed space.

One night, soon after our occupancy of Wycombe Abbey, I was assigned to act as Officer-of the Day, who had to sit in the Commanding General's office to receive any messages that might come in from any of the lower echelon bomber wings, for relay to the General at his quarters.

Soon after mess that night, I began to get repeated and recurring rings from the BOQ's on the former head-mistresses buzzer, now located on the General's desk.

To see what the commotion was in the BOQ's that required any attention by the General, I sent the commander of the Military Police up to the barracks area to investigate the problem.

The MP officer soon returned to the General's office with a sly grin on his face. He explained that on the dividing partition between the former girl's cells, was a distress buzzer that was labeled, "FOR MISTRESS, PLEASE RING BUZZER."

THE RED LION

In my early days in England, I became friendly with a fellow officer in our A-4 Section, Captain Bill Hayden.

I was a raw Second Lieutenant, just arrived from the States, and here was Captain William Steinmetz Hayden, a handsome, suave, and debonair man in his mid-thirties, who had, before the war, made numerous trips to Europe to purchase goods for his employers, Macy's Department Store in New York City.

Bill was an adopted son of the electrical genius from Schenectady, Steinmetz, and hence his middle name. He was a very honorable guy, and wouldn't deign to try to set up a friendship with any English girl, because of his great love for his wife Billy, back in Manhattan.

So to while away our time on our free days from headquarters duties, Bill and I would make long, exploratory trips through the English countryside on our bikes.

On one of these trips, we happened by a very, picturesque pub, called "The Red Lions Inn", at Bledloe Ridge. It was situated on a hill, surrounded on all sides by heavily cultivated farm land. It looked charming, so we decided to stop there for a rest, and some food and drink before we travelled on.

The inn consisted of a centrally located bar area, which on its left, faced a public room, where the local people would repair for their pints of "mild and bitters", or "arf- and arf", as they called it. To the right of the bar was another large room, for the gentle-folk of the area and for the patrons of the restaurant, or guests of the hotel rooms on the second floor.

The patroness of the inn, was a striking women named Tim Marr, a Welsh-woman, who although not beautiful, was extremely handsome with prematurely white hair and a gorgeous figure. She had as her handyman, a local farmer named Bo, who would help her with the heavy chores about the place, and who obviously adored her.

One of Tim's permanent hotel guests, was a retired British Naval Officer, Captain Eliot, who had spent his entire career with the Raj in India. There he learned to drink Pink Gin, which was straight gin with a slight splash of bitters, with no ice. And this man stood at the bar for 12 hours or more a day, downing his Pink Gins, and never appear to be the slightest inebriated.

Next door to the inn, was a small cottage inhabited by the most beautiful red-headed woman I had ever seen up to that point in my life. She had a gorgeous peaches-and-cream complexion, and a shape that would not quit. And, of course, her name was...Ginger. She had a little three-year old daughter, who one day, would become a mirror image of her mother. Ginger's husband was a Captain in the British Eighth Army, who at that time was in a furious campaign with that "Desert Fox", Erwin Rommel and his Afrika Korps.

Ginger and Tim were apparently good friends, because Ginger was often at the restaurant with her daughter, sharing dinner with Tim Marr.

Bill and I were enchanted by the place and we made it a part of our itinerary whenever we took our weekly bike rides. We then became, what we perceived, as good friends with both Tim, Ginger, Bo, and Captain Eliot, the former naval person.

On one of our trips, Bill Hayden was engaged in conversation with Captain Eliot, and I with Bo, who proceeded to tell me not to get too interested in Tim Marr, because she was not available for any liaison with young men, such as me. I took this to mean that Bo had staked out Tim as his personal prize, and to keep my hands off.

However, on this night, Tim was in her bedroom upstairs with a bad cold, and out of sheer stubbornness, I thought I would give Bo his come-up-ance, by going upstairs to Tim's room, and try to perk her up from her cold. I told Bo what I was going to do, and he merely shook his head at me, as I climbed the stair to Tim's room.

I knocked on her door, and getting no reply, thought she might be asleep, so I quietly opened the door a crack to see if she was alright, and I saw that she was.....she was in bed with Ginger.

Bo was right, Tim was not interested in any young men.

RED CROSS AID

At our airdrome in Bovington, the Officer's Mess allowed the young women from the American Red Cross to join us in our meals, in return for their courtesies to our men in the field.

However, our Commanding Officer, a rather straight-laced Brahmin from Virginia, did not appreciate this courtesy because some of the girls returned this favor by accompanying the guys to their quarters after dinner, and not leaving until breakfast the next day.

When the girls did join us at our dinner table, they invariably sat at the far end, while the Colonel sat at the opposite head end. The table was a long affair, seating perhaps twenty officers on both sides of the table. It was covered with a white table cloth, which draped down the sides of the table by about 15 inches.

During the meal, when this stony-faced Colonel of ours was presumably busy eating, he would ask one of the junior officers to pass the pitcher of drinking water up to him. When this occurred, we knew what was then in store.

The C.O. would then lift up the draped overhang of the table cloth at the side of the table, to form a gutter, and which terminated right above the lap of one of the unsuspecting Red Cross girls. He then proceeded to empty the water pitcher into the makeshift tablecloth gutter, where it would flow downhill to spill into the lap of the poor girl.

They would jump up, with their skirts soaking wet and proceed to berate some of the junior officers for such a childish prank, and run back to their barracks...unaccompanied by any of the male officers that night.

They never suspected the C.O. He was too dignified and staid to indulge in such childish pranks!!!!

LANGFORD LODGE

The Eighth Air Force had established a base for the reception of spare aircraft parts, as they arrived from the United States, at a location called Langford Lodge, on the banks of Loch Neagh near Belfast in Northern Ireland.

On those occasions, when the fighter groups or bomber groups were in dire need of replacement parts for the repair of battle-damaged aircraft, and there appeared to be some hang-ups in the shipments to the operational groups from the supply depot, it became necessary for us to take a quick flight to Langford Lodge to try to unsnarl the delays, or, at least, set up priorities for shipments based on our knowledge of future operational sorties into Germany.

When these situations arose, we tried to arrange it so that our trip was started on a Friday morning, so that we could spend the week-end in Northern Ireland. Not that we were that eager to work all these extra hours,but that it gave us an opportunity to sneak over the border into the Irish Free State.

It should be remembered that at this time, the Free State was a neutral country, because any enemy of Great Britain, was a friend of theirs. However, this did not stop many of the Southern Irish from working in our depot in North Ireland, because of the war-time shortage of personnel throughout the United Kingdom. Besides, the American pay scales were very good!!!

On these occasions, Major Keene and I would fly up to Langford Lodge in our Piper Cub, with our suitcase packed with newly acquired civilian clothes bought in London.

With prior arrangements made with some of the South Ireland workers, after work on Friday evening, dressed in our civvies, we rode across the border in a car driven by our Free State Irish employees.

Of course they were only too glad to do this, because they acted as our spokespersons in the South, while they accompanied us to the finest restaurants feasting on steaks, milk, butter, fresh bread, ice cream etc. which were not available in England during the war.

After feasting in the Free State, we would return to Belfast on Sunday evening with our South Irish friends, in time for work the next morning.

Of course, this was risky business, for if we were found out by our superiors, we would have been court martialed for dressing out of uniform, or worse, if found by the Free State authorities, we would have been interned for the rest of the war as belligerents.

But when you were young...and hungry for good food...any risk was worth the taking.

ENGLISH PREGNANCY

Lt. Rowe and Lt. Coates were sent on detached duty to the Radio School, at Oxford to become more conversant with the British system in their code and cipher work at the Eighth Air Force headquarters.

During their temporary stay, they were billeted in the home of a British couple, Ivy and Les Constable.

Soon after their arrival, they were escorted to their rooms by Les Constable, and as he was leaving the room, asked them, "What time shall I knock you up in the morning?"

Of couse, what he was trying to say in the English idiom, was, "What time shall I knock on your door to wake you up in the morning?"

But until they found out what he meant from Ivy the next day, they were both a little non-plussed as to the costs of their boarding with the Constables.

BLACKOUT

At our base at Bovington, it was necessary to insure that all windows, doors and other openings were closed and draped at nightfall to affect a blackout and thus prevent showing the German Luftwaffe where the occupied areas of England were located.

Many nights, the hanger which housed our planes, was busy with crews affecting maintenance or modifications to the aircraft, to ready them for missions in the morning.

We usually kept a broad beam short wave radio on, while we were working in the hangar, and perhaps hear the British Broadcasting Company news broadcasts, or on occasion, intercept a German transmission if the atmospheric conditions were correct.

Soon we began to note that the typical radial engine throb of a Luftwaffe Focke-Wolf FW-190 could be heard over the base at about 9:00 P.M. every evening.

At about the same time, we could hear a very clipped British accent broadcasting on our frequency, announcing "Hello Bovington, Hello Bovington, your blackout is LOUSY"

Apparently, this Luftwaffe pilot was educated in England before the war, and was using this taunting flight as part of the German psychological warfare theme.

Of course, our blackout was good, but apparently he knew the location of our airdrome at Bovington, and was using this ploy to good-naturedly tease us.

We began to look forward, after a while, to his nightly visits. It gave us a laugh while we were working in the hangar.

THE UNASSUMING AGENT

Major George Weinbrenner was assigned to the A-2 Section of the Eighth Air Force Headquarters at Pinetree.

He was a most unimposing sight, with heavy horn-rimmed glasses and a pot-belly,--hardly the type you would expect to act as an espionage agent.

But these very physical qualities made him an excellent choice for the work assigned to him.

In addition to his low-key physical appearance, he had other attributes for his work. He was a graduate of Heidelberg University and spoke German like a native, which in fact, he was. He was born in Germany, and his parents migrated to America when he was a teenager. He later returned to Germany before the war, to matriculate at Heidelberg, where he was later graduated, and returned to the States.

When war was declared by the United States upon Germany, George immediately enlisted in the Air Force, and became a commissioned officer.

He ultimately was assigned to the growing Eighth Air Force Headquarters at Pinetree, in High Wycombe, and served in the A-2 Section as an Intelligence Officer.

His job was to monthly change into civilian clothes, pack up a series of forged German credentials, and take along German money, and be parachuted at night over occupied German territory.

He would wend his way through France, Germany and Austria, ultimately making his way to Lisbon in Portugal, a neutral country, where a U.S. Air Force plane would pick him up and return him to headquarters in England.

He would then be de-briefed by the Intelligence staff as to his findings in Europe, which invariably led to a raid by the Eight Air Force to bomb these strategic targets.

And so on, until the next month, when George would repeat his travels in Occupied Europe, to pick up other intelligence for potential raids by the bombers of the 8th Air Force.

These achievements were all the more remarkable, since George, dressed as a civilian, if apprehended by the Germans, would be executed as a spy. And the fact that he was Jewish, only made his work more tenuous.

George was a remarkably brave guy!!!!

CINCINNATUS

My first superior when I arrived at the Headquarters of the Eighth Bomber Command at Pinetree, (High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire), was Colonial Fred W. Castle. He was the commanding Officer of the A-4 Section of the newly formed Bomber Command under General Jimmy Doolittle, of the Flight Over Tokyo fame.

A-4 in Air Force parlance, was nominally in charge of Supply and Maintenance. However, in the build-up of the bomber force, our job was to track the incoming B-17's as they left the United States with shuttle pilots, as they made their way through Labrador, Iceland, and finally into Prestwick, Scotland, where we would take over control of their flight, and direct them to the new bomb squadrons being built up at the discretion of General Doolittle.

We also had to keep them supplied with replacement parts, and Technical Orders (T.O's), the manufactures technical literature relating to the various components of the aircraft manufacture.

Frederick W. Castle was a West Pointer, who graduated 7th in a class of 241 in the Class of 1930. He was thus following in the footsteps of his father, Benjamin F. Castle, of the Class of 1907, and of his Godfather, General Henry H. Arnold, who later became known as "Hap" Arnold, the father of the Army Air Forces.

After he got his wings at Selfridge Field, flying pursuit biplanes, he resigned from the Army in 1934 because of the lack of opportunities in the minuscule air force at that time. He ultimately worked in the Civilian Conservation Corps, Allied Chemical Corporation and Sperry Gyroscope Co, where he became assistant to the president. Since Sperry was instrumental in manufacturing the secret Norden bomb-sight and various gun turrets for the air forces, he became reacquainted with his Godfather, General Arnold,

At the outbreak of World War II, General Arnold was asked by General Ira Eaker, who was in charge of the air force build-up in England, to recall Castle to active duty to assist him in the organizing the supply and maintenance of the burgeoning 8th Air Force in England. He arrived in England as a Major, but within a year he became a full Colonel, a rank befitting his status as a command officer in charge of A-4.

As a fellow New Jerseyan, Colonel Castle took me under his wing, and his soft-spoken way, trained me in the tracking of the incoming aircraft, and their allocation to the various bomb groups as required by the Operations command.

Although he was a genius in organizational skills, it was Castle's ambition to get a combat command, which he felt was the real challenge of the war.

His requests for a command was tabled by Doolittle because of his skill in building up the strengths of the lower echelon bomb groups. However, in the Summer of 1943, it became apparent to Doolittle that there was something wrong in the command of two new groups which were becoming part of a new 4th Bombardment Wing, the 94th Group and the 95th Group.

Attrition in these groups was so high, that Doolittle was compelled to send his two highest staff officers, Col. Castle and Col. Frank Armstrong of A-3 Operations, to take over the command of the two dispirited bomb groups. Castle was assigned to the 94th and Armstrong to the 95th.

When Castle arrived at his command of the 94th at Bury St. Edmunds, his assignment was resented because of the affection the men had for the previous commander who had trained with them and arrived together from the States. The fact that Castle was a West Pointer and a staff officer, to boot, made him all the more suspect to his men.

He instituted more discipline to his officers, insisting on more "officer and gentlemen" demeanor of his men, with no more foul language, shabby uniform dress, and no more drunken brawls in the Officers Club.

Although he was seen as being too aloof from his men, his new discipline began to take effect upon his group, especially in combat. He insisted that his crews participate in practice flights, with him on board as commander, which was taken as an insult by the veterans of previous combat missions.

On July 28th, 1943, he led the 94th on a long distant raid to bomb the Focke Wulf fighter factory at Oschersleben, but the weather over the English Channel was so bad, that most of the other groups became disheartened and returned to base, except for his 94th. He reached the target and through fighter attacks and cloud cover, dropped his bombs and severely damaged the German factory. Although he lost no planes, when he returned to Bury St. Edmunds he was chastised for carrying out his raid with such a small force, but was eventually awarded the Silver Star medal for his leadership on the raid.

In April of 1944, he was awarded the command of the 4th Bombardment Wing, which included both his 94th Group as well as two other Groups, making it the largest of the five bomb wings of the 8th Air Force. As commander of the 4th Bomb Wing, he was promoted to Brigadier General in November.

On December 15th, the Germans made their largest offensive since the Normandy invasion of Europe, by attacking U.S. Army positions in the Forests of the Ardennes, intending to retake Antwerp and to cut the Allied forces in two, and to deny them the use of the port at Antwerp. This battle created a loosening of the Allied lines in what became known as the Battle of the Bulge

The weather at this time of the year was so bad that the usual Allied air superiority was nullified, until Christmas Eve, December 24th. The 8th Air Force put every available bomber in the sky to attempt to stop the German advance. Castle took command of the 4th Bomb Wing, and lead the wing in an aircraft of the 487th Bomb Squadron, named the " Triple Four " from the last four digits of its serial number .

Castle took over the co-pilots seat of this lead aircraft and as they crossed over into Belgium, were' attacked by a flight of enemy Me109's, with no friendly fighter aircraft to defend them.

^{HARRIMAN}
Lt. Middleton, the pilot, was not able to keep up as lead aircraft after his number four engine was knocked out by the Germans in their first attack. Castle told his deputy commander to take over the command of the wing, and directed Harriman to fall back to the rear of the formation. As he did so, they were attacked a second time by the Germans, who shattered the Plexiglas nose of the aircraft killing the navigator.

As they continued to drop back in the formation, they were attacked a third time, this time from the rear, where that experienced major damage in two other engines.

Castle then directed his crew to bail out, and the B-17 went into a dive, when Castle took over the controls and ordered Harriman to get his parachute. All the other crew members has parachuted out of the stricken plane, but before Harriman could get into his chute, the right wing tank exploded, sending the stricken plane into a spin and crashed without jettisoning its bomb load for fear of killing friendly Belgian civilians.

The aircraft then crashed near Hods in Belgium killing Harriman and his commander, General Castle.

Castle thus gave his life so that he could save the lives of his crew members.

I feel honored to have served under this great and good man..

CANADIAN-----EH?????

The American GI's in England, were heavily concentrated on the South coast waiting for the invasion of Europe. Also stationed in the same areas, were a goodly number of Canadian troops, who would be slated to fight alongside the Americans in the invasion.

The Canadians wore the typical British battle uniform, and the only thing that distinguished them from the English was a small shoulder patch that read "CANADA".

However, the pay and allowances for the Canadian soldier was comparable to the Americans and consequently, had enough money to wine and dine the British girls on their dates, in a far higher scale than the English Tommy could.

While the English soldier grudgingly accepted the unfair monetary competition with the Yanks, they found the competition from the Canucks was considered almost treasonable.

Accordingly, street fights in the South of England prior to the invasion, was more of a Commonwealth thing between Tommy and Canuck, while the American GI went about their merry way with the English girls without any problem with the English soldiers. After all, the GI was not BRITISH, you know!!!

NIGHT FIGHTERS

With the influx of many American soldiers into England in preparation to the anticipated invasion of mainland Europe, a considerable number of GI's were black. In the days before British blacks emigrated to England from the Caribbean, black people were quite a curiosity to the English country folks.

Up until this time, the only blacks known to the rural British were those that they had read about from their colonies in Africa and the West Indies.

This, of course, excited no little interest in the English civilian population, many of whom had encountered the black soldiers in their pubs for the first time. This was especially true for the English girls who anxious for a little excitement after their drab existence in war-torn British manufacturing plants.

And, of course, the American black GI, away from the prejudice of race in the U.S., were more than eager to meet and date the blonde English girls that they had met, especially since the black fellows had a lot of money to spend on them.

The black GI's, too, were lonesome for female companionship, and took quick advantage of the situation. When asked about their dark complexions by the British girls, explained that they were being trained as "night fighters" by the U.S. Army so that in the oncoming invasion of Nazi Europe, they could land on the mainland at night without detection by the Germans, and sabotage their installations.

The British girls were intrigued by this tale and quickly became temporary lovers to the black GI's.

Shortly, thereafter, many coffee-and-cream babies were born into British families.

VIRGINITY

One of the most lovely towns in the English countryside was a little village called Maidenhead on the River Thames, which became well known as the site of the annual peacetime regattas between the competing rowing teams from the rival colleges of Oxford and Cambridge.

Many picturesque restaurants and hotels lined the banks of the river, which became well known during the regattas, and later were frequented by the graduates of the two universities.

The town was situated in the county of Hertfordshire, which in postal parlance, was abbreviated to "Herts."

Of course, this brought about the natural coupling of the postal address by GI's when writing to their local girl friends to "Maidenhead, Herts" or phonetically to "Maidenhead Hurts."

To which the British girls would reply. "Well, do you think that sex was all fun and games, do you?"

THE BARD OF AVON

During our infrequent weekend breaks during the war, many American GI's would travel to Stratford upon Avon, in the Cotswold Hills, a lovely countryside area where William Shakespeare was born.

Besides Shakespeare's home, which has been refurbished and open to the public as a museum, one of the other attractions in Stratford, was the Hathaway Cottage, the home of Anne Hathaway, his wife and her family before she married.

The caretaker of the cottage was a well educated lady in her late 50's who used to regale the visiting soldiers with her stories about pre-war Stratford.

One of her stories told of the old days, in Shakespeare's time, when supper was laid out in the cottage on a dining table composed of two boards supported by cross-buck frames at each end of the table. When the copious farm food was laden upon the make-shift table, the boards would sometime creak under the food , giving rise to the phrase used by the family of the "groaning board."

And of course, the children and help of the family would sit upon rude benches on either side of the table, and the master of the house sat at the head on the only chair available in the house, and he then became dubbed the "chairman of the board" by the rest of the family.

The housewife would prepare all the victuals for the nightly supper, including the freshly baked bread, which she baked on the hearth of the open fireplace. This, of course, made the regulation of the baking time very chancy, and more often then not, the bottom of the loaves became charred, while the upper part of the loaf was just right. Since the housewife would not dare to serve her husband any part of the charred loaf, she would cut off the charred bottom to give to the help, leaving the white portion for the master and his family. Hence, the family became known as the "upper crust" as differentiated from the farm help.

The beds in the cottage consisted of a four-sided wood frame set upon four legs, with the two long parallel sides of the frame drilled with spaced holes. Through these holes, a rope was strung, back and forth to support a mattress of sorts. After a good while of use, the supporting rope began to sag under the weight of the sleepers, causing them to be uncomfortable. It then became incumbent upon the master of the house to loosen the supporting rope, and retie it more tautly to give better support to the mattress, so that his family could "sleep tight" that night.

The farms, in those days, were invariably muddy from the frequent rains and the lack of adequate drainage. As a result, coming into the house after the days work, would befoul the cottage floor with mud and manure. To prevent this from occurring, he and his wife carved out two wooden soles with two- inch high cleats attached to their bottoms. On the upper surfaces of the soles, the toe-portion of old slippers were fastened, to which the wearer could slip his feet when he was working out-of-doors. Hence, the height of the cleats would prevent the outside mud from dirtying the farmers feet when he entered the cottage, because he had become "slip-shod."

VIAGRA

Even in war-torn England, there were **SOME THINGS** that the British would not give up.....and one of these things were the races at Ascot.

At Ascot there was a real polyglot of patrons ranging from aristocratic Britons, blue collar Cockneys and surely the ever-present American G.I. And the favorites of all these were the famous fish-and-chips served in a rolled-up cone of newspapers, and of course, TEA.

The tea venders paraded all along the rail with a cart assembled from a remade baby carriage, fitted out with a hot water heater, tea kettles,,milk, sugar and disposable paper cups.

To advertise their wares as they were strolling amongst the assembled crowd, the tea venders often attached a large cardboard poster to the side of the rolling tea cart, extolling the virtues of a "nice cup of hot tea".

Some of these posters were very ingenious indeed, with variations made in their wording to attract the customers away from their tea cart competitors. One of these posters, in large block letters, advertised "KEEP YOUR PECKER UP WITH TEA." Of course, in British slang the word PECKER referred to your spirit and peppiness, after losing money at the betting windows, while in American slang, that word referred to the male genital organ.

But the newly arrived Americans did not fully grasp all the nuances of British slang and their differences with the American jargon. So of course, the American G.I. made a bee-line to the cart with that placard, rather than to the competition, for, after all, they had dates with their British girl friends after the races!!!!

THE COMET

The Germans missed the boat in World War II by not capitalizing on their advantage when they had it, (but did not realize that they did have it).

If they had invaded England in 1942, they could have walked in without a battle. The British had a few Spitfires, a small contingent of tanks, and their soldiers were equipped with World War II rifles. But, Hitler held his fire because his real adversary was Communist Russia, and he wanted to conquer it to create more room for his populace, and-----he thought he was the latter-day Napoleon, who could succeed were the other Little Corporal had not.

Toward the end of the war in August 1944, our fighter pilots encountered the world's first rocket powered fighter, the Luftwaffe's "Comet" or the Me163b as developed by Wolfgang Spuete, Commander of E-K do 16 and manufactured by Messerschmitt. We estimated that 300 of these planes were built and entered into service

This aircraft flew at speeds of 700 MPH, compared with our B-17 bombers who flew at 230 MPH.

However, it was in it's early stage of development and only flew for 7 minutes with a range of 25 miles. Yet in it's infrequent appearances, it shot down 12 B-17s. It was equipped with 10 cannons, which were triggered by photoelectric cells. It was fuelled by a mixture of hydrogen peroxide, ethanol and alcohol. The earliest versions had a landing skid in its belly, which was dropped after it became airborne. However in April 1945, a wheeled version, the Me 263 was introduced.

We got a good look at this plane, when it ran out of fuel and force landed at our technical squadron located at Bovingdon.

This unit, commanded by the Luftwaffe ace, Adolf Galland, if perfected earlier would have decimated both the U.S and the Royal Air Forces.

But, again, Herr Schickelgruber mis-calculated and lost the war.

WHAT LANGUAGE IS IT ?????

After a few weeks in England, we began to realize that there were certain expressions that we use in America, that were spoken differently by the British, for instance:

We say Jelly,	they say Jam
Popsicle,	Ice Lolly
Jell-O	Jelly
Cookie	Biscuit
Stroller	Push Chair
Baby Carriage	Pram
Chips	Crisps
French Fries	Chips!!!!
Truck	Lorry
Undershirt	Vest
Pacifier	Dummy
Diaper	Nappy
Sneakers	Trainers
Pants	Trousers
Take a Nap	Have a Rest
Give a Hug	Have a Cuddle
Trash Can	Dust Bin
Garbage	Rubbish

But after a few weeks, we began to speak ENGLISH English !!!!!

SLANG---uage

Although our British cousins, and we Americans ostensibly spoke the same language, it soon became apparent to us in WWII that the basic English was probably the same, but our slang words were vastly different.

I soon found out, to my dismay, that this was true, when I remarked to a British lady friend in the Officers Club, about an off-hand remark about a pretty young lady who walked past us, had what I called a cute little FANNY was not polite.

My friend was aghast at my remark because, as she explained, I had no way of knowing the young girl's anatomical features, since that word in English slang referred to her pudenda!!!!

She also cautioned me not to use the word PINKY in polite society, (that we were prone to call our little finger), because that word to them was vulgar and referred to the male genital organ!!!!

We then had a quick review of the differences between British and American slang, which revealed:

AMERICAN

Suspenders
Elevator
Traffic Circle
Car Hood
Road Shoulder
Knock-up (impregnate)
Movie line
Movies
Undershirt
Vest
Panties
Sweater
Jumper
Garters

BRITISH

Braces
Lift
Round About
Bonnet
Chippings
Wake up in the A.M.
Queue
Flicks
Vest
Waistcoat
Knickers
Jumper
Pinafore dress
Suspenders

Suffice to say, I became a lot more circumspect in my choice of American slang when I was in English company.

ENGLISH-----ISMS

The American forces in England during World War II were genuinely fond of the English people, mainly for their bravery during the Nazi air raids over London and for their kindness and hospitality during our stay.

One thing that bothered the American GI was the English method of pronunciation, which, although still standard English was sometimes very difficult to understand because of their accents. For instance:

Our ATE became their ET

Our FOREHEAD was their FORRID

MARLEYBONE rail station in London was to them----MAIRBUM

IMMEDIATELY was pronounced MEEJUTLY

NECESSARY was NESSREE to them.

Our LIBRARY was their LIBREE

HALFPENNY was pronounced as HAYPENEE

BARNOLDSWICK became BARLICK

WYMONDHAM was to them, WINDUM

CHOLMONDESTON became CHUMSON

CHALMONDELAY was CHUMLEY

CHICHESTER was said as SISTER

ST. JOHN was SINJIN.

ST. CLAIRE was spoken as SINCLAIRE

We would say HOW DO YOU DO and they would say HOWJADOO

Our WAISTCOAT became their WESKIT.

The BALLET was their BALLY

A BUFFET was to them a BUFFY

The DERBY was called the DARBY

BERKELEY SQUARE was BARCLAY SQUARE

The county of BERKSHIRE was pronounced as BARKLEY

HERTFORDSHIRE was called HARTFORDSHIRE.

The proper name KERR was not KERR but KARR to them.

The month of JULY was then called JULIE.

(and a 4th of July celebration for the Yanks did not include FIREWORKS but rather ILLUMINATIONS!!!!)

GOLD was GOULD

Our GARAGE was their GARRIDGE

We went to a DANCE but they to a DAHNCE

An American's home was his CASTLE but was an Englishman's CAHSTLE.

But, all in all we became accustomed to their mode of pronunciation, mainly because we realized it was a tight little island, and they were prone to clip short a lot of our words.

They carried it a bit to far, however, when they named this quaint little village on the top of a hill----PIDDLE. And the adjacent village below the hill was called PIDDLE IN THE HOLE!!!!

A TROPICAL ISLAND

We often made flights over Occupied France by flying West over Lands End, the small spit of land at the Westernmost peninsula of England, and thence South over the Bay of Biscay to our targets in France.

When we did this, we were amazed to see Palm Trees growing in that part of England which was in the same latitude as New York City!!!!

After making inquiries of our British friends, we were told that the Gulf Stream which originates in the Gulf of Mexico, makes its way Eastward past the Florida Keys, thence North along the East Coast of Florida to Vero Beach, and finally heads out East across the Atlantic where it ends in the English Channel.

As the Gulf Stream terminates at the English Channel, it takes up coconuts picked up in Florida and deposits them in Cornwall or Lands End where they take root and grow in the warm climate afforded by the Gulf Stream.

When the warm Gulf Stream waters in the English Channel meets the cold water of the North Sea, the two disparate temperatures form a mist which gives England its famous London Fog!!!

SOME MORE ENGLISH-ISMS

As a remnant of the British Raj in India and Pakistan, many of the Indian words have crept into British slang.

If one says someone is one "chapatti" short of a full "tiffin", that is the equivalent of our "not playing with a full deck" or "one brick short of a full load". A "chapatti" is a kind of Indian bread and a "tiffin" is a small lunch.

When we say some has gotten his "bowels in an uproar" over something that irks him, the British say that he has "gotten his knickers in a twist," meaning that his undershorts are too tight.

In British slang, a "quiff" is a newly done hairdo, but it also means to copulate!!! In American slang, a quiff is a young attractive girl or her pudenda.

Their "smog" is our "smooch" and to "bonk" someone is to make love to them.

"Knacker" is to tire of something and is equivalent to our being "hissed off".

BREAKING IN

During the early years of the build-up of the 8th Air Force and Eighth Bomber Command, the German U-Boat packs were raising hell with the convoys crossing the Atlantic with supplies for both the British and ourselves.

The U-Boat bunkers of the Kriegsmarine were located on the North coast of Occupied France at St. Nazaire, Brest, Bordeaux, Lorient, and LaPallice. The bunkers were huge concrete structures with roofs and walls of 24" reinforced concrete.

It became one of the first tasks of the 8th Bomber Command to try to cripple or impede the refueling and repair of the U-Boats at their nests.

One of the first groups to attack these targets was the "Ragged Irregulars" of the 91st Bomb Group located at Bassingbourne. This group included such later famous planes like the Memphis Belle, Shoo-shoo Baby, General Ike, and Nine-O-Nine. The 91st ultimately performed 3 years of aerial combat, including over 340 missions!!!

The Main Luftwaffe Wing put up against these early bomber raids were quipped with Messerschmitt ME-109's and Focke-Wulf FW 190 fighters of the experienced Jagdgeschwader 26. This expert group of the Luftwaffe included such famous aces as Heinz Bar, Otto Kittel, Heinz-Wolfgang Schauer, Wilhelm Batz, Otto Weiss, Joachim Helfrig, And Ludwig Havighorst.

So these so-called "Milk Runs" against the sub pens were no picnics!!

Our bombers were given fighter escort by P-47C Thunderbolt fighters of the 55th Fighter Group, who later became the champion locomotive busters of the 8th Air Force.

Suffice to say, the German "Butcher Bird" FW-190D, (the liquid cooled variant of the earlier radial engine FW's) absorbed heavy punishment from the 8th Air Force fighters, who successfully stalled the U-Boat raids in the Atlantic until our air raids over the ocean upon the wolf packs took their measure.

ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONS

With the arrival of the first contingents of the Women's Army Corps (WAC's), everyone felt a little self-conscious about dating the American girls.

The G.I's said it was great to see American girls again, but many of the enlisted men continued to prefer the company of the British girls from the British Womens Volunteer Service, The Womens Air Force Auxiliary Service, and the Land Army. Some of these liaisons were of long standing before the American girls came upon the scene.

In fact, one G I, ran into a bunch of his pals at the base by saying "Hey fellas, what do you know? My girl's husband just got the D.F.C. (Distinguished Flying Cross) with the RAF. Ain't it great?"

On his days off, the Yank would visit the "local" pub and learned to drink and like their "mild and bitter" beers, which of course often led to rather spirited arguments with locals.

One of these arguments began with the relative merits of "The Flying Scot" railroad train, compared to the American "Twentieth Century Limited ."

This brawl led to an investigation of the American Provost Marshal who visited the pub to see what it was all about.

The proprietress explained how the fight began over the relative merits of the two railroad trains.

The Provost Marshal interrupted her and verified the cause of the fight, and asked her what the name of her pub was.

To which she replied, "This is the Two Lions, of course".

The Provost then yelled, " Hell that wasn't the brawl that I came to investigate. I was looking for the RED LION !!!"

KEEP 'EM ROLLING

One of the finest joint efforts of the British and American allies was the perfection of the Enigma, code-breaking machine, which allowed the allies to intercept and decode German messages.

This useful machine allowed the allies to set up listening posts in both the European and Pacific theatres of war. These units were given the code name of "Special Liaison Units" or SLU's. SLU No. 7 was set up at Pinetree, the headquarters of the 8th Air Force, which gave General Doolittle much valuable intelligence for possible targets in Germany.

One bit of information gained was that the orderly minds of the Germans chose to concentrate over 50% of their ball-bearing manufacture in a town deep within Germany, called Schweinfurt.

A previous 8th Air Force strike at the town was only partially successful, causing great damage, but failing to obliterate it. So it was decided to give it another attack. It was felt that if we could cripple their ball-bearing manufacture, the Nazi war machine would slowly grind down to a halt. After all, all the moving vehicles of war depended upon smooth ball bearing rolling operation, such as trucks, tanks, aircraft, gun emplacements, etc.

On October 14th, 1943, a second raid on Schweinfurt was planned, utilizing over 290 heavy bombers of the 8th Air Force. Since Schweinfurt was so deep in enemy territory, it was beyond the range of our fighter escort, and could involve over 3 to 5 hours of German fighter attacks.

The German manufacturing complex at Schweinfurt consisted of over 70 acres with over 15 different manufacturing buildings. As a result the Germans protected the area with heavy fighter plane protection.

The long flight of the bomber crews in below freezing weather, using oxygen masks at altitudes of over 30,000 feet, was grueling trip even without the Nazi fighters. The Nazi fighters used every acrobatic trick in the trade to confuse the B-17 allied gunners, usually shooting at the bombers in an inverted position or in a sidewise mode.

The second raid on Schweinfurt, however, proved a huge success with almost 90% demolition of the assembly plants. However, the 8th Air Force lost over 60 planes, with 600 men, a record loss up to that date.

However, the commander of the 1st Air Division, General LeMay commented that never had such devastation been accomplished by such a small group of bombers.

SIXTY MINUTES ???????

One of the most widely read newspapers in England during the war was the "Stars and Stripes" published by the U.S. Information Service but read by the British whenever they could get a copy.

One of the best staff writers for the Stars and Stripes was a young man who went by the name of Andrew A. Rooney, who later in life became famous as the grumpy final segment of that popular Sunday evening television show called "Sixty Minutes" and he became beloved as ANDY ROONEY.

And rightly so. He was no mean cub reporter. On Friday, February 26, 1943, Andy hitched a ride on one of the 8th Air Force bombing raids, with a B-17 called "Banshee".

He endured a four hour flight to targets in Wilhelmshaven, while the bomber was viciously attacked by a horde of German fighters.

Small wonder that he is such a curmudgeon today!!!!!!

TOWEL RACKS

The Bachelor Officer's Quarters (BOQ's) at Bovington where the headquarters squadron of the 8th Air Force was located, consisted of long, low one-story buildings inherited from the Royal Air Force.

The building housed about 40 young officers and consisted of two-man cells, situated on either side of a long corridor running down the spine of the building.

The senior officers (Majors and Captains), were situated at the head of the corridor, nearest the lavatories and showers, while the lower ranked officers were situated at the opposite end of the long corridor.

Of course, the monotony of living alone so far away from home, inspired the young officers to be very inventive in their search for amusement. There was nothing on the radio that was entertaining, so they developed their own gambling games.

One of these games was dubbed, "The Towel Rack", and bets were placed on the racers who could run the length of the corridor in the fastest time, from the shower room down to the opposite end of the building.

However, the contestants were required to shower first, and towel off, and run naked from one end of the building to the other wearing only the soggy towel that they just used in the shower. They were not allowed to use their hands to hold the towel, but were allowed to hang their wet towel on their only erect appendage that was available to them!!!!

If the towel fell during the run, the runner was automatically disqualified.

Of course, the youngest and most lonesome runner, who probably was recently married, was the best bet in the race.

LORD HAW HAW

In the propaganda war, developed by Josef Goebbels for the Nazis, A British expatriate (or perhaps, a German who had lived in England between the two World Wars,) was given the job of broadcasting to the British on the BBC frequencies, in an attempt to demoralize the British populace.

This Nazi was dubbed Lord Haw Haw by the British, and spoke with a perfect British accent. He gave the English a dire picture of Hitler's successes in Europe and Russia, predicting, at the same time that the same fate awaited the British if they persisted in resisting.

However, this attempt to sway the British populace, backfired since they felt that if Lord Haw Haw was indeed a British person, he was no better than a traitor to them. If he were a German, masquerading as an Englishman, he was ridiculed as a clown.

So the Minister of Propaganda for the Nazis failed to sway the British people who were not so easily duped as were their German counterparts.

A DIP IN THE CHANNEL

In an examination of the casualties that occurred after each bombing mission, we began to detect a glaring discrepancy between the men who parachuted from their planes over the English Channel, compared to the head count of parachutes that we gleaned from the crews who came home safely.

We soon discovered that in dropping over the channel, it became very difficult for the men who had jumped, to determine how high above the water they were when they released their chutes.

If they waited too long, the parachute silk would drop directly over their heads, and become water-logged thus preventing the men from getting his head above water, causing them to drown in their own chute.

If they released themselves from the chute harness prematurely, the shock of impact with the water from the great height would cause them to be injured and drown.

General Doolittle, hearing this scenario, directed our experimental squadron to develop a quick release harness, where the crewman good make a better judgment as to when he released his chute harness. We did this by tying all the members of the harness to a single chest button, which when depressed, released the chute harness automatically.

He now could release his chute so that it would blow away from him before it hit the water. Further, he could wait longer before releasing so that his drop was nearer to the surface of the water and not so hard on his body.

A further example of Doolittle's deep concern for his men!!!

FRENCH SEVENTY-FIVES

Lt. Jack Scott was a pilot temporarily assigned to us from the 9th Air Force to assist in the development of low-level bombing that was envisioned for the 8th Air Force after our troops penetrated further into Germany.

Scott came with his A-26, an attack fighter-bomber and soon became like a regular member of our Research and Development Squadron at Bovington.

He was a tall, rangy 24 year old, with a cocky attitude probably brought about by the fact that his father was a Brigadier General in the 9th Air Force.

During one of the lulls in our test bombing experiments, it was made known that the Officer's Club at Bovington was running dangerously short on booze. So, Scott, with his usual breezy cocksure demeanor, promptly offered to make a milk-run into newly-liberated France to scout up some cognac and champagne, the two main ingredients in a cocktail known as a French-75.

The A-26 was then readied for the flight from England, and to assist in lugging the anticipated cases of booze and load them into the aircraft in France, I called upon my Tech-Sergeant Vinny Snyder to fly with us in the A-26. Vinny, a fighter-mechanic specialist, was only too willing to come along.

Since the A-26 was a two-seat plane, with Scott piloting, and me in the co-pilot's seat, there was only one comfortable place for Vinny in the aircraft--the tail turret. Since the A-26 was a tricycle type landing gear plane, the tail turret was entered with the assistance of a small ladder, and secured from its exterior by a member of the ground crew, who would also release the tail-gunner from the turret after its mission was completed.

We took off from Bovington, and flew over the English Channel, at Elevation 20 feet, until we met the cliffs on the French coast. By this time, Scott was really feeling his oats and decided to "buzz" every church spire on our way to the Cognac region. "Just to give the Frogs a thrill", he said.

We landed in a grass strip just outside of the town of Avranche in the Cognac area, jumped out of the plane, and hurried to our first destination, a local bistro that was known to have stashed away a store of booze during the German occupation.

After completing arrangements for the purchase of the liquor, and its transport to the plane the next afternoon, Scott and I decided to sight-see the town, in search of some diversion, other than booze.

At noon, the next day, we had sobered enough to hitch a ride back to the landing strip, and upon arriving there, heard this God-Awful pounding on the interior of the fuselage.....it was from Snyder, who we had sealed into the tail turret some 36 hours ago.

I commandeered a ladder from a local farm-house, and released Vinny from his turret-prison, to get him some food and drink.

He jumped off the ladder, and nose-to-nose to me, offered to punch me in the nose, if I would take off my Captain's bars.

Suffice to say, after getting him some food, drink and female companionship, Vinny was somewhat mollified. And since we were fellow New Jerseyans, he ultimately forgave me and became one of my dearest friends after the war.

FRIED GREEN EGGS

Lt. Cookie Coates, the WAC officer who later became my fiance, (and wife), often had to work the midnight shift in the underground "hole" where her unit would intercept German radio messages, decode them, and pass them on to the Commanding General and his A-2 Operations staff.

When she came off duty in the wee small hours of dawn, she was wont to walk around a small lake on the headquarters grounds, which was populated with ducks, geese and swans, from its former days as a girls finishing school.

The Officer's Mess at this time, was having a problem feeding us because of the severity of German submarine attacks in the Atlantic on our supply ships from the States. One of the most severely short items was fresh eggs. We were therefore given a concoction at breakfast consisting of reconstituted dried powdered eggs, mixed and fried to resemble scrambled eggs.

All the officers were served the powdered eggs but me, when to my amazement, at every breakfast, I was served two fresh eggs, served sunny-side up. I was embarrassed by this since my fellow officers at the mess table would look askance at me, as much as to say, "who the hell does this guy know???"

It later developed that Cookie, in her early morning walks around the lake, would pick some duck-eggs, and give them to her friend, the Mess Officer, Major Neal Lang, to serve them up to me at breakfast.

I never tumbled to this until one morning, as I sat down to breakfast, I was served two eggs, sunny-side up.....but which had no whites surrounding their yolks, only a GHASTLY-LOOKING GREEN COLOR.

I then found out from Cookie Coates, of her care for me, which she tried to keep secret, until that day when her duck-eggs were served up to me discolored green from the duck's diet of algae that was growing in the lake, where she had harvested her daily treat for me.

RANK HAS ITS PRIVILEGES

One of the first rules we learned as commissioned officers, was to always keep your right arm free from any encumbrances, such as umbrellas, packages or other parcels, so that we would have our right hand free to return a courtesy salute given us by a lower ranked officer or enlisted man.

London, at this time, even though it was being bombed almost daily by the Germans, was still the Mecca for service people on their days off from duty.

Piccadilly Circus was the hub of London, but was usually swarming with military personnel from all Allied countries such as Norway, Free French, Free Poles, Australians, Canadians and from all other branches of the U.S. Services other than my Air Force.

While on a such a day off, Lt. Coates and I were making our way to a cinema in Piccadilly, and because of the crush of people on the sidewalk, she temporarily clutched my right arm for support, to prevent us from becoming separated.

As luck would have it then, I heard a loud voice calling out to me from our rear, saying "what's the matter, Lieutenant, don't they teach you the basics of military courtesy in the Air Force?"

I turned around to face a red-faced and angry U.S. Army Tank Corps Captain, who we had evidently passed on the sidewalk without saluting. I apologized, but he had to get his licks in by berating me in front of this good-looking WAC Lieutenant on my arm, and in a very loud voice, demanded that in the future I show more respect for my superior officers..... I'll never forget that man's ugly face!!!

About 15 months later, through the kind offices of my fiancée, Lt. Coates and her room-mate, Warrant Officer Mary Gill, (General Doolittle's personal secretary), I got repeated promotions every six-months, until I reached my ultimate rank of Major.

Wouldn't you know, that on another day off in Piccadilly, I passed that same Tank Corps Captain who had embarrassed me a few months earlier....AND....who had neglected to salute ME!!!!, his superior officer.

I don't think I ever got so much pleasure in dressing down anyone as I did this ugly red-neck, Cracker Captain, as I did that day.

As I walked into the foyer, all the officers and enlisted hospital personnel jumped to their feet and threw me a salute. I began to be amazed how respectful these hospital people were to visitors.UNTIL I GOT INTO COOKIE'S ROOM!!!

She then asked me why in hell I was wearing a Bird-Colonel's raincoat, with eagles on each shoulder epaulet??? I had inadvertently worn my C.O.'s raincoat and then began to understand why the hospital staff jumped to attention, when they saw this snot-nosed 22 year old, who at such an early age, was made a Colonel in the Air Force.

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NEVERBREAK

Kenneth Ray Martin was born in Kansas City, Missouri, and graduated from Missouri University. Upon graduation, he enlisted in the army and was sent to flight school to be trained as a pilot. He served as a flier for three years before Pearl Harbor, and was promoted to the rank of Colonel in charge of the 354th Fighter Group.

Upon the declaration of World War II, he was assigned to the Eighth Air Force Fighter Command and his group was assigned to fly P-51 Mustangs to escort the heavy bombers on their raids over Germany. He had flown 17 missions in their escorts to the bombers.

On one of these 400 mile missions over Germany, he shot down seventeen German fighters, a record that stands until today.

Ken loved to fly head-on at the fast approaching German fighter opponent, and when the German "chickened out", and pulled up to avoid collision with Martin, Ken sprayed the belly of his opponent with machine gun fire, and invariably knocked his opponent out of the air.

Ken had nerves of steel and would never break away from his head on course, and this tactic earned him the nickname, "Neverbreak."

On his last mission, he met a German pilot who was just as bold as he, and the two planes crashed head-on.

Both pilots, however, ejected from the damaged planes, pulled their rip-cords and parachuted down to earth.

Ken experienced many broken bones and was interned as a Prisoner of War at Stalag Luft III at Sagan, Germany.

However, before the end of the war, he managed to escape, and traveling carefully at night, he made it through Germany to Portugal, and eventually back to America.

For his exploits during the war, Colonel Ray Martin was decorated with the Distinguished Service Cross, two Distinguished Flying Crosses, eight Air Medals, the Purple Heart, a POW Medal, the European Theater of Operations Medal and the Victory Medal.

It was heroes such as Martin that helped up win the war and freedom!!!
