

**ANSWERING THE CALL:
LT. CLIFFORD A. “TED” HARRIS, HIS CREW,
AND HIS B-17 BOMBER, NICKNAMED
“MILK RUN MABEL”**



I'm Lieutenant Clifford H. “Ted” Harris, pilot of the B-17 bomber, “Milk Run Mabel”, flying missions out of RAF Thorpe Abbots, England, into the heavily-defended skies over World War II Europe and Germany in 1944. There’s a lot to tell, but my story starts off a few years earlier, at a boarding school in Maine...

On December 7, 1941,

I was studying in my room at Hebron Academy, when my roommate burst into the room with the news that,

“The Japanese have just bombed Pearl Harbor!”

I remember thinking, and then asking, where Pearl Harbor was?? Over the following years, I spent a good bit of time very close to Pearl Harbor, and, in fact, lived literally a stone’s

throw from it for a while. Of course, that day changed my life completely, as well as the lives of most of the people in the world that day!

That summer, I decided to enlist in the army and, came an eventful day at Marshfield where we spent our summers, that was settled. A bunch of us kids were sitting around the beach on a blanket - Alma, Fran, Bernie, Chickie - listening to records of Vaughn Munroe or Glenn Miller, when a kid from Medford, name of Katendorf, came along. During the conversation, he mentioned that his older brother had just taken

the exam for 'Aviation Cadets'.

It seems that only a high school diploma was required if you were 18 years old. I thought it sounded pretty good - it beat walking, and the pay would be better - though I don't think I really thought I could make it through with no college background. So, I took the test, which I found relatively easy, and passed. A day or so later, I took the physical, and was sworn into the Army Air Corps on Sept. 20, 1942.

I expected to be called to active duty immediately, but I had to wait for my class, and that took six months, during which I worked as an office boy/clerk in Boston. Finally, on March 5, 1943, I reported to the North Station in Boston, climbed on a day-coach with a hundred or so other cadets, and we were off to the wars! We spent three days and nights on that damned day-coach, but eventually arrived in Nashville, Tenn. We received uniforms right away (two sizes - too small or too big) and then took about 4 or 5 days of intensive testing of many kinds, along with learning some close order drill. After about a week, the results came out.

About 50% of the guys were gone - washed out -

while a few were to be navigators, and the rest of us were to go to pilot training. Got more uniforms then, as cadet uniforms were a bit more dressy than our G.I. stuff, and started in on physical training and lots and lots of drill. Actually, I loved it all, as I was 18 years old, in very good physical shape, so it was fun. About the first or second of April, we climbed back on day-coaches, and the pilot group was off to Pre-flight at Maxwell Field in Montgomery, Ala.

Pre-flight was about 5 hours of classwork a day on aircraft recognition, basic navigation, engines and airplanes, and military stuff. Then lots of phys. ed. and lots of close-order drill. We ran miles and miles around Maxwell Field, which I thought was fun, but it was tough on some of the older cadets, at first. I recall big parades for Retreat at the end of the day, with about 4,000 cadets marching to a big army band. One day, they had us out at

attention, lined up along the streets of the base, and who should drive by about 10 feet in front of me but

President Roosevelt himself!

After 6 weeks of this life, we hopped on those day-coaches again for Avon Park, Fla. and Primary Flying School. Airplanes at last!

Avon Park was nice. It had been a small resort hotel, I guess, with a small lake. As lower classmen, we lived in a large barracks-like affair, and as upper class, into the hotel. The airfield was a few miles away, and we had a bus to go back and forth. The first 10 days were really something, as we lost about half the class to washing out. It seems you couldn't solo before 8 hours and must solo by 10, or you were gone. I had a ball! The first time up in the trainer - a Stearman biplane with open cockpit - I remember looking down and thinking, "It really works!", and just had fun through all the maneuvers. But many of the guys were sick every flight, or terrified, or just couldn't hack it for some reason, so they washed out and were gone. We didn't realize it at the time, but once we made it through that week, we were going to make it to graduation, as we had no further wash outs.

Had a couple guys killed along the way, both through stupidity, but other than that, we had it made.

Primary was lots of flying and lots of classes on navigation, engines, propellers, aircraft rec, etc., etc. Anything to do with flying. Also had the everlasting close order drill and PT. But the flying, I loved. The day I was to reach 8 hours, my instructor, Lt. Fowle, had me fly over to one of our auxiliary fields, taxi to the center, and he climbed out and told me to take it around. I taxied to the end of the field, made a magneto check, and off I went into the wide blue yonder. Well, I came in too high for my landing, so I poured on the throttle and went around. Next time, no problem, and I landed just fine, and that was that. After that, it was into stalls, spins and then loops, rolls and the full run of aerobatics, all of which I loved. Then again, after 60 days, we were back on the day-coaches and off to Gunter Field, back in Montgomery, Ala. Here we had a bit bigger and more powerful airplane, and got started on cross country and a bit of instrument flying.

The BT-13 was a bit scary at times,

as it had a weird spin and at times it wouldn't come out, so we were warned to bail out if it wouldn't recover on the third try. But none of us had that problem, so we had smooth flying. Social life in cadets was pretty slow, as we didn't have much time off, and few knew anyone in the places we were. Another six weeks and we moved on to Seymour, Indiana for

twin engine Advanced. We flew an AT-10 in Advanced, sort of a plywood bomber without a bomb bay. Here, we pretty much concentrated on instrument flying and learning to handle an engine failure, and cross country. I had one funny experience on a cross-country, where we were supposed to go Seymore to Indianapolis to Ft. Wayne to Cincinnati to Seymore by following lightlines, which don't exist anymore. They were powerful rotating beacons set every ten miles along a route, and each had a Morse-coded red light for identification. We went to Indy O.K., and turned east where the line split, and we evidently took the wrong one. We finally came upon a large city, which we knew Ft. Wayne was not, and finally figured out it was Cincinnati, so we killed some time and went home. It did teach us a lesson though, in that, after that, in addition to following just the light line, we'd check the heading.

We had had a cadet killed in a crash in primary, and here in advanced, we lost another, though he asked for it.

Two cadets flying together decided to see how fast the airplane would go straight down.

They climbed to 10,000 ft. and pushed it over in a vertical dive with power on, and at 350 the tail came off! The fellow in the right seat bailed out through the tail, but the other guy went into the ground. Pretty dumb!

Finally, we came to Dec. 5, 1943 and graduation from the cadet program, and I became a brand-new 2nd Lt. in the Army Air Corps, and received a pair of silver wings. We had been asked our preference for next assignment, and I had requested B-17 first pilot training, and as the 8th and 15th Air Forces needed many pilots, that's what I got. I was assigned to Hendricks Field in Sebring, Fla. after a 10-day leave. So I went home and gave my wings to Betty and went off to B-17 training. A few words about cadet life. Probably because I was 19 yrs old, I enjoyed it. We marched and we marched everywhere we went, and then we'd get out and practice close order drill. We marched to class and we marched to fly, counting cadence as we went, or singing songs from "Yellow Ribbon" to "Sixpence" to "I've Been Working On the Railroad". One day in Pre-Flight at Maxwell Field, we all were called out in our class A uniforms and marched to a residential area on the base, and lined up along the edge of the street. No one said why we're here, or for how long. We were "At Ease" for 30 or 40 minutes and then called to attention. A few minutes later, we could hear cars approaching, and then, twenty feet in front of me,

Ol' Franklin D. Roosevelt went by, with a big smile!

Then we marched back. Our Squadron Commander was "Tex" Havard, who had been in the army for several years, in the tank corps, before he became a cadet. I later heard he was killed in the 8th AF, but he was a real soldier. He separated us around the drill field and then got us all back together again. It was fun to watch. It was early in my stay at Sebring that I had my first real shock to show me that this whole flying thing could be dangerous. I'd vaguely known a guy named Bill Ressler all through cadets, and somehow at Sebring we hung around together, a bit. I think we both went over to Avon Park one day and looked up our old primary instructors. We were in different squadrons, but made a date to meet in the Officers' Club on New Years Eve at the bar at 7 P.M. Well, I was a bit annoyed when he didn't show, but figured something else came up. A few days later, I ran into Lt. Fowle, my primary instructor, who commented that he'd seen in the paper that my buddy Ressler had been killed in a crash at Sebring. Well, I'd heard about a B-17 crashing while trying to land in a fog one morning and that all in it were killed, but I hadn't seen who was in it, so it came as a shock to find Bill Ressler was the student. Sort of hit close to home. The actual transition to the B-17 wasn't really very exciting. We had a good bit of instrument work, formation, and actually got up to 18,000 ft. a few times to try oxygen masks, and to feel we'd been there. Then we had a lot of work with engine failures, and after six weeks, moved on to Tampa and an old stadium called Plant Park.

Plant Park had a lot of tents pitched in it, and that was home for a few weeks 'till we acquired crews. We had nothing to do but appear for rollcall every morning, so we just hung around Tampa's bars or went to the beach in St. Petersburg.

Finally, one morning, my name was read, and I had a crew!



Copilot - Paul Hoff.

Navigator - Stan Russell.

Bombardier - Fred Leach.

Top Turret Gunner and Engineer - Woody Woodville.

Radioman Waist Gunner - Kocher.

Waist Gunner - Rogers,

and Tail Gunner - Alex Alexander.

Then we were off to Drew Field, across town in Tampa, to train for combat. Six weeks at Drew Field were lots of dropping practice bombs at a range over in central Florida - actually back in old Avon Park - lots of formation flying, gunnery missions out on the Gulf, and some cross-country around the Southeast, or around Florida and the Keys.

Several funny incidents. We had been on a simulated bombing trip that took us down the west coast, across to Miami, to Palm Beach, and was then to turn northwest and cross Lake Okeechobee and return to Tampa. At Palm Beach, I asked for a heading for Tampa, and my new navigator, Stan, gave something like 145 degrees,

which, of course, was wrong!

I told him to recheck, and he said that was correct, so I turned to 145 which headed us out over the Atlantic. A minute or so later, Stan commented that the lake was much bigger than he thought, and I told him that it was the Atlantic he was looking at. He yelled that he'd given me a reciprocal and to reverse course, which was O.K. . Never gave me another reciprocal after that.

The other incident didn't involve us, but a crew we knew. During training, we usually dropped 100-pound practice bombs, which put out some smoke on impact. They may have been reusable, if not too beat up. Once during our time there, we were to load up with 100-pound demolition bombs so we'd feel we had dropped the real thing. So, this crew left Tampa for Avon Park with 5 real bombs in the bomb bay. Approaching the bombing range, the bombardier stated he was about to open the bomb bay doors, and the radio man opened the radio room door to the bomb bay to check that the doors open, only to discover the doors already open and the bombs gone. "Bombs Away", from the radio man. The bombardier asked what he was talking about, and ran to look. Sure enough. No bombs. Never did find where they went.

Must have just killed a bunch of alligators in the swamps.

Finally, we were deemed fit to fly against the Hun, and we were shipped up to Savannah, Ga. to a port of embarkation, Hunter Field. After a few days of receiving equipment such as helmets, gas masks, knapsacks, and this and that, it was decided to give us a week's leave. We went to the railroad station and a bunch of us found that the only train north to N.Y. and Boston was an all-reservation train that was sold out. Well, having nothing to lose, we got on anyway and, for a while, with the train underway, we tried to avoid the conductor taking tickets. We ended up in the baggage car, where he caught up with us, and we explained our situation. He agreed to sell us tickets to ride, and let us sit in the baggage car for the trip. There was a casket in there, we found was a poor Aviation Cadet who'd spun in while in basic flying training, and the body was being sent home. Then we had with us a gunnery officer, also a second Lt. like us, but he had a few bottles of tequila from the Southwest.

So, we sat on the casket all night long and drank tequila,

and eventually arrived in N.Y. I don't recall how I got to Boston, but somehow I got to the Cape, and that was my first time in Harwichport to see Betty.

A few days there, and then back to Savannah. We had expected to fly an airplane across the ocean, but when we were shipped again to Camp Kilmer, N.J., we learned we'd go by ship. A dull week in N.J., and we, at last, entrained for N.Y. and the ship for Europe - the Aquitania. The trip took a week and wasn't bad, but dull. I was assigned to submarine watch up beside the bridge. At night, I'd step outside for my duty tour, and it was so dark that, after 2 hours, I still couldn't see anything, much less a sub. We awoke one morning in a harbor in Scotland, climbed down some nets with our bags to small boats, and rode ashore. Then army trucks took us to a staging base for a day or two, a train trip to Bury St. Edmunds where we caught more trucks, and we arrived at RAF Thorpe Abbots, England, and the 100th Bomb Group.



LIFE AT THE BLOODY HUNDREDTH

I remember a mission was returning about the time we arrived, and we looked up to see them fly over in formation. We could see a few gaps here and there, which, of course, impressed us, and we figured we'd be up there in a few days. We were assigned to our barracks that were to be home for some months, and met the "veterans" of the group. Next to our beds in Barracks 8 were the crew of "The Pollock", a big, good-natured guy named Dobrogowski. His copilot was a nice guy, about 22 or 23, named "Mac", his bombardier a husky guy named Bruce something, and the navigator we always called "the kid" because

he looked about 13, though I guess he was 20. There were two other crew's officers in there, a guy named Lundquist, I think, had a crew, and the other crew was just going home when we arrived. I don't remember who replaced them right away, but, at any rate, they were shot down before we got to know them well. These guys had showed us around the base, the officer's club, briefing room and operations, and the combat officer's mess. We were bunked in barracks 8 right next to Dobrogowski's crew, and it was a shock, and I still have a feeling of sadness when I remember their crash.

But this is about something else. Heat!!

Our hut, as all the others, had two stoves, and each one was allotted one bucket of coal a day. Now, when the days began to cool in October, that one bucket didn't go very far, so action was called for. First, 'scrounging'. That's a nice army term for stealing, but it was too much trouble, with all the barbed wire and stuff. So, a bit of thought produced the realization that, while we had a shortage of coal, there was one thing that burned that we had in nearly unlimited supply - good old 100 octane aviation gasoline! A fifty-gallon drum was found easily, and a frame of 2x4's made to hold it outside the barracks. Fuel line was easy, and a line ran under my bed to the back of the stove. A hole was drilled in the back of the stove, and the fuel line ran into the hole, and a petcock put into the line for a shutoff. Some sand in the bottom of the stove completed the job, and we were ready. Open the stove door - turn on the petcock - stand back about 5 feet, and throw a match at the stove door, and you've got heat man, right now!! It worked great, and

was probably nearly as dangerous as flying over Berlin,

but we had heat! I was to spend a couple of months sleeping next to that stove before going home, and we never had any trouble with it. When the good corporal came in to wake us for briefing, he'd open the door and stand back, and throw a match, and it felt just fine, and nice and comfy. Our electrical wiring was also a nightmare. The original wiring had a few wall plugs around, but everyone wanted a reading light, and there were a few radios, and that required outlets, so we put them in ourselves. Turn off the power by the front door and climb up and cut the wire where you wanted a splice. Junction box?? Surely you jest! In fact, at times, we didn't even have tape, so we'd just leave a few inches between the bare wires to be safe. Probably make a good mousetrap, as any mouse that crossed those wires would only do it once. Again, we never had a problem. I can imagine though, a fire starting from the wiring with a fifty-gallon drum of gasoline outside would have caused a bit of a stir around the base. Then there was the trick of dropping a couple of .45 bullets down the chimney of the next barracks, which got lots of attention. Someone dropped a .50 caliber

down one day and, amazingly, it didn't blow the stove apart, but it was deemed a bit dangerous, and never done again.

You think flying missions was dangerous? It wasn't too damned safe at home either!

We had such different hours from other officers that we had our own mess. Perhaps the food was supposed to be for flying personnel, but I doubt if it was, as we seemed to have things that I remember we were told to stay away from, if we were to fly high altitude. We had a few practice missions in the next few days, which were mostly bombing while flying on someone's wing. Every time we took off, the plane had to be fully armed with guns and ammunition, as the Germans had occasionally sent fighters across the channel. Finally, on the night of Aug. 13, 1944, we were told we'd be up the next morning for our first mission. I had expected to fly copilot for one or two missions but, instead, I was first pilot, and we had an experienced copilot, so Paul would stay home for another day. The corporal woke me about 3 A.M. the next morning and told me the briefing time. Stan and Fred got up too, and we climbed into our flying stuff - long underwear, as it's cold at 28 thousand feet - and we put on our black boots.

You had to wear boots in case of bailing out - shoes would come off when the chute opened -

and they had to be black, as all shoes on the continent were black, and our brown shoes would stand out if we were trying to evade. Then, a uniform, and, of course, the leather A2 jacket. Then, to breakfast and to the briefing hut, where we picked up the rest of our gear, which was kept in a big parachute bag. First, of course, a parachute and harness. We wore chest chutes, as it was easy to hook the chute on the seat beside you, where it was handy, but not necessary to wear it all the time. A Mae West, a flak vest, which was a very heavy vest, I believe, containing brass plates, and a steel flak helmet. Then various assorted things like a flight helmet with earphones built in, goggles, and an oxygen mask. On to the briefing room, where everyone was checked in by showing an ID card. The front of the room had a curtain over it and, when everyone was present, the door was closed and the curtain drawn, and that day, it revealed a mission to Ludwighsaven and some kind of chemical factory. After about a 30-minute briefing, we took trucks to our planes, where guns were installed, and each of us put our equipment where we wanted it. As I remember, we had 6 one-thousand pound demolition bombs that day. Finally, to start time, when all were aboard, and we started engines. We had a taxi procedure, so we'd all be in the proper position for take-off, and finally, a flare was fired and we took off at 30 second intervals.

Then we had a climb towards a radio beacon, "Splasher Six", on the east coast, where we circled to form the formation. That day, we were the lowest of the low, in that we filled in the slot for the low element of the low squadron.

There were 39 planes, and we were last.

The lead plane flew a circle at 10,000 ft. and fired double yellow flares, while the low squadron was at 9,000 and fired yellow-red, and the high lead was at 11,000 and fired yellow-green. After assembly, and at a precise time, we took off for the checkpoint, where we would fit right in line behind other groups to form what was known as the bomber stream - group after group in line heading for Germany. At some point over the channel, guns would be test fired, and we'd start looking for our fighter escort - usually P-51's but occasionally P-47's, who would patrol back and forth along the line of bombers as we climbed to bombing altitude. We usually bombed from 28 thousand, but I remember one mission at 33 and one as low as 8,000, but that was just across the channel, at Brest. I recall Stan saying we should be over enemy lines, and, not long after, two black puffs appeared about 200 yards to our left, followed by two more. Sort of made you feel they were really down there and

this wasn't practice any more!

It was a long drag in to the target, and we'd pick up some occasional flak, though nothing came close, and our 51's stayed up about a thousand feet above us. At last, the target and plenty of flak, and we turned right into it for the bomb run. We couldn't hear it unless a burst was quite close, but the black smoke kept appearing all around. One interesting, if scary, aspect was that at times, the bursts would walk up on you. A few bursts would be 200 yds. ahead, then 100 yds., then 50 yds and

suddenly the airplane would bounce up as they exploded
beneath you.

Then, after dropping the bombs, the group lead would always make a steep diving turn away, figuring the flak would proceed on our original path, but over most targets, the gunners would pick up the turn on the first group, and, after that, they'd just lead you around the turn. Someplace on the bomb run, the lead opened his bomb bay doors and everyone else followed - except us - as our doors wouldn't open. Fred, the bombardier, tried cranking them manually, but had no luck. When the lead plane dropped, a smoke bomb went first, and everyone else let their bombs go on seeing that. There was a salvo handle on a cable by my left foot, and I reached down and yanked it, and the bombs released onto the

doors, which flew open as the weight disengaged them. But at least we'd bombed. Then we couldn't close the doors all the way home, but that was no big problem. We found that during the flight to the target, we'd urinated in the bomb bay, and that froze on the threads of the screws that opened the doors and jammed them. After that, I had relief tubes placed all around, so no more urinating in the bomb bay. The trip home was uneventful, except again for an occasional lonely flak battery lobbing up a few 88's, but nothing came close.

We did lose a plane over the target, and it was a classmate of mine I didn't know very well.

He just drifted out of the formation, and no one knew why, but he was gone. On arrival back over England we were usually down to a low altitude and usually had a solid deck of clouds below. We'd peel off one by one after crossing good old "Splasher Six" and head east, letting down over the channel to 1,500 feet, then north to 1,000 and come back over the station under the clouds, which could be pretty low. Then we'd head west, right on the deck, till the navigator said to turn north, and he'd vector us to the runway with a device called a "G Box". It was sort of like Loran, and it got us home all right. Luckily, we had no tall buildings to worry about,

but I'll bet we knocked some glasses off the shelves of some farmhouses!

The next day, Aug. 15, we went out again, this time with Paul as copilot, to Venlo, Netherlands, where we bombed a German fighter airfield. Southern France was being invaded that day, and I guess the idea was to keep German Airbases busy. After dropping with very little flak, we had turned back, and were flying beside another airbase, when the RAF hit it. They didn't fly formation, but rather, were just a whole lot of airplanes going the same direction. Bombs started exploding at the west end of the base, and just progressed eastward, till the whole thing appeared to blow up. Impressive!! Next, we had a raid to Pacy sur Armancon in France, and hit an oil storage site. Light flak was encountered, but nothing like the first mission. Then we went to Brest, but were unable to bomb because of weather. Little opposition was met. With a few more fairly light flak missions, we thought, this was easy, and on the 5th of Sept. we went to Stuttgart where flak was very heavy, and we picked up many holes from it, and felt a bit subdued again. Somewhere in here we were scheduled to fly, and in the morning, were told to take a 48 hour pass instead.

We were supposed to be in the low squadron that day, and discovered on our return from pass that the entire low squadron had been shot down!

Well, I'd rather be lucky than good. At least we went to the big city, and London was exciting with lots of 8th AF guys, plus other G.I. 's, and plenty of all the other troops from all over the world – and, of course, the British, with whom we got along great. We stayed at the Strand Palace Hotel, and about two in the morning, I got shook up a bit when a V1 hit just down the street and leveled a department store. These V1's came over the city at any time, and usually we paid them little mind, though many people slept every night in the "tube" or subway. The thing that bothered me a bit was that, at times, all these anti-aircraft batteries were opening up on these "buzz bombs", as they were called, and no one seemed to worry about where all that stuff was coming back down. Anyway, we did a bit of sightseeing with Westminster and the Palace, etc., and enjoyed our 48.

We flew missions every day or so, with some heavy flak, and some light. I remember one day going to some target when all was quiet, though we were well into Germany, when evidently a 2-gun anti-aircraft battery opened up with two shots each - and 3 of our planes went down. So, you never knew what to expect. Another day, we had bombed a troop barracks at Brest again and had no opposition over the target. I don't know why no one caught it, but we flew right over the Gurnsey Islands on the way home, and they were German held, and

we lost two planes to flak.

At times when a plane went down, you couldn't see why - no visible damage or smoke. Other times, there would be flames and smoke visible, and some would just plain blow up, which shook up everyone. And then we went to Russia. There had been talk of a shuttle raid for several days, and, once, we were even alerted for a mission which was scrubbed before briefing. Finally, we were told this was it, and the briefing had us going to Warsaw to drop supplies to the Poles, and then go on into Russia. As usual, we gave our wallets to be kept for us, as

we couldn't carry anything personal like that, in case of capture.

We found later that we should have kept more money - but I'll get to that. The briefing had us dropping from 10,000 feet, which was awfully low, as we usually bombed from 28,000, but intelligence had all guns removed from the area - easy for them to say. Colonel Jeff said

he thought 18,000 might be a bit more to his liking, which we all agreed to, though even that seemed low. We had three groups on the mission, the 100th, the 95th, and the 390th, who composed the 13th combat wing of the 8th A.F.,

so about 110 B-17's were involved.

Then we had a group of P-51's as escort as far as Denmark, where they'd go home, and another group pick us up and go all the way with us. I was to lead the low element of the formation, and, on the bomb run, was told to take my element up high and fly to the right of the high element. This was done so we wouldn't fly into any of the chutes that we were going to drop. We took off on schedule and assembled, then took off across the channel. Our route took us across the Netherlands, then across Denmark, and turned south towards Warsaw. We had just about no opposition along the way, except for a few bursts of flak, none of which came close, and on approaching Warsaw, we were at 18,000, but we had clouds in our way. We made a big circle with all three groups and descended 'till we could get underneath the clouds at about 12,000. It was a bit disconcerting, as we were descending, to see German fighters taking off from a base below. At 12,000, we started our run, and I tried to lead my element up to the high position. Well, I had all of about 700 hours at the time, and never realized how much power I'd need to hold my position. I should have increased my RPM's so I could get the power, but instead, I fell way behind the group and with flak which was fairly heavy, some fighters that showed up and then the chute drop, I lost my leaders, though we dropped our supply loads on the other chutes.

I remember hearing someone on the radio, in pretty much of a panic, saying his pilot had his head shot off,

and someone else trying to calm him. Then I heard Sammy Barr, the lead pilot, asking if I'd like to rejoin the group, and I looked down and the 100th was down below me, and I slid back down into position. The Russians were supposed to meet us with fighter support, but they never showed up, but we were lucky, and the 100th didn't lose any planes. From Warsaw, we flew quite a distance, right across Kiev and at last to town named Mirgorad, where we peeled off and landed on a steel mat runway. We were put up on cots in a schoolhouse, and went to a local bar and drank local champagne and a little vodka, which the Russians seemed to drink like water. The food we got wasn't bad - Spam and bread - and I don't remember what else. Then, after a night's sleep, we returned to our planes, which were still being loaded with fuel and bombs, as we were to bomb a railroad yard in Szolnok, a suburb of Budapest. The Russians loading the bombs didn't even know how to work the block and tackle in the bomb bay, but just put about six guys to lift a 1000-pound bomb up into the plane. Take-off on that steel mat was quite an experience, as the mat

seemed to build up ahead of the plane, and every now and then the plane would be thrown into the air when it built up enough. As the speed wasn't enough to fly, it would come slamming down onto the runway again. Finally, we were thrown high enough that, though the speed was a bit low, I held the plane off and, fortunately, we picked up flying speed before we fell out of the air. Our fighters picked us up as escort, and we took off southwest and encountered little opposition till the target, where flak was heavy and very accurate. I heard calls that fighters were around but saw none but our own.

I saw a '17 on fire from the group ahead of us, and chutes opening below it as the crew bailed out, and I thought what a long way from home it was!

Happily, our group lost none and just had a good bit of flak damage. We then flew over I guess what became Yugoslavia and the mountains of Albania, where we seemed to be just skimming the tops as we descended, and finally across the Adriatic, before landing in Foggia, Italy. We had picked up some fighter escort from Italy on the way, and it was the first time we'd seen P-38's.

We were assigned tents for sleeping, and the next day was nice and sunny. I ran into Sammy Barr, and he'd been given permission to fly up to Rome and asked if I'd like to go along, so I rounded up Paul, Stan and Fred, and off we went. Sammy was a squadron C.O. and a major, but for some reason, we had always got along and kidded each other. On arrival in Rome in our B17, we somehow got a ride to town which left us in front of the Red Cross canteen. Sammy said for us all to meet there at 5 PM and we'd fly back to Foggia. So we spent the day wandering around bars, sightseeing, talking to girls, one thing or another, and at 4:45 we were back at the Red Cross. Someone had left us word from Sammy that the airport closed at 4:30 so he'd gone back to Foggia and lots of luck. We got rooms for the night at the Red Cross, and, the next morning, went out to the airport and hitchhiked a ride on a B-24 going to Foggia. Well, the 8th AF had gone back to England that morning and left us an airplane with a damaged wing spar and orders to wait for it to be repaired and fly it home. First of all, we had almost no money, as we'd turned our wallets in before flying the mission, so we went looking for cash. We found the finance office in Foggia and requested a partial pay from

some captain, who treated us little better than he'd have treated the Luftwaffe.

He finally said he'd never heard of the 100th Bomb Group and we told him it was in the 8th Air Force. He said that was in England and we said, "That's right", and he said for us to go back to England to get paid. Next, we opened our escape pouches, which contained some maps printed on silk, some pills to stay awake, and \$50 dollars worth of French francs. So, we'd flown across the Netherlands, Germany, Poland, Russia, Hungary, I guess Albania, and God knows where else, and we had French money. Well, it turned out we could use it so we each had 50 bucks. We didn't need much, but officers are charged for their meals, though not much, and a drink at a bar in town cost maybe 20 cents, so we weren't too badly off. I remember one night Stan and I got back to the base late, I think we'd been to an officer's club out east of Foggia, and at the base gate we ran into a couple of Aussie pilots who had a few bottles of wine, and we sat on a fence late into the night, drinking wine and telling war stories. Stan and I were in Foggia one day just wandering around, and stopped in a little hole in the wall bar for a beer or a drink of some kind. We'd been there a while when it began to fill up a bit, which was O.K., though we were the only officers there, but mostly G.I.s, and I guess a few Aussies. Suddenly a fight started, and it was like you see in a western movie where it rapidly spreads, so Stan and I climbed up and sat on the bar, which was fairly high. The M.P.'s came running in and started grabbing people to drag away but we could see that at times they'd grab some poor innocent guy who been merely watching so

we'd signal the M.P. a negative shake of the head, and he'd let
that guy go,

so finally, we were pointing out the guys to run in. Three black N.C.O.'s were minding their own business when one of the M.P.'s decided to run them in, 'till we jumped down and said that they had nothing to do with the fight, and to let them go, which they did. Well, these guys thought we were great to take their side, and insisted we go to their N.C.O. club for dinner, which we did, and had a pleasant time. Time to go home, we left their club and stepped outside into the blackout - and it was dark - but we could see a few vehicles on the road. We wanted to hitchhike back to the base, except that there was a 10 foot-deep drainage ditch in between, and we both fell in and rolled to the bottom.

Lucky we weren't killed.

But we climbed out and got to the road and back to our tent without further trouble. Finally, our airplane was fixed and we test-hopped it. We had to have the whole crew. As in England, any time you took off, you had to be ready to fight in case a fighter showed up. So after a few stalls, and this and that, we were ready to go home. There were about 15 planes around in the same situation, so one morning we all briefed and took off, assembled, and

headed home. We headed across Italy and up to Southern France. We saw a city below at one time that Stan thought was Marseille, but I'd seen a newsreel of the French fleet being scuttled in Toulon, and thought that was it - and sure enough, the fleet was there on the bottom. We got back to England with no problems, and the formation split up, with all returning to their own groups. It was nice to get back. We had missed the 200 mission party for the 100th Bomb Group, but that was no big deal, as we settled back in.

When we were in training, we had all sorts of aircraft recognition classes, and got so we could recognize a plane in a hundredth of a second. Great. In combat, everyone decided that this was for real, and

if a fighter points his nose at us, shoot at him!

They knew it, too, and were very careful pulling in on us to give us a good look at the shape of the wing, and to not point their guns at us.

Flying missions was very tiring, not just because of the danger, but at 28,000 feet, it's cold, and we had to keep our oxygen masks on to breathe, which got tiresome after 7 or 8 hours. Then, just holding formation is work, and becomes tedious pretty quickly. We had started out with Paul and I shifting off every 30 minutes, but finally ended up with 15 minutes each. I smoked cigarettes in those days, as did just about everyone in the group, and I remember how I lit up after a tough bomb run when I needed a smoke. Get out a cigarette and my Zippo lighter, and have them in my lap. Switch to 100 percent oxygen on my supply, where we usually breathed air and oxygen according to altitude, then take a couple of breaths of pure oxygen, take off my mask, and put the cigarette in my mouth, and blow oxygen on the lighter as I lit it, as it wouldn't light otherwise, then light the cigarette and put the mask back on before I passed out. Then I'd take the mask off every few seconds and inhale some smoke, then put it back on again. A cigarette would last for hours at altitude as it burned so slowly. People have remarked about that procedure being dangerous,

but with the best gunners in the world trying to shoot me down, that was the least of my worries!

A few days later, we were alerted for another mission, and the Pollock and crew were to take off early to check the cloud tops and make sure we could assemble at 9-10 & 11 000 ft. The officers' club had a set of traffic lights at the end of the bar, and green meant no mission tomorrow, or what we called a stand down, yellow was no word yet, and red meant a mission. If it went red, we'd usually call operations to see if we were up, and what position, and we'd hit the sack early. This day, we had our usual pre-dawn briefing, and during that we heard a loud explosion. When I was hopping on the truck to go to the

airplane, someone said that the Pollock had gone in on take-off, and that was the explosion we heard. Of course, it shook us up as they bunked right beside us in Barracks 8. Never found out just what actually happened, but the investigation seemed to think he'd taken off with his artificial horizon caged, which means it was locked in level position, so he wouldn't know that he was turning into the ground. Later models had warning flags, and even later ones would only cage if you held the knob manually, and would uncage when you let it go. At any rate, the Pollock, Mack, and "the kid" were killed, but Bruce, the bombardier had slept late as he wasn't needed, so he survived. Then, the next day, we had the day off, and Lundholm was shot down, and two days later, the new crew in the barracks went down,

*so in the space of less than a week, the four of us in my crew
were the only ones left.*

Luckily, none of us was very superstitious, but it was a bad week. The barracks seemed very, very empty 'till some new crews came in to replace them. That reminds me of a strange incident that happened sometime during my tour. A new crew arrived in the squadron one afternoon and were given their bed assignments, went to the mess hall for dinner, and as they were tired, they went right to bed. There was a mission on the next morning, and a copilot was sick, so the copilot on the new crew was grabbed, and off he went - to be shot down. No one even remembered the guy, his name, or what he looked like. He just arrived, ate, slept and was gone, so he was always mentioned as "the man who came to dinner".

Our group C.O. was Col. Jeffry, and he was an ideal bomb group commander. He was about 28 or 29, I think, and a VMI grad, but it was his way of running things that made us all respect him. If the mission seemed pretty easy, he'd stay home, but if we had a long haul, as we said, "1780 and incendiaries" (which meant 1,780 gallons and some carried incendiary bombs), and that meant we were off for a long flight and probably a major target, and Col. Jeff would be in the lead plane. I recall, at one briefing, the adjutant stood up and read a letter from 8th AF headquarters, saying that the bases didn't look military enough, and from now on, our A2 leather flight jackets would not be worn around the base, but only on flights. Well, we always wore them around, so that was an unpleasant surprise 'till Col. Jeff got up and said we could do what we wanted, but he planned to keep wearing his jacket. End of that problem! We kept wearing them, and I never heard a thing about it. At some point, we flew about 4 missions in 5 days, and were really beat. I think it was when we were hitting the rail yards at Cologne and it was go, go, go. The medium bombers would come up from France or England and hit early in the morning 'till about 10

or 11 o'clock, then we'd come in for about 4 hours, then the mediums again, and then the RAF would pound it all night. This went on for three days and nights, and

I don't know how anyone could have survived it.

We'd drop mostly demolition bombs, and a few planes carried delayed action bombs, which would go off 6, 12 or 24 hours after, hitting to bother the people making repairs. If you carried these, you couldn't bring them home, and if the mission was canceled after takeoff or you had to abort the mission, you'd drop the bombs in the English Channel. Must be a lot of those just laying on the bottom, even today.

When we returned from a mission, we'd be debriefed by an intelligence officer to report on flak, fighters, or any enemy ship traffic in the channel, when at night we'd hear the English Beaufighters going out to shoot up the shipping. After debrief and turning in our equipment, we'd usually hit the mess hall, then to the barracks to clean up, and to the club for a beer and to bed early. Once in this stretch, that is the consecutive mission days, I went to the barracks after debrief before eating and just fell on my bed to rest a minute. The next thing I knew the corporal was shaking me to go out again as I'd slept through fully clothed. Then,

on some days, I'd have to take time to shave, as my oxygen mask wasn't fitting tightly enough.

One day, we were flying someplace in Northern Germany up near Denmark, maybe we were going to hit the shipyards along the Kiel Canal. The Hundredth was leading the mission that day, and I was in my usual second element lead, so right at the head of the whole show. There was a front built up ahead of us, and the lead kept zig zagging and climbing to get above the wall of clouds ahead, but he made a mistake, and led us right into the clouds, which were very thick, so I could barely see my inboard engine. So here I was with the lead ahead and above me, a plane on each wing, and another three planes below me. I concentrated on my instruments to hold heading, altitude and airspeed, and someone called over the radio to do just that.

I was expecting a B-17 to come flying in my window any second,

or that I would catch up with the guy ahead. This went on for a terrifying two minutes, and I suddenly broke out into bright sunshine with Denmark and the Baltic Sea down below - and not a damned airplane in sight! As I looked around, I could see one break out of the clouds below or above, or way to the left, so everyone had scattered. But I had no place to

go. Scary! I think they canceled the mission and we descended below the front out over the ocean, and flew home.

On another run, we were in our usual second element lead, returning from a mission, when a cold front forced us to lower altitude to go beneath it. Going in, we'd flown above it, but now we had descended and going under it seemed best. We were over Belgium, which was in control of our troops, so flak was no problem. As we went lower and lower, the element lead beneath me wisely changed position to fly above the high element, which left us as the lowest part of the group. My two wingmen usually flew a bit low on my wing, or at least level, but now they flew a bit high, as we were down about 100 or 200 feet above the ground and just clearing farmhouses and tall trees. Stan called out that there was a city up ahead, and, shortly, we were buzzing across a pretty large city that Stan identified as Liege. I was looking up at the lead airplane to hold formation, and

*occasionally Stan or Fred would call out a tall building ahead,
and I should slide to the right or left to go around it.*

I glanced down once and we were flying right up a main street with no vehicles that I could see, but people here and there. Stan said later that it was funny seeing all those people staring up at us as we breezed over. We finally got out from under the front, and climbed up a few thousand feet to cross the channel and home. A very funny experience.

One day, we received word that we were going to the "Flak Shack" for a week or so, which we'd heard about. Someplace through your combat tour everyone got a week or so of R & R, "rest and recuperation", and that was the "Flak Shack", a beautiful English estate, which had been given to the 8th Air Force for that use during the war. It was over near Oxford, and we stopped for a night in London along the way, as nothing was too cut and dried about this week. The V-1's were still coming in occasionally, and about this time the V-2's started. This was a long rocket that resembled a flying telegraph pole and went 3,000 MPH, so when one hit you'd hear the tremendous explosion and then the sound of it coming at you. Anyway, we spent a night in London, and then to Oxford, which was quite plush.

*I was awakened the first morning by a very English butler
giving me a glass of orange juice in bed.*

The Red Cross ran it and did a nice job. Food was great, and every afternoon we had a cocktail hour. During the day we did pretty much as we wanted, and I remember going to a party by some Oxford students, which was pleasant, if non-alcoholic.

Stan and I spent a day at the horse races, and it was quite lucrative. Before the first race, we were looking over the list of horses, odds, etc., when a little cockney came past us and said, "If I were you Yanks I'd bet on 3 and 5", so, why not, and who came in first and second but 3 and 5! So we looked him up before every race, and did very well for ourselves. He must have made a bundle, as he picked nearly every race. We did go down to London for a day during the week, as it really got a bit boring, and we were free to come and go. But Flak Shack was different for a week and it got us pretty much away from the war which was the idea.

Then back to Thorpe Abbotts and the Bloody Hundredth, and the war.

I was having a problem with the sciatic nerve in the right buttocks. It hurt me to stand up or to sit down, that is, the in-between bothered me - in fact it hurt a lot. Once I was up or down, I was O.K., so I could fly. The flight surgeon thought it was from sitting on a parachute harness for long hours that irritated the nerve, and even suggested I fly with the harness unfastened, but I told him he was out of his mind and that if I had to get out in a hurry, I didn't want to stop and buckle my harness, and I didn't think a sore leg would slow me up much. So I endured it, and it actually bothered me for several years. I still can't bend over and touch toes very well, as I think I stiffened up while I had that. Another thought on the V2's or flying telegraph poles - we saw them going up when we were on missions while over the low countries or west Germany. We'd see a trail of smoke, and somewhere ahead of it would be this long thin object, and it would go right up out of sight. Saw them quite often, as a matter of fact.

One day we took off in terrible weather, which was not at all unusual, but evidently some meteorologist looked ahead a few hours and saw the weather was to be terrible on our return, and probably below what we needed to land. So the mission was cancelled, and we circled for a while until someone found a couple of RAF fields away over in western England, where the weather was pretty good, so off we went - all 200 of us. We found the fields all right, and contact with the tower verified it, and we flew across, in formation, at 2,000 ft., and the lead fired a flare for us to start peeling off to land. The Brits had never seen this evidently, and asked why we were "firing pyrotechnics". They were assured all was well, and we landed and

then had to figure out what to do with 200 airplanes on a small Limey airfield.

We ended up parking on the grass someplace and, as we had a load of bombs and still most of our fuel, we sunk in a bit. One of the crew was assigned to stand guard, I forget

who it was, and the rest of us went to a hospital for wounded G.I.'s from France. They thought we were great as they'd seen us flying over, while all of us agreed that we'd never swap jobs and jump into a foxhole. We got beds for the night, and next day, were briefed to return individually, rather than in formation. Home was forecast to be about 3 to 5 hundred feet.

We started up old "Milk Run Mabel", but with a full bomb load, she was stuck in the mud.

I finally started rocking her back and forth, which must have been quite a sight. I pushed the throttle full on, then idle, then full, then idle, and finally tried half flaps as we rocked forward, and out we came. We took off and tried staying low, right on the deck at 100 or 200 feet, but finally had to go up to about 2,000 feet, where I worried about other traffic. We headed for "Splasher 6", our radio beacon on the coast, and after 45 minutes or so, Stan said we should be there, so something was wrong, as the needle still pointed straight ahead. We knew the Germans would occasionally put out a strong radio signal on our frequencies to lure planes across the channel, and a few planes had been lost that way. In fact, several were captured intact. I slowly let down and at about 500 feet we broke out and there was nothing but water below us, so I reversed course, and Stan got his G-box going and vectored us home, as I held the plane right on the deck. And we made it, as did all the others.

Showed us how careful we'd have to be, though, as we could have ended up in Germany.

On Nov. 2, 1944 the 8th Air Force went to Merseburg and bombed the Luena synthetic oil plant. Merseburg is a suburb of Leipzig, so it was to be a long haul, and the Germans guarded it well, as oil was short and precious. When I walked into the briefing room at 5 A.M., Stan had just finished pre-briefing for navigators and bombardiers, and said, "Ted, this one'll kill ya". At briefing, they told us we'd be in range of 3,500 guns on the bomb run in and out, and that's a lot of guns. Take-off was normal, and we assembled and crossed the channel in line, and flew into Germany. We picked up a bit of flak here and there but nothing too close, and about 4 hours into the mission, I was watching a large thunderstorm out ahead and to the left and thought it a funny time of year for a thunderstorm. I checked the time and realized we made a left turn in about 4 minutes, and realized my thunderstorm was a solid mass of flak, and looking closer I could see individual bursts. I asked Stan if we made a left turn ahead and he answered, "You better believe it", and the group ahead of us turned and flew into it. Then we made our turn, and

for the only time during our tour, in fact in my life, I was sure
we were going to be killed,

as no one could get through that flak. But as the Limeys say, "In for a penny, in for a pound", and this is what we're here for, so in we went. I was second element lead, as usual, so I was in the middle of the pack. When we flew into the cloud, the whole plane bounced every few seconds as a shell exploded beneath us, and there was the steady popping of the explosions. Some would explode just outside my window, so close I'd see the red flash and we'd be past it but because of its upwards velocity, I wasn't hit. We could hear shrapnel hitting the plane and

now and then some shrapnel would ricochet around the
cockpit, and drop to the floor.

The plane would take quite a bounce at times as a shell exploded just beneath us, but on we went! Rogers reported from the waist gun that our left wingman was going down, and I looked, and though I could see no smoke or fire, that wingman was sure going down, as he rolled to the left and the nose dropped into a 45-degree dive. I watched 'till he'd gone about 2,000 feet down, and then back to business. A moment later Rogers reported we had a wingman again, as a guy moved up from the element below us.

Then, Stan called out for everyone to check his oxygen supply,
as his read zero - and so did mine -

so our primary supply had been hit. I told everyone to switch to reserve supply if they needed to, and I reached under my seat for the reserve supply hose, disconnected from the primary source, and plugged into the reserve, and I was back in business. Paul was looking out the right window at something and seemed in no hurry, so I told him to switch over right away, and I watched as he retrieved the reserve hose and slowly disconnected his primary and tried to reconnect to the reserve, but he was already too far gone and couldn't put the hoses together.

In another few seconds, he passed out and slumped over the
controls.

I grabbed him by his parachute harness at the shoulder and pulled him over so he was slumping to the side but off the control column. As I pulled my arm back, Woodville fell out of the top turret and hit my arm, and ended up slumped into the hatchway to the nose,

with an arm on either side. I got on the intercom and said that the copilot and top turret gunner were unconscious up here, and that the others had to figure out how to take care of them, as I had to fly the airplane! Shortly, Woodie disappeared down the nose hatch as Stan pulled him into the nose, and then Kocher was beside me with a walk-around bottle, and he worked on reviving Paul, who quickly came around. Then Woodie came climbing back from the nose with a walk-around and got back into the turret, and we were back in business!

Stan had really saved us all by noticing the oxygen was gone, as a few more seconds and we'd all have been unconscious.

I looked around and our left wingman was gone again and Rogers said he'd gone down a few minutes ago, but as I had seemed busy, he hadn't reported it. I asked Alex, the tail gunner, if anyone else was moving up from the low element, and Alex reported that there was no one left down there. Then the bomb bay doors opened on the lead plane, and we all opened ours, and in a minute or so, the lead dropped, and we all did. The lead then started a diving turn to the right to get us out of there, but the flak gunners were good and followed us around the corner. As we were turning, I let my plane slide a bit to the right, so I was almost under the right wingman on the lead, and I didn't notice that he hadn't dropped his bombs.

As we flew nearly under him, he dropped his bombs late. I can still those bombs hanging there as I closed the throttles, and I think I even stepped on my foot brakes, as

they must have missed the nose by about six inches.

When we leveled off after diving about 1,500 feet, I told Paul to fly a while, and I looked around. Way back, about a quarter mile away, I saw what looked like a large candle flame as far as shape, but, as I stared at it, I could see wings going round and round. It was a B17 on fire. As I looked, there was a blinding flash as it blew up, and then there was nothing. No debris, no smoke, nothing to show that burning plane had been there with nine men aboard. I know it shook me up. A bit later the flak let up a bit, and I began to think we might make it. The engine instruments looked good, and especially the oil pressures looked good on all four engines. Then the waist gunner reported a ship from the 390th BG was pulling in on our wing.

We found out later that he was the last survivor, and he wanted a place to hide, and my wing was it.

A lone airplane was a set-up for fighters, so everyone wanted to stay in formation, and he pulled in tight and flew back to England with us. We had a bit of flak here and there on the way back, and then, let down over the channel, and headed home. Everyone was pretty shot up, and of course, we'd lost a number of airplanes, so we got a few days off to build back up. It might have been here that Col. Jeff decided we should get a few night landings, as missions were getting back sometimes after dark. So, we got the crew together and had to arm the guns and be ready for anything, and took off, flew around the perimeter of the field, which was marked by lights, and made three landings. No problem. But

one of the guys in the squadron made three landings at three other airports before he found his way back to ours.

He said he figured something was wrong when after landing he noticed the field was loaded with B-24's. Colonel Jeff thought it a riot and considered a seeing eye dog for the pilot.

In December, the Battle of the Bulge started, and the troops really needed air support, but the weather was terrible, with pea soup fog every day, and from what we were told, the weather on the continent was just as bad, so we couldn't bomb, even if we got off.

Christmas Eve dawned nice and sunny, and the Eighth had every airplane up that could fly. The Hundredth put up 5 squadrons or 50 airplanes, where we usually put up 36. The extra 2 squadrons flew with one from the 390th to make an extra group. We bombed an airfield at Biblis and had heavy flak, and fighters were around, though I didn't see any. We lost a few planes, but at least we got out. The Stars and Stripes, our newspaper, said it was the largest raid by the heavies to date, all hitting either airports or railroad yards. Crossing the channel, everyone usually test-fired their guns, and the lead usually said when to do it. Occasionally, the lead would fire without warning, and as I was right under him,

all the shell casings from the ball turret would fly back and hit my props and wings,

so the leading edges of my wings were dents and patches from those hitting. Another great deal for making holes in my wing were the spinners from incendiary clusters, and I had some of those even hit the windshield, but luckily didn't come through, but it was startling to have those things come back at you. Sort of like carrying our own flak.

In November, we had a big night when Glenn Miller and his Army Air Corps Band played at the Hundredth. They went around from group to group, and it was quite exciting for us.

They set up in one of the hangers, and it was a great show. I believe it was only about a month later

when he disappeared out over the channel in a DC-3.

Our barracks were long, square cement block buildings that held about 20 of us, and were really not too bad. Sort of a square Quonset hut. England in those days didn't know much about central heating - even the hotels had a heating unit in a false fireplace that you'd drop a shilling into for heat. In the barracks, we had coal stoves and we were limited to one pail of coal a day, which didn't go very far in cold weather. We'd make midnight requisitions (known as stealing) at times for extra coal, but then someone had the great idea that where we were short of coal, there was one thing we could get plenty of - GASOLINE. So we found a 50 gallon drum and mounted it outside the barracks on a platform with a mixture of oil and 100 octane gasoline about 50/50, ran a fuel line in to the stove, and had a petcock about 2 feet from the stove for a shut off, and dripped the mixture onto sand in the bottom. You'd turn on the petcock, open the stove door and after a few seconds throw a match at the stove door and you had heat right now. It worked just great. Someone has since told me how dangerous it was,

but when you're getting shot at every day by Hitler's finest, it really didn't bother us much!

Then, I don't know who started it but someone climbed on top of a barracks and dropped a handful of 45 cal. bullets down the chimney late at night. Really got your attention. Someone actually dropped a 50 cal. machine gun bullet down one night, and surprisingly, it didn't come through the side of the stove, but it made a Hell of a bang!

[The story was recounted again in 1997 in "Splasher Six", the newsletter of The 100th Bomb Group of World War II, see appendix.]

It was probably the trip where we returned from Italy that I remember flying quite low out over the ocean, and looking ahead to see the white cliffs of Dover ahead, and higher than us. The lead then climbed so we came across the top of the cliffs about three or four hundred feet above the ground. Then, we gradually climbed to about 3,000, and flew right over London. They had barrage balloons flying all the time on heavy cables to catch low flying fighters, and they emitted a high-pitched sound on the radio, and were called "squeakers" The sound was to warn you they were there and to maintain some altitude.

Over Germany, there was always a humming in the headsets that we were told was the sound of thousands of radar sets, both ours and theirs, in constant sweep. When we'd get

in range of our field, we'd call in to "Clearup", the code for the hundredth base, and give our code, which our plane was "Rubber, U for uncle", as "RU" was painted someplace on our plane. Then we always had a Transponder going, which we called the "IFF" for "Identification, Friend or Foe", and put out a signal on the ground radar.

They still shot at us now and then anyway over England, but I never saw anyone hit.

Peeling off over the field from formation got us on the ground pretty quickly when the weather was good, say a 3,000-foot ceiling, or better. The lead would take us right up the runway at 1,500 feet and would fire a flare for his wingman to go. He'd peel off to the left, and pull up his nose a bit to slow to flap speed, and throw down half flaps, and then the landing gear, as he kept turning left. He'd keep it fairly tight, so he just about made a descending 360-degree turn, which put him down on the end of the runway. After he had peeled off, the lead would follow in about 5 seconds, then the right wingman, and so on, into the next element, 'till all 12 planes were in one big pattern, and all would be on the ground in a minute or so. I remember one day, though, when the plane ahead of me blew a tire near the far end of the runway and was left sitting half-on and half-off of it. Some guys were out trying to wave him out of the way, but he couldn't move, and here came old Lt. Ted Harris and his B-17 a few seconds later, and I couldn't stop. It was too late to go around, and the guys on the ground took off for the boonies when they saw my plane. I was able to just sneak by to the left of the other guy with no damage, but it was close. If a plane had wounded on board, they'd fly a red flare just before touching down, and they'd pull off the runway onto the dirt when they could, and an ambulance would rush over to them. It was all very efficient.

December brought the "Battle of the Bulge",

and we were needed badly to bomb in support of the ground troops, but the weather was so bad we couldn't get out till the 24th, Christmas Eve, when we put up every plane that could fly. We combined with, I think, the 390th, to put up 3 groups, and we bombed an airfield at Biblis, and had considerable opposition with heavy flak and fighters, but our casualties were quite light. The next day, Christmas, we couldn't get out, as was the 26th, but on the 27th we went to Fulda, a railroad center, and on the 28th, to Coblenz in the Ruhr Valley, and another big rail center, and all to stop the German movements into the Bulge. Somehow, in the next few days as we neared the end of our combat tour, they managed to get me flying even when we didn't fly a mission. One day, I flew to check someone out on flying the second element lead, and on another day, I took a new airplane up to 30,000 feet to see if everything worked all right at altitude, which it did. We flew a couple missions,

Frankfurt and back to Fulda, and finally, on Jan. 5, we came up to our final mission to bomb the railroad yards in Frankfurt. The weather was poor on the ground, but we could get out all right, and above about 8,000 the weather was beautiful. At times when the ceiling would be about 1,000 feet, we'd take off, make a turn onto our course for "Splasher Six", the radio station we homed on and used for assembly, and I'd look out the window to find a fighter, a P-51 or a P-47, flying formation with me. In those days,

fighter pilots were often not very good instrument pilots,

but they could fly tight formation, so they'd tack onto a B-17 flying up through the overcast and leave when on top. One of these days, too, I had the pitot tube, which gave me my airspeed, freeze up on take-off. When I got off the ground, I only had about 100 knots, and I needed 120. After a few panic seconds while I held the airplane level instead of climbing, I realized that with all four engines running fine, I must have more speed than that, so I started a shallow climb. After a minute or two, the ice broke loose and I had about 130 or 140 so no problem. Evidently, the heater for the tube failed, or something, but it worked fine after that. We assembled as usual about 10,000 feet in bright sun, and, at the proper time, took off for the assembly point for the Eighth Air Force, which was up around a bay known as "The Wash". As we turned to fly across the channel and slip into the bomber stream, as far as I could see ahead were group after group of B-17's. Spectacular!!

They said there were over 2,200 heavy bombers out that day,

and the bomber stream was so long that the first groups had bombed and turned for home before the last groups left England. The mission was fairly tame, as flak was light to moderate, and other than a few holes in the planes, everyone came through O.K. I had a fuel problem for some reason and pulled out of formation after the target, and flew below the group all the way back, as formation flying really uses fuel in a hurry, and we got back O.K., but sweat a bit. I probably should have landed in Brussels or Paris for fuel, but it was our last one and we wanted to go home, and I was young and foolish, but we got back all right, and the ground crew met us with congratulations.

I remember an amazing incident that happened when we returned from one of the missions, when the weather at the base was pretty good, probably 8,000 overcast and perhaps 5 miles visibility. On that mission, for some reason I was leading the high element of the high squadron, so I was way up on top of the whole formation. I flew just above and to the right of the squadron lead, so looking down from my cockpit window, I could see everyone. We were going to land north, and we had come across the coast just north of the base, so flew south, just west of the base, with the lead about 3,000 feet. There was a B-24 base about 10 miles west of Thorpe Abbots, and their group, for some reason, was flying

north, just east of their field, and as I watched, both groups flew into each other. I pulled up with my wingmen a couple hundred feet to stay clear, and I expected to see explosions all over as planes collided. I couldn't believe my eyes as nothing happened, and the two groups just flew through each other with no one colliding. Funny, there was a little talk about it at the club that night, but evidently no one else realized just how close it was.

So, we'd completed our combat tour, and we were all in one piece!

We were standing around in our barracks that night, talking with the other guys in there, when a new crew came in, with a guy named Calder as first pilot. They had done some anti-sub flying off the U.S. coast, and we all thought they were a pretty cocky bunch, with the attitude that combat would be a piece of cake. Next morning, they were up for a mission, and they were to fly old "Milk Run Mabel", the plane which had taken care of us through it all.

The mission came back that afternoon, and no Milk Run Mabel!

They'd been hit over the target, which was close to the front lines, and had a fire, and all bailed out. Well, they all showed up again in a few days, but that was the end of our old airplane on its first mission without us. Calder and crew were later in a collision with a German fighter and blew up. Funny, but after we'd finished, we were in no special hurry to leave Thorpe Abbots and go home, and we just hung around doing this or that, awaiting our orders.

One morning, I went up to the hospital to see "Smokey" Stover, the doctor assigned to the 418th squadron, about my sciatica, which still bothered me. Stan was with me, as we were going someplace afterwards. I don't remember where. We'd just got in to see Smokey, when we heard airplane engines coming closer and closer, and they sounded very uneven, and then a tremendous explosion, and quiet. Smokey grabbed his hat and ran for the door, and I yelled that if there were guys in the plane, it was too late now. A B-17 on the day's mission had somehow got into a tailspin and they couldn't get it out, so the crew bailed out, and it crashed about a quarter mile behind the hospital - in our bomb dump, on top of the fragmentary bombs. Stan and I went out to the perimeter track, the taxi way around the airport, to watch the activity. I remember there was a press photographer standing beside us taking pictures. For some reason, no one thought about the fact that the plane was on a mission, and loaded with 6 one-thousand pound demolition bombs. As we stood there, perhaps a quarter mile from the flames, one of those bombs went off, and the two of us

went flat on the ground, and shrapnel went flying by. When all was quiet again, we decided that anyplace else was better than being where we were, so we moved out fast. I looked for the photographer and saw him about 200 yards away, and making good time. We got up to a street with some jeeps parked along it, when another bomb exploded, but at least we had the jeeps to duck behind. We got back to the barracks and a poker game was in progress, and

every time a bomb went off, the guys would dive under beds,

as many people are hurt from flying glass from broken windows in bombing raids. This went on all day 'till it burned out, and remarkably, the only injury was a shrapnel wound some GI got in his arm. When I think back on the days in the 100th, my greatest sense of loss is thinking of Mac and Junior in Dobrogowski's crew. Those of us who survived of course get older, but

*one always remembers them as they were, especially Junior,
looking about 14 years old, and never to get any older.*

Sad. But war isn't much fun. Finally, our orders were printed up to go home, and we packed up and left Thorpe Abbots via the railroad station in Diss. We noticed that for some reason, the orders had no report date for the base in western England from where we would ship home, so we thought we'd spend a few days in London en route. So, a night in London was spent going to our old haunts, the Regent Palace bar, which was sort of an Eighth Air Force hangout. The Savoy, where we knew some R.A.F. guys. The Blue Lagoon night club. But the damned V2's were coming in and hitting in London about once an hour, so after one night we decided to leave, as this was a Hell of a time to get killed. We had left some of our bags in a checkroom at the railroad station, and one of my b-4 bags turned up missing, with about half of what I owned, but nothing to do about it. However, on arrival at the station in western England, a truck picked us up, and while picking up my bags, I realized I had the one that was missing in London. And there was my other one, too. I have no idea how that bag got there, but I was, of course, happy to see it. We spent about a week at this base awaiting a ship home, and the Transportation Corps did a good job with signs welcoming "The Happy Warriors", and making everything as pleasant as possible. We wandered into the local town a few times for dinner and a few drinks, even went to a symphony with Stan, and it wasn't a bad week. I got orders first, and shipped off to Glasgow, where

my ship awaited, and it turned out to be the Queen Mary!

I ran into Bill Grimm, a friend from cadet days, and we played gin rummy all the way across the ocean. This was late January, and even on the Queen, it was a rough trip, and of course the ship was really moving to avoid subs. We finally pulled into N.Y. harbor, took a train to Ft. Dix, and received orders for a 30-day leave, and I was to report to Atlantic City for R and R - an Atlantic City vacation in March! FUN CITY!! Forget it. Another lieutenant and myself were put in charge of about 100 G.I. 's all going home like us, and put on a train for Ft. Devens, a happy group. The train stopped for an hour in New London, Ct. and we told the guys to stay away from bars, as we didn't want to lose anyone, and everyone took off. After about 30 minutes, the other officer and I decided to hop in a bar for one or two, and, on walking in, were greeted by about half the G.I. 's, who insisted on buying us our drinks. On getting back on the train, we were missing one guy, who, it turned out, lived in New London and drove up to Devens and met us there.

BACK TO THE STATES

Processing at Devens was very short, and we were cleared to go home. I thought of taking a bus, but called my folks, who lived in Nashua at the time, and they came down to get me, as it's not far. Next day, I went back to Winchester and Betty, and saw a bunch of my old high school friends. Seemed funny to be back there again as a war veteran, with wings and combat ribbons. I don't remember especially what we did for those 30 days, but they ended all too soon, and I went to Atlantic City for fun in the sun - in February. Ran into a few guys I knew there, Herky Gearhardt, for one, who'd been in cadets with me, and now was a combat returnee. We had a rugged physical, which showed me to be O.K., and some psychiatrist asked me if I felt O.K. and that was that. We hung around a few bars, one had a good piano player and singer, and just wasted time for 30 days. I remember we ran into Joe DiMaggio down there, as he was playing ball for a service team, and putting in appearances at various bases. I was sort of glad to get out of there, as there just wasn't much to do. When it came to my next assignment, I decided to go back to Sebring as an instructor, as did Herkie. Funny, if you're just out of school, they sent you here or there with no problem, including to combat, but if you had just survived and returned from combat, the powers that be didn't seem to know what to do with us. So, back to Sebring. Arriving back in Sebring, we quickly discovered that, as the war was winding down, there were more instructors than students. They gave us a B-17 to fly around several times to get our flying time in for flight pay, and other than that, Herkie and I discovered golf, and we played every day. One day,

we were asked if we'd like to go into B-29's to bomb Japan,

but I said I thought I'd pass for a while, so they sent us to Charleston, S.C to be, as it turned out, B-24 instructors. I didn't even know how to get into the airplane, but we got to fly them for a few hours, which only convinced me that a B-17 was much the better airplane. I always seemed that I could smell gasoline fumes in a B-24, which was unsettling, and I just didn't like the way it flew.

Somewhere I met a Wave named Sandy, and we went to the beach a lot. Then, I was asked if I'd be interested in going to C-54 training, the same as the commercial DC-4, and I said, "Why not!", and off I went to Homestead, Florida. One incident in Charleston was funny. Our coming and going from our rooms was very random, and I'd been rooming with a guy for about 3 weeks, but I'd never met him, as we were only slept in our rooms, and either he was asleep when I came in, or vice versa. One night at the officer's club, I got talking with a guy at the bar and swapped stories for a while, and then headed to our barracks. He headed for the same building and then the same room. My roommate! Bob Hayward, and he was from Worcester, Mass., and we hung around somewhat together for the next few years.

TO THE PACIFIC

So off I went to Homestead, Florida and to check out on the C-54. We had three weeks of ground school first, and had lots of meteorology, navigation, fuel control, and stuff I had received a bit of in cadets, but now went deeper. Then into flight training, which was O.K., but I thought, as in many military courses I was to get, they spent too much time on instrument work and not enough on flying the damned machine. Sort of that I could fly it fine with one or two engines out and ceiling of 300 feet, but no one showed me how to make a plain ordinary landing with everything working. But, anyway, after six weeks in Florida, I went back to Charleston to await assignment. Now, from what I heard, we could go to Bradley Field in Hartford, Conn., which I thought would be super, as I could see Betty at college in N.Y., or we'd go to the west coast. So, orders came through for Mather Field in Sacramento, naturally. For some reason, I took a train out, and it was a week's jaunt and not much fun. The eastern half of the U.S. is dull, anyway, but I met a few people aboard who were interesting. On arrival in Mather Field, I found it was just a staging base, and I was assigned to Fairfield-Suisun AFB, about halfway between Sacramento and San Francisco, later to be named Travis AFB. The idea was that we'd be based at Fairfield, but when up for a trip, would be flown over to Hamilton Field just north of San Francisco Bay, and there we'd pick up our airplane. The war with Japan had just ended, so we were to be involved with getting people and equipment into Japan, which sounded interesting, and it was. On my first trip out, I flew as copilot, and we stopped at Hickam Field in Honolulu, which I was to learn well, then to little Johnston Island, to Kwajalein in the Marshalls, and on to Guam.

The trips in those days were long in a C-54, and, depending on the wind, it took from 12 to 17 hours to get to Honolulu, 12 to Kwajalein, and about 8 to Guam. Kwaj was just a big coral atoll that the marines had taken, and there were still ruins of tanks and landing craft laying about, and a coral landing strip of about 10,000 feet. It's about 13 degrees north of the equator, so it's hot, but it does have a steady breeze.

Guam is just jungle.

Later on, there was a beautiful beach called Tuman Bay, the perfect picture of a south seas beach, with palm trees leaning out over the water - but the water inside the reef was only 2 or 3 feet deep, and outside the reef was big shark country. That first trip, we turned around at Guam, so I didn't get to see Tokyo. My second trip, I went out as first pilot or plane commander, or whatever. Our trip to Hickam in Honolulu was uneventful, and we had a layover of a few days, and went to see Pearl Harbor and the wreckage of the Arizona, and then even went to Waikiki.

A few days later, we were called out for a flight to Kwajalein with a load of cargo. We took off north, which is to the mountains, and as soon as I called gear up, I felt an engine fail, and called out that we'd lost either #3 or #4. The engineer said #3, so I said to feather it and shut it down, and to tell the tower we were coming back, as I started a right turn. Then #1 quit, so I said to shut it down as I kept turning. Then #4 quit, then #2, so the engineer cut the fuel to them and then brought it back, and #2 engine restarted. The copilot said he saw a runway to the right and ahead, and then said it was only a taxiway. I said that was good enough for me and went for it. We put the gear down and landed in the middle of Hickam Field, on a taxiway, with one engine still going. The problem turned out to be lots of water in the gasoline, and, since then, I've heard of others who had that problem, who were not so lucky.

So, I never lost an engine in combat, but on my first trip in command on a transport, I lost three of them!

Must prove something???? Finally, I got back to my trip again after the airplane was all checked over, and water in the gas was found to be the culprit. We flew west to Kwajalein, which took us across 180 degrees west, or the International Dateline, where, if it was 2 P.M. Tuesday, it's suddenly 2 P.M. Wednesday, and, of course, the reverse on return. A bit confusing at first, but we got used to it. The log book was always kept in "Z time" or Greenwich so that didn't change, though it gave us another time to think about. That trip, I finally got to Tokyo. We flew north about 7 or 8 hours from Guam to Atsugi, about 20 miles northwest of the city. Later, we used to land at Iwo Jima on the way north, and land at

Haneda, right in Tokyo, but I guess those airfields weren't ready on this trip, as the war hadn't been over very long. The whole area had much damage, but the runways had been repaired pretty well, so we had no problem landing, and the local people we encountered, maids, etc., seemed quite friendly. We got a jeep someplace and the copilot, engineer and navigator and I took off for the big city of Tokyo. Yokohama and Tokyo adjoin each other, and factories had covered the area between them, but now you could see across the area, as

everything had been flattened by the bombing.

We drove down to the area of the palace and the Ginza, and there was very little damage here. We happened to see Gen. Macarthur exit his office to go home, and that was a major ceremony, and the locals loved all the pomp. It was strange that the war had just ended, but there seemed no animosity from the people that I could see. The next day we took off and flew southeast to Marcus Island, which was quite small, and I believe was a weather station, and then flew to Wake Island, which was a mess, with wrecked ships and landing craft all over the beaches. We stayed overnight, and wandered through some of the dugouts and other fortifications the Japanese had built, but were warned about picking things up, as they could be booby-trapped. The next day, we flew to Johnston, and on to Hickam, in Honolulu. Somewhere in here, I was checked out on another route, which was very interesting and a bit different. We flew south from Honolulu about 700 miles and landed at Canton Island, which was 3 degrees south of the equator. It was a round atoll with a big lagoon, about 6,000 ft. of coral runway, and it was operated by Pan American Airways. There was a large ship high and dry on the west side of the island, and it seems that, on Pearl Harbor day, this ship, one of the Presidential Line (I think it was the President Cleveland) had been chased by a Japanese submarine. The captain tried to sail into the lagoon through a narrow channel, but there just wasn't enough water, so it drove aground, and there she sat and probably still does, unless rusted out.

Better to drive her aground than be sunk, anyway.

We stayed overnight there, and the next morning took off for about a six hour flight to Nandi in the Fiji Islands. Nowadays, it's called "Nadi" for some reason, but we knew it as Nandi. The Fijis are beautiful islands, with mountains and coral reefs around them, and lush vegetation, much like the Hawaiians. The local people are black and big, and all seemed well-built and good-natured. "Bula" was the word for "Hello", and we had one guy who met us and showed us around that we always called "Bula Joe". We brought him aloha shirts from Honolulu, which he loved, and thought we were great friends. The buildings were all grass shacks, though very well constructed, and comfortable, including even the Officer's Club, which was run by New Zealanders and Aussies. The town of Latoka was

close by and populated mostly by Indians, who seem to be the business men of the Pacific, as the street was lined with shops selling clothing or hand-made silver jewelry - actually pretty cheap stuff - though I suppose they had some better.

One trip, I had along a full colonel who loved to fly but just couldn't hack it.

He wore pilot's wings, but I don't see how he ever won them.

I used to let him get in the right seat and fly copilot at times, and would try to talk him through a landing, but I had to take it away from him every time, or he'd fly us right into the ground! He used to say that he loved to fly but just couldn't seem to do it right. For some reason, he had to go to Suva, the Fijian capital, which was across the island from Nandi, and he got us permission to take him over there. The Aussies briefed me to fly up a river from Suva and look for a sharp bend to the west, and the airport was just to the right. Then fly over the stonewall that marked the end of the runway, and land between two white stones which marked the end of the steel mat runway. The runway was invisible as the grass and weed grew through it, but they said it was a piece of cake. Well, it worked, but I was pretty worried when I touched the wheels down and felt the solid mat below. We caught a cab into Suva, and had rooms at a hotel right out of a south sea novel. In fact, the whole city was that way,

with barefoot Fijian traffic cops, with bright blue shorts, and
bright crimson jackets, and white hats.

The hotel had balconies upwards over the sign-in desk, and the rooms were all bamboo furniture, but quite comfortable. The British do things right in the south seas and it's very pleasant. The next day, of course, we had to take off again, but as the airplane was very light, it was no problem. Rather than flying over the mountains to return to Nandi, I flew about 1,000 ft. above the ground all around the west coast, and it was a spectacular ride.

The next stop down the line after Nandi was a field in New Caledonia, with the exotic name of "Tontouta". It sat in the middle of some low hills about 20 miles west of the capital of Noumea, but the weather was always pretty good, so we never had any problem landing there. I had a surprise the first trip, as the operations officer was a guy who'd been in the 100th BG, and we knew each other fairly well, though I can't recall his name now, other than Bud something. We were given a jeep, and went into Noumea, which wasn't much, except that the natives all put some kind of dye in their hair, so you have all these red-headed black guys all over the place. We used to go to a bar in the main hotel for drinks and dinner, but really there wasn't much of interest. There was an American base there,

and we met some Aussie girls who worked out there. In late 1947, I flew the last Americans out of there, and

we had a footlocker belonging to the finance office, which supposedly contained 4 or 5 million dollars.

My big chance to disappear and I blew it! The first trip down there, we went into Brisbane, Australia and stayed overnight, but I remember little about it, except that we went to the zoo to see all the crazy local animals. The next day, it was back to Tontouta, and day-by-day retrace our route back to Honolulu. In 1947, I was asked to stay at Hickam for 90 days temporary duty with another crew, and, each week, one of us would fly the route Canton, Nandi to Tontouta and back. It was a very tight schedule that left Hickam Sunday and got back sometime, so if we found something to do in Fiji, we could lay over a day if we felt like it. On the week off in Honolulu, we stayed down at Ft. Derusey, which is right on Waikiki beach - and we were collecting full per diem for the temporary duty assignment. This is known as falling into it and coming out smelling like a rose. We had a ball and hated the time to end. I knew some girls in Honolulu, so dates were no problem, and we had the best beach on Waikiki. We even swam on our layovers on Canton Island.

We'd dive off a pier into deep warm water where we'd seen bi-i-g sharks an hour before, but they never bothered us.

I got into a crap game in Nandi one night and made 8 straight passes of the dice, and no one would bet against me. Only won about \$200, though. It was a very pleasant three months, and probably one of the best deals I ever had in the service. I can recall many little things that happened during this time that were nice. Like the time we were going to Tontouta and back to Fiji in one day, and wanted something to eat in Tontouta. They drove us down to a local restaurant out in the hills, at a pretty chalet hotel. A bowl of shrimp was provided which we feasted on, and kept being refilled as we ate. Finally, we'd had enough and made to leave, but discovered that the shrimp was just the first of 7 courses. What a feed. One curious aspect of much of my military career is that, though I was based various places at different times - I was just about never there, but was an eternal transient. When based at Fairfield-Suisun, I was just about always somewhere in the Pacific, or later in Canada, or even Alaska, one time. Later, I was based at Hickam, but was in Germany for a good bit of time, or else out on the Pacific islands. Then, when at Westover Field, I could be found out on the Atlantic someplace, but seldom home. When I was single, I didn't care, but once married, it lost its luster, fast. One day, I was sitting on the steps of the Officer's Club at Hickam, just killing time, when a staff car pulled up at the other end of the steps,

and who should get out, but Gen. Eisenhower!

I had no idea he was even in the Pacific. He and some colonel just walked into the club, and I didn't see them again, though I read in the paper about what it was that brought him there. Came as a surprise, though. Ft. Derusey, where I spent quite a bit of time, was, and I guess still is, quite a spot for military people. It sits right on the best part of Waikiki Beach, and though the rooms were small and each had 2 beds, it was adequate and convenient, and at that time cost us, I think, a quarter a night. There was a restaurant, which was adequate, and a bar in the Officer's Club, as well as at the NCO Club, and was convenient to Halekalanui Boulevard, which is the main street for Waikiki. Families stayed there, so it was just a great resort for us. I remember getting in a bridge game about 4:30 one afternoon, playing with John Campbell, a navigator I flew with often, and the game went till 6:30 the next night---26 hours--and I won 2 cents. For a while, we were up probably 100 bucks, and once, down about 75, but ended up 2 cents ahead. Good game!! Bridge was a big game out there, as we had a lot of time to kill between flights on some of those islands, and we got pretty good. John and I got in a game one day on Kwajalein with a couple of fairly new players, and we figured we had two fish on the hook. We looked at nothing above a ten for four hours, and they took us for \$70 each - and they were terrible, but they could do nothing wrong. Frustrating. This goes back to when I was based at Fairfield-Suisun, where a bunch of us pilots and navigators were sitting around a table at a Saturday night party, I guess about 7 of us. About 10 or 11,

a navigator named "Monty" Montgomery suddenly got to his feet, and said he thought he'd sing with the orchestra.

We'd all had a few, but not that much, and tried to talk him out of it, feeling he'd embarrass us all, and finally we figured we'd pretend we didn't know him. Well, Monty went over and talked to the band leader, the next number was some well-known ballad of the day and Monty strolled to the mike and began to sing. The place grew quiet as everyone listened. He was terrific! He got a big hand and gave a number of encores before coming back to the table. He'd flown with me a few times and with many of the other pilots, but had never mentioned that he was a professional singer with Guy Lombardo and several other big-name bands before entering the service. You just never know.

Guam was mostly thick jungle, and there was little to do in the days right after the war, and, in fact, there were a few Japanese out there who didn't know the war was over, and were roaming around for years. John and I had dates one night with two nurses, and went to the club at the 20th AF Base, about 5 miles away. We got a jeep, and had to each draw out a .45 pistol. It was like the old west as we checked our hats and guns at the door.

The trick at all these places, if you had a jeep, was to take the rotor out of the distributor to keep it from being stolen.

Did this in Japan, Manila, and later in Germany, too, though of course, a thief would just carry a rotor around with him 'till he wanted to take a jeep. Some Jap surrendered on Guam about 1949 I recall, and he was treated like a hero, and returned to Japan to a royal welcome. Just east of Kwajalein, there is a small island, I think named Majuro, and for a year or so after the war, we occasionally saw tracer bullets coming up at us, but at 8 or 10 thousand, they didn't do any damage, but I was very happy they didn't have the 88's the Germans had.

When we first went into Manila, we landed at Nichols Field, which was right downtown, but later moved to a base about 30 miles north. One night, we went out on the town when we were at Nichols, and went to a gambling casino, and it was a big surprise. The war had only been over a few months but here were Filipinos dressed formally, both men and women, and spending money like they were all multi-millionaires. Perhaps they were. The city was banged up here and there, but nothing like Japan or Germany. There was a mountain, about 50 miles northeast of the city, that was held by "Huk", a Communist band, and they occasionally fired on some of our planes who came close. I gave it room, so I was never fired on. At times we'd stop at Iwo Jima on the way to Tokyo, and when you saw the place, you wondered why anyone would want it.

"God forsaken" is the term that comes to mind,

as it's just 8 miles of volcanic ash and stone, with an airstrip built in. Mt. Suribachi is only about 800 feet high, and there was still a lot of war wreckage around when we went there. Then, it was in the hurricane belt, and one trip we arrived about two days after a major typhoon, which had bent the steel flagpole in front of headquarters. During the final days of the war, the B-29's would fly up and bomb Japan from Guam and Saipan, and if one had an engine or two shot up, he could land at Iwo, where they got engine changes down to a couple hours. I met a P-51 pilot who had been shot up while flying cover over Tokyo and doing some strafing. His engine wasn't going to get him back to Iwo, so he called "Mayday" over the emergency frequency, and a voice answered right back to take up such and such a heading, and a minute or so later to bail out. He said he barely got his feet wet, when a sub picked him up. Then, the only problem he had was that he was stuck on the submarine for three months. One thing about flying in the Pacific is that the long distances over water caused hours and hours of boredom. Flying from Hamilton Field just outside of San Francisco to Honolulu took from 12 to 17 hours, depending on the wind. There was nothing to do but look at the ocean go by, and after 10 hours, it seemed like you hadn't moved. The

navigator had Loran on that segment, and took star shots at night, but pilots had nothing to do but look at the gauges. West of Honolulu, even the navigator didn't have much to work with during the day, as Loran didn't go that far. The navigators we had were excellent for the most part, and could do a lot with little information. One trip from Kwajalein to Hickam, my navigator was puzzled with his first star shot, as, though it seemed like a good shot, his position had us about 600 miles west of where we should be. After a second shot an hour later gave the same thing, we started thinking it out, and he finally moved everything east one hour.

His watch was an hour wrong!

One had to be careful, though, as I remember a B-17 carrying an assistant secretary of state overflowed Johnston Island in 1948, and didn't have the fuel to reach Hickam, so they ditched, and all were lost. Must have misread their fuel or something, as it seemed like a dumb mistake. I knew a navigator who flew on a DC-3 from Kwajalein to Hickam with a Johnston fuel stop, and he had a scary story. It was a long haul for a DC-3, and during the day, he didn't have much to work with. They had a few GI's as passengers, and one asked him at some time what the island was that they had passed about 5 minutes ago. ISLAND??? So, he turned on his radio compass for a bearing, and, sure enough, they had passed Johnston, and no one saw it except that GI. No way they could have made it without a stop. Of course, he'd probably caught his error within a few minutes, but it still was scary. When we did get back to Fairfield Suisun, we'd get from 3 to maybe 7 days off, and usually headed for San Francisco, though once in a while to Sacramento. I'd met a Wave, Helen, on the train on the way out, so used to date her and see plays, or visit the many restaurants, just a great city for leave. We could get rooms cheaply at the good hotels, and I liked the Mark Hopkins with its "Top of the Mark", and the Fairmont or the St. Francis. We had to call in each day to see if we were set up for a trip, but other than that, we were on our own. For a while, we moved over to Hamilton Field, which was even closer to San Fran, while they built up Fairfield with new quarters and, actually, a new airfield. While we were at Hamilton,

the Air Force became a separate unit from the Army.

All the officers' clubs were to send any surplus funds in to a central fund by a certain date, and the guy in charge at Hamilton had a big surplus, as it was a big transient base, and he decided to spend the surplus instead of turning it in, so for a few weeks, everything was on the house at the club. No charge for drinks or dinner or whatever. The club ended up in the hole a bit, but we made it up as we sure made good use of that time. After the war ended, I'd thought about getting out of the service and going to college on the G.I. Bill. I could

have got out shortly after I came back from England, as they had some kind of point system where getting out depended on overseas time, combat, ribbons accumulated, etc., and I had plenty of points, but I decided that I liked what I was doing, so why not try to make a career of flying. I was just 21 when I started flying the Pacific and was pilot in command, which wasn't bad, and I seemed to have an aptitude for it, so I just stayed on. I was still only a first Lieutenant and, right after the war, no one got promoted, but that was O.K., as I had my own airplane all the time. Funny, when the Air Force became a separate entity, I received my commission as a captain, but was on duty as a First Lt. But I was single, and having a ball seeing a good bit of the world, so what the Hell. Of course, most of what I saw was Pacific Ocean, but I saw a lot of it and I was building up flying time in a hurry. When we arrived at an island, we never knew how long we'd be there, as it depended on crew availability and when the next flight was due in. Then, we didn't know where we'd go next. Sometimes we'd have a slow trip with a few days sitting in Kwaj or Guam, and then to Tokyo, and when we'd finally get back to Honolulu, they'd send us back west again.

At one time I had laundry in Tokyo, Manila, and Honolulu,

and I managed to pick up all of them. Thank Heaven for bridge, as there just wasn't much to do most places - perhaps a movie at night, and some places we could get to a beach for a while. Guam was interesting, as the quarters had rats running around the beams, and they cry if we sprayed with a bug bomb to kill mosquitoes. If you found a rat on your bed, you'd throw a stone or a shoe at it. Nice restful layovers.

Late in 1947 they asked me to instruct at Hickam in Honolulu for 90 days, and I jumped at it. I had two students, and we'd usually fly three or four hours a few times a week, as these guys had other jobs and had to fit the flying in. They knew some teachers on Maui, and invited me along for a weekend, now and then. There was usually a DC-3 training flight going up Friday afternoon or Saturday morning, so we'd hop on, and the instructor would drop us off at the airport on Maui, called Punenai. We'd get hotel rooms, and spend the weekends on the beaches, and early Monday morning our DC-3 would pick us up and fly us back. Great racket! I got the guys checked out all right, though I really don't care for instructing, and I went back to Fairfield in December to find the whole squadron was moving to Hickam, as I guess Fairfield was going to be a SAC base, though we'd still come in there. So, in January of 1948, I moved to Hickam, and things changed a bit. I was still a line pilot, but they now wanted all pilots to also have a ground job, so I became a base operations officer who would clear the flights going out by helping them check their weather, fuel, etc., as well as to inspect the runways occasionally. I bought a car, a 1939 Ford Model A, which I wish I still had, "so I could go all over" the island of Oahu. I had met a girl, Grace, who could play the ukelele and sing Hawaiian songs, so what else could I want.

We often went through the "Pali", a fabulous mountain pass to the north side of the island, to Kailua, which had a pretty uncrowded beach and a Navy Officer's beach club which I could use.

Life was goood!

There were plenty of officer's clubs on the island, and if you belonged to one, you could use all of them, and some had nice dining rooms with great views. So, I'd hang around and do my operations job till I was assigned a trip, and off I'd go to Tokyo again.

JOHNSTON ISLAND

Sometime in May, I think, my good luck came to a close, as an operations officer was needed at Johnston Island, and I was it. This island is not what one would visualize for a south sea paradise, as it was a coral atoll 5,000 ft. long and a quarter of a mile wide, with one tree on the whole place, and a maximum elevation of 13 feet. It was 700 miles southwest of Honolulu, and I guess about 15 degrees north of the equator. The tour there was to be a year. Fun!! One thing they did, which turned out to be important, was to set me up to fly a trip from Johnston to Hickam once a month to maintain my plane commander status. There were always flights coming through from Kwajalein, so this was no problem, and I got to spend a day or two a month in Honolulu. In spite of being close to the equator, we always had a good east wind blowing, so nights were comfortable for sleeping, and, in fact, the days weren't too bad. Not much to do, but we played some tennis, handball. I jogged a bit, and, of course, swimming in the lagoon. While I was there, a 14 ft. hammerhead shark was caught, but we had no problems swimming. I lived in a Quonset hut with four guys, and one was Doc Tripplehorn, the island doctor. "Tripp" was quite recently out of med school and had his work cut out for him. One morning we awoke as a jeep pulled up to our hut and a guy came in, yelling for Tripp. It was a lieutenant we knew, who had gone out with the captain of the motor pool to target shoot.

When the Lt. went to put up a target, the Captain put a .45 bullet through his own head. Checking back, we could see that he'd set his affairs somewhat in order for a suicide. Not much for Tripp to do but send him off to Hickam where he was dead. Then an ichthyologist from U. of Hawaii came down to study local fish, and tangled with a Moray Eel, which nearly took his arm off. Tripp patched him up as well as he could, and he went off to Hickam, where we heard they saved his arm. Then we had a guy for a while who spoke very little English, and no one knew much about him, and he seemed to have nothing to do. We heard later that

he was an important Russian defector, and the U.S. government wanted to get him out of circulation for a while,

so where better than good old romantic Johnston Isl.? I talked to my C.O. and made an arrangement to fly a trip to Hickam and on to San Francisco in July, as Betty was driving out during the summer with her college roommate, and we'd meet, and I would give her a diamond, and we'd be engaged. But as they say, "The best laid plans, etc.", as something pretty big happened to spoil that idea. I was walking down the road from my Quonset hut to take the midnight shift in operations, when a jeep passed me, jammed on its brakes, and backed up. It was Johnny Campbell, my navigator friend from Hickam, who said for me to pack everything I had and be on an airplane in 30 minutes, and he didn't know what was up, but they were looking for plane commanders all over the place, and someone mentioned "Frankfurt". I said "Germany?", as we were a long way from there, and the last time I'd seen it I was at 28,000 feet and dropping bombs on my final mission. So, I threw everything in a footlocker, told the C.O., who got someone to cover operations, and told him Johnny had said they'd give me my orders later, and off we went to Hickam and the Berlin Airlift.

THE BERLIN AIRLIFT

On arrival at Hickam, I got a room in the BOQ, and went to headquarters to find out what was going on. In two or three days, I was to take a plane to Frankfurt, Germany, and take along enough clothes, etc., for sixty days, and no one knew why. There would be three crews per plane, and we'd alternate legs, and we'd be loaded with spare parts and support personnel for whatever was ahead. So, on the day assigned, all the planes we had left at thirty-minute interval for Germany. First stop was Travis in California, and I called Betty, who was in Salt Lake City, and said I didn't know what was going on, but I should fly right over Salt Lake City in a few hours. I flew the second leg to Kearney, Nebraska, then on to Westover Field in Mass., so I could have met Betty if she'd stayed home. We took a rest there, and then on to Stephanville, Newfoundland. I flew to Lages, Azores, where we had an instrument approach, and broke out between two mountains, which made it interesting, and finally on to Frankfurt, where we were told to keep everyone on board and go to Weisbaden, which was about 10 minutes away. I had a copilot named George Fry, who'd always been a supply officer, and a flight engineer, who'd been a ground crew chief, but it worked out. At Weisbaden, we rode to town on a bus or truck, I don't recall, and had pretty nice quarters right downtown. There wasn't much bomb damage right where we were, but it was spotty around the place. We had about twelve hours off for rest, and then

out to the airport, where our airplane had been loaded with 100 tons of flour, and, with a check pilot,

we took our first trip up the corridor to Berlin.

This was quite an operation. The Soviets had blocked all ground traffic to Berlin, so everything had to be flown in. There were three corridors, each 20 miles wide, and the one I first took was from Frankfurt, and flights were assigned 5, 6, or 7 thousand feet, as I recall. All flights from Frankfurt or Weisbaden came in on this. All traffic went out the middle corridor which ran west, and flights to northern Germany used 3, 4, or 5,000, while the southern flights were up at 7, 8, or 9,000. The northern corridor, which we were to eventually use, started up east of Hamburg and used 3, 4, or 5,000. The guys from the south flew 2 roundtrips in 12 hours, and the northern guys flew three. On this first trip, there was an undercast below us on arrival, and some problem on the ground caused a delay, so they told us to circle the radio beacon, which sounded fine, except that every three or four minutes brought another airplane to circle. Finally, we were given altitudes,

but it was a mess with everyone just trying to avoid all the other airplanes.

What really made the airlift work was when someone decided there would be no holding or circling in Berlin. If for any reason you couldn't land immediately, you kept right on going to the outbound corridor, and went back to base to refuel and start all over. It sounds like a waste of fuel, but it avoided a mess like we encountered that first trip.

We were first to land after the tie-up, and made a ground-controlled approach (GCA), and broke out about 4 or 500 feet. The runway was ahead and a cemetery below, with an apartment house on each side. FUN!!! Then, the runway was steel mat about 5,000 ft., I guess, but no problem. The terminal was like a tremendous covered amphitheater, and the planes taxied in under the overhang out of the weather, and where trucks pulled up to us to unload. The whole thing was great for those days, but the larger planes today wouldn't work. A wagon drove around from plane to plane selling coffee and doughnuts or sandwiches, and we just hung around till unloaded, which only took about ten or so minutes. It was really an efficient operation. At some time or other during the lift, we had a German come over from the unloading crew, and, pointing to himself, say "Luftwaffe", so I asked if he ever flew against the flying fortresses from England. "Eastern front" was always the answer.

I guess those airplanes against us were unmanned.

After unloading, we'd taxi out and get in line for takeoff. A flight landed about every three minutes, and, in between, we'd get a takeoff or sometimes two, then out the central corridor and back to Weisbaden. After about a week or ten days, we were suddenly moved out to a base in the British zone of north Germany, Fassberg. This was sort of in the middle of nowhere and close to the boundary to the Russian zone, but the quarters were nice, as it had been a Luftwaffe fighter base. The food, though, was British rations, and though I like the Limies, they can't cook. One morning, I was scheduled to fly three round trips to Berlin, and I was hungry and ready to load up on breakfast---which was kippers and fried tomato. So I waited to get to Berlin and had coffee and doughnuts from the truck. Even British coffee is awful, but the tea is good. After about three weeks, we got American rations and cooks, and things improved. We had a flight line mess hall, where we could grab a meal while the plane was loaded, and that mess sergeant loved his job, and turned out great meals. I was eating spaghetti one day, when he leaned over my shoulder to ask if I liked the sauce, and told how he'd had it simmering for three days for flavor. A real morale booster. Later on, some general came to the base and ate at the flight line mess, and took our sergeant away, which sure didn't give us much affection for the brass. Along that line, after a couple months of flying twelve hours on and twelve off for 7 days a week, no days off, and just about all done by Lieuts. or captains, there was a lot of publicity about the 20 thousandth or 50 thousandth, some number trip to be a big deal, and was given a lot of publicity ahead of time –

and guess who was flying that trip and got in all the pictures,
etc., but Colonel Someone and his Colonel copilot!

Probably the first trip they'd flown, but it was arranged for them. Oh, that went over big on the flight line. I thought back to Colonel Jeffries, my C.O. in the Hundredth, and there was no way he'd have done that. He was the type to sleep in for an easy mission, but would lead the group for tough ones. This was not a morale builder. Something else that came up in here was that we were told we would be in Germany for 60 days and we'd be on \$7 a day per diem. Well, the 60 days were gone, the per diem stopped, but we were still here, and we all had summer uniforms, with cold weather coming fast. So, we had to buy new uniforms for winter, on our own, though we all had them back in Honolulu. Dumb! Khaki uniforms are peculiar. New khakis look like the Devil and need to be washed a few times and bleached in the sun a good bit. Nothing looks better than fresh pressed khakis, but they quickly lose that sharp look in a few hours. Anyway, we had to buy new uniforms for winter. Our route into Berlin via the North corridor flew just about over a Russian fighter base, and we could see the planes lined up, and of course we could be as low as 3,000 feet. About three times during my tour,

I looked out my window to see a Russian fighter in formation
with me.

I don't know if they were trying to shake me up or what, but after combat with the Eighth Air Force, it didn't bother me at all, and I just waved to the pilot who, one time, waved back. A few minutes later I looked out and he was gone. We'd been flying 12 on and 12 off for a month or so with no days off except for 24 off with a shift change, when we had a funny incident. We were all pretty tired, and we were returning from Berlin one night about 2 or 3 A.M., and George Frie was flying in the right seat. It was a nice night, and I could tell from the radio that there was no one behind us for quite a distance. We were landing east, which meant we'd fly west a mile or so south of the runway and parallel with it at about 1,200 feet, and would make a 180 degree, right-descending turn to land. George started the turn, and as the runway lights came into view, I realized he'd fallen asleep, so I held the controls and just kept turning 'till we were facing west again. In northern Germany there aren't many lights out there, and when I nudged George and he awoke and there were no runway lights out there he was in complete confusion and couldn't figure out where we were. The engineer and I were broken up, and I pointed out the runway over his right shoulder, and he got reoriented and landed. Shows how tired we were. I heard that

some crew fell asleep inbound to Berlin and no one woke up
for an hour or so,

at which time they were well into East Germany but they turned around and flew back, and the Russians never said a word.

One night George and I were flying back to Fassberg around midnight in the middle of our shift. It was dark, but clear, and we could see forever. In Germany, though, there are few lights between cities or towns, so the countryside is pretty black, with only an occasional light. We flew west from Berlin to a radio beacon at Braunschweig, and then turned northerly to another beacon, which would be just west of Fassberg about five miles, and we'd be lined up with the runway. Just out of Braunschweig, we saw a fire on the ground way out ahead - a large fire - so I called the tower and asked if they'd lost an airplane, and reported the fire. They were somewhat evasive, but a few minutes later we flew right over a burning airplane about four miles from the end of the runway. It was flown by a guy named Weaver, from my squadron, and, in fact, from the same BOQ, and I'd played bridge with him the day before. Weaver was killed but the copilot and engineer survived, though burned badly.

It seemed that they just got careless and got too low, and flew into the ground.

The minimum altitude there was listed as 1,500 feet on the charts, and he hit at about 800 feet. We only had one other crash of the Fassberg guys, and the other one was not our squadron, but a plane took off about 3 A.M. and just flew into the ground for some reason about 3 miles after take-off. I heard it, as it made quite an explosion. No survivors from that one. Actually, the whole airlift had very few losses for the weather we flew in, and none were lost on GCA approaches, which was remarkable. As I mentioned, we were flying out of a British base, though most of the operations were ours, but the club was very English and the "Limies" were very much in evidence. One afternoon, after flying a few round trips, we made our way to the Officer's Club for a couple of drinks and dinner. As we walked in, a British Officer met us with "What are you drinking, Yank?" and glasses were put into our hands, and we couldn't buy a drink.

Prince Charles had just been born,

and there was one toast after another "To the Prince." No empty glasses were allowed, and we got out of there fairly soon, as we had to fly the next day.

The weather was pretty bad that winter, with plenty of fog, but our GCA operators were excellent, and with all of us quite experienced, we usually got on the ground if the place had limits of 150 feet. They had developed a lighting system of a line of million candle-power approach lights to lead into the runway, and they worked very well, though blinding when we broke out below the clouds. Actually, they were the forerunner of the strobe approach light systems in use today. We took off one day for our usual three roundtrips, and made a few tight approaches into Gatow, in the British zone of Berlin, and came back to Fassberg- no problem. The third trip, we got into Berlin, but Fassberg was below limits, so we went to Celle, another base in Northern Germany. They put us up for the night, and, the next day, we started out from there for our three trips. Returning from our third trip, Fassberg and Celle were down, so we had to drag the airplane all the way down to Frankfurt's Rhine Maine, and another night away from home base. The third night found us back at Rhine Maine again, and we wanted home and some clean clothes, and our own beds. The fourth day, on the final trip, Fassberg was giving limits - but barely. I made the approach and at 150 feet we saw nothing but fog - so I sneaked another 50 feet which is something I NEVER do, and we broke out just off the left side of the runway. I pushed the control yoke forward, dropped the right wing and hit right rudder, and slipped over to the center of the runway and landed. At the end of the runway, when we'd come to a stop, the flight engineer said,

"Let's never do that again!!"

But we were home. After the start of the lift in July we were only going into Templehof in Berlin, but a month or so later, a British zone base, Gatow, opened up, and this was a more ordinary air base than Templehof, with its steel mat runway and unworldly terminal. Then the French opened Tegal, which was fine, except, when it opened, there was a 1,000 ft. tower located only about 1/2 mile away to the north, and was straddling the French-Russian line, and was the tower for Russia's Radio Berlin. So, one night, all operations stopped for about an hour, and

the crazy French dynamited the two legs of the tower on the French side, and down it came!

Of course, there was all sorts of yelling from the Russians, but the tower was gone. On the other side, though, one night while inbound to Berlin, all of our Berlin radio navigation stations went off, as the Russian turned off all the electricity in the city. I thought it pretty stupid that the Allies had left themselves so vulnerable, but there it was. All of us flying simply went to dead reckoning, and flew in and out without landing, with no problem. The first few months of the operation were tough going, as we really didn't have enough pilots, so it was a seven-day workweek and no days off, which drags you down in the dumps. Then the food was awful for a while, and one thing and another caused pretty bad morale. Then we got a new C.O., one Col. Coulter, and things changed for the better, almost overnight. He took one plane off the line, and said that was for crews to be taken where they wanted on three day passes, which also began right now. His wife was the actress Constance Bennett, and she was with him, and the mess halls never knew when she'd drop in for lunch, and it better be good. Not just the officer's mess halls, but she went to the G.I. ones, too, and talked with all the guys - a real nice person. I had a few days off and explored Hamburg a bit (they had some great cabarets with amazing circus acts), and while many of the guys went to Paris, I went to Munich and Garmisch, and skiing. Morale jumped about 900% almost overnight, and we had a bunch of happy campers again!

Sometime during the lift, Bob Hope came over, I think around Christmas, and he put on a show at the base,

and he had his wife with him. After the show, he dropped into the Officer's Club for a while, and sat at the bar, and the man is just naturally funny.

One fairly nice day, we took off from Gatow, and, as usual, I called for "gear up", and we heard a loud "thump". I looked over at the hydraulic pressure gauge and it read zero, and

the gear wouldn't come up, so I figured we had a problem. I said I thought the hydraulic accumulator had blown up, but the other two guys looked blank, so I told the engineer to take a look, as the accumulator was under the floor in the cabin, and we had a hatch to get to it. He was in back for a minute, and came rushing back to report a hole in the floor, and a six-foot hole in the side of the airplane! Well, we were flying all right, so I kept going back to Fassberg, while we figured out what to do. We had an emergency hand pump with some fluid in it to put the gear down and provide brakes. But our gear was down, so that was no problem - but we'd have to land without flaps, which meant coming in fast, but we were very light, so wouldn't need too much speed. We alerted Fassberg and they got out the crash equipment, and in we went. I put the plane on the ground and hit the brakes, and told George to pump, and we damned near blew out the tires as that pressure hit right now, so I eased up, and was even able to turn off at the end with brakes, but then stopped and shut down. No one had ever seen that happen before, and

I ended up with a bigger hole in the airplane than I got in 35 combat missions!

I think it was sometime in January that we flew into Gatow one night about 19:30, and just barely squeaked in, as we broke out right at 150 feet and the visibility was also down. We went into ops while they unloaded, and sat around drinking coffee with the other crews while the weather really went to pot. One crew went out to their plane and came back in a while, and said they couldn't find it, as they couldn't even read the tail numbers. The operations officer said as far as he was concerned, the field was still open, but most of us, after going out to take a look, agreed that there was no way we could take off. Finally, someone called Headquarters at Frankfurt and told them the situation, and I guess meteorology made a check, and the field was closed for the night. George and I hadn't eaten for hours and were hungry, so I called Templehof and requested a jeep to take us to the Officer's Club at Templehof, and surprisingly, they sent one. It arrived after an hour or so, and we drove off for about a 10-mile ride, but I've never seen such fog before or since. The driver knew Berlin well, but had to crawl along about 5 or 10 miles an hour, and even then,

I had to get out at times and walk along the curb to tell him when we came to the next street.

Of course, the city was all ruins, so there were few street lights, or, in fact, lights of any kind. A weird ride, but we at last pulled up to Templehof. We told the driver we'd be about an hour, and he said he'd pick us up. We went into the club and ordered coffee and

sandwiches, and sat back comfortably. I just got my sandwich when I heard someone yell my name, and looked up at Malcolm Rich, who had lived 3 doors down School Street from me in Arlington, and we'd grown up together. He was a pilot, too, but his primary duty was in personnel, and he wasn't flying the lift, but what a strange place to run into someone! We'd left School Street in 1940 while we were both still in school, he was a few years behind me, and hadn't seen each other since. He told me that Jack Falkins, another of our childhood gang, was also an Air Force pilot in fighters, so three of us had our wings! We yakked a while and finally came time to return to Gatow.

Our driver picked us up as promised, and going back was a repeat of the ride over, but after about an hour, we made it. The poor driver called Templehof and told them he was spending the night at Gatow rather than make another trip. So then, where to sleep? We had bunks in the airplane but that would be much too cold, and people were sleeping all over the place in operations. I spied a shelf under the operations desk with some books on it, so I stacked the books on the floor, climbed in, and put my flight jacket down as a pillow, and I was set for the night, as no one was doing any business on the desk. Next morning, we awoke early and were still socked in, so we had coffee and doughnuts from the flight line truck, and about 9 or 10 the base opened up. We checked the other end of the line, too, as we didn't want to find Fassberg closed, as our fuel could get to be a problem, but it was open, and one by one we took off and flew home. What a night! I've never seen such fog, and to run into Malcolm in Berlin of all places! I had started taking most of my 3-day breaks by catching the plane Col. Coulter had given for our use, and flying to Munich and then catching a bus to Garmisch, way up in the Alps, and was where the 1936 Winter Olympics were held. On my first trip down there, there was no snow in the lower elevations, but the Zugspitze went up to 10,000 plus feet, and there was year-round skiing with a rope tow. I took a cog railway up, and, as the hotel was run by our Special Services, I got a room with no problem. This was the highest altitude I'd been to, except of course, for the airplane, and

I smoked cigarettes in those days, and nearly passed out walking upstairs while smoking.

It's a beautiful spot, and the skiing was fun, except the run was quite short. Later, I skied at the Kreutzig, which had the Olympic course, and that was fun. The first time I went up there, I was with 3 other guys from my squadron, and they were startled that I knew how to ski. The Reisersee Hotel in Garmisch, itself, was just what one pictures a winter sports resort to look like. It was on a small lake with the Zugspitz rising across from the hotel. All of these places were run by the army, so I could stay there for something like a dollar a night. A funny episode I had there was getting into a hockey game with a bunch of German

kids. They skated fine, but had never encountered a body check, and when I knocked one of them down with a good hip check I didn't know what to expect - but they thought it was great fun and they all started hitting everyone in sight. So, I introduced body checks to the German kids in Garmisch. I really enjoyed my stays down there as the skiing was great, the town perfect, and I found the people very friendly.

Once they discovered I flew the Berlin Airlift, I was their fair-haired boy.

All the airplanes had to go to a maintenance base in England after so many hours for a major overhaul, and George and I got to take one of those flights, I think to Burtonwood. We spent about four days there, and I took a trip to London for old times' sake, and spent a night. It seemed quieter after the wartime days, but the bomb damage was getting fixed up, and it was a pleasant visit. Back at Burtonwood, I was at the bar in the club one night and ran into a Major Zeller, who had been my squadron C.O. when I first arrived at the 100th BG. I don't remember why he was there, but I don't believe it had anything to do with the airlift. After a long, rugged winter, during which we were finally getting replacements, we heard talk of being sent home to Honolulu. One rather sore point with some of us first Lts. - we just about all had reserve commissions as captains, but were on duty as Lts. The guys being recalled came back at their reserve ranks, so they outranked us, which we thought a dirty trick. We'd flown the whole lift, plus those years in the Pacific.

The military seems to pull lots of stunts like that,

which we found out at the end of 1949. Anyway, in March I finally had orders to go back with a 10-days leave enroute. I caught a C-54 going back to Westover, in Mass., for something, and our first stop was at Orly Field in Paris, where I called Betty. The call went through as though she was just down the street, no delay at all, and I made plans to meet her in the States. Going back, we stopped in the Azores again and Stephanville, Newfoundland, and finally the U.S.A. For some reason, it seems to me I had to go to Ft. Dix again for orders, but I don't know why.

Before I forget I'll fit in here about the sightseeing trip I took to Berlin on a day off, I don't know what month. I just hopped a flight that was going in and rode the jump seat to Gatow, where I guess I caught a cab or bus. Anyway, I got a ride to the Brandenburg Gate, which is the boundary between the Allied Berlin and the Russian Zone.

The damage was nearly total, with miles of ruined buildings, and many people living in any hole they could find.

I didn't worry, as they all thought we were great, as we were feeding the city and keeping the Russians from getting it. The Gate was at the end of Unter der Linden, which was, in pre war days, a beautiful boulevard, lined with linden trees. Now it was mass of wreckage on each side and the lindens had all gone for firewood. This was the French zone, I think, as there was a tremendous French Victory Memorial in the center. Supposedly, I could cross into the Russian Zone, but I left well enough alone, and just looked around and took pictures. The Reichstag was there, where Hitler killed himself, and it was badly damaged, but still impressive. Finally, I just went back to Gatow and caught a flight back.

So I arrived back in the U.S., and, of course, went to see Betty. We took a ski trip to Bromley in Vermont and stayed at the Red Doors Inn. The owners were going out someplace and left us in front of the warm fireplace, and

I at last gave her an engagement ring!

When the owners came home they opened a bottle of champagne to us. Betty called home to report, and a party was quickly arranged for a few days ahead, and we planned the wedding for July 9, 1949. Then I went back to Hickam Field for a few months, and back to flying the Pacific and working as operations officer. One evening, while on duty in operations, I took my usual inspection trip of the runways and ramp. There was a C-54 parked in front of ops, this about 9 or 10 P.M., and fuel was pouring off of its wings. Luckily, I was so familiar with the plane and knew the crossfeed valves had been left open so the fuel in the outboard tanks flowed to the inboards and overflowed, so I ran up the steps and into the cockpit and closed the valves, and then to operations to get the fire company down. They hosed it all down to dilute the fuel, but

I believe a guard was put out to keep people away who might smoke, as that would cause a real big boom!

By morning, all fumes had dissipated and the danger was over, but it could have been real bad. Things seemed slow for the next few months as I waited to go back to Winchester for the wedding. I flew my trips and worked in operations, and went to the beach, but time dragged 'till finally it was time to head back. I had a 30-day leave, and flew back to the coast as extra crew, and somehow hitchhiked a flight back east.

Our wedding was wonderful as expected - the happiest day of my life -

and we drove across the country to San Francisco. Took in Yellowstone on the way, and went through Salt Lake City and spent a few days around San Fran, my old stamping ground. They were supposed to give Betty a seat on a MATS flight, but for some reason they reneged, and we sent her out to Hawaii on United, and I gave her directions for Ft. Derussy, where they put her up. The next day, I flew a trip out, and we were reunited. We were given an apartment up at Wheeler Field, which sits up in the middle of Oahu, near Schofield Barracks, and it was O.K., and I knew a bunch of the people there. Had to commute every day to Hickam, which wasn't bad, and we soon got our car and could roam the island. Things went nicely for a few months, and in November, we heard there was to be a big cutback in personnel---especially flight people.

I flew a trip to Fairfield, and there learned that I was to be cut
and would go on inactive status –

sort of a shock, especially as we'd learned Betty was pregnant! Typical of the military - the year before they couldn't do without us on the airlift, but now pilots were just not needed in the Air Force. We elected to come back by ship, as we could bring the car, so about the 20th of December we moved to good old Ft. Derussy and waited for our ship, along with all the others in the same situation. We sailed, I think, on the 28th or 29th, as we were at sea for New Year's Eve. Sort of a dull trip, but not bad weather, and I played a lot of bridge. Betty flew back from San Fran, and I picked up the car, went around to the flight terminal, and found a G.I. who'd help me drive, and drove home in three days--no stops to rest. So, we were back in Winchester staying with Betty's folks 'till I found what I was going to do.

We had very little money, no job, and Betty was 5 months
pregnant. Great!!

I had about 3,000 hours total flying time, mostly as pilot in command, and I had my commercial license and instrument rating, as well as a radio telephone license, so I sent resumes to airlines all over the place. In just a few days I received a telegram from American Airlines to come down to N.Y. for an interview. I went to 100 Park Ave., where they were located in those days, and talked to the personnel chief, who then sent me out to LaGuardia for a physical, and then home. A few days later, I was told to report to hangar 5 at LaGuardia to see some guy named Harry Clark, who was chief pilot. I found his office O.K., and was told to take a seat for a few minutes by his secretary---who was something! Not very pretty but she had an amazing bod. Finally, the great man called me in, and I found a red-haired, red-faced guy who told me to have a seat, and he looked at my papers. Then he reached out his hand to shake and said as far as he was concerned, I was hired.

End of interview, and I had a job!

Harry Clark, it turns out, was, as well as chief pilot, sort of a red tape cutter for the company - the guy who could get things done. I ran into him here and there over the years. So, I was hired and assigned to a flight engineer class at LaGuardia. The future outlook they projected was that I'd be a F/E for 6 or 7 years before moving into the copilot seat, and might expect to be Captain in 15-18 years. Well, it turned out that I was Captain in a bit over five years, as the airline expansion was incredible, and with my usual good luck, I was hired right at the beginning of the growth. I still say, it's better to be lucky than good. We had about 40 guys in the F/E class, and I'd know a number of these guys for the next 34 years. I was the second youngest in the class, so my seniority was next to last, with only Vincent O'Toole a month younger, so he was junior man. Years later, he was still there, to retire a month after me. Class was a pretty intensive 8 hours a day on aircraft and engines, FAA regulations, and anything else they could think of. Much of it I found interesting, and we really went right into the nitty gritty of engines, props, hydraulics, electrical, etc. One of the best courses I think I've had. After six weeks, we took the FAA exam, and everyone passed. On my first weekend home from training, Betty started having some pains at night, and being pregnant, we were worried,

so I rushed her over to Winchester Hospital and Mike was born by Caesarian. Well, that made it nice that I had a job!

I, of course, wanted to be based on Boston, but at the time Boston flew only Convair 240's, which didn't have an engineer, so I was sent to Chicago. I had a checkout on the airplane, which was a piece of cake, and I was put on reserve. I found a room close to the airport, which was Midway in those days, and waited for the phone to ring, which it soon did, and I was off in the airline business! As a reserve, I flew all over the system, and had trips to L.A. and Phoenix and Dallas, and quite a few to Boston, which was great, as I could see Betty. After a month or so, I found an apartment on the north side, and Betty and Mike moved out. It wasn't much, but it was close to a park and the lake, so we made do. In February, I was told I could go to first officer training (copilot), so things were progressing very rapidly, as I had expected to be an engineer for years. This would be going into those Convair 240's, a twin engine, 40 passenger airplane, so it looked to be fun.

BACK TO DUTY

The country had gone to war in Korea in the summer of 1950, and the Air Force suddenly realized it had released all of its experienced pilots, so I was invited back for two years. I was quite reluctant to go, but I'd signed something early in the year saying I'd go back, so I

was stuck. It appeared at the time that I'd be in the engineer's seat for years, but times had changed. At least I got to fly on the line in the Convair, so I was on the pilot's seniority list, which was everything. I later knew a copilot who had turned down hiring for American for six months so he could receive a ski instructor's certification at Sugarloaf, and the delay cost him about 1,000 seniority numbers, or about 4 or 5 years delay in becoming captain. Seniority is everything. I was a captain in the AF anyway, and was first sent to Ft. Dix, and then to Westover Field in Chicopee, Mass., where I knew some of the guys in the squadron from my Pacific days. I was appointed as an instructor on C-54 's, as I had more time than most of the recalkees, and I was set up to go to C-97 training in a month or so, and would be flying the North Atlantic to Frankfurt.

I did have a break because I had so much overseas time,

as pilots were being sent to B-26 training to go to Korea according to that overseas time, and I actually had more time overseas than anyone else in the squadron. Finally, in July of '51, I was sent to Kelly Field in San Antonio, Texas for C-97 training. This was a 4-engine, pressurized, 2-deck airplane, and pretty big for its day. It had very large piston engines (known as the 4360 engine), and it turned out that it was hard to make a trip across the ocean and back without shutting one down. But that's getting ahead of myself. On the way down to Texas via commercial airline, I met a Tony Cale, a major going to the same deal from Westover. He'd spent a good bit of time in Northern India, in Kashmire, I think, and was married to a woman from there. He was in the same barracks down there as I was, and we more or less hung around together. During our flight training, after 3 weeks of ground school, I was riding by the end of a runway one day, where a C-97 was just taking off. We didn't see the actual take-off, but we saw the tremendous explosion a few seconds later as it hit the ground inverted. The rod connecting the flaps together had broken, and they had 15 degree of flaps on the right and none on the left, which rolled them right over before they could do a thing. In fact, they wouldn't have known what happened to make a correction. Later planes have separate gauges for left and right flaps to avoid just such an occasion. Anyway, my friend Tony was a student in that airplane, and, of course, was killed along with another student I knew fairly well.

Other than that, our training was uneventful, but we were somewhat wary of the airplane.

Back at Westover I found a house for us in Agawam, and we moved into a pretty nice neighborhood. I started fling trips right away, and we'd go via Newfoundland and the Azores to Paris and Frankfurt, or else via Goose Bay in Labrador or Newfoundland to Keflavik, Iceland to Prestwick, Scotland or Burtonwood, England to Frankfurt. Interesting

for a while, and the northern route took us right over the Greenland icecap, which is impressive - 12 or 14 thousand feet of ice. Iceland, on the other hand, did occasionally have not so nice weather, but not much snow and ice. Just to the south of Iceland, we saw a volcanic island forming in the ocean. It was all steam and smoke and a bit of land showing as a new island was being formed. I'd been flying this a few months, when

we lost an airplane out of Lages in the Azores and headed for Newfoundland.

It was very strange, as no report or message was heard from them after they left Lages. The pilot lived on the next street to us in Agawam, though I didn't know him. We flew search mission for days - tiring - as we spent hours at 500 feet looking for anything at all, but no trace was found, which I still find very strange. I was headed east from Lages one very dark night, and was just about dozing with the copilot flying, when I heard the RPM increase on one engine. I started to turn to the flight engineer to ask why he was increasing it, when I realized it was still increasing, and that we had a runaway propeller, so I just grabbed all four throttles and pulled them back to get the power off and to slow the airplane. Maximum RPM is 2,800 and I'd estimate this at about 3,300 or 3,400 on the #3 engine. The prop wouldn't feather at first, but I put down some flaps and slowed down to about 120, and to our relief, it feathered and we went back to the Azores.

That's the only runaway prop I ever had, happily,

as, if you can't shut it down, there's a danger of it coming off the engine, and no one knows where it's going, and it could come right through the airplane. I remember someone in the old Hundredth Bomb Group had a runaway that came off, flew out ahead of the plane, came back, and flew up and over them, and never touched them. Scary!!

One of our airplanes was a very plush Stratocruiser with all the airline trappings, including a spiral staircase to the lower deck. It was Number 9596, I remember, and I was assigned to it, along with another plane commander. On a trip, we'd leave Westover and fly to Washington National to pick up a load of officials, congressmen, senators, etc., and fly right through to the Azores, where we took a 10 hour break, then through to Frankfurt and another 10 hours or so off, and repeat the process in the other direction. By the time we landed back in Westover we were punchy.

I don't think it was a very safe operation.

I arrived back at the base about 2 A.M. one morning, and was told to land on runway 27. The next day I got thinking about it, and it occurred to me that I'd landed on runway 9 -

the reciprocal runway, but even the tower hadn't said anything. If there had been much wind, I'm sure I'd have been aware of it, but no one noticed a thing. Old 9596 was registered with Bell Telephone in Boston, and one trip on another airplane, I called them on the radio and said I was 9596 and put in a phone call to Betty while we were right over the Greenland Icecap, and told her to come out to pick me up in a few hours. Worked great, and only cost for a phone call from Boston to Agawam. Betty was pregnant in 1952, and when the time came, she went to the Westover Hospital, where, though not fancy, the care was good.

And along came Linda to the family.

We had to move out of Agawam, as our house was sold, but we got one in Springfield which was quite nice. I was made chief pilot, which I didn't want, as it only meant I spent my days off giving instrument checks and had to go out on the line checking other people, when I preferred to fly myself. Then I had to spend time in the office setting up crews for trips and giving briefings. I still got myself out on trips that I flew, but my time off was limited.

One trip, while enroute from Keflavik to Burtonwood, England, we had an engine failure and went into Prestwick, Scotland, where we were told we'd have to wait for the engine to be changed, which would take several days. The operations officer knew of a real Scottish castle we could stay in, so off we went - to one of the coldest nights I've ever spent! The people were nice and the castle was real alright, but the only heat came from fireplaces, and

I think it was colder in the castle than outdoors.

But we did it, anyway. Another time we were there for New Years Eve and were invited into Glasgow with a local friendly guy who brought us out knocking on doors for drinks, which is a Scottish custom on "hogamonay" as they called it. Everyone was awfully friendly, and we had a fine time. One trip we flew from Lages to Tripoli, and I looked forward to seeing Gibraltar and Africa, as I'd never been there. We flew in through Gibraltar about 2 A.M. on a dark night, so all that I saw was a few lights. We landed in Tripoli just after sunrise, so I saw only a little of the surrounding desert, and we were tired and went to bed as soon as we landed. When we awoke, we found the mess hall and had dinner, and went to the airplane and took off just before dark, so on the return I saw the same as on arrival. So, I still haven't seen much of Africa or Gibraltar - but I've been to Tripoli, anyway. One trip we flew from Frankfurt to Keflavik to Goose Bay to Westover in mid-summer, and the sun never really set the whole 4 days. In the winter, of course, it was dark all the time. Lages had one main runway, and a shorter one that came in over a cliff. On one of my last trips, the wind was right across the main runway and was really blowing, and the air over the cliff

was too turbulent to land. We held for a few hours awaiting a change, and finally gave up and went to the island of Santa Maria, which was no problem. We had something to eat and had some sleep, refueled, and then went back to Lages.

I was not home much, but always out somewhere on the Atlantic,

and then giving check rides when I was home. We had a maximum of 100 hours a month, and one month I reached that by about the 20th. The squadron C.O. suggested I go to the flight surgeon and get a waiver - I told him to forget it, and I had a few days off for a change. Finally, my 2 years was about up, and the C.O. called me in and suggested I stay 'coming up for promotion to major shortly, but I wanted out. There was no guarantee that they wouldn't kick me out again if an economy move came down, and I preferred the airline life, anyway, and thought the future there looked better and the day-to-day life was a lot more predictable.

So, in April of '53, I became a civilian again, and went back to good old American Airlines.

Life in the airlines seemed awfully good after the Air Force. Each month I had a schedule which was pretty much followed, so we could make plans to do things, or to be someplace, which was just not possible in the AF. Then, the airline had grown by leaps and bounds while I was gone, so I was a fairly senior copilot and could fly the best trips. It was back to the Convair again, and I was happy with it, as I found it fun to fly. I wasn't in the Convair too long, though, when the DC-6 came to Boston and I started flying that, and spent much time on the Chicago to Boston trips.

I think a pilot who has spent a few winters flying from Chicago to Detroit to Buffalo to Rochester to Syracuse to Albany to Hartford to Boston can fly about anyplace.

One funny episode on the Convair - I was copilot with Doug Macodrum, who had been pilot for, I think, Gen. MacAurthur for a while. Doug hated to fly on an instrument clearance but wanted VFR (visual flight rules) whenever possible. We were flying from Syracuse to Albany about midnight and were, of course, VFR, and I was flying. We ran into clouds about Schenectady and I suggested a clearance, but Doug just said there's no one else around this time of night, but he called Albany for weather. "Ten thousand scattered and 25 miles." I kept on, now on solid instruments, and decided I'd better head for the

outer marker where we could start an instrument approach. We got over the marker and I had the ILS set up and followed it down, and we broke out at 200 feet - VFR!! Doug decided we should depart on an instrument clearance. Doug finally retired a bit early, as he went to school in our first jet in Boston, a BAC-100, and Doug wouldn't spend the time memorizing all the flap settings you have to have to fly a jet, and he retired, instead. A number of the old school guys did the same. which was good, as

the old days of seat of the pants stuff were over.

Another, but scary, day I remember, was the day after Christmas, I suppose '54. I was copilot for George Govoni, a nice guy, on a DC-6, and we were holding over Chicago, when what should come along but a thunderstorm - in December! We had a big flash and a loud boom, and I thought we had a midair collision, but I was flying, and everything worked, so I realized it was a static discharge, similar to a lightning strike. I've had about 10 of those, or actual lightning strikes, in my career, and every one scared the Hell out of me, even when I knew some of them were coming. So, we kept holding, and once started an approach, but the airplane ahead of us hit the stone arrow at the end of the runway and knocked off his right landing gear, and he was sitting on his belly on the runway. So back to holding. A guy named Bob Dornberg was engineer, and he and I were watching the fuel go down, but George didn't want to go to Detroit, our alternate. Finally, I said that we had to get out of here, and Born echoed me, and George, at last, gave in. When we passed South Bend, all tanks read empty and I wanted to land, but George said keep on. Detroit had about 400 feet, and we made our approach to runway 4 to circle to 9, and George made the approach. About halfway down, #3 engine ran out of gas, so I hit the feathering button, as we couldn't do much about it anyway. We broke out, and George couldn't find the runway, so I grabbed the wheel, as I could see better out my side, and got us lined up, as we sure couldn't go around. George landed, and the place was a sheet of ice, but we got stopped and carefully taxied to the terminal area, where we sat with two engines in idle for about an hour. I couldn't care less. We were down.

The episode with George Govoni did one good thing for me, though, as I never let myself get cornered like that again.

We were given fuel to fly to destination plus to an alternate, plus 45 minutes, and I always treated that 45 minutes fuel as mine, and never to be touched. I had a few dispatchers over the years who used some of that fuel in their figuring, perhaps because of weight, and were cutting me short, and I never stood for it, but, in fact, one time I just refused to go 'till I got more fuel. He backed down, as actually he was wrong. Another time, I was enroute to Dallas with an Oklahoma City alternate, and Oke city went below alternate limits. I called

dispatch for a new alternate, and he gave me San Antonio, which was too far away, so as I was right over Little Rock, and I could see it. I landed and refueled. No problem.

The stewardesses on all the airplanes, for the most part, were great gals and did a fine job - except a lot of them had trouble with the air conditioning, and with the cabin to cockpit phone on the DC-6. The air conditioner control in the cabin was a simple rheostat, but it seemed like many of the gals treated it as a two-position switch, and if they got too warm, the control went to full cold, 'till they were too cold, then it went to full hot. So, they'd call the cockpit to complain. Their phone had a button to talk, and let it go to listen. The second part was hard to understand, evidently. We'd get calls saying it was too hot or too cold, and when we tried to answer we'd get, "I can't hear you", and we'd, of course, try to answer,

"Let go of the damned button and you can hear me!"

Finally, the engineer would have to go back and try to explain the whole thing - but that seldom worked. It really was funny, but no amount of explanation seemed to straighten out some of them. But they were nice anyway, and we loved them all. Funny, though, to remember in these days of sexual harrassment that one of the girls we called "Lady Jane" had the foulest mouth and told the foulest jokes on the airline. I understand, though, that with her husband around, she was a perfect lady.

We were settled into Hamilton pretty well after my service time, and

a few months after returning to AA, along came Debbie

- born at Winchester Hospital - and Mom and daughter were fine, and our family was complete! Mike was getting to be a big 3, and Linda, of course, almost 1. We did have another two additions with our 2 German Shepherds, Jet and Kamie. Kamie stood for Kamehameha, reference to our Hawaii days. We were well protected with those two guys around. I moved up in the airplanes I was flying, as the airline expanded rapidly, and I flew the DC-6, and then the DC-7. I flew a trip with a layover in St. Louis for quite a while, and I used to play golf on a course just opposite the hotel. One day, I caught up with a couple ahead of me and was invited to join them, as I was alone, and I did. I referred to something in Massachusetts and the girl asked if I was Ted Harris. I had thought her familiar, and it seems I'd dated her for a while one summer in Marshfield. She had been divorced, and presently married to a pilot for Ozark Airlines. More of that small world stuff. Things sure moved fast with the airline, as it grew by leaps and bounds, and I went back to school and was checked out as Captain on the Convair in 1955, and on Jan. 15, 1956, I flew my first trip

as captain to N.Y. and back. I figured it for a temporary thing, but I never went back to first officer, but instead the airline got bigger.

Thinking back to those early days with the airline, it was a lot more fun than later on, when the airline got big. In those days, everyone knew everyone else, and all were friends. We knew all the agents at the gates through Chicago to Boston, all the operations personnel, and the mechanics. My main flying was done east of the Mississippi, and mostly between Chicago and Boston. I contend that anyone who flies from Chicago to Boston through Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Albany for 2 or 3 winters can fly anywhere. One trip I had for a while had a layover in Nashville, where we leave there about 6:00 PM with 12 stops to Boston.

Leave Nashville, then Louisville, Cincinnati, Dayton,
Columbus, Canton- Akron, Cleveland, Buffalo, Rochester,
Syracuse, Albany, Hartford, Boston.

The stewardess had a meal to serve between Buffalo and Rochester, which took 19 minutes, gate to gate. She'd throw them out, and pick them back up, so a passenger had to eat fast, or it was gone. At times, we'd have 200 foot ceilings all the way, but get into Boston just about on time, as we'd take off east and land straight in east at the next place. Here we had 12 landings in one day, and, later on, when I had seniority, at times I didn't make 12 landings in a month! It was tiring, but fun, as we knew everyone, and even some of the passengers were regulars the stewardess knew. At other times, I'd get locked in for some months on what we called the "Trans-Con", meaning Trans-Connecticut. We'd fly to LaGuardia or JFK, which was then Idlewild, in the morning, and fly locals up to Providence or Hartford from N.Y. for a couple days. I figured one six-month period that I flew regularly but never crossed the Hudson River. We had a lot of layovers in Chicago, Detroit, and Saint Louis, but we never flew to the West Coast in those days – "till we got 727's, which took a while. As I said, the crews hung around together, and for the most part, we were "buddies" with the stewardesses, though, of course, there were a few cases that went beyond that. I remember Pat Prentice, a Boston copilot, was going around with Fran Marie, a real good-looking gal. I always liked Fran, and she was a pleasant gal to fly with. But anyway, Pat was married, and finally got a divorce and married Fran. Then for strange endings, not long after their marriage, Pat was visiting his mother at Mass General (Hospital), I don't know what she was there for, and Pat collapsed from a stroke in the parking lot, and died. I heard that Fran later married a doctor in Winchester.

But there really was very little “hanky panky going on, as people always seem to think it does happen.

I had one very close call while flying Convairs, and the company was quite upset about it. We left Washington National for N.Y. or Boston, and proceeded IFR, and while talking to Washington Center, southeast to an intersection called Shadyside, where we were to turn northeast and follow the airway. We were about 7,000 feet, if I recall, and I was flying. At Shadyside, I started a left turn to the north, and just as I was about to roll out on the airway, I saw a shadow, and steepened the turn instead of rolling level.

A Panagra DC-7 passed under us within 50 feet, and I doubt if they even saw us.

I got on the radio to the center asking for an explanation and got the old, "Stand by", answer. On landing I debriefed it, and the company was upset, and demanded an explanation from the center. A few days later, I received an answer, something about poor communications between Philadelphia departure control, Washington Center, and Washington Departure Control, and that the problem had been taken care of. I hope so!! Years later I had an incident, though it wasn't close, it could have been. We were in a DC-10 enroute to Aruba, and had just passed over Grand Turk Island at 35,000 feet. The copilot was flying, so I reached for the mike to report to Miami Center, when I heard a World Airways flight report over Grand Turk at 35,000. We looked all over for him, and it was a bit hazy, and I spotted him about five miles ahead of us. When he was through, I said, "This should wake people up", and I reported in. The center came back with, "American, climb to 37,000 immediately". I said we had World Airways in sight ahead, but we were climbing. I never found out just what had happened, but probably one of us went a bit slow or a bit fast to put us together, but the center should have caught it. Then one time we were coming into Aruba, again in a DC-10, and were at 37,000 ft., and cleared down to 5,000 ft. on the 180-degree radial of Aruba, which means the track that takes us into Aruba going due south. Then we heard Pan American cleared from Aruba to climb to 31,000 ft., also on the 180-degree radial. Well, it was very unlikely we'd be at the very same altitude as we passed each other, and we'd probably see each other, but - I called him. "Pan Am, this is American." "Yeah. Go ahead." "How about if you climb out to the right of course, and I descend into the right of course." "I'd like that." We did see him well below us and off to the left a few miles, but we felt better knowing we had separation.

I flew DC-7 freighters for a while, and that was a real drag.

We left Boston at about 11 PM and went to Hartford, where we'd sit for a couple hours for unloading and loading, and then on to Detroit for the same thing. As I remember, we arrived in Chicago about 7 AM. We had that day off, and the next night, before departing Chicago in the morning, and I think we flew to Detroit and Newark, and then Boston, with the 2 hour stops at each base. Someplace in there, we always lost a night's sleep. The only really memorable thing I remember on those freighters is that we were in Newark when we had word of Kennedy being shot in Dallas, and, on the way to Boston, heard that he was dead. We all hated the freighter, but sooner or later everyone flew it. After the DC-7, we finally got closer to the jet age, as we moved into the Lockheed Electra, which I think was the only plane where I felt I really had more power than I needed. Boy, did that thing get off the ground. The only problem came if you lost #1 engine right after take-off, as the loss of all that power really tried to turn the plane to the left and to push the left wing down. You had to come in with lots of right rudder and get the right wing up right away, or you could lose it.

Several of them were lost when wings came off in flight,

and it was finally ascertained that the angle of the propellers to the wing at a certain speed could set up a vibration that tore off the wing. We flew them at a slower speed for a while 'till all the engine mounts were changed to change that angle, and had no further problem. I always thought it a great airplane to fly, as it really flew like a fighter.

Someplace in here, I got in a Reserve unit at Bedford, and checked out on the F-80, a jet fighter. I thought I'd accumulate time towards Air Force retirement, as I had in 9 years active, plus a few more years that counted when I took correspondence courses. It didn't work out in the end, but it was a good idea. Anyway, I had a blast flying fighters around, and though it had been years since I did any aerobatics, I had no problem, and had great fun with loops and rolls and whatever I could think of. One day, they had me lead a three-plane formation, and we fooled around for a couple hours, not doing too much, as the other two guys were not very gung-ho fighter types. We arrived back at Bedford pretty low on fuel, which was routine, as the plane didn't carry much fuel, and

a T-28 had landed ahead of us and had the gear collapse, so he
was sitting on the runway.

Bedford only had one runway so, in effect, the field was closed. I told the other two guys we were going to Boston right now, as we couldn't fool around. Calling the tower, I told him we were short of fuel and we were cleared to land on 22R, and we were just about overhead by then. I told my left wingman to break and make a 360 turn to land, and I followed him.

About halfway around, we could see a DC-3 had stopped in the middle of the runway for some reason, and the tower told us to go around. I said we were going to land on 22R and was told, which I knew, that 22R was closed to landing jet traffic. I said I knew it but, we were landing anyway, and told the guy ahead of me to land, and the three of us got down. I don't believe we had enough fuel to go around. We taxied to the National Guard area, and the phones were ringing with people from Winthrop complaining about us landing.

A jet had crashed there years before, and that's why it was restricted.

I had to write a letter stating that we had no choice, other than to put 3 jets down in Boston Harbor, and I never heard a thing about it. I wonder though, where flying was my business, so I never gave a thought to going around, if those other guys would have tried it and crashed into the harbor.

I had lots of fun for about a year and a half flying that F-80 around, 'till one day someone was looking at the Air Force Times with a list of promotions, and

there was my name as being promoted to major.

Well, I was happy as a captain, and surprised at the promotion, and, evidently, I had good reports from my C.O. back in my Westover days, which gave this to me. Then the bad news came - there was no opening for a major, so I was kicked out of that reserve unit, and no more F-80. I was pretty mad, as I could fly a lot better than most of the guys in the unit, but out I went. I joined the National Guard in Manchester for a while as they flew C-97's, but it was a drag to go up there every month, and it wasn't any fun, so I resigned the whole thing. I must have had about 15 years in and probably should have held on for 5 more, but

I was sort of fed up with the military and got out.

EPILOGUE – LIFE AS A CIVILIAN PILOT

Back flying for American Airlines, another funny episode we overheard while flying across Pennsylvania one day. The following conversation took place:

Center: American 482. Do you want to give a new estimate for Selinsgrove?

American: No. The estimate looks all right.

Center: Well, we have you estimating Selinsgrove at 20 after the hour and it's now 22 after the hour.

American (after a few second delay): Well we have 3 clocks and 3 watches that all say it's 14 after the hour.

Center: But this is official U.S. Naval Observatory time.

All is quiet for about 30 seconds, and then another voice.

United: This is United 520, and I don't know about your Official U.S. Naval Observatory time, but we agree with the other guys. Another 30 seconds or more of quiet, then:

Center: The time is now 16 minutes after the hour.

United: What about your official U.S. Navy Observatory time?

Never got any explanation.

One day we were at 37,000 and the center cleared us to cross a checkpoint that was 200 miles ahead at 17,000, and slowed to 250. No way we could do it, so I just said that I could give him one or the other - altitude or speed - so he said to get down when we could but cross the point at 250 knots.

Some of these controllers don't realize how the flying
machines work.

Flight simulators came along while I flew the Electra, and instrument checks got a lot safer. A 707 had crashed out at Riverhead, L.I. sometime before, and killed a bunch of guys I knew, who were on a check ride. I got a scare on an Electra check ride when the instructor pulled a maneuver I did not consider safe at all, and, with the simulator, the danger was gone. As time went on, they became more realistic, too, so it was just as good as being in the airplane, but safe. Quicker, too, as if someone goofed on something, they could just

move the whole thing back and start over in a few seconds. This is getting ahead of my history, but when I checked out on the 747, I had my check ride in the simulator, so it was on my license that I was qualified, and the first time I got in the cockpit of the actual airplane, I flew it from Dallas to Gatwick in London. Piece of cake. I had a check pilot with me, but I flew the airplane and made an approach in 150-foot weather in England. Simulators are the best thing to come along since the jet engine.

When I flew piston engines with propellers, I probably averaged an engine failure a year.

Well, in C-97's in the air force, a lot more than that, as we said that the C-97 was the first three-engine airplane. It wasn't meant to be, but that's how it worked out. But with the airline, in DC-6's and DC-7's, one a year would be about right, I think. With jets, in probably 25 years of flying, I can only remember 3 shutdowns. They are so reliable. The first one was on a 727 out of Chicago, I think, for L.A. Out over Kansas someplace, we felt a sharp bump, and looking at my engine instruments, #1 wasn't showing any power, so we shut it down and went to St. Louis, which was our nearest American Airlines base. After landing, when we had cleaned up our cockpit work, a mechanic came over to me and said, "Hi Skipper. Take a look at this", and led me to a stand, up to the rear of the #1 engine. I could see turbine blades all over the bottom of the cowl and we'd probably thrown some around the Kansas farmlands, too.

The whole turbine had come apart

and it's a wonder some blades didn't come through the cowl and through the side of the fuselage! But flying on two engines was no big deal, and we had no trouble getting to St. Louis. I heard later, though, that a crew from Tulsa was sent up to St. Louis to ferry the airplane to Tulsa on two engines, and they'd change the engine in Tulsa. Somehow that was changed, and the engine was changed right there in St. Louis, and the crew, I guess, was used for a test flight instead. On take-off, the #2 engine failed. If they'd taken off on two engines and lost one, they wouldn't have a chance of making it around. So, I'll bet that changed a lot of ideas about 2 engine ferry flights. I flew the Electra for a couple years, still staying mostly east of the Mississippi, except for St. Louis.

Next came the BAC-111 which was like a fighter plane, and real squirrely at times. If you were flying manually and looked away for a minute, when you looked back at your instruments, you might be going up or down a couple thousand feet a minute.

Not very stable at all.

I had a scary incident on the BAC, though. I had a copilot who had been a B-47 pilot in the Air Force and was sort of a know-it-all type. I took off from Boston one day and called for gear up, and he grabbed the flap handle. I slammed my hand down on top of his before he could move the handle and repeated "Gear up". He sort of sheepishly pulled up the gear. If I hadn't caught it and those flaps had come up at that point, I don't know if we'd have made it. I'd like to say it cured him of his cockiness, but it didn't.

Finally came the big day I could go to 727 training, and this opened up the whole U.S. of A., as the 727 went all over, and shortly. even outside, the US. Again, the three weeks of ground school and three of simulator, and a few hours with a chief pilot on a trip to L.A., and I was qualified. Now I had layovers in Santa Monica, which was a great spot for jogging, and San Diego, which was a bit of a thrill, as the city rises up east of the airport so you sort of fly down the hill to land.

We used to claim we could see the people in the bar on top of the El Cortez hotel as we flew by.

The jogging reminds me of another funny incident. At some time, I had a layover in Albany N. Y., of all places, and I used to jog around the campus of NY University at Albany. The copilot saw me going out one trip, and brought his running gear along the next trip, and we covered a few miles. Then a stewardess saw us and asked if she could go along next trip. "Sure. No problem". So next trip, we set out for our usual three mile "jog", and she killed us. After three miles, she was just getting warmed up, and took off and left us panting behind. We found out she ran in the Boston marathon every year. Who would 'a thought it?

Anyway, I finally got to fly to the west coast, but my initiation had to be a tough one, with an all-nighter back through Dallas and arriving in N. Y. about 7 A.M. At some time, I had a night coach, where I left Boston at 11 P.M., flew to Washington, to Dallas, Phoenix, and arrived in LA. about 7 A.M., and then had a limo ride to Ontario, California, where we had a layover. The limo ride was about an hour before we could finally go to bed. They had a nice high school track across the street from our motel, though, and I used to jog a few miles on that.

I guess I enjoyed the layovers in L.A. and San Diego most,

as the hotels were nice, and there were things to do. San Diego had Balboa Park right behind the hotel, and it was great for jogging, and about the neatest cleanest park I've ever seen. No one even threw a cigarette butt away out there, but put them in the trash. It was so neat you'd think it wasn't used much, but it was very busy with people playing football,

or softball, or Frisbie, or just sitting on blankets on the grass. Then, down the hill, there was a great Aquarium with porpoises and seals doing all sorts of stunts. A lot of fun.

But then we acquired a Caribbean trip, and the fun began. We flew from Boston, to Dulles, to St. Thomas, to St. Croix, and laid over in St. Croix. St. Thomas was a bit tight, as they only had 4,460 ft. of runway, and that's not much for a 727 to land and stop, so I had the stewardesses trained to not expect a very smooth landing there. The idea was to get it on and get it stopped. Nancy Perry flew with me a lot over the years, and was the type that, if we hit a bit of rough air unexpectedly enroute, the cockpit door would fly open and Nancy would ask, "What the Hell is going on Ted?" In St. Thomas, after I slammed the airplane on the runway, hit the brakes, and lots of reverse thrust, the door would open, and Nancy would say, "Nice landing, Ted ." The takeoff was just as bad, as we couldn't take off with much weight (we were only going to St. Croix, about 15 minutes away), and after take-off we flew between two peaks, made a 90-degree right turn, and flew between a couple more peaks, and out the bay to the ocean. One trip I was asked on our call-in to the company how much fuel we had. I reported 17,000 pounds and was told to not land with over 10,000 pounds. I came across the field about 1,500 ft., put out half flaps and the landing gear, and gave everyone a tour of the island, which even I enjoyed. American had a bad accident there on the trip number I flew, where the pilot touched down, then thought he was too far down and tried to go around,

then tried to stop, and ended up against the mountain with a wrecked airplane and a bunch of dead people.

I figured when I was on, I was there to stay. They gave us a car to use in St. Croix, and put us up in a nice condo on the beach, and it was a great layover as the snorkeling was super. There was a reef in front of the hotel, and lots of coral, and I fooled around exploring and found a way through it into deeper water, perhaps 15 or 20 feet, with a million bright-colored fish and squid and octopus, and even barracuda, which never bothered us. I got an underwater camera and took all sorts of pictures. We had other beaches, too, which were fun, especially one on the southeast end of the island. One day, we walked down to that beach with our diving gear, and a bunch of people, men and women, were lying around nude. A nude beach. The copilot and engineer decided to join the crowd and took off their bathing suits, but I kept mine on, and we snorkeled for about three hours. That evening on the airplane, on the flight back to Boston, those guys could barely sit down, as those bare bottoms sure sunburned. Guess they decided the old Captain knew what he was doing!

One thing interesting down in the islands are

the mongooses running wild, so there aren't any snakes.

There sure are lizards, though, and occasionally one of those big iguanas will cross the road in front of you, or we'd see them around the condo. They are harmless, evidently, as far as people are concerned, and no one seemed to pay much attention to them. The barracudas, though, scare people, but at times, the local one they called George would appear in the shallow water in front of the condo, and people would rush out of the water. I'd grab my camera and mask and flippers, and swim beside it taking pictures, and he never seemed to pay any attention to me. They said to avoid wearing any shiny bracelets or pins, as they were inclined to strike at such things.

One day, we were heading out of St Croix, heading back to Washington, when we got a call from the center, of a clearance change. I was flying with Dennis Kilroy, who was a pretty funny guy, who got out paper to take it down. Usually, a clearance is to prior named places on our charts with names like "cod" or "trout," etc., but this one was off route, evidently, as

they said there was to be a missile firing at Cape Kennedy,

and it would come down someplace where we had planned to go. But they came on with all these coordinates such as "18 degrees, 10 minutes north, and 40 degrees, 15 minutes west", and on and on, all the way up the coast to Washington. Dennis looked at me and I just shrugged. After all the clearance was read Dennis picked up the mike and said, "Surely sir, you jest". The controller laughed, as I did, and said that we had to do it - so Dennis finally took it all down. While he did that, I had to figure out where we were, as coming out of St. Thomas, we had no Loran for about an hour, so we always just took up a heading corrected for wind, and always came out close, and made a slight correction when the Loran came back in. I never thought about it, but you can't navigate to a point unless you know where you are. Anyway, I figured it all out, and added two minutes to figure out the rest, and we plotted our course to the next fix, put in the wind to figure our speed, and gave the center our estimate. About 30 minutes later, we felt like a couple of Magellans as we hit the point right on and to the minute. Dennis was quite a guy, as

he'd been a pitcher for the Chicago Cubs years before, and quit
to learn to fly.

A funny thing happened on our way to Washington on the St. Croix trip. Our first stop was at Dulles airport, and we were enroute at something like flight level 350, or 35,000 ft. We normally cruised by mach number, and on the 727 it was usually .835, which works out to around 600 mph. The center called us and said we must slow to .78 mach, which is a

considerable slowdown, so I asked why, and was told we were catching up with the Concorde!! It seems the Concorde, when it goes subsonic, slows way down to .78, so we must slow down. That was a new one on me.

I've had to slow down for MD-80's to .78, but that's their cruising speed, but the Concorde?

Another trip, going to Washinton National, we were to cruise at FL 250, and the copilot was flying. He leveled off at 18,000, and I asked why, so he pointed to his altimeter which read 26,000. Mine read 18,000, and the center altimeter read 21,000. I called the center immediately and said we had an altimeter problem, so keep us clear of traffic. We finally figured out, by reviewing in our heads how the whole pitot static system worked, that probably his altimeter was correct, and that the three altimeters should read the same when we landed. This proved true, as during descent, the three came closer and closer together. Evidently a leak in the system bled cabin pressurization into my system- which also fed the center altimeter. We looked in the logbook, and my instrument had been changed the night before. Maintenance changed mine on the ground, and all was normal, so we figured

someone had cross-threaded it during installation,

and cabin air bled into it. Luckily it was a nice day, so we kept our eyes open, and the center kept us clear, but on a cloudy day, I'd have been a bit worried. Another time, over Syracuse at night, at cruise altitude, the fire warning bell went off - but no light indicating where the fire was. I told the copilot to turn off the damned bell, and I tested all the circuits. Everything lit just fine, so I figured it for a false warning, which it evidently was. The company came out with a new procedure shortly after for just this situation, evidently because of our occurrence. That bell is scary when it goes off - especially at night.

When I started flying the Carib, we had a Loran set to work with, and it was fine, but had limitations. If you were on what is called the "base line extension", you couldn't use it 'till you got out of that range. Also, thunderstorms would interfere with reception, but, all in all, it wasn't bad. In the DC-10, I had what is called "Omega", which operates off of 20 medium frequency stations worldwide, and was better. Accuracy was improved and it encountered little interference. We could load the set with our first nine positions enroute, and when the auto pilot was turned on, the airplane went there, one by one. Of course, if you made a mistake and put in the wrong positions, it's still going to go to what you select,

so we were very, very careful.

That could well be what happened to the Korean plane that the Russians shot down. Then, we had an INS or inertial navigation set, which was all self-contained and worked off of gyros, and was also very accurate. In the 747, I had two Omegas and one INS, and all should agree, and they always did, on my flights. I was halfway to Hawaii one trip when my flight instruments all spilled, and the auto pilot clicked off. The copilot's instruments were fine, so I checked the INS which ran my flight instruments, and it was inoperative for some reason. I was able to switch my instruments and the auto pilot to another system, and all was well, but it keeps you on your toes. Another time, I heard a click on my overhead panel, and called out that a circuit breaker had tripped, and, sure enough, there was a tripped breaker with no label. No one knew what it was for, so we looked in the manual - but it was blank on the diagram. The engineer asked if I wanted to reset it, but as we were halfway to Honolulu from the coast, and, as everything seemed to be working, I said to leave it alone till we were on the ground. There was a reason for it tripping, whatever it was, and

I couldn't see looking for trouble with no land for 1,500 miles in any direction.

On landing, after taxiing to the gate, I reset it and nothing happened. The mechanics on the ground didn't know what it was for. So I was due for simulator training in a few days, and sitting in the box, I asked an instructor what that circuit breaker was for, as I pointed to it. He didn't know, but said he'd find out. A few days later, I got about a 10-page report that said a weather interrogator had been installed in all the aircraft, and periodically it would take information from our nav sets as to altitude, wind, and temperature, and store it 'till a ground station in San Francisco sent an interrogator asking for it. No one had told any of us about it. I loved flying to the Carib, as the layovers were fun with windsurfing or snorkeling, and the flights gave you something interesting to look at as you passed over the various islands. I love Barbados and Aruba. St. Croix was fun because of the diving, and

Trinidad, I didn't like, as the people are downright unfriendly.

I seldom left the hotel grounds there, though I did jog on a big track we could see from the hotel. St. Martin had an interesting take-off with a few 2,000 ft. mountains ahead of you, so we had to turn 180 degrees to the right as soon as we cleared the ground, to go between two peaks. We took off light there, as we did from St. Thomas, and flew a few miles to Antigua, where the plane fueled up and we had a layover. A few times, we had small hurricanes en route, but at 39,000 we were above them. I flew the 727 for 12 years and about 6,000 hours, and liked the airplane very much. But

next came the DC-10, and it's my favorite airplane.

It was light on the controls, and thus very maneuverable, and the automatic controls were unbelievable, though I guess now everything has these systems. We could sit on the ground at Kennedy Airport and put the positions en route to Aruba into the computer, put in the altitude and speed we wanted, and at 1,000 feet after take-off turn on the autopilot. The airplane would climb to altitude, set the power for the speed, and go to Aruba. We just had to watch it go.

It even could land by itself if the airport was equipped,

and it did a nice job. Very often we had what is called a circling approach at JFK, where we'd be circling the field at fairly low altitude, 1,000 feet, and maintaining a speed of about 120. With the auto throttle set at 120, I could concentrate on my approach and watching other traffic, and not have to worry about juggling throttles to hold my speed. It was a great system.