

*These memories
are
for
David Hutchens*

THE WAR YEARS 1939-1946

BY

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POST HIGH SCHOOL – EARLY COLLEGE YEARS

I graduated from Roseville High School in the spring of 1939 at the age of 17. It was obvious to me that in view of the on-going war in Europe against the forces of Hitler, this country would get into this war and that I would be serving in the military. I told my Dad that if I went into the military my preference would be to serve in the Air Force rather than the ground forces. With his permission, I contacted the local military headquarters in the Detroit area and was told that the Army Air Force had a requirement that to enter as an aviation cadet for pilot training, you had to be 21 and have two years of college.

I took the challenge of getting started on the two years of college. My first objective was to get a job to earn the money for college. I had been offered a football scholarship from the University of Detroit but that would only pay my tuition. I would have to provide all the expenses for books, food, and a place to live. This meant I would have to work while going to school, so I passed up the football scholarship and started looking for a job. I found that being only 17 precluded me from getting a job in industry. The word was that you must be at least 18 to get a job with industry. I finally worked out an arrangement to work for a local dairy. They were milking about 40 cows and needed a hired hand to help with this work. Since I took care of the family cow, I qualified for the farm hand job. They offered me 75 cents a day and room and board. After a month, the farm boss raised my pay to one dollar a day. Since I had no expenses, I saved all of this money. I worked hard for this money. It included getting up at 4 A.M. to get the cows into the barn and into the stalls for milking. This included cleaning their udders and putting the milking equipment on the cows, feeding them a bran mixture so they would be contented cows and give their milk. When the milking machine had done its job, it had to be removed and each cow had to be stripped by hand to get any remaining milk. With milking cows if you did not strip them of all their milk, they would gradually give you less milk. For the 40 cows, this would take about 2 hours to complete. Then I would clean up and have a big farm breakfast served by the hired cook who took care of the house work and the cooking. Fortunately, the farmer had another hired hand to work with me. This was a young man from West Virginia who was as strong as a horse and we worked well together.

After a healthy but not eventful summer, I decided to make a more positive move toward getting into college. I had to have a better job than a hired farm hand. Answering an ad in the paper I found a job. It was with a dental laboratory located in downtown Detroit. With the funds I made during the summer, I came up with about \$125. I bought a 1932 Plymouth coup. This gave me transportation to my job in downtown Detroit. My job was as a delivery boy. The Company furnished me a car on the job- which was to deliver dental products from the laboratory to the dentist who had placed the order for bridges, porcelain inlays, etc. Also, I collected money from the dentist for the company. After working for about a month or so, I decided I had to make another change. I enrolled in night school at Wayne University and took advanced math courses. Now I had the problem of working in downtown Detroit on days and going to school at night. After thinking through my options, I decided to sell my Plymouth and buy a motorcycle. Then,

I proposed to the Dental Lab that they take the money they were spending on a delivery car and increase my pay. We settled on going from \$15 a week to \$25 a week. There was a big problem on the motorcycle. Since I was still only 17, my parents had to sign for me to buy the motorcycle. My dad would not sign, but I convinced my mother to sign. I expect this caused a little heated discussion on the home front, if I know my dad. I was proud of that motorcycle which was a Harley-Davidson. I decided to spruce it up a bit. I bought some aluminum paint and painted almost everything with the aluminum paint. When the paint was dry, I got on the cycle and kicked it into start. Surprise, surprise, I got an electrical shock which almost knocked me off the bike. Lesson learned, aluminum paint conducts electricity right up to the handle bars.

With a job in downtown Detroit and enrolled in Wayne University for night school, I was all set for the winter of 1939, except living at home in Roseville did not quite fit a reasonable schedule. So, I decided to leave home and get a room in the Detroit downtown YMCA. Now, I had a program in hand for the 1939-1940 school years. Things were going fine for me except one night coming home from Wayne University night school to my YMCA room downtown. I was coming down Woodward Avenue on my motorcycle and made a left-hand turn off Woodward toward the YMCA. I thought I had cleared myself for the left-hand turn. I guess the winter jacket I was wearing did not let me see clearly to the left rear and I turned right across the path of a car coming behind me. The car must have hit me square on. I remember flying high in the air and seeing spinning street car tracks as I was coming down. A cop on the corner saw the action and said I went above the street car wires or I guess about 20 feet. My winter jacket must have given me some protection on landing. I was momentarily knocked out. I do remember coming to and looking at my smashed motorcycle. Then I must have passed out and was probably in shock. I remember coming to briefly and a man had put me in his car with the intent of taking me to the hospital. A man, probably the cop, was saying to the man in the car that it was foolish for him to do this because then he would be a responsible party. At this time, I must have passed out again. Apparently, I was taken by police ambulance to the downtown hospital. They must have been having a busy night. I must have come to and was moving and I heard one of the hospital attendants say that: "the guy that was brought in and we thought was dead is moving." The next thing I remember was being trundled down the hall for x-rays. I remember that both my Dad and Mom were with me. Net results no broken bones, no head or neck injuries but I remember that every muscle in my body must have been strained. I was really sore.

I was in the hospital for about two day's and then came home. I received a court order that I had to attend a court session as the responsible party for the accident. My Dad said that I should go to court with a lawyer. We arranged to have a lawyer friend from the church go to court with me. My Dad said, although a friend, I should pay my lawyer. Mr. Gaskill did not want a fee but we agreed on \$10. In court, the judge read the charges and my lawyer gave a summary of how the accident had happened. The judge then asked the man who had hit me if he had any charges for repair of his car. This very nice man said he had no charges and he was just thankful that I was alive. The judge then pronounced the sentence. I would lose my drivers license for 30 days and must attend a court sponsored driver's education school for a month.-Lesson Learned! I tried to retrieve my motorcycle which was being held in a police pool. The officer running the pool doubted my identity because the records show this had been a fatal accident. When

I saw the motorcycle it was badly crushed so I decided it was not worth retrieving. In the meantime, the dental lab still wanted me to work for them and they furnished me a car for the delivery work.

At the end of the night school year, I decided I had saved enough money to get started on full-time college work. I applied for entrance to the Lawrence Institute of Technology in Highland Park, a suburb of Detroit. I was accepted as a freshman.

Tuition was \$40 a semester. I had the money for that but now needed to place to stay. I

found that I could stay at a local fraternity house, so I joined this fraternity known as the Alpha-Beta-Upsilon. They had a large house near the school for sleeping rooms and a housekeeper who furnished breakfast and dinner. Now, I needed a night job so that I could handle expenses. My room and board was \$10 per week. I did find the night job working for a parking garage. They gave me a uniform and my job was to work the Michigan Theatre in downtown Detroit. People coming to the Theater could use our parking service. With about six boys, we took the cars to a nearby parking garage and then brought them back from the garage. We got paid by the car so there was a competition to see who could make it to the garage and back in the fastest order. The boss could soon see that I could handle cars in and out of the parking garage in fast order. It was an inside garage with about a four floors. I think I squealed the tires in the fast run up and down the ramps. Note- from this experience I would never use a garage parking service in my later years. This was in 1940 and I found I could handle any of the new and older cars with no problem. I think this experience probably helped develop my dexterity for later flying airplanes. After about a month on the job, the boss decided I should be promoted to working the door at the Theatre as boss of the boys driving the cars. A couple of the boys were a little rough to handle. I became friends with the cop on the beat. This cop told me that he would watch over me and help if I was ever jumped by these two tough kids. Fortunately, I never needed his service, but I did learn a thing or two about handling men.

I worked this night parking job for about four months. One of the boys at the Frat House said he could get me a night job at a place that repaired Sears Cold Spot refrigerators. I would be the only man working the night shift. My job was to repair and inspect refrigerators left over by the day crew. This meant that I had to know how to handle the complete repair sequence for the early Cold Spot Sears refrigerators. This included unpacking the incoming product-putting it on the repair line and running an inspection to find the problem- fix the problem and then put the unit on a test stand to check out the fix. Then the unit was taken to the paint shop where I spray painted the motor and pump black so it looked like a new unit. Since I was working the night shift alone, I had to master all the problems with the proper fix. Usually, it was either a gas leak in the refrigerator coils or a bad pump. This turned out to be a good job for me. I could usually clean up the left over days work in four or five hours and this left me with three to four hours to study and do - home work. My biggest problem was a short night. I got to bed about one a.m. and I had an eight o'clock class. So, I was getting about five or six hours sleep at night.

I started as a freshman at Lawrence Tech in Sept. of 1940. I started my sophomore year in Sept. 1941 at the age of 19. My plan was to finish two years of college and join the military as an aviation cadet by age 21. My plan was on schedule. On Sunday morning Dec. 7, 1941, I was studying for a calculus exam in the fraternity house when it was

announced on the radio that Japan had bombed Pearl Harbor and we were at war. Shortly thereafter, I found the requirement for entry into the Army as an aviation cadet had been changed to age 18. Two years of college had been dropped. You had to pass an intelligence test and pass a medical exam. Within the next week, I had met all these requirements and had been sworn into the Army as a candidate for aviation cadet training. I was given orders to remain at home until called for active duty – estimated to be in one or two months .

I was really looking forward to starting the Army flight training. I had taken advantage of a course offered in my first year of college to take flight training in a course offered by the college and sponsored by the government. This course included about 40 hours of flying. At the end of 40 hours, you must pass a flight test given by your instructor and a written exam to obtain your private pilot's license. In this course, I flew a small single-engine Piper Club. Most of my instruction was given by a lady and her husband, a commercial pilot.

MEETING MARY

This time of waiting to be called was not wasted. I met a very beautiful young girl from Windsor, Ontario in the fall of 1941. Her name was Mary Wilson. Mary had a cousin living with her while this cousin was attending college at Wayne University in Detroit. I had a friend, Don Brown. We had met in grade school and had maintained a close friend relationship. Don had a girl cousin, named Shirley, who also was attending Wayne University. Shirley was a college friend of Marney Rutherford who was living with Mary. The stage was now set for Shirley, Don Brown's cousin, to introduce him to Marney. They started dating and that led Marney to introduce me to Mary. This led to the famous foursome of Don Brown and Marney and Dave and Mary. This all took place in the fall of 1941. I spent a lot of time with Mary while waiting to be called into the Army.

ARMY FLIGHT TRAINING

Early in March of 1942, I received orders to report for duty. Don and Marney and Mary saw me off on a troop train bound for California where my training would start. I had fallen in love with Mary so this was a sad parting for me. The troop train stopped in Chicago to pick up another group of boys headed for flight training. After what seemed like a long train ride, we arrived at Santa Ana, California. This base was processing recruits for the Army Air Force. Here, I was given a cadet uniform, a thorough medical exam, and the famous Army shots or vaccinations. We formed a long line and with both arms bare to receive the shots from the medical Corps. We passed in a line through this operation. There were a few boys who fainted during this ordeal. We were told that this would wash you out for getting into flight training. We spent a lot of time marching and each Sunday afternoon we marched in a parade put on by the base for the local public. This included standing at attention for a long period of time under the hot California sun. The meat wagon (ambulance) was available to pick up those who fainted from this ordeal. Again, that meant a wash out for further training. We lived in tents with about 8

to a tent. We attended classes to be taught military subjects including the Morse Code. You had to pass a test in code, about six words a minute, to continue the training. I was receiving mail from Mary at this time. I remember sending her letter saying "I love you" in code.

After about two months of basic training if you've mastered all the testing, you were sent to a primary flying school. I was assigned to a flight school in King City, California. Here life was upgraded. We lived in large comfortable rooms with about six boys to a room -- much better than tents. The school was run by civilians under contract to the Army. The food was good and we had weekends for free time. Our training consisted of ground school, flight instruction, and rigorous physical training. The flight instruction was given by civilians but to pass primary you were tested by an Army test pilot. I had one problem. We were flying a PT -19 trainer. The student sits in the forward cockpit and the instructor sits in the rear cockpit. I was connected to the instructor by a headset which was operated by voice from the instructor to the student (this was not a radio contact). When we landed, my instructor said that I did not follow his instructions and this could result in a wash out. Before taking this action, he sent me to the medics for a hearing test. The medics discovered that I had a large deposit of wax in both ears. They washed out my ears and that solved the problem. Flight training in primary was not a big problem for me. Having flown in the civilians training course in college was a big advantage. The PT - 19 was a good plane for acrobatics which I enjoyed doing. I remember one problem which came up when I was given a simulated engine failure by the instructor. Without any warning he would pull the throttle to idle and you were expected to react by locating a field where you could use as an emergency landing spot. On my first try, I picked out a nice looking green field and proceeded to set up my pattern for executing the simulated force landing. As I approached the field for the simulated landing, my instructor took over the controls. We flew over the field and my instructor pointed out that I had picked out a field of lettuce with a watering system of piping which would have destroyed the airplane.

Near the end of the primary flying course, I had a few solo hours to make up for graduation. I took off for my solo flying and decided to practice all my acrobatic maneuvers. This airplane was easy to perform snap rolls. I did a series of these and returned to the field having completed the required flying time. Upon landing, taxiing, and parking the airplane, I was met by one of the military instructor pilots. He said, mister, I was in the air watching while you were doing those snap rolls and you flew out of the assigned area for the school. You violated this ruling. You will be given 4 black marks. These black marks will require you to march around the landing field for four hours while wearing your parachute. This turned out to be very embarrassing for me. While marching around the field, the student body was in the final day of classes which included choosing the class cadet to receive the award to be the most likely to succeed in his flying career. They picked me to receive this award. This included having your name engraved on a gift statue donated to the school by a family that had lost their son in an aircraft accident while attending this school.

After graduating from primary, I was sent to basic flying school located at Lemoore, California. This school was strictly run by the military and we had military flight instructors. We trained in a BT 13 airplane. The BT 13 was a single-engine, larger and higher horsepower than in the primary PT 19. One of the problems to master was the

tendency of the airplane to veer off to the right on the takeoff due to engine torque. This was corrected by applying left rudder pressure during the takeoff run. This basic flying field was one large concrete area rather than a designated run way strip. We had a terrible accident which killed two of the cadets when the veering torque caused them to collide on takeoff.

Basic flight training included night flying and flying on instruments. My instructor said that we should have had instrument flight training before we had night flight training. However, he said because of scheduling problems we would start night flying first and we would have our first night flight today. That night he had myself and another cadet scheduled to fly. The plan was to fly formation with him leading. I was to fly on his right wing and the other cadet on the left wing. We would take off in formation. We would fly in formation and then returned to the field for landing. His instructions were when preparing to land he would waggle his wings first and then he would peel out of formation and set up a landing pattern to approach the field for our first night landing. I have a vivid memory staying in close formation on my instructor's right wing. What ever he did I did to stay in a fixed formation. Suddenly, I realized that my fixed sight on my instructor's right wing was gone. Not having had any instruction on instrument flying, I tried to orient myself with the lighted landing field. I suddenly found the lighted landing field by looking straight up. I recognized that I was upside down .I then maneuvered my airplane to put the lighted landing field below me. I set up a landing pattern and completed my first night landing. My instructor was very concerned for my safety. He said that when he waggled his wing as a sign to fall into formation behind him for the landing I waggled my wings and then he lost me as he made his pattern and approach for landing. He and I were both happy for me to be on the ground safely.

As we were near the time to complete basic flight training, the school posted our names on a bulletin board. We were instructed to indicate behind our names our choice for advanced flying school. We could choose to either go to an advanced school for single-engine flying which would lead to training to be a fighter pilot or to go to the twin-engine training school which would lead to an assignment for flying multi-aircraft such as a bomber or a cargo aircraft. I had already decided I wanted to be a fighter pilot. Two or three of the boys who had become my best friends decided we should stay together. They wanted to go to twin-engine training. While I was up flying in the afternoon, the names were posted. They put down my choice for twin engine training. When I landed, it was too late to change the choice. That one act sent me on the path I would follow to become a bomber pilot for my combat flying.

In early December 1942, I arrived at a base in southern Arizona. This was Douglas Army Air Force base for advanced flight training. Douglas was a small town located on the border with Mexico. I was assigned to fly the AT-19 which was a twin-engine aircraft. This airplane had a reputation for being somewhat unstable and underpowered for its weight and since Douglas was about 5000 feet above sea level, this added to the problem. At this altitude the airplane had the reputation of taking off at 120 mph, flying at 120 mph, and landing at 120 mph. My only problem in learning to fly this airplane was setting up the final approach for landing. In basic flying at Lemoore, CA, we were at or near sea level and our landing field was a large concrete field. At Douglas, we were at 5000 ft and we were landing on a single narrow runway strip. I had the problem

of either over shooting or under shooting on my 90 degree turn from base leg unto the final landing approach. My instructor finally decided I had no problem in flying the airplane except for the final 90 degree turn to the runway. He did not want to wash me out for this one problem so he had his other student, Bob Ingersol, fly with me. Bob and I were roommates and had become good friends. Bob instructed me on the base leg turn and I made several good landings. My instructor was happy with Bob's OK report and I went on to graduate. I got my wings and commission as a 2nd Lt. on the fourth of February 1943, just a few days before my 21st birthday on 8 Feb.

Although I had been receiving and writing letters to Mary, my girl back in Windsor, I must confess that I had met a girl in town through the social affairs office sponsored by the city of Douglas. She was a very pretty dark haired girl with blue eyes. She was a Catholic girl and I went to midnight mass with her on Xmas Eve, 1942. She came out to the Base for our graduation ceremonies and she pinned on my new pilot wings. I left Douglas AFB shortly after graduation ceremonies and I never saw or corresponded with this pretty blue eyed girl again. I mention this now because later in my memories she enters the scene by a letter I received from her after Mary and I had been married for about a year. I still remember this girl whose name was Aurellia. I will finish this memory later in my writings.

After graduating from pilot school, I received orders to report to a military organization in Salt Lake City, Utah. After a couple of weeks, I received orders to report to a base in southern California, Blyth AFB, lying in the middle of the desert. I was assigned for pilot training in a B-17. I remember we lived in tents and it was important to check your bed covers every night before you crawled in because snakes and other reptiles would crawl in to your bed during the day to keep warm from the cold desert sand. After flying the smaller training airplanes, the B-17 was a monster. Sitting in the pilot's compartment it seemed like I was flying an apartment house. After flying for some hours with an instructor pilot, I was designated to be a first pilot on the B-17 and would be assigned a crew for further crew flight training. At that time, my crew consisted of nine other men, three officers and six enlisted men. My officers were my copilot, Lt. Tex Stephens, my navigator, Lt. Bill Goodman and my bombardier, Lt. Bill Tilson. My senior enlisted man was Sgt. Lester Bucey who was my flight engineer. My radio man was Ed Knauth, the ball turret man was Sgt. Purdy, my waist gunners were Sgt. Jasinski and Sgt. Barnett. Last was my tail gunner Sgt. Hilbert Braun. I'll have more to say about my crew later.



Co-Pilot Lt. Tex Stephens



Navigator: Lt. Bill Goodman

Our training instructors were good men. Some had been in combat in the early days on the Japanese front but they had no idea what we would have in combat fighting the Germans. For gunnery training, I would fly down along a line of low-lying hills in the desert which had targets painted on the side of the hill. Not exactly good training for what we would have over Germany with attacking German fighters. We did have a bomb drop zone where Tilson could drop practice bombs on a marked circular target on the ground. If the bomb dropped within 200 feet of the target, it was considered a "shack hit". We were using the famous Norton bomb sight and Bill became very proficient. The B-17 was set up so that the pilot would fly the airplane toward the target. Close to the target Bill would take over directional control by using the PDI (Pilot Directional Indicator) he would control the PDI and I would fly the designated course. We got pretty good and got several shack hits. By comparison, in flying combat we would fly in formation and salvo the bombs on the target based on the bomb drop of the formation leader.

After being in basic training for about a month, an officer in charge of my training unit called me into his office. He told me that he had been contacted by the Red Cross. He had been informed that my Dad was in a hospital back in Detroit. I was told that my Dad was not expected to live and that the Red Cross had made arrangements to fly me home on a commercial airliner. Arrangements had been made for me to be gone about a week and then I would be flown back to Blythe, California to continue my B-17 training

with my crew. I was met at the Detroit airport by family. We went to the hospital to see Dad. He was alert and very excited to see his son in uniform as a 2nd Lt. in the Army Air Corps wearing the silver wings of a pilot. On this visit home, I did get to spend some time with Mary. Both of us were very much in love. We decided that we wanted to get married. Even though I was very much in love with Mary, I told her that it would be best to postpone marriage. I knew I would be flying a B-17 combat tour, probably out of England. This was in the spring of 1943 and the air war against the Germans was heating up, and I knew I would be in the thick of this war. We compromised and I bought Mary an engagement ring. I left my Dad, family, and Mary and returned to Blythe, California as planned.

I found my crew intact and anxious to continue our B-17 training. We were now into May and the start of very high temperatures in the day time. The aluminum skin of the airplane was too hot to touch and even worse the macadam runways were beginning to buckle under the weight of the B-17s. We switched to night flying because of the high day time temperatures out in the California desert. Finally, it was decided that we would leave Blythe and go to a base up north in the State of Washington. We transferred our training activity to a base at Walla Walla, Washington. We did some flying at this base with plans to move to a satellite base in Oregon. I have a vivid memory of receiving orders to fly my B-17 and crew on a special mission. We were to fly to Oklahoma City transporting another flight crew for the purpose of picking up another B-17 airplane and they would fly this airplane back to Walla Walla. After taking this crew to Oklahoma City, we would return to Walla Walla with our B-17. I was instructed to stop at Boise, Idaho to remain overnight and refuel for the flight back to Walla Walla. Now, I had a big problem. The crew which I had brought down were experienced in flying cross country under flying rules of the Civil Air Commission. All of my flying had been local flying under military orders. I was in Base Operations struggling with the paper work required for this return flight. I was touched on the shoulder. I turned to find a young lady in the uniform of a WAF. This was an organization of women pilots who were supporting our country by flying military aircraft from the production plants to military bases and delivering military aircraft to over-seas locations. Imagine my complete surprise to find that this lady had been my instructor pilot when I was taking Civilian Pilot Training (CPT) while in college. She gave me a big hug and asked what I was up to. I told her that I was supposed to fly a B-17 back to Walla Walla with an over night refueling stop at Boise, Idaho. I was trying to make out the paper work as a clearance for this flight. She took over the job and completed the paper work for me. Part of the paper work included getting an enroute weather briefing. We found that the weather at Boise would be bad and would require an instrument approach and landing. Of course, I had flown the B-17 in instrument training but had never made an actual instrument approach and landing. She got out the approach procedures for Boise and gave me a detailed briefing on how to make this instrument approach and landing using the "Let-Down Charts" for Boise. Based on this briefing we took off for Boise. We were on instruments for most of the trip. I knew that Boise was in mountain country. I made the let down procedure exactly as briefed. I am sure today that this lady saved my "butt" and I'll be forever grateful, but I can't remember her name.

Upon returning to Walla Walla, I found that we were being transferred to a satellite base at Madras, Oregon to finish our combat crew training. I have another vivid

memory. I was preparing my crew for a practice bombing flight. As I was in the process of starting our four engines, a staff car and an ambulance approached my airplane. A Captain got out of the staff car and signaled me to cut the engines. He told me that he had orders that required me to fly this B-17 back to Walla Walla. He was taking a young Indian girl from a nearby Indian Reservation back to the hospital at Walla Walla. She had a ruptured appendix and needed hospital medical care. They put her on a stretcher and put her aboard my airplane. The Captain, a medical doctor, would be with her in my airplane. I was instructed by the Captain to keep the airplane at a low altitude and to fly this airplane as smooth as possible. I pride myself in being a smooth pilot in the air, but I wasn't so sure about a smooth landing. In all my flying experience I have never made a landing as smooth as I did that day at Walla Walla. It was one when you never really realize you are on the ground. I've often felt that I had a little help from on "High" to get this little girl safely on the ground.

We were nearing the end of our training at Madras, Oregon when I received another message that my Dad had died. My commanding officer said again that I would be flown home by the Red Cross. He promised that my crew would be given a weeks leave and be ready for me when I returned. Losing my Dad at this time was a special burden to me. We had been very close. He was my best friend and companion during my growing up years. Of course, I got to see Mary again and that help me to handle this in troubled time. We buried Dad in the family cemetery in Indiana and I returned to Walla Walla by courtesy of the Red Cross.

My crew members were waiting for me and we continued with our B-17 training including practice bomb dropping, night cross-country flying, and formation flying. About mid-July 1943, we were alerted that we would be transferred overseas to join the Eighth Air Force operating out of England. We left Seattle, Wash. by rail. Our destination was Kearny, Nebraska where we were to pick up a new B-17 bomber to fly to England. We arrived at Kearny and as a flight crew we checked out a brand new B-17. Two memories stand out involving our stay at Kearny. My friend, Don Brown, and his new wife, Marney, paid an overnight visit with me. Don at that time was in the Army and stationed at Salina, Kansas which was several miles south of Kearny. Don got a weekend pass and he and Marney arrived by bus from Salina. I really was glad to see my friends from home. I was scheduled to fly the new B-17 on a transition flight to check out the new airplane. Since Don was in uniform, I asked him if he would like to go along for a flight in the local area. He agreed that he would like to fly with me. He came out to the Air Base. We loaded up in the B-17 and I was about to start engines. Here came a staff car. A major in Air Corp uniform got out of that car. He came into the airplane and said that he had been cleared to fly with me to England and he had gear to load into the B-17 for the trip. Well, that canceled my flight with Don Brown.

I later found out that this man's name was Fred Keyes, a well known name in aviation history. He and his brother held the record for the longest flight aloft using a type of aerial refueling by hose from another airplane. His brother was the head engineering officer for the Air Force in England. Fred was going over to visit his brother and most important to deliver a supply of corn whiskey which was a rarity in England. The following day we received orders to fly to Gander, Newfoundland. This would be our departure point for the flight overseas. We were to fly to Baer Field in Fort Wayne, Indiana for overnight and refueling stop. The next day we were to fly to Bangor, Maine

for another overnight stop and refueling. From Bangor, we were to fly Gander and when the weather included a good tail wind we were to fly directly to Prestwick, Scotland. With these flight orders in hand, I called my mother at home to give my love and to say goodbye. When Mom heard I would be stopping in Fort Wayne for an overnight, she said Fort Wayne isn't that far from Detroit. She said she wanted to meet me in Fort Wayne for our goodbye visit. I gave her a phone number where she could reach me but I didn't really think she could make this trip on this short notice. After flying to Fort Wayne, I got a phone call that she was in town and staying at a local hotel. I got an okay from the military to spend another day to visit my family before takeoff to Bangor, Maine. I got a cab and headed for Mom's hotel. Imagine my complete surprise to find Mom brought my sister Milly with her and even more of a surprise to find that my fiancé, Mary, was with them. Needless to say, we had a joyful reunion, dinner, and an emotional goodbye.

The next morning my crew and I with our passenger, Fred Keyes, took off for Bangor, Maine for refueling and another night stay. We were told that we would not leave Bangor until the following afternoon. We were taken to our barracks where we would spend the night. This place was the scene of many stops for flight crews on the way to England for a combat tour. It was obvious that this last night in the USA had been celebrated by many departing crews. The plaster walls were busted in many places. It seems that the last night celebration included much alcohol drinking. I must admit that I joined in. I was not a drinking man but my flight engineer reminded me that we were not scheduled to flying until the following afternoon. I celebrated. The next morning I didn't feel very good. I think they call this a hangover. To make matters worse, I was told that our takeoff time had been moved up to a morning takeoff.

I got our gang together and we headed for the airplane. This was a new experience for me. I had never flown under the influence of alcohol and never in all my flying years have I ever flown under these conditions again. My flight engineer was a big help. He gave me the oxygen hose which helped. We got started and made the flight to Gander. On arrival and in the landing pattern, I turned on to a final approach. I asked my flight engineer which of two parallel runways I was to land on. He said "Lt., there is only one runway down there." I took another strong whiff of oxygen and I made my landing.

EIGHTH AIR FORCE

We spent almost two weeks at Gander waiting for a favorable tailwind. Finally, the weather gave us our tailwind and one night we took off with a full load of gas for a nighttime flight. We had maximum load on the B-17. I flew the heading provided by Bill Goodman, my navigator. Because of the heavy load on the airplane, I stayed at a low altitude to burn off some of the fuel load. The weather was bad and I flew on instruments. After about two hours, I climbed to 10,000 feet, but the weather was so bad that I was still flying on instruments. After a few hours of flying, Bill Goodman asked me to climb to an altitude above the clouds so that he could get a star shot to check our position for possible course correction. I started climbing but could not get above the clouds. We continued flying based on Bill Goodman's course direction. After about eight hours of flying, we got a break in the clouds and in the morning daylight I looked

down and I saw the greenest land I had ever seen. We had to be over Ireland. We were now close enough to Prestwick, Scotland to pick up their radio beacon. This beacon was closely controlled by directions to keep the Germans from using it to drop their bombs. I followed the new heading provided by Bill Goodman and we made our landing at Prestwick, Scotland as planned. After landing, we unloaded our gear and were informed that this new airplane we had been flying was scheduled to be flown to a modification center for changes to put it in combat configuration. We spent the day at Prestwick and were told that we would leave the next day by train for arrival at a new air base for new crews. I remember getting a haircut at Prestwick. I was told by the barber that he would be trimming my hair line by razor without soap lather. It seems that soap was a luxury in Great Britain during the war. We were loaded on the train the next morning and our destination was an airbase in Bovington, England. We would be stationed there for lectures concerning combat flying out of England. While we were at Bovington, it seems that another well-known Yankee was on the base. This turned out to be Clark Gable. The local English girls knew Clark Gable was here for his indoctrination training and they lined the path to watch for Clark as he came along riding his bicycle going to his quarters. Capt. Gable was assigned to a bomb group as a cameraman. Many of the movies of the B-17 flying in combat formation were the work of Clark Gable. We were at Bovington for about 10 days and then received our orders transferring my crew and I to our combat base at the 381st Bomb Group at Ridgewell, England. We left Bovington by train to arrive in London where we would transfer to another train to Cambridge and be picked up by G.I. buses and taken to our new base at Ridgewell. We arrived in London during a blackout. And it was black. To make the train transfer we had to change stations which took us up to the street level. About this time a flashlight was shined into my face. A girl's voice said "Why you are still a baby". The light went out. I was obviously being checked out by one of the famous street walkers in war-torn London. The buses met us in Cambridge and we then were taken to our new home at Ridgewell.

This base was a typical combat base. It was organized for combat flying into four squadrons. We would fly with the 532nd squadron. We arrived on Aug. 18, 1943. The famous first Schwienfurt raid had been flown on the previous day, August 17, 1943. This raid had been made with heavy losses taken by the Eighth Air Force. A total of sixty planes had been lost. About half of the 381st was gone and the Group was not operational. Our assignment to the Group was the start of building back to a combat strength. This meant that 18 B-17s had to be put into the air. Six from each of three squadrons were required. We were getting settled in our quarters, which were called quanset huts. The huts were located in an area by squadrons. The officers were in one location and enlisted men were in another location. All in the same type metal quanset huts. We had a latrine hut for shaving and showering and cleaning up. I don't remember that we had any a hot water. We were in a hut with my four officers and we were with another crew of four officers led by the pilot Cecil Clore. Cecil and I had been together during flight school and were best friends. The next morning we reported into the squadron headquarters as a new replacement crew and we were joined by the enlisted men of our crew. The Squadron Commander took us out to the flight line and pointed out an obvious war weary airplane, with many patches. After flying over a brand-new B-17 which we left in Scotland, this was a big letdown. We all looked at this airplane and then we looked at each other and said well this is it. That airplane did have a very curvaceous

girl painted on the nose of the airplane. We named our airplane "This Is It" and painted the name along with the picture.

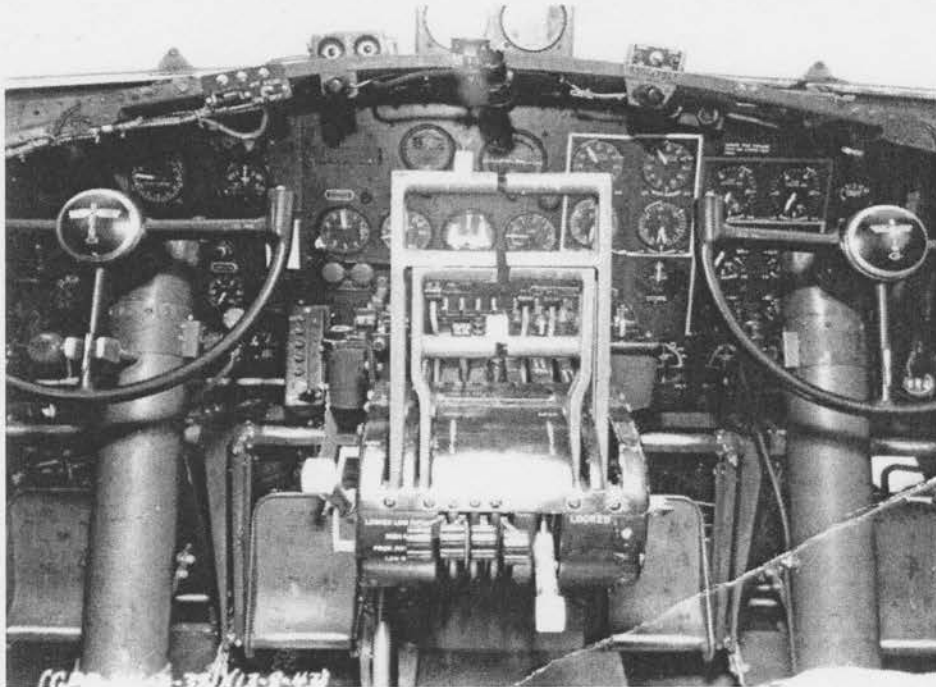


THIS IS IT! B-17F

That morning, we settled into the new quarters which would be our home for the next several months. We were visited by an officer from a nearby hut in our squadron living area. This man was a pilot and had flown on the famous first Schweinfurt raid on 17 August 1943. He told us about ditching in the English Channel and being saved by British Air Sea rescue. He ran out of fuel and the airplane had major damage caused by German fighters and intense flak over the target. We could tell that this man had survived a major air battle. He was in our squadron and offered to fly with me the next day in our newly assigned war weary B-17. His purpose was to acquaint me with the area and to point out landmarks. Our air base was distinguished by a crashed British Lancaster bomber near the end of one of our two runways. With hundreds of air bases on this part of England, his guidance proved to be very vital in the days to come. Unfortunately, when I landed the B-17 back on our base, a tire blew causing a loud bang. My friend sitting in the co-pilot's seat screamed and left his seat and dove out of the entrance hatch in the nose of the airplane. I don't know how he missed getting hit by the rotating props. I saw him running across the field. I called the tower and reported my blown tire. I advised them to catch my friend before he hurt himself. Note: this man was put into a hospital for treatment for a nervous breakdown. A few months later he returned to our air base in an administrative job. I learned later that this man requested to be put back on flight status. He still wanted to finish his 25 missions. This was a very "gutsy" man.

Our bomb group had suffered severe losses on the 17th of August Schweinfurt mission and had been put on a non-operational status. With the arrival of new

replacement crews, of which we were one, the group became operational. We flew our first combat mission August 31, 1943 to Romilly-sur-seine, France. Since I had been assigned a new co-pilot before we left Gander with no training in formation flying, I flew most of this mission myself. I later got Tex well checked out in the B-17 including formation flying. As a matter-of-fact, Tex later became a first pilot with his own crew. We flew our last and 25th combat mission on the 4th February 1944. Four days before my 22nd birthday. If I hadn't become a man during my earlier years, I certainly became very mature flying these 25 combat missions at the age of 21. I'll never know how close I came to being knocked out of the air by the German fighters and their accurate flake guns over the target. Three close call missions will always be remembered.



“This is it!” Cockpit

The first was our second mission which was to Stuttgart, Germany on Sept. 6, 1943. We received our preflight briefing with the flight line drawn on the briefing map going deep into Germany. After the briefing, Bill Goodman, my navigator said we could never get to the target and back. He had checked our fuel consumption on previous flights. He said that “THIS IS IT” did not have sufficient range to complete this mission. I gave this a lot of serious thought. Then, I decided we would fly this mission to the target and drop our bombs. After “Bombs Away”, I would consider our options for surviving. One option might be diverting to Sweden and landing in a neutral country. This option had been used by other combat crews. We had been given this input in one of our training sessions. We took off in our assigned formation position. We were escorted across the English Channel by British and American air support. When our air support withdrew because of fuel range problems, the German Air Force took over and we fought

our way to the target. After dropping our bombs and leaving the target for the return flight, I started reducing fuel consumption by reducing engine power and drifting back through the B-17 formations. I was able to do this which gave us some added flight range. As we reached Paris, I had to feather No. 1 engine and transfer remaining fuel to the other three engines. As we approach the channel, I had to make a decision, should we divert to Sweden? I decided to go for the channel and take a chance on ditching in the channel and getting picked up by air sea rescue. As we reached the channel, I had to shut down another engine for lack of fuel. I had been losing altitude to save fuel. We started across the channel at 5000 feet and two engines out. I continued to fly at minimum power and losing altitude. I had the crew throw everything loose overboard including guns, ammunition, and parachutes, and radio equipment except that required to send position reports to air sea rescue. Ed Knauth, my radio operator was never able to make contact with air sea rescue. Later, we heard that there were many B-17s in trouble and air sea rescue service could not handle all of the emergency calls. At about mid channel, I had to set up a ditching plan. We had a small rubber boat we could eject after we were in the water. We also had on our Mae West life jackets. I was going to fly as far as I could in the direction of England, but I would have to ditch out some distance from the shoreline. We had been warned that the English coastline was heavily mined with explosives to hold off any land invasion by the Germans. Also, I wanted to ditch with some control during my letdown with the one remaining engine. The optimum ditching procedure was to hit the water on the down slope of the rolling waves and to land into the wind.

With all this in mind, I suddenly saw a Spitfire fighter on my left-wing. I could tell by the markings on the Spitfire that it was being flown as part of the RAF and was being flown by a Polish pilot. The pilot waved to me and gave a signal to follow him. As we neared land, he pointed in the direction that I was to fly. As we approached land, I saw a clearing just beyond the shoreline which turned out to be a steel matted emergency landing field. I had one engine going which could run out of fuel at anytime. I had 1500 feet altitude. I headed toward the emergency field. I crossed the shoreline and converted remaining altitude to flight distance. I could see that I could make this field and lowered my landing gear. As I approached for landing, my airspeed, which I had been conserving was still at about 120 mph. I should have been at about 90 mph at this point. Also this was a small field. I forced the landing gear to touch down with brakes full on. The tail of the airplane immediately came up. I released brakes to get the tail back down again. Then with the full brakes on again the tail came up again. Off with the brakes, and tail back down again. My airspeed was still about 50 mile per hour and the edge of the field was approaching rapidly. Beyond the field, there was a woods with large trees. I did not want to hit those trees at this speed. I hit the left brake full on to ground loop the airplane. I watched as the right wing tip nearly dug into the ground. We completed the ground loop and the remaining engine died for lack of fuel. We were towed out of the landing field and parked alongside other B-17s which had landed on this emergency field. We were told that a British refueling truck would be bringing out fuel. After a few hours, a British truck showed up with five gallon fuel cans. It took about two hours to get about 100 gallons in our tanks. I elected to go back to our home base at Ridgewell. We finally got home about dark. This had been a long day and we were safe at home. We understood that about fifty B-17s had been lost on this mission and many because of

running out of fuel. If Bill Goodman had not warned me of the range problem before takeoff, we probably would be among the B-17's that did not survive this mission.



Bomber Crew

Standing Lt to Rt: Tex Stephens (copilot), Dave Hutchens (pilot), Bill Tilson (bombardier), Bill Goodman (navigator)

Front row Lt to Rt: Jasinski (waist gunner), Purdy (ball turret gunner), Knauth (radio op/gunner), Barnett (waist gunner), Braun (tail gunner), Bucey (engineer/top turret gunner)

The second mission, very much in my memory, was the 14 October 1943 mission to Schweinfurt, Germany. The Eighth Air Force records show that this was a mission where we lost 60 B-17s. It could have been 61, but the Hutchens Crew got back to England after being recorded as being lost due to a mid air collision. That morning we had real eggs and bacon instead of powdered eggs. We enjoyed the eggs but knew that was a signal that we would be flying a tough mission. The mission briefing confirmed that we would be going deep into Germany. The target was a factory in Schweinfurt that produced all the ball bearings for the German war machine. We were told that this plant would be heavily defended by the Germans. Heavy German fighter attacks could be expected along with heavy flak at the target. I went out to my assigned aircraft and assembled my crew for preparations for takeoff. This always included a pre- takeoff "pee break" in the bushes. We were delayed by weather for takeoff but finally started our takeoff run. My standard procedure for a heavily loaded combat mission takeoff was to run the engines up with the brakes on, release the brakes and start down the runway. I

remembered that this was one of many instrument takeoffs with no forward visibility. I flew the airplane using only instruments. My copilot, Tex, would count the runway lights on the edge of the runway as we proceeded down the runway. At the magic number, Tex called out "takeoff" and I would then pull this heavily loaded airplane off the ground and start a slow climb. We became very proficient in this type of takeoff because of the winter weather in England. I did not allow any radio talk by my crew during these takeoffs. On this day after takeoff was completed and we were climbing for altitude, I received an intercom message from my waist gunners. They reported that on take off at brake release both the 50 caliber waist guns on the left and right windows had snapped off their swivel mounts and had fallen back in on the floor of the waist gunner's position. This was not good news. For the type of mission we would be flying we needed all 10 of our 50 caliber machine guns in operation. My flight engineer, Bucey, told me that the two guns out would be equivalent to an inoperative gun turret and that this was a valid and approved reason to abort our position in the formation and return to base.

While still climbing, I had a discussion on the intercom with my waist gunners. They said they thought they could put at least one gun in operation. They would tie it down on the window ledge by using a cord from their electric heated flying suits. One man would hold downward pressure on the gun while the other man fired the gun. Both of these men were brawny and strong. I told the crew that we would not abort this mission. It would be our 11th mission toward the required 25 mission goal. We took our position in the group formation. As briefed after crossing the channel, our fighter escort left us because of fuel problems. Then came the Germans in their ME-109s and their FW-190s. We fought our way into the target. We maintained our position and flew a tight formation. We knew the Germans would pick out a group not flying a good tight formation pattern. We were taking many hits from both the fighters and the heavy flak. The flak was very heavy as we approached the target for our bomb run. Actually, I would rather fly through flak because the German fighters would back off and not fly into the flak barrage. We dropped our bombs and made a turn to leave the target area. Again the fighter attacks began. I received a call from my ball turret operator reporting that oil was flowing off the trailing edge of my left wing. I checked the oil pressure gauges of both No. 1 and No. 2 engines. There was no indication of which engine was losing the oil. I told my copilot to watch for a drop in oil pressure and be prepared to feather the prop and shut down that engine. We never got the low oil pressure indication until the No. 1 engine dropped rpm and the No. 1 engine oil pressure dropped suddenly. Tex tried to feather No. 1 but the prop would not feather. We had lost too much oil. The prop is feathered using oil from that engine tank. The prop was now rotating at a high RPM and causing a high drag on the left wing. To reduce the drag I had to slow the airplane down which meant that we could not stay in formation. We now had German fighters on our tail. My tail gunner reported three fighters were closing in. I was now clear of our formation and losing altitude. We were now at about 20,000 feet. I looked down and saw the tops of cloud layer at about 5000 ft. Our only chance would be to get into the cloud layer. I put the B-17 into a downward dive. The three fighters were closing in. My left wing was starting a high vibration. I knew I would lose that wing if I continued my downward dive. I decided to do a wing over. This meant pulling the nose up to a high angle of climb and when almost vertical kick the right rudder and roll the airplane over to start a downward dive again. My tail gunner and ball turret gunner said that when

I suddenly pulled the nose up all three fighters continued to dive and for some reason they did not return for the attack. At this time we were down to about 10,000 feet. The wing was continuing to vibrate up and down. I slowed the airplane down but the oscillation of the wing up-and-down continued to build and vibration continued to increase. I knew that if this oscillation continued to build we would lose the left wing, which of course would put the airplane completely out of control. I was concerned that if this happened my crew probably would not be able to abandon the ship by parachute. As these thoughts flashed through my mind I ordered Tex to push the bailout button for the crew to leave the airplane. Tex looked at me without blinking and said, let's give it another couple of seconds. Just at that time the wild oscillation of the left wing slowed down and we were able to continue our descent to the cloud layer. I later confirmed that the prop shaft had sheared from turning the engine and this reduced the drag on the wing.

The airplane was now completely controllable and we made it into the cloud layer as planned. I then got my crew on intercom to plan our next step. I told my crew that we had the option of going to Switzerland and being interned or we may have enough fuel to make the channel and possibly England. I told the crew there may be a problem in going to Switzerland. Although I had maps and our embassy telephone number given to me during the morning briefing, we were told that there had been reports of American crews landing in Switzerland and being sold back to the Germans by some of the Swiss. To a man, all my crew replied, "Boss let's go home." I agreed with this decision. There was a small problem. On an earlier mission, I had to leave formation on our return flight. Again, because of an engine problem and that time I had also made a rapid descent from altitude. Both my navigator, Bill Goodman and my bombardier, Bill Tilson, had suffered ruptured ear drums because of this fast descent. They had been grounded to recover from the eardrum problem and I had been assigned a bombardier from another crew to handle bomb drop and to handle one of the 50 caliber guns in the nose. The other man, who replaced my navigator, was strictly a gunner so I had no navigator to get us back to England. I knew roughly where we were. I took up a heading of 315 degrees which I thought would head as toward England. We flew and we flew. At least we had no fighters to bother us. Suddenly, we were in a heavy barrage of flak. Through a break in the clouds, I saw the Eiffel Tower and then I knew exactly where we were, over Paris. At that time, Paris was occupied by the Germans and we were being shot at by some of their experts. The clouds gave us protection and we kept on our course which I had hoped would get us back to someplace in England. We flew and we flew. The clouds suddenly parted and finally I saw water which I knew was the English Channel. I made a course correction by turning to 330 degrees. I did not want to miss England. We flew and we flew. I had no idea of our location. I began to think maybe a strong wind was blowing us back towards Europe. Suddenly, we saw land ahead. At this time, I was not sure if it was England or the western coast of Europe. As we approached land, I saw an airfield. It could have been either England or the western coast of Europe. We were running low on fuel so we had to land. As we approached the field, I saw one of these queer looking small British airplanes with the engines mounted on their landing gear. Then I knew for sure that we were landing on a field in England. As I approached the field for landing, I received a green light from the tower which meant I was cleared to land. After landing, I was met by a jeep and the driver waved to follow the jeep. We were parked near the tower. As we were shutting down, we opened the front hatch to leave the airplane and a

shower of empty 50 caliber machine gun shells fell out. I heard one of the British men say in a loud voice "boy, you Yanks must have been in a real fight," and we had. We landed at an RAF base on the southern tip of England. I was given a room in the officer's quarters for that night. Compared to our base, this was first class. In the morning, I was awakened by a steward with a glass of orange juice in his hand. The Group had been advised of my landing at this RAF base. They sent down a plane to pick us up and when we returned to base we found that we had been reported missing during the mission debriefing. It was reported that we had been hit head-on by a German fighter coming through our formation and it was reported that we went down in a ball of flame. It turned out that a B-17 from another group took our place in our formation when we had to drop out due to our engine problem. It was this B-17 that took the head-on collision from the German fighter.

The Eighth Air Force has adopted a policy of sending combat crews to a Rest Home after they had finished several combat missions. We were sent to a Rest Home out in the country south of London. These homes had been provided to the Eighth Air Force by wealthy English landlords. They were operated by the Red Cross and staffed by Red Cross personnel. I remember that it was a welcome change from our combat duty. A real comfortable bed, good food, and the Red Cross girls kept us busy with activities. I remember that I took the opportunity to get a horse from the stable and went horseback riding. This horse obviously didn't like Yankees. When we got some distance from the barn, the horse decided to go home at a full gallop back toward the barn. When he got a few feet from the barn at full gallop, he made a sudden 90 degree turn obviously with the intent of getting rid of this Yankee. Luckily, I stayed on. I thought afterward wouldn't it be a shame to get killed during my combat tour while riding a horse.

As we neared our goal of 25 missions, we had a disaster happen. We had been bunked in our hut with another crew. Their pilot was Cecil Clore. Cecil and I had gone through flying school together and by luck of the draw had finished our B-17 training at the same time. We flew our crew and a new B-17 to England at the same time and ended up assigned to the 381st Bomb Group's 532nd Squadron at the same time. We both had survived our way through tough combat by some miracle. Cecil had 24 missions in and I had about 22 or 23 completed. We were now taking turns leading our squadron of six ships in our Group combat formation of 18 ships. Our Squadron Commander, Major Lord, said Cecil and I could make a choice on who was to lead the squadron on the next mission. Clore and I decided we would have Major Lord flip a coin and whoever won the flip as heads would have a choice to fly or not to fly.

Clore won the flip and made a choice to fly. It would be his 25th and last mission. Major Lord said the Hutchens crew would have leave orders which we decided to take and we went to London to have a break from Group combat operations. While having breakfast at our London hotel, I got a telephone call from the base ordering my crew and I to return to base. Clore and his crew had crashed on takeoff and all ten men had been killed in the crash. Needless to say, but for a flip of the coin, I would have been flying that airplane. The cause of the crash was determined to have been caused by a fuel leak from the Tokyo wing tip tanks which had flowed down the wings to the red hot superchargers.

The last mission, which I have vivid memories, was near the end of my 25 missions. On 11 January 1944, the target was Oshersleben, a German aircraft factory.

At the briefing, we were told that this target would be heavily defended by German fighters, but we now would have British and American escort fighters to and from the target. I was leading the 532nd squadron of six ships. We were part of a formation to include 500 to 600 B-17s. This was an important target. We made our standard takeoff and climbed out in formation. As we crossed the channel, the mission was canceled because of weather, which precluded our fighters from taking off. Our Group did not get the message that the mission had been canceled. As we crossed the channel and approached the European Coast, I saw a large formation of fighter aircraft at our altitude and of course assumed this was our fighter escort. Since the mission had been canceled without our knowledge, the fighters turned out to be Germans. Instead of a large formation of 500 to 600 B-17s, we were now part of about 150 B-17s going to the target because we didn't get the cancellation message. We flew a tight formation, but we had to fight our way to the target. After we dropped our bombs and started home, the fighters made savage head-on attacks on the remaining formation. On one of the attacks, our Group was the main target and they came head-on firing their 20 mm canons. On this pass, they got all six ships of the Group's high Squadron. I was leading the low Squadron of six ships. After this pass, our Group leader pulled his six ship lead Squadron up into the Group of B-17s in the front of our Group. Obviously, he did this to get protection from the head-on attacks by the Germans. As result of his action, my low Squadron was left without any protection from the group formation. At this point, I decided our best defense would be to climb and get above the remaining formation. Here, I could make S turns into the frontal attacks. I timed the turns to disrupt their head-on attacks. We flew for about an hour under these conditions. When the 20 mm canon shells are coming right at you, you can see little black dots. I lost one of the B-17s in my Squadron.

When we reached the channel, we were told by radio transmission that all of south England was closed by weather. We were advised to try to land in the northern part of England. I instructed the remaining ships in my Squadron that we would break formation and each pilot would try to land at any base which would be open. The weather had really closed in. I had let down through the weather and was looking for an open field. I saw a landing field and called for landing permission. I got the OK and set up my pattern for landing. As I was on final approach, I was informed by the tower that I was landing on the wrong field but to continue and make the landing. This turned out to be a B-24 base. We were debriefed by their intelligence staff. My crew was elated to be safely on the ground. They thought their pilot should be awarded the Silver Star medal for getting the squadron through this air battle. I didn't get the medal because the rewarding staff took the position that I was doing the job as expected for Squadron leader. I agreed with their findings. As the results of this mission were recorded, it was found that of the 500 B-17s planned to bomb the target only 150 went to the target because our division leader did not get the recall message. We lost one third of 150 aircraft going to the target. Bombing results were good. We destroyed the target. Later, our Group records showed that my 532nd Squadron shot down 19 German fighters which was a record for the air battles fought over Europe. The "President's Unit Citation" was later awarded to those who flew this mission.

We flew our 25th and last mission on 4 February 1944. The target was Frankfurt, Germany. The bombs were to be dropped on the center of the city. Our top commanders had joined the British approach. Destroy the ability of the Germans to rebuild the

factories and rail yards and other structures required for supporting their war effort. The Germans were very efficient for rebuilding. We would counter that rebuilding effort by bombing the center of the city. For targets outside Germany, such as occupied France, we would do only strategic bombing of factories and rail lines. This last mission was relatively easy compared to earlier missions. We had fighter escort to and from the target. I do remember that the lead ship for our Group had a mechanical problem and turned the lead ship position over to his backup. The backup B-17 must have had a new navigator. We were supposed to fly at a route back to England that would avoid the Ruhr valley. This part of Germany was very heavily defended by Flak guns. We flew right down the heart of flak valley. We lost some B-17's because of this flak. I lucked out with my Squadron. We made it without any ships lost, but we got many holes in our aircraft. We returned to our base and made a standard landing pattern, with one exception. Since it was our last mission, it was standard practice for a crew finishing to buzz the tower before landing. I must admit that I did a buzz job that was at the cutting edge of being dangerous. The usual crowd was at the control tower. My buzz job caused everybody gathered around the tower to hit the ground. I think my left wing clipped off the wind direction indicator on the top of the tower. I found out later that the commanding officer was in the tower and I'm told he fired a very pistol round at me to ward me off. I must admit that I did not see that warning shot. I'm sure I was too busy flying the airplane. We then buzzed our ground crew assembled at our aircraft parking area. Again, this was standard practice and we did our best to put on a good show. The next day the commanding officer made the decision that this tower buzzing should be changed. Any finishing crews were allowed only to buzz the runway before landing but not the control tower.

A few days later my crew and I were ordered to appear before the Group commander where we were all awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for completing our 25 missions. As the Commander was pinning on my DFC, he said "Hutchens, you are the most experienced lead pilot we have in the Group and we need an experienced lead pilot at this time. If you will stay and fly lead pilot for the Group for five more missions, I will give you a spot promotion to Major." I had just made Captain about a month ago. I did not think twice. I replied, "Sir, I have a girl back home and we plan to get married. I intend to bring her back a live Captain."

We received orders to return to the States via Liverpool. In about two weeks, we boarded a small converted Liberty ship, normally a cargo carrier, and headed out to cross the North Atlantic. Since I was a ranking officer on board, I was put in a small state room shared with another captain in Medical Corps. There were a few men who were returning from having finished their overseas duty. Most of the passengers were in section 8 with a case of mental problems. The war was taking its toll. My cabin partner had his hands full, taking care of these men.

We crossed the North Atlantic in a convoy with a number of destroyers escorting us. The German submarines were active at this time and an attack could come at anytime. The weather in March for crossing the North Atlantic was bad. I remember watching our escorting destroyers handle the rough seas. They were tossed straight up by the waves and came down pointing 90 degrees off course. Then they would pitch up again and come down back on course. The weather was so rough it took us about three weeks to cross. I did not get seasick but I did lose my appetite. The Liberty Ship was

serving top grade home style food which was quite an improvement over the food we had at our combat camp.

MARRIAGE AND WRIGHT PATTERSON

We finally reached our goal, the good old USA, and sailed past our Statue of Liberty and on up the Hudson River to dock and unload at an Army base in upstate New York. I received orders to transfer to an Army camp near Indianapolis. At this camp, I was given orders for a three week home leave and then to report for a rest and relaxation stay in a hotel in Miami, Florida. I then called my mother, who had moved with our family to Upland, Indiana. I told mother I would be home the next day. I then called Mary and told her I would be up to see her after I went home to see my mother and family. I found out later that my call to Mary made her so excited that she became ill with an upset stomach. When I arrived at Mary's home in Windsor, Ontario, I found my friend, Don Brown, and his wife, Marney, were home on leave from the Army base in Salina, Kansas. With a big thank you to Marney, she decided that this would be a good time to have a wedding for Mary and me. Mary and I were very much in love so we agreed with the wedding plan. Marney handled the whole matter including a big write-up in the Detroit newspaper (copy attached). We were married on March 25, 1944 in the manse for the Windsor Presbyterian Church by their minister. Don and Marney stood up with us during the ceremony. I felt very lucky to have Don home on leave and have my best friend be my "Best Man." My mother and Detroit family members attended our wedding and reception which was held at Mary's home by her mother and father. What a change after my combat tour in England. Mary and I got on a train and left for our honeymoon in Toronto, Canada. We were escorted to the train by the wedding party. Once onboard, we got settled into our seats and decided to have dinner in the dining car. I remember that a very distinguished looking gentleman in the dining car insisted on buying our dinner. After a couple of days in Toronto, we returned to Mary's home in Windsor and made arrangements for Mary to accompany me to Miami, Florida. Here, I would have a rest and relaxation leave and be given an assignment for my next duty station. I planned this trip to go through Indianapolis so that I could stop over and see Cecil Clores family. I had pictures of Clore's accident to give the family. We made this stop and Clore's dad picked us up at our hotel. The visit with his family was an emotional event as you can imagine. I remember that Clore was engaged to marry a girl in his hometown. She was with the family. I found out later that after the war this bride-to-be went to England and visited an English family that had witnessed the accident that had killed Cecil Clore and his entire crew.

We left Indianapolis the next day and had about a two-day train ride to Miami. When we arrived, we were given a beautiful room overlooking the ocean. I was scheduled for a two-week rest and relaxation leave before receiving my assignment for duty. One day, I received a call to report to the Army reassignment office. Here, I was told that my reassignment orders had been prepared. I was to report to an Air Force Base in Florida for transition training in a B-29. This was the latest big bomber built by the Boeing Company designed for flying combat against the Japanese targets. I would be assigned a crew to be trained on this new airplane. After being given this information, the assignment officer said that their office had just received orders to select a combat

pilot who had finished a combat tour in Europe and had two years of college at an engineering school. The officer explained that I fit these requirements and would be assigned to Wright-Patterson in Dayton, Ohio for duty. He said the choice was up to me. Obviously, I opted for the assignment to Wright-Patterson. Mary was excited about the assignment since she would be near her parent's home in Windsor. We were given the train tickets to Dayton and orders to report to the Aircraft Procurement Division at Wright Patterson. When we arrived at the Dayton train station, I bought Mary a ticket to Detroit so she could return to her home in Windsor. She would stay with her parents until I could make arrangements for housing in Dayton. I reported to the Aircraft Procurement Division at the base as ordered. I reported to the General in charge of the Division. After this interview, I was informed that I would be put in charge of the office responsible for design and production of the B-17 airplanes. My orders were to make changes that would improve the airplane combat performance. My orders included the requirement to maintain the B-17 production rate currently at 500 aircraft per month. The B-17 was being produced at three factories on the West Coast. Boeing the design producer in Seattle was partnered with Douglas and Lockheed in the Los Angeles area. I held this job from 1944 until the end of the war.

My first job was to find a place where Mary and I could live in Dayton. The war was on and housing was a scarce commodity. I finally found a Jewish family that had a room for us. They were well-known in Dayton since they ran a large pawn shop downtown. I rode a jitney from a near by corner out to the field. This was common transportation in war time Dayton. This provided transportation for the large work force required out at the air base. With these arrangements made, Mary arrived in Dayton by train. We were happy to be together again, but the housing arrangements were not the best. We had our meals at a small eating place in the area. Mary was given her breakfast by the Jewish lady in the house. Her biggest complaint about the setup was the odor coming at all hours from the kitchen cooking the Jewish specialty dishes. My assignment at the Field was very demanding and would involve a lot of traveling to the West Coast. We had to change the home front. Top priority was to get a car. There were very few for sale in this wartime period. I finally was told about one for sale by an officer at the base who was being transferred out. It was an old Chevy that was rundown but at least it ran. I paid about \$300 for the car and was glad to have it. We then looked for another place to stay. I heard about a house in Springfield that was for rent for \$90 per month. We drove out and looked it over and took it immediately. It was a small house that looked like a mansion compared to our one room. Mary was very happy with this move. She had friendly neighbors and a house she could call her own. I had to commute to the base but this was eased by joining a ride club with two other men who worked at the base with me. For the record, they were Charlie Small and Byron Boettcher. We all had a junk car and we got gasoline with ration tickets. Yes, gasoline was rationed during this war. This included other things like getting a ration of red points to buy meat.

It had been about three months since I had flown. After three months, you would lose your flight rating. I reported into the flight operations office at Wright Field. I had all my flight records with me. After review by the operations officer, I was told that I was qualified to fly any airplane they had in the flight pool. I spotted a BT-13 which I had flown in basic flight training. So, I made arrangements to schedule this airplane for flying. It was a two place single-engine trainer. My friend, Charlie Small, said he would

like to fly with me. He was an officer but not a rated pilot. He had taken a flight course at MIT. Charlie was a graduate aero-engineer from MIT. He was in my B-17 office as my engineering officer. We took off with Charlie in the back seat. I climbed out to 5000 feet east of the base. Charlie had a radio head set on so we could talk to each other. I told Charlie that I was going to practice some maneuvers that I had flown in basic training school about two years ago. First, I did a series of stalls with a recovery technique. Then, I did some snap rolls and then some slow rolls. Everything was going fine. Then I told Charlie that I was going to do a tailspin to the right. I stalled the airplane and kicked full right rudder and went into a tailspin. I counted the turns and then I used the recovery taught in basic flight school. This was to put in full left rudder and pop the stick full forward to a straight nose down position. This maneuver would stop the spinning you could then recover to straight and level flying. I completed that maneuver with no problem. I climbed back up to 5000 feet and told Charlie I was going to repeat with a spin to the left. I put the airplane into the spin to the left and counted two revolutions. I then started the recovery procedure by a full right rudder and popped the stick to a full nose down position. Surprise-surprise we kept spinning. This was new to me. I had made many spin maneuvers in basic training but had never had failed to get the airplane out of the spin. I remember my instructor had told me that if this ever happened to put the airplane controls back into the spin entry position and repeat the recovery maneuver. I did this but no luck. We kept spinning. I now recognized that we were entering a secondary spin position with the nose of airplane pointed straight down with the airplane going into an increasing rapid spinning motion. I checked my altimeter and we were going through 2000 ft. The field elevation was about eight hundred feet at this location. We both were wearing parachutes and I motioned to Charlie to bail out. He opened his canopy and stood up preparing to jump. At this point, I was in the middle of a third recovery attempt. When Charlie stood up to jump, the spinning stopped and I started to pull out from the straight down dive we had been in. As I pulled the nose up, Charlie sat back down in his seat and closed the canopy. I was busy pulling the nose up from our vertical dive position. My worry now was to avoid pancaking into the ground. I knew I could not make a rapid pull up maneuver. This would cause a high-speed stall. I eased the nose up to level flight we skimmed over the trees lining the field. I climbed back up to 2000 ft. and headed for our field. We landed and crawled out of this airplane. We headed for the nearest bar and had a drink for each of Charlie's three children. As far as I know in all my combat flying, I had never come so close to getting killed. Of course, I really never knew how close the German bullets from their head-on attacks came to me. I do know they had to becoming close, because when 20 mm canon shells are coming right at you, you can see momentarily little black dots coming head-on.

I spent the rest of the war years, 1944 through 1946, as a project manager for production of the B-17 working out of Wright Patterson Air Force Base. The first major improvement I made was a redesign of the tail gunner' position. I had flown one of my missions as a tail gunner. On this mission, my crew was picked to fly Division lead. The Division Commander would occupy the pilot's seat. He wanted a pilot in the tail gunner's position to provide information on the formation configuration. I volunteered. I wanted a chance to fire a gun at those German fighters that had been firing at me. This was about a seven hour mission. This position for the tail gunner was terrible. You were in a kneeling position for the whole trip. The twin 50 caliber guns were covered by

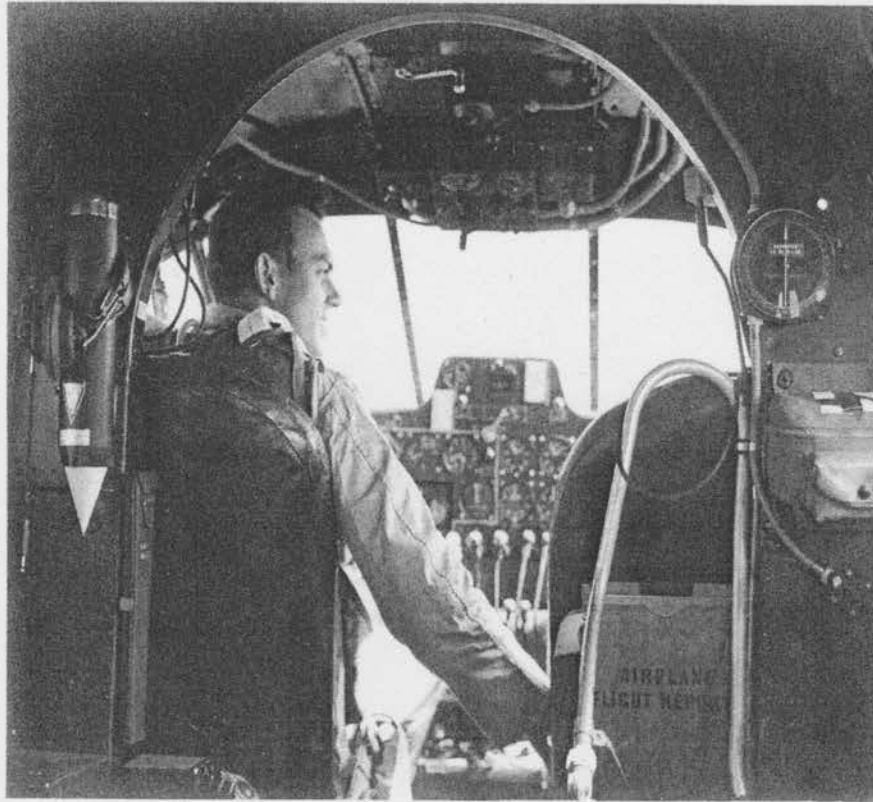
canvas and cold minus 50 degree air seeped into this unheated compartment through the canvas openings. I modified this configuration so that the guns were covered by an air tight plastic bubble to replace the canvas. Instead of kneeling, I put a saddle seat in with a back rest. The tail turret gunner sat on this seat for firing the guns. In the event the gunner had to bail out, he would use the rear door. In this event, the seat back would fold down so he could easily abandon the ship.

The second modification I made was to correct a problem I had on the 14 Oct. 1943 mission to Schweinfurt. After dropping our bombs, I received a call from my ball turret operator reporting that oil was leaking from the trailing edge of my left wing. I could not tell from the engine instruments if it was a leak coming from No.1 engine or No. 2. Since I did not want to shut down the wrong engine, I asked my co-pilot to watch the oil pressure gauges to determine which engine was losing oil. Suddenly, the oil pressure on No.1 engine dropped. We tried to feather the engine prop on No.1 but the prop would not feather. Engine oil is used to run the feathering pump from the oil in the engine oil tank for each engine. I lost all the oil before I could identify the oil was coming from No. 1. A free wheeling un-feathered prop is a set up for disaster. I put stand pipes in all the engine oil tanks so that sufficient oil would be retained to feather the propeller.

The third change was to correct the problem which caused Cecil Clore to crash on take-off. It was standard practice to top off the fuel tanks before take off for a mission. This included topping off the wing tip tanks which were called Tokyo tanks. Fuel from the tip tanks flows to the main tanks by gravity through interconnecting plumbing. This interconnecting plumbing was leaking on Clore's airplane. On take off, the leaking fuel ran down the inside of the wing. When it reached the red hot superchargers, the fuel caused the uncontrollable fire. This resulted in the crash and the death of Clore and his entire crew. I had Boeing to redesign this interconnecting plumbing to fix this problem.

The fourth change was to install a formation stick which operated through the auto-pilot. Many of the missions we were flying lasted 6 or 7 hours. Holding a tight formation for this period of time was a physical challenge even with a copilot's help. Working with the autopilot contractor, we designed a formation control stick that worked through the autopilot. I think the war was over before we got this change into the production airplanes.

I spent about a week of every month out at the production plants on the West Coast. I had permission to fly a twin-engine small passenger aircraft, the C-45 type, without a copilot for my monthly trips. I would fly to Boeing in Seattle first. Then down to Los Angeles to visit with Lockheed at Burbank and then over to Douglas at Santa Monica. Boeing was building about 300 aircraft per month with Lockheed and Douglas each producing about 100 aircraft per month to total the 500 B-17's per month production. Boeing was the design production contractor. I worked very closely with one of the finest design managers whose name was Tory Gamlin. The design management between the three contractors was through a committee called the BDV committee (Boeing Douglas Vega). As a side note, one day I got a sharp letter from a company making the famous BVD underwear. They were complaining about the similarity of the label for our Boeing Douglas Lockheed Vega committee. I gave them a polite answer but we didn't make any change.



C-45 Aircraft Flying to B-17 Production Locations

I must admit my flying trips were a bit of a challenge. This was before the days where commercial aircraft was readily available for travel. Back in the early days of cross-country flying, we had low frequency radio stations that were designed to broadcast so that four quadrants were set up (A-N-A-N) or by Morse code (dit da.- da dit – dit da-da dit). Where the quadrants met, you received a solid background buzz. This then became the beam you flew to navigate your course and heading. When you passed over the ground station, you got a null that established your exact location in space. This all worked fine except in mountainous territory and also in thunderstorms you would often get a false null. I'm sure this caused many accidents during instrument flight in bad weather. I know I was fooled a few times.

Flying alone on my monthly trips was a bit of a challenge. I would usually stay at Boeing for two days and then fly down south to Lockheed and Douglas for a couple of days. Usually leaving at night out of L.A., I almost "bought the farm" one night. This aircraft had a 75 gallon tank for each engine and a 25 gallon auxiliary tank for each engine. You would always takeoff and climb to altitude on the 75 gallon tanks. Then at cruise altitude, you would switch to the 25 gallon tanks before switching back to the

larger tanks. This one black night, I took off and climbed out on course leaving Los Angeles. You had to cross a mountain range to the east of Los Angeles. This aircraft did not have an oxygen system. So, I would pick my course out flying at about 12 to 14,000 feet. On this night, I leveled out after reaching my altitude and per standard procedure I switched from the engine 75 gallon tanks to the 25 gallon auxiliary tanks. I sat back and relaxed and promptly went to sleep. I suddenly was awakened by the "thundering" silence of no engine noise. I immediately knew I had lost both engines from fuel starvation. I immediately switched to the 75 gallon tanks and began to use the wobble pump to prime the engines. Both caught and roared back into action. I should have reduced prop RPM position but since I had not, both props revved up to a red line over speed position. I finally got the engines under control. I had lost some altitude but was still flying. I climbed back on course and knew I had experienced another close call.

Another design change we made to the B-17 was to install an elevator down spring. We were flying the B-17 in combat with full fuel load and bomb load that put the airplane about 5000 pounds over design gross weight. As result, when we leveled out at altitude it was difficult to get the airplane "up on the step" so you were not mushing in level flight. To help achieve this desirable flight attitude of "being up on the step" we designed and installed an "elevator down spring". This would help raise the tail in level flight and "get up on the step". I kept a new B-17 at Wright Patterson for my use and inspection. I had the designed down spring installed on the elevator by the Boeing people. We then loaded the airplane with sand bags to get the over weight configuration. At that time flight test was at Wright Field. I asked Flight Test to fly the airplane with the Boeing engineer to make sure we had the correct configuration for operation of the elevator down spring. Flight Test refused to fly the airplane which was in this overweight configuration. We had to have this test so I told Boeing since I had made many combat over-weight takeoffs that I would fly this mission.

I taxied the B-17 to the southwest runway which was the longest runway at Wright Field at that time. I made my normal combat takeoff with full brakes on until all four engines were at max power. I released the brakes and started down the runway. I "sort of pulled" the airplane into a takeoff and we cleared the runway. It seemed like a normal heavyweight combat takeoff to me. There was one big problem. At the base, in England the ground was completely level after take off. At Wright Patterson, the ground begins to get higher after takeoff. Also at Wright Pat, the field elevation was about 800 feet while in England it was at sea level. All of this was making a takeoff that just skimmed over the ground. Also, there was a water tank on the takeoff course and I was headed straight for it. I didn't want to bank the airplane and loose lift at this point so I skidded the airplane to the left and just missed the tank. After all this, we got to altitude at about 25,000 feet. The elevator down spring worked as designed and we got up on the step and completed a successful flight test. This change was retrofitted on all B-17's flying combat.

I remember that near the end of the war the Air Force was designing and building our first jet powered fighter, the P- 80. It was being built by the Lockheed plant in Burbank. I was instructed that the B-17 production work at Burbank had to be reduced to provide manpower and space for the P-80 program. The solution was to put the B-17s at Burbank into a flyable configuration and fly the B-17's to a facility in Louisville, Kentucky operated by Curtis Wright. To get this facility up and running to finish building

the B-17's took a little work. I had to get a B-17 flight acceptance operation going at Louisville to production test the B-17. I flew my B-17 down to Louisville and checked out a couple of pilots on B-17 acceptance flights. It all worked out as planned and Lockheed got the P-80 program under way.

As the war came to an end in Europe with D-Day, my workload was reduced and I began applying for leaving the military and completing my college work. I sent my credits to the University of Michigan and received a reply that I would be accepted to finish my degree in engineering. The military planned to start discharging personnel based on a war time of service. With my combat time, I had enough points for an early discharge. In the meantime, the Army Air Force was starting to plan for separating from the Army and going to a separate department in the Defense Department. This would be called the United States Air Force with an equal rank to the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. This new Air Force was conducting selection board interviews for Army Air Force officers to be selected for a commission into the new United States Air Force. There was a review station located down in Kentucky at Fort Knox. Charlie Small and I decided to go down for the interview. It would be several months before the selection process would be completed. Since I had been accepted at Michigan, I had my plans made to get out at the start of the 1946 school year.



D-Day Celebration with Marney and Don

It was now early 1946. My military boss at that time was Col. Tom Gerrity who called me in for a discussion about taking an assignment down at Fort Worth, Texas on temporary duty until the start of the school year in the Fall. The job was to supervise the engineering program at the Consolidated Aircraft Co. which was in the early stages of engineering and building the B-36 aircraft. This would be a large six engine bomber airplane. I would be the engineering representative for the B-36 project office at Wright Field. I would be assigned to the Air Force Plant Representative's office at the factory.

Mary and I were in a very comfortable home in Springfield, Ohio. Putting it mildly, Mary was not at all interested in going to Texas. In Ohio, she was close enough to her parent's home in Windsor so that we made frequent weekend trips. I finally convinced her to go with me to Texas on a temporary job assignment. We would be driving down in our old car. I decided to get a better set of wheels. Here I got some help from Mr. M. A. Brown, Don's dad. He located a used Packard built prewar with low mileage and in good shape. We packed up our few belongings in this car and headed for Texas in the spring of 1946.

At Fort Worth, housing was a problem but we finally located a furnished cabin on a lake near the plant. Mary still was not very happy in Texas, but she put up with it based on the promise this was only temporary duty. In the late spring of 1946, I received a telegram from the new United States Air Force. I was informed that I had been selected to be given a permanent commission in the new Service. At that time, I was a Captain in the Army. I would be given a 1st Lt. permanent commission into the new Air Force but would still maintain an active duty grade as a Captain. If I accepted this commission, I was to report to the Adjutant's office at the Fort Worth Air Base to be sworn in and to receive my commission paperwork. Well needless to say Mary was less than enthusiastic about this turn in career planning. I must admit I was excited about the prospect of getting this commission. It meant that I would be a flying officer in a new service. I loved to fly. Also, I had learned that a school was to be established at Wright-Field. This was to be called the United States Air Force Institute of Technology. The major objective was to provide the opportunity for newly appointed officers to get their last two years of college and to graduate with a degree in Aero-Engineering. Mary could tell that I had my heart set on taking this opportunity. She finally reluctantly agreed with the proviso that it would only be a max of 20 years. She knew I would be able to retire after 20 years with retirement pay. I readily agreed to this plan. My job at Fort Worth was nearing an end with the B-36 making its first flight in the summer of 1946.

A footnote - Mary had plans. She wanted to become a mother. We had been married for two years with no plans for a family. I agreed to her plan. We tried but without any success. We agreed that she would go for an exam by a doctor and I would check with the Air Force medical office. In my exam, there was no medical problem but I was informed that combat flying had left some men sterile but normally this was a temporary problem. I went home that night to report to Mary. After I gave her my report, she said: "honey, do not worry. I have my report and I am pregnant." This is how we started our post war life. We returned to Dayton and bought a little house on Harvey Avenue. I got on with the engineering course at the Institute of Technology. Our baby was due in December 1946.

ATTACHMENTS

1. **Combat Missions (A- 1)**
2. **Commendations from Prime Minister Winston Churchill, RAF Air Marshall Portal, Generals Marshall, Arnold, Eaker, Anderson, and Williams (A- 2-5)**
3. **Presidential Citation (A- 6)**
4. **January 1944 381st Bomb Group Log (A- 7-9)**
5. **“The Might Men of the 381st” author endorsement (A- 10)**
6. **Excerpts “The Mighty Men of the 381st” (A- 11-14)**
7. **Distinguished Flying Cross Citation (A- 15)**
8. **Army Commendation Ribbon Citation (A- 16)**
9. **Wedding Notices (A- 17)**

COMBAT MISSIONS

<u>Mission Number</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Target</u>
1	31 Aug. 1943	Romilly, France
2	6 Sept.	Stuttgart, Ger.
3	7 Sept.	Brussels, Belgium
4	8 Sept.	Lille Nord, France
5	17 Sept.	Nantes, France
6	23 Sept.	Nantes, France
7	27 Sept.	Emden, Ger.
8	2 Oct.	Emden, Ger.
9	4 Oct.	Frankfurt, Ger.
10	10 Oct.	Munster, Ger.
11	14 Oct.	Schweinfurt, Ger.
12	3 Nov.	Wilhelmshaven, Ger.
13	5 Nov.	Gelsenkirchen, Ger.
14	7 Nov.	Wesel, Ger.
15	11 Nov.	Wesel, Ger.
16	15 Nov.	Knaben, Norway (Heavy Water Plant)
17	13 Dec.	Breman, Ger.
18	20 Dec.	Breman, Ger.
19	22 Dec.	Osnabruck. Ger.
20	24 Dec	Cocove, France
21	31 De	Bordeaux, France
22	7 Jan. 1944	Ludigshaven, Ger.
23	11 Jan.	Oschersleben, Ger.
24	25 Jan.	Wilhelmshaven, Ger.
25	4 Feb.	Frankfurt, Ger.

2nd Ind. (Copy) A-A/G-3
HQ, 1ST BOHB. DIVISION, APO 634, 16 October 1943.

TO: All Personnel, Air and Ground, of the 1st Bombardment Division.

My hearty congratulations on these well earned commendations.

/s/ ROBERT P. WILLIAMS,
Brigadier General, U.S.A.,
Commanding.

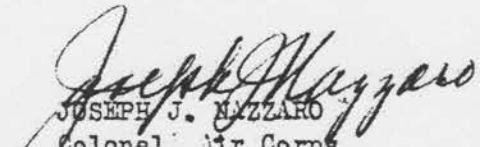
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n/c.

3rd Ind. A-A-1
Headquarters AIF Station 167, APO 634, 21 October 1943.

TO: DAVID D. HUTCHENS, 1st Lt, O-737427, 532nd Bomb Sq, 381st Bomb Gp (H), Pilot, B17F, No. 42-30009, on mission to Emden, Germany, 2 October 1943. Pilot, B17F, No. 42-29854, on mission to Frankfort, Germany, 4 October 1943. Pilot, B17F, No. 42-29570, on mission to Munster, Germany, 10 October 1943.

1. Attached hereto are commendations from Prime Minister Winston Churchill; Air Chief Marshal Portal, Chief of Air Staff, RAF; General Marshall, Chief of Staff, U.S. Army; General Arnold, Commanding General, Army Air Forces; Lieut. General Eaker, Commanding General, Eighth Air Force; Brig General Anderson, Commanding General, VIII Bomber Command; and Brig General Williams, Commanding General, 1st Bombardment Division.

2. I am proud to give you these commendations as I realize more than anyone else what you went through to earn them and that they were honestly earned and earned the hard way.


JOSEPH J. NAZZARO
Colonel, Air Corps
Commanding

4 Incls:
n/c.

HEADQUARTERS
EIGHTH AIR FORCE
APO 633

12 October 1943.

SUBJECT: Commendations

TO : Commanding General, VIII Bomber Command,
" " VIII Fighter Command,
" " VIII Air Support Command.

1. Inclosed herewith are copies of commendations received from the Prime Minister; Air Chief Marshal Portal, Chief of Air Staff, RAF; from the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, General Marshal; and from the Commanding General, Army Air Forces, General Arnold. In my opinion, every officer and man of the Eighth Air Force who participated in the great air offensive which has been waged during the past ten (10) days should be fully advised of these estimates which the highest Government and Military leaders place on their work. If it is administratively possible, I think that every participating combat crew member should receive a letter from his Commander stating that he participated in these great air battles and that, therefore, he is entitled to a personal copy of these commendations.

2. Last Sunday, October 10th, after seeing the pictures of the effort of the preceding Saturday and particularly the destructive effects on the German fighter factories at Anklam and Marienburg, I sent a cable to General Arnold, from which the following is a quotation:

"Marienburg undoubtedly destroyed. It will be a better example of pinpoint bombing, better concentration even than Regensburg. It looks like a perfect job. Believe you will find October 9th a day to remember in the air war. The Prime Minister is sending message to crews."

Subsequent examination of photographs supports this estimate.

3. Convey to all your officers and men my unbounded admiration for the courage and boldness with which they pushed their attacks into enemy territory and the accuracy and skill with which they disposed of their targets. They have, by their effort, won the respect and admiration of the Air leaders of Britain and that great band of fighting men, the Royal Air Force. They have outfought a tough, experienced and battle-tried enemy. Their success has altered the course of the war and hastened its favorable conclusion.

/s/ IRA. C. BAUER
Lieut. General, U.S.A.,
Commanding.

4 Incls.

1st Ind.

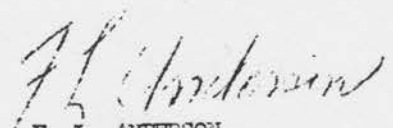
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HEADQUARTERS VIII BOMBER COMMAND, APO634, 13 October 1943.

TO: Combat Personnel of the VIII Bomber Command.

1. It is my privilege to be the instrument of bringing directly to you as individuals the comments and commendations from these distinguished sources,

2. Such expressions of appreciation of your efforts are extremely gratifying.


F. L. ANDERSON
Brigadier General, U. S. Army
Commanding

4 Incls.
n/c

COPY

COPY

10 Downing Street
Whitehall.

PRIME MINISTER TO GENERAL DEVERS:

I shall be obliged if you will convey to General Baker and his Command the thanks of the British War Cabinet for the magnificent achievements of the 8th Air Force in the Battle of Germany in recent days culminating in their remarkable successes of last week.

In broad daylight the crews of your bombers have fought their way through the strongest defence which the enemy could bring against them and have ranged over the length and breadth of Germany, striking with deadly accuracy many of the most important hostile industrial installations and ports.

Your bombers and the fighters which support them in these fierce engagements have inflicted serious losses on the German Air Force, and by forcing the enemy to weaken other fronts have contributed notably to the successes of the Allied arms everywhere.

The War Cabinet extend their congratulations also to the ground crews of the 8th Air Force without whose technical skill and faithful labor these feats of arms would not be possible.

I am confident that with the ever-growing power of the 8th Air Force, striking alternate blows with the Royal Air Force Bomber Command, we shall together inexorably beat the life out of the industrial Germany and thus hasten the day of final victory.

Initials - W.C.

INCOMING MESSAGE
HEADQUARTERS EIGHTH AIR FORCE

IN REPLY CITE: A 105

DATED: 11 OCTOBER 1943

FROM: AIR MINISTRY WHITEHALL

TO: ANW

Personal for General Baker from C. A. S

I should be grateful if you would pass to your squadrons an expression of my deep admiration for their splendid achievements over Germany during the last few days.

I know I am speaking for the whole of The Royal Air Force in offering you our heartiest congratulations and expressing our full confidence in evergrowing success for your command in the future.

PORTAL

COPY

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COPY

INCOMING MESSAGE
ETOUSA.

FROM: AGNLR
TO : ETOUSA FOR ACTION

REF NO. R-4219
DATED: OCT 111545Z

Interior Addresses: To : DEVERS
For : EAKER
From : MARSHALL

During the past few days the series of brilliant punishing blows which the crews of the Eighth Air Force have been delivering far into the interior of Germany are producing a devastating effect on German military power and the morale of the German people. Please give my congratulations and personal thanks to your gallant flight crews.

INCOMING MESSAGE
HEADQUARTERS EIGHTH AIR FORCE

IN REPLY CITE: R 4218

DATED: 11 OCT

FROM: AGWAR
TO : ANW

Internal Address: From: ARNOLD
For : EAKER

Long mission into Baltic and attacks on distant German objectives in Poland shows the world your growing ability to hit the enemy wherever you choose.

Well done.

The employment of larger bombing forces on successive days is encouraging proof that you are putting an increasing proportion of your bombers where they will hurt the enemy.

Good work.

As you turn your effort away from ship building cities and toward crippling the sources of the still growing German fighter forces the air war is clearly moving toward our supremacy in the air.

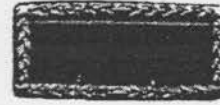
Carry on.

A-5

COPY

COPY

Presidential Unit Citation



A Presidential Citation was awarded to the 1st Combat Group for "extraordinary heroism, determination and esprit de corps" on the January 11, 1944 mission to Oschersleben, Germany.

HEADQUARTERS
1ST COMBAT BOMBARDMENT GROUP
APO 557

200.6

11 August

1944

SUBJECT: Presidential Citation, 1st Bombardment Division
TO: Commanding Officers, 91st, 381st, & 398th Bombardment Groups

1. The battle honors awarded the 1st Bombardment Division, by Section XI, WD General Orders No. 50, 17 June 1944, for extraordinary heroism, determination, and esprit de corps, in bombing the heavily defended German Aircraft factories at Oschersleben Germany, on 11 January 1944, is a very high honor. It ranks with the DSC for individual heroism. In order fully to appreciate the meaning of this citation and the significance of the Distinguished Unit Badge now authorized for wear with the uniform in accordance with instructions contained in para. 4, Section IV, W.D. Circular 333, 22 December 1943, the full wing background material concerning the mission is supplied for the information and guidance of all personnel in the command.

2. Oschersleben marked the beginning of our winning battle to cancel the fighter strength of the Luftwaffe by striking at the source of enemy air power; his airplane factories. It was fully understood by all, both by ourselves and by the enemy, that the winning of air mastery was a necessary prelude to victory. Without complete ownership of the air over the channel and the invasion coast, there could be no D-Day. It has become an essential principle of warfare that surface contests between major forces are decided by Air supremacy over the battlefield.

During the early history of the 8th Air Force, the Americans demonstrated that it was possible to conduct air operations over the continent in daylight and to make effective attacks on precision industrial targets. The threat to German war industry was clear, and the Hun promptly laid plans to meet it by projecting a fighter production to reach the staggering total of 2,500 fighter planes per month. Had that goal, easily within Germany's industrial power, ever been reached the course of the war would have been far different from the events we are witnessing today.

During the preceding April, the 8th Air Force had knocked out the Focke-Wulf factory at Bremen. This led the Hun to withdraw his airplane factories from western Germany to places in the east where he thought they would be safe from our attack. He was doubly safe when we suffered our heavy losses on Schweinfurt and Anklam in the fall of 1943. These places appeared to be at the outside of the range of our escort fighters, and effective air opposition forced us to temporarily desist from long range attacks.

3 January 1944, Jerry's fighter program was getting into stride, while our long-range fighters were only beginning to come in, a small though encouraging trickle. Our problem was that if we waited for full scale fighter support before daring interrupt the German program, it might come too late. It may have been one of those cases where everything depended on a delicate question of timing and on the ability to deliver a damaging blow before the opportunity was past.

Our target for the 11th January was the A.G.O. aircraft factory at Oschersleben. This target is in the Magdeburg area, only 90 miles from Berlin. It was by all odds the deepest pen-

etration ever made by our aircraft into the heart of Germany. The Factory we were after was the most important unit in the network of plants making FW 190s.

Our forces were smaller than they are now. Although it was a maximum effort for all groups, the Wing was able to scrape up only 63 airplanes. Three Combat Wings assigned to Oschersleben, the 1st, 41st and 94th, put up a total of 177 aircraft, and of these only 139 went through to attack the primary.

Weather over England and en route was much worse than anticipated. This made things rather bad. It broke up the Division order of battle, with the result that the 1st Combat Wing was obliged to proceed to the target alone, arriving in advance of the schedule leaders. The one group of P-51s then in the theater gave us target support as briefed, but the penetration and withdrawal support never materialized. The 2nd and 3rd Division, which were intended to dilute the fighter opposition en route by attacks in the Brunswick area, had to be recalled and only a few of their formation went through to their briefed targets.

As result of all these factors, the opposition we encountered from enemy fighters was probably the heaviest in the whole history of air warfare. The 1st Combat Wing, flying itself, bore its full share of the battle. The fight began in the vicinity of Dummer Lake, continued all the way to the target, including the bombing run and lasted after that until it had run over an hour and a half. Our Wing alone lost 13 of the total of 42 aircraft lost by the Division. We were officially credited with 66 enemy aircraft destroyed, one probable and 14 damaged. Lt. Col. Milten who was severely and painfully wounded an hour before the target, led our Wing formation to the target and back to England, where the entire Division was forced by weather to land at diversion airdromes. The lead airplane had been severely damaged by head-on attacks and flew more than half the mission on three engines. In spite of head on attacks during all bomb runs, an excellent job of bombing was accomplished and the other two combat wings that followed completed the work. The target was well and truly plastered, and was out of commission during the vital months that followed.

The battle of German aircraft production began with Oschersleben, it will continue until the end of the war, however there have been and will be other battles i.e., the battle of oil production, transportation, and even support of our ground forces. We will win them all and Jerry knows it.

3. It is recommended that all personnel of this command become familiar with the circumstances surrounding this mission as set forth herein.

By command of Brigadier General Gross:

/s/ Vernon P. Smith
/t/ VERNON P. SMITH
1st Lt. Air Corps
Asst. Adjutant.



Search

[December 1943]

532nd Bomb. Sq., 381st Bomb Group (H) - WAR DIARY
Submitted by Lt. G.T. Kelley

[February 1944]

JANUARY 1944

3. The first mission of the month, to Leverkusen, was scrubbed.

4. Six aircraft of this squadron took off for Kiel, Germany, the pilots being: Lts Flaherty, Zeman, Beckman, Robinson and Herrington, who was forced to abort. Unfortunately, just a few miles from the base, Lt Clore's blew up and crashed, killing all on board. Most of them on their 25th and final mission. Crew: Lts Cecil M. Clore, John W. Newell, Ralph J. Waldman, Sgts Walter R. Trainer, Salvatore Bozzette, Richard L. Streicher, Harold M. Robinson, Named M. Howard, Richard E. Ingmire.

5. The 381st BG was led by Capt Lord and Lt Wood on a mission to Tours, France to bomb the Parday/Lesley airfield. Other squadron pilots were: Lts Genter, McNeill, Darrow, Herrington and Zeman. The latter, in #676, is missing in action. The ship was hit by a rocket while it still had the bombs bay open, it then made a slow turn to the right, then turned back finally going into a spin before crashing to the ground. Eight chutes were reported seen.

MIA Crew: Lts Jack R. Zeman, Otis A. Montgomery, Frank R. Bisagna, William C. Walker; Sgts John W. Sinquefield, Burton A. Girvan, Harve A. LeRoux, Francis B. Cater, Raymond Chevreux, George M. Day.

6. Today, a party headed by Lt DeSantis attended funeral services at the Cambridge American Cemetery for Lt Clore and his crew, who were killed on Jan 4, when their aircraft crashed at Sible Hedingham, Essex, soon after take-off. There were 12 officers and 30 EM from the squadron who attended. The service was conducted by Chaplain Brown and Chaplain Collett, starting at 15.00 hrs and completed in 30 minutes or so. The caskets were each draped with the American Flag, and placed in a separate grave.

A mission planned for Cocove, France, was scrubbed.

7. Seven aircraft were airborne this morning for a mission to Ludwigshafen, piloted by Lts Hutchens, Genter, Flaherty, Beckman, Saur, Robinson and McNeill. All returned safely to base reporting bombing results as unobserved due to a complete overcast.

1st Lt Adrian L. Maloney, in addition to his other duties, is appointed Assistant Station Personnel Officer.

8. Major J. J. Fitzgerald Jr, was appointed Squadron Commander, relieving Capt Lord, who was appointed Squadron Operations Officer.

The following crew personnel were assigned: 2nd Lt Ray F. Bombard, 2nd Lt R. E. Hassletine, Sgts James E. Marbry, Andrew J. Amato, James G. Keesling.

9. The following officers have been detailed and appointed to carry out the duties indicated: 1st Lt David D. Hutchens - Flight Commander "A" Flight, vice Capt William J. Baltrusaitis transferred; 1st Lt Charles G. Wood - Flight Commander "B" Flight; 1st Lt Bernard F. Beckman - Flight Commander "C" Flight; 1st Lt George R. Darrow - Flight

Commander - Flight Commander "D" Flight.

10. Today the following combat personnel were assigned: 1st Lt Kirsch J. Cogswell, 2nd Lt William R. Keenan, S/Sgt Raymond J. Leceese, S/Sgt Frank O. Urban, Sgt Charles E. Duncan.

11. The target for today was the fighter aircraft assembly plant at Oschersleben, the pilots being: Lts Hutchens, McNeill, Robinson, Darrow, Goodge, Flaherty and Saur, the latter missing in action. Heavy flak and approx. 175 enemy aircraft were encountered.

NEW MEN IN 532nd Sqd

Twice wounded, Lt William W. Farrell, aboard "Friday 13th", picked himself up off the floor and bombed his objective, knocked down an enemy fighter and administered first aid to a wounded colleague, refusing medical treatment until the aircraft was out of danger. His explosives fell a split second before those of the rest of the formation. He then plugged in his oxygen hose and got back to his guns. His turret guns ran out of ammunition so he jumped to the nose gun and fought from that position until he again exhausted his ammunition.

The pilot Lt Flaherty, had performed prodigious flying skill all through the trip, always keeping the bomber in its position in the formation. Back over England he found his hydraulic system shot out and, although he didn't know it he also had a flat tire. He made an excellent landing, nevertheless, although the flat tire dragged the ship off the runway and into the mud. Combat crew members of this squadron are credited with 19 enemy aircraft destroyed.

13. 2nd Lt Martin P. King and F/O Russell D. Austin were assigned this date.

14. The mission planned for Croisette, France, was scrubbed.

15. The mission to Gotha, Germany, was scrubbed.

18. The mission to Frankfurt, Germany, was scrubbed.

19. The missions to Belleville en Caux and St Adrien, France, were scrubbed.

20. The following combat personnel were assigned today:

2nd Lts Armour C. Bowen, Floyd L. Miller, S/Sgts Brian Grinde, John T. Yergo, Thomas L. Lamore. Again the missions were scrubbed, this time to Belleville en Caux and St Adrien.

21. After two unsuccessful attempts at the previous target, a mission was finally carried out with bombing results reported as good. Enemy air opposition was nil while flak was meagre and inaccurate. The pilots participated were: Lts Genter, Robinson, Wood, McNeill, Flaherty, Winter, McCrory and Thomson.

24. The aircraft of this squadron took off on a mission to Frankfurt, but four minutes after crossing the enemy coastline, 10.24 hrs word was received to abandon the mission.

The following combat personnel were assigned this date:

Lts William Borrego, Julian G. O'Neill, Lorenzo Espinoza, Henry B. Matty; Sgts Wilfred L. Miller, Joseph L. Durnin, John V. Kangas, Glenn J. Terry, Herbert D. Walker, S/Sgt Oliver K. Stuart.

26. The mission to Frankfurt was scrubbed. A second mission was therefor planned, but that was also scrubbed.

29. Eight aircraft of this squadron took off for Frankfurt, piloted by: Lts Wood, Thomson, Flaherty, Beckman, Genter,

Laux, McNeill and McCrory. All planes returned safely.

Sgt Robert L. Fain was assigned this unit today.

30. The group formation was led by Major Fitzgerald and Capt Hecker on a mission to Brunswick, the other pilots being: Lts Thomson, Flaherty, Wood, Genter, Laux, McNeill and Fastrup. All crews returned safely reporting bomb results unobserved due to a 10/10th cloud cover. Capt Hester and Sgt Dearth are each credited with one enemy aircraft destroyed.

31. The end of January finds four combat crew personnel who have finished their tour of operations over enemy territory: Major Marvin D. Lord, S/Sgt Kenneth Stone, and C. B. Fry, finished their mission on 7 January, while today S/Sgt Billy L. Whittington finished up.

There were nine promotions this month: Capt Lord to Major, 1st Lt Hutchens to Capt, 2nd Lts Moore, Genter, McNeill, Stephens, Goodman and Wilson to 1st Lt. Lt Hecker was already promoted to Capt.

The strength of the squadron is 82 officers and 400 enlisted men.

The 532nd was well represented by recipients of awards during December/January. The awards are as follows:- Six Distinguished Flying Crosses to: Capt Melvin R. Hecker, S/Sgt James L. Baker, T/Sgt Carl W. Hartnett, T/Sgt Jack Kaufman, S/Sgt Richard G. Morrison, S/Sgt William F. Provonsha, while five Purple Hearts went to Lt William R. Farrell, F/O Benjamin M. Saporta, S/Sgt Robert E. LaVert, S/Sgt Joseph C. Clement, S/Sgt Ralph R. Rosato.

There were 29 Air Medals and 74 Oak Leaf Clusters.

[December 1944]

[February 1944]



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To

Colonel David I. Hutchens

A pilot of the
381st Bombardment Group (H)
Eighth Air Force
European Theatre of Operations
World War II.

In praise for your service
To our country.

James Good Brown
Chaplain

February 22, 1985

The Eighth Air Force established Oschersleben as a target of strategic importance. Eight hundred bombers were sent to the target on January 11, 1944. In addition to these, there were several hundred Allied fighters as escort, a total of more than a thousand planes.

What one must now hear are the remarks of our men when they returned. I shall long hear them speaking. While taking a shower in the evening, I overheard a conversation. One of the men who flew this day was reflecting upon the horror and terror of his experience. I heard him say, "To see our ships go down one after another, without any protection from Allied fighters, was wholesale slaughter." He continued, "It was a suicide raid."

A second fellow said to me a half-hour later at the supper table that, if they were sent out on such a raid again, he would bail out wherever he was, and added, "To hell with the war."

Such statements mean something and were quite unlike the reactions of men on even the most severe raids. He was telling me something. What was the cause of these remarks?

It is common knowledge on the base, especially with the fliers, that the whole raid was messed up; that someone higher up made some mistake. In short, the raid did not go off as intended. What is worse, the raid was called off at the last minute, even after the planes were over Germany. Here, then, was the unfortunate mix-up.

The mission to Oschersleben on January 11, 1944, is one of the badly misrepresented missions of the war. It had wide publicity. Editorials were written about this raid which greatly praised the American heavy bombers, and stated that the losses were worth the gains. But this is not the way the fliers in the 381st looked upon the raid. They know what happened.

Raids are often called off. Sometimes the mission is cancelled just after the briefing, or after the men take to their stations. Other missions are cancelled after the men are in the ships warming up their engines. Missions are cancelled after two or three planes are off the ground. Then, too, one may be scrubbed after the planes are over the continent. This is not unusual. The

weather back home is closing in so that the scheduled time of return would make it impossible for the ships to land.

On the Oschersleben raid, the ships were recalled after they were thirty minutes inside the Continent. As a result, most of the Eighth Air Force returned to England, including the Allied fighter planes. But the First Division, three Combat Wings, including the 381st Bomb Group, went on to Oschersleben. We never got the message to cancel the mission. Instead of 700 bombers going to the target, only about 180 ships went through. And what is worse, these had no fighter escort. The Allied fighters never took off from England.

For a few Flying Fortresses to go deep into Germany without fighter protection was suicide. And that is what it turned out to be, as related by the men of the 381st. They were met by hundreds of German fighters. Our Group did not have a ghost of a chance. Our men were helpless against the onslaught.

Thus the loss of over 50 bombers was not from the 700 to 800 that were scheduled to go to Oschersleben, but from the few that went to the target. It was a blunder. But when our men saw the next day the reports in the papers which wrote up the Oschersleben raid as a great accomplishment, our men could but shake their heads in disgust.

Our men say that they did not see a single friendly fighter all the way. They were left alone to battle the fast FW-190's, which came in after them time and again like devils. The Germans knew that they had the few Flying Fortresses licked. Almost one-third of the Forts were shot down. And the losses were in one Division. One of our squadrons, the 533rd, was the target of the German fighters. They pounded the 533rd. The formation of the squadron was broken up, and there were left isolated ships, scattered helplessly. These became the target of the enemy and soon went down in flames. Out of the 533rd Squadron, six ships were shot down. Only three were left. These tacked onto another squadron. Thus the 533rd came back licked to pieces. We lost two other ships that day, giving us a loss of eight planes. Eighty men in one day!

This was the second highest loss we had had since coming to England. August 17, 1943, was the worst when we lost ten ships

on the Schweinfurt raid. It was a hammer blow to the 381st, but we were told that it was necessary for the total success of the war — to bomb the ball-bearing factories of Germany. Our men knew full well what they were going into. We knew there would be heavy losses.

Oschersleben on this January 11, 1944, was different. The losses were not predicted. They were not even expected, and they should not have been. It was done because of a blunder on the part of the Eighth Air Force. This is what makes the day so sad. The loss of one man was too heavy a price for a mistake in the Eighth Air Force. The loss of 80 men in our Group was a price we should not have been asked to pay. The price was too high. These men should have been with us for six months more.

MISSION 60 — January 21, 1944. St. Adrien, France.

All planes returned safely.

Oschersleben knocked us out. It was like a sledgehammer blow or a hit below the belt, and did not help the morale of the Group, especially because the truth was revealed that the Eighth Air Force had fouled this one up. Ten days passed before the 381st was able to fly another mission, this one to St. Adrien, France. We had good fortune this day.

But good fortune is not the norm in a bomber group in the European Theatre of Operations. We are still a long way from liberating the continent of Europe.

Another eight days passed after the St. Adrien raid before we were able to regain our strength; thus on January 29, we hit Frankfurt, Germany. Our men did not welcome this mission when they saw it uncovered on the map in the briefing room. I saw the look on their faces. The flight chart is here printed:

Frankfurt City
January 29, 1944

3 Divisions
6 Wings
40 Groups

BREAKFAST: 0330
PILOTS MEETING: 0600
STATIONS: 0645

love of destruction, but is instead celebrating the "continuance of life." This is the opposite of war and death.

Therefore this excitement over getting back, expressed by men hanging on to each other when they get out of the plane or falling to the ground and kissing it is wholly the expression of "The love of life."

Lieutenant David W. Hutchens

We witnessed this "Joy and Release" when a long-time pilot of the 381st came home from his 25th mission. He is not an original member of the 381st, but almost. He came into the Group on August 27, 1943. But that date means something. Those were the days when flying was rough. The Schweinfurt raid of August 17, 1943, had just taken place a few days before. Bremen, Munich, Frankfurt, Oscherslebe, Anklam, Schweinfurt II, Hamburg were all to follow. Lieutenant David W. Hutchens had to go through all of these. Could he do it? The statistical odds were against him. Few had done it. The original men could not do it. The very best new men went down. Only a few survived the 25 missions.

It did not seem that Lieutenant Hutchens had a ghost of a chance. His name appeared night after night on the flight chart — HUTCHENS — always typed out in capital letters. How often could it be put up there after August, 1943? The name still appeared on the flight chart in March, 1944. We flew 16 missions in March, 1944, including Frankfurt, Mannheim, Dusseldorf, four flight to Berlin, plus others. But Lieutenant Hutchens always returned. Who knows the answer? Perhaps he does.

The day of joy and release came with his 25th mission, March 29, 1944, to Brunswick, Germany. Lieutenant David W. Hutchens goes down on the record of the 381st with only a few others who made 25 missions from the summer of 1943 to March 1944. One thing surely can be said of him: He was a great pilot — one of THE MIGHTY MEN OF THE 381st.

RESTRICTED

GENERAL ORDERS)
NO. 43)

EXTRACT

Hq 1st Bombardment Division,
APO 634, 5 February 1944.

Under the provisions of Army Regulations 600-45, 22 September 1943, and pursuant to authority contained in Ltr Hq Eighth Air Force, 15 January 1944, Subject "Awards and Decorations," the DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS is awarded to the following-named Officer, for extraordinary achievement, as set forth in citation. This individual has previously earned the Air Medal and three Oak Leaf Clusters for wear therewith.

* * * *

DAVID D. HUTCHENS, O-737427, Captain, 532nd Bombardment Squadron, 381st Bombardment Group (H), Army Air Forces, United States Army. For extraordinary achievement, while serving as Pilot of a B-17 airplane on twenty-five bombardment missions over enemy occupied Continental Europe. Displaying great courage and skill, Captain Hutchens has materially aided in the success of each of the twenty-five missions and his actions are an inspiring example for his fellow flyers. The courage, coolness and skill displayed by Captain Hutchens on all these occasions reflect the highest credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of the United States. Home address: 16852 Mayfield, Roseville, ~~California.~~

Mich.

* * * *

By command of Brigadier General WILLIAMS:

BARTLETT BEAMAN,
Colonel, GSC,
Chief of Staff.

OFFICIAL:

ROBERTS P. JOHNSON, JR.,
Lt. Col., A. G. D.,
Adjutant General.

RESTRICTED





Office of the Commanding General

HEADQUARTERS
AIR MATERIEL COMMAND

Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio

27 SEP 1946

SUBJECT: Award of the Army Commendation Ribbon

THRU: Deputy Commanding General, Supply (T-4)
Air Materiel Command
Wright Field
Dayton, Ohio

TO: Captain David L. Hutchens, O-737427

By direction of the Secretary of War and in accordance with the provisions of Circular 377, WD, 1945, you are hereby authorized to wear the Army Commendation Ribbon for distinctive meritorious service as Project Officer on the B-17 Airplane, Headquarters, Air Technical Service Command from 23 April 1944 to 31 October 1945. Through your untiring efforts and highly efficient administration of this Project, the production and modification of B-17 Airplanes became an outstanding contribution to the successful accomplishment of the bombardment airplane program.

M. F. TWINING
Lieutenant General, USA
Commanding

♥ To Live at Miami Beach



ON a wedding trip to Toronto, following which they will go to Miami, Florida, where the bridegroom is stationed, to reside, are Capt. David Dale Hutchens, of the U.S. Army Air Forces, holder of the D.F.C. and American Air Medal with three oak clusters, and his bride, the former Miss Mary Frances Wilson, only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Gordon D. Wilson of Ouellette avenue. They were married Saturday at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. Capt. Hutchens is the son of Mrs. Harold Hutchens of Upland, Indiana, and the late Mr. Hutchens.

U.S.A.A.F. Officer, Home From Duty Overseas, Weds Today

With the bridegroom just home from almost a year's service with the U. S. Eighth Air Force in England, where he won the Distinguished Flying Cross and the American Air Medal with three oak clusters, particular interest attached to the marriage this afternoon, at 1 o'clock, in St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, of Miss Mary Frances Wilson, only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Gordon D. Wilson of Ouellette avenue, to Capt. David Dale Hutchens, eldest son of Mrs. Harold Hutchens of Upland, Indiana, and the late Mr. Hutchens. The Rev. Dr. H. M. Paulin officiated at the ceremony.

Given in marriage by her father, the bride wore a stunning street

length frock of pale pink sheer, with a softly shirred bodice, long, featuring a ruffled yoke effect, and a draped skirt. Her perky little half-hat matched, and featured shoulder-length veiling, and she wore two white orchids at her shoulder.

Mrs. Donald E. Brown of Grosse Pointe (the former Miss Marjorie Rutherford of Blenheim), as her cousin's matron of honor, was in soft pastel blue, fashioned just like the bride's dress, and she, too, wore a tiny hat with a shoulder veil, in the same blue, and gardenias around pale pink rosebuds, encircled with forget-me-nots.

Pte. (first class) Brown, home on furlough from Camp McCain, Mississippi, was best man.

RECEPTION AT HOME

A reception at the home of the bride's parents, where a buffet luncheon was served, followed. Profusions of spring flowers were used throughout the house, and the table was centered with the three-tiered wedding cake in a bed of white tulle and pastel sweet peas, flanked by burning ivory tapers.

Mrs. Wilson chose for her daughter's wedding a gown of soft grey crepe, with cut-work trimming the yoke, and a tiny gray and fuchsia hat, and wore pale pink orchids, while Mrs. Hutchens was in dusty rose, and wore a black hat and purple orchids.

Assisting in serving were Miss Ruth Cunningham, Miss Pat O'Neil, Miss Noreen Beattie and Miss Barbara Laurie.

Capt. and Mrs. Hutchens left later for a wedding trip, the bride traveling in coral gabardine suit trimmed with big square gold buttons, and a camel's hair coat, and brown hat, and wearing white orchids.

After spending a few days in Toronto, they will leave for Miami Beach, Florida, where the bridegroom has been posted since his return. Capt. Hutchens attended the Lawrence Institute of Technology in Detroit, where he was a member of Alpha Gamma Upsilon Fraternity.

Out-of-town guests here for the wedding included Mr. and Mrs. Glenn C. Rutherford and Miss Freda S. Spackman of Blenheim; Mr. and Mrs. Millard A. Brown, Miss Doris Brown and Mr. and Mrs. Abram L. Brown and their family, all of Grosse Pointe; Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Brown of Grosse Pointe Woods; and Dr. and Mrs. B. W. McDougall, Mr. and Mrs. George Mardison and Mrs. Ethel Trembley, all of Detroit.

Miss Wilson Marries Flier

A UNITED STATES ARMY AIR FORCES hero, holder of the Distinguished Flying Cross and the American Air Medal with three oak clusters, just back from England where he was based with the Eighth Air Force, was married in Windsor quietly at 1 o'clock Saturday. He is Capt. David Dale Hutchens, now stationed at Miami Beach, Fla., son of Mrs. Harold Hutchens, of Upland, Ind., and the late Mr. Hutchens, and his bride, the former Mary Frances Wilson is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Gordon D. Wilson, of Ouellette Ave.

The wedding took place at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church Manse, with the Rev. H. M. Paulin officiating. The bride's sister, Mrs. Donald E. Brown, of Grosse Pointe, and Pfc. Brown, home from Camp McCain, Miss., were the only attendants.

♥
March
25
1944

