

and other combat gear. .45 caliber automatic pistols were issued to each crew member and a .45 caliber Thompson Sub-machine [Tommy-gun] was issued to all bombardiers to be used transporting the highly secret bombsight to and from the vault.

Bill and I got in a high rolling crap game that night and picked up several hundred dollars. We decided that now was time to buy an engagement ring for our fiancées if we could slip into town somehow. Bill had met an old friend in the mess hall that was a medical officer and permanently attached here. He furnished us with medical insignia and open passes that would get us in and out the gate as medical officers. The mission was accomplished with no snags and the diamonds were in the mail that night.

The following day we flew to Selfridge Field, Michigan and landed to spend the night. An all negro fighter group was stationed here, I think it was the 72nd Fighter Group, an experimental thing, and made up entirely of blacks. They were flying the P-39 known as the Bell Aerocobra. A relatively small craft they didn't work out too well with the German fighters, but were excellent against the Jap Zero. When sent into combat in Italy they proved to be a disaster. Their favorite caper was to fire all of their ammo into the air, often hitting the bombers they were supposedly escorting. Out of ammo they had to return to base. After a short period they were returned to the states as heroes and used in some propaganda campaign. That night there was a party and dance at the NCO Club that we all thought would be fun as there was a unit of WAC'S stationed here and there should be plenty of girls to dance with, etc. The NCO Club was off limits to Officers. Bill, Griff and I borrowed clothes from our Sergeants and attended the affair. The party progressed as expected with black boys and white boys and only white girls. When the fight started, the intruders had to leave before the MP's arrived, as it wouldn't have been good to be arrested in Sgt. stripes. Three of our gunners were arrested, Jones and the two Texans. They were fined fifty dollars each and confined to the post which meant nothing as we left for Presque Isle, Maine that day. Here we found that our wing's fuel valves had been installed backwards preventing the fuel from flowing to the main tanks. This would have proven disastrous if they had of remained undetected until we tried to open them half way across the Atlantic. Naturally, being overseas personnel we were not allowed off base. One of our gunners, Hodston had not come home on the six day furlough as he would of used all the time traveling. A legal pass could not be obtained, so we fixed one up for him. His home was only about thirty miles from the base so he spent a few days at home and was back in time for our departure.

CHAPTER II
OVERSEAS AND COMBAT [May and June 1943]

The Airforce used two different routes when flying to England. The direct route was from Gander Lake, Newfoundland; to Prestwick, Scotland. Under normal conditions it could be flown in less than eleven hours. We carried fuel for eleven-plus so this was cutting it rather close, but with the right winds and weather it was used quite frequently.

The far northern route started at Goose Bay Labrador; to Greenland; then to Iceland; and finally on to Prestwick, Scotland. This route would take three days, and much of the time the weather would turn bad overnight and the planes would be socked in until it cleared, which could take several days. Therefore the direct route while more dangerous, was used more often than the far northern route.

We flew to Gander Lake, Newfoundland as soon as "Iron Gut Gert" was ready to go again and prepared for the long flight across the Atlantic. The weather and winds weren't cooperative the first day so we were forced to lay over.

While talking to some permanent personnel we were told that there was good trout fishing in the lake. Griff and I scrounged up some tackle, bait and beer and went a'fishin. We borrowed an old raft tied up near the wharf, went aboard and poled our way out to deep water. We dropped our lines and right away started catching fish that were running from ten to eighteen inches long. We had taken a lunch and beer along so were having a good old time. After a few hours we must have caught enough trout to feed our entire Squadron so decided to go in. We had completely forgotten that our only means of power and steering the raft was with the poles and we couldn't touch bottom. Besides this the wind was picking up and blowing us across the lake. We could only wait until we were close enough to shore to reach bottom with the poles. About an hour before sun-down the poles touched bottom, but we were straight across the lake from the base, probably a couple of miles. When it was possible to pole again we had drifted into a maze of snags, floating trees and brush. We fought this situation for awhile but could make no headway at all, so decided we would have to walk back around the shore line. We thought this would probably take four or five hours. We started wading as quickly as possible, carrying our catch of fish and our tackle. There seemed to be only thick brush and swamp. Finally after sliding and falling around in the mud we reached dry ground, only to find a fence of barbed wire entanglement [concertina wire]. This fence was placed right on the edge of the swamp so we still had to wade in the mud. We had

sacrificed about half of our fish by now. Darkness had overtaken us and searchlights were probing the perimeter that we were following. We didn't know until later that this was a weather installation and manned by Canadian troops. Anyway we realized we wouldn't be too healthy to be seen lurking in the shadows, so we could only move between the light beams. Many hours and just a few fish later we were out of the swamp and had reached a corduroy road running toward the base. A most welcome sight as we had been under attack from squadrons of mammoth mosquitos for hours. We were coated with mud, so this slowed their attacks down a little. Needing both hands to protect ourselves we lost all interest in trout dinner, so dropped the last of our catch along the road. We reached the base with only the fishing tackle we had borrowed. The guards took about thirty minutes identifying us, then gave us a ride to our barracks. Now to our dismay, we were scheduled for a five o'clock take-off. It being three a.m. now, we just had time for a most welcome shower, a briefing and breakfast, with no time for sleep or even rest. We were in great shape for an extended flight across the Atlantic Ocean. At briefing we were told that we would be flying at altitude most of the time so we would ride the tail winds, and this would necessitate using oxygen. As we didn't have a large enough reserve to enable all of the crew to stay on oxygen for the entire flight, two men would change off every hour. Griff and I decided we would change every two hours, which would allow the one without oxygen to get some badly needed sleep.

Our altitude should be about 16,000 feet. While not being dangerous to the health without oxygen a person would become drowsy and muddled. We would use celestial and dead reckoning to find our way across as there were no radio beacons until we got within fifty miles of Prestwick. Griff plotted our course and gave Earl the heading then went to sleep. I was to check our position every thirty minutes while he was sleeping. If the winds didn't change there would be no correction in our heading. After about eight hours into flight we suddenly realized that we had both been asleep for a couple of hours. Checking our drift we found that the wind had changed drastically and it was very likely that we were off course. With some calculation and I think a little magic, Griff made a new heading and about two hours later we made a perfect land-fall on Scotland. We landed at Prestwick after eleven plus hours in the air just as the book said we should.

Our quarters were in a huge beautiful castle with nicely groomed lawns and shrubbery. I recall a very large barn of a sort where the gunners were quartered. The castle seemed like a museum. There was knights armour standing in the halls and in many of the rooms, swords, shields and crests were on the walls. It gave me a strange feeling, as if we were modern day knights going into battle as these old timers had so many years ago. Of course we had flying steeds and no armour.

We stayed here two days just resting, then on to our permanent home at Ridgewell, located about twenty miles east of Cambridge. From the air the country was very beautiful, it being spring and everything was green, and the buildings well painted it made a very

nice sight. One thing distracted from all the beauty though and made us conscience of the present. This was the never ending bomb craters that were visible wherever you looked. They were the grim results of The Battle of Britain. The German Luftwaffe had really clobbered them and were still making nightly raids on the airbases. The RAF never flew bombing missions during the day only at night. We Americans were just the opposite by flying during the day. Consequently our planes were on the ground at night, making them a more lucrative target for the Luftwaffe than the RAF bases.

The RAF and American Airforce had two distinctly different theories about bombing enemy targets. However the type of bombsight each had to use dictated their bombing procedure. We had given England our Sperry sight designed for pattern bombing. This was a large sight and permanently mounted in the aircraft. It was not nearly as accurate as our Norden. They would fly into the target area singly, at about two minute intervals, sight in on the target and drop their bomb load. The target area would be well saturated and the target usually destroyed.

With our Norden sight we employed a precision type bombing system. In theory every one of our bomb runs should have been successful and on target but due to the limited bomb run and human error, there were some misses. Our daylight bombing caused us to be completely vulnerable to anti-aircraft fire and enemy fighters. By flying in a carefully worked out formation to use the fire power of each plane to the best advantage, we were enabled to put up quite an impressive and challenging front for the German fighters. We were positioned in echelons of three units. Three planes to the Flight, and so on as follows: Flights formed into Squadrons; Squadrons into Groups; Groups into Wings and Wings into a Division all flying this basic pattern.

Head-on view 3 View from above and below 1 2 3

This plan offered protection for the formation from each planes guns. When a plane was knocked out of formation, they were on their own and at the mercy of the enemy fighters, having lost the protection of the formation's fire-power. The last plane in the formation was known as Tail-End Charlie and the last flight was in the Purple Heart Corner. The lead planes had the protection of the entire formation.

As threatening a front as we presented, the Luftwaffe fighters would form at two o'clock high and come diving and firing through the formation, one after another. It was amazing, distressing and frightening, in that order, to see how courageous and skillful they really were.

We were checked out by a training cadre whom presumably had extensive combat experience and found that we must loosen up our formation flying. By flying so close we were a hazard to each other. When one was hit and went down he could easily take one or more planes with him. After a few days of combat training we were given the stamp of approval and declared ready and willing.

The weather turned foul [an English word for bad], foggy and

drizzling rain, so we were given twenty four hour passes. Bill Griff and I caught the train into London town to see the sights and check out the natives. We were told that the action was in Picadilly so that's where we went. Sure enough, wine, women and song awaited us there. We stopped in a few pubs before finding the one that suited us best. It was a large hall with two long bars, a band, tables and booths. More American than any we had seen before. It was full of Yank service men and overflowing with English lassies. We were sitting at a table talking and drinking when we were suddenly attacked by a mob of hysterical women. Clara Gable was mentioned and they seemed to be zero-ing in on Bill. He was dark and did resemble Gable slightly. One of Bill's classmates named Robertson, had started the stampede by pointing Bill out and telling a girl that he was Gable. He was sitting at the bar and about to fall off his stool from laughing so hard. By the time we had straightened them out we were well enough acquainted to insure ourselves of a very successful evening. There was an Air Raid that night and a few bombs hit near our hotel but it didn't bother us.

The day after returning to base, we heard that a maximum effort bombing raid was being planned. A max effort meant that all of the heavy bombers in England would make the raid. I think we were the fifth group to arrive in England, so there would be around a hundred and eighty planes in the formation. We had heard the rumor before so didn't give it much thought. We all bicycled over to the Officer's Club for the big opening party. Our base had formerly belonged to the RAF and it was obvious that they weren't the best of housekeepers. We had worked on the club in our spare time and were very proud of the finished product. After a few rounds of drinks, someone complained about not having any ice for the hi-balls. The Colonel was very co-operative, and said that if a skeleton crew could be found that was sober, he would allow them to take a plane with some water to altitude until it was frozen and we would have ice for our drinks. Earl was the pilot chosen to go and in a couple of hours they were back with the ice. The next day some wit figured the cost of the ice at about fifty dollars per drink, and posted it on the bulletin board.

A shoe factory was discovered near the base that employed a lot of women, so it wasn't long before we all had dancing partners. After I was shot down most of the officers had live-in housekeepers.

The Airbases in England were built to blend in with the country side and were pretty well camouflaged. Sections of the run-way could be spotted from the air by someone who knew it was an airbase. The hard-stands for the planes were well dispersed and also the buildings. Our quarters were quanset huts, with eight men to the hut. They were sectioned off into eight rooms, with a large room in the center that had a heating stove. We cooked a lot of our meals here, as the mess-hall was about two miles away and the chow wasn't very good anyway. When we left the States we had loaded the plane with C-Rations that turned out to be our chief property, so we had plenty of food available. We could trade the D-Bars [chocolate], and Nescafe from the C-Rations for fresh eggs and many other good things.

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MRS LENA V HOOVER

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Purple Heart Is Awarded Pilot Killed in Action

Special to The Star-Telegram

FARWELL, Aug. 22.—Second Lieutenant William R. Roberts, 22, reported killed in action June 22, has been posthumously awarded the Purple Heart. Flying Fortress pilot, based in England, he was shot down over German territory on the day when American planes raided the synthetic rubber works at Recklinghausen, near Huls, and military targets at occupied Antwerp. His plane was last seen spinning and in flames.

The German government reported to the International Red Cross that he was killed.

Only child of Mr. and Mrs. M. Roberts, he was born in Greenburg, Mo., March 13, 1921. He lived in Commerce until he was 5. The family moved to Amarillo, where he attended the public schools until the junior year in high school. He graduated here in 1938.

After attending Texas Technological College for two years he joined the Army Air Forces in



LIEUTENANT ROBERTS.

January, 1942. He took his primary flight training at Coleman, basic at Goodfellow Field, San Angelo, and his advanced at Lubbock Army Air Field. He was commissioned and given his wings last Feb. 16. He flew to England in May.



LT. GEORGE PAUL GRIFFITH
KILLED IN ACTION 22 JUNE 1943
(MY NAVIGATOR)

Fourth Star Telegram
8-21-43
M... ..

LOCAL BOYS IN THE U. S. ARMED FORCES

Lytie Hoover Is

German War Prisoner

Lt. Lytie Hoover, son of Mr. and Mrs. Logan Hoover of Greynhill, is a German war prisoner. His parents received a telegram Friday saying their son had been pris-



oner by the Germans. A few weeks ago Mr. and Mrs. Hoover received a telegram stating their son was reported missing in action.

Lytie, a well-known Greynhill boy, was home on a furlough late in April after completing his army aviation training in New Mexico. Shortly after he reported for duty he was sent to England, and was in England only a short time when he was reported missing in action.

HOOVERS HEAR FROM SON IN GERMAN PRISON

Mr. and Mrs. Logan Hoover Friday received both a card and a letter from their son, Lt. Lytie Hoover, who is a German war prisoner. The communications were mailed from a prison camp.

Lytie states that he is doing nothing, and much of his idle time is spent in playing softball with other American sailors and soldiers who are prisoners of war in the German camp. He was permitted to say, passed by the censor, that he hoped this war would soon be over and that he could return home.

He wanted his folks to send him certain little articles, but his mother said she would be unable to send them for some time, because regulations prohibit sending packages at only infrequent intervals, and she had just recently mailed him a package.

Lytie was home on a furlough late in April. Shortly after he reported for duty again he was sent to England. Being an aviator, he no doubt participated in bombing attacks over Germany, and probably had to bail out of his plane and fell into German hands.

TANKS, BRIGIONS Blast Germany In Heavy Raids U. S. Planes Make First Visit to Ruhr, Bomb Rubber Plant

By JAMES M. LONG.

London, June 22.—(AP)—Rounding out devastating, round-the-clock blows for the first time into the German Ruhr—the heart of Nazi war production—American flying Fortresses set a square mile of fires roaring through the German synthetic rubber town of Huls Tuesday soon after the R. A. F. had blasted the important steel town of Krefeld with perhaps 2,000 tons of bombs.

Other Flying Fortresses also struck by daylight at the former General Motors plant at Antwerp, and R. A. F. Mitchells smashed docks and shipping at Rotterdam, while great forces of American and British fighters made diversionary sweeps to complete 24 hours of tremendous activity.

The Flying Fortresses, through without escort through strong enemy air and ground defenses to strike Huls, near Recklinghausen, seeking to knock out Buna rubber plants.

Fortress crewmen said mounds of earth appeared raised atop the plant buildings, with trees planted in them. The rubber factory beneath the trees had been built since the start of the war. But American bombers turned the area into sheets of flame.

They left fires and destruction nearly as disastrous as the R. A. F. saturation attack by more than 700 planes during Monday night up Krefeld, 40 miles southwest of Huls, when the British delivered one of the heaviest bomb loads so far released on any German target. The air ministry gave no other description, but unofficial sources estimated 2,000 tons of bombs were dropped, raining down 31,000 tons

But the raids took a heavy toll—20 United States bombers and four fighters Tuesday and 44 British bombers and one fighter Monday night.

The double blows into the Ruhr showed close British-American air cooperation, and indicated that American daylight precision raids were being directed toward obliterating specific targets remaining after widespread British night attacks.

And the employment of United States bombers in an area heretofore pounded only by the British—plus the British pounce against Lt. Creusot which had been an American hunting ground—hinted at a strategy to keep the Germans guessing about where to concentrate their limited day and night fighter forces. Smoke from fires set at Huls rose 6,000 feet, returning airmen said Huls is approximately 25 miles southwest of Munster and 15 miles northwest of Recklinghausen. There is another Huls near Krefeld.

The air ministry news service said the attack on Rotterdam was a diversion to draw German fighters away from the Fortresses as the Americans were about to go into Germany unescorted.

Flying Fortress Belly-Lands Here

A Flying Fortress crew and seven passengers Sunday afternoon escaped injury when their bomber made a belly landing at Oklahoma City Air Depot.

Successful landing of the plane Sunday was the third of the type for the depot. No one was injured in the other two.

Lieut. Marvin Lord, pilot, was directed to land at the depot here after one of the plane's landing wheels was damaged at takeoff from Pyote, Texas. Lord and his crew intended to fly seven passengers to Pueblo, Colo.

Over the South Canadian, Lord dropped an extra gas tank, which would have made landing even more risky. The impact caused the gasoline to burn. The tank hit a South Canadian sand bar.

DAMAGE TO THE FORTRESS WAS SEVERE.

We were all issued bicycles as our means of transportation for getting around the base. Every place we had to go seemed to be a mile or two away. The Officer's Club was about two miles from our quarters which made it difficult to find our way home on bicycles at night with no light ever, only flashlights. The roads or paths were bordered with tall shrubbery and usually muddy. I found that it didn't pay to stay till closing time.

The day after the party was just a lazy day. We lay around licking our wounds and healing up from the party. Earl pedaled over to the Headquarters and returned with the good news that the maximum effort was on for tomorrow if the weather remained favorable. What the target would be wouldn't be known until briefing the next morning. Keeping anything secret was a laugh here, as the German Newscaster, "Lord Haw-Haw", a defected Englishman, would welcome each new group as they arrived, on his 0600 hours newscast that we would listen to while eating breakfast.

Occasionally he would toss in some useful information about a new group, such as in our case, he told us that our mess-hall clock was five minutes fast.