

IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT.....

It was late January or early February 1945 when it happened. If my memory was not so faulty I would know. However, my wife says I have oldtimers disease and I can't remember a damn thing. In any case.

Another guy and myself were called by Group Operations to take off at approximately 10 p.m. for a flight to Stornaway, an RAF Base located at the northern reaches of a series of islands off the northern coast of Scotland. "Pine Tree" was very anxious to locate a front coming down from Iceland that could very well effect bomber operations for the next several days. They wanted the usual information as to where the front was located, its' forward speed, cloud cover, heights, wind direction, velocity, and so forth, the usual stuff. This guy I was going to fly with had a hot date in Norwich for that evening and he tried every trick in the book to keep from going including flying in the future at my any time and so forth, and so forth, but his efforts were to no avail. Group Operations in no way could see his way. He was going and that was it. As a consequence, he was boiling mad at everybody and everything.

After briefing, we took off at approximately 10 p.m. and headed north. He climbed to about 2000 feet or maybe 3000 and leveled off. After flying for a few minutes, I suggested that we go upstairs. He didn't change our altitude by more than a couple of inches. A few minutes later I requested that we climb for the second time. Again, he ignored me. Now I got hot and told him in no uncertain terms if we didn't climb I would call base on my radio. Since he was already on thin ice with Base Operations, he didn't want a report like that being filed. He horsebacked and we climbed as fast as the bird would go until we hit almost 30,000 feet. In a very sarcastic voice he asked me if this was high enough? I said sure this was great. He didn't speak to me the rest of the mission. He took my headings and so forth, as if he were doing me a favor. We landed about 2 a.m. and I was taken in a staff car to the intelligence room and gave my report of the mission over the scrambler phone. He put the bird away.

The next morning after my breakfast I went down to Squadron Operations and he met me at the door. He almost fell all over me thanking me for saving his ass. I told him I wasn't as concerned about saving his as I was my own. The first thing he did when he got into Squadron Operations was to look at the maps that covered Scotland and much to his

surprise he found that the highlands of Scotland are not just words but are real and make great rock-lined clouds. He apologized three or four times and I told him to forget it since that was one of my jobs. He told me he would never again fail to do what a navigator would tell him and although he might be pigheaded, he would never again be pigheaded in an airplane.

After that we were buddies and the best of friends for the rest of our stay at Watton.

"LT. GEORGE"
by
William E. "Bill" Grey

Leutenant George asked me to give him a 5-minute warning.

He asked me to give him a 1-minute warning before starting the long count.

10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1.....and then he was gone!

With him went my prayers and deep concern for the success of his mission and also for his life.

In early April of 1944, I graduated from flying school at Selman Field, Monroe Louisiana. Upon getting my wings and commission, I hurried home (because of a delay en route) to Syracuse New York to marry my sweetheart Margie. After the wedding, we headed for Drew Field, Tampa Florida. Here I met the other members of our crew and we started our phase training prior to being assigned to a theater of operations. Upon completion of this training, we went back to Syracuse where I said goodbye to my bride, my father, mother, sisters, brother, neices and nephews. After returning to Drew Field, we went almost at once to Camp Kilmer, NJ where our crew was assigned to the good ship Aquitania for transport to England.

After an orientation in British procedures, we were assigned to the 849th Bomb Squadron of the 490th Bomb Group. After the completion of thirty-five missions, right after the Battle of the Bulge, we were free to come home as we had completed our obligations. A short time before completion of our missions, I was deeply concerned that I might be assigned to more missions in the Pacific. Since I didn't want to say goodbye a second time, I volunteered to stay in the 8th Air Force as a crewman on a Mosquito aircraft doing reconnaissance work. Our job in Mosquitos was to do anything requested by the 8th Air Force headquarters located at High Wicomb.

I had completed several missions when a very strange thing happened. After supper one night, I went into the club. When I arrived, a high ranking officer of our Group gave me a high sign to come to his table. There he introduced me to an officer sitting with him as Lt. George. Immediately after the introduction, the high ranking officer left. I tried to make small talk with Lt. George, but was cut off. He asked me several dozen questions where I went to school, how many missions I'd been on, how I earned the DFC, and so forth. After a pretty deep interrogation, he said "you will do". He also instructed me to leave the club and climb in a jeep parked outside.

Lt. George was one of those very rare individuals that I ever had an opportunity to meet. He was about 6 feet tall, weighed about 180 pounds. He had red hair, green eyes, and freckles as if he were a caricature of a true Irishman. He was the coolest man I'd every met and if he were ordered to cut off one of his arms, I'm sure he would with only one question, Which one?

He climbed into the jeep and drove to a very small building approximately 10-10 with no windows and a padlock steel door. He unlocked the door and we went in and only turned on the light when the door was secure. The room was sparsely furnished with a map of Europe on the wall, it had two small chairs each one with an arm that you might find in a school. Here, he outlined what we were to do. Basically, it was to fly him to a rendezvous point in Germany where he was to be picked up by some of our "friends". We were to fly a very zig-zag course to confuse the enemy if they were to pick us up by radar. We took off at about 10 p.m. and while I didn't know the pilot, he was instructed to follow my orders to the letter. After the long count, we dropped Lt. George, and then got the hell out of there. We headed for our base at Watton. Up to this point, there was no unnecessary conversation between the three of us. While crossing the North Sea, the pilot showed me a .45 he had with him and his orders were to shoot me in the head if we ran into any difficulties since I was the only one who knew anything about the mission and the pilot was told to follow only my directions and was not to be shown the map where the drop zone was. We landed at Watton and I had been instructed not to make a map as to where we'd been (as was the usual case) and was told only to contact "Pine Tree" the code name for 8th Air Force Headquarters and ask for "fat boy and tell him I was blue boy and that red boy was happy". This I did and I wondered if I'd ever see Lt. George again.

Following this trip, I took my turn in the regular rotation and flew another couple of missions and again a few days later went into the club and who was there but Lt. George. He indicated I should sit with him and told me that we were going to repeat the earlier performance with the only change being a different location. This we did and I drew a different pilot for this second mission. Again, the procedure was similar with only a different drop zone. He congratulated me on our earlier mission and said that the calculations for the wind drift were so good that when he landed, he was only about 50 feet from his intended spot. As a result of my navigation being so accurate and precise, he again chose me for his second escapade.

Again, we took off from Watton, flew a zig-zag course, dropped Lt. George as before, and was heading back to base when the second pilot showed me a .45 with the same orders as the first one. I often wondered if either of these men would use a .45 on me since to do so he would most certainly have sealed his own fate as a dead navigator would be in the way of escape and he would have to go out first before the pilot would have a chance.

We landed at our base and again I called Pine Tree and gave them the good news as to the success of our mission.

I never told anyone about these missions and to this day, I wonder what effect Lt. George's missions had on the outcome of the war and I often wonder if he is still alive. For that matter, I wonder if Lt. George was a real name or one made up for these missions. In the event that he reads this, or someone knows where he is, I'd be most grateful for this information. Who knows, it's possible he might show up at our next 25th Group reunion. Wouldn't it be wonderful if he did!

OUR THIRTY-THIRD MISSION
BY
BILL GREY

When Mission #33 came up, I gave it no thought. I am not a superstitious man nor do I believe in hunches, but our 33rd was like no other. We were shot down.

Our crew was sent to England after completing our phase training, on the good ship Aquatania. This was the ship that our Bombardier's father traveled to Europe on in World War I. Shortly after the World War II, this ship was cut up for scrap.

We arrived in Europe and anchored in the Clyde Estuary. Here we were met with Lighters and transferred to Gurick, Scotland where we were transshipped to Stone-In-Trent, a big reception center for all U.S. Military Personnel arriving in England. Next we were sent to Watford located outside of London where we were schooled in U.K. procedures prior to being assigned to a regular Bomb Group. After learning British procedures, we were sent to the 490th Bomb Group located in Eye, and assigned to the 849th Bomb Squadron. After a few rides with Command Pilots, Command Bombardiers and Command Navigators, we were assigned to tail-end Charlie position for the 849th.

Our first Mission was to the Brest Peninsula, which terrified all of us, but in reality was a milk run. After two or three Missions in this place of the formation, we were promoted to #3. Several Missions were hard, dirty and dangerous and while we had battle damage in practical every one, none of us were hurt and we always managed to get back to base.

Mission #11 was the first where something unusual happened. We tried to bomb the I.G. Farben Chemical Works at Ludweghaven. Here we ran into very heavy flak and the underside of our wings could have been used by a cook in the mess hall for a colander. It had that many holes of all sizes. We kept up our position in the group and as was the custom we requested permission to leave the squadron after the coastout. We were running low on fuel and headed directly for our home base. We landed and before we reached our own hardstand, our engines quit, starved for fuel.

After this one Mission, we went into another without mishap, however, all of them were dangerous and as a Catholic, I always saw our Chaplain and received viatica, which a Catholic man could receive should any of us be in danger of death within the next several hours. This routine continued until our 22nd Mission. Our 22nd Mission was at

Frankfort and the target was the rail yards. The Nazis did not like us attacking their rail yards and put up extremely flak from over 400 guns even if their gunners were poor shots, 400 guns can do a lot of damage. Fox holes are not located in the skies. We had been hit but a check by the Bombardier showed that none of us had been hurt. The only thing hurt was the airplane. Again, on a coastout we requested permission to leave the formation and head for England. Here we found that we had no hydraulics and as a consequence it was necessary to crank down the wheels and since we had no hydraulic, we had no brakes. It was my job to direct the plane to one of the RAF crash strips that were located on the eastern side of England. The nearest one was at Manston. These crash strips were approximately 3-4 miles long and about 1/4 wide and if you could get there you could get all kinds of help. A long runway for those without brakes, medical facilities if you had wounded, a place to stay on a temporary basis, food and communications with your home base. As we landed and rolled to a stop, we passed a B-324 that was burning like crazy. We were towed back to a parking spot, contacted the base and stayed there for two days before a crew came down to take us home. Mechanics were sent down to evaluate the airplane and their job was to scrap it or repair it. They repaired it and our bird was ready again for more missions.

The Squadron and Group decided that we should go to a flak shack for R & R. The one we were sent to was located near Oxford University and it was a big estate owned by nobility prior to World War II. Here we could lounge, sleep, play pool, golf, etc. with no military formations, etc. The highlight of our stay as far as I was concerned was a tour of Oxford University. Here we were told how colleges were started, had a tour of several colleges and the final one is called even to this day, New College. I don't exactly know when New College was founded, but it was somewhere in the ten or eleven hundreds and was quite old when Christopher Columbus was born. After four to five days there we were returned to the 490th Bomb Group and again took our regular rotation in formations. Nothing in the next several missions was outstanding, as one melts into the other, until our 33rd.

The target for our 33rd Mission was the Holenzollar Bridge across the Rhine River in Cologne, Germany. This bridge was vital to the enemy ground forces and they considered it safe since the Cologne Cathedral was located at the end of the bridge and we, to my knowledge, never bombed any churches or a target near a church since to do so might destroy something of no particular military value. We

took off and took our place (regular) in the Squadron Group, Wing and Bomber stream. We let our bombs go hoping to hit the bridge, we did not however, as the German AA gunners did a job on us. A bomb exploded in the bombay and severed all control cables except the trim tabs. One hit our #4 engine so that it could not be feathered. One hit our #2 engine and one hit our #3 engine. Each of these engines were damaged but we could get a little bit of power out of both and the only one that was normal was engine #1. After getting hit we were knocked completely out of formation and fell 5,000 ft. or more in less time than it takes to tell about it. The pilot immediately dropped the left wing and kept the right wing as high in the air as he could. He was afraid that if the left side came up so that the ship would be level, the power on that side would flip us completely over and we would dive to the ground. Since the only control we had were trim tabs, he had to be very careful so as not to lose the little bit of control he did have. After determining where we were at the rate at which we were losing a little altitude, I determined that we could make England if we did not run into German fighters or were subjected to anti-aircraft fire. Since our path would take us over Calais, it was doubtful that the Germans would let us pass without firing at us. They didn't and the barrage became very heavy and accurate. We turned to the left and the pilot and I debated what we would do next. I remembered a strip in Northern France that was used by the Luftwaffa and so we headed there. About this time, two friendly two P-51s picked us up to protect us against fighters. Next I dug through my parachute bag and found a pilotage map of the area. I picked up our location on this map and directed the pilot to the air strip. About this time we ran into a blinding snow storm and could see practically nothing in any direction; however, I sent the Bombardier to the rear of the airplane and I sat in his seat where I could look straight down and there I could pick our way over strange streams, forests, and fields to this Luftwaffa station located at Merville, France. We passed over the field and then had to make a very long turn to the left to do two things, lose altitude and line up with the runway. We came in perfectly and landed with only one engine working, and only after the wheels were cranked down. After landing we counted 169 holes in the airplane and the last bit of communication went out as we stopped. The two fighter pilots landed and came over and looked at our airplane and all they could do was mutter, shake their heads, and say something like, "better them than us." All instruments were out and all instruments for the Navigator were out, including compass, Gee box, etc. The #4 engine had windmilled until the engine set up, then it continued to crank around breaking the shaft from the

engine to the prop and while we were hoping the prop might fall off, it did not. When we stopped, it hung at a crazy angle. That airplane was scrapped on the spot and as far as I know, it is still there.

The first thing the operators of the field did was give each of us a carton of cigarettes and we could buy all we wanted at .40c a carton. How primitive medical care was in those days since smoking and flying at high altitudes using oxygen is about the dumbest thing anyone can do. We stayed at that base that night and the next day we were taken into the town of Merville, put on a square wheels express for Lille. We were all day and all night getting there. I think it was about 25 miles and here we were met by a military party and taken to a hotel in Lille. We were kept there for about 3 days, fed, talked to doctors and told to stay there until transport could be made available back to our own base. On the 5th day we hitched a ride on a C-47 back to England. We landed at our own base and the first thing that happened, we caught hell for not letting the base know that we were OK. We wired from the Luftwaffe station back to our base and the message was not received until after 2 days and we were back home. When we got in our hut all of our clothes had been stuffed in barricks bags and stored at the flight line. What a mess! It took 3-4 days just to get them liveable again. When we didn't return with the other planes on the missions, we were put down as MIA and that status would hold for five days and then a telegram would have gone home MIA. By getting back when we did, we saved a lot of heartaches for all of our relatives. Later, the pilot and myself were awarded the DFC for this mission. Again, the crew was sent to the flak shack, the same one we had experienced after our 22nd mission and then we returned to our base and flew two more missions. Then we could go home, as we had completed our obligation of 35.

The pilot and myself both elected to stay and we volunteered to fly a second tour in Mosquitoes, which is another story.

A CONVERSATION WITH A MAN
FROM
AUSTRAILIA

A short time ago, it was my pleasure and high honor to have met and had lunch with a man from Austrailia. We met while we were on a trip of Ireland. Each of us thought that we might have something in common since we are about the same age. Little did we know how much we had in common. We found that we were comrades in arms having both been in the flying business during World War II. Our paths could not have been more parellel if it had been written by a scenerio writer from Hollywood.

This man was in the RAAF and I was in the Air Corp. of the U.S. Army Air Force. Our first duty after graduation was to training squadrons in Florida for the writer, and the British West Indies for the Austrailian. While we were practicing as crew members, we also were hunting submarines in the Carribbean and the Gulf of Mexico. Upon completion of this training, we were both assigned in England. He in Lancasters, the RAF's best bomber, and I to the Third Air Division of the 8th Air Force. On or about our 10th missions, we were each assigned as a target the IG Farbin Chemical Works in Ludrichhaven. This was one of the most heavily defended targets in the Third Reich, as far as AA goes, with over 500 guns surrounding the installation. On this mission, our respective airplanes received a tremendous amount of damage and while we had self-sealing fuel tanks, they do little good in holes as big plates caused by flak. We limped home as he said they did and upon landing, our engines quit for lack of fuel on the runway. As a consequence, each of us had to be towed off the runway.

On our 20th mission, we each had a target of Biefeld. Again, each of us received a tremendous amount of damage and each of us lost our hydrolic systems, in addition to other damage. We each landed at an RAF crash strip, of which the RAF had four, where if you could reach there, you could get any and all kinds of help, if needed. As a result of losing our hydrolic system, our wheels had to be cranked down and we were without brakes. Upon landing, we had to roll till we stopped. These crash strips were approximately three miles long and a quarter of a mile wide. When we landed, we touched down next to a B-24 that was burning furiously. The crash strip we landed at was located at a place called Manston, which is just inland from the Straits of Dover.

On our 33rd mission, we had a target of the Hollanzoller Bridge across the Rhine River at Koln. About one half second after bombs away, we got four direct hits from a battery of 88s. These shells ruined our number 4

engine and we could not feather it and caused quite a bit of damage to number 2 and number 3, as we could only get partial power. Number 1 miraculously escaped any damage. The control cables going through the bomb bay were all severed except for our trim tabs. We immediately dropped our port wing, lost alot of altitude, and tried to make it back to England. We suffered alot of anti-aircraft fire and were picked up by two P-51s. We could not make it back to England because of weather and enemy fire and landed at an ex-Luftwaffa Base at Merville. We were in France for five days before we could get back to our base and as a consequence, were labled MIA by our base commander. If we were MIA for the sixth day, our families would have been notified to that effect. After landing, we counted the holes in our airplane and they numbered 169 total. I don't know of all the details of the Austrailian's damage, but it was very closely related to ours. They also were five days before getting back to England.

After completing our assigned missions, we each volunteered to fly a second tour. He said that he was assigned to an airplane that I probably never heard of. When I inquired what type, he replied a Mosquito. I almost had cardiac arrest since that was the type of plane I flew in my second tour. He flew from Southhampton in a bomber version and never went above 14,000 feet, while I was assigned to a reconnaissance version based at Watton. On one occassion, we got up to 45,000 feet. The Mosquito was an all plywood airplane with two big engines and was the fastest plane in the world for three years and wide open, was about eight knots faster than a P-51. With our drop tanks, we were somewhat slower than a P-51 by a few knots; however, we had range to go beyond Berlin or Lipezig and still return to England with no trouble. The reconnaissance version was used to get the weather, make photos, drop spies behind the lines, go to Malmo, Sweden to pick up ballbearings, check on Loran, and so forth.

After being amazed by our parellel paths in England, it was not surprising to ask each other the same questions as we finished our war experiences. The question was:

WHO REALLY WON WORLD WAR II

I don't know how many readers have ever studied the causes of war. Almost every cause of every war had been economic in nature. A couple of examples follow:

John the caveman with a wife and two children. His cave doesn't leak when it rains, has a southern exposure,

has a spring only a few feet from the entrance, game trails nearby, and a stream filled with fish. His neighbor Tom has a wife and eight children, a cramped cave with northern exposure, it leaks when it rains, he has to go over a mile for fresh water, over two miles to a stream that has a few fish and practically no game trails.

In more modern times, lets take a look at the American Civil War. The South had an economy based principally on the raising of cotton and selling it to foreign countries as well as the mills in the North. To raise this crop, they felt they had to have slaves. The nation said that this was wrong and they would have to give up their slaves. When they refused to do this, they succeeded from the Union and this succession brought about the Civil War, and the underlying economic reason of slavery was the real cause.

At about this time, the President of the United States sent Admiral Perry to Japan on a goodwill mission. What he found was a nation with a feudal society and one whereby the outside world would have been excluded. After Perry's visit, the Japanese began to adopt Western ways and the people had an awakening which continues to this day. The Japanese, when they looked around the Pacific Basin, saw a potential for economic dominance. When they began their economic expansion, they found the Russians in their way and the Russian-Japanese war was the result. Our President at that time, Theodore Roosevelt, got the two sides together to settle their differences at the United States Naval Base in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The Japanese saw as the only country that would prohibit them from dominating the whole Pacific Basin was the United States. As a consequence to this, they instructed or perhaps a better word would be demanded, that all graduates of their naval academy must, as a pre-requisite of graduation, turn in a paper showing how they would conquer the United States or at least defeat it as a power to reckon with in the Pacific. We all know what happened at Pearl Harbor and how the war might have turned out differently if they had followed through on their initial advantage. Since they did not, the war finally came to an end on the deck of the battleship Missouri anchored in Tokyo Bay. After defeating the Japanese, we spent a great deal of effort and time in helping to rebuild their Country. The Japanese have spent very little in their own defense and have been under the American umbrella ever since. Even today, we have a sizeable military presence not only in Japan but also in Korea and other points in that general geographic area. The Japanese being brilliant and industrious have capitalized on economic issues. Today we

find their products worldwide. Their greatest trading partner is the United States and we spend billions of dollars buying Japanese automobiles, VCRs, etc., etc., etc. We now find that the ten largest banks in the world are in Tokyo and almost all of them are filled with American money. The Japanese are doing something to us that they wouldn't dare let us do to them. They restrict the importation of American autos, food stuffs, and manufactured goods and so forth, and yet they say they believe in free trade. I believe they do as long as we are free and they do the trading. Do you remember a picture in the papers a short time ago showing Japanese farmers smashing an American automobile because we proposed that they import our rice which would cost them less than locally grown? How many times have the Japanese promised to correct our trade imbalance and how many times have they failed to do so? They don't care how many steel workers, glass workers, rubber workers, aluminum workers, and so forth that they put out of work so long as they can export cars to America. Yet they protect a handful of farmers rather than import American rice.

As a consequence of their policies, we have a huge trade imbalance with Japan. Over the last decade or so, this imbalance equals or exceeds over half of our national debt. This huge trade imbalance effects not only our workers but also all of us as taxpayers. What to do? There have been many proposals in Congress to restrict trade and correct this imbalance, but to do this, may foster a trade war not only with Japan, but with other countries. While we might correct some injustices, we may find we have opened a pandoras box that we can't even foresee. We should keep the government out of this and we as taxpayers can correct this problem ourselves by not buying Japanese products, in particular, their automobiles. This includes not only autos made in Japan, but also includes Japanese cars that are made in America. While it is true that they hire American workers to assemble their cars, most of their components come from Japan and the profit from the sale goes into Japanese banks. They see the economic clout of our citizens. They and other people of the world would see that free trade is a two-way street and not one-way as is the case today.

Several recent events prove that the Japanese are very greedy and do not let friendship stand in the way of a buck. Over the past twenty years or so, the United States has developed a formula for submarines that makes them silent under water and virtually impossible to detect. Somehow, a company in Japan obtained the formula for these

propellers and sold the design to the Russians. Then when the United States said that this company could no longer do business for a least three years, they screamed that they were being discriminated against and why for a few dollars were they being eliminated from doing any more business with the United States.

In the second instance, in the recent past, we have had trouble with Noriega in Panama. As a result of this, we embargoed all trade with Panama with the objective being to eliminate him as a dictator in that troubled country. Immediately, Japan stepped in and told them not to worry about the American embargo because they would furnish Panama with all their needs. When it comes time to weigh friendship and billions of dollars of a trade imbalance, never let it be said that this will prevent them from putting more American dollars in their banks.

When the United States lends money to a foreign country, such as Mexico, Brazil, and so forth, we have a lot of leverage and strongly suggest that they do things so that our money will be safe and someday will be repaid. As our national debt grows, and we have become a debtor nation, we have to sell bonds to keep our government in operation. The Japanese buy huge amounts of these bonds with American money that is now in their banks. As a result of our trade imbalance, and if this keeps up, one day they will be over here "strongly suggesting" what we should do to make their money safe. The day they do that, they will have won World War III without firing a shot!!!