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5<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 1943 SAW ME LEAVE TWICKENHAM TO REPORT FOR SERVICE IN THE ROYAL AIR FORCE. MOST OF MY FRIENDS HAD ALREADY BEEN CALLED UP, SO IT WAS A RELIEF TO BE JOINING THEM AT LAST. EVEN SO IT WAS A WRENCH TO BE LEAVING HOME, I MADE MY WAY TO LORDS CRICKET GROUND NEAR REGENT'S PARK IN LONDON, UPON REPORTING TOGETHER WITH MANY MORE, WE FIRED IN MASSES OF PAPER WORK & WERE KITTED OUT. FIRST A MASSIVE KIT BAG + EVERYTHING ELSE WAS JUST SHUDD IN. IT WEIGHED A TON. AFTER LUNCH WE WERE PARADED IN SOME SORT OF ORDER + MARCHED TO VICEROY COURT. A RECENTLY BUILT LUXURY BLOCK OF FLATS, WITHOUT ANY LUXURIES. THE FLOORS WERE PLAIN CONCRETE, THE ROOMS CONTAINED 1 BED AND 1 CUPBOARD PER BODY, OF WHICH THERE WERE ABOUT 1 DOZEN PER ROOM. WE WERE INSTRUCTED TO UNPACK OUR KIT, CHECK EVERYTHING FOR SIZE. ANYTHING NOT FITTING WAS TO BE EXCHANGED THE FOLLOWING DAY. PARADE THE FOLLOWING MORNING, IN UNIFORM WAS AT 8AM, BREAKFAST WAS AT 7AM BED HAD TO BE MADE UP IN ARMY FASHION, READY FOR OFFICERS INSPECTION. A DRILL SERGEANT WAS ASSIGNED TO INSTRUCT US AND INFORM US ABOUT WHAT WAS TO BE EXPECTED, THERE WAS ABOUT 20 OF US IN OUR FLIGHT. OUR FIRST DAY WAS TO BE TAKEN UP WITH MEDICAL & INJECTIONS, SO OFF WE WERE MARCHED TO SOMEWHERE NEAR THE ZOO. WE WERE A RACED LOT, BUT HAVING DONE TRAINING & DRILL WITH THE HOME GUARD IT WAS EASY FOR ME TO FIT IN. THE MEDICALS & INJECTIONS + LUNCH TOOK ALL MORNING. QUITE A FEW OF THE LADS WERE OVERONE & LAID OUT ON BENCHES. THE SERGEANT WASN'T TOO PLEASED AT THIS, HE

THAN THE OTHERS, COULD YOU FIND YOUR WAY BACK TO VICEROY COURT?" I SAID "YES SERGEANT" HE SAID "VERY WELL, MARCH THOSE THAT CAN WALK BACK, I WILL HAVE TO GET A WAGON TO TAKE THE OTHERS SHOWER BACK", "STAY IN YOUR BILLET UNTIL I COME BACK" I TOLD THE OTHER LADS WHAT WAS GOING ON & THEY ACCEPTED THAT IT WAS BETTER THAN HANGING AROUND FOR A COUPLE OF HOURS, SO OFF WE WENT AND IN 15 MINUTES WERE BACK AT VICEROY COURT, THE LADS WERE GLAD TO LAY ON THEIR BEDS FOR THE REST OF THE AFTERNOON, I MANAGED TO SEE THE SERGEANT IN THE KITCHEN AND SCAVENGED FOR A DISCUITS, WHICH WENT DOWN WELL. THE DRILL SERGEANT WAS QUITE HAPPY ON HIS RETURN TO SEE ALL HIS FLIGHT WAS ACCOUNTED FOR & DISMISSED US UNTIL 8 AM PARADE THE FOLLOWING MORNING, BUT WE HAD TO REMAIN IN QUARTERS, NO TRIPS INTO TOWN. THE FOLLOWING MORNING WAS TAKEN UP WITH CLASSROOM WORK ON AIRFORCE PROCEDURES & WORKING, AFTERNOON FREE TO GET OVER THE EFFECTS OF THE INOCULATIONS, THE FOLLOWING MORNING WAS TAKEN UP WITH DRILL & MARCHING, AFTER A WHILE THE SERGEANT PULLED ME OUT & TOLD ME TO TAKE OVER. HIS WORDS WERE "LET'S SEE JUST WHAT YOU DO KNOW". SO THE HOME GROUND TRAINING WAS COMING IN USEFUL & ALL WENT WELL. IT WENT SO WELL THAT FOR THE REST OF THE WEEK I WAS GIVEN THE JOB OF DRILLING THE OTHERS WHEREVER THE NEED AROSE. TO MY ASTONISHMENT THE LADS TOOK IT WELL & WE HAD NO TROUBLE. MAINLY BECAUSE AT THE END OF THE DRILL SESSION WE WERE ALWAYS FIRST IN THE QUEUE FOR MEALS. WE WERE PORTED TO

OF THE WEEK. BEFORE WE LEFT, THE DRILL SERGEANT SAID "GOOD LUCK, YOU'VE HAD A GOOD REPORT ON YOUR RECORD, THIS WEEK HAS BEEN AN EASY ONE FOR ME"; BRIDLINGTON AND BILLET WAS A HOUSE IN RICHMOND ROAD, THE COURSE WORK WAS AIRCRAFT RECOGNITION MESSAGE CODE SIGNALING & GENERAL DRILLING ETC, THIS LASTED 6 WEEKS, THOSE THAT PASSED THE TEST WERE POSTED TO BRIDFORTH IN SHROPSHIRE, HERE WE WERE INSTRUCTED IN THE WORKINGS OF THE FRAZER NAH TURRET & THE DRAWING 303 MACHING GUN, AIRCRAFT RECOGNITION WAS AGAIN A MUST, ALL WAS CLASSROOM WORK WITH A TAPER EXAM AT THE END OF A FOTHER 6 WEEKS, THEN OFF TO STEAMY DOWNS IN SOUTH WALES. STEAMY DOWNS WAS APTLY NAMED). THE DRAME WAS ON THE HILLS CLOSE TO THE SEA, & THE AIRCRAFT WERE AVRO ANSONS WITH A GUN TURRET MIDWAY ALONG THE FUSELAGE, THE PILOTS WERE THOSE BEING RESTED AFTER A TOUR OF OPERATIONS, ALL OF US CAJETS HAD NOT FLOWN BEFORE & THE PILOTS TOOK GREAT DELIGHT IN THROWING THE AIRCRAFT ABOUT TO SEE IF THEY COULD MAKE US AIRSICK, FORTUNATELY I STOOD UP TO IT PRETTY WELL, ANDWHILT FEELING A BIT SQUEEZY AT TIMES, MANAGED TO KEEP THINGS UNDER CONTROL, HERE WE DID AIR TO AIR FIRING & PRACTICE CINECAMERA GUNNERY, WITH OTHER AIRCRAFT ATTACKING, HAVING AT LAST GOT THE RUDIMENTS OF WHAT AIR GUNNERY WAS ABOUT, WE WERE EXAMINED & PASSED OUT AS AIRGUNNERS, GIVEN 3 STRIPES & THE RANK OF SERGEANT AND SENT ON 7 DAYS LEAVE. I

AIR GUNNER, ALL IN A MATTER OF 5 MONTHS OF JOINING. THE LEAVE WENT QUICKLY & I HAD BEEN NOTIFIED THAT I WAS TO REPORT TO HIXON IN STAFFORDSHIRE, TO BE CREWED UP, & SO IT WAS AT THE END OF AUGUST '43 THAT I WAS TO MEET THE CHAP I WAS TO FLY WITH. IT WAS A QUER MEETING. WE STOOD AROUND IN OUR VARIOUS GROUPS WIRELESS OPS. BOMBAINERS, NAVIATORS, & AIR GUNNERS THE PILOTS THEN APPROACHED EACH GROUP AND ASKED INDIVIDUALS IF THEY WOULD LIKE TO JOIN HIS CREW. BY THE TIME HE CAME TO THE GUNNERS HE HAD ALREADY GOT THE OTHERS TOGETHER, HIS OPENING LINE AS HE CAME UP TO ME WAS "CREWED UP YET GUNNER?" I LOOKED UP TO SEE A CHAP OF MY OWN AGE, FAIR HAired & WITH A BIG SMILE AND A TWINKLE IN HIS EYES, AND A SERGEANT'S STRIPES ON HIS ARM. WHY I ASKED MYSELF WAS HE ONLY A SERGEANT, MOST PILOTS WERE OFFICER RANK. I REPLIED THAT I WASN'T CREWED UP, HIS NEXT WORDS WERE OFFPUTTING "HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT BECOMING A HERO & WINNING MEDALS" HE SAID. "NO THANKS" I REPLIED "THE ONLY MEDAL I WANT IS THE LONG SERVICE ONE" HE LAUGHED AND SAID "YOU'LL DO, COME AND MEET THE OTHERS" WITH THAT WE INTRODUCED OURSELVES. THE PILOT WAS RON JONES FROM BRIGHTON, HE HAD BEEN PUT BACK TO SERGEANT PILOT BECAUSE HE HAD UPSET TOO MANY "BIG WIGS" THE NAVIATOR WAS ALF CRICHE CANADIAN FARMER. THE BOMBAINER ANOTHER CANADIAN DAVE BRENNER A YOUNG COLLEGE BOY FULL OF EVIL THE WIRELESS OPERATOR WAS KEN SMITH, SHORT, TUBBY FROM DENSBURY & A COMIC. So

GET THEMSELVES INTO A TEAM, FOR THE ESSENCE OF A COMBAT CREW WAS EACH TO HAVE THE CONFIDENCE OF THE OTHERS. HIXON WAS AN OPERATIONAL TRAINING UNIT, FLYING WELLINGTON TWIN ENGINE BOMBERS, OR WIMPIYS AS WE LOVINGLY CALLED THEM. WE FLEW AS A CREW MAINLY, PRACTISING TAKE OFFS & LANDINGS, HIGH & LOW LEVEL BOMBING CROSS COUNTRY NAVIGATIONAL TRIPS OF 4 TO 5 HOURS AND GUNNERY EXERCISES. I ALSO HAD TO GO ON A SPECIAL GUNNERY COURSE & RECOGNITION COURSE AT THIS TIME MY SHOOTING WAS NOT VERY BRILLIANT, BUT THANKFULLY IMPROVED WHEN IT WAS NEEDED. GRADUALLY IN THE WEEKS AHEAD, WE BECAME RELIANT ON EACH OTHER, WE WORKED HARD TO BECOME A TEAM, UNTIL WE ALMOST KNEW WHAT THE OTHERS WERE THINKING. SOCIALLY WE HAD VERY LITTLE CONTACT WITH EACH OTHER, BUT ONCE A WEEK WE HAD A CREW MEAL IN A LOCAL PUB, THE 2 CANADIANS BANG OFFICERS, PAID FOR THE MEAL & THE SERGEANTS PAID FOR THE DRINKS. OUR OTHER CONTACT WAS ONLY DURING FLYING TRAINING, WHICH WE ALL TOOK SERIOUSLY AND IT PAID OFF LATER ON. MY SPARE TIME, MOSTLY EVENINGS WAS SPENT IN STAFFORD, DARTS, SNOOKER & DRINKING IN THE LOCALS. I HAD MADE FRIENDS WITH ANOTHER GUNNER NAMED TONY. HE WAS ABOUT THE SAME AGE AS MYSELF. A BLONDE, BLUE EYED, HANDSOME FELLOW. AN ONLY CHILD OF DOTTING PARENTS & VERY SHY. I DON'T THINK HE HAD EVER HAD A DRINK BEFORE JOINING THE AIRFORCE. MANY TIMES I HAD TO TAKE HIM BACK TO CAMP WORSE FOR WEAR. DURING ONE OF OUR EVENINGS

GIRL FRIEND), WE USED TO GET THE LORRY TO TAKE US IN TO STAFFORD, THE INTO THE PUB FOR DRINKING DANCING. HE WOULD GO OFF WITH HIS GIRL & I WOULD PLAY DARTS ON SNOOKER, UNTIL IT WAS TIME TO GO BACK TO CAMP. ALL OUR MATES WOULD PILE INTO THE LORRY, IN VARIOUS STATES OF INEBRIATION ESPECIALLY TONY, TOWARD THE END OF OCTOBER '43 OUR CREW HAD BEEN ON A CROSS COUNTRY FLIGHT OF ABOUT 5 HOURS AND WERE READY TO LAND, WHEN WE SAW THAT THERE WAS A PLANE ON THE GROUND ON FIRE, WE WERE ALLOWED TO LAND & IN THE FLIGHT OFFICE WERE TOLD THAT THE CREW WAS TONY'S & THAT THEY MANAGED TO GET OUT, EXCEPT TONY IN THE REAR TURRET BEING TONY'S MATE I HAD THE TASK OF COLLECTING HIS PERSONAL BELONGINGS AND PRESENTING THEM TO HIS PARENTS WHEN THEY CAME TO CAMP. I VOWED THEN THAT I WOULD NOT GET INVOLVED IN ANY CLOSE FRIENDSHIP WHILST FLYING AGAIN. & NEVER DID. THE EVENING AFTER THE ACCIDENT I WENT INTO STAFFORD, INTO THE PUB WHERE I KNEW HIS GIRL FRIEND WOULD BE. AS SOON AS SHE SAW ME ON MY OWN SHE KNEW THAT SOMETHING HAD HAPPENED. THERE WERE NO TEARS AS I TOLD HER. WE FINISHED OUR DRINKS AND SHE JUST SAID "THANKS BILL" & OFF SHE WENT WITH HER CROWD. SHE HAD SEEN IT HAPPEN BEFORE & NO DOUBT WOULD SEE IT HAPPEN AGAIN. AS WE ALL DID. A WEEK LATER WE HAD OUR LAST FLIGHT AT THE OTY IT WAS TO BE A TRIP OVER SOUTHERN FRANCE. WE WERE LOADED UP WITH

DETAILING ALL THE NEWS OF THE PROGRESS OF THE WAR. ALSO WE HAD BUNDLES OF FOIL STRIPS WHICH WERE TO BE RELEASED AT A GIVEN TIME AT A GIVEN PLACE, THESE FOIL STRIPS REFLECTED THE SIGNALS OF GERMAN RADAR & GAVE THE APPEARANCE OF A HUGE FORMATION OF BOMBERS, IT ACTED AS A DECOY & DREW FIGHTER AIRCRAFT AWAY FROM THE TRUE BOMBER FORCE. WE ACCOMPLISHED THIS MISSION WITHOUT MISTAKE & WERE THILLED THAT AT LAST WE HAD BEEN PART OF A RAID. THEN IT WAS A 14 DAY LEAVE. IT WAS DURING THIS LEAVE THAT I CELEBRATED MY 21<sup>ST</sup> BIRTHDAY ALBEIT, A LITTLE EARLY, BUT AFTER FLYING IT SEEMED QUEER NOT TO HEAR THE ROAR OF AIRCRAFT ENGINES. ALSO THE FLYING ROUTINE WAS MISSING, SO WHILST IN WAS NICE TO BE HOME WITH THE FAMILY I WAS NOT SORRY TO BE GOING BACK. THERE WAS MORE TRAINING TO BE DONE & I HAD TO GO FOR A WEEKS EVENING COURSE TO BIN BROOK. THIS WAS AN AUSTRALIAN BOMBER STATION, VERY OPERATIONAL & THEIR LOSSES WERE HIGH. THE FIRST PERSON THAT I MET AT BINBROOK WAS A CAPT I HAD DONE MY INITIAL TRAINING WITH AT STORMY DOWNS, A WELSHMAN FROM TREDGAR & AN EX POLICEMAN NAMED VICTOR JONES, VIC & I HAD BEEN PUT FORWARD FOR OFFICER SELECTION AS WE HAD TOPPED THE COURSE TABLES, THERE WAS ONE OFFICER PLACE PER COURSE, I WAS NOT OVERLOOKED & THOUGHT THAT ONLY STRENGTHS DID NOT JUSTIFY BEING MADE AN OFFICER. THE BENEFITS OF BEING AN

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WHEN SHOT DOWN YOU WOULD BE ENTITLED TO BETTER TREATMENT. VIC GOT THE OFFICERS SH.CO. MUCH TO MY RELIEF. AFTER THE DAILY GUNNERY PRACTICE, I USED TO MEET UP WITH VIC, BORROW HIS SPARE UNIFORM & WE WOULD HAVE A DRINK OR TWO IN THE OFFICERS MESS, WHICH WAS VERY ENJOYABLE. AFTER A WEEK I LEFT BINGBOOM THANKFULLY MY SHOOTING HAD IMPROVED & I WAS MORE CONFIDENT IN MY JOB. SOON I HEARD A FEW MONTHS LATER THAT VIC HAD BEEN SHOT DOWN. I RETAINED MY CREW AT BLYTON 1662 CONVERSION UNIT, WE WERE TO FLY HALIFAXES, ONE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS AND CONTRARY AIRCRAFT AND SO EASY FOR INEXPERIENCED PILOTS TO CRASH. HOWEVER, RON, OUR PILOT MASTERED THE BRUTE & WE COMPLETED 10 DAYS THERE. DURING THIS TIME OUR CREW INCREASED BY 2. THE FLIGHT ENGINEER CALLED GEORGE, I NEVER DID KNOW HIS SURNAME. HE WAS A LONDONER & HAD WON HIMSELF THE GEORGE CROSS MEDAL FOR HIS PART IN THE BLITZ. OUR PILOT TOOK AN INSTANT DISLIKE TO HIM & ALWAYS FELT THAT GEORGE WAS ONLY WAITING TO WIN MORE MEDALS, WHICH WAS AGAINST OUR CREWS WAY OF THINKING. WE ALWAYS SAID THAT OUR JOB WAS TO REACH THE TARGET DROP THE BOMBS & GET HOME IN ONE PIECE. HOWEVER GEORGE WAS GOOD AT HIS JOB & WAS NEVER GIVEN THE CHANCE TO PLAY THE HARD, — MUCH TO HIS DISGUST —. THE OTHER MEMBER WAS THE MID-UPPER GUNNER JOHNNY JOHNSON. SHORT &

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HIMSELF TO HIMSELF - CAME FROM NOUTHAMPTON  
 OUR ORIGINAL 5 NEVER REALLY GOT USED TO  
 BECOMING 7. BUT WE ALL DID OUR JOBS AND  
 MADE A DECENT CREW. WE TRANSFERRED (MUCH  
 TO OUR RELIEF) TO LANCASTERS AT HEMSWELL  
 FOR A WEEK AT ELSHAM WELDS AFTER A  
 COUPLE OF FLIGHTS IT WAS FINALLY ONTO  
 550 SQUADRON AT NORTH KILLINGHOLME NEAR  
 GRIMSBY, OUR FIRST TASTE OF OPERATIONAL  
 LIFE. IT WAS NOW MARCH 1944, KILLINGHOLME  
 KILLINGHOLME HAD ONLY JUST OPENED UP IN JAN 44  
 & THE FACILITIES WERE VERY SPARTAN, & WE  
 HAD TO ROUGH IT FOR SOME TIME. SLEEPING  
 ACCOMODATION WAS A NISSAN HUT, STRAW  
 MATTRESSES ON IRON BEDS & TWO COKE STOVES  
 FOR HEATING, BUT AS THE C/O SAID "YOU'LL  
 BE PLENTY WARM ENOUGH, FLYING". WE SETTLED  
 IN WELL TO SQUADRON LIFE. WE STILL HAD TO  
 TRAIN DURING THE DAY, WE WORKED WELL TOGETHER,  
 & DEvised A SYSTEM SO THAT WE WERE AS  
 EFFICIENT AS WE COULD BE. THEN ON THE 10<sup>TH</sup>  
 APRIL 1944 OUR PILOTS NAME APPEARDED ON  
 THE FLIGHT LIST. THE ROUTING THEN & IN  
 FUTURE TO BE REPEATED OFTEN, WAS, 10AM IN  
 THE MORNING, CREW BUS TO THE AIRCRAFT WE  
 WERE TO USE. ① - GUDENIE, EACH OF US CHECKED  
 & RECHECKED HIS PART. THE ENGINES WERE RUN UP  
 & THE PILOT CHECKED EACH ENGINE SEPERATELY. ANYTHING  
 HE DIDN'T LIKE WAS ATTENDED TO & I CHECKED AGAIN  
 THE WIRELESS OP. CHECKED HIS EQUIPMENT. WE

HAD TO CHECK MY GUNS WERE IN WORKING ORDER  
AMMUNITION RAN SMOOTHLY INTO THE GUN. THE  
AMMUNITION BELT WAS FOLDED INSIDE THE FUSelage  
& RAN IN TRACKS INTO THE TURRET. COULD NOT  
AFFORD A JAMMED BULLET, I ENDED AROUND, TO MESS  
THINGS UP. THE TURRET HAD TO WORK SMOOTHLY  
THE HYDRAULICS FREE FROM LEAKS & AIRLOCKS  
THE ELECTRIC HEATING FOR MY FLYING SUIT HAD TO  
BE WORKING, FROZEN FINGERS AT A CRUCIAL MOMENT  
TO BE AVOIDED. THE INSIDE PERSPEX WAS CLEANED  
SO THAT VISION WAS CLEAR. EVERYTHING CHECKED  
& RECHECKED, THEN & ONLY THEN THE PILOT WAS  
ADVISED THAT EVERYTHING WAS O.K. & THE BOOK  
SIGNED. WE HAD A FIRST CLASS GROUND CREW  
& RARELY FOUND A FAULT, WHEN WE DID, IT WAS  
PUT RIGHT, BY FINDING OUT HOW MUCH PETROL  
WAS BEING PUT IN & THE WEIGHT AND TYPE OF  
BOMBS WE COULD WORK OUT THE DISTANCE AND  
TYPE OF TARGET OF THE OPERATION. ALL WAS TO  
BE REVEALED AT THE BRIEFING ABOUT 2 HOURS  
BEFORE TAKE OFF. NO ONE WAS ALLOWED OUT  
OF CAMP UNTIL TAKE OFF. AT THE BRIEFING  
IT WOULD BE DISCLOSED THE TARGET, THE COURSE  
TO BE SET. TIME OF TAKE OFF, TIME OVER TARGET  
& TIME BACK. WE WERE ISSUED WITH AN ESCAPE KIT  
IN CASE WE HAD TO BALE OUT & CHOCOLATE & CANNED  
DRINK FOR THE JOURNEY. ALL RELEVANT INFORMATION  
WAS GIVEN & DIGESTED. THE NAVIGATOR THEN  
HAD TO WORK OUT HIS FLIGHT PLAN. OUR NAVIGATOR  
WAS SLOW & METHODOICAL. I NEVER KNEW HIM TO

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ON, TOO SOON OR TOO LATE MEANT THAT YOU WERE ON YOUR OWN & EASILY PICKED UP BY RADAR, SEARCHLIGHTS ON FIGHTERS, SO THEN TO TAKE OFF. OUR TARGET ON THAT FIRST TRIP WAS MARSHALLING YARDS AT AULNOYE, TAKE OFF 23.35 TIME OVER TARGET 02.25 WE RAN INTO THE CROWN BUS WITH 2 OTHER CROWS & WERE TAKEN OUT TO OUR AIRCRAFT THERE WAS A BIT OF LAUGHING & JOKING & AS EACH CROW LEFT, IT WAS "CHEERIO, SEE YOU AT BREAKFAST", WHEN OUR AIRCRAFT WAS REACHED, WE ALIGHTED, SAID "CHEERIO" TO THE GROUND CROW & CLIMBED ABOARD, THE JOKES STOPPED & WE WERE EACH LEFT TO OUR OWN THOUGHTS "HOW WOULD WE COPE UNDER FIRE" WE SHOOK EACH OTHERS HANDS, PATTED THE SIDE OF THE AIRCRAFT & MADE OUR WAY TO OUR POSTS, THERE WAS A LONG WALK TO THE REAR, STOWING MY PARACHUTE OUTSIDE THE TURRET I SWUNG MYSELF IN. PLUGGED IN MY ELECTRIC HEATER, CHECKED IT & SWITCHED ON, RUNNING THROUGH ALL THE CHECKS I REPORTED OVER THE INTERCOM THAT ALL WAS O.K. EACH MEMBER IN TURN REPORTED AND ALL WAS SET. AT THE APPROPRIATE TIME THE ENGINES WERE STARTED & CHECKS AWAY WE WERE MOVING TO THE END OF THE RUNWAY. GIVING THE THUMB UP SIGN FROM THE GROUND CROW SERGEANT. ONE PLANE AFTER THE OTHER WERE SIGNALLED OFF & SOON WE WERE AIRBORNE & REACHING 10,000 FT

LIKE A TRAINING EXERCISE, SOON IT WAS OVER THE FRENCH COAST & COURSE SET FOR TARGET TARGET REACHED SPOT ON TIME, FEW SEARCH-LIGHTS AND A BIT OF "ACK" "ACK" GUNFIRE, THE BOMB AIMER LINED UP HIS TARGET & GAVE THE PILOT DIRECTIONS, I FELT THE AIRCRAFT RISE AS HE REPORTED "BOMBS COME SKIPPED" THE PILOT REPLIED "THANK YOU BOMB AIMER, LETS GO HOME" & AS WE PASSED OVER THE TARGET I COULD SEE A SERIES OF EXPLOSIONS, FIRES BURNING & SEARCHLIGHTS TRYING TO PICK US UP, VERY LITTLE "FLACK" SUGGESTING THAT THERE WERE A NUMBER OF NIGHT FIGHTERS ABOUT, I REPORTED THIS TO THE SKIDDER, HE SAID "KEEP YOUR EYES WELL PEELED GUMMERS, THE WIND IS BEHIND US," WE HAD A QUIET JOURNEY BACK, LANDED, REPORTED IN & WENT TO BREAKFAST, ALL OUR CREWS WERE BACK SAFELY AFTER WHAT WAS A RELATIVELY EASY TRIP, BUT AS ONE OLD CREW SAID IT DOESNT HAPPEN OFTEN, COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS BREAKFAST WAS A GOOD FRYUP AND SUDDENLY I WAS TIRED & SURPRISED TO SEE IT GETTING LIGHTER IT WAS 6AM THE TRIP HAD TAKEN 5 HOURS NO REPORTING UNTIL 12 NOON AND SO TO SLEEP, AS IT HAPPENED WE WERE NOT OPERATIONAL AGAIN FOR OVER A WEEK, BUT THERE WAS NO SLACKING, WE STILL HAD TO PRACTICE AND WERE ALWAYS KEPT INFORMED OF DIFFERENT TECHNIQUES BEING USED, IF WE WEREN'T REQUIRED FOR FLYING WE COULD GO INTO GAINSBY FOR CINEMA, PUBS & ENTERTAIN

WHICH WAS USED BY THE RAF, AND NICKNAMED  
 THE "MUCKY DUCK", NOISY SMOKEY. IT WAS  
 THERE THAT I FIRST MET UP WITH THE "YANKS".  
 WE GOT ON REASONABLY WELL ONCE WE WERE USED  
 TO THEIR WAYS, BUT COULD NEVER UNDERSTAND  
 WHY THE WHITES WOULD INSIST ON BLACKS BEING  
 FORCED TO DRINK ELSE WHERE. AND ANY TROUBLE  
 USUALLY AROSE BETWEEN THE TWO. BACK IN  
 CANP WE KEPT LOOKING AT THE OPERATIONS  
 BOARD, AND AT LAST ON THE 18<sup>TH</sup> APRIL WE WERE  
 DETAILED. OUR ROUTINE CHECKS OF THE AIRCRAFT  
 WERE DONE AND ABOUT 8 PM WE HAD BRIEFING.  
 THE TARGET WAS ROUEN. THE DOCKS & MARSHALLING  
 YARDS. AGAIN EVERY THING WENT WELL. WE STAYED  
 OUT OF TROUBLE, DID THE JOB AND CAME BACK  
 TO BASE. TWO NIGHTS LATER WE WERE FLYING  
 AGAIN, THIS TIME TO COLOGNE IN THE RHUR. THE  
 HOT SPOT OF GERMANY. THE LARGE MUNITIONS  
 FACTORIES OF KRUPPS & STEEL WORKS. WERE ALL  
 ALONG THE RHUR. WELL DEFENDED. THIS TIME IT  
 WAS NO JOY RIDE. WE SAW IT ALL. SEARCHLIGHTS  
 "FLACK" AND THE AIRCRAFT TOSSED ABOUT BY NEAR  
 SHAL BURSTS. NO DAMAGE TO WORRY ABOUT. WE  
 SAW OTHER AIRCRAFT BEING ATTACKED BY NIGHT  
 FIGHTERS & GO DOWN IN FLAMES. THE TARGET  
 WAS ONE MASS OF FIRES & BOMB BURSTS. IT SEEMED  
 ENDLESS. BUT EVENTUALLY WE WERE THROUGH, BOMBS  
 DROPPED & TARGET BEHIND US. THE SKIPPER CHECKED  
 EVERY ONE WAS O.K. APOLOGISED FOR THE BUMPY RIDE  
 & SAID "I'LL BUY YOU ALL A BEER WHEN WE GET BACK"

A COUPLE OF SCARCS FROM NIGHT FIGHTERS, BUT  
 MANAGED TO EVADE THEM AND LOSE OURSELVES  
 IN TO THE DARK NIGHT SKY. THE C/O HAD  
 BEEN RIGHT, IT HAD BEEN PRETTY WARM FLYING  
 NO NEED FOR COKE FIRES. TWO NIGHTS LATER  
 WE WERE IN THE RHUR AGAIN TO DUSSELDORF,  
 MUCH THE SAME HAPPENED, BUT WE RETURNED O.K  
 NO DAMAGE. THEN KARLSRUHE A COUPLE OF  
 NIGHTS LATER, WE HAD A BIT OF DAMAGE, BUT  
 MADE IT HOME, BUT THAT WAS A LONG TRIP  
 AND TOOK 6 $\frac{1}{2}$  HOURS, MOST OF IT TRYING TO KEEP  
 OUT OF TROUBLE, WE HAD TO PICK UP ANOTHER  
 AIRCRAFT FOR OUR NEXT FLIGHT TO ESSEN ON  
 THE 26<sup>TH</sup> APRIL, BY NOW WE HAD EXPERIENCED IT  
 ALL EVERYTHING THAT COULD HAPPEN AND THOUGHT  
 WE WERE BEING LUCKY TO GET AWAY WITH IT.  
 WE HAD DEVELOPED A GOOD WORKING SYSTEM  
 BETWEEN US FUNNERS WHICH KEPT US OUT OF  
 THE WORST OF IT. THE REST OF THE CREW  
 ALWAYS CAME AND SAID THANKS ON LANDING.  
 GEORGE WOULD HAVE PREFERRED MORE ACTION,  
 ON THE 27<sup>TH</sup> WE WERE BRIEFED FOR FRIEDRICHAFEN  
 AFTER ABOUT 30 MINUTES ONE ENGINE BEGAN  
 SEIZING UP AND HAD TO BE CUT. THE SKIPPER  
 SAID WE WOULD HAVE TO GO BACK. GEORGE WANTED  
 TO CARRY ON ON THREE ENGINES BUT RON WAS  
 AGAINST IT & TO GEORGE'S DISSENT TURNED THE  
 PLANE AROUND AND HEADED HOME. RON RADIOED  
 BASE & WAS TOLD TO JETTISON THE BOMB LOAD  
 OVER THE NORTH SEA. THIS WAS DONE AND WE

ENGINE WAS PLAYING UP, SO IT WAS A RELIEF TO PUT FEET ON LAND), ON THE 30<sup>TH</sup> APRIL WE WERE BRIEFED FOR A TRIP TO MAINTENON MARSHALLING YARDS IN FRANCE THIS TIME A NEW TECHNIQUE WAS TO BE USED, WE WERE INSTRUCTED TO ARRIVE AT THE TARGET AREA AT A GIVEN TIME. TARGET INDICATORS WERE BEING DROPPED (YELLOW FLARES) AND WE WERE TO CIRCLE UNTIL ORDERED TO OUR SPECIAL TARGET (GREEN FLARES) OTHER AIRCRAFT WERE GIVEN (BLUE FLARES OR RED) FLARES TO COME ON. EVERYTHING WENT ACCORDING TO PLAN AND THIS WAS THE BEGINNING OF THE PATH FINDER TECHNIQUE AND PROVED A GREAT SUCCESS FOR PINPOINT BOMBING, THE AIRCRAFT USED WERE THE MOSQUITO'S WITH A 2 MAN CREW THEY WERE FANTASTIC. THERE WAS, HOWEVER, TO BE A SERIOUS SET BACK A FEW DAYS LATER A PERIOD OF FULL MOON HAD JUST BEGUN, AND USUALLY THAT MEANT A STAND DOWN, WE WERE THEREFOR SURPRISED ON THE 3RD MAY TO SEE THE ROSA UP FOR EVENING OPS. AND OUR CREW DETAILED, WE DID OUR USUAL CHECKS IN THE MORNING, EVERYTHING O.K AND THEN BRIEFING ABOUT SP4. WE WERE INFORMED THAT THE TARGET WAS MAILLY-LE-CAMP IN FRANCE JUST SOUTH OF PARIS. THIS WAS A GERMAN PANZER TANK TRAINING CAMP AND WITH THE IMPENDING INVASION WAS BETTER DESTROYED. THERE WERE TO BE TWO TARGETS, WITH OUR NEIGHBOURS, GROUP 5 TAKING THE FIRST. OUR GROUP

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TO DROP TARGET INDICATORS AND EACH GROUP  
TOLD WHEN TO ATTACK AND WHAT COLOUR FLARE  
TO BOMB ON. GROUP 5 ARRIVED AND CIRCLED ON  
YELLOW MARKERS UNTIL GIVEN THE ORDER TO  
BOMB. THIS THEY DID SUCCESSFULLY. GROUP I  
(OUR GROUP) ARRIVED, SOME A LITTLE EARLY AND  
WAS INSTRUCTED TO CIRCLE NEAR THE YELLOW  
MARKERS. UNTIL GIVEN THE ORDER TO BOMB. IN  
THE MEANWHILE (GERMAN FIGHTERS HAD ARRIVED)  
AND GIVEN BRIGHT MOONLIGHT AND LANCASTERS  
FLYING AROUND IN CIRCLES, HAD EASY PREY.  
THE PATH FINDERS ORDERED THE PLANES TO KEEP  
THEIR POSITION AND THE AIR WAS BLUE WITH  
PILOTS REMONSTRATING, IT WAS PANDEMONIUM.  
OUR PLANE WAS APPROXIMATING THE AREA AT THE  
CORRECT TIME AND THE PILOT DECIDED TO CIRCLE  
SOME WAY AWAY FROM THE ACTION UNTIL WE  
HAD THE ORDER TO BOMB ON THE RED FLARE.  
THIS WAS ACCOMPLISHED WITH DUE HASTE AND  
ACCURACY. ONCE THROUGH THE TARGET WE  
WERE CONTINUALLY HARRASSED BY GERMAN  
FIGHTERS. ONE IN PARTICULAR CAME FROM AHEAD  
AND I COULD SEE HIS TRACER BULLETS GOING OVER  
THE TOP OF US. AS HE GOT WITHIN RANGE I  
OPENED FIRE AND HE PEELED OFF. I KNOW SOME  
OF MY SHOT HIT HIM. HE WHEELED ROUND AND  
CAME IN AGAIN, WELL OUT OF MY RANGE. BUT  
AGAIN HIS TRACERS WERE HIGH AND I SAT  
THERE FULLY EXPECTING TO GET THE FULL  
IMPACT. OUR PILOT WAS TWISTING AND TURNING

SUDDENLY HIS FIRING CEASED AND RAIN HE WENT AGAIN. THIS TIME HE JUST SAT OUT OF RANGE, WAGGED HIS WINGS AND FLEW OFF. — WHY? — EITHER HE HAD RUN OUT OF AMMUNITION, OR HIS GUNS HAD JAMMED, EITHER WAY, IT WAS A RELIEF AND I SAID A FEW WORDS OF THANKS TO OUR GUARDIAN ANGEL WE HAD OTHER ENCOUNTERS AFTER THAT BUT ARRIVED BACK WITH ONLY A FEW CASUALTIES. ALL OUR OTHER CREWS ARRIVED BACK TO BASE AS WELL, AND HAD FARED IN THE SAME MANNER. OUR GROUPS LOSSES WERE 28 AIRCRAFT AND GROUP 5 LOST 14. WE WERE LUCKY BUT NONE OF US WOULD EVER EXPERIENCE ANYTHING LIKE IT AGAIN — OR FORGET IT — THE PATHFINDERS NEVER AGAIN MADE SUCH A MESS OF THINGS AND WENT ON TO BECOME A GREAT SUCCESS. THERE WAS A STORY THAT WENT AROUND SOME TIME AFTER, THE SPECIAL DUTIES FLIGHT AT BINBROOK UNDER COMMAND OF SQUADRON LEADER BILL BREAKSPEAR HAD BEEN AGAINST THE RAID BECAUSE OF THE BRIGHT MOON AND CLEAR SKY AND HAD SAID SO TO HARRIS, BOTH HAD BEEN OVERRULED. AT THEIR NEXT MEETING BREAKSPEAR STORMED OUT OF THE ROOM WITHOUT SALUTING, HARRIS CALLED HIM BACK AND SAID "DON'T YOU SALUTE AIR CHIEF MARSHALS" BREAKSPEAR REPLIED "NOT STUPID GIVES — SIR", HARRIS WAS NOT NAMED THE BUTCHER FOR NOTHING AND APPEARED NOT TO CARE ABOUT LOSSES OF MEN. AFTER DAILY WE HAD A REST FOR A

WHICH BY NOW WAS BECOMING A WAY OF LIFE  
 RENNETS (FRANCE) DIEPPE (FRANCE) ORLEANS (FRANCE)  
 DORTMUND, AACHEN (GERMANY) TWICE ACHERES (FRANCE)  
 THIS WAS ON THE 6<sup>TH</sup> JUNE (D. DAY). WE TOOK  
 OFF JUST AFTER MIDNIGHT AND RETURNED  
 5 $\frac{1}{2}$  HRS LATER TO BE TOLD THAT BRITISH +  
 ALLIED TROOPS HAD MADE A SUCCESSFUL  
 LANDING IN FRANCE. ALL OPERATIONS AFTER  
 THAT WERE TO FULLY SUPPORT GROUND TROOPS  
 FLEURS (FRANCE) ON THE 9<sup>TH</sup> ACHERES (FRANCE) 10<sup>TH</sup>  
 THEN ON THE 13<sup>TH</sup> JUNE CAME THE SHOCK.  
 WE WERE TO BE POSTED TO 300 (POLISH) SQUADRON  
 TOGETHER WITH 5 OTHER EXPERIENCED CREWS  
 IT SEEMED THAT 300 SQUADRON WERE LOSING A  
 LOT OF AIRCRAFT AND WAS UNDER STRENGTH  
 NO ONE WANTED TO LEAVE KILLINGHOLME  
 WE HAD BUILT UP A GOOD REPUTATION LOSSES  
 WERE LOW MISSIONS WERE ACCOMPLISHED AND  
 WEIGHT OF BOMBS PER AIRCRAFT WERE THE HIGHEST  
 IN THE GROUP. HOWEVER, ORDERS WERE ORDERS  
 AND WITH MUCH MISGIVINGS WE WENT TO  
 FALDINGWORTH NEAR LINCOLN. WE ARRIVED  
 AND WERE SHOWN OUR QUARTERS, SAME NISSAN  
 HUTS SAME TYPE OF BEDS. NO OTHER COMFORTS  
 THEN TAKEN TO THE MESS FOR A MEAL. TO  
 PUT IT KINDLY POLISH FOOD HAD LITTLE ATTRACTION  
 FOR US AND WE SETTLED FOR A GOOD FRY UP  
 OF EGGS AND BACON. WE MANAGED TO INSIST ON AN  
 ENGLISH MENU. THE AIRCRAFT WE WERE SUPPOSED  
 TO FLY WERE A DISGRACE AND FALLING TO PIECES

to fly them and our C/O backed us up, within 2 days we had new Lancasters delivered and on the 14<sup>th</sup> did our first operation for 300 Squadron to Le Havre. The state of the other aircraft the Poles were flying gave us a good idea why their losses were so high. But with our support things were to change and new aircraft arrived almost daily. The Poles were a friendly lot, very quick to buy a drink for their English friends, we had been warned not to discuss politics, as part of Poland had been handed over to Russia in a deal between Roosevelt Churchill & Stalin. We settled in very quickly to our new Squadron, more thorough checks on every nut and bolt. We did operations to Aulnoye (France) Rheims (France) at this time London was beginning to get rocket attacks and we were sent out with path finders marking targets, to the rocket sites, these were mainly in woodlands hidden by trees and heavily camouflaged we started daylight bombing. Something new for us, we were used to being on our own, not flying in formation, which was for us, downright dangerous & dispensed with right from the start. The Yanks had our admiration for the way they flew in formation. And it was laughable when, as

IN PRETTY PATTERNS AND OUR STRAGGLY LOT  
 ALL OVER THE PLACE. IT WAS ABOUT THIS  
 TIME I WAS PROMOTED TO FLIGHT SERGEANT  
 THIS MEANT A LITTLE EXTRA CASH AND WAS  
 MOST WELCOME, AS VERY OFTEN WE HAD TO  
 VISIT A RESTAURANT IN LINCOLN TO GET A  
 DECENT MEAL. I BECAME QUITE A REGULAR  
 CUSTOMER AT MRS HOLDEN'S FOR HER DELICIOUS  
 CHICKEN LUNCH, AFTER WHICH AN EVENING IN  
 THE SARA CENS HEAD. OR AS IT WAS AFFECTIONALLY  
 KNOWN "THE SNAKE PIT". BY NOW THE 2ND  
 FRONT WAS GETTING ESTABLISHED AND WE  
 WERE ATTACKING TAREETS SUCH AS AULNOYE  
 (MARSHALLING YARDS) RHEIMS (TROOP EMPLACEMENTS)  
 SIRACOURT (ROCKETS) VIERZON (TROOPS) ORLEANS  
 ROCKET LAUNCHERS IN DAYLIGHT, ALMOST EVERY  
 DAY AND NIGHT WE WERE OUT. SOMETIMES RUNNING  
 INTO FIGHTER AIRCRAFT, SOMETIMES HEAVY GUNFIRE  
 BUT WE STEERED CLEAR OF TROUBLE, THEN  
 CAME CAEN ON THE NORMANDY FRONT. THE  
 BRITISH TROOPS WERE BEING HELD UP IN THEIR  
 ADVANCE AND THE INSTRUCTIONS FOR US, WERE  
 TO BOMB A VERY HEAVILY DEFENDED TOWN AND  
 PANZER DIVISION. THE PATHFINDERS WERE TO GO  
 IN FIRST AND DROP THEIR FLARES AND GIVE US  
 INSTRUCTIONS ON WHICH COLOUR TO BOMB  
 WE TOOK OFF AT 8 PM AND STILL VERY LIGHT  
 WE COULD SEE ALL OUR OTHER LANCASTERS  
 MAKING THEIR WAY TO DIFFERENT TARGETS,  
 THERE WOULD BE 30-35 PLANE ON 1 COLOUR FLARE

WAS STILL LIGHT. OUR USUAL BOMBING HEIGHT WAS 20,000 FT FOR THIS ONE WE STARTED OFF AT 10,000 FT. BUT BECAUSE OF CLOUDS HAD TO DESCEND UNTIL WE COULD SEE OUR FLARE. BOMBING HAD TO BE SPOT ON BECAUSE OF THE NEARNESS OF BRITISH TROOPS ON THE GROUND. WE COULD SEE THE HOUSES, TROOPS, EVERYTHING — ESPECIALLY OTHER AIRCRAFT CONVOYING ON THE SAME TARGET SOME LOWER SOME HIGHER, THOSE THAT WERE HIGHER WERE OPENING THEIR BOMB BAYS RIGHT OVER HEAD OF US, AND AS I HEARD OUR BOMB AIMER SAY "BOMBS GONE" I COULD SEE ABOUT 3 OTHERS HIGHER, RELEASING THEIRS. I JUST SAT THERE AND PRAYED. THE BOMBS WERE FALLING ONE BEFORE THE OTHER AND THANKFULLY MISSED THE TAIL, BY HOW MUCH I DON'T KNOW BUT IT LOOKED PRETTY CLOSE. OUR LOSSES DURING THAT TRIP WERE PUT DOWN TO OUR OWN. WE WERE TO DO A COUPLE MORE TRIPS LIKE THAT. ON ONE WE EVEN GOT DOWN TO 1500 FT WHICH WAS VERY, VERY LOW. THEN ON THE 31<sup>ST</sup> JULY WE WERE TO DO OUR 30<sup>TH</sup> TRIP AND THE LAST ONE OF OUR FIRST TOUR. THEN ON TO 14 DAYS LEAVE. WE TRIED NOT TO THINK ABOUT IT UNTIL WE HAD PUT FOOT ON ENGLISH SOIL AGAIN, THIS TIME A ROCKET SITE. NO HASSEL. NO FLACK, NO FIGHTERS ONLY ON THE RETURN DID AN ENGINE PACK IN, AND WE HAD TO LAND AT A DIFFERENT BASE. WE WERE DEBRIEFED, AND WHEN THEY HEARD IT WAS OUR

THE AIRCREW'S CAME OUT, IT WAS ABOUT 3 AM IN THE MORNING. WE HAD A BIT OF A PARTY BUT WE WERE LOOKED UPON LIKE FREAKS THE QUESTIONS WE WERE ASKED, IT WAS ALL A BIT OVER POWERING, NEXT MORNING WE WERE NOT ALLOWED TO FLY BACK TO BASE THEY SENT A CAR TO TRANSPORT US AND A FRESH CREW TO TAKE OUR PLANE. ON ARRIVAL BACK AT FALDINGWORTH WE WERE DROPPED OFF AT THE C/O'S OFFICE TAKEN IN I HAD A SHOT OF WHISKY WITH HIM, SHOCK HANDS AND TOLD THAT ON THE FOLLOWING DAY WE WERE TO START OUR LEAVE, GET EVERY THING PACKED. THAT EVENING WE MET UP AS A CREW FOR THE LAST TIME. HAD A DRINK OR TWO AND SAID OUR CHEERIO'S. THE FOLLOWING MORNING RON, OUR PILOT + I WENT TO LINCOLN STATION (CHANGED) TRAINS AT PETERBOROUGH AND HENCE TO LONDON. THERE HE WENT OFF TO BRIGHTON + I TO THICKETMAN.

JOB DONE, — NONE OF US MET UP AGAIN.

## TAIL ENDERS END TALES.

- ① IT WAS DURING OCTOBER 43 THAT OUR PILOT CALLED A CREW MEETING. HIS OPENING WORDS WERE "WE HAVE BEEN TOGETHER LONG ENOUGH, I TAKE IT THAT WE ARE HAPPY WITH THE WAY WE OPERATE TOGETHER. WE ALL AGREE). HE CONTINUED ON. "AS I SEE IT. I AM JUST THE DRIVER. ART (NAVIGATOR) GIVES ME THE COURSE, I FLY IT, OVER THE TARGET. DAVE (BOMBER) GIVES ME DIRECTIONS. - I FLY IT -, KEN. ~~AND~~ I RELY ON YOU TO GIVE ME CORRECT MESSAGES THAT COME OVER THE RADIO. AND I ACT ON IT. BILL. - AS RUNNER, YOU ARE OUR EYES. ANY TIME YOU SEE WE ARE BEING ATTACKED, YOU GIVE ME DIRECTIONS FOR EVASIVE ACTION. - STRAIGHT AWAY. ALL OF YOU, TELL ME, I WILL FOLLOW YOUR ORDERS WITHOUT QUESTION OR HESITATION. - ANY QUESTIONS NOW." DURING PRACTICE RUNS I EVOLVED A SERIES OF MANOEUVERS FOR EVASIVE ACTION, THAT THEY WORKED WAS ONLY DUE TO THE WAY THE LANCASTER WAS BUILT.
- ② ONE NIGHT WHILEST ON A TRAINING FLIGHT WE RAN INTO AN ELECTRICAL STORM. LIGHTENING FLASHED AND THE AIRCRAFT WAS TOSSED ABOUT BUT WHAT WAS MOST FRIGHTENING WAS THE WAY SPARKS WERE LEAPING FROM ONE METAL OBJECT TO ANOTHER. RUNNING THE LENGTH OF THE GUN BARRELS AND ALL AROUND THE TURRET I WAS GLAD WHEN WE WERE OUT OF IT.
- ③ ON SQUADRON THE GROUND CREW WERE FANTASTIC

THE SERGEANT WAS THERE IN THE MORNINGS AND THERE WHEN WE TOOK OFF AT NIGHT, — AND THERE AGAIN ON OUR RETURN, WHEN HE SLEPT I DON'T KNOW. BUT THEY WERE DEDICATED TO GIVING US THE BEST SERVICE,

- ④ OUR SQUADRON BASE AT KILLINGHOLME WAS CLOSE TO THE HUMBER RIVER, THE PORT OF HULL ONE SIDE AND GRIMSBY THE OTHER. VERY OFTEN BOTH PLACES WERE SUBJECTED TO HEAVY BOMBING BY THE GERMAN AIR FORCE. QUITE OFTEN THESE RAIDS CO-INCIDED WITH OUR TAKE OFF TIME, SO THAT BOTH AIRFORCES WERE IN THE AIR OVER GRIMSBY AT THE SAME TIME AND WE WERE OFTEN CAUGHT UP IN OUR OWN SEARCHLIGHTS. WITH THE NEXT GROUP OF SEARCHLIGHTS HOLDING A GERMAN BOMBER IN ITS BEAMS. WE HAD TO SIGNAL IN MORSE TO THE GROUND FOR THEM TO SWITCH OFF.

- ⑤ DURING THE TRIP ON AACHEN AT THE END OF MAY. ART, OUR NAVIGATOR ANNOUNCED THAT HE WAS ALWAYS SO BUSY PLOTTING THE NEXT COURSE AFTER THE TARGET, THAT HE HAD NEVER THE CHANCE TO SEE THE TARGET. THE NAVIGATOR'S CUBBY HOLE WAS ALL SHUT IN BECAUSE HE HAD TO HAVE LIGHT TO WORK BY. ON THIS TRIP HE DECLARED HE WOULD GIVE THE PILOT THE COURSE TO FOLLOW BEFORE HAND. SWITCH HIS LIGHTS OUT AND SEE WHAT WENT ON. THIS HE DID. IT HAPPENED THAT IT WAS A HECTIC NIGHT, AND THE FIREWORK DISPLAY WAS BRILLIANT. WE HEARD ART GASP.

I WOULDN'T HAVE COME<sup>d</sup>. I DON'T THINK HE PARKED OUT AGAIN.

(6) 3rd MAY, THE PERIOD OF FULL MOON. WE TOOK OFF (CLIMBED) THROUGH BILLOWING WHITE CLOUD AT 10,000 FT INTO FULL MOONLIGHT. THE SIGHT WAS BREATHTAKING THE MOON SHONE ON THE CLOUDS LIKE DRIFTS OF SNOW. YOU COULD SEE FOR MILES, LANCASTERS ALL OVER THE SKY. OUR PILOT WAS SO CARRIED AWAY AT THE BEAUTY OF IT, HE FLEW THE AIRCRAFT LIKE A SLEIGH, SKIDDING THE TOPS OF THE CLOUDS AND WHOOPING LIKE A CONBOY. IT WAS INDEED A GRAND SIGHT. PITY IT WAS GOING TO BE SPOILT LATER THAT NIGHT.

(7) AFTER WE HAD FINISHED OUR TOUR AND THE CREW HAD GONE OUR DIFFERENT WAYS. I WAS TO BE POSTED TO BRIDGENORTH AS INSTRUCTOR. IT WAS THERE THAT I WAS INFORMED THAT I WAS ELIGIBLE FOR 2 SERVICE MEDALS, THE 1939/45 STAR. AND THE AIRCRAFT EUROPE STAR AND CLASP. MY THOUGHTS IMMEDIATELY WENT TO GEORGE. HE MUST HAVE LAUGHED HIS SOCKS OFF.