

I am Lawrence Goodman. Bill and I flew together on bomber operations during 1944 and 45.

Bill was born in Midmar, near Aberdeen in 1925 and the family moved to Spean Bridge when he was 2. After matriculation in 1943, at the age of 18, he went to Edinburgh and joined the RAF.

Having a mechanical-aptitude he trained at St. Athans in S. Wales as a Flight Engineer before joining Bomber Command.

I first met Bill at RAF Swinderby in 1944. I'd already got most of my crew together but since we were now flying four-engined bombers I needed a Flight Engineer.

The standard procedure was for the pilots to be shown into a room where there were an equal number of Flight Engineers looking for a crew. We got talking and purely on that basis and mutual consent, not really knowing very much about each other, we sorted ourselves out.

In fact I recall that I did most of the talking and Bill said very little - and that really set the trend for our continued existence.

Much to our surprise at the end of our conversion course from the Stirling onto the Lancaster, I was interviewed and found that we had been selected to join 617 Sqn - the renowned Dambusters. As far as we were concerned they were all very experienced crews and we weren't sure why, as a new 'sprog' crew, we had been chosen. In fact the idea was that we would be 'fast tracked' to learn quickly from the experienced crews. And we did. Our third operation involved attacking the German battleship Tirpitz, hidden in Tromso Fjord, Norway - well inside the Arctic Circle.

It was beyond the limits of the Lancaster's range - and to get there (and back) the aircraft had to be fitted with additional fuel tanks and a modified fuel system. It was Bill's responsibility to master this modified system quickly and manage the engines and fuel consumption - a test that would tax even an experienced Flight Engineer, let alone one on his third operation. To his enormous credit, Bill did a wonderful job and we made it safely back with fuel to spare.

As I've said, Bill was a man of few words, and there's probably no better example than the occasion during a daylight attack on U-boat pens at Hamburg.

After bombing, as we were setting course for home Bill, who was sitting next to me, nudged me, and gestured with his head for me to look to the right. I thought he wanted me to look at the fuel gauges, which I did, but could see nothing wrong and continued to fly the aircraft. He nudged me again - with a little more urgency and this time, looking out of the window I was dumbstruck to see one of the latest German jet fighters forming with us on our wing tip - and I feared the worst. He stayed there for a minute or so and broke away, disappearing, much to our relief. I think he was probably out of ammunition, and curious!

Throughout the whole incident, Bill was totally unperturbed - he took it all in his stride - as if it were an everyday occurrence. In all we completed a tour of duty together. That's what I remember most about Bill. He was courageous, professional, utterly reliable and the person you'd most want sitting alongside you at such moments.

With the end of the war in Europe our crew was split up and Bill joined another pilot to train for Tiger Force - Bomber Command's intended contribution for the war against Japan. However, the atomic bomb brought that war to an end before they could be deployed. Instead Bill and the remainder of the squadron found themselves posted to India in January

1946. They spent four months just outside Calcutta before returning to the UK and Bill was demobbed in 1947.

But aviation was in the blood and Bill found himself a position with Hunting Air - which first took him out to the Lebanon as part of an oil prospecting team, and then to Nice as a ground aircraft servicing engineer.

In 1956, Bill joined BEA and he was clearly seen as above average. He was one of the first to become qualified to supervise the maintenance of the new era turbo-prop aircraft coming into service. This gave him opportunities for posting throughout Europe - which Bill seized.

After a brief spell in Berlin, he went to sample the delights of Jersey - and delights they were for that is where he met his future wife Natalie.

They were married in 1958, but that didn't stop the travelling. After a fortnight's honeymoon in Athens the touring continued with Bill's work.

Gibraltar and Madrid were followed by Istanbul- where their daughter Janet was born - thus bestowing on her the name 'the little Turk'.

They returned to the UK in 1960, and unable to find suitable accommodation, lived for a period in a caravan until they found a place in Blackwater, which was to become their permanent home - and not a moment too soon as their son Richard was born that year.

This was a period of continued technological development for air travel and BEA were now in the jet- age with the Trident - necessitating the mastering of yet further technical skills that were food and drink for Bill.

His qualifications were now even more in demand and in 1969 the family moved to Naples, followed by a posting to Beirut - just in time for the 6-day war. For this reason and with no suitable school for the children, a more conducive posting was engineered to Gibraltar where they remained for 8 years.

After a brief return to the UK in 1978, Bill was posted to Amsterdam and remained there until he retired in 1984.

In retirement, he found himself fully occupied, with his two interests, the 'Save the Children' fund and maintaining the house, leaving Natalie to do the garden. Bill's contribution, by the way, being to service the lawnmower, the best oiled one in the neighbourhood.

In conclusion, I'd like to reiterate that Bill was brave, totally reliable and utterly professional - in everything he did. He was also a devoted husband and father. It was a privilege to serve with him and I shall never forget him. For one of few words, his actions and achievements speak volumes for him.

It goes without saying that I shall miss him greatly as will his devoted wife Natalie, daughter Janet, son Richard and his grandchildren.