

**F/L William Francis "Cookie" Cook DFC, 39-45 Star, CVSM & Maple Leaf, Ops Wing
and Bar
J16201**

My Service Record

ENLISTMENT

It all began on November 18, 1940 when I visited the R.C.A.F. recruiting centre in London, Ontario.

There I filled out an application, took a medical examination and was interviewed. On the interview sheet you had to give all pertinent information of yourself and your family. From my medical examination I learned that I was living, not colour blind and had good balance. They also said that I had no communicable diseases. In the interview I found out that:

- *I was healthy.
- *Liked sports.
- *Had quick intelligence.
- *Was "tastily" dressed.
- *My personality was confident, mature and pleasant.

On a summary of the interview I found out that I was:

- *Just eighteen.
- *Did well in school.
- *Was a good athlete for my years.
- *Tall, youthful, but would develop.
- *I was clean and alert.
- *I was keen to fly.
- *I was confident and had a pleasant personality.
- *I would absorb training readily.

But, I was too young to be recommended for a commission. It appeared that I was above average (in what I do not know) and was recommended for either a Pilot or Observer. I guess the Observer part came about due to my math marks.

I returned to Clinton and to good old C.C.I. to await my call.

On March 15, 1941, I once again reported to London and there took another medical and filled out more forms. I nearly didn't pass the medical as the M.O. found that I had a heart flutter. I explained that I had participated in a hockey match the previous night and perhaps this was the reason. He accepted the explanation but warned me that there would be another medical at Initial Training School and if my condition had not improved I would be washed out. Those were dirty words. One of the forms that I had to fill out was an aircrew enlistment form stating that if I were unsuitable for either pilot or observer that I may be re-mustered to any other aircrew duty and if not found suitable, could go to ground crew duty or take my discharge. I then returned home to

get all my affairs in order.

March 18, 1941, I returned to London and took the oath of allegiance. It went this way: "That I do sincerely promise and swear (or solemnly declare) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to his Majesty."

I was no longer William Francis Cook Esq., or better known to my friends as "Blondy", but Cook, William Francis R90446 AC2, and to my new found friends - "Cookie". I, along with other recruits. Now embarked via CNR for No. 1 Manning Depot in the Exhibition Grounds in Toronto. Actually my records show that I was taken on strength as of March 16, 1941. It was here that we were jabbed, outfitted with uniforms (they never fit) and confined to barracks until the powers that be decided that we were strong enough to venture forth into the wilds of the big city.

I recall that the first time out of barracks. It was a Sunday. I walked up to the corner of Yonge and Bloor Streets, with the aid of a road map that I had scrounged at a Shell service station. This was because I was too shy to travel on a streetcar. It was tough being alone in a strange city when you came from a small town like Clinton. Incidentally, I walked all the way back to the Exhibition Grounds.

There were two things that I remember distinctly: the numerous parades and the cold porridge and fried eggs for breakfast. Some of the older fellows said that the porridge and the coffee was laced with saltpeter to make sure that we would be good little boys. It was here also that I learned the meaning of SNAFU - Situation Normal All "Fouled" (not quite the true word) Up.

One morning on parade some of us were asked to take three paces forward. We were marched off and were taken to the Security Guard Post where we were informed that we were a part of this courageous rifle-slinging bunch. I did my turn for the night and returning later to my bunk found a note saying that I was to report to the orderly room. I was told that I had been absent from morning parade. I explained what had happened and was told that I was not to go back to the Security Guard duties. Next morning, after parade, I found another note on my bunk stating that I was to report to the Security Guard orderly room. Once again I had to explain why I had not reported for duty last night. This went on for two days until the "powers that be" got straightened out. There was also the time on parade that the NCO in charge of the flight asked all who wanted to push a joy-stick (to be pilots), take three paces forward. Naturally those who had aspirations to be pilots, me among them, took the required number of paces. We were told that since we wished to handle a joy-stick we could pick up brooms and clean the Coliseum. I swore that I would never volunteer again.

It so happened that coming up shortly, the Juvenile team, for which I had played was going to meet Kingston in the Ontario finals in Midland. I was to accompany the team to Midland if I were able to scrounge a 48-hour pass. Volunteers were solicited to dig up the tanbark in the Coliseum with the promise of a 48-hour pass and "all the beer you could drink"

I volunteered

When the pick and shovel brigade finished their work after few days, we were taken to the wet canteen to partake of "all the beer" that we could drink. Some of the more seasoned drinkers finished their first one and were all set to have a second. They were informed that their capacity was one and so we were cut off. So much for this volunteer crap. I still had that week-end pass coming to me. So I thought. Next morning on parade I was again to hear that familiar phrase.

"From here to the left, right turn."

We were marched a short distance and then given the shocking news, "Get your kit together and reform in ten minutes". The date was the tenth of April and we were posted to Trenton for security guard duty. This was usually a six-month tour of duty. Off we went to the spit and polish station of Trenton.

I managed to get guard duty on Saturday. This was the night that I was to go to Midland to watch my team play hockey against a team from Kingston. The night was cold, windy and a mixture of snow and rain. I had to pass by the officers mess on the beat that I was patrolling. As I neared the kitchen, I could smell coffee and newly baked apple pies"

I'll never forget the sergeant in charge of the kitchen. He must have heard me coming because as I was opposite to the doorway, he stuck his head out and asked me if I would be interested in a hot cup of coffee and a piece of pie. I explained that I was on duty and wasn't certain whether I should. He told me to step inside the door and he would keep a lookout for the duty officer or sergeant who might pass by on their inspection. I took a chance and luckily was not caught.

Our flight had a French-Canadian for a leader. To say the least, he could really murder the English language. One morning, on the commanding officer's parade we were expected to present arms. The rifle was between the knees and the bayonet partially drawn from the scabbard when the command was given to fix bayonets. For some reason it didn't come out that way. The command was "Big knife on gun fix".

Needless to say we did not react as quickly as we should have done. At this inspection the commanding officer asked me why I did not have regulation airforce issue shoes. I said that these army boots were issued to me at Manning Depot. I was told to go to stores and receive a new pair of airforce issue .

The days at Trenton became routine; parades and guard duty. I did have a chance to see the old Fairey Battles and other aircraft fly around the aerodrome but never got a chance to get a ride in any of them .

My big moment came one afternoon a short time before going over to 6ARD for a night of patrol duty. We were told to report to the M.O. When the flight arrived we found that we were once again to get jabbed with the needle. It seemed funny that we were to get a needle just before going on duty but who were we to know anything, we were only lowly AC2s. That night all hell broke loose. Many of the fellows were passing out on guard and running very high temperatures. I was at the main post when one of the fellows came by and did nosedive right in front of me. As

I couldn't leave my post, I called for the corporal of the guard. He came out of the office and between us we got our man inside and on a cot. I then returned to my post to keep off all cowans and intruders.

Suddenly a jeep came to a screeching halt in front of me and out jumped a sergeant and a medical officer. As he had not yet attained the rank necessary for a present arms, he was only a Flot Loot. I slapped the stock of my rifle in the accepted fashion. I don't think he even saw me and probably did not return my salute. A few minutes later he came out and asked me how I felt. I replied that I was O.K. He ordered me inside and stuck a thermometer under my tongue. I couldn't even argue that I was to be at my post outside the building. The next thing that I knew I was getting into bed with a high temperature. We were all taken off security guard for the night and replacements mobilized to take over our duties. It seems that someone made a mistake as to which flight was to be inoculated. I understand that the Senior Medical Officer took the can for the whole schimazol. Some of the boys were taken to hospital and confined for a number of days.

As was typical of the armed forces, and I have no doubt still is, a situation became SNAFU in having bodies of men flowing in an orderly fashion. Apparently someone had neglected to have replacements fill a class at No. 1 ITS at Eglinton Hunt Club in Toronto. We were lucky enough to have them select a number of bodies from the security guard at Trenton. It turned out that I was number three replacement drawn from the hat. I didn't think that I had much of a chance to make the draft. To my surprise some of the boys were not allowed to leave the hospital. Their names had been drawn but they were unable to report for duty. The Lord really smiled on me this time. I was the last person needed to fill the complement of the squad going to Toronto.

So it was that on May 3, 1941 I was officially posted to No. 1 I.T.S. (Initial Training School) at the well-known and well-heeled Hunt Club. This was to be a spit and polish posting and was the first taste for some of the fellows to be washed out.

The sergeant in my flight didn't hesitate to inform us that he wanted the best flight on the station and that if we co-operated we could be assured of more than our fair share of 48 hour passes. We were the best flight. We were chosen to march on Victory parades etc. and for once I found a true sergeant. We did get a few extra privileges. The floors in our barracks were so clean and polished that you could have eaten off them. It was here that we were introduced to the great Link trainer; a machine that had as many true characteristics of an airplane as an old mule. I never did like the damn things. I managed to graduate from here with an average of 85% with 83's in mathematics and armament. My crowning glory was a perfect 100 in signals. Thank the Lord for my Boy Scout training. My total marks were 427 out of 500 and best of all I was recommended for a pilot.

It was stated that I was a well developed young airman who is inclined to be the slow methodical type. Cool, stable and reliable. Very enthusiastic and will improve with service. Good substantial type of airman who is average type. What a lot of bullshit. I was still unsuitable for a commission. It wasn't what you knew it was who you knew.

Well at least I was promoted to the great rank of L.A.C. (leading aircraftsman) and was allowed to now wear the white flash on my cap. I thought it meant aircrew but later found out it meant

officer under training. As I was still unsuitable for a commission I couldn't figure out the second interpretation.

So as of June 10 I was to be on strength at No. 19 E.F.T.S. (elementary flying training school) at Virden, Manitoba. It seems that if you are from the East you were sent West and if you were from the West you were sent East. The powers that be wanted you to see the country. We were the second Course into Virden and were designated course No. 30. At last I was going to soar into the wild blue yonder. My first time airborne was on June 9, 1941 in Tiger Moth 4961 with my instructor Sgt. Crosby. This pilot was later sent overseas and reported missing but I believe that he survived and was awarded a D.F.C. I never considered myself a ball of fire as it took me around nine hours to solo. At twenty hours we were given a check flight. I had a F/O Fernie for my test. I managed to pass so escaped another washout. Fernie later went overseas and was reported missing. Some of the boys were really intrepid pilots chasing one another around haystacks and just continually low flying.

There wasn't anything really exciting happened to me at E.F.T.S. but some of the fellows had some narrow escapes, or should I call them escapades. There were a few forced landings and one chap when attempting to land on his first solo attempt came in a wee bit too high and leveled off about the height of a hangar and dropped the Tiger to the ground. Needless to say he sprung the gas tank and made an inverted V of the upper wing. Undaunted he poured the throttle to the kite and went around for another circuit and made an excellent landing. His instructor ran on to the field to see if his student was hurt. Apparently the student said to the instructor "Will you taxi it in sir or shall I?"

As in everything else there was always another test. It was called the 50 hour check. Usually it was somewhat before your fifty hours of air time. I think mine came somewhere around forty hours. Once again I had F/O Fernie and once again I managed to survive. Before I left Virden I went up for some aerobatics with another instructor named Sgt. Bamford. Jack was from Hamilton and later appeared on 421 Squadron. At this time I was on my second tour. He was forced down in France after D-Day and taken Prisoner-of-War. Before he went down he destroyed three enemy aircraft and was awarded the DFC. He was a great fellow and a good pilot. Unfortunately I lost all contact with him.

Our class was the second one into Virden. I think we were lucky because the first one had to contend with nothing but mud. The contribution made by my class was the digging of a hole for the swimming pool. We left before it was even close to completion.

Four of us went to Regina for a weekend. We stayed at the Hotel Saskatchewan, and because we were earning \$2.25 a day, found it necessary to sleep four crossways on one bed. I also hitchhiked to Brandon one Sunday to see my cousin Margaret Routly who had recently been married and had moved there from the metropolis of Blight, Ontario.

My marks on flying tests were as follows: 20 hour 74.3%; 50 hour 68%. I was listed as an average pilot but above average in instrument flying. I had one major fault. I was a little careless in appearance. If I was that bad why in hell didn't someone inform me of this? I mention this fact because for some reason it followed me all through the war. I can only say that as far as I am

concerned they had to say something to justify my not being recommended until on operations for a commission.

My average at ground school was 73% with 100% in signals. It is a wonder they didn't make me a wireless airgunner. I credit the signal's mark to my training in Morse code as a Boy Scout. At this point someone rated me as suitable for a commission (?) (possibly the chief ground instructor) and a very good student. After all I was in the top half of the Class and quite possibly one of, if not the youngest.

So it was that effective August 8, 1941 I was posted from E.F T.S. Virden Manitoba to No. 10 S.F.T.S. (Service Flying Training School at Dauphin, Manitoba. We were allowed some leave and I returned home to Clinton for a short stay.

At Dauphin we were to be the last course on Harvard Mk. I's. The West was destined to be changed over to twin engines as I guess they needed more bomber boys than fighter pilots. My instructor was a F/O James (Jimmy) Baird. I understand that he was a jockey in civvy street and I often wondered how he could see over some of the students' heads when he was in the back seat. My first flight in Dauphin was on September 8, 1941 after having one hour day dual and one and one-half hours night dual.

We had some more tests and navigation exercises. One of the instructors in my flight was from Clinton, someone I knew very well, Tom Cooke. This made me a little more confident as I could go to Tom for advice on flying and ground school.

Once again there was testing; this time it was instrument flying and navigation. I really didn't enjoy night flying. I found it very boring.

Some of the other fellows felt the same. The one big thing about it was while in the circuit for landing you had to fly over Dauphin. Naturally that was about the time you had to change pitch and if you know anything about a Harvard you know that when you go into full pitch they make one hell of a noise. This was particularly enjoyable late on a Saturday night.

One night one of the class made an extremely heavy landing and pulled off the runway and stopped. If memory serves me right his name was Brown. The powers that be rushed out to see what was the trouble. Apparently when they arrived at the aircraft they couldn't see anyone in the cockpit. On closer inspection they discovered Brownie down in the belly of the kite. It seems when he dropped the Harvard in, his false teeth popped out and he was trying to recover them.

On October 1, 1941 I had my wings test. The person giving the test was a F/L Bolduc. I felt he was a real bind, an opinionated snot. I later ran into him when I was going back to England for my second tour. Incidentally I managed to pass.

As the instructors were becoming familiar with the twin engined Cessna Cranes, we students would sometimes get some extra flips.

On October 21 I found out that I was scheduled for a flight with one of the testing officers from

Trenton. This was known as an ability test. As rumours fly, those selected thought that it was a washout test. I thank God that Tom was there. I asked him what was going on. He said "Did I think instructors put up their poorest pilots when they were being graded as instructors?" I felt a lot better after that.

The remarks that I received were as follows:

flying ability -- good average

clear hood -- good average

instrument -- average

aerobatics -- average

My faults were that I climbed too steeply after leaving the ground on take-off. Precautionary landing was "wheely". He told the New Zealand pilot who followed me that he hoped he did as well on his precautionary landing as the previous student. I was told that I had dropped my nose too far on my roll-off-the-top. He said he would show me how it should be done. Actually his was worse than mine. I guess he saw the grin on my face in the mirror because he said, "Not very good was it?" I liked this officer, F/L Bannock, not because he gave me a good report but because he didn't treat you like dirt.

Wings parade and then posted from Daljphin. I managed to obtain around 76% in flying ability and about 83% in ground training. The comments of the Chief Ground Instructor were that I was studious, capable, and slightly self - concious. What do you expect from someone who was only 18 years old? Anyway, I received my wings and for my efforts the rank of sergeant.

And so it was that I was to return to my hometown for my last leave before going over to fight for my King and country. The course left Dauphin and proceeded to Winnipeg. It was there that I saw my first professional football game. Two of my buddies and I went into a tobacco store. The elderly gent behind the counter asked us if we would be interested in seeing a football game. He produced three tickets "free gratis" and we left for the park to watch Regina and Winnipeg battle it out. I remember one of the Winnipeg players was Fritz Hanson. He ran head-on into a Regina player and both were knocked cold. I also ran into Doug McKenzie an old school-mate of mine from Clinton. He was training as an airgunner nearby. He was later killed overseas as were most of the aircrew from Clinton. Well I managed to get in some leave at home. It was not very exciting as most of the fellows had enlisted My leave was from October 25 to November 8, 1941. That amounts to 14 days.

OFF TO WAR

I reported to #1 "Y" depot RAF Trainees Pool and left there on November 11. The draft was to sail in convoy from Halifax and our gang was assigned to go for a cruise on the good ship Warwick Castle. What a tub! The crew I was with was billeted on the boarded-in promenade deck and if you left your boots on the deck and not at the foot of your bunk, they would be washed somewhere else by the morning. We were 11 days on that damn tub and I believe it was my worst eleven days in my Airforce career. The wet canteen was open only a short time before blackout and if you were near the end of the line you would just get to the window and it would be closed. You could also buy chocolate and sardines and with what you received on the mess

deck, that is what you survived on. Thank God that we had a contingent of Aussies on board.

These fellows got sick and tired of the whole damn thing. One morning when we were served kippers for breakfast, they all came down with their gasmasks on. Another time we were served tripe that was swished through warm water but the climax came later when we were to partake of lamb stew. We could see that the officers, who had mostly received their wings when we did, were partaking of salads and chicken. They also had a well-stocked bar on one of the upper decks. This was the last straw. All the sergeants were fed up to the teeth with the treatment that we were getting. It became like the mess hall in a prison. We started to chant UNGA! UNGA! UNGA! and beat our tin cups and plates on the makeshift tables. When the Orderly Officer, one of my class, a new Pilot Officer, asked if there were any complaints he was chased out of the mess. The next thing we knew the officer commanding the troops appeared and started to walk down between the rows of tables. At the same time one of my class, an American we called "Nigger" Walsh was going to find a seat at one of the tables. He met the O.C. head on. He was asked how he liked his supper. Walsh's reply was "What the hell is it Sir?" The officer went into the kitchen and when he returned he said that he didn't understand what we were complaining about, that he had just tasted the best lamb stew that he had ever ate. That was too much and we booed him out of the mess with such remarks as: "What pigpen were YOU raised in SIR?", and some a hell of a lot worse. We did manage to get kegs of beer down to our mess deck and the Aussies set up a crown and anchor game until they went broke. It seems some of the Canadians knew how to beat the game by doubling up after they lost a spin. When we disembarked at Greenock in Scotland. Some officer had the nerve to say "three cheers for the O.C. of troops". He was given three rousing BOO's.

And so it was that we disembarked from the tub and started for the south of England to a summer resort called Bournemouth. I don't think that there is anyone who doesn't remember the pavilion in Bournemouth. Some of us were billeted in what I would call a sort of retirement home. It was there that I met an elderly, gentleman enjoying the fire in the fireplace. During the conversation it came out that I was from Clinton. He said that his son had gone to school at old C.C.I. and had stayed with a family named Trewartha at a place called Holmesville. I said that I remembered an English fellow who played on the school soccer team. He excused himself and came back with a picture of the soccer team. I named quite a few of the players and from then on I could do no wrong. I was taken on strength at 3 PCR on Nov. 23, 1941 and struck off strength Dec. 15, 1941. During that period of time we attended classes on aircraft recognition and other incidental lectures. It was here that we really began to understand the English pound monetary system. Everyone felt that the people in the bars really made a killing on the stupid colonials.

Bournemouth was under the jurisdiction of the RAF so that all parades were in charge of their personnel. We were paraded to lectures in the morning; such things as aircraft recognition, tests for night vision, morse code etc. We were a mixed lot; Aussies, New Zealanders, English, Canadians and what have you. It seemed that every time we lined up for a parade the eager-beaver RAF types headed it. The marker was a real browner and jumped to attention every time the corporal gave a command. The colonials as the rest of us were known as, took a great dislike to being under the command of a junior N.C.O. After all he was only a corporal and we were sergeants.

Leave it to the Aussies. They came up with the idea that one of their boys should become the marker and the rest of the Colonials would fall in on him. When the Corporal called for The marker one of the RAAF jumped forward and the rest of us shouldered the RAF types out of the way. They ended up at the end of the line. It was right turn into line and off down the street we marched with the corporal calling out the cadence at his usual fast pace. We went at about half pace and he kept yelling to pick it up His instructions fell on deaf ears. We came to a laneway when the command was right wheel and up the lane we marched. The next thing that we heard was an order to about turn and back down the lane we went with the limeys leading the way at their fast pace. You had to hand it to the corporal. He was one smart dude. Unfortunately we had to pass some pubs along the way and by the time the squad reached its destination it was sadly depleted. The English airmen were all that was left to attend classes.

So on December 15 was struck off strength 3 PRC and posted to 15 SFTS at Kidlington, near Oxford for an advanced flying training course on the twin-engined Oxford. This was really an SFTS for the RAF but the powers that be decided that they needed some Beaufighter pilots so here I was, a single engine Harvard pilot to be converted to twins. What a comedown

The C.O. of the station also decided that we were to wear the white flashes in our wedge hats. In Canada that had been the sign of aircrew under training and we took it as a personal insult. We all got together and decided that we would throw them in the fire, and that is where the damn things went. Next morning we were asked where our white flashes were. We explained that they had been lost somewhere. We were told that we had better find them. The next morning it was the same question. As we were unable to locate them the C.O. instructed that new ones were to be issued. These were also misplaced. It now became evident to the English that the Canadians were a militant squad so we were paraded before the head man. He explained that we were officers under training and as such were required to wear the white flashes. Our spokesman, one of our older fellows replied that when we graduated we were not considered officer material and therefore, having completed our training were not required to wear any flashes. Somehow the old man accepted this explanation and we were allowed to go on as we were.

On the 16th I had my first flight in an Oxford together with another Canadian Sergeant Pilot named Clymer. The pilot and officer to be our instructor was an RAF type, F/O Booth. a prince of a guy. After two days instruction and less than two hours dual flying I was allowed to take the mighty Oxford aloft by myself. Big deal.

This was the winter time and we had quite a bit of snow. One day we were called out for physical education training. I remember it well. It was a cold day and there we were, all sergeants, in these droopy shorts commonly called poop catchers running up and down the field tramping down the snow so that the damn officers could fly without pranging the aircraft. We all decided, very shortly I might add, that we had enough of this foolishness and walked off the field and went back to barracks to get warm. Once again the shit hit the fan. You damn Canadians are the most undisciplined bunch I have ever seen. We did however get away with it.

We were not the most popular people in the sergeants mess either. The SWO (senior warrant officer) naturally was English. He had served for years, so we were told by him, out in the East. His favorite song was Sheiber Blues. The spelling is quite possibly wrong. We detested his guts.

On Christmas eve we had a real bash in the mess and the beer flowed like water. The SWO decided that he would do a balancing act. He got a bucket and filled it full of beer and started parading around the anteroom with it balanced on his head.

One of the fellows, I don't recall which one, stuck out his foot and tripped him as he went by. Down he went with the bucket of beer spilling all over him. He was unable to find out just who it was that tripped him and he was so drunk that he would have been unable to press charges if he had.

On December S/L Phillips took myself and two sergeants over to the auxiliary field for night flying. I have to admit that it was really something to see the building of Oxford sitting amidst the snow. Anyway we made three landings and that was it for the night. I had quite a surprise when who should appear at the drome but my good friend from Clinton, Ens. Rolfe Monteith. He had taken a room in the village and was going to stay over for the night. I asked my instructor if there was any chance of taking him up for a flip. F/O Booth, being the good egg that he was said that there would be no problem. We took off from the drome and the instructor asked me how I would like to do some low flying. What an opportunity to show off. I remember looking back at Rolfe when we were down on the deck and he was hanging on for dear life. I give him credit, he never barfed because if he had I would have had to clean up the mess. That night we went to the local cinema and after partook of fish and chips.

The rest of my time at Kidlington was spent on night flying, cross country trips and the usual practices. As I and two of my buddies were not enthralled at being sent to a twin operational training unit (OUT). I bitched to FO Booth every time I could about twin engines. He said he could not understand why I did not like them. I said that I had been trained on singles and my log book stated that I was recommended for fighter duties. He told me that I certainly had the ability to handle twins and that there was a new aircraft coming on operations called the Mosquito. I replied that I just didn't want to do any time on the Beaufighters. He said that he would see what he could do for the three of us.

The next thing that I knew I was told to report to the wing commander flying. When I arrived at his office there were the other two sergeants. We were escorted into the inner sanctum not knowing what lay ahead.

I remember hearing "Which one of you is sergeant Cook?" I replied that I was he. The next question was "Are we related"? There was a name plate on the desk and there in capital letters was W/C Cook. He asked what the problem was and I answered with the same explanation as I had told my instructor. He said that he would do what he could for us but could not promise that our request for single engines would be granted. Would you believe that when the postings came out that there were three pilots posted to a Hurricane OTU at Sutton Bridge. The three sergeants who appeared before the wing commander flying. The officers who were training with us were to say the least very disturbed.

And so it was that on January 17, 1942 I took my last flight in an Oxford. It lasted exactly one hour. I was now transferred to number 56 OTU Sutton Bridge, Lincolnshire effective February

10, 1942. Our billets was right next to the railway track. In order to get there it was necessary for us to go around the church and through the cemetery. In doing this we passed right by the graves of some of the unfortunate pilots who had crashed and were buried there. It gave one a scary feeling. You sometimes wondered just where your resting place would be.

My first flip at my new drome was on the 16th when I had 50 minutes dual in a Master. These aircraft were equipped with in-line engines and were surely on their last legs. I did a solo flight on the 19th and right after that found myself taking off in the well known Hurricane. My first flight in a fighter plane. I was on my way.

It was on a height climb that I ran into a bit of trouble. I became bored hanging on the prop on the climb. I think the old girl had about reached her best ceiling and I didn't think that I wanted to take as much time going down as I did going up. I rolled over on my back and down I went. The Hurricane had a habit of bunting in a dive so I did an aileron turn to pull it out of the dive. As I still had some time to spare I decided to do some aerobatics. Loops and rolls and roll-off-the-tops. I ended up by doing what is called a flick-roll. When I straightened out I found it just a little difficult to keep the aircraft in the proper flying position. I managed to land safely and while taxiing to the dispersal noticed a crowd running towards the aircraft. I parked and climbed out on the left side of the old girl and lit a cigarette.

The crowd had all gone to the starboard side so hitching my parachute over my shoulder I went around the tail to see what was going on. My God there was no fabric from the hump at the rear of the cockpit to the rudder at the rear. I think it must have been rotten to start. Someone asked me if I had been shot at by a German to which I replied no. I went into our dispersal and placed the condition of the plane as unserviceable. Who should arrive at the dispersal but the old man himself. This group captain must have been in World War I as he wore breeches and carried a cane. He also did not appear to like colonials. He asked who was the pilot of the plane. I said that I was. His questions to me were;

"What was the exercise?"

I replied "An altitude climb, sir. "

He then said "excessive speeds?"

I said "no sir."

"You were doing flick rolls."

I had to think fast as he had hit the nail on the head. I replied "How do you do a flick roll sir?"

He muttered something like damn Canadians and left. I had to taxi the old girl over to maintenance and that was it. I once had a picture relating to this exploit but lost it when my wallet was lifted when Rolfe and I visited Goldie at Aldershot.

There was another incident that included the Groupie that I must comment on .

Sutton Bridge was a grass field and therefore you were not confined to make certain landings in a direct crosswind. It was also in the form of a rectangle so that we usually landed in an west-east direction, the prevailing wind coming in off the Wash. This morning there was a strong crosswind and one of the boys, a Canadian, ground looped the Hurricane on landing. There really wasn't that much damage to the aircraft but unfortunately the Groupie saw it. Down to the dispersal he flew in his private car. He asked the pilot what had happened and when the student replied that there was a bad crosswind the old man answered that it wasn't the wind but poor flying. He immediately signed himself out in a Hurricane in order to show us the proper way to compensate for a slight crosswind. On landing he made a real nice groundloop, wiped out the landing gear and prop and God knows what other damage and immediately cancelled flying for the rest of the day. The reason for the cancellation was too dangerous a crosswind for flying.

OTU # 56 was now being moved to Tealing in Scotland, not too far from New Dundee. It would be necessary for the senior class to fly the aircraft up to the new drome. This would entail a landing in England and then a trip over the Cheviot Hills. On March 27 we took off somewhat like a squadron and made the trip without incident. I must say those hills would not have been very good as a landing field if the old engine packed it in. On the 30th we flew back to Sutton Bridge to pick up the remaining aircraft. This time I was to fly one of the old Masters to Scotland and had been assigned a passenger. These old kites had a bad habit of leaking glycol from the engine. My God the Hurricanes were bad enough but a Master. I think that I prayed most of the time that I was over the Cheviots that the old clunker would not give up the ghost. I only did three flights from the new drome and our course had completed its time.

421 SQUADRON

On April 14 I was SOS from #56 OTU and posted to a spanking new Canadian squadron numbered 421 and was going to be flying the famous Spitfire. The Squadron was to be formed at Digby. We were given leave and so I decided to make my way down to 132 Moorside Road and spend some time there.

Wouldn't you know my good friend Rolfe was going to be there on leave. The leave ended and that evening on reading the paper I noticed that the date was the date that I was to report to the squadron. I commented that it was something to see a paper put out so early. It turned out that I was AWOL as I should have reported to Digby by 1200 hours that day. Rolfe and I caught the last tram and by the underground in London ended up at the station of departure. I arrived at the squadron the next morning and was immediately escorted to the adjutant who demanded in a gruff voice that he required an explanation.

To say the least I was a little nervous but I decided to tell the truth. I told it as it, happened. There was a dead silence and I braced myself for the worst. F/O Chassanoff, the adjutant, had been washed out as a pilot and having been a lawyer in private life he looked straight in the eye and said that was the most idiotic story that he had ever heard but that it was too unbelievable for anyone to make up. I was now in a squadron that was to be my real airforce life.

I'm sure that you realize that there is no dual for a Spitfire, only a cockpit check. When that was completed I took off in spitfire AUS which was what was known as a mark VA and did a sector

recco or a familiarization of the area. The date was April 24. I was assigned to a flight; a flight to which I always seemed to be assigned. My flight commander was F/L George Hill, a super pilot and a super guy.

There were quite a few differences between the Spitfire and the Hurricane but the one that caught my fancy was the landing gear. The Spitfire had a landing gear that swung outwards while the hurricane's gear tucked inward. I compared this to a young virgin milkmaid lifting up her skirts for an airman to an older woman adjusting her bra after an encounter.

We spent the next flights doing formation flying. As most of us had just come from OTU we could quite easily become spragues and as such would have been cannon fodder for the more experienced pilots of the Luftwaffe. The majority of the squadron was made up of sergeant pilots with no experience on operations. The CO and the two Flight commanders were about the only ones with combat experience. The remainder of the officers had no more experience than the sergeants. We left Digby for a new base at Swansea in South Wales called Fairwood Common. At that time there was a Newfoundland squadron of Beaufighters there. I sure was glad that I spoke up at Kidlington. These aircraft were monsters.

Our job here was to do convoy patrol and gain more flying experience on the spitfire. It was also a change to newer VB's. The armament on these aircraft was two 20 millimeter cannon and four .303 Browning machine guns. When we became bored with stooging around we would sometimes go west and do a little low flying over southern Ireland. Besides convoy patrol we spent our time doing air to air firing, air to ground firing, formation, and practice cine gun aerial combat. We also managed to get in a few trips to the south coast. It was about this time that our key men were posted to other duties. The CO and the two flight commanders left the squadron: Johnny Long the A flight commander went to Malta and George Hill went to the desert. Before George left our flight was sent to Exeter and from there to Bolt Point (Head). When we took off from Fairwood Common, George forgot to pull up his undercarriage. After about three tries his number two managed to contact him on the radio and up went the wheels. On our sortie George became a little lost, it seems, and he called up on the radio for a homing. As he couldn't remember the call sign for Exeter he asked his number two for it. In fact he asked him three times. He then came on the r.t. to Exeter with "Hello Hector. Give me a vector".

While at Fairwood Common we had a very interesting court case. It seems one of our ground crew decided to do a little sortie of his own with a local wench. Next thing that he knew he was up on a rape charge. Our adjutant at the time was F/O Chassanoff, a lawyer from Winnipeg. On questioning by the defense it was established that the woman in question had partaken of intercourse a number of times. In summation the defense put forward what he termed was an old Canadian precedent. Waving the ladies panties for all to see, he stated that in Canada it was a proven fact that a woman could run faster with her skirts up than a man could with his pants down. The case was dismissed but the airman was subsequently posted.

The Squadron now had a new CO and two new flight commanders, Namely S/L Willis, F/L Blades and F/L Robertson. Robertson was the flight commander of B flight. During this period of time the squadron did convoy patrols, trips to the south coast, and air to air drogue firing. I also became night operational on Spitfires. We also managed to obtain VB's.

On March 25 the squadron moved to Redhill. This was a grass field and was closer to the south coast. It was here that I purchased my first motorcycle, a Francis Barnett two stroke. You mixed the oil with the gas and watched the smoke come out the exhaust.

Have you ever been caught with your pants down? I was once. I was taking a crap when we got the order to scramble. This was a squadron scramble and it was to escort some Whirlwinds to Ostend where they were going after some shipping in the harbour. I just managed to get my pants done up but as the other pilots were starting their engines I didn't have time enough to do my parachute up properly. I figured that I could get it done up as we formed up. We joined the Whirlybirds and went across the North sea at wave level. After some attempts of trying to fasten the chute I gave up. It wouldn't have been much help at this low level. Later that day we had another scramble to Eastbourne. I was back in the pack on take-off and suddenly the spit ahead of me must have hit the slipstream of someone and went over on his back and crashed. There was supposed to be some FW 190's but we never saw any. They kept us on patrol and all the time I tried to figure out who had bought it. It turned out to be F/O Hal Rogers, the person who spelled out the Latin for our insignia. I think he was the only one of us who had a college education.

We were billeted in a beautiful mansion. It had the largest bathtub that I had ever seen. It was here, while I was on leave that I lost a good friend. Cam Meyers and I had gone down together for our commission interviews. Cam had J16200 and I had J16201. It was here also that I received a new batman; his name was Les Darkins and he used to stay at the Mutch house on his times off. He was at the radar base in Clinton .

From March 25 to May 17 we were relegated to sweeps, scrambles, ramrods, rodeos, patrols, escort duty and practice formation flying. There was a trip to Martlesham Heath for gunnery practice. This lasted for about ten days. We now practiced cine camera dog fights and escorted Venturas and Mitchells on bombing insertions into France. After our sojourn at Redhill the squadron returned to Kenley and began the transition to the spitfire IX A's. This was a higher flying version of the spitfire which we had become used to flying. The supercharger cut in at a higher altitude to enable us to cope with the Messerschmidt 109 G's while escorting the high flying Fortresses. It was a period of training for us on the new Marks so we were flying our old V's mostly for air to air and the odd patrol and the new mark IX's on the real operational duties.

We encountered both ME 109's and FW 190's on these missions. During these engagements we won some and lost some. On June 20, our sister squadron 403 lost 3 pilots. It was quite a busy summer. On August 27 we left Kenley for 127 advanced drome. This was to be under canvas and we were designated as an airfield. We first went to Lashenden and then on to Headcorn. Once again we were very busy. While at Headcorn I was visited by a good friend from Clinton, Sgt. Gordy Montieth of the Canadian Dental Corps. Naturally I managed to get him up in the Tiger Moth for local flying and aerobatics. On September 24 F/L Roger Wilson was flying my number two when someone thought they saw some 109's on the deck. Down we went but they were spitfires. Climbing back up the last thing that I remember was seeing my oxygen dial registering zilch.

I was at 21,000 feet. The next thing that I remember was hearing Roger saying "Pull out Cookie, Cookie pull out". The ground was coming towards me at a terrific speed so I pulled back on the stick but nothing happened. It ended up that I had to pull out of the dive by using my trim. On returning to join the squadron, Roger spotted a train moving along the tracks and alerted me over the radio. I knew we were inside the flak belt which was considered to be 20 miles from the coast but it was too tempting. I guess I blocked out the CO's order to stay up for I immediately peeled off and went up into the sun. Unfortunately Roger went right down and started shooting at the rear of the train. Now Jerry was no fool and knew that usually there were two of us. Not seeing us together he deduced that one of us must be coming out of sun. I dove down to the deck and when I felt I had a good shot at the engine pulled up and let go with both cannon and machine gun. I watched those red balls of flak coming lazily towards me but when they became close they went by a mile a minute.

I saw strikes on the engine and steam pouring from the boiler. As I was about over the engine I felt the aircraft give a lurch and immediately found myself pushing the stick far over to the starboard. Believing that the engine had exploded and I had picked up some of the debris I headed even lower for the deck. On looking to the port side I noticed a gash along my wing, but that couldn't give me the trouble I was having keeping AUW level and straight. I looked farther back and low and behold I had lost about three quarters of my port aileron. Roger and I headed for the coast hugging the deck as much as was possible. We passed the coast and sped across the Channel as low and fast as we could. When we crossed over the cliffs on the south coast of England I noticed that I was very low on fuel. We made for Friston, an advanced drome on the south coast and did an emergency landing. As I had no idea of the stalling speed at this point so I brought the kite in hot. Now Friston was a small airfield and if you landed and rolled too far you went over the cliffs and into the Channel. I just managed to stop and when I turned around to taxi back my wing was hanging over the cliff.

I refueled and asked the rigger (airframe mechanic) if he could patch up the old girl as I wanted to get back to Headcorn. They did a patch-up job and away I went. While waiting for the repairs I went over to look at an American medium bomber that had put down there. One of the gunners was good enough to give me a pair of American flying goggles. These were a lot better than the ones we were issued so I immediately replaced my issue with my new found ones. I no sooner got airborne than the patch filled with air and I had one hell of a time keeping the port wing up. I had to do a right hand circuit to land at Headcorn as I feared that the regular left hand would end up in spinning in. I landed OK and when I was getting out of the plane noticed W/C Johnnie Johnson (he of fighter fame) and G/C "Iron Bill" MacBrien pulling up in a jeep. Johnnie looked at his old aircraft and immediately started to give me hell.

I was told how many hours he had flown this aircraft and had never put a scratch on it. The Group Captain asked Roger if I had destroyed the engine. Roger replied that I had blown it all to hell. The G/C then turned to the W/C and said; "I think that's a pretty good exchange, one damaged spitfire for a destroyed French locomotive."

The squadron finished out the month of September by participating on Ramrods escorting American Marauders and local flying

On Saturday October 2, 1943, a liberty run was organized to go into Maidstone. My good friend Karl Linton and I went along but unlike the rest of the fellows decided to forgo the dance and go on a pub crawl. This was one of our favourite pastimes. After becoming pretty oiled up we decided that we would go to the dance after all. We paid our entry fee and as soon as we got there I headed for the bar and a couple of rum and orange drinks - heavy on the rum and light on the orange cordial. One of the fellows from the squadron talked me into going back with him to the table which was loaded with sludge (pints of bitters commonly thought to be a substitute for beer). I sat there enjoying my pint and watching the fellows gyrating around the floor.

I noticed that the young girl (I think she was young and nice looking, but after the drinks your eyes play tricks on you) across from me was not dancing. I asked her which of the Romeos that she was with and she replied none, that her girl friend was with John Patterson but she was alone. I got bolder and asked her if she danced. She said that she did, so I asked her if she would like to step on the floor.

That girl could really dance. In fact we waltzed, jitter-bugged, tangoed and fox-trotted the rest of the evening, I also sobered up considerably. She certainly was no dog-face. She and her girlfriend were firewatchers and had only come off duty. When the danced finished I had made a date to see her at the Sunday night dance. I did not fly on the first show on Sunday but late in the afternoon we were scheduled to do an escort called Ramrod 258 which I believe was to cover an RAF squadron of Boston bombers (I could be wrong about this but I remember reading a book about RAF bomber Command which had a write-up on this sortie. I am breaking off here as this starts a new experience in my life!

EVASION

I don't remember much of the dogfight only that it was a good one. Never underestimate the fighting ability of the German fighter boys, they were good. I was flying number two to my good friend Karl Linton when we engaged a good number of FW 190's. Karl and I shared one. I remember we were jumped by two coming in at five o'clock and a little above us. I saw the number one firing but the tracers were going behind us and he was a little out of range. I waited until he was within a good range then called a break to starboard which meant we would turn into them and perhaps get on their tails. We swung around and I put old AUV through the gate; this was called pushing the "tit". All of a sudden I had very little power. I quickly scanned the instrument panel and noticed my oil pressure dropping. I tried to keep up with Karl but found it impossible.

Soon I was streaming glycol and going nowhere but down. I called up my CO who was Squadron Leader Buck McNair and told him of my predicament. I said that I was going to try for the Channel and bale out. He asked if I needed an escort and I said that I thought that I could make it on my own. I checked the outside of the aircraft and could see that there was a great deal of oil on the cowling on the port side of the engine. I was also making quite a trail of white glycol smoke. I was awakened suddenly from my inspection by black puffs of smoke around me. Flak. I looked down and noticed aerodromes. I also noticed that I was lower than I thought I should be. I figured that I was between Poix and Conty. If that were the case then I had better forget the Channel.

I radioed the CO that I was turning back inland and was going to hit the silk. I headed south in the shallowest glide that I could as I had an aversion to walking. I tried to get the catch of the canopy off the lock but couldn't budge the damn thing. My airspeed was near the stalling speed so it should have unlocked. I tried a couple of times but nothing happened. No oil pressure and my glycol off the clock and trapped in the aircraft with no chance of baling out and every chance of a fire. I decided to crash tout suite. I picked a field and with what I had learned at SFTS started my descent for a precautionary landing only this was to be a crash landing wheels up. I had to make this a good one. Switches off, gas off, line up the field, and down I glided.

The landing was pretty good, I had to lift my port wing as I had picked out a field that had a bit of a slope to it. My safety harness would not lock and allowed me to jackknife forward towards the gun sight. I saw it coming and managed to turn my head enough so that I only grazed the side of it. This was enough to daze me slightly but only for a few moments. When my faculties returned to normal I worked on releasing the perspex. There was no crowbar in this aircraft which necessitated using brute strength to slide it back. I dropped the side panel, undid my harness, looked for a fire bomb and any maps that happened to have been left inadvertently in the aircraft. There were none of these. I climbed out of old AUV, checked the kite for damage and bullet holes, of which there were none, and started running towards a copse of trees not too far distant.

Now I had never been what might be called a fast sprinter in the hundred yard dash but I knew that I could run faster than I was going at this time. Would you believe that I was still wearing my helmet and goggles but what was really slowing me down was my parachute. Back to the aircraft I ran, deposited my headgear over the rear view mirror and my parachute in the cockpit and took off once more for the woods, this time at a much faster pace. I did not know how deep the woods were but when I had penetrated a short distance I could hear people coming in my direction. Thinking that they were Germans I dove for the best shelter that I could find. Unfortunately I had chosen a sort of bramble bush. The thorns were not the most pleasant. I could hear people coming closer and closer. They were calling out camerade or kamerad. I remembered these two words from my high school French classes and listening to WW I veterans discussing some of their experiences. When the voices came nearly up to me I decided that it was time to surrender. I did not relish being stabbed in the butt by a German bayonet. With my arms stretched above my head I stood up to surrender. To my surprise I saw some civilians. As I was in France I presumed them to be French and friendly. They immediately surrounded me and began to motion me to follow them. One lady about forty seemed to take the lead and motioned me to follow her. Could that woman ever run. We headed across an open field and towards a road. She stopped before some bushes and began to move the branches aside which disclosed an opening which she entered and motioned me to follow. It was a small cave with white walls and a smaller section to one side. You had to remain stooped over as it was not as high as my height.

She explained to me that she must go but would be back as soon as it was safe for her to do so. Thank God for my French classes at school. I did not understand everything that she said but got the most of what she was trying to impart to me. When she had gone I began to take stock of what I had on my person. I found my knife and immediately cut off the uppers of my escape

flying boots and stuffed all of my escape kits into my trouser pocket. I felt I was dreaming and at any moment would awaken and find myself in the tent at Headcorn. I heard a noise outside and retreated into the little part of the cave. I had to lie down in this as it was about the size of a coffin. Through the part opening I could see some French men and women entering the larger section. They had brought me something to eat; bread, cheese, raw eggs and a couple of flasks of beer. One of the men took my battle dress tops from me and presented me with an old suit coat that hung about to my knees. They told me that the Germans were looking for me and that they could not stay very long. Apparently one of their youngsters had told the soldiers that he saw me take off in the opposite direction. They were going to return the next day when it would be a great deal safer. Next morning came but no one showed. I later found out that the Germans had taken some of the men hostages and were questioning them as to my whereabouts. I remained in this cave for all of that day and at night took a peak outside mostly to get some fresh air.

I really couldn't believe that this was happening to me and would not be able to keep my rendezvous with the little English girl in Maidstone. I later found out that John Patterson had taken along Andy MacKenzie as a substitute. The girl asked where Cookie was and didn't he like me? Pat told her that I had been shot down. She immediately burst into tears and left the party. Maybe I was lucky she could have had matrimony on her mind.

Another day and night passed. As I was running out of food and escape rations I decided to strike out on my own. About two hundred yards in front of me was another road. I decided to make my way down to this backroad and see where it would lead me.

I noticed a horse and cart coming from the village and decided that I would lie down in the ditch until it and the owner had passed. When they went by me I jumped on the cart to the astonishment of the elderly driver. I explained who and what I was, a Canadian airman who had been forced down, and asked him the whereabouts of any Germans. This was of course in very poor French. He said that the Jerries had given up the search in this area for the time being. I sensed that he was just a little upset so jumped off the cart and headed across a field. I noticed a man walking along the far edge of the field and decided to approach him head on. It turned out that he was a Belgian. I once again enquired about the Germans. I could see a village in the not too far distance and asked if any Germans were there. The answer was no. I then asked if there was a place that I could get food and drink. I did know the words "pour boucher and pour manger". I gathered that there was a cafe in the village and that it would be safe for me to enter. Ignorance is bliss so they tell you so off I started for the village. I arrived at the intersection of two streets but for the life of me I could see no cafe. I then enquired of an old man the whereabouts of this diner. He threw up his hands when I told him I was a Canadian airman; he went one way and I made quick tracks in the other direction.

The first doorway that I came to, I made a hasty entrance. It turned out to be a blacksmith shop. I immediately hid behind some upright iron rods and waited patiently until I reclaimed my breath and senses. I finally got up enough nerve to approach the smithy who was hammering a piece of iron on his anvil. By now I had one of the silk escape maps in my hand, explained who I was and asked him to point out exactly where I was. I also asked him where I could get some food and drink. I presume he understood to some extent my broken French because he nodded his head as if to say "I see". He then stopped a French farmer who was passing by driving a team of

horses and conversed with him. I wish that the French people would slow down their speech for dummies like me. Perhaps I could pick up enough of the conversation to figure out what goes on. He told me to follow this man and he would see that I was given what I had requested. I followed behind the farmer and his team up the street and turned into a farmyard. I found out that in France the inhabitants live in the villages, keep their animals in barns attached to the house and go into the fields in the morning to do their ploughing and other chores in the fields.

This poor farmer's understanding of English was worse than my understanding of French. I finally deduced that he had a son who could speak and understand English. Bon. He brought a young lad of about nine or ten, some food and drink, an old straight razor, a broken mirror and some pumice soap. All the boy knew in English was yes and no. I asked if there was a village priest and if so could he come to the hayloft. Away the two of them went so I ate, drank and damn near cut myself to pieces with that saw-like straight razor.

When they returned they had the village priest with them. He spoke and understood a little English so I had made a little progress. Unfortunately he told me that I must leave "toute de suite". I informed him that I had no intention of doing and asked if there was any chance that he could contact the French underground. He informed me that he knew of no such people. I told him that I would leave the village that night but not before sundown.

He left and I took the opportunity to get some well needed rest. I was awakened by voices below me and feared that I had been turned over to the Germans. The next thing that I saw as I peaked out of the darkest corner of the loft that I could find was the priest and two other men who I had never seen before this time. These strangers began asking me questions in French which I answered as best I could. They made me understand that I was to follow them. We went along the edge of the fields towards a bush. It was then that I noticed a car partially hidden among the trees. They motioned me into the back seat and we were off to God knows where.

Along the way I had the opportunity to see my first German soldier. He didn't look that tough but I really couldn't say whether I felt fear or a touch of cockiness. We entered a village which I later found out to be Crevecoeur. You will have to pardon my spelling of French towns and people as one's memory doesn't work well after some fifty years. The car stopped in front of a long building which turned out to be a residence with a cafe-bar attached. I was taken into the family kitchen and told to be seated. I was also introduced to my hosts; they were Monsieur and Madame Bonnevaive together with their young son Regis.

We waited for a considerable length of time before two new men appeared on the scene. I was asked for my identity tags and numerous other things e.g. name, rank and serial number. As I was telling them this they checked my dog tags. There were other questions that I had to answer at the conclusion of which I was informed that they would check me out and if I were not telling the truth I would be disposed of in the morning. Now I was a little apprehensive because knowing the way the airforce operated the finger could be well up and everything would be SNAFU.

I was taken to my quarters for my stay with these good people; it consisted of a room with a bed,

a radio and some French magazines. It was situated at the far end of the building away from the cafe. It seemed that the German soldiers made a habit of spending a good part of the evenings imbibing in the wine, spirits and beer that was sold there. I was provided with two bottles of wine each morning after breakfast; one red and one white. I also received a jug of cider in case that I ran out of wine.

As no one here spoke English I was forced to rely on my school French. It is surprising how quickly one can pick up a new language when necessity dictates. I think that I learned more French in my short time here than I did all the time I took it at school. Maybe the verb tenses were not entirely correct but no one gave you a poor mark such as an "E". Many times I had to get them to slow down as sometimes they slurred their words e.g. un petit peu (a little bit) sounded like umpeteepu when Regis would answer you at the table. I stayed here for about five to seven days.

One morning, the good doctor, and a stranger came and told me that I would be moving on to another hideaway. We got into the doctor's car and down the road we went passing a few Germans who seemed to be aimlessly walking along the sides of the road. We stopped before a house, the doctor's home, in the village of Catheux (?). We went inside and I was introduced to his wife. She was from south America and spoke pretty good English. When I told her my name was William she brought out a toddler and told me that his name was also William or as in French, Guillame. The doctor asked me if I would like a drink. I told him that I was a rum drinker. He produced a bottle of rum but as it was nearly empty I told him that I could not take his last drink. He offered me something which at first sight looked like gin. I accepted this and found a full glass placed in my hand. We raised our glasses in a salute and I downed the whole thing. This wasn't gin because it went right down to my toes came back up hit me in the chin, went down to my toes again and then back to my chin. After doing this a couple of more times I gasped for breath, shook my head and managed a sickly grin. This was my first taste of French Calvados. I think it was a close relative of potato whiskey.

We continued our journey and ended up at a farmhouse near Beauvais. We were so close to the airdrome that I could see the 109's and 190's getting airborne. After a day at this farmhouse a new visitor appeared. His name was Czerwinski and he was a Polish pilot.

Andy had been shot down in his spitfire and had spent about six months in an underground hospital recovering from burns around his eyes. There was still considerable evidence of the burns. Pilot Officer Czerwinski was a native of Crakow, Poland and had been flying with 308 Polish squadron. We had a French school teacher visit us and this kind gentleman brought us the necessities of life, toothpaste and cigarettes. They were the foulest tasting cigarettes that I can remember smoking. We decided that I should speak only French and if really stuck that I could call on Andy for help. The couple who owned the farm were not very old and had no children. The brother of the lady of the house was living with them to escape from being placed in forced labour by the Germans.

There were some amusing incidents that befell me during my stay here. We very seldom drank any water, none if we could help it. One afternoon, being a little thirsty, I went over to the sink to pour a glass of cider out of the jug into a glass. Luckily I looked into the glass before I drank.

There swimming around was a small salamander. I quickly rescued it and then drank the liquid from the glass.

We had to go into the orchard if we wanted to go to the outhouse. This necessitated keeping close to the house and the barn and slipping through the gate, up a slight incline, and entering the two-holer. I had been used to outhouses as we were not rich enough to have indoor plumbing in Little England - a part of Clinton that was situated between the CNR tracks and the Bayfield River. This night was beautiful, a full moon that allowed you to see as if it were the daytime. Unfortunately the clouds rolled in and when I started to return it was pitch black. I groped my way along the path and found the slight incline that told me I was approaching the gate. I kept feeling for the gate but for some reason couldn't feel it. Now the French built their house and barns in a sort of rectangle and in the centre heaped up their manure from cows and horses. When I didn't feel the gate I kept right on going. You guessed it. I went straight into the shit pile. Luckily I did not fall completely forward on my face but managed to fall on my hands and knees. I don't think that I stopped swearing the rest of the way into the house. Everybody but me thought it was a huge joke.

Another time, at night after dinner the young farmer decided that he would show Andy and I some French postcards. Now you know that these postcards were not of the type that you would show children. If you have ever been evading you get a certain feeling that people are watching you. I felt that feeling at this very moment. I turned around and there was the farmer's wife looking over my shoulder and wearing a big smile. I guess I turned beet red because she then really burst out in laughter.

At about this time there was a crack much like the shot from a pistol. The young couple had given us a small caliber revolver which we had placed on a shelf in our bedroom. We had the option of shooting at the Germans or at ourselves if we were ever discovered. We noticed that the young French lad was not with us and wondered if he had decided to end it all. When we rushed into the bedroom we found him sitting on the bed not with the revolver but with a burst condom in his hand. Wanting to show everyone that I was progressing in the French language, I immediately proclaimed "Aha, la lettre de francais", to which the young housewife immediately replied, "mais non monsieur, la lettre d'anglais".

You know these people made the best coffee that I have ever tasted. It was made from burnt wheat and topped with heated cream. They also had honey that I understood was made from a fat or lard ingredient. Everything must come to an end as did our sojourn with these good people. We had a great time and my French had improved greatly.

We now journeyed by car to a small village not too far from Paris. I believe that it was called Noailles (the spelling is probably incorrect). Here we were to stay overnight and continue into Paris in the morning. The person who owned the house was a French lieutenant who had served in the African campaign and had been repatriated home. He insisted that Andy and I take turns on a rowing machine in order to tone up our muscles. He also gave me a letter to be mailed in Gibraltar if we should ever reach the Rock. I found out later that he had been imprisoned by the Germans and assassinated.

We traveled next morning to Paris and immediately took the Metro to our destination. As my French was not fluent enough to pass inspection by the Gestapo, I was assigned to the last carriage of the train. This car was reserved for the Jewish population. Our lieutenant and Andy took the car ahead of the one I was in. I was to watch for them to get off and I was to follow at a discreet distance. I had been given a paperback book to read on the journey as that would make it appear that I was on my way to work. I was wearing a brown checked suit, white shirt, brown tie and brown shoes. I also had false papers in case I was stopped by anyone. I was pretending to read the book when I felt the hair on the back of my neck begin to rise. I looked at the book and found that I had the damn thing upside down. I immediately corrected the situation and looked over my shoulder to see if anyone had noticed.

I looked directly into the dark eyes of this young French girl. She must have known that I was not what I appeared to be. Anyway, she smiled and I went back to paying attention to the book making sure that I turned the page at what I thought was the appropriate time. The train entered a station and I noticed that Andy was stepping off onto the platform, I immediately made for the door in order that I would not lose him. They made for the exit leading to the street and as I was about to follow I noticed in the dirty glass of the door the reflection of a German officer. I quickly held open the door and stepped to the side. As he passed he acknowledge my effort with a "merci" to which I replied "c'est bien". I did not use "ca va" as I was not sure that was the wording used in Paris. I had used it all the time at the farmhouse.

The other two were waiting for me and we proceeded down the street. We passed cubicles where you could see the head and shoulders of the men. These were the urinals of Paris. I also noticed a woman holding her young son over the gutter while he proceeded to ease his bladder and bowels. When finished his mother wiped his little ass pulled up his clothing and went on her way. I confess that I couldn't believe my eyes.

We made our way to a small cathedral where we were to meet a new contact. We were told that this woman would be wearing a large floppy-brimmed black hat and when she left we were to follow her. When we entered the sanctuary we proceeded to go through the Roman Catholic ritual of dipping your finger's in the holy water, crossing yourself, walking down the aisle, crossing yourself again and depositing yourself in the pew. I remembered the cross was head, testicles, left tit, right tit.

There was a ceremony in progress which I had never witnessed before. Apparently a youth was being inducted into the church. I remember someone swinging a pot of incense around but could not understand a word that was being said. Maybe it was in Latin and I was never very good at Latin while in school.

Something must have gone wrong because we never did see our contact. As we were now at a bit of a loss and it was getting near the lunch hour Andy suggested to the French guide that perhaps we could go to the home of a gentleman that had befriended he and his cousin when they were fleeing from Poland. As far as I could gather from the conversation this person had been involved in the discovery of radar. I could have been wrong about this but the man was no dimwit. We arrived at his apartment and after the usual French greetings, a kiss on the cheeks for Andy and a handshake for me, we ate a light lunch.

Where were we to go from here? Andy suggested a place that he had gone previously. The elderly gentleman suggested that he phone these people and see if it would be O.K. to stay there overnight. When we received an affirmative reply Andy wondered if it would be possible to contact his cousin. He apparently was at work in the Renault factory just outside of Paris. Once again the owner of the apartment was able to get the cousin on the phone. It was arranged that we should all meet at the apartment of a doctor and there we would find shelter for the night. I have to admit that I was not happy with this turn of events but I realized also that there was no way I could strike out on my own so off we went to this apartment.

Andy had a good memory for he had no difficulty in finding the exact apartment in the building. We were greeted at the door by a tall slender woman and once again Andy went through the usual French greeting. Once inside the room, and with the door to the hallway closed Andy and the lady broke into an excited conversation about where and how he happened to be in France at this particular time. I was somewhat ignored for the time being. The Madame however in time turned to me and asked me my name.

I replied that I was Francois Cook, I did not use the name Guillame as it was a little harder at this time to remember. I also said that I was a Canadian. She replied, in a Bostonian accent, that she was an American and had married a French doctor and had lived in Paris for a number of years. Was it ever good to hear someone speaking English. I explained that this was my twenty-first birthday, (October 29). She said that we would have to have a birthday party. Now, although this woman was a member of the French Underground her husband was not but she assured us that he would do nothing to hinder our run for freedom. Andy's cousin came and the party began. We drank champagne and ate sardines in sauce on Peak Frean biscuits, drank English tea and enjoyed ourselves immensely.

When the party was over and the cousin had departed, it was time for our abolutions and bed. Andy and I went to the bathroom. What a place, there were two toilets. I suppose a man and wife could hold hands while having a crap. I was about to have a leak in one of the toilets when Andy spotted me and say that what I was about to do was a no-no. I couldn't see why I couldn't use this toilet when it was the closest one to me. It was then explained to me what this one really was and how it was to be used. The damn thing was called a bidet and was used by women to rinse themselves after making their potty. How the hell was a small town boy who had been brought up using two-holer outhouses supposed to know what these new-fangled contraptions were? Live and learn as they say.

We stayed the night and the next morning, after breakfast, took our leave but not until we had said goodby in the usual French manner. I even got in on the act. I thought that I had better learn the right approach just in case I should ever be called on to use it in the future. We ended up this morning in Notre Dame cathedral. This is where we should have gone the previous day. This is a magnificent building and I presume was used a great deal by the Underground for making transfers. You could see the odd German wandering about but they were not paying too much attention to the people who were going to attend their services.

As usual I was the last to enter and dip my fingers in the holy water, cross myself, walk down the

aisle to a pew, cross myself, enter the pew, cross myself, take a seat, kneel and say a prayer, rise and cross myself and sit there and watch the ceremony. We did spot the woman in the broad-brimmed black hat this time. When she departed we went through the ceremony of leaving our seats and once again I went into the kneeling and crossing myself.

Once outside our French officer left us and we hurried to "pick up" our lady friend. She took us to another apartment building where we were greeted by an elderly woman and her daughter. Later on a young man came into the room. It was the young priest who had conducted the service. We introduced ourselves and during the conversation he inquired as to our religious beliefs. Andy, being Polish was naturally a Roman Catholic. When I told him that I was Protestant he assured me that it made no difference. He did however say that he thought I may have been Roman Catholic because every time he looked at me I was crossing myself.

The priest noticed that I was not drinking the water. He explained that it was not polluted as he had blessed it that morning.

It was not too long after that a man, with a decided limp, came into the room. He asked us a lot of questions and I remember one that he asked me about baseball. It was an old chestnut but I was sure glad that baseball was one of the sports that I had participated in my prewar days. He spoke to the priest in French, to Andy in Polish and to me in English. His languages were flawless. He told Andy that they probably disagreed on politics which led us to believe that he was of Russian origin.

Next day the mother and her daughter left for home which I understood was somewhere around the Cherbourg peninsula. In the beginning we were to have been picked up on the coast of France but something went wrong and it would be necessary for us to stay in Paris until other arrangements could be finalized.

The young priest was attempting to learn English and had many mystery novels in paperback form which I enjoyed very much. When not reading we watched the girls in the office building across the street through a pair of binoculars. We were careful not to catch the sun's rays and show a reflection to anyone who may have happened to be looking our way. At night we went with the priest to confession. While he listened to the sinners, Andy and I played pool in the recreation room. I call it that for want of a better description.

I recall one day watching an Me 109 circling around the Eiffel tower. I guess that there were no air raids on that time and he was just stooing around. We stayed with the priest for around five or six days and then one morning we were told to get ready to leave that afternoon. We were picked up by our lady friend and to pass the time of day we attended a tour of the Botanical Gardens in Paris. We did not wear watches or rings as any printing or engraving on them could have given us away.

We walked along the Seine river peering at the paintings and cards that were displayed by the vendors. As we would be taking a long train ride to the south of France, it was decided that we should partake of some nourishment. We entered a small cafe and the Madame ordered wine and food for all of us. You had to watch how you positioned your eating utensils after you had

finished the meal. If memory serves me correctly the English put the knife and fork at the right hand side of the plate while the French put them in the shape of a vee at the top of the plate. Reminds me of the story that the English wash their hands after urination while the Frenchmen wash their hands before urination.

I noticed a lavatory and as I was finding it necessary that I relieve myself got up from the table and made for the door. I opened the door and saw nothing but darkness. Someone shouted "l'allume le gauche". Did that mean left or right? I couldn't remember and as someone kept repeating this phrase I could feel a little panic setting in. Luckily I recalled the coat of arms of Canada which contained the words "le droit". My right. The light switch must therefore be on the left. I groped around and finally found it. The room was not like any that I had ever been in before. There were no toilets but only urinals. I noticed that in the urinals were two places to put your feet and in the centre a round hole. Well when in France do as the Frenchmen do. I was not a bomber command pilot but we did do dive bombing in fighter command so I let her go. I did not shout bombs away but prayed fervently that my aim was good. I managed to hit the target, finish my chores and return to the dining area.

I, along with our lady friend sensed that people were watching us. She quickly paid the bill and we were once again in the street and mingling with the passers-by. Again we strolled along the Seine. As we had some time before our train departed for Bordeaux we proceeded at a leisurely pace, a girl and two boys.

Our guide explained to us that we were to follow a man who she would be talking to at the station and that we would be given new identification and train tickets. The station was a dimly lit building much like those in England. The lady left us and approached a young fellow who was standing nearby. For all intents and purposes she was asking certain travel information of this gentleman. There were a number of Germans in the station. They were probably going on, or returning from leave. After our lady guide had finished talking to the stranger, she returned to Andy and I. We were given our new identity papers and train tickets.

She explained to me that I was a deaf mute working for the Germans; that I was a Dutch engineer and was going to the south of France to assist in the building of fortifications. The Germans at that time were concerned about an invasion by the allies into the south of France. I cannot recall the nom de plume that the Underground had given me.

Some time after the lady left our new guide strolled over to us and struck up a conversation. Once again I was to be on my own going through the gate to the platform. He explained that the ticket collector was probably pro German and that there would probably be some Gestapo in the near vicinity. The dreaded hour arrived and the guide and Andy made for the platform. I followed at a discreet distance. They did not have any difficulty in passing on to the platform. I awaited and finally found myself handing my papers and ticket in for inspection. The ticket taker did not take my identification, it was a man in civilian clothes. My God, the dreaded Gestapo!

My identification stated that I was a Dutch engineer, working for the Germans and was going to the south of France to inspect some fortifications. At that time the Germans were contemplating an attack on the southern coast of France. I was also a deaf mute. He looked at my papers and my

ticket and after a couple of minutes handed them back to me.

I had taken about six steps down the platform when someone called to me. I kept on walking, looking straight ahead, as if I hadn't heard. I suppose if I had turned around I would have been a dead duck. The Germans never missed a trick. What was more scary was that I could have been taken for a spy and quite possibly shot.

I noted the carriage door that the guide and Andy entered and made my way to that destination. I entered the compartment and took a seat opposite them. I had just gotten nicely settled when the door to the compartment opened and this beautiful young girl and, I presumed, her father entered. I took the girl to be about eighteen years old. She sat down beside me and spoke to me with the usual French greeting. It didn't take her long to attempt to open a conversation. I had to sit there like a bump a log. Our guide came to my rescue by explaining to her that I was a deaf mute. She replied to him with something like "the poor young man".

That ride to Bordeaux was probably the most exasperating part of my journey. She slept with her head on my shoulder for most of the night and I had to act the part of a gentleman.

When we arrived at the station in Bordeaux, we alit from the train but instead of going out of the station our guide took us down a flight of stairs and we made a sharp ninety degree turn into a tunnel. We all had our tickets and identification papers in our hand as they would have to be shown at the gate as we departed the station. As we rounded the corner to enter the tunnel a young fellow bumped into me. Before I knew what was going on I had new papers and a new ticket.

We did another right angle and proceeded up some more stairs. What had happened was that we had passed under the tracks and arrived at another platform. This line was to take us to a smaller village near the Pyrennes.

When we stepped out onto the platform I immediately spotted two people standing off from the other passengers. I said to myself "those fellows are evaders". That is exactly what they were. One was an American and the other was an Englishman. They were to join us for the ride to the next station and beyond.

From the new ticket I discovered that we were headed for the town of Dax. I had no idea what lay ahead as I had never heard of Dax. This was a slow local train that seemed to creep along at a snail's pace. I spent my time looking out the window at the countryside.

During this trip the fellow sitting next to me asked for a match to light his cigarette. I pretended that I did not hear him. Once again our guide came to the rescue and handed the man a match.

We had one more hurdle to cross and this would be the most difficult. This was probably the station used by many of the evaders. We were really on our own as far as passing inspection. There was the usual uniformed ticket taker but with him were two men in civilian clothes who were scrutinizing all the passengers as they passed out into the street. I doubt if anyone ever went through this ordeal without some butterflies in their stomach. Our guide went through with no hesitation. I followed after Andy with a couple of people between us. The other fellows were

bringing up the rear.

In sports I always felt that a strong offence was a good defense. With this in mind I handed the ticket taker my ticket. I was asked for identification by, I presumed Gestapo, and looking him straight in the eye produced the false papers for his inspection. At the same time I tried desperately to keep my knees from knocking in case the sound would give me away. I managed to pass inspection and as nonchalantly as I possibly could proceeded on to the street.

Our guide was waiting for us some distance down the road. We all managed to join him and followed him to a shed down a side street. There we discovered enough bicycles for a small contingent. We started to ride down the street and on to a road that would take us into the countryside and eventually to Bayonne.

We traveled for some time and by the feeling in my stomach decided that it must be getting somewhere near lunch time. Our guide must have read my mind because he pulled off the road and headed for a small grove of trees that would hide us from prying eyes. Everyone but the American had no trouble riding the bicycles. He on the other hand was pretty wobbly. I felt that he had perhaps spent more time in a car than on a bicycle

It wasn't an elaborate feast but it sure tasted good. We once again mounted our chariots and headed in a southwesterly direction towards the foothills of the Pyrennes and to freedom. During our trip we were to pass through a fairly large town which I took to be Bayonne. Here we ran into a contingent of German soldiers marching down the street. We immediately dismounted at the curb so that we would not hinder their passing. They seemed to be made up of two age groups, old men of perhaps 60 and young lads of about 14. They went down the street singing a German song just as we would do on parades such as this in Canada and England.

Once again it was necessary to split up somewhat as we had to pass over a good-sized bridge. The span was guarded by a soldier at both ends. As we passed the soldier at our entrance we showed our identity card. The soldiers didn't seem too interested at really checking them and we passed with no incidents.

Once again we were in the open country and peddling our fool heads off. The pumping was getting harder and you could judge that you were fast approaching the foothills of the mountains. On going down one hill there suddenly appeared quite a sharp turn. With the brakes these bikes had, if they had any, you were better to use the rear ones and forget the front wheel. I hardly touched the brake but put my foot into the gravel and manipulated the bike around and on down the hill.

Our American friend was not so lucky. I gathered that he put on both brakes and went flying over the handlebars. His face was a bit of a mess but I give him credit, he got on his machine and continued the journey. I think it was the smell of freedom that urged him on.

The sky was beginning to darken and you could sense that there was rain on the way. Sure enough before long there were a few sprinkles. Thank God there wasn't a downpour. It was beginning to get dark and as we passed into the village of St. Jean de Luz I heard someone start

shouting "allume, allume". On the bike was one of those generators that run off the rim. I immediately pressed it against the tire and continued down the street. Our guide turned off the main street and we deposited our trusty steeds behind a shed. From there we continued on foot and into a house

Here we were given some soup and bread. We were also told to get some rest as we would be leaving for Spain in a few hours.

The older woman seemed to be in charge. She was just a bit of a thing but she certainly had things under control. There was a young girl who I would judge to be about fourteen years old. I would think that she was Basque from her face and figure. The girls in the south of France mature much earlier than in the northern climates.

We had a meal of hot soup, beans and bread and then lay down for a couple of hours sleep. We were awakened and told to get ready to leave. I think Andy thought that he was going to have the young girl for his guide but as things turned out he was disappointed. I was the chosen one.

We headed out in a dark and drizzly night and immediately started walking up a hill. When we finally leveled off we entered a farmhouse where we were treated to goat's milk and cheese. We were also issued new shoes for our trip to Spain. They were made of a rope sole and a sturdy cloth upper. We also were divested of any remaining French francs that we had and were told to take a benzadrine tablet to sort of pep us up for the journey. The ladies left us in the care of one of the men. They were a tough looking outfit and I certainly was glad that they were on our side. These men were smugglers who would take radios, cameras along with other merchandise into Spain and return with coffee and other articles that they could sell in France on the black market.

Our guide spoke many languages. He spoke English, French, Spanish and as he was Basque he naturally spoke that language. I understand that he was fluent in many of the other European languages. He had a price on his head as he had killed a German up north in a knife fight from which he had an ugly scar on his right cheek. Believe me, he was tough and took no crap from anyone.

When the time of departure came the men hoisted their contraband on their backs. You could not miss the white circles that were painted on these bundles. I really didn't know their purpose but once outside it became evident. You could see them in the dark. We also were given stout staves cut from saplings. These were to assist us in securing better footing on the slopes. We each tied a white handkerchief at one end making it easier to see the fellow ahead of you. The paths were very slippery and we sure made good use of our staves.

The smugglers seemed to be as sure footed as mountain goats. We continued upwards for an hour or two. You lost all track of time. The terrain leveled off for a spell and the rain had stopped. It made little difference to us however as we were soaking wet by this time.

All of a sudden we started downwards. We had gone some distance when a strong aroma of coffee wafted towards us. Our guide instructed us to stop and keep crouched close to the ground. Apparently there was some communication going back and forth and it turned out that we had

met a caravan smuggling goods into France.

We continued on and then the guide told us to keep our backs to the wall and inch along watching for the white patches and handkerchiefs of those in front of us. This was quite a bit steeper than our previous descent. I probed a little in front with my stave and felt the rock path that we were walking along. All of a sudden the stave hit nothing but air. This was a very narrow ledge and believe me, if I could have wormed my way into the rock at my back I would have, to the depth of about three feet.

When we had completed our trip and arrived at the bottom we were faced with a speeding mountain torrent. On the other side was Spain. We tied a rope around our waist so that if we slipped on one of the stones there would be a man ahead and one behind to save us. Would you believe that one of us slipped and was saved by the lifeline. No it wasn't me.

INTO SPAIN

On the other side was a road running along the river bank. Our guide told us to be quiet and to watch for Spanish patrols. The spainards would turn any evaders in to the Germans who were a short distance downstream. We scurried across the road and once again started an ascent into the hills on the Spanish side. For some reason it seemed to be easier going. Perhaps it was from knowing that every step took us farther away from France and the Germans.

After climbing for some time we halted and our guide informed us that it was safe to talk. I think I could have let out a large roar to show that we had all made it. The guide brought out a package of American cigarettes. We lit up and dragged on these.

After a short rest we continued on until we were walking on a flatter plateau. We were cold and wet but no one complained. Soon we started down the other side. It was still dark, I judged somewhere around four o'clock. Later when the sky began to lighten up we could see a village in the distance and railway tracks leading into the outskirts. We followed along these tracks until we were nearly into the village. We ended up at a house on the outskirts where we were greeted by three rather large senoras. I believed that they were senoras and not señoritas.

There was a good fire burning and we crowded around to get some warmth and to dry our clothes. The guide, who had been conversing with the senoras suddenly came over to us and told us to take all our clothes off.

In front of these women?

I'm not a prude but like the rest didn't feel like stripping before this audience. Our guide wasn't fooling and pretty soon all of us were standing bare-assed. The ladies started giving us a rubdown with knobby towels which sure brought back the circulation. Thank the Lord they weren't beauty queens or the results could have been embarrassing.

Next cut came the old red flannels. I have always hated these longjohns as they itched like crazy. We all put them on, had something to eat and then were shown into bedrooms. We had to sleep two to a bed as there was not enough room for the luxury of one of your own. Before we dozed

off we were given a tumbler of cognac or brandy, I never did know the difference, and in no time all the beaten and tired airmen were sound asleep.

We were awakened at around five o'clock and told to get dressed for dinner. Our clothes had been dried and pressed by the senoras and were laid out for us. We went into the dining area not knowing what to expect. I can't remember how many courses there were but we had hot soup, fish, meat, wines and fresh fruit. There could have been other things on the table but at this time I cannot remember.

After this fabulous meal we were told that the British embassy was sending a car from Madrid and that we would be leaving about eleven o'clock that-night. When the appointed time came we said goodbye to our hosts and were escorted through some back streets to our rendezvous. Lo and behold there sat a big Buick sedan. I would judge that it was somewhere near a 1940 vintage.

Our guide now was a member of the British consulate. He instructed us that if we were stopped by the Spaniards who wore the funny hats (Guardia Civil) we were to hide under the rugs in the back and not make any noise even if prodded by a bayonet. The Spanish driver was a madman. The streets were deserted at this time of night but the roadway was narrow and he went down through the village like a man possessed. I had visions of an accident and not making it to Madrid. I guess somewhere along the way we all went to sleep. The next thing I remember was that the sun was shining brightly and everyone was busy watching the countryside.

We arrived at a hill overlooking Madrid. You could see some of the destruction left from the civil war. As we had not stopped along the way to relieve ourselves, we were told that nobody would see us if we let it all hang out at the side of the road. What a relief. We were taken into this Spanish home and there had a steaming hot bath, bacon and eggs for breakfast after which we were whisked off to the British embassy. Once through the gates and we were safe. We had made it.

Our American friend was taken to the American embassy. The Americans bought their way out of Spain and were therefore allowed to see the sights. Our American friend came around to see us and spent a few minutes chatting with us. We were never to see him again. There was now an Englishman, a Pole and myself.

Unlike the Americans we were destined to stay in within the protection of the British embassy walls and did not have the freedom of the city. Our amusement consisted of reading, drinking a dark beer and eating candy-coated almonds. Some lady donated an amount of ten pounds to all escapees on reaching the embassy and it was with this money and through the kindness of our senora that we were able to purchase these treats and some souvenirs.

One night we attended a movie on embassy grounds. I can't remember the title but I do recall that the language was Spanish with English sub-titles flashing across the bottom of the screen. There was also an old upright piano in one of the rooms that we frequented. I shall never forget the piece of sheet music that was on this old relic, it was Sonny Dunham's theme song "Memories of you". I played it using the one finger method and it has ever remained in my memory.

Before we were to be deported as undesirable characters to the Republic of Spain we had to receive false identities. We were to go out as army escapees. I understood that you were not allowed to depart the country as airmen. My nom de plume was to be Captain Miles Standish of Longfellow fame.

Finally the time came for us to depart. We were taken to the railway station under escort. We were to be accompanied to the Spanish - Gibraltar border by a representative of the British government and by a Spanish policeman who would fall into the category of an American FBI agent, gun and all. We were escorted to the train car by Spanish soldiers, the ones who wear those funny army hats. We were taken to our compartment by our friend and guard who we dubbed Dick Tracy.

I moved out into the corridor to watch the crowd wandering up and down the platform. There was this blonde Spanish girl parading in front of our carriage and was she ever stacked. They reminded me of twin searchlights pointing to the heavens. I couldn't resist the temptation. I tried to open the window to whistle at her but the damn thing wouldn't budge. I discovered that they worked the opposite to the English carriage windows. I did manage a wolf call but when one of Franco's boys took a swipe at my head with the butt end of his rifle I decided to make a hasty retreat. I pulled quite sharply on the window strap and lo and behold the glass shattered. I had visions of going to jail so I beat a hasty retreat and seated myself in our compartment as far away from the door as I possibly could get. Sure enough two guards came through the train, peering into the compartments trying to find the perpetrator of the dastardly crime. They never did find the person responsible.

It was late in the night when we left the station in Madrid. We did get some sleep and when the sun rose we munched on sandwiches that had been provided. Our guard decided to tell a joke. We didn't understand a word that he said but it must have been very funny because every so often he would roar with laughter. We all laughed at him, which he took to mean that we understood and this caused him to roar louder.

One of us decided that he had to go to the lavatory. The Spaniard escorted him to the john and guarded the door. When they returned and we found out what had happened we decided to have a little fun. Someone else decided that he had to go. We kept this up until the guard asked our guide if we would promise not to try to escape if he let us go to the lavatory by ourselves. So ended the fun. He really was a nice fellow. He bought us some oranges, sugar-coated nuts, and some meat (like a battered hot dog) on a stick. They were a little greasy but we ate them anyway. We watched the olive groves pass by but became very bored with nothing to do.

The Frenchmen who had been in prison came in for their ration of tin meat and biscuits. There was supposed to be a tin of meat and two packages of biscuits for two men. I had them brought in by twos to get their allotment. I noticed very quickly that the supply was going down too fast. It was my Polish friend. He was dishing out the grub. He had always resented that I was senior in rank but younger in age. I tore a strip off him and said that we would do without ourselves rather than have the French do without.

We arrived at the station at La Linea, a small town on the border of Spain and Gibraltar. We

were now bussed to customs and requested to open our bags for inspection. About all we had were some small souvenirs. We did of course have interrogation. Name, rank etc. My answers were as follows: Captain Miles Standish. I had escaped from the Germans while being taken to a POW camp on a train. I had no recollection of the names of the places that I had passed through at this time.

Your father's Name? Joseph Standish.

Your mother's name? Mary Cook.

Where did they live? 234 Jarvis Street in Toronto Canada

You had to make the answers simple in case they repeated a question.

GIBRALTER AND HOME

We now proceeded in the British fortress of Gibraltar. We were warned not to discuss anything with anybody. Spies you know.

We were outfitted with airforce battle dress, a wedge hat, RAF pilot's wings, and an identity card. The date was November 13, 1943. I felt that some of these people were as crazy as the monkeys that infested the caverns on the rock. I kept feeling something hitting the back of my head. I looked around and there was this officer shooting peas at me. I had wondered for what purpose dishes of peas were placed about the mess. Now I knew. There happened to be one of these dishes close at hand. I reached in and took a handful, wheeled around and let fly. From the looks of the officer he really didn't appreciate a full salvo and I really didn't give a damn.

The garrison was made up of a contingent of Polish soldiers. As they were Andy's fellow countrymen he wanted to visit their mess. You did not travel the streets of Gibraltar by yourself after dark. He asked me if I would go along. I really did not want to but figured he really needed an escort. We arrived at the mess and he became swallowed up in conversation with the Polish officers. Nobody even noticed that I was there. I made my way to the bar and partially by sign language secured a drink. After a couple I asked Andy if he was ready to leave. I got such a cold response that I told him to go to hell and that I was leaving on my own. I returned to our mess. I guess he had some of his buddies bring him home. After this episode I completely ignored him.

It was no great loss., I don't think the Poles and Canadians ever did get along. It was about the second afternoon on going down the main street on a cigarette shopping expedition (American cigarettes) that I noticed a large cruiser anchored in the harbour. About the same time I saw a group of sailors coming down the street all decked out in navy whites. Their hats were different from any that I had ever seen. When I got close to them I noticed that the bands were printed with the word 'Italia". My God this was the enemy. Apparently they had surrendered their ship and dropped anchor in Gib. The first night they were there they came ashore and were severely beaten by some of the Royal Navy hence they only appeared ashore in the daytime.

Since I was in Gibraltar I decided to go to the cemetery and look up Rip Mutch's grave. I had heard that he had been killed in the Beurling crash. As I could not locate it I enquired at the

caretaker's house. He told me that now the dead were buried at sea as there was no more room in the cemetery.

I wasn't long in getting a flight back to England on a Liberator. There were other passengers, some returning to England from the near east and also Gibraltar. We took off from the Rock late in the evening. The cabin of the plane was dark and I couldn't see the passenger seated next to me. The accommodations weren't much to write home about but who cared. We were bound for jolly old England. I soon dozed off to sleep. I was awakened by someone shaking my shoulder. I looked over and saw red tabs on his lapel. He was a general but I didn't see his rank, probably a major general. He was very worried about the wing tips moving up and down. I took a look and still half asleep muttered that when they stopped vibrating to wake me up and I would jump. We didn't have any parachutes and I guess that really bothered him.

We were over water and I could see the sun off the starboard wing. We started to turn to the port and then straightened out for some time. We then took another ninety degree turn which meant that we were now heading south. We flew some minutes on this heading and then turned toward the east. I figured that we were doing a square search for England and that this Aussie crew didn't know where they were going. Eventually we were over land and I certainly hoped that it was England. We landed at Reading and were immediately taken through customs.

The English sergeant had to pay duty on the oranges, cigarettes and souvenirs that he had. Czerwinski, the Polish pilot had to do the same. I was next and asked what I had to declare. I told the bloke that I had the same as the others. He said "you are not RAF"? I replied that I was RCAF. I didn't have to pay a farthing.

We boarded a train for London and reported for interrogation. After that I was given a few days and ended up at 132 Mooreside Road with all the goodies. I even had a box of cigars which Uncle Jim and I puffed on. Aunt Anne took the oranges to her church to give to the kids. They had never seen oranges and didn't know what to do with them.

I had to report to RCAF headquarters and have a medical. I guess they wanted to know if I had picked up VD. I had some impetigo on my face which had been looked after in Gibraltar but these doctors took another look and put more blue jelly on the sores. A little WAAF came out and handed me a bottle. I knew what I was supposed to do but asked her anyway. I had stopped for a draught on my way to HQ and when I arrived made straight for the men's room. I told her I didn't think that I could fulfill her wishes. She told me to try. I came back empty. I explained that it was no use so the MOs continued on with the medical. I was all finished with everything but the urine test. There was the little girl waiting with the bottle. Once again I explained that it was no use. She quickly told me to go into the john and squeeze it.

I must have embarrassed the little girl no end because when I went in to see the group captain, the medical head, he said she came into his office red as a beet when she told him it was useless. Anyway he said that I had passed with flying colours and was fit for flying duties.

It was now on to Damhead hall outside Worthington and then on to Liverpool to catch the Mauritania. On arriving on board! was told that I was to be in charge of one of the mess decks. I

told the officer in charge that I was reporting sick. His reply was that I looked healthy to him.

I lifted my pant leg and all he could see was my underwear tops coated with blood and puss. I had been to a dance in the village the night before and a boil on my leg had burst on my return to barracks. Not wishing to miss Christmas at home I had bound it up with the first thing that I could get hold of. My leg was also swollen from ankle to knee. He told me to report to sick bay immediately.

The doctor immediately put me into bed with a rounded covering over my leg. I received hot compresses every four hours, night and day, until the poison was all extracted from my leg and it was back to normal. He came in one morning and asked me why I had not reported sick on shore. I told him the reason. He said that there was a good chance that I could have had it amputated if I had waited much longer.

The trip home was uneventful, the food was great and the care terrific. When we docked in Halifax I had my luggage carried to the train, secured a compartment with another officer and for the most part was treated with great respect. An old buddy from 421, Bill Wendt, from Hibbing, Minnesota was also on board. He had evaded in Italy. Sad to say that he was killed on his second tour of operations.

We had a number of English war brides on the train and what some of their husbands had told them of their destinations in Canada was something else. One of them was going to a ranch in Labrador. I felt sorry for them. The first day on the train, about bedtime one of the brides asked one of the Canadians if he would mind asking the porter to make up her berth. The fellow asked her why she didn't ask herself. She said that she didn't speak Indian. The porter was black and she thought that he was an Indian. Was she ever embarrassed when one of the boys asked for her in English. At one place in New Brunswick the train came to a stop at a station. There was a blackout on the train, enemy action you know, so all the blinds were down. I peaked out into the black cold night and there was a woman going to meet her in-laws who were standing on the platform. I felt sorry for her being let off at this desolate way station.

We arrived in Montreal and the train had a layover while we had breakfast in the diner of the terminal. It was here that I had a run in with the Gestapo, the service police. I was sitting on a bench with some of the other passengers when this F/O walked by. He stopped and asked why I was wearing a wedge hat off station. Apparently this was a no-no in Canada.

He also asked to see my ID card. In order to get it out I had to undo my greatcoat. Horrors I was wearing battledress and off the station too. I produced my identification and made still another boo boo. It gave my rank as a Flying officer. I still had a Pilot officer ribbon on my greatcoat. He became just a little obnoxious and I decided to end this little interview. I had a note from overseas stating that I was exempt from wearing regulation dress as I was an ex POW until I could get my clothes when they arrived from Uxbridge in England. The gendarme never even apologized so I decided to give him a hard time telling him that I probably had more time at the top-of-a-loop than he had in the service etc. It was time to board the train for Ottawa so left him standing with his mouth open.

When we arrived at the station in Ottawa there we were met by girls handing out cigarettes and kisses, the lip style. We were transported to Rockcliffe where we were to be billeted until we were cleared for leave. All evaders had to pass another medical after which four of us decided to go downtown to see if we could obtain a decent meal. Wendt and I sort of teamed up perhaps because we had both been on the same squadron. While going down the main drag we met four WDs. They gave us a smart salute and passed on. We had taken about six steps when we heard this whistle. We turned around to see the origin and there were these four WDs standing grinning at us. There always has to be a first for everything. Ottawa had more women than men at that time so I guess these girls were pretty hard up. We didn't pick them up as we were more interested in food. We must have been malade de le tete.

Well we cleared Rockcliffe and took the train for Toronto and then had to change for Clinton. I didn't go straight home but laid overnight in Toronto. I had been corresponding with a girl, a niece of Earl Cooper, an old Clintonite who had lived behind our house. I was not there too long as I found out that during my escape she considered me to have been killed and became engaged to another fellow from Clinton. I should have tumbled that this was happening from her letters but as I was very naive at that time I could not see the trees for the forest. I never considered it a great loss as I had no intention of matrimony.

I did phone home to let my parents know when I would be arriving in Clinton. They met me at the station in Stratford and continued on to Clinton with me. My God I think most of the town met the train when we arrived in Clinton, school kids and everything. Mrs. Walter Oakes, the doctor's wife, I hardly knew her, gave me a hug and a kiss. I was sort of embarrassed. I was glad to be home but after a couple of weeks became bored. I had a duplicate logbook of one of the boys from the squadron so made a trip to Toronto to deliver it to his family. I also picked up some records at a secondhand record shop.

When my leave was over I took the train to Lachine for posting overseas again. I rode to Toronto with a girl that was a couple of years ahead of me in school, Gertrude Holmes, which helped to break the monotony. My mother was the only one who went to the station with me to see me off. My father, as when I left the first time, couldn't bear to see me go. I really felt that my mother was the tower of strength in the family.

At Lachine all the repats got together for a night on the City of Montreal. We got rid of most of our Canadian money but kept enough in case of emergency. We embarked by train for New York from where we set sail on the Queen Mary. I remember seeing the statute of Liberty as we were leaving and that is all. It seems we had managed to pick up some spirits before we boarded and none of us was feeling any pain.

BACK TO THE WAR

Once again we docked at Greenoch in Scotland. It had been a rough crossing but the large American contingent, yes they were in the war, had a dance band that was equal to Miller, Dorsey, etc. with them which helped to break the dismal hours aboard ship. Once again it was down to the south coast to Bournemouth. It was considerably different from the first time as we knew what to expect.

I asked for a posting back to 421 squadron and was told that there were no request postings. Good old RAF and their look-down-our-noses Limies. I wangled leave to London and immediately made for RCAF headquarters. I asked to see the posting officer. To my surprise it was my old adjutant. He told me that there was no problem that I would be going back to 421. When I returned to Bournemouth and the postings came out I was asked were I got all my pull. I said that you had to know the ropes.

I reported to Kenley the middle of February 1944. My new squadron commander was Wally Conrad, a fellow evader. There were three of us evaders; Wally, F/L Eddie Gimbel, an American, and myself. It was back to the old routine; patrols escorts and weather reccos. We stayed at Kenley until April 18th at which time we moved under canvas to Tangmere. Before we were able to take off for our new drome the weather rolled in and we were grounded for a couple of days.

Being fighter pilots we could not abstain from having a good time in the mess. The bar was our favourite watering hole. Someone suggested that we write our names on the walls of the barroom. After that it was the old footprints up the wall across the ceiling, which was fairly high, and down the other side. This was done with ink and bare feet. Someone decided that we should leave the imprint of a bare ass on one of the walls. Everyone put his name in a hat and the lucky fellow was drawn. Down came his pants and underwear, on went the ink, and up on the wall went the imprint.

Someone, an artist perhaps, then completed the drawing by adding the genitals of the male. It was quite impressive.

The next morning some females saw our work and covered it over with a picture of the King and Queen. I don't think that the English thought it very funny as the squadron CO's were hauled up before the station Group Captain, also an Englishman, with the threat of severe action on his part. Our Wing Commander at that time was a real prince of a guy by the name of Lloyd Chadburn. He had got wind of what was going on and "inadvertently" burst in on the gathering. He inquired what the squadron leaders where doing in the groupies office. On being told that they were to be put on charge for not constraining their men he immediately said that he was the one to be charged as he had taken part in the whole shebang. You just didn't place a DSO and bar, DFC with a court-martial offense. The outcome was that the wing would pay all damages out of our mess fund. So it was on to Tangers.

We were at Tangmere from April 118 until June 16. During this time we did quite a number of Ramrods, escort to medium bombers, Rodeos, strafing anything that moved and patrols. On June 5 we were confined to camp and immediately knew what was going to take place. Our Job was to patrol the beaches of Normandy. I was lucky to have been chosen for the first flight and it was a very impressive sight to see the Channel filled with ships along with the paratroopers and gliders going inland with the troops. With the weather being what it was we had a clear view of the troops going ashore, the navy blasting the shore batteries with their heavy guns and the Germans retaliating with their own shore batteries.

On June 15th we ran into the Luftwaffe over Caen and after a dogfight in which we were outnumbered 20-30 against our 12 we were forced to land at B.2 strip (Bazenville, France) to refuel and rearm. We managed to destroy 10 of the Me 109's. My cannons jammed after getting one and I was forced to rely on my machine guns alone. We landed for good at the same aerodrome on June 16. It was now dive bombing, armed recces and patrols. There was always an abundance of flak to contend with on a lot of these recces and patrols.

On August 28 we moved to a new drome called B.26. You had to watch landing and taxiing as it had been hammered with bombs. Same old routine. This aerodrome was near the French village of Illiers l'Eveque. We stayed here until September 22, once again doing the same work as before. We now moved into Belgium to a place designated as B.68 (Beauvechain). We were to remain here until October 1st and then move on to B.82, Grave in the Netherlands. Our duty here was to protect the bridges of Nijmegen and Arnhem.

On October 2 our airfield was bombed five times and the Red Indians ran into about 175 FW 190's and ME 109's. I was leading one section while the CO S/L Prest was leading the other. We destroyed 3 of the Germans while a further 5 were damaged. On October 4, I was to take my last flight in a Spitfire. I was now put into hospital with a slight case of pneumonia. It was also the end of my second tour.

I left 421 with many regrets and headed back to England and thence to Canada. We were not now allowed to do more than two tours. It was once again Halifax, Ottawa and Clinton. After leave at home I was posted to Fingal, a bombing and gunnery school and had the opportunity to fly the mighty Anson.

As fighter pilots were not needed any longer, and as I refused to enlist in the permanent forces I was sent to discharge centre at Manning pool in Toronto. I had made the complete circle and on March 15, 1945 received my honourable discharge. So ends an exciting chapter in my life.