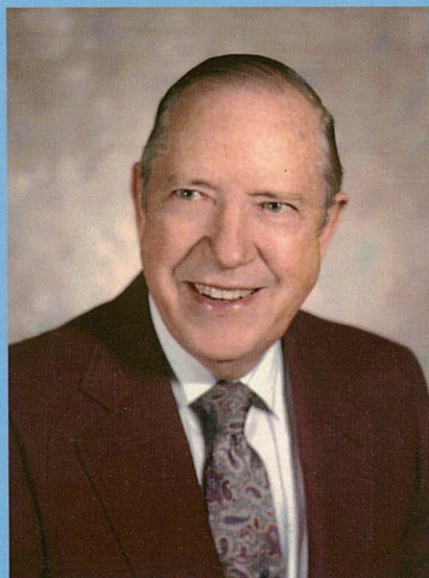




**THEY HELPED ME ESCAPE:**  
From Amsterdam to Gibraltar in 1944

**Clayton C. David**



Clayton C. David, Associate Professor Emeritus, West Virginia Northern Community College, Wheeling, West Virginia, was a pilot during World War II. He had the distinction of evading capture and escaping from behind enemy lines when he bailed out of his battle-damaged B-17 Flying Fortress over Holland. After four years on active duty he returned to his work in agribusiness, but remained active in the Air Force Reserves, retiring as a lieutenant colonel.

Following more than 25 years in agribusiness, David formed his own company, The Youcan Company, specializing in management and supervisory seminars for business and industry. Conducting seminars was his major assignment at West Virginia Northern Community College.

Lt. Colonel David was a member of the Air Force Association, Reserve Officers Association, American Society for Training and Development, Eighth Air Force Historical Society, and a director of the Air Force Escape and Evasion Society. He held a B.S. degree from Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, and has done graduate work at several universities.

Clayton passed away on May 15, 2009 at the age of eighty-nine. His words will live on in this book and in the memory of him held by his family and friends.

**They Helped Me Escape:  
From Amsterdam to Gibraltar in 1944**

By Clayton C. David

Copyright 2010 by Clayton C. David

Layout by Amanda Henry

## Introduction

With his battle-damaged B-17 on fire as a result of a two and a half hour air battle, which had seen his group fight its way to the target and back on 11 January 1944, co-pilot Clayton C. David parachuted to safety and landed on a dike of the Zuider Zee in enemy-controlled territory near Amsterdam, Holland. From there his life became a fascinating endeavor to evade capture in Holland, Belgium, and France to escape into Spain where he would be arrested and interned until placed in British and American hands.

The escape, which required some four and a half months, found David eye-to-eye with the police, receiving help from ordinary citizens, on his own at times, or being escorted by outstanding resistance workers. Although many of his known helpers paid with their lives for their part in the resistance, some survived the prisons and concentration camps. Still others went unnoticed and were never arrested.

The author and his helpers, both male and female, all had one common objective. They were in pursuit of freedom for themselves and their countries. When these survivors from both sides of the Atlantic get together, they are keenly aware of the price that was often paid to achieve freedom, but it had to be done. This story looks in on the lives of the helpers years later to learn the effect that the war had on these brave people and how assisting Allied airmen touched their lives.

## Acknowledgment

I see the events in our lives as primarily the result of the choices we make for ourselves or of those made for us. Some of these choices are clear and distinctly based on factual information. Some are a matter of selecting the least undesirable projected outcome, and still others are a gamble on instincts which may be influenced by a power greater than man. Happenings that are casually referred to as luck may occur as a result of being prepared to provide a power greater than man the opportunity to guide our decisions.

My decision to write this book was based on facts, observations, and the urging of others. The support and help of my loving wife, Lenora "Scotty" David, has made it possible. I wish also to acknowledge the encouragement of friends and my evasion helpers who provided much information. Thanks to Simone Scales, who was born and reared in Belgium, now living in the United States. She was most gracious in using her language skills to translate Dutch and French information for me.

I believe that freedom is taken for granted by too many Americans and in that context it has a tendency to lose its value. The desire to have my readers understand the value of freedom when it is lost or threatened is a feeling that propelled me. The clincher was the experiences we had in 1983 and 1985 when we tried saying thanks to those who had helped me and fliers like me that were shot down and landed behind enemy lines. Every time we tried to say thanks and show appreciation to those people of the Netherlands, Belgium, and France, we found them thanking us for helping make their freedom from German control a reality.

The comradeship which exists when downed Allied airmen and their wartime helpers get together as

individuals, or at a meeting of an Air Forces Escape and Evasion Society, is electrifying. There is an indescribable closeness among these people who have shared the risks of death and have survived – even after years of separation.

We have now made six trips back to Europe since this book was initially published in 1987 with all copies sold. Each trip has added to the facts as I knew them. Our sons, Lynn and James David along with Lynn's son, Jonathan, have had the opportunity to retrace my route across Holland, Belgium, France and the over the Pyrenees Mountains to Spain. With my wife Scotty, three generations have put the pressure on me to complete this Second Edition. Their experiences of walking in my footsteps 50 plus years later will be covered in an Epilogue put together by Brent Engel in hopes it will inspire others to place a greater value on history.

Clayton C. David  
Hannibal, MO

# Contents

Introduction.....	v
Acknowledgment.....	vi
Chapter 1 – Pilot Training .....	1
Chapter 2 – Survival .....	12
Chapter 3 – The Netherlands .....	27
Chapter 4 – Travel by Train .....	39
Chapter 5 – The First Border Crossing .....	70
Chapter 6 – To Brussels and Paris .....	77
Chapter 7 – Paris .....	83
Chapter 8 – Arrests and Escape .....	89
Chapter 9 – Traveling Alone on French Trains.....	98
Chapter 10 – A Leap into the Unknown .....	109
Chapter 11 – The Free French Connection .....	121
Chapter 12 – An Escort with a Lookout .....	135
Chapter 13 – The Pyrenees – Beauty and Mystery.....	139
Chapter 14 – The Crossing .....	149
Chapter 15 – Spain Arrest and Internment .....	155



Chapter 16 – Return to England .....	167
Chapter 17 – The Faith of Family and Friends.....	172
Chapter 18 – Return to Duty .....	176
A Tribute to My Helpers .....	178
Epilogue by Brett Engel .....	180

