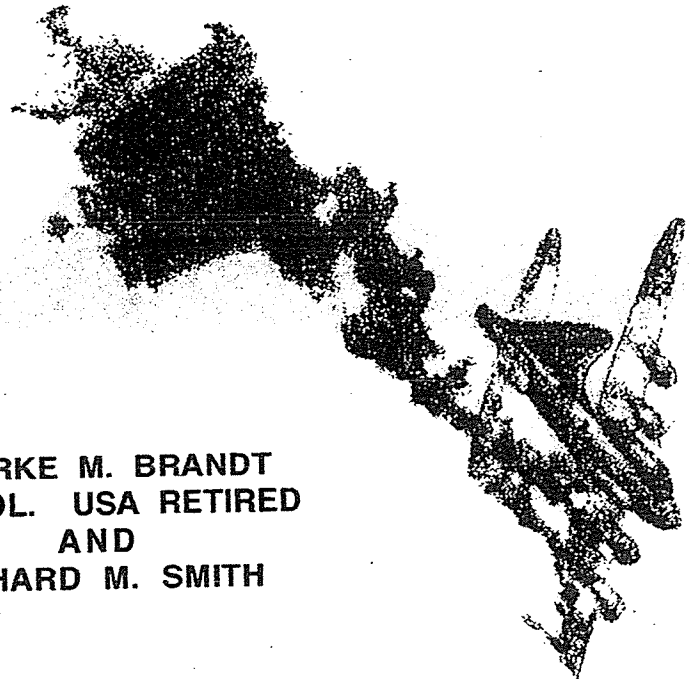




# HIDE-AND-SEEK WITH THE GERMAN ARMY

PART II

THE ADVENTURES OF THE CREW OF  
THE *DESTINY'S TOT* AFTER BEING  
SHOT DOWN OVER FRANCE



CLARKE M. BRANDT  
LT. COL. USA RETIRED  
AND  
RICHARD M. SMITH

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## FORWARD

In Part I of *HIDE-AND-SEEK WITH THE GERMAN ARMY*, Dick Smith, pilot of the B-17 *DESTINY'S TOT*, describes his World War II service with emphasis on what happened after his bomber was shot down over France on 30 December 1943. Several other crewmen are mentioned, particularly those that evaded with Dick, but the story is essentially his.

Now in Part II, we can relive the integrated experiences of each of the ten men in the crew from the time the bomber is attacked by German fighters until the last man returns home from the war. Seven men play hide and seek with the German army, but three are so badly wounded that they can't hide, so this story carries you through the evasion network of the French Underground as well as into the German prison compounds of American POWs.

Of the ten men in this story who fought and were overwhelmed by German air superiority on that fateful day in December of 1943, only four are still alive; Dick Smith, Bill Booher, Lou Feingold, and Tony Onesi. These men must be credited with providing the vast amount of information contained in this book. Alberta Eshuis, widow of Jerry Eshuis, Richard Tarkington, son of Warren Tarkington, and Milton Mills, fellow evader with Ken Morrison must be thanked for providing both invaluable information and background material and photographs used in this book.

You, the reader, may note some discrepancies or variances between narrations in Part I and Part II and perhaps even within Part II itself. It has been 54 years since these events took place, memories do fade a little, and new facts have come to light. Each narrator relates how he saw the situation at any specified time, and how he saw it and how he interrupted it may vary from his crewmate who is nearby. This story is a composite of facts contained in WWII Intelligence Escape and Evasion Reports, men's memories, newspaper articles, and accounts of trips taken back to the scene of the 1943-1944 action. You will find the story exciting and accented by both humor and suspense. These ten men experienced adventures that most of us love to read about but are always glad that it was someone else undergoing the trials and dangers, not us. It was the courage of men such as these that defeated the dictatorial powers of the early 1940s.

Lt. Col. CLARKE M. BRANDT  
U.S. Army Retired

## THE AUTHORS



Lt. Col. Clarke M Brandt is a retired Army officer whose association with the military began in October 1940 when his father was activated with other reserve officers. He was commissioned in the Regular Army in June 1953 and served until his retirement in May 1981. He served in the Vietnam War with the 1st Air Cavalry Division where he was awarded the Combat Medical Badge. Since his retirement, he has taught at Fitzsimons Army Medical Center where he activated the Outreach Program, a program to record personal accounts of WWII history and to provide the information to various military history agencies as well as school systems.



Richard M. Smith, a native of Minnesota, enlisted in the Army in December 1941 to become a bomber pilot and in 1943 was the commander of a B-17 in England. He and his crew were shot down over France on 30 December 1943. That event is the basis of this story. After WWII, he graduated from Notre Dame University and then went to work in the agricultural field. In 1964, he helped organize the Air Forces Escape and Evasion Society, AFEES. In 1996, he was elected the President of AFEES. In this position, he encouraged the members to record their WWII service for the benefit of future generations.

CREW OF THE DESTINY'S TOT

THE LIEUTENANTS



1st Lt. Richard M. Smith  
Pilot



2nd Lt. William R. Booher  
Copilot



2nd Lt. Louis (NMI) Feingold  
Navigator



2nd Lt. Warren C. Tarkington  
Bombardier

## THE SERGEANTS



T/Sgt. Alphonse M. Mele  
Radio Operator



T/Sgt. Kenneth A. Morrison  
Flight Engineer and  
Top Turret Gunner



S/Sgt. Robert F. Adams  
Waist Gunner



S/Sgt. Jerry (NMI) Eshuis  
Ball Gunner



S/Sgt. Thomas G. O'Hearn  
Tail Gunner



S/Sgt. Anthony (NMI) Onesi  
Waist Gunner

## CHAPTER 1

### OUR LAST MISSION

#### \*\*\* THE FINAL BOMB RUN \*\*\*

Twenty-five is the magic number. Twenty-five missions and it's back to the good old USA! For most of the men of the *DESTINY'S TOT*, this is the midpoint of their projected combat careers. Lt. Bill Booher, the copilot, and S/Sgt. Jerry Eshuis, down in the ball turret, are one mission ahead of the rest of the crew as they are flying their 14th mission. S/Sgt. Adams, a waist gunner, is on his 16th combat flight and 2nd Lt. Louis Feingold, the recently assigned navigator, is leading the pack with 20 missions. Lou has only five more missions to go, and is looking forward to being home by the end of January, 1944.

Mission 13, as shown in the log books, is a raid on Ludwigshafen, Germany flown on 30 December 1943. It is not suppose to be unusually hazardous, but any raid over enemy territory carries the potential for some risk. All the crew have flown together for a few missions so they feel confident in each other's abilities. 1st Lt. Richard "Dick" Smith is at the controls as pilot and commander of the aircraft. 2nd Lt. William "Bill" Booher sits in the right seat in the cockpit as copilot. Down in the nose section, the bombardier, 2nd Lt. Warren "Tark" or "Red Dog" Tarkington, sits ready to use his Norden bomb sight to deliver the bombs on target. Immediately behind him at a small desk sits 2nd Lt. Louis "Lou" Feingold, the navigator. Back in the plane's fuselage are the enlisted men of the crew. T/Sgt. Kenneth "Ken" Morrison mans the upper turret, a position that allows him to be near the cockpit and to function as flight engineer. Aft of the bomb bay, T/Sgt. Alphonse "Al" Mele is seated in his radio room tending to his radio equipment. Further to the rear and aft of the bomb bay S/Sgt. Robert "Bob" Adams mans the starboard waist machine gun while S/Sgt. Anthony "Tony" Onesi mans the port waist gun. Below them curled up in the ball turret is S/Sgt. Jerry Eshuis. Bringing up the rear and alone in the tail turret is S/Sgt. Thomas "Gene" O'Hearn. This then is the crew of the *DESTINY'S TOT* on the fateful day in December, 1943.

The flight from the home base in Horham, England has been uneventful. The 95th Bomb Group, of which the *DESTINY'S TOT* is part, is trailing the 100th and 390th Bomb Groups. Both British and American fighters provide escort most of the way, but they turn back before the bomber formations reach the target. The 95th Bomb Group is now flying at 30,000 feet and nearing the Initial Point (IP) where the bomb run will begin. At 12:43 p.m., the *DESTINY'S TOT* reaches the IP and Dick Smith follows the lead bomber and turns into the correct heading for the bomb run. Warren Tarkington goes to work. The bomb bay doors open and he concentrates on the lead bomber. When Tark sees the bombs fall away from the lead bomber, he toggles the



bomb release switch and the bomb load of the *DESTINY'S TOT* falls free. Immediately Dick Smith turns the aircraft with the rest of the group and heads for home on the assigned course.

Obviously the German antiaircraft crews are busy and doing their best to make the Americans pay a price for the raid. There is plenty of flak over the target. Without warning, a piece of metal rips through the floor of the bomber and lodges in an instrument panel near the navigator, but the *DESTINY'S TOT* flies on. Number 3 engine, the inboard starboard engine, has taken some flak, but it continues to operate. The pilot begins having trouble keeping up with the formation as it flies away from the target and starts its homeward journey. The *DESTINY'S TOT* is slowly drifting to the rear of the formation as the oil pressure in number 4 engine continues to drop rapidly. Unfortunately for the crew, the 95th Bomb Group is the last group over the target and there are no formations to which the *DESTINY'S TOT* can fall back to for protection. As Dick Smith descends to a lower altitude, number 4 engine, the outboard starboard engine, starts to run away and eventually the crank shaft snaps, thus leaving the propeller in a drag position and significantly reducing the speed of the bomber even more. Meanwhile, the *DESTINY'S TOT* is slowly making its way over northern France. Concern among the crew is increasing by the minute as the bomber struggles on alone. At this time in the war, there are no American fighter escorts that can pick up and safely escort damaged planes home unless they are very close to the French coast, and the Smith crew is still east of Paris. Dick Smith sees a British Spitfire fighter way up ahead and attempts to contact it on the radio to ask for support, but the pilot of the Spitfire never answers. Perhaps he never hears the call for help or perhaps he is out of operational range but either way the result is the same. The *DESTINY'S TOT* will have no fighter escort in its time of need and will have to carry on alone.

### **\*\*\* DESTINY'S TOT BATTLES GERMAN FIGHTERS \*\*\***

It is now shortly after 3 p.m. Thursday afternoon. Dick Smith is flying the aircraft and Bill Booher is copilot and functioning as fire control officer in case of enemy attack. Suddenly Adams and Onesi, at their waist gun positions, sight a lone German fighter, a Me 109 and one of the best in the German inventory. The German pilot drifts back of the *DESTINY'S TOT* and positions himself high and to the rear of the bomber. He radios for reinforcements while probably thinking the Americans can scratch that B-17. Gene O'Hearn, in the tail turret, can watch the German fighter as the pilot waits for reinforcements. Soon six other fighters appear in the sky and the battle begins.

Lou Feingold up forward in the nose section calls out, "A fighter at 9 o'clock" and pulls the trigger on his machine gun. Immediately Red Dog Tarkington joins in the battle by firing his machine gun too. A German fighter pilot bears in on the *DESTINY'S TOT* but breaks off just 50 feet from the bomber. It's going to be a hectic time for the next few minutes!

Over the intercom, Tarkington hears that O'Hearn back in the tail turret has been wounded, but he can't hear how badly. Then the intercom goes dead. It's going to be tough trying to coordinate a bomber crew under attack with no functioning intercom system!

The German plan of attack is simple; start high, go down in a power dive under the bomber's tail, pull up and rake the fuselage with machine gun fire. Because of this attack scheme, it is the sergeants in the rear of the *DESTINY'S TOT* that sustain all the wounds. Both waist gunners and the tail gunner receive serious wounds while the ball gunner sustains less severe wounds. The men up front miraculously escape the thousands of German bullets fired at the bomber. Al Mele can really count his blessings as a German fighter attacks with 20 mm shells and one enters the radio room and blows Mele to the floor. The radio room is a wreck and on fire, but Al's guardian angel is working overtime to keep him safe.

Dick Smith can see no fighters to his front and is at the controls frantically trying to evade the German fighters attacking from the rear and keep his damaged plane aloft. His copilot, Bill Booher, is desperately doing what he can to help and trying to direct the fire of the gunners, but it appears it is going to be a losing battle.

Everyone in the Smith crew who has a machine gun is now blazing away at the attacking German fighters. Down in the nose section, Tarkington and Feingold see fighters out their windows. Lou remembers thinking "I'm dead!", but the action is so fast and furious, he doesn't have time to dwell on that thought and he keeps on firing. A German pilot starts an attack run at 12 o'clock but veers off to come in at 9 o'clock with all wing guns blazing. All who are firing machine guns are positive they have scored hits. Tark is firing from his bombardier's position in the nose at a German fighter pressing the attack at 2 o'clock. He reports, after returning to England two months later, that he hit and set the fighter afire and that it was burning the length of the fuselage as it went down into a cloud bank. Jerry Eshuis, manning the twin 50 caliber machine guns in the ball turret, also claims to have hit and downed two attackers. Certainly the chances are that some German fighters were damaged, but the French underground reported no German fighters crashed in this area on 30 December 1943. Perhaps the fighters managed to limp home or crashed in another area before arriving at the home base. There is no way to ascertain the German fighter aircraft status after this determined battle.

**\*\*\* LET'S GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE! \*\*\***

As the *DESTINY'S TOT* struggles on towards the French coast, it is being methodically shot to pieces by German fighters, and it is getting more and more difficult to keep the plane airborne. Dick Smith and his copilot Bill Booher are in the cockpit, desperately striving to keep the plane in the air. The wings have gaping holes in them, the intercom system and hydraulic systems are shot to shreds, and there is a fire in the radio room that Al Mele is trying to put out with a fire extinguisher. The electrical system is gone and with it the inter-crew communications and the electrically operated gun turrets. Smith, as commander of the aircraft, decides it is time to get his crew out. Booher agrees with the decision. By now there is no chance of saving the aircraft or even of making an emergency landing. Smith rings the alarm bell, but no one remembers ever hearing it. The system was probably shot away by then. The last transmission Lou Feingold remembers is Dick Smith radioing for a fix on his current location.

The copilot sees Ken Morrison, the flight engineer and top turret gunner, out of his turret and standing between the cockpit seats. Bill turns to Ken and says "Get the navigator, the bombardier, and yourself out of the nose hatch." Morrison then quickly buckles on his chest chute and heads for the escape hatch and goes out into the slip-stream. If he warns the navigator and bombardiers as he heads out the hatch, his warning is not heard.

Meanwhile down in the nose, Tark and Lou are firing away at German fighters. Feingold remembers Tarkington telling him once that if they ever have to bail out, he'll beat him out the door. Now since the hatch is to the rear of the navigator's desk, Lou doesn't seem to understand how Warren is going to accomplish this feat. After firing a burst at a German fighter and reporting that he set it afire, Red Dog looks around and sees Morrison, the top turret gunner and flight engineer, going out his escape hatch. This gives him a clue it's time to go. Warren yells at Lou, "Let's get the hell out of here!" and "I'm going to beat you out!" Lou answers, "How are you going to do that? I'm right here." Feingold remembers seeing Tarkington immediately taking off his oxygen mask and ear phones and diving over his head for the escape hatch. Lou is thinking, "Well, he sure did!" Warren uses the emergency release to open the hatch since Morrison had apparently used the normal handle on the door and it had blown shut after he bailed out. Feingold immediately decides that it really is time to go too, so he rips off his mask and headset and out the hatch he goes. Fortunately both men are wearing back chutes that need no buckling so they go out without delay.

Sometime during all this action, Eshuis has called out on the intercom system saying he is wounded and Bill Booher responds, "Somebody check on the ball turret." Onesi and Adams in the waist gun positions never hear this transmission as their intercom system has been shot out already. Mele in the radio room apparently never hears it either or is too busy with other things to respond. Eshuis remembers hearing the order but also remembers that no one ever did check on him. Fifty years after this incident, Eshuis stated, "I'll always remember Willy telling someone to check on me." By this time, Jerry Eshuis has a slight wound over his right eye, and more serious wounds in his back and right leg. He decides to crawl out of the ball turret and get into the main fuselage.

Meanwhile a lone Me109 is going in the opposite direction from the other German fighters apparently acting as a decoy. He has been out there even before the attack started. Bob Adams yells at Tony to fire at the decoy and Onesi squeezes off only a few rounds at the fighter since he knows the plane is out of range. As the first wave of six fighters bear in, Adams and Onesi start blazing away from their waist gun positions. As both gunners glance hurriedly around, they can see many holes in the fuselage and more appearing all the time. Times are getting tense!

It isn't long after the first pass of enemy fighters that Bob Adams is suddenly thrown from his starboard gun position in the fuselage up against the port wall of the fuselage where Onesi is firing away. Onesi remembers Bob looking at him with a surprised look on his face and then grinning as he picks himself up and returns to his starboard gun position. Tony realizes that Bob might have been wounded. He doesn't realize, however, that the shell that has passed through

his friend is also the same shell that has just blown a hole in the fuselage the size of a basketball. Both men later learn that it was a German 20 mm shell that did all the damage. Adams gets back to his gun position but his belly wound is severe.

With the ferocious attack underway by German fighters, it isn't long before Tony Onesi joins his companion Adams as a casualty. Tony takes a machine gun bullet through the left armpit that embeds itself behind Tony's heart. Tony soon has shell fragments in both legs and is feeling the effects of the wounds, just as Bob Adams is with his wounds. To compound matters, the *DESTINY'S TOT* is in a dive as Dick Smith attempts to get the aircraft down to a lower cloud cover to escape the withering fire of the German fighters. Back in the waist section, things do not look good! Both men decide it's time to leave the battered bomber.

Adams ceases firing and turns toward the starboard door just a few feet aft of his gun position. Onesi is still firing at the port gun position but takes a quick look forward into the radio room. He sees Eshuis in the up position and starting to climb out of the ball turret. Mele is moving over to help Jerry out. Tony quickly shifts his gaze to Bob Adams and sees he is struggling with the door latch so he moves over to help. Both men pull on the release cord but to no avail. By this time Adams is down on his knees and Tony realizes how seriously he is wounded when Bob lays back on the deck and feebly tries to kick the door open.

Tony now sees Al and Jerry starting to move aft towards him, but they pause momentarily by the port machine gun. Jerry's face is covered with blood. Tony senses the plane is starting to spin and shoves his left shoulder against the door and it flies open and out Tony goes, falling free of the disabled bomber. The door remains open, but still on its hinges.

Al Mele now moves quickly to hold the door open and Jerry Eshuis assists the badly wounded Adams. Jerry's first thought is "He's chewing gum." Jerry gets Bob chuted up and then rolls him out the open door.

Jerry moves swiftly back to the port gun position and fires at a German fighter who is pressing home an attack. His wounds are now taking their toll and Jerry momentarily passes out. Al hurries to Jerry, gets his chute on, and helps him to the door. He shoves him clear of the plane. As soon as Eshuis has cleared what is left of the *DESTINY'S TOT*, Al takes his leap into the unknown and joins his three companions as they float towards the ground.

\* \*

With the intercom system out and the physical separation of the tail turret from the rest of the crew positions, S/Sgt. Gene O'Hearn is isolated and wondering what is happening. Early on in the fight, he too is wounded as he is in a very vulnerable part of the aircraft considering the German plan of attack. No one knows precisely when O'Hearn decides to bail out, but it is only after seeing parachutes to the rear of the aircraft that Gene decides the time has come to be prudent. Orders or no orders, he chutes up and struggles out of the rear escape hatch and soon he too, like his crew mates, is swinging under a deployed parachute.

Dick Smith tells his copilot, Bill Booher, to go. Bill grabs his parachute packs and hurries back into the bomb bay and hand signals Al Mele in the radio room and the gunners in the mid-section to bail out. Then Bill reports to Dick that everyone is going to jump and is then told to jump himself. Bill immediately goes to the nose escape hatch, sits on the edge for a few seconds to muster enough nerve to shove off into nothingness, and then leaps into space for his first and last parachute jump.

\* \*

As all of this is going on Dick, alone in the cockpit, puts his feet up against the control column to try to keep the plane's nose level so the aircraft doesn't stall. After 30 or 40 seconds, Dick kicks his feet off the control column, grabs his chest chute, and heads for the nose escape hatch. As the pilotless plane flounders in flight downwards toward the ground, Dick sits on the floor of the fuselage with his feet dangling out of the hatch at 15,000 feet up and buckles on his chute. He is quite nonchalant about the whole matter, but fifty years later he realizes how foolish and downright dangerous it was hanging his feet out of the hatch before he was buckled into his chute. But such is the utter confidence of a man in his youth. After securing the last buckle, Dick shoves off and free falls away from the wreck that was once the *DESTINY'S TOT*. As the men sequentially open their chutes, the remains of the bomber glide on a few more miles before crashing in a field outside Campremy, France.

### \*\*\* ON THE WAY DOWN \*\*\*

Ken Morrison clears the plane in good shape and sees a German fighter circling around. He decides to free fall for awhile and does so until he enters the overcast at 8,000 feet. As Ken breaks through the overcast, he looks down and sees farm land below. Ken tries as best he can to steer towards an open field and manages to execute a reasonable landing in a plowed field. He is pleased that he is down, but now he must hurry and get out of the open.

\* \*

Tark Tarkington and Lou Feingold are the next men to exit the plane. As Tarkington gets to the hatch used by Morrison, he finds the hatch has automatically closed. He pulls the release latch and the hatch opens. At 15,000 feet Warren exits feet first and soon hears himself saying "I guess I'd better pull my chute." He reaches down to the ripcord, gives it a yank, and the chute deploys with little or no noticeable jerk. There is now time to notice that his ankle is hurting badly. His first inclination is that he has been shot, but he sees no hole in his boot so concludes he must have slammed the ankle against the aircraft when he exited. Tark is now floating gently towards the ground which at this time he can't see due to clouds below him. Eventually he drifts through the cloud cover and then suddenly sights the ground below. Tarkington observes an automobile on the road below which stops and the occupants get out to watch him descend. His first

thoughts are that he will now be captured and spend the rest of the war in a German POW camp. Not a very pleasant prospect! As this thought races through his mind, the ground comes up rapidly and his thoughts switch to "How do I land?" Because his ankle hurts so much he tries a one foot landing and soon learns that it is a major mistake. His landing leg seems to crumple upon impact with the result that he hits the ground with a tremendous impact. Well, at least he is down.

\* \*

Following closely behind Tarkington is Lou Feingold. He reaches the hatch where Warren went out and starts out feet first, but the slipstream catches his legs and Lou decides it might be best to go out head first as he had been instructed sometime during his training. He struggles against the force of the slipstream, but finally gets his feet back inside the plane. On the second try, this time head first, Lou gets safely away from the aircraft. He reaches down, grabs his ripcord, pulls it, and looks up to watch the chute billow out above him. Nothing happens! What went wrong? There is a temporary sinking sensation in his stomach. He looks down and sees he hasn't pulled the ripcord hard enough so on the second try he gives it a good, hard jerk and soon, to his relief, the chute deploys, and he finds himself eventually drifting groundward, hanging beneath the most lovely canopy he has ever seen. "Well," he thinks to himself, "this isn't something you do everyday." Lou sees several other men of the crew also descending towards the ground. The men Lou sees are maybe the waist gunners, Bob Adams and Tony Onesi, and the belly gunner Jerry Eshuis. It is impossible to tell exactly who they are. It is, however, a good feeling to know that others have made it out safely. By now, Lou is passing through the cloud cover and shortly he too clears the clouds and sees the ground as well as Tark Tarkington who is a little below him since he went out just before Lou. He also sees the same car stopped that Warren sees. He is now nearing the ground. Things happen fast at this stage and Lou hits the field hard in a standing position and immediately falls on his face, but he is safely on the ground.

\* \*

As Tony Onesi is forcing open the fuselage door, the door unexpectedly flies open all the way when he applies his full body weight against it. Tony finds himself falling through the open door and free of the plane. As he plummets towards the ground, he decides to pull his ripcord right away since he has been shot up by the Germans. It seems the reasonable thing to do considering the circumstances. He also remembers worrying about Gene O'Hearn in the tail turret and whether he knows the rest of them are bailing out. He convinces himself that being in the tail and having a good view of things, Gene will probably see him and the others bailing out, but if he doesn't he will be certain to see the deployed chutes and know it is time to get out of his gun station. As Onesi slowly descends towards the earth, he is bleeding from the mouth and having major problems breathing. He decides his lung is punctured by the German bullet that hit him in

the chest and that maybe it is collapsed. To add to Tony's problems, a German fighter comes towards him firing its machine guns. Panic time! Fortunately the bullets do not come close and Onesi finally decides that he is not the target after all: the pilot is still trying to bring down the B-17. He is not aware of seeing any other chutes as he floats silently below the cloud cover, but he does recollect seeing the *DESTINY'S TOT* sort of level off after its dive and then skid into the ground. Tony is amazed at how silent everything is as he descends under the canopy of his parachute until he nears the ground when he can once again hear the noise of civilization. As he comes closer to the field he will land in, he concentrates on his landing position. As he looks around he sees more trouble ahead. First it was the German fighters and now power lines. The prevailing breezes are making him drift straight towards some power lines and he can't seem to do a thing about it. By the grace of God, he floats by with twelve whole inches to spare. Seconds after clearing the power lines, he lands in a French field with a body jarring jolt.

\* \*

The severely wounded Bob Adams is rolled out the door as Onesi clears the way. Since he is injured and eventually lands near Onesi, one assumes he pulled his ripcord as soon as he cleared the bomber. Due to his major injury, he may have been only semi-conscious while floating to earth, and his landing is more likely to be better termed a collapse than a landing.

\* \*

Onesi's thoughts of Gene O'Hearn seeing him and the others bailing out is correct. After the war, Gene told Bill Booher that he had seen several chutes behind the plane and that is when he buckled up and bailed out. Based on landing sites, O'Hearn must have fought his way out of the damaged bomber shortly after Onesi and Adams went out. Since Gene also has significant injuries resulting from the German fighter attacks, he too opens his parachute as soon as possible and drifts where the winds take him as did Onesi and Adams. One can only assume that O'Hearn is injured enough to preclude a controlled parachute landing when he hits the ground and that he crumples to the ground upon landing. But at least he is safely down.

\* \*

As Onesi and Adams clear the fuselage of the *DESTINY'S TOT*, Al Mele is getting Jerry Eshuis harnessed up and out the door. Even though the plane is still close to 17,000 feet up, Jerry figures since he is wounded and starting to feel dizzy that he better pull the ripcord right away and forget about a free fall and a delayed opening. As soon as he thinks he is clear of the disabled plane, he pops his chute and is soon swinging under its canopy. A German FW 190 circles around Jerry checking the situation out. The pilot takes no hostile action and then leaves, but the air turbulence he creates when circling has Jerry swinging violently in his harness for

awhile. While not pleasant, swinging is far better than being shot at! As Jerry drifts slowly down, he looks around and sees two deployed parachutes below him. He is certain it is Adams and Onesi. Like everyone else in the crew, Eshuis passes through the cloud layer for a minute or two and then breaks into the clear. By now he can see the ground clearly. He senses that he is drifting towards a village he can see. It strikes him that the entire population must be in the streets watching the action above. Jerry is now watching the ground coming up. He sees Adams landing in a field and in another moment he too hits the ground, just about 100 yards from Adams and only about 400 yards from the village. The landing isn't too bad for the first parachute jump, and Jerry is not unduly shaken.

\* \*

Following closely on Eshuis' heels, so to speak, is Al Mele. As soon as Jerry is clear of the plane, Al takes the big step into space and starts falling. Since Al is not wounded, he opts to do a free fall and a delayed chute opening as he has been instructed in his training. As he holds his free fall positions, he passes Eshuis in his opened chute and continues to fall. Al estimates that he falls nearly 9,000 feet before opening his parachute at an estimated height of 3,000 feet. For some reason Al is feeling a bit dazed. As his parachute deploys, Mele looks around and catches sight of the *DESTINY'S TOT* crashing and burning northwest of him. By now and unknown to him, a member of the French underground, a man by the name of Santune, is watching him from the ground. Santune also sees Booher but hurries towards where Al will eventually land. Up in the air, Mele figures it is about time to start concentrating on the landing. Back at base Al has a friend who is a qualified paratrooper, and he is trying to recollect what his buddy has told him about PLFs, parachute landing falls. Now he remembers. As the ground races towards him, Al slightly flexes his knees and when his feet first touch the ground, he rolls on one shoulder and breaks his fall just as his friend had instructed him to do. Mele is now on the ground and uninjured. Nothing like a successful PLF on your first try!

\* \*

Bill Booher bails out at what he thinks is close to 12,000 feet altitude. He is not injured so he, like Al Mele, goes for a free fall and a delayed opening of his chute. He tucks and falls for sometime. He then estimates he is at 4,000 feet and still falling so it's time to pull his ripcord which he does. For a falling man, the sight of a blossoming parachute is always very reassuring. Booher looks around and sees four FW 109s still circling the crippled *DESTINY'S TOT*. As he watches, he sees three chutes opening behind the aircraft and is glad some of the men are out successfully even if he doesn't know who they are. A moment later he has his last glimpse of the bomber and spies a figure jumping from the falling plane. He thinks that must be Dick Smith for as far as he knows, Dick is the only man left aboard when he went out. Bill soon loses sight of Dick and never does see a chute open. The bomber is in its final steep dive. Booher is suddenly



concerned as he realizes that he is coming down backwards and can't maintain good ground reference. He is also remembering some newspaper articles he recently read that said the Germans were going to court martial any Allied airmen they capture. Bill determines that when he hits the ground, he will slip out of his chute and harness as fast as he can and get out of the area immediately if not sooner. By now Bill is just feet off the ground and almost instantly he lands in the French field and falls on his back. He is again on solid earth and with the exception of a slight jar when he lands, he is in good physical shape.

\* \*

As any competent bomber pilot would do, Dick Smith stays at the controls until the last to insure his crew is out. After he himself pushes out into the wild blue yonder, as the Army Air Corps song so states, he hits the prop blast and starts to tumble. Dick figures this is not the way to free fall so he tucks and eventually stabilizes his fall. He has already decided on a delayed chute opening so he holds his position and falls for what seems to be a mini-eternity. A cloud bank at around 4,000 feet convinces Dick that it is time to deploy his chute. He does and passes through the cloud bank before breaking into the open. Now he sees the activity on the ground and the noises rise up to greet him. There is a moment of dread as he sees a German Me 109 heading straight for him, but Dick's luck holds and the German pilot is a friendly sort who waves and flies off. In the spirit of friendliness, Smith waves back. No use upsetting an enemy pilot while suspended under a parachute! It isn't long before Smith lands in a plowed field. A PFL it isn't, and Dick will suffer from this jolt in the days to come.

\* \*

With Smith on the ground, the entire crew is now down and in France. The wreckage of the *DESTINY'S TOT* lies smoldering in a field northwest of where the crew lands with a crowd of curious Frenchmen around it. All the men have survived their first parachute jump and all have experienced the eerie feeling of floating through wispy clouds drifting by in absolute silence. It is an experience each man will remember as long as he lives. But now on with the story.

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## CHAPTER 2

### A GRAND ENTRANCE INTO FRANCE

\*\*\* DOWN AT LAST \*\*\*

Just as Ken Morrison lands, he sees two other chutes touching down a couple of kilometers away, probably Tarkington and Feingold. Ken collapses his chute, gets out of his harness, and then immediately buries the chute in a furrow. He then hears sirens and looking up sees six men running towards him. They stop running before they reach Morrison and then approach slowly. When they meet, Ken shows them a language card and asks about where the Germans are. In some manner, they get the message to Ken where the Germans are. He immediately strips of his Mae West, throws it on the ground, and starts running in the opposite direction.

Ken runs along the edge of the field discarding his throat mike and flying boots as he goes. After awhile he comes on a thicket and lies down for a rest. After a short rest he starts moving again. In half an hour he spies a haystack in a field and heads towards it. As soon as he arrives, he buries in the stack and hides. In spite of being hidden from view, he was seen heading towards it and within a short time a Frenchman appears at the stack. He calls out and finally Ken answers and emerges, not knowing quite what to expect.

\* \*

Tark Tarkington and Lou Feingold are the next two men to hit the ground. Both land northwest of St. Just in a field shown on French maps as just north of Les Valleees and just south of La Croix Blanche but near the Maladreie Road.

After picking himself up, Tarkington spills the air from his chute, immediately takes off his Mae West and parachute harness, rolls his chute into a small bundle, and then stacks all this in a neat pile. As he looks up, he sees another person landing a mere 50 yards away. He moves swiftly towards his companion. As he runs, he is wondering how his wife will take the news of his being declared Missing In Action, especially since his wife has a very young son to care for as well as herself.

When Feingold lands, he falls forward on his face. Lou is prevented from getting up by a wind current that catches the open chute and drags him across the field. He decides to lie still and then try to get into a sitting position. He does and things work better after that; there is no more dragging. Lou finally is able to unhook his leg straps and then his chest straps. Now he gets out of the entire harness, rolls his chute, and runs toward the haystack in the field. The hay is so densely packed that he can't burrow into it to hide the chute and Mae West. Lou gives up and

stacks the items by the rick and then sits down to rest for a minute or two. As an ex-infantryman, he quickly surveys the terrain to determine the lay of the land and by doing so he spots a patch of woods that will provide some cover. He also sees some peasants coming toward him so he gets up and starts in their direction. As he heads for the peasants, he hears a voice saying "Hey, Lou." He stops, looks around, and sees no one so he starts again. He then hears, "Hey, Lou." Now he sees Red Dog Tarkington coming around from the other side of the haystack. As Lou often tells people years later, "We didn't waste any time kissing, but we hurried toward the peasants."

\* \*

Tony Onesi and Bob Adams, both badly wounded, come down within a couple hundred yards of one another. Their landing sites are just on the north edge of the small French village of Catillon. Due to the proximity of the village, many people see them drifting down out of the sky.

Bob Adams is down in a field and still in his harness. He is having a great deal of trouble moving at all. Several of the Frenchmen who watched him land immediately rush to his aid and take charge of the situation. The men get Adams out of his chute and see at a glance how badly hurt he is. A discussion takes place, and it is decided to carry him to a nearby barn and send for a doctor. One Frenchman runs off to summon a surgeon while the others move Bob to the barn. Within one hour, Adams is being operated on by a surgeon who determines that he must remove one damaged kidney. The doctor only puts in five stitches in a gaping incision around Bob's waist thinking the German medics will go in and clean up the damaged belly. It is obvious that Adams' condition will not tolerate movement by the Underground, so there is nothing left to do but notify the Germans and let their medics take over. Certainly not the ideal situation, but at the time it seems to be the best chance for Adams to survive the trauma he has undergone.

\* \*

Meanwhile, Tony Onesi has landed on the far side of the power lines in a plowed field and is lying helplessly on his back. Tony has said many times that he was fortunate to be wearing a British breast chute at this time. He is able to reach up, find the release knob on the harness, and hit it with his hand. The wind catches the canopy and drags the harness off Tony without dragging him too. It isn't long before two Frenchmen arrive on the scene and examine Tony. They realize that Tony is badly hurt and isn't going anywhere so they make him understand that they have more use of his wristwatch and some other personal items than he has. Tony gives the Frenchmen what they want. The men also go gather up his chute. Several Frenchmen wander in and out of the area to see what is going on, and sometime during this period one of them goes to seek medical help for Tony from the Germans. This will hopefully save his life and divert the Germans from searching for the other downed crewmen. Two Frenchmen stay and attempt to keep Onesi posted as to what is happening to Bob Adams in the barn. Tony

continues to lie there in the field on his back for sometime. It gets rather cool lying there, and he loses track of time as the minutes march on.

\* \*

Eshuis picks himself up after his landing and starts getting out of his harness. He is immediately surrounded by curious onlookers from the local village of Catillon. A young boy helps spill the air from the chute and then rolls it up. "Camarade?" he asks Jerry. "No," Jerry replies, "American." The boy looks pleased at the answer and then asks, "Prisoner?" Again Jerry replies "No" while shaking his head vigorously. Jerry isn't certain why he asked but could only think that it was because he is wounded. The boy immediately motions to several Frenchmen who gather around Jerry. They support him as they lead him to a house in the village. On the way, they pass Adams still on the ground, but they keep Jerry moving and won't stop for him to talk to Bob. Jerry can't see how badly off Adams is at this time. Soon the procession arrives at a French house.

\* \*

Gene O'Hearn is also wounded rather badly, but somehow makes his landing. His landing site is on the north edge of the village of Fumechon, a village practically touching Catillon on the west. He lands, struggles out of his harness, and lies back down. O'Hearn is in the same predicament as are his crew mates Adams and Onesi. The Frenchmen who find Gene lying in the field make the decision that he needs immediate medical assistance since he appears to be too badly wounded to be moved through the French Underground system. There seems to be no choice except to turn him over to a roving German patrol, so off goes one Frenchman seeking medical help for O'Hearn from the hated Germans.

\* \*

Al Mele finds himself in a location that he will later learn is called by the French *La Fond des Vignes* or in English, *The Shallow of the Vineyards*. It is located perhaps half a mile south-southwest of the village of Wavignies. Before Mele can even get to his feet after his landing, he finds himself surrounded by five Frenchmen, one of whom is Santune, the Underground member who has watched him float to earth. Al does, however, get free of his harness. One Frenchman asks Mele, "Are you Polish?", but Al replies, "No, American." The answer seems to be acceptable to the man. While this little conversation is going on, Santune is rolling up the chute and burying it. Another is taking Al's Mae West. Santune reaches over and grabs Al's arm, and leads him off to a nearby barn which belongs to a farmer named Desesquelle. This farm is located on a road leading southeast out of Wavignies to Catillon, an area being searched by the Germans. Santune and Al arrive at the barn and Santune orders Al to lie down and stay put until

he returns. In a few minutes, he returns with some French peasant clothing and Mele changes from his American aviator's clothing into that of a French peasant. When the change of clothes is complete, Santune moves Mele outside to a lean-to where there is a stack of oats sheaves where he helps Mele to the top of the stack and then covers him with more bunches of freshly cut oats. Santune takes out his watch and indicates to Al to stay put in the lean-to until he returns at eight o'clock that night. Then he leaves and Mele settles in for the wait. Santune exits the lean-to from the rear and walks down a country road. A roving German patrol stops him and inquires if he has seen a parachute or anyone who might have landed in one. He acknowledges that he did indeed see a parachute some time earlier in the day and points in the direction of *Val de Saillie*, a location not exactly where Mele landed but not so far off that it would be obvious that he is lying. The patrol moves off and Santune returns to his business in the village.

\* \*

Booher hits the ground in an area between *La Fond des Vignes* and a grove of trees know locally as *Bosquet d'Herlet*. When he looks up after landing, Bill finds a reception committee of about 10 men or so beginning to run towards his landing site. Bill can't decide if they are friendly or not and his nervousness is complicating getting his chute collapsed. He finally makes it and rolls it up and then with the chute and his Mae West in his arms starts off. When he sees the people rapidly approaching, he decides that time is running out and if he wants to avoid these people, he'll have to get on with it. He drops the chute and Mae West and starts to run towards another chute he sees in a field several hundred yards away. After running a couple hundred yards Bill hears a woman's voice calling in English from behind him. "Yes! Yes! Yes!" He then stops and decides to risk talking to whomsoever is speaking English. He stops running and walks slowly back towards the reception committee where the woman is. When he closes the distance, the woman asks in English, "American?" Bill nods his head and is immediately engulfed by the crowd who pats him on the back and speaks excitedly in French which Bill, of course, can't understand. Everyone now seems happy about the whole incident. Bill now learns that the French woman has exhausted her English vocabulary.

By this time, the crowd has grown to around 25 villagers who are using sign language and beginning to drag him off towards the village proper. Three of the women take Booher to a house and motion for him to take off his clothes and change into French peasant's clothes they have for him. Bill has no problem with changing clothes, but being a proper young American man, he is having difficulty in persuading the women to leave while he changes. For some reason they persist in staying, so Bill finally swallows his modesty and changes in front of his appreciative audience. After surmounting this little obstacle, another situation arises that is complicated by the French-English language barrier. It has been a long time since Bill has used a relief tube and he desperately needs to retire to a bathroom and use its facilities, but people keep arriving at the house to see the newly arrived "visitor" from America. Somehow Bill finally finds out that the facility he needs is outside so he heads out the door in spite of the people coming to see him. In

a few minutes, a much relieved and happier Bill Booher returns to the house and settles in to see what will happen next.

\* \*

Dick Smith, the last man out of what was the *DESTINY'S TOT*, lands a short distance west of the village of Wavignies in a field very close to a French farmer who is plowing his field. He slips out of his chute and has the farmer bury it. It's now time to begin evading the Germans based on their location as indicated by the farmer. By late afternoon, he holes up in a hedge and settles in to await darkness. Darkness comes, but his plans are significantly altered when three armed Frenchmen appear outside his hiding place and indicate for him to come out. There really isn't much choice so out he goes and confronts his visitors.

\*\*\* WHERE TO NOW? \*\*\*

Ken Morrison is now standing in front of a Frenchman. The Frenchman tells Ken where he is so he could get his bearings and then tells him to head back to the thicket and hide until it gets dark when he will return. Ken does as he is instructed.

After darkness, the Frenchman returns with civilian clothes for Ken who changes into an old blue suit, a well worn topcoat, and a beret. The Frenchman directs Ken towards the railroad track and tells him to catch a train. Since there appears no other good option at the time, Morrison heads out in the dark and begins walking along the railroad tracks, wondering where he is going to catch a train.

\* \*

The two officers, Tarkington and Feingold, leave the haystack where they met and now hurry towards the approaching wagon containing two men, two women, and two teen-agers. Lou Feingold remembers some of his high school French and asks, "*Ulsan le Aleman?*" or in English "Where are the Germans?" No one seems to understand and Lou repeats the question several times. At last, an older Frenchman says "*Oh, le Bosch.*" Lou remembers from seeing movies about World War I when he was a kid that the French always referred to the Germans as "*La Bosch*". Now the Frenchman says "*Sur toute la ligne*" meaning "They're all around."

While this conversation is going on, another wagon drives up. There is getting to be quite a crowd so Tark and Lou tell the peasants so scatter. They don't want any Germans seeing a crowd and then coming over to investigate. The young girls go off and recover the parachutes, this insuring themselves of a new blouse or two. The newly arrived Frenchman speaks some English. He tells Lou and Tark to get in his wagon, which they do. The Frenchman then drives to a wooded ravine three quarters of a mile away where Warren and Lou are told to stay until he returns. This man, it turns out, served in the Belgian army in World War I and is certainly no friend

of the Germans. While the Frenchman is gone, Lou and Red Dog discuss what they are going to do next. There really haven't been any detailed instructions as to what to do if shot down. About the only thing the men ever remember hearing anyone say is maybe you can get to the Pyrenees Mountains and cross over into Spain. Well, when you are north of Paris and it is a 500 mile trip through German occupied territory, that doesn't seem to be the best solution to the problem.

After awhile, the Frenchman returns without the wagon but with some civilian clothing for the two downed aviators. Lou and Warren change clothes except for the OD shirts. The shoes brought for Tarkington are too small but he squeezes into them anyway. It's literally a pain since his ankle is so bruised from bailing out of the bomber. It is now conference time. It turns out that the Frenchman is willing to house Lou and Tark in his tiny home, but he has no connections with the French Underground system that could move the two around and hopefully back to England. Some unknown Frenchman stops by, talks with the peasant, and then leaves. Lou and Red Dog decide to go with the peasant to his house until some other plan can be worked out.

The three men now start walking down the road towards town when a man on a bicycle peddles up. In perfect English he says to Tarkington and Feingold, "I am Jean Crouet, and I will help you. Get off the main road but follow it until you come to a place where a great mass of wires meets the road. I will meet you there at 6:00 p.m. and I'll provide food." He then peddles off towards town.

To Lou and Tark, this unexpected offer seems too good to be true. What they don't know at this time is that Crouet is the Chief of the St. Just Underground organization by night and a Ford Motor Company chemical engineer by day. Lou turns to the Belgian army veteran from World War I and asks what he knows about the man who has made the offer. The peasant answers that he owns a chateau in town and perhaps might be a collaborator, but he isn't completely certain about that. The two aviators learn later there are a number of collaborators living in the area and thus the locals are leery. The three men continue walking down the road while Lou and Red Dog discuss whether they should meet the man or not. Their initial impression is to remember the advice of their bomb group intelligence officer and disregard the offer. As they continue walking, they encounter a local farmer plowing his field. The guide asks him about Crouet. The reply is "He's OK; a good man." The farmer is very enthusiastic about him overall.

For an instant, Lou and Tark consider stealing some bikes and peddling away from this area, but they soon discard the idea. In the distance they can hear a train whistle, perhaps the same train that Dick Smith is hearing from his hedgerow hideout. After further consideration and in spite of their initial reluctance to accept Crouet's offer, Lou and Tark decide that this seems to offer more chance of getting back to England than staying with their guide. At this point, Lou informs the peasant of their decision and the man goes on his way. The only thing to do now is to keep out of sight until 6 p.m. and then rendezvous at the specified point. The temperature is dropping and the clothes given to them are not all that warm. Tarkington opens his escape box and finds it has a map in French and a compass; however, these items are never used and are given to the

French. What is of immediate value is some candy. Lou and Tark munch on candy while they wait for 6 p.m. to arrive.

\* \*

About one hour has passed since Adams and Onesi landed in France. As Onesi lies there in the field, his ears pick up the sound of a motor vehicle approaching. It isn't long until the Frenchmen with him wave at the vehicle and direct it towards their position. It is a German army field ambulance. The medics get out and place Tony on a litter and load him into the ambulance. The vehicle starts up again and drives to the barn where Bob is lying unconscious after his operation by the French doctor. Again the German medics do their thing and load Adams on a litter and into the ambulance. Having recovered two badly wounded American airmen, the ambulance driver heads for the German controlled hospital. To Onesi, the trip seems like 40 miles or so, but it is actually much shorter. At last the ambulance arrives at a French Catholic hospital that is being used by the German army. Adams and Onesi are unloaded and taken into the hospital's receiving area where they are examined by a German army doctor. Little if any treatment is provided to the two men. Medical orderlies move Adams and Onesi to the top floor of the hospital and place each in a separate room which is essentially a cell. There are no windows except a small cut-out viewing area to enable the guards to look in. This viewing port is covered with bars. Adams and Onesi are removed one by one from the litters and placed on small wooden bed frames that are covered with straw-filled mattresses. As the orderlies leave, the door is locked behind them. Now both Adams and Onesi face a long trial in the days ahead.

\* \*

Gene O'Hearn continues to await medical help as he lies in the field where he landed. Eventually the Frenchman seeking help makes contact with the Germans who then send an ambulance to evacuate Gene to a hospital. Although O'Hearn's landing site is not all that far from Adams and Onesi's, his German captors evacuate him to a hospital other than the one where his crew mates were taken. Upon arrival at the hospital, O'Hearn is examined and placed in a controlled area of the hospital.

\* \*

When Eshuis and his French procession arrive in the village, they rapidly enter the home of a young farmer, Monsieur Gervais Gorge. Before anything else is done for him, Jerry receives a typical French welcome; he is kissed on the cheeks by each member of the family which includes Gervais' brother Peter and his father. After the ritual welcome, his wounds are washed and bandaged. His flying clothes are taken, and he is provided with peasant clothing. It is then time for some food as it has been many hours since he has eaten. The women of the house fix



up a meal as best they can and Jerry eats with relish. Then it's off to bed for a two and a half hour nap in one of the bedrooms. His sleep is interrupted as the Germans are still on the prowl looking for the downed aviators, and they are in the near vicinity of the house searching everywhere. Jerry is awakened and moved swiftly out to the barn where he is carefully hidden in the hay. Jerry is hoping his luck will hold out!

\* \*

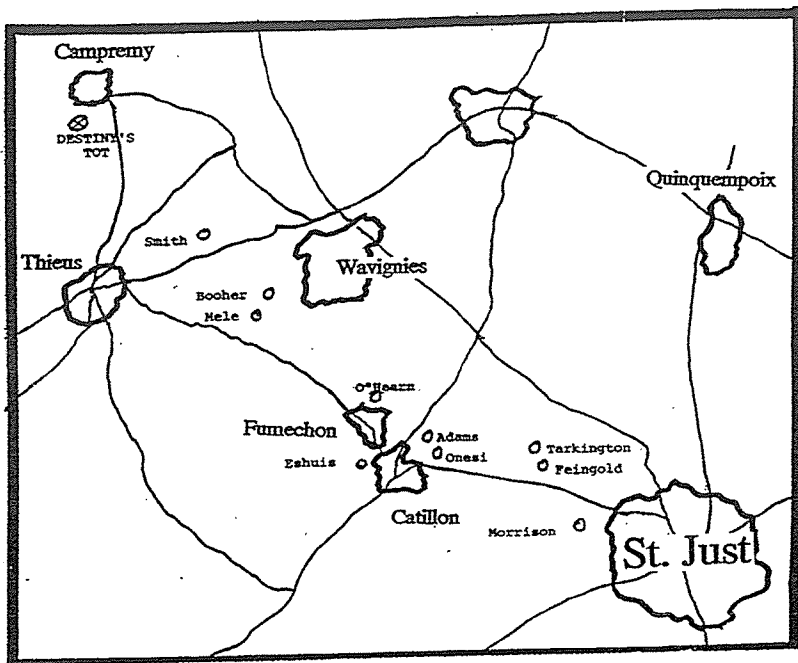
Al Mele has been snuggled down in the oats for several hours and is beginning to get restless. At last, twilight fades into darkness and Santune discreetly returns to the lean-to where Mele is still hiding. The time is now about 7 p.m. Santune announces his arrival, and Al crawls out from under the oats, happy to be out in the fresh air again. After a short discussion between the two men, much of which is conducted in sign language, they head for the Santune house in Wavignies which is about a ten minute walk. Upon entering the house, Mele is given water to wash the blood from his face and to generally clean up. After drying off, he sinks into a chair, one tired evader! Madame Santune prepares some eggs for Al which he eats with a sense of gratefulness as it has been over 14 hours since he ate last. After the eggs, Al relaxes and tries to conserve his strength as he is sure that something else will happen not too far in the future. Al is led to a bedroom where he sinks down on a bed and goes to sleep.

\* \*

Bill Booher has been the local center of attraction for some time in the house in the village, but the Underground decides it is best to move him on. After supper, a car drives up and a man gets out. The newly arrived Frenchman will be a guide for Bill on the next leg of his journey to another unknown location.

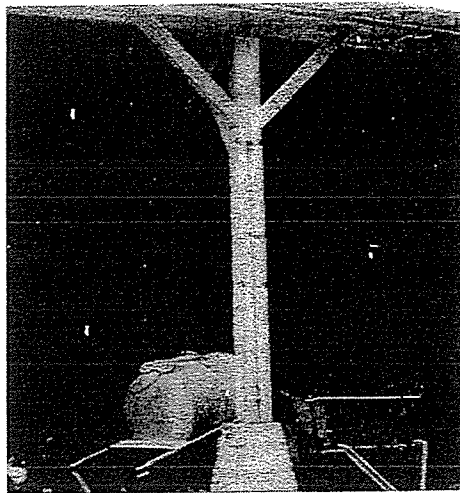
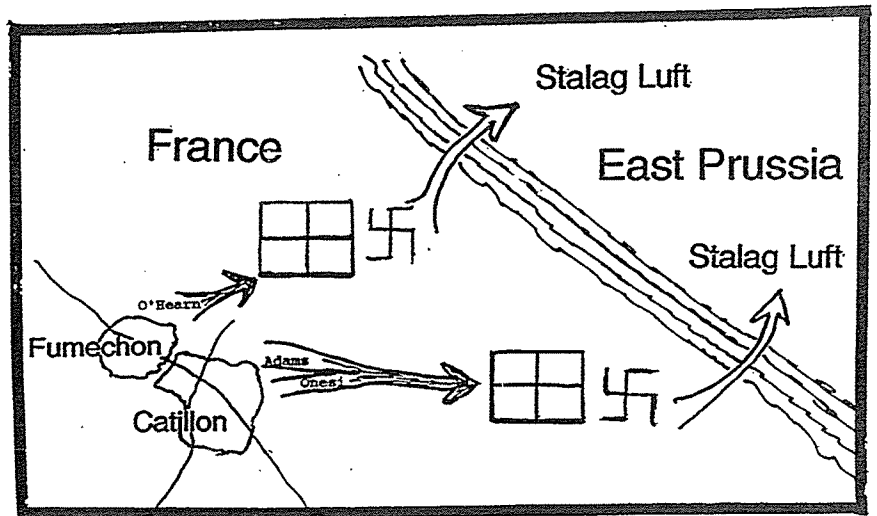
\* \*

Dick Smith is now face-to-face with three young and armed Frenchmen. They give him civilian clothes to change into, and then the four of them walk into Wavignies. Dick finds himself in the office of the local sheriff as a bystander while the Frenchmen decide his fate in a language he cannot understand. Eventually it is agreed that he is a legitimate evader and will be helped. He is then taken outside and crammed into the trunk of a very small car and driven off.



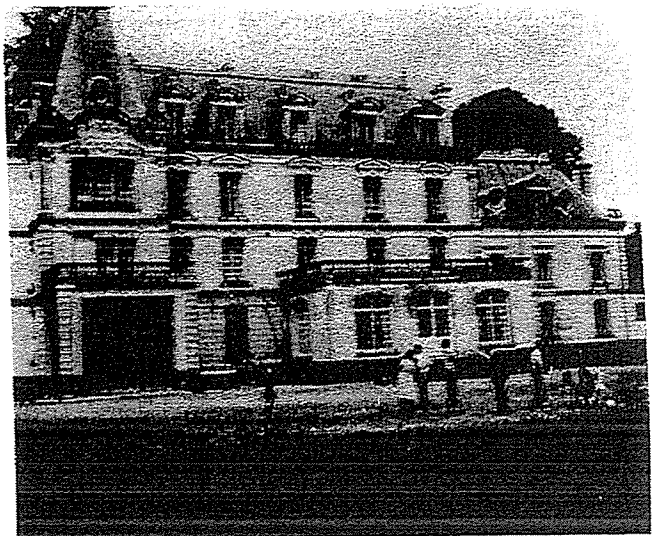
Left: The general landing sites of the Smith crew after bailing out.

Below: Adams, O'Hearn, and Onesi, all badly wounded were captured, treated, and sent to POW camps.



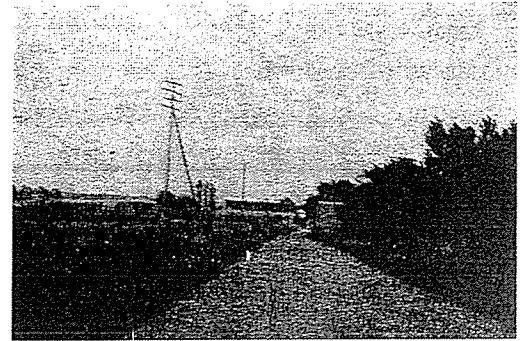
Above: The hay loft on the Genvaris farm where Eshuis hid the night of 30 December 1943.

Right: At the Chateau Morainvillers, Eshuis had an operation on his leg on New Year's Day, 1944.





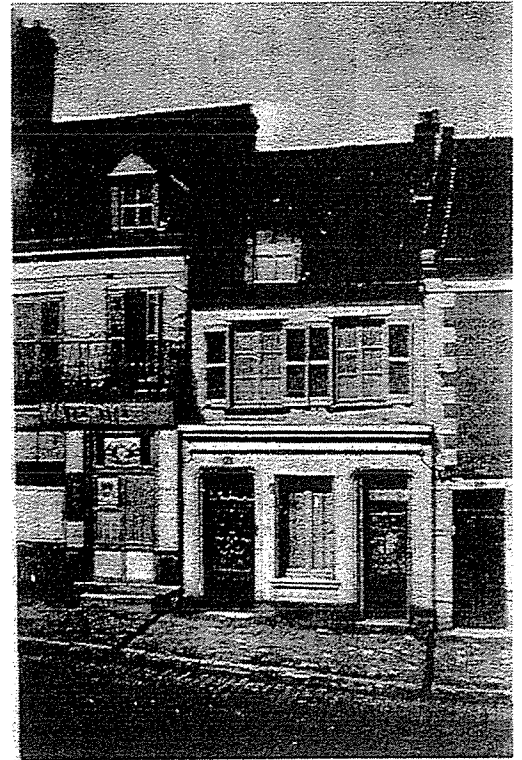
Left: French fields near St. Just where Feingold and Tarkington landed on 30 December 1943. Feingold helped Tarkington through the wires in this nursery.



Right: The rendezvous point with Jean Crouet near where the power lines crossed the road.



Jean Crouet, shown with his wife, was the first Underground helper for Tarkington and Feingold.



The house of Harry the Baker in St. Just where Feingold and Tarkington were taken the night of 1 January 1944.

**11-203**  
**CARTE D'IDENTITE**

Nom **MARCHAND**

Prénoms *Pierre Lucien*

Nationalité *fr*

Profession *Cultivateur*

Né le *5 Mars 1923*

à *St Cloud* Dep. *Saône et Loire*

Domicile *Pluzey*

Taille *1 m 72*

Cheveux *bruns*

Moustache

Yeux *bleus*

Signes Particuliers *Ment*

Le Titulaire *P. Marchand*

Signature

Commune de Pluzey

Signature

Empreinte digitale

Empreinte digitale



A French photo of Dick Smith used on an ID card. He was listed as a geologist.

Jerry Eshuis was given a French ID card while at Chateau Morainvillers. He was shown as a farm worker.

**CARTE D'IDENTITE**

Nom **Le Gall**

Prénoms *Jerry*

Nationalité *fr*

Profession *Cultivateur*

Né le *17 Juillet 1923*

à *St Julien Des Vignes*

Domicile *Chateau Morainvillers (St Julien)*

Taille *1 m 77*

Cheveux *bruns*

Moustache *brun*

Yeux *bruns*

Signes Particuliers

Le Titulaire *P. Le Gall*

Signature

Commune de St Julien

Signature

Empreinte digitale

Empreinte digitale



**11-275**  
**CARTE D'IDENTITE**

Nom **Le Bazic**

Prénoms *Jean Pierre*

Nationalité *fr*

Profession *Cultivateur*

Né le *26 Janvier 1919*

à *Saint Gaud* Dep. *Lot*

Domicile *Pluzey*

Taille *1 m 77*

Cheveux *bruns*

Barbe *brun*

Yeux *bleus*

Signes particuliers *ment*

Le Titulaire *Le Bazic*

Signature

Commune de Pluzey

Signature

Empreinte digitale

Empreinte digitale



Warren Tarkington's first ID card was issued in the countryside. He was also depicted as a farm laborer.

Lou Feingold's first ID card showed him as a farm worker in rural clothes.

**IDENTITÉ ET SIGNALEMENT**

Nom: Lectore  
 Prénoms: Robert  
 né le: 18 Mars 1914  
 à: St. Mandé

Mode d'acquisition de la nationalité française: de naissance


Taille: 1.70  
 Cheveux: bruns  
 Nez: droit  
 Yeux: bleus  
 Teint: rosé

Situation matrimoniale: célibataire

Profession: Apprenti

Signature du titulaire: [Signature]

Don le Préfet et par délégation: [Signature]



Left: Feingold's second ID card showed him as a butcher's apprentice in city clothes.

Below: Tarkington was listed as a journalist on his second ID card.

**IDENTITÉ ET SIGNALEMENT**

Nom: Baquet  
 Prénoms: Louis  
 né le: 13 Septembre 1921  
 à: Cuigy en Bray (Orde)  
 Sexe: Masculin

Mode d'acquisition de la nationalité française: d'origine

Taille: 1.77  
 Cheveux: Blonds  
 Nez: Rect  
 Yeux: bleus  
 Teint: Rosé

Forme du visage: ov.  
 Signes particuliers:

Situation matrimoniale: marie  
 Profession: journaliste

Signature du titulaire: [Signature]

**IDENTITÉ ET SIGNALEMENT**

Nom: Tarkington  
 Prénoms: [illegible]  
 né le: [illegible]  
 à: [illegible]

Mode d'acquisition de la nationalité française: [illegible]

Taille: [illegible]  
 Cheveux: [illegible]  
 Nez: [illegible]  
 Yeux: [illegible]  
 Teint: [illegible]

Situation matrimoniale: [illegible]  
 Profession: journaliste

Signature du titulaire: [Signature]

Empreinte digitale: [illegible]

Departement des Côtes-du-Nord  
 Commune de Binic  
 Gemeinde Binic

**ATTESTATION  
 BESCHEINIGUNG**

Je soussigné, Maire de Binic  
 Der Unterzeichnete, Bürgermeister von Binic

certifie, afin de pouvoir se rendre en zone interdite de la région côtière,  
 bescheinigt zum Zwecke der Einreise in die Küstensperrezone

que Monsieur, Madame, Mademoiselle Jean Pierre  
 dass Herr, Frau, Fräulein Jean Pierre (nom et prénom; Name u. Vorname)

né le 26/11/19 à St. Gauden de la Riv.  
 (profession (Beruf) (date et lieu de naissance) (Geburtsort u. Ort)

domicilié à Binic  
 wohnhaft in Binic

a son domicile légal - sa résidence habituelle  
 seinen/thren Wohnsitz / seinen /ihren gewöhnlichen Aufenthalt

depuis le 26/11/19 à Binic hat  
 seit dem 26/11/19 in Binic

Valable jusqu'au 26 Mai 1943

**A faire proroger  
 tous les six mois.**

**AVIS IMPORTANT.** - Cette attestation n'est valable pour passer en zone interdite de la région côtière que si la personne en question est en possession d'une carte d'identité officielle munie d'une photographie.

**ZUR BEACHTUNG.** - Diese Bescheinigung berechtigt nur in Verbindung mit einer amtlichen Lichtbildkarte zur Einreise in die Küstensperrezone.

Imp. Moderne - St-Dizac. 21 - 25-421

per. 17

Left: A permit allowed Tarkington entrance to the German controlled coastal region near Plouha, France.

## CHAPTER 3

### LEARNING OUR FATE

\*\*\* OUR FIRST DAY IN FRANCE COMES TO A CLOSE \*\*\*

Ken Morrison walks for some time down the railroad tracks and just when he is ready to cross them he hears someone approaching. He tenses up and becomes more alert. A voice from the darkness says something in French that Ken does not understand. Finally the man is within sight and Ken breathes easier as the Frenchman seems friendly enough. Morrison identifies himself as an American and the Frenchman replies, "Come." Ken follows and is led to a nearby railroad station. Here they meet another Frenchman who tells Ken to follow him and off they go. At about 11 p.m. the second Frenchman takes Ken to the house of a friend where he is fed and bedded down for the night. It's been a long, hard day for Morrison, and he is thankful for a bed to sleep in.

\* \*

Back in the countryside, Warren Tarkington and Lou Feingold head for the place on the specified farm road where the overhead wires cross over. By 6 p.m. they have arrived. Lou and Tark await the coming of Crouet, hoping it isn't a trap. At the appointed time, Crouet is seen walking down the road toward them. He has a companion with him. Crouet is whistling a tune as a signal. Thanks to all the time he spent in the movie houses as a kid, Lou recognizes the tune from the old World War I movies. It is the famous British Empire song *It's a Long Way to Tipparary*. The stanza says, "It's a long way to Tipparary, it's a long way from home." Lou and Tark accepts this as a recognition code and immediately leave their hiding place and make contact with Crouet. The four men immediately proceed to a small house back of the overhead wires where the second man lives. Here Lou and Warren are offered sandwiches, tea, and rum. It is decided that both Americans will finish eating and then move to Jean Crouet's chateau for the night. It is safer there.

\* \*

Adams and Onesi are lying in their beds, each in a hospital cell under guard by the Germans. Adams is in really bad condition and is not expected to live, according to the German guards. Onesi cannot communicate with Adams so he can only wonder as to his condition. Tomorrow will be a challenge just to live through.

\* \*

The German patrol has done its search and found no American airmen anywhere, so they depart to search elsewhere. Gervais leaves the house and goes to the barn and summons Jerry Eshuis out of the haystack and back into the house. He is not feeling too well as he has bullet fragments in his legs and back but he will just have to endure it for awhile and see what happens tomorrow. He goes back to sleep.

\* \*

Shortly after midnight, Al Mele is awakened. By this time, the word has been passed to other members of the Underground that an airman is at the Santune's house, and the local Underground cell commander arrives with a couple of his men, one of whom is Louis Pillon. A discussion takes place in French and a decision is made to relocate Mele immediately. For Santune's safety, he is not told where the new site will be. Santune gets his handgun that is stashed in the house and slips out into the dark to reconnoiter the area prior to the others relocating Al. Once the area is found to be reasonably secure, the other Underground members, with Mele in tow, head out into the darkness, and Santune returns home and hides his weapon out of sight. These men of the underground take Mele by vehicle to a farm 30 or 40 minutes away from Wavignies. He arrives at a farmhouse and finds his copilot, Bill Booher already there.

\* \*

Bill is now on the move again. After hiking about a mile, Booher stops and asks of the guide, "Is this land in France?" He is assured that it is. The two men then begin hiking again. They traverse small paths through the fields until they finally reach a road. Following the road, Bill and his Underground guide continue on until they reach an enclosed farmhouse. Here Bill is led to a rear door where both men enter. Booher is taken to a side room, told to stay put, and then left alone. Bill would dearly love to have a cigarette about now, but he left his in the plane when he bailed out. He searches the room for one but comes up empty handed. There is some reading material but is all in French and therefore of no help at all in passing the time away.

An hour or so passes and a man arrives and enters. In broken English he announces that he is a doctor. Bill can see he is visually agitated. The doctor tells Bill that he had rescued a parachutist but was stopped by a German roadblock and his parachutist taken from him. The doctor then turns his attention to Booher and advises him to remain quiet, not to answer the door if anyone knocks, and to stay where he is. He is also told that sooner or later a man will arrive that knows how to enter the house. After all these instructions, Bill asks the doctor for a cigarette as he is still dying for one. The doctor gives him some tobacco and some paper with an added remark that these are indeed expensive items.

Bill settles back with his lighted cigarette and tries to wait patiently. Thirty to forty-five minutes later, Bill hears a loud knock on the door and peeks out the window to see who it is. An old lady speaking very loudly in French is at the door, but Bill ignores her and soon she reluctantly goes away. Bill settles back down again. As the sun begins to set, two more women come by. Somehow they gain entrance to the farmhouse and when they see Bill, they start to talk to him in French. The language barrier between Bill and the women is such that they soon leave.

Hours pass and an unexpected event occurs. A French Underground member arrives with Al Mele in tow. The two Americans are glad to see each other and to know that the other is safe, at least for the moment. From here on, visitors seem to be coming and going quite frequently. Americans must be a real "tourist" attraction.

\* \*

After 30 to 40 minutes of jolting ride over back roads, the car with Dick Smith in the trunk stops and the trunk lid opens. It is now 11 p.m. A stiff but very happy young aviator is glad to be out of the trunk and is very thankful this part of the trip is over. As he is taken inside a French farmhouse, he is overjoyed to find that his copilot, Bill Booher, and his radio operator, Al Mele are already there. Since misery loves company, it's always a relief to learn you are no longer alone in such circumstances. The three men have a joyful reunion after hours of suspense-filled separation.

To celebrate the reunion, one of the Frenchmen offers the three Americans some spirits and Dick indicates he for one would surely like something. A glass and a bottle of light brown liquid is offered, and Dick pours out half a glass full. He remembers one of the Frenchman looking somewhat surprised at the amount, but he says nothing. Dick takes a big swallow and then for the next five minutes can neither speak or catch his breath. He has just chugged a big drink of Calvados, a 190 proof applejack concoction from the Calvados region of France. Smith now joins a long list of Americans who can relate an identical story about their first introduction to Calvados.

By now there were several people in the house and the three Americans are made to understand that they are members of the French Underground and will be assisting in returning them to England. One man makes a short appearance and then leaves. He is a very sinister appearing man who wears a black fedora hat with the brim turned down and a black leather coat. He could have just stepped out of a French murder mystery novel. He goes by the name of Captain Jacques and Dick, Bill, and Al are informed that he is the head Underground leader in the sector. Dick learns after the war that he is a French Communist and is hoping for an important position within the Communist party when the time comes. After some secretive conferences with the other Underground members, Captain Jacques tells the American he will return and then slips out into the darkness and is gone.



\* \*

Meanwhile at the Headquarters of the 95th Bomb Group at Horham, England, the realization has set in that the *DESTINY'S TOT* won't be coming back. The bomber is listed as shot down and the crew Missing In Action, MIA in military shorthand. It is the only bomber lost on this day from the 95th Bomb Group so from an equipment standpoint, the raid went well, but it is always difficult to lose a bomber with its trained crew who may be your close friends.

\* \*

At this point in our story, let's take a look at the situations of the first night the crew are in France, 30 December 1943 to be exact. The French Underground has seven of the crew under its control. Three of the crew, Smith, Booher, and Mele have been reunited and are spending the night together in a farmhouse some distance outside Wavignies. Morrison is in a French house a little northwest of where he landed and is in good shape. Feingold and Tarkington are in a second farmhouse located much nearer St. Just and under a different set of Underground helpers than are the others. A slightly wounded Eshuis is alone in the Garvais' farmhouse somewhere in the vicinity of Catillon. The three seriously wounded crewmen, Adams, O'Hearn, and Onesi, are under limited medical care in two separate German controlled French hospitals being guarded by Germans. And so ends 30 December 1943.

**\* \* \* AN UNUSUAL NEW YEAR'S EVE \* \* \***

The sun rises over the eastern horizon, and the first rays of sun light up the French landscape. So begins the second day of adventure and suspense in France for the crew of the downed *DESTINY'S TOT*.

\* \*

Back at Army Air Force Station 119 in Horham, England, 1st Lt. David E. Olson, the Assistant Operations Officer, is preparing for another unpleasant task, one he has unfortunately performed before. He must complete some prescribed official forms dealing with the loss of the *DESTINY'S TOT* the day before. First he completes the Ninety Fifth bomb Group Certificate based on the previous day's post-mission intelligence reports completed after the returning crew's debriefing sessions. Lt. Olson certifies that the B-17F piloted by 1st Lt. Richard M. Smith was last seen just before the target, that it turned into a cloud, and that no chutes were seen leaving the plane. He then signs his name and stamps the document CONFIDENTIAL. Next he turns his attention to a War Department form known as the Missing Air Crew Report, or MACR for short. On this form Lt. Olson enters data as to the crew's organization, the aircraft itself, the mission, and the crew roster. Once finished he again signs his names and then stamps the

complete form CONFIDENTIAL. With these unpleasant chores out of the way, Lt. Olson turns his attention to other more routine matters and contemplates whether there will be a social gathering at the Officers' Club after supper. After all, it is New Year's Eve.

\* \*

Lt. Murray Ball, lead navigator for the 336th Bomb Squadron learns of the MIA report of his old crew and wonders what has happened to all his old friends. He hopes they are safe and in the hands of the French Underground. Only time will tell.

\* \*

Meanwhile, back on the European mainland, the ten men of Dick Smith's crew are awake and wondering what will happen today. For some the day will be depressing; for others, hope and unforeseen circumstances will make for a relatively pleasant day considering their plight.

\* \*

Sergeants Bob Adams, Gene O'Hearn, and Tony Onesi won't be going anywhere today. Adams and Onesi are being guarded in a German controlled hospital while O'Hearn is in similar circumstances in another German hospital. Onesi is being told by his guard that Adams is just about *Kaputt* or in English, about ready to die. Even though in adjoining cells, Onesi cannot communicate with Adams in order to verify his condition. There is no special food for these men on New Year's Eve, just a small amount of soup or gruel. Neither is there any medical treatment per se by the German staff; the men are on their own to live or die. The only break from the isolation and boredom of the cells is when the guards take the men to and from the bathroom. O'Hearn hopefully is getting a little better care, but no one knows. The only saving grace on this day is that they are still alive and holding on. It would be nice, however, to have a glass of good French champagne to help ease the pain, but that is only a dream.

\* \*

Jerry Eshuis is not to be moved today so he resigns himself to staying put in Gervais' farmhouse until further notice. He is getting uncomfortable as the shell fragment in his leg is bothering him and the wound is infected and progressively getting worse. There are no medicines immediately available for him. During the day there is another scare as a German patrol suddenly appears out of nowhere, and the French have but a brief moment to hide Jerry in a bedroom. Lady Luck is again with Jerry and the Germans conduct their search but find no downed airmen in the farmhouse or barn. The Germans leave, Jerry comes out of hiding, and

everyone breathes a little easier, but it was a close call that leaves everyone still a little tense for the rest of the day. There is no record of any New Year's Eve celebration. Circumstances don't seem to warrant one.

\* \*

Ken Morrison wakes up and for a moment does not know where he is since this is a strange house. Slowly he remembers the events of the night before and recalls that he is being cared for by the French underground. After getting up, Ken is fed breakfast and then settles down to see what will happen next. It is an anxious day for Ken. He tries to kill the dead time while the Underground decides what to do with him next. Nightfall arrives and Ken is still in the house waiting for something to happen. About the only thing that he can be certain of is that there will be no New Year's Eve party tonight.

\* \*

Lou Feingold and Warren Tarkington awake very early in the chateau of Jean Crouet. Not bad accommodations for two guys on the run from the Germans. Crouet decides that with the amount of German activity in the area, the men will be safer elsewhere, so at 6:30 a.m. and after a reasonable breakfast, Lou and Tark are taken by Crouet himself to his paint factory in St. Just. Here they are directed into a tunnel under the factory and instructed to remain there until someone comes for them. It is cold in the tunnel and both men huddle around the single, naked light bulb that lights their area trying to stay warm. They finally give up and curl up in the loose straw on the floor. At noon, Lou and Tark are summoned from the tunnel and escorted to Jean Crouet's office. A noon meal is provided and both men eat in the office and try to warm up. The factory workers are eating their noon meal in another area.

At 1 p.m. the workers return to their jobs and it is time for Lou and Tark to re-enter the cold tunnel where they are safe from prying eyes and ears. For the next five and a half hours, the two men try to stay warm and alert. After what seems an eternity, they are again retrieved from the tunnel and taken to Crouet's office where they can at least warm up a little. It is supper time and food is brought and the men eat in the office. Now Jean Crouet leaves for his chateau and Lou and Warren are alone with their thoughts. They will have no celebration to commemorate the passing of 1943. They try their best to sleep on the floor but it is hard. Both men consider their situation and decide there are some redeeming factors: they are alive, uninjured, and in the good hands of the French underground. Yes indeed, there are some good possibilities for 1944!

\* \*

When the sun rises in the sky on 31 December 1943, Dick Smith, Bill Booher, and Al Mele find themselves in a seemingly remote French farmhouse jointly occupied by an old couple who

were pro-German and their son and daughter-in-law who were adamantly pro-Allies. The older couple were never aware that the three Americans were in the house as they were kept in the younger couple's part of the house. At dawn, the younger woman cooks breakfast for Dick, Bill, and Al, something that is gratefully appreciated by the men. After eating breakfast, the men settle down to see what the day will bring. Dick, Bill, and Al spend considerable time retelling their different experiences of their last minutes aboard the *DESTINY'S TOT*, their parachuting into France, and their adventures until they were all brought together.

Al Mele attempts using his limited French to converse with his hosts. It soon becomes readily apparent as Al speaks with them that the farmers don't have a clue as to what is going on since they are so low level in the Underground organization. Hours pass and Dick, Bill, and Al continue to wait to see what their fate will be. Meanwhile the local Underground leaders are meeting and discussing what is the best move at this time. It is finally decided to transfer the three Americans into the town of St. Just where the Underground support system is much better. The move will take place after dark.

Darkness finally settles over the countryside and the Americans are fed a small meal. Captain Jacques appears with one or two of his men and informs the Americans it is time to leave. The destination is not revealed. It will only be later that they learn their destination is St. Just. Dick, Bill, and Al say goodbye to the pro-Allies young farmer and his wife and then go outside where their transportation is waiting. They are loaded into the back of a very small panel truck and then driven over bumpy, poorly maintained dirt roads until, after what seems to be a very long time, the driver arrives at a hard surface road. The ride is now considerably more comfortable, and it isn't long before the driver pulls into a driveway and the men are unloaded one by one. The unloading is done quickly and quietly.

As Smith, Booher, and Mele stand in the darkness, they see they are by a two-story house located near the downtown section of St. Just. Of course at this time the men still have no idea of where they are. They are ushered into the house and find it completely furnished except for bathroom facilities which they learn are in a shed out back. Dick and his crewmates are told to stay away from the windows and not to go outside during daylight hours. A member of the Underground explains that the family that owns the house has gone south to visit relatives. No one quite believes this story, but it really makes no difference to the Americans one way or the other. Here they will stay until told otherwise.

After getting Dick, Bill, and Al settled, the French Underground leaves. Shortly thereafter some unexpected guests begin to filter into the house, and it isn't long before a small New Year's Eve party is underway. Bill gets the impression that the three Americans are apparently the honored guests. Everyone is very friendly and all have brought something to drink. Of course, there is a language barrier but Al is doing his best to translate what is being said to the Americans and attempting to respond in his limited French and that helps a lot. Because of the circumstances, the noise level is held to a low level. As midnight rolls around, everyone, including the Americans lift their glasses high and wish others in the party a *La Bonne Annee* or Happy

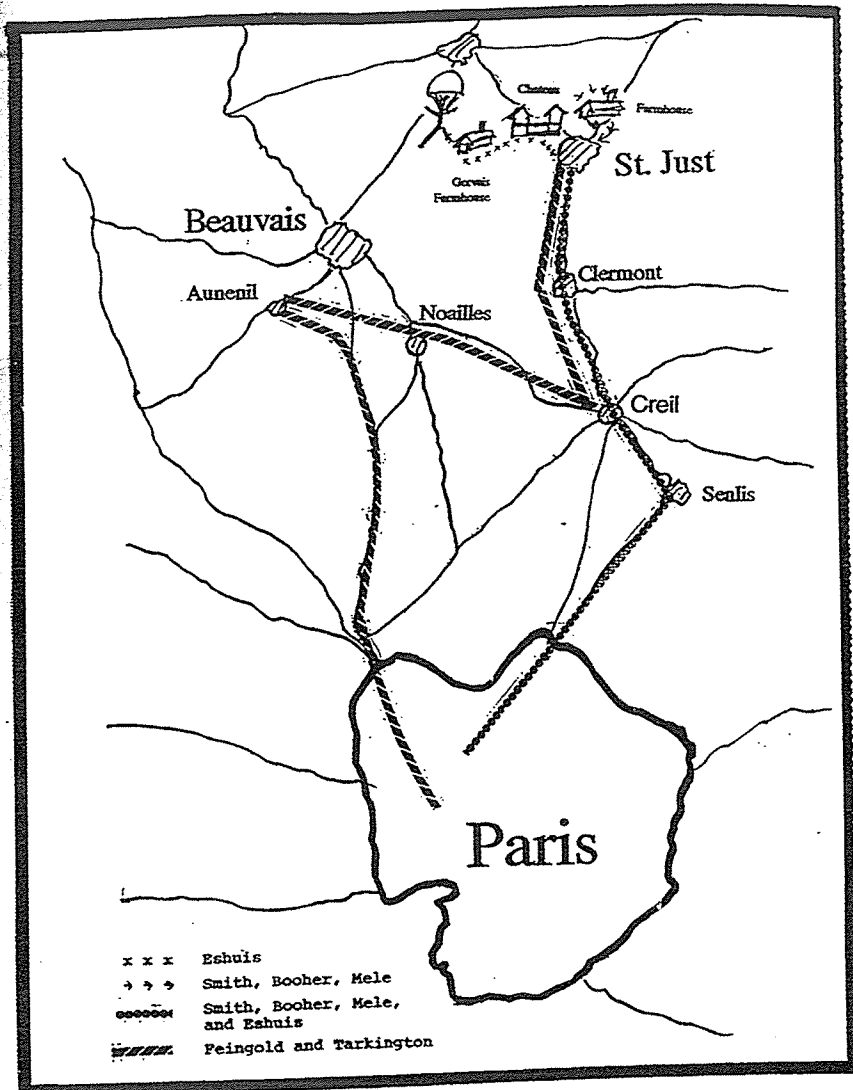
New Year. For downed American airmen trying to evade capture, this party is a real surprise and delight! Life could certainly be worse.

\* \*

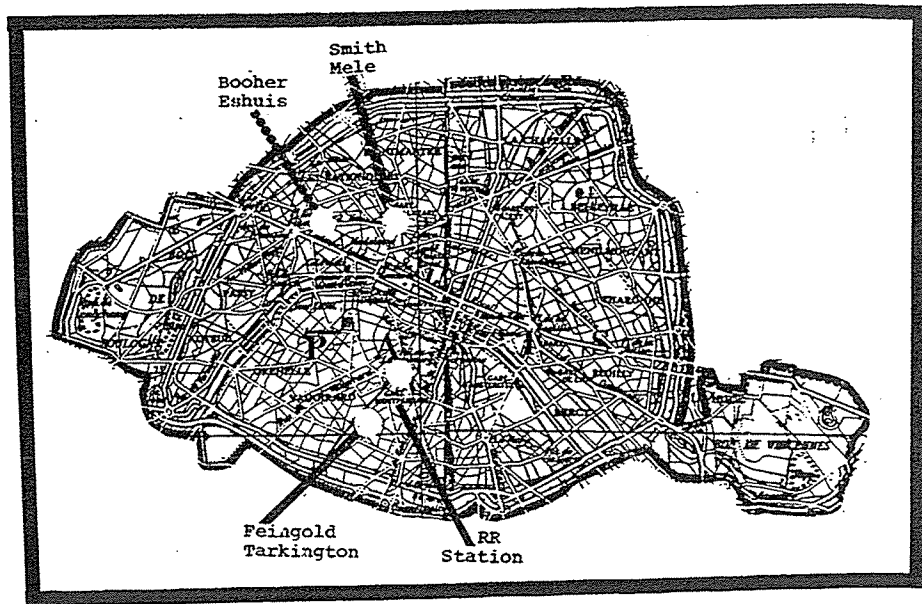
A comment of interest at this point. Material and clothing is in short supply and Allied parachutes are a wonderful source of material. Under cover of darkness on New Year's Eve, Santune sneaks back to the field where Mele landed, locates the buried parachute, and hurries back to his house with the prize source of material for his wife and two children. This is how one survives in German occupied France in 1943.

\* \*

And so ends 1943 for the men of the *DESTINY'S TOT*.

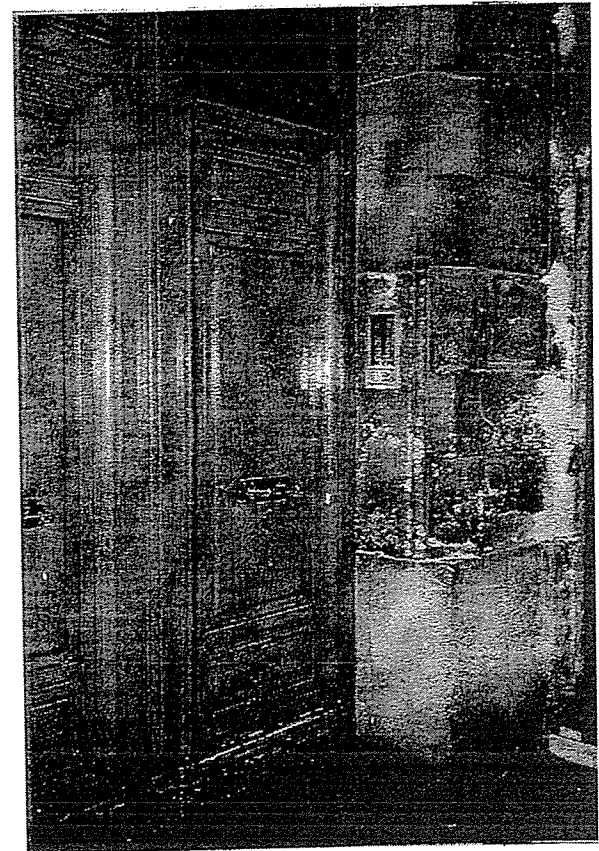
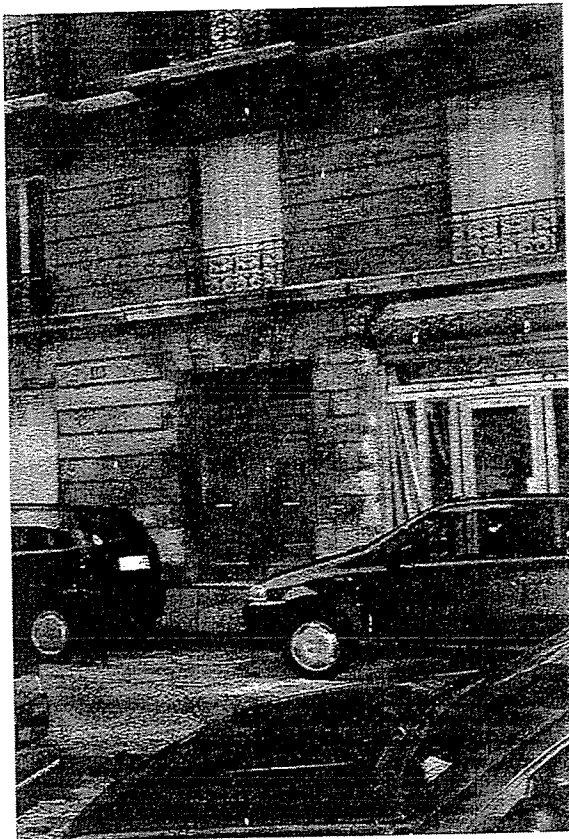
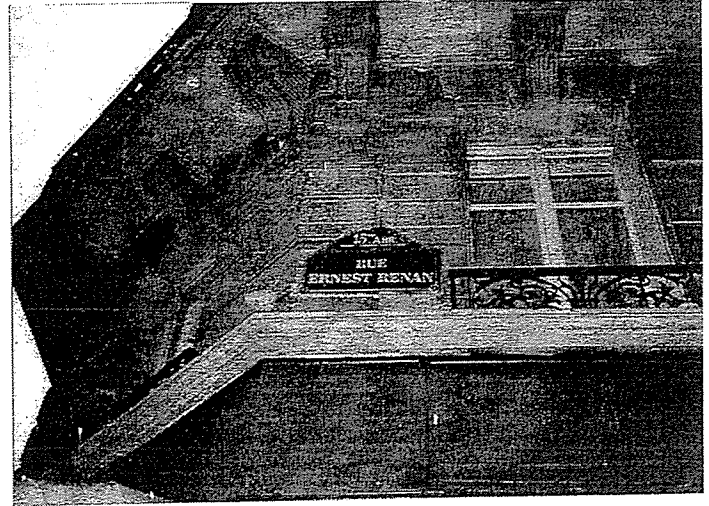
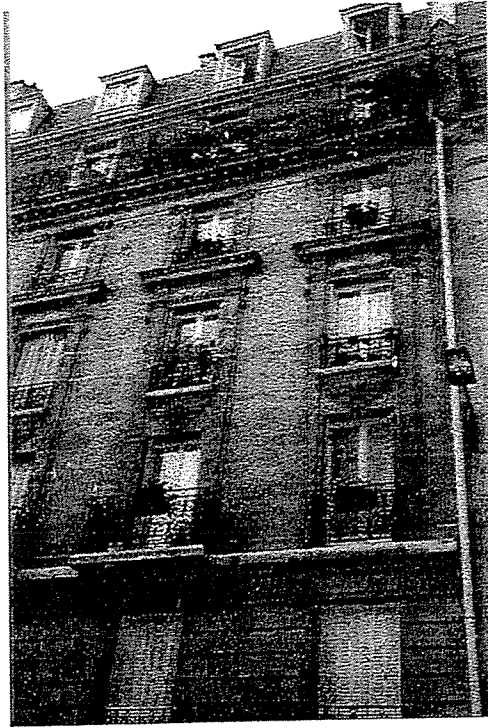


Left: A map of the routes taken by six evaders on their way to Paris.



Paris and location of three of the four safe houses used by Smith, Bocher, Feingold, Tarkington, Mele, and Eshuis and the railroad station where trains left for Plouha.

Below: These photographs show the safe house used by the French Underground to house Finegold and Tarkington while in Paris. The house was located in the southern section of Paris near Pasteur Boulevard.



## CHAPTER 4

### JANUARY IN FRANCE

\*\*\* NEW YEAR'S DAY 1944 \*\*\*

It is now Saturday, New Year's Day, 1944, a year that will have tremendous impact on the course of World War II. But on this particular New Year's Day, there will be no college football bowl games on radio for the crew of the *DESTINY'S TOT*. Right now there is uncertainty, anxiety, and stress.

\* \*

For three of the gunners lying in German hospitals, Bob Adams, Gene O'Hearn, and Tony Onesi, there is only captivity to look forward to in 1944. They will lie in their hospital beds until they die or are released to go to a POW camp. For them, active participation in World War II is over. Their fate is in the hands of the Germans and whatever deities they believe in.

\* \*

Jerry Eshuis is still in Gervais' farmhouse, but his leg wound is getting worse. Today the Underground decides to move him to Chateau Morainvillers which belongs to Count and Countess De Baynast. A French doctor is summoned and after examining the wounds decides the shell fragment in Jerry's right upper thigh must be removed. This is a trial for Jerry as the doctor has no anesthesia nor anti-inflammatory medicine. These items are strictly audited by the Germans and any unauthorized use will cause major trouble for the doctor. Jerry is laid out and the wound site scrubbed down. Jerry is given a glass of whiskey, something he is not used to drinking, to theoretically help dull the pain. A rag is placed in his mouth to insure he doesn't bite his tongue and to muffle any screams if the pain becomes too intense. With the Count holding down Jerry's legs and the Countess holding down his arms, the doctor probes the wound, locates the fragment, and then makes a nine inch incision. A casual observer might think he is watching a re-creation of a dramatic scene from an American cowboy or western movie with the setting transposed to a French chateau. With forceps, the doctor extracts the fragment of metal from Jerry's groin, cleans up the incision and infection as best he can, and places three sutures in the muscle and skin, thus allowing for open drainage of the wound. Jerry is a tough young man and comes through the operation in reasonably good shape. The Countess saves the fragment as a souvenir and as a reminder of the war. For the rest of New Year's Day, Jerry remains in bed being attended to by people in the chateau.



\* \*

The new year dawns over France and Ken Morrison awakens in the same house where he was yesterday. Today will be a repeat of yesterday; wait, wait and wait some more while the Underground goes about its business of figuring out where he will go and when. Since Ken does not speak French, the day is long and tedious. Finally darkness settles in again and Ken goes to bed hoping that something will happen the next day.

\* \*

Lou Feingold and Warren Tarkington wake up in the office at the Crouet's paint factory. They spend the morning trying to make the best of the situation and the boredom. The monotony is interrupted only by the first light meal of the day. Then it's back to more monotony until supper time. Finally supper arrives and the men eat again. It is now dark and things will soon be changing. Jean Crouet, their Underground contact, decides to move Lou and Red Dog so after supper they leave on foot for a new destination, the house of a baker. As the three men stroll down the street, some German soldiers are sighted heading in their direction. The men's blood pressure spikes a little. Jean tells Lou and Warren to remain quiet and then drapes one arm over each of them and starts singing a popular French song. To a casual observer, these are three friends out for a night on the town. The German soldiers eye them but continue walking and are soon gone. Blood pressure returns to normal and Jean stops singing. Eventually they reach the house of the baker on the main street of St. Just. Here Lou and Tark remain for the next few days. The baker becomes known only as Monsieur Harry.

\* \*

Dick Smith, Bill Booher, and Al Mele are trying to sleep late after the preceding night's impromptu party at the supposedly vacant house they are staying in. Nothing much takes place on New Year's Day. Bill Booher remembers that the men were sort of settling into a routine. In late morning, Captain Jacques' wife, a young, pretty French woman by the name of Paulette, brings cafe au lait and bread to the Americans. Food is always a welcome break when there is so little to do. After the morning meal, Dick, Bill, and Al discuss all the wild stories they have heard from the Underground so far concerning escaping from France. The French are certain that someone is coming to help or maybe a plane will be flown in to pick them up. Somehow the American aviators find all this hard to believe. Bill remembers hearing briefings from returned evaders about having to get to southwest France and crossing the Pyrenees Mountains into Spain from where you could get back to England. That doesn't seem to offer much help as Spain is a long distance from northern France and the border is tough to cross because of some Spanish sympathy for Germany. The men look for some reading material but all they find is in French so that doesn't help. They do find a pack of playing cards so there are many games of solitaire or

gin rummy. Since the house is supposed to be vacant, talking is in only hushed tones and everyone stays inside except for a fast trip to the "facility" out in the back shed. In the evening Paulette returns with supper and spends a little time with the men. Certainly a treat for them, particularly for Al who is able to communicate a little with her. When she leaves, monotony sets in again. At last it is time to go get some sleep.

\* \*

Even for the Germans, New Year's Day brings no break nor relaxation. Just within the past six weeks an entire B-17 crew escaped capture and the German command was terribly embarrassed by that incident. The local German commander has certainly been told of the displeasure of his higher command and today he is doing all he can to avoid a repeat reprimand. Patrols are sweeping the countryside trying to find more downed American aviators to join Adams, O'Hearn, and Onesi in captivity. The local German commander has issued a standing order to the French population that anyone caught standing in a field waiting for an Allied parachutist to reach the ground will be shot on sight. The implied threat is that the same applies to anyone harboring an evading Allied aviator or soldier. It is a tense day both for the Germans and the French Underground.

#### \*\*\* THE FIRST WEEK \*\*\*

It is now 2 January 1944 and as far as members of the *DESTINY'S TOT's* crew who are evaders are concerned, not much is happening. Each man is trying to cope with the boredom of being restricted to a confined area and not knowing what to expect in the future.

Members of the Underground are going about their normal jobs, but they are also meeting clandestinely, making contacts, gathering information on various groups of downed airmen, and planning who gets moved next, when, and where.

\* \*

By the second or third of January, the exact date is not known, the Underground decides to move Morrison on to another safe haven. Ken is temporarily moved to Gouvieux, a village 25 or 30 kilometers north of Paris, and into the home of Robert and Betty Lauro. Being hidden in their home is Sergeant Milton J. Mills, Jr., a B-17 radio operator from the 379th Bomb Group who had been shot down the same day as Ken. He, too, is an evader; however, Milton is temporarily laid up in bed due to a bullet wound in the leg incurred during the aerial battle. Milton has been told by the Lauros that Ken is under suspicion of possibly being a German plant because he is so quiet and says so little. After meeting Ken and talking to him for a couple hours, Milton is certain Ken is "a good old GI boy" and so tells the Lauros after Ken's departure.

After about two hours at the Lauros', M. Bouge takes Ken on a motorcycle to the town of Creil, about eight or ten kilometers north of Gouvieux. Morrison is taken to the home of the M. and Mme. Dorez who receive Ken with open arms like a long lost friend. It turns out the Bouge is their son-in-law who lives there with his wife. Jacqueline, a teen-ager, rounds out the family. The house is enclosed by a high iron fence which provided a great deal of privacy, ideal for evaders being housed there. Ken settles in for an unknown period.

\* \*

Most members of the Smith crew who are under control of the Underground begin moving again during the first week in January. Late on Monday the third of January, Jean Crouet feels it's best if Lou and Tark move back to his chateau for the next 24 hours. Since the chateau offers fairly comfortable accommodations, Lou and Tark don't complain at all over the move.

Early in the evading process, it is Feingold and Tarkington who seem to be on the go more than their fellow crewmates. After a relatively pleasant one day stay at the chateau, Lou and Tark are moved again after darkness falls on the fourth of January. Their destination is the home of the Rosseaus, located on the same street as Monsieur Harry, the baker in downtown St. Just. In fact the two houses are just several blocks apart. Here Feingold and Tarkington will stay until the evening of the sixth. Warren is a redhead and has acquired the nickname of Red Dog back in crew training. The French Underground refer to him as *Chien Rouge*.

Jean Crouet, as local Underground chief, determines it is time to relocate Lou and Red Dog one more time. Just after 5 p.m. on 6 January, Jean arrives at the Rosseaus' with a new set of clothes for Tarkington. He donates his own shoes to Red Dog as well as a pair of slacks and an overcoat. He also gives Feingold an overcoat. Jean explains the plan. He will leave the house and walk down the main street leading out of St. Just. Lou and Tark are to trail him at a distance of 20-30 yards. When a small truck passes them and stops, they are to quickly climb in.

And so the trio starts out. After walking awhile, a small truck drives down the street, passes them by, drives a little farther and pulls over and parks. Lou and Tark hurriedly scramble in and the driver immediately starts down the street again. If their luck holds up, the two men will soon be at their next way station. As they drive along, Lou and Warren are amazed at the fuel system for the truck. There is no petrol for the French as the Germans have allocated all supplies for their own vehicles. This situation forces the French into innovating some other ways to fuel their vehicles. The truck Lou and Red Dog are in has been modified by the addition of a device that burns charcoal and through some mechanism, propels the truck. They never really understand how the thing works, but it does.

Two miles down the road the truck pulls over and stops along side two parked cars. As the truck stops, a member of the Underground tells Feingold and Tarkington to get out and enter the second car. They do as instructed. Both cars immediately leave the parking site and proceed down the road with the car containing the evaders following the other vehicle. Destination: Clermont, some eight miles south of St. Just on the way to Paris. After a short drive, the car

suddenly brakes to a stop and Lou and Tark find themselves standing on a darkened, obscure street corner. They are rapidly whisked around the corner into a house belonging to Madame Odette. In the house they find another evader by the name of Lt. Edward Donaldson. The three men introduce themselves and explain how they all arrived at Madame Odette's. This will be Lou's and Red Dog's temporary home for the next two weeks.

\* \*

Bob Adams, Gene O'Hearn, and Tony Onesi spend the first week in January just trying to stay alive and recover from their wounds. By the end of the first week, the German guards are no longer telling Tony that Bob Adams is *Kaputt* so that seems encouraging. Tony himself knows he is going to make it, but he is still a long ways from being well and remains flat on his back on his bed in the cell. Gene also seems to be recovering slowly. No doctors or corpsmen have examined either man during this period. Tony Onesi remembers being told, probably by a German guard, that no one in the crew was killed and many of them have been picked up by the French Underground. That is all good news to Tony. He assumes that Bob is receiving the same information.

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Jerry Eshuis remains by himself with no knowledge of the rest of the crew. His wound is doing much better after the removal of the shell fragment and he is able to ambulate some with the help of a large stick which he uses as a cane. He is being well cared for by the occupants of Chateau Morainvillers where he is. As nice as this living situation is, Jerry wishes he were back in England heading for the USA.

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In the "vacant" house in St. Just, the trio of Dick Smith, Bill Booher, and Al Mele continue their endless games of solitaire and gin rummy. Dick is having back problems resulting from his jolting parachute landing a few days ago. He initially has to take the stairs on his hands and knees, but eventually recovers and can walk the stairs again. Paulette continues to bring two meals a day which are the highlights of the day. On each visit, Paulette remains for awhile to chat with the men, and this too is a treat! It isn't soon, however, that this social period comes to a screeching halt. Captain Jacques has forbidden Paulette to spend any more time with the Americans, as in his opinion, they are getting much too friendly. Al is becoming more fluent in French and is able to chat with Paulette and obtain a little information as to what is happening in the world outside. There is still no word as to when they will get on the road again.

The local inhabitants in the neighborhood are becoming suspicious since the "vacant" house seems to have an awful lot of people coming and going plus there is smoke coming from

the chimney. Some time around the sixth or seventh of January, Captain Jacques arrives and a heated argument ensues. Jacques feels it is time for the men to move on but as a stipulation for his help, he demands all the men's dog tags. Failure to have these dog tags could be detrimental in establishing them as military in case they are ever captured by the Germans. After a lengthy and heated argument, Dick, Bill, and Al reluctantly hand over their dog tags as a lesser of evils available to them. They never see their dog tags again. After the war, they learn Jacques is the only known Underground member to ever demand an evader's dog tags. Whether this demand was an action connected with his Communist plans or not, no one ever ascertains. Loss of the tags certainly didn't make the Americans feel anymore secure over their situation.

The next day, Dick, Bill, and Al are being fed by the attractive Paulette, but she seems distant and highly agitated. She finally breaks down and tells the men that they are being moved shortly to another house as too much attention has been focused on the "vacant" one and the Underground is getting nervous. Paulette leaves and shortly after supper, Captain Jacques, Paulette's husband, arrives with a car. The trio is loaded slowly and secretly into the car and driven off. The ride takes little time and the car stops and parks a little way from the house the men are taken to. Again, the men are moved individually from the car into the house. Later the Americans will learn this is the home of Paul and Yvonne Begue. Once the trio is settled in the house, Captain Jacques drives off into the darkness.

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Back at the 95th Bomb Group in Horham, England, life goes on and day in and day out combat missions are scheduled and flown and more losses occur. Murray Ball, the original navigator on the *DESTINY'S TOT*, has spoken to several crews that flew the mission the day his old crew was shot down. Several of the airmen are certain they saw parachutes floating down from the stricken bomber. Murray decides to write a letter to the Smith family since Dick is such a good friend. In the letter he tells Mr. and Mrs. Smith what he knows about the circumstances and urges them to keep the faith as he is certain Dick will show up sooner or later. He signs the letter and mails it. The censors clear the letter and the next week, the Smith family receives Murray's letter. They are pleased to hear from one of Dick's close friends. The contents of the letter reinforce their own strong belief that Dick is alive and well and that one day he will return safely.

### **\* \* \* THE SECOND WEEK \* \* \***

As the second week in January rolls around, Ken is still living a relatively good life with the Dorez family in Creil. Ken does not sense that any move is going to happen in the immediate future, so he devotes his time to trying to combat boredom.

Lou Feingold and Warren Tarkington learn they are billeted with a woman who is a local legend in the French Underground due to her exploits. Her home is the center of anti-German activity. Madame Odette's husband threw in his lot with the Hitler regime back in 1935 and moved to Germany leaving his family behind. Her son, Edmund Sauvage, lives with her as does Gaston Legrand, an ex-German POW and currently a black market butcher. Madame Odette, strange as it might seem, is on exceptionally good terms with the local German commandant. This unusual relationship has its advantages for the French Resistance movement. Madame Odette owns a dairy that sells milk to the German Quartermaster. Edmund was involved in the dairy operations since 1942 and had been watering down the milk destined for the Germans and diverting what he saved to the French children of the town. Caught by German authorities, he is barred from dealing in any milk transaction. Through the influence of his mother with the German commandant, Edmund escapes any severe disciplinary action. He is now directing his efforts towards stealing German cigarettes and distributing them to Allied evaders passing through the escape system. Neither Lou nor Tark have ever thought about it before, but they learn that the French are growing their own tobacco and curing it in front of the family fireplace. At Madame Odette's, the men roll their own cigarettes from homegrown tobacco.

Gaston Legrand plies his trade as a butcher and is heavily involved in the local black market operations. This probably means a little more meat in the Odette household than would normally be expected in wartime Clermont. Gaston also functions as the executioner of French collaborators for the local Underground cell. He shrewdly postpones one of his "hits" until Lou and Red Dog are moved on. No need in getting the Germans upset and increasing their surveillance while the evaders are still around.

On one Saturday, the ninth of January, three of Lt. Donaldson's crew are brought to Madame Odette's home. These are the pilot, Lt. Glen Camp, the navigator Lt. James Cooper, and one of the gunners, Sgt. Parker. With six evaders in the house, things are getting a little cozy. A daily routine sets in now that there are six evaders. Madame Odette arranges for all of them to visit a Mademoiselle Bernadette every other evening. She is an interesting and very charming lady who has, for the past seven years, been the local dressmaker. She, like Madame Odette, is a member of the French Underground. Bernadette is quite proficient in English, at least British English, as she studied at Britain's Cambridge University before becoming a governess to a well-to-do family in Scotland. The men look forward to visiting the Bernadette home as she is wonderful hostess and the conversation is spirited and in English. Mademoiselle graciously provides the men books to read that are written in English. These books help the men pass the time of day while at Madame Odette's home.

Lou and Tark also meet two locally prominent young men by the names of Lucien and Maurice LeClerc. Their father is one of the biggest French businessmen in the area and owns numerous commercial enterprises. Because of their father's position, both young men are exempt from the local German labor draft law. This is a good family to know, and the relationship nets the

evaders additional food and cigarettes. Madame LeClerc sends Lou and Red Dog new sweaters and shirts through her sons. Madame and the boys frequently stop by and play cards with the Americans, thus providing a welcome relief from the monotony of their confinement. Having friends in high places always helps.

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Smith, Booher, and Mele are now established in the Begue household. It is a small house with only one bedroom, but the Begues insist the Americans use it. The three men rotate sleeping arrangements, two men in the bed and one on a pallet on the floor. Where Paul and Yvonne sleep is a mystery and no one ever finds out. The evaders are fed well as Yvonne is an excellent cook and seems to enjoy cooking for them. She prepares three light meals each day. Language is still a problem and again Dick and Bill depend on Al for much of the communications. Dick is starting to acquire a few French words and tries them out every so often. As was standard, the men never knew the real names of the people they stayed with nor even the exact location. In case they were ever captured by the Germans, they couldn't tell what they didn't know. Life, even at the Begue household, could be tedious. The trio stays indoors and tries to amuse themselves with card games and other activities. They occasionally play with or rock little Paulette, the new baby. There is, however, some diversity during the evenings. Just about every other evening, Dick, Bill, and Al are invited out to some Frenchman's home for supper. Paul scouts the route and if clear, Yvonne brings the men to the home where supper is being served. As usual, there is a language problem but between Al's translation, Dick and Bill's few French words, and a lot of sign language, everyone has an enjoyable time. The trio begins to feel like local celebrities.

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Jerry Eshuis remains at Chateau Morainvillers and is fairly comfortable. His leg is healing and he can walk with less discomfort. No news of his other crewmates has filtered in so he is in the dark as to what has happened to them. Towards the end of the second week of January, an Underground member arrives at the chateau and alerts Jerry that in the morning he is to be ready to start on the next leg of his journey home. That is good news to him.

\* \*

The three hospitalized gunners slowly improve despite the lack of active medical care. Onesi is feeling a little better and can sit up now for longer periods of time; however, he remains in the prone position much of the time. None of the three are going anywhere in the next week or so.

As the second week in France draws to a close, the action picks up for Dick, Bill, Al and Jerry. Captain Jacques stops by the Begue's house one evening and informs Dick, Bill, and Al that they will leave in the morning for Paris. The men try to get a good night's sleep as it may be a long and tedious day tomorrow. With the arrival of tomorrow, Yvonne feeds the trio breakfast. At about the same time, Jerry Eshuis is having his breakfast in the chateau just before getting in a car and heading for the rendezvous point. After breakfast, Dick, Bill, and Al say good-bye to Paulette and then with Paul in the lead, walk to an abandoned store in St. Just. Here they are reunited with Jerry Eshuis who has already arrived from the chateau. It certainly is a happy moment for the four when they are reunited because no one in the Begue house had ever heard what happened to Eshuis.

Captain Jacques arrives and begins to distribute pistols to everyone. Dick and the others aren't too happy with this idea but Jacques insists. None of the men have any American or French identity cards and if stopped, that will be hard to explain. Jacques instructs the men that if stopped by the Germans and it looks like they are to be taken into custody, they are to shoot the Germans and make a run for it. With that final statement, Captain Jacques and Paul leave and Dick, Bill, Al, and Jerry climb into a four-door sedan, a vehicle somewhat larger than what the men have been in before. The driver is impatient and a tough looking individual who doesn't speak English. Not terribly reassuring to say the least. Once loaded, away they go heading for their adventures in Paris.

En route the men experience a short delay that has them apprehensive. The highway crosses a railroad track and when the driver arrives, the track gate is down. Now that in itself is not a problem but the German staff car filled with German officers that pulls up along side is. The Americans try to portray an attitude of just ignoring the Germans who fortunately are having a good time and don't seem interested in scrutinizing the French car and its occupants. After what seem like hours, the train passes by, and the gate is raised. Both cars drive off and the tension in the French car diminishes, and the Americans are greatly relieved! The rest of the trip into Paris is uneventful.

The atmosphere changes, however, once the driver reaches Paris. He seems lost and highly agitated as he drives through Paris. Finally the car is jerked to a stop and the driver jumps out and makes a call from a public telephone booth. He then rushes back to the car and drives to an apartment building where he unceremoniously deposits the Americans, collects their pistols, and hurriedly drives off with no word of farewell. He has to be back in St. Just before the curfew and it is getting late.

Dick, Bill, Al, and Jerry find themselves in the general vicinity north of the Arc de Triomphe at the tiny apartment of an elderly and petite British lady. She fixes tea and crumpets for her guests and then goes and makes a telephone call to someone. An hour later she informs the four Americans that she can house only two of them. Since Jerry's leg is still hindering him some, it is agreed among the four crewmates that Jerry and Bill will remain with the British lady while Dick



and Al continue on to another safe haven. The British lady provides the instructions on how to make contact with another member of the Underground and the four friends say a temporary good-bye. Bill and Jerry settle in according to the instructions of the lady and Dick and Al leave to make their way to the Champs Elysees. There they spot their contact who is identified by a rolled newspaper in his left pocket. Dick and Al follow him as inconspicuously as possible for nearly an hour and eventually find themselves at the Canadian Pacific Railroad Building. The guide enters the building, but Dick and Al delay awhile before entering. When they enter the lobby, they take the stairs to the fifth floor where they meet Alphonse and his wife. Dick and Al are now in the new safe haven. As luck will have it, Alphonse is quite proficient in English and his wife can get by in that language. This will certainly make life less complicated for the two Americans.

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At this point, let's digress just a moment and consider another aspect of evasion of downed airmen. Air Force planners had in 1942 developed two items they thought they might assist men like the Smith crew who were in evader status. First was an aid box that contained several items like matches and candy bars and second, a purse containing 2,000 French francs plus maps, a compass, and a hacksaw blade. Each man was also issued several small black and white photographs of himself in civilian clothes that were designed to be used for forged identity cards while running around behind the enemy lines. How much did all this planning and foresight do for our Smith crew evaders? With the exception of the money and a few candy bars, none. Dick lost both kits upon landing and Booher and Feingold left theirs in the aircraft as they rushed to get out of the shattered airplane. Of the things in the aid kits, only Tarkington used any of the items. He shared a peanut bar with Lou while waiting for a French contact and saved the matches. Not one man used the maps, the compass, or hacksaw blade. They were all given over to the French Underground. Now money was a different proposition. The francs bought food and cigarettes and was used to pay French helpers. The photographs proved worthless. They were either too light or too dark or the wrong proportion. While the Air Force planners certainly had good intentions and tried to provide downed aircrews with helpful items, their efforts overall, at least for the Smith crew, were generally for naught. Only the money was a really usable item. After returning to England, each evader had to tell the debriefing officer what items he used and what he did with the rest of them. It was probably a big shock to the planners after they saw the results. And now back to the adventures of the Smith crew.

\*\*\* LATER IN JANUARY \*\*\*

In the German hospitals, the three wounded gunners of the Smith crew are slowly on the mend. Bob Adams is now out of life threatening danger and Tony Onesi is regaining some of this strength. It is a strange situation here in the hospital. There is no contact at all with medical personnel, but the guards will occasionally pass on some news from the outside as best they

can considering the language problem. A little news is better than no news at all. There is nothing to do but continue to heal and then move to a POW camp. A least there will then be someone to talk to. Gene O'Hearn too improves slowly in his hospital bed.

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Ken Morrison remains with the Dorez family in Creil, just waiting. He is beginning to wonder if he'll ever get on the move again, but there is nothing to do except wait. The Underground seems to be doing the best they can.

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In the heart of Paris, Bill and Jerry are adjusting to living in a tiny apartment. They sleep in a double bed in one bedroom. Madame feeds them two light meals per day as food is scarce and rationed in Paris and expensive. They know it is a sacrifice for her to shelter them.

The two men are also finding out a little bit about their hostess' past, but never her name. They learn that as a young woman she married a dashing young French artist. The walls of her tiny apartment are covered with many of her husband's works of art. The young couple moved to a French colony in North Africa where they lived for many years. After her husband retired, they moved to, and lived comfortably, in England rather than in France. Just prior to the outbreak of World War II, she returned to France to visit her husband's relatives who live in St. Just. Her beloved husband died at the beginning of the war and with the declaration of war on Germany by Great Britain, she is prohibited from returning to England by the German occupiers of France. She is forced to stay in France but is able to move to Paris and rent a tiny apartment where she now lives in early 1944. Fortunately, the French government provides her a small pension to live on. Age wise, she appears to be in her late fifties or early sixties.

It is an interesting experience for Bill and Jerry to live with this elderly English lady. She is delighted to speak English so much again, even if Bill and Jerry do use that strange American version of English. Almost every day there are visitors, most of whom are French relatives of hers by marriage. Of course the conversation is all in French so the best Bill and Jerry can do is listen. They do begin to recognize many of the words and by the time they leave for England they are understanding perhaps 70% of the conversation, even though they cannot take part in the spoken exchange. The visitors are kind people and some bring food as they know Bill and Jerry are placing a strain on Madame's small food ration. After having been in Paris for about five days, another relative from St. Just arrives with a bonanza for the lady. In his suitcase he brings meat from a freshly killed lamb. What a treat! This gracious relative stays awhile, cleans his suitcase, and returns to St. Just.

Jerry's leg wound continues to require attention and fresh medication applied daily. The muscle and the subcutaneous tissue have not yet completely closed. There are many visiting young ladies and girls who offer to dress Jerry's wound, but he is a little sensitive about allowing

them to because the wound is rather close to some very private anatomical parts. In the end, however, he occasionally submits to a gentle woman's touch, but usually with a slight blush of embarrassment on his cheeks. It all works well and after a week passes, Jerry is able to take a stroll outdoors.

The English lady has two nieces in their late teens. One is studying to be a nun in the Catholic church and the other works in a hospital and has been involved with transmitting messages in and out for hospitalized Allied POWs. The elderly lady also has a nephew in his early twenties. All three young people are anxious to show Bill and Jerry the world famous sights of their beloved Paris. Communications between the young French and young Americans are limited as the French know little English and the Americans know no spoken French. There is a lot of sign language, laughter, and probably giggles from the girls. But in spite of the language barrier, Bill and Jerry are escorted throughout Paris. They become familiar with the metro subway system and the buses. They walk along the banks of the Seine River and stroll through many of the parks that unfortunately are not in bloom in January. Like millions of tourists before them, they visit the Eiffel Tower. While visiting the Arc de Triomphe, Bill and Jerry drift over to inspect the eternal flame. A moment of consternation arises when they see a group of German soldiers approaching the flame at the same time. Anyway, they keep their poise and don't panic. There is no real threat as young German soldiers like to be tourists too, and they are interested in seeing the sights of Paris just as the Americans are. There is, however, one outing that is touchy. Jerry accidentally bumps into a German soldier and without thinking says in English, "Excuse me." Bill gasps silently. Apparently the German soldier either didn't hear it or understand what was said so nothing happens. Jerry keeps right on walking with his friends. The two Americans are treated to a movie one night, but since it didn't appear to be an action movie and it is in French that Bill can't understand, he is generally bored with the whole thing.

Someone in the Underground decides that photos of Bill and Jerry are needed so work on their French ID cards can commence. The IDs are necessary before the men can start on the next leg of their trip through France heading for England. The English lady's niece escorts the Americans to a nearby French equivalent of a five and ten cent store where there is a small booth for taking self photos. Each man in turn poses with a solemn expression and in his French civilian city clothes. After the picture taking is over, the three return to the apartment and the photos are delivered to the Underground.

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While Bill and Jerry are viewing the landmarks of Paris with the English lady's nieces and nephew, Dick Smith and Al Mele are also seeing some of the sights of Paris. Their host Alphonse takes them to several movies and stage shows. One evening the men accompany Alphonse to a movie house with a vaudeville staging. While Dick misses most of the conversation and Al understands some, both really enjoy the vaudeville actors and think them quite funny. They try to be nonchalant around the Germans in attendance. On a couple afternoons they, with

Alphonse, slip into a local bar frequented by working-Frenchmen, sample several typical French drinks including a chocolate tasting one, and then leave.

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Things are a little more exciting in the Canadian Pacific Railroad Building than where the English lady lives, as German officers live on the third floor. Their orderly often comes to Alphonse's apartment to have coffee beans ground. That always adds a little excitement to the daily routine. The highlight of Mele's stay in Paris is the meeting of the famed French singer and entertainer Mistinguette who stops by a few times for a glass of wine with Alphonse and his wife.

In spite of their outings, Dick and Al still must spend a considerable amount of time in the apartment. To help while the time, they devise a simple card game based on a baseball game. Baseball was the topic of the game since both men are avid baseball fans. This creativity helps pass many hours.

Dick and Al eat much better than their crewmates a few blocks away. Madame has access to Underground finances so twice a week she rides the train into the countryside and buys meat and vegetables from the black market. Back in Paris there is then a rather extravagant supper with many friends and relatives present.

It is necessary for evaders to have forged identification papers and it was by chance that at roughly the same time Bill and Jerry are having their pictures taken for ID cards, the Underground is working with Dick and Al for the same type photos. It is about time to forge French ID cards for the four evaders in Paris and get them on the road again.

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North of Paris in Clermont, plans have been finalized to move Lou Feingold and Warren Tarkington one more time. On Wednesday, 19 January, Mademoiselle Bernadette tells the evaders staying with Madame Odette that four of them will leave the next morning and the other two the following Tuesday, the 25th. The evaders agree that Lou, Tark, and Ed Donaldson will be three of those that leave as they have been in Clermont the longest. The fourth will be determined by a cut of the cards with high card winning. Lieutenants Camp and Cooper and then Sergeant Parker each take a card from the deck and Parker is the lucky winner. The two lieutenants resign themselves to staying behind a few more days.

Weeks later, Lou and Tark realize how any apparently insignificant event in a combat zone may drastically alter circumstances that can result in the difference of living or dying or escaping or being captured. And so it was with Lieutenants Camp and Cooper. The failure to draw high card seems at the time only an inconvenience in delaying getting home safely. In fact it results in both officers being captured by the Germans. When it is their time to move, the French Underground opts to move them through southwestern France and the Pyrenees Mountains into

Spain. Things go well up to the French-Spanish border, and then ironically the Germans initiate a thorough search and scrutinize everyone trying to cross the border. Lieutenants Camp and Cooper are apprehended and sent to a German POW camp for Allied officers. They remain prisoners for the next 16 months. Upon hearing this report of their two friends, Lou and Tark count their lucky stars they didn't have to cut cards to leave Clermont!

Unexpectedly, the Underground guide comes later in the very same day the men are briefed about the move, not on Thursday the 20th as they had been told earlier in the morning. Escorted by the underground helper, the three officers and one sergeant walk to the railroad station while Lucin LeClerc patrols the area in his car to insure the way is clear. Lou, Tark, and the two from the Donaldson crew expect to be put on a train for Beauvais, a town 15 miles west of Clermont; however, they are surprised when they are told to board a train heading for Creil, a mere ten miles south of Clermont. The American quartet do as they have been ordered to.

Upon arrival at Creil, the four evaders get off the train as instructed. One French guide walks Tarkington and Parker through the town to the house of an unidentified woman. Simultaneously Feingold and Donaldson walk to the local five and ten cent store and mill around for 15 minutes trying to look inconspicuous as possible. It's a little tense killing time in the open while waiting for an Underground contact to arrive. At last the contact arrives and escorts them to his house. It's an overnight stay in Creil and in the morning of Thursday the 20th, the four evaders are escorted back to the railroad station. They are surprised to see Edmund Sauvage, Madame Odette's son waiting for them. Greetings are exchanged and then Donaldson, Feingold, Tarkington, and Parker climb aboard the designated train accompanied by Edmund and his friend from the Underground. The Americans have no idea where they are traveling to and are surprised when the train stops a mere 15 miles to the northwest at the village of Noailles and they are told that this is the end of the line for today. They are met at the station by a car with a chauffeur. Edmund Sauvage and his friend bid the Americans farewell while the four evaders climb into the car. The chauffeur drives out of town for some ten miles and deposits the men at the farmhouse of Monsieur and Madame Robert Eckert, a friendly French couple. The Underground is busy preparing fake French ID cards for Allied evaders so Lou and Warren and the others have photos taken for their new papers. Lou's ID will list him as a deaf-mute.

It is a restful time here in the country and the men enjoy their stay. On Monday the 24th, a small truck with driver appears at the farmhouse of Monsieur Eckert. Lou, Tark, Ed, and Parker climb into the truck and the driver heads for the small village of Auneuil, ten miles northwest of Noailles. Here the four Americans are delivered to the house of the local Underground chief, Monsieur Gilbert, the local Justice of the Peace. He has an interesting background. As a French army officer he fought the Germans but was captured and sent to Germany as a POW. Through his resourcefulness, he was able to escape and work his way covertly back to France. The Germans do not seem to know of his history as they do not harass or arrest him.

Warren Tarkington has the misfortune of coming down with gastritis and is asking for a doctor. Gilbert arranges for a local physician to visit and examine him. Whatever the treatment was, it works and in a few days Tark is much better.

Wednesday morning arrives and another evader is added to the men already at Gilbert's. Sgt. Reeves, a gunner on a B-17, arrives and introductions are made all around. Reeves tells of being shot down three days ago and of being rescued by the French. Now that there are five evaders at his house, Gilbert calls a friend who is a barber and invites him out to cut the men's hair. This is welcome news to the men, and when the barber arrives, they learn he will be their guide on the trip into Paris.

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While Lou and Red Dog are resting at the Eckert's in the country, unexpected visitors arrive at the apartment where Bill and Jerry are staying in Paris. It is Sunday morning, 23 January 1944. A man speaking in American accented English announces they are from the underground and wish to interview the two Americans. Eshuis is interviewed by one man while Booher undergoes a separate interrogation by the other. They are asked about things they know about in the United States. Bill's interview inquires as to the name of the island on which the Statue of Liberty stands. Bill draws a blank on Liberty Island and is temporarily a bit concerned, but the rest of the interview goes well. Jerry too passes his interrogation. After the interviews the men leave and the Americans wonder as to how this discussion will influence their future.

The following day, a member of the underground arrives in mid-morning and asks Jerry to accompany him. The Underground has a slight problem and they think he may be able to help. It seems that the Underground has acquired an individual who claims he is a Dutch newspaper reporter who was shot down while flying a mission with the Royal Air Force. The Underground suspects he is a German infiltrator and since Jerry is of Dutch descent and speaks Dutch, they want him to evaluate the fellow. Off Jerry goes with his escort and is introduced to the man. For the next few hours he and Jerry talk about things that Jerry thinks a Dutchman should be familiar with as well as listening to his accent. Subsequent to the lengthy discussion, Jerry gives the Underground his impression of the individual under scrutiny. Eshuis reports that the man has extensive knowledge but speaks in high Dutch, a dialect closely akin to German, rather than in low Dutch or the common dialect used in Holland. Jerry cannot make a positive statement that the man either is or is not an infiltrator but expresses his opinion that the man does not use Dutch as his first language. Eshuis is thanked for his assistance and returned to the English lady's apartment where he tells Bill of his afternoon's experience. Sometime later he hears rumors that the man he spoke with has been executed by the French Underground for security reasons. Jerry is upset over this news as he cannot verify positively that the man was in fact a German infiltrator. He hopes his comments to the Underground are not the overriding reason the man was executed, but at this stage there is nothing that can be done about the situation.

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Over in the Canadian Pacific Railroad Building, dawn is breaking on Sunday the 23rd of January. While Bill Booher and Jerry Eshuis are being interrogated by the French Underground, Dick Smith and Al Mele are having an entirely different kind of day. Although both men are Catholic, the French helpers never take them to Mass on Sundays even though they take them to nightclubs. To liven this particular Sunday up, Alphonse suggests a little outing to the third floor apartment where the German officers reside. Somehow to Dick and Al this seems to be pressing their good luck, but Alphonse is certain nothing adverse will come of the visit, so off they go. Upon entering the apartment, the men see that the Germans are not the neatest housekeepers around and that they have bought quite a few souvenirs of Paris. Alphonse is exceedingly generous and suggests that the two Americans take something as a souvenir. Dick and Al are leery about this but Alphonse insists that with all the clutter, the Germans will never miss anything. Dick finally takes an expensive pipe for his father and Al decides on a small item as well. After a tour of the apartment, the men finally leave and return to Alphonse's apartment. The day ends with a fine French meal.

Madame often has parties in the apartment for relatives and friends who seem not to be doing as well under the German occupation as she is. These gatherings are quite enjoyable for Dick and Al as there are on occasion young French women present.

Now man is a social animal by nature, but there are lessons to be learned if one is to achieve success in a social atmosphere, whether in the USA or in France. First Lieutenant Richard M. Smith learns a very important lesson the hard way during one of the parties given by Alphonse's wife. At one particular party there are a number of attractive young French women present and Lieutenant Smith deems it important to make a highly favorable impression on them. After all, he is the ranking member of his crew and commander of the aircraft even if he is the youngest of the crew.

Because Dick and Al are in evader status, they are no longer clothed in military uniforms resplendent with bars, wings, and ribbons, but rather in hand-me-down French civilian clothes which do not designate the hierarchal standing of the two men as do military uniforms. It seems to Lt. Richard Smith that T/Sgt. Alphonse Mele is becoming the favorite partner for conversation with all the young ladies. Al's more mature bearing (after all he is a number of years older than Dick), his innate Italian charm, and his limited knowledge of French all contribute to the young women finding Al quite interesting. Dick feels shunned and wanders off to the music room where he sits alone and pouts. This snubbing by women is a new experience for Dick and certainly not a pleasant one either. Not too long afterwards, one of the young ladies enters the music room in an attempt to engage Dick in conversation and to ask him to rejoin the company. He is not quite ready for that and through the use of hand signals, tells her to "Butt out." She does. Dick remains seated for awhile but eventually comes to his senses and decides he is the only one being punished by his isolation, so he stands up and walks back into the other room and rejoins the party. Dick has made up his mind that he will have to allow Al the privilege of regaling all the French in attendance while he quietly goes his own way. Lesson learned: Rank does not always guarantee success in the Parisian social setting.

\* \* \* SIX DAYS UNTIL FEBRUARY \* \* \*

There are only six more days left in January 1944 and at night the moon is only a sliver radiating very little if any light. It is during these conditions that the French underground tries to transfer evaders to the British Royal Navy at the French coast for transport across the English Channel to England. It is because of these conditions that Wednesday, 26 January becomes very important to the four Smith crewmen currently in Paris.

Early in the morning, Dick Smith is unexpectedly awakened with a gentle touch. He opens his eyes and finds he is looking at an exceedingly attractive and vivacious young French woman who softly tells him to get up, dress, and be ready to leave the apartment very soon. Dick learns she calls herself Claudette. Dick does as he has been instructed. Claudette, meanwhile, has awakened Al Mele and is in intense discussion with him. She is trying with all her charm and femininity to convince Al to stay in Paris and work with her and the Underground as a radio operator. Mele tells her he is honored that they would want him but he wisely resists all her arguments and tells her all he wants to do is go home. Claudette finally gives up. By now Dick is dressed and ready to go. He and Al say a temporary good-bye, and then Claudette leads him to the door and they are off.

Claudette walks Dick from the apartment to the nearest metro station where she buys two tickets to the railroad station where the French trains run towards the Brittany region. She and Dick ride the metro and get off at the railroad station where they are met by other members of the French Underground. Dick is given his false identification card and other papers that show him as a French geologist. He is also told to stay on the train until it stops and when everyone gets off, so should he. There are also other detailed instructions passed on. Dick is then put aboard the appropriate train and he is off and temporarily on his own. It is a scary sensation for awhile.

Back at Alphonse's apartment, Al Mele is waiting to see what is to happen to him. His wait isn't long and soon another Underground helper arrives. Al bids farewell to Alphonse and his wife and then Al and his helper follow Claudette and Dick's route to the railroad station. Al, like Dick, will travel towards Brittany so he is provided with the necessary ID card and other papers and briefed as to what to do.

\* \*

Over at the English lady's small apartment, a similar scene is taking place. The day before, Bill Booher and Jerry Eshuis had been alerted to be ready to move in the next day or so. The morning of the 26th is the day. Claudette has returned from escorting Dick Smith to the railroad station and is ready to get Bill and Jerry there. The three move through the metro system to the Gare Montparnasse section of Paris and arrive at the railroad station where Bill and Jerry find they are reunited with Al Mele. Like Dick and Al before them, Bill and Jerry each receive his French identification card, a ration card, an occupation card, and an entry pass into a high defense zone. They also receive the same instructions passed on to Dick a little earlier in the morning.



The men can't understand why Al wasn't brought with Dick when Bill and Jerry were brought together, but such are the workings of the Underground. Bill, Jerry, and Al are given rail tickets purchased by a member of the Underground. Following their instructions, the three Americans follow a woman they do not know and board the train and settle into a compartment ready for the train ride to Brittany.

\* \*

For years, Bill Booher and those who traveled with him from Paris were certain that Dick Smith was on the same train. Dick is positive that he was on an earlier train or one that took a different route because of differences in remembered incidences. Our story continues with Dick Smith traveling on a separate train.

As the train pulls out of the Paris station on 26 January 1944, Dick Smith is in a compartment full of French farmers who try to offer him food and wine and conversation, but in accordance with instructions he ignores them. He is certain they think him rude.

Finally the train arrives at St. Brieuc and Dick gets off as instructed. Obviously at this time he has no idea of the name of the town where he finds himself. While waiting for the narrow gauge train to arrive Dick wanders around the village square. In his long, black coat and grey fedora hat, he is trying to look inconspicuous in the village square while waiting for the next train. All he succeeds in doing is making other evaders, like himself, who are in the square also extremely nervous as they picture him as the personification of a dreaded Gestapo agent.

\* \*

The train Smith is on has already left the Paris station by the time Booher, Mele, and Eshuis board theirs. They and their French helper find a compartment and settle down. Bill, Jerry, and Al can talk while their compartment is empty of other riders except their guide, but once any Frenchman enters the compartment, they feign sleep so no one will try to engage them in conversation. As the train continues heading westward, the friends speculate on where they are heading as none of them has ever been told the destination. All hope they are heading closer to England. When time permits, all three evaders try to "age" their IDs and papers by rubbing them on the floor of the train and flexing them back and forth for a well worn look.

At one rail stop, Bill notices two young men dressed in very European and expensive suits. Since he and the others are dressed in very old and ill-fitting French working men's clothing, he briefly wishes he was as well dressed as the young men. The train starts up again and Bill loses track of them. The hours move on and the train passes through the town of Rennes and keeps going. Finally it arrives at a station and it is time to get off. Much later the Americans learn that they were at St. Brieuc on the Brest Peninsula.

All the passengers get off the train and go through a checkpoint. Bill is asked for his papers by a French gendarmerie and he presents his with no comment. The gendarmerie asks

for more identification so Bill pulls out his "worn" papers and these seem to satisfy the guard. He is cleared to proceed. Al and Jerry are subjected to the same routine, but soon they too are all through the checkpoint. The three now loosely follow their female helper through the area until they arrive at another train stop. Here the responsibility for the three Americans is passed to another young French woman while the Paris helper melts away into the crowd.

\* \*

At the appointed time, Smith moves nearer the train station and soon the narrow gauge train arrives. Dick boards and finds a seat in a compartment and within minutes the train is underway. After forty-five minutes, the train pulls to a halt and people start to get off. This is Plouha, but at that time Dick is unaware of that. Inside the car, Dick sees an attractive young Frenchwoman in knee-high rubber boots walk down the aisle and head for the door. This is the signal he has been waiting for, so he gets up and follows her off the train. To his amazement, five other young men in various clothing also get up and follow the young woman. Once out of the train, the woman, whose Underground name turns out to be Germaine, starts walking down the railroad tracks with six young evaders following like goslings. Dick sees that none of them are members of his crew. The file walks about a mile until they reach a modest two-story house where Germaine lives with her rather elderly mother. The trip from Paris has ended, and the next chapter in Dick's adventure is about to begin.

\* \*

Later in the day and at a specified time, Booher, Mele, and Eshuis head for the railroad station in St. Brieuc to catch a designated train that will take them on the final leg of their trip. Once again it is necessary to pass through an identification papers check. Bill goes first and things momentarily do not seem to be going well. He fumbles with his various papers and the inspector appears to be rather unfriendly. Jerry is in the rear and suspects trouble so he drifts farther to the rear and eventually decides to stay behind and try to board another train. Apparently what he doesn't see is that eventually Bill clears the checkpoint and the inspector regains his more friendly attitude and Al passes through the check with no difficulty at all. Once on the train, Bill asks Al where Jerry is and Al doesn't know: he thought Jerry was just behind him. The train is very crowded and Bill and Al find themselves standing on an open platform for the ride. And so Bill and Al depart on the narrow gauge train while Jerry is left behind. The ride is around forty-five minutes or so and the train makes several stops. At what the men learn later is the village of Plouha, French Underground guides start to disembark from the train.

\* \*

The two Americans follow a young French Underground worker as she gets off the train. Bill and Al follow her as she ignores them but leads them to a country farmhouse about a mile away from the station. Here they find 15 to 20 Allied airmen, also anxious to return to England. Bill is surprised to see the two nicely dressed fellows he had spotted at a stop while traveling to Plouha. After introductions, he learns they are members of Britain's Royal Air Force and have been stranded in France for three or four months. Their helpers were rather wealthy French ladies who enjoyed having young men around and did their best for them. Well, if an evader has to be helped, it is just as easy to be helped in style rather than having to just barely survive as some had to. The men find that it is a pleasure to be able to speak English with different people in the group. Bill and Al are shown around and told where they will sleep. And so Wednesday, the 26th of January 1944 comes to a close.

\* \*

Meanwhile back in St. Brieuc, Jerry Eshuis is wandering around the streets. Whether Jerry had any money to buy food with is not known. He did not dare risk getting a hotel room so he finds a side street and curls up in back of a large trash can and goes to sleep. Well, as best he could under the circumstances. Fortunately he was never detected by the French police or the German Gestapo.

In the morning he returns to the narrow gauge railroad and without any problems he boards a train. Somehow he gets off at the correct destination. How the Underground identifies him or vice versa, no one seems to know. It is a fact, however, that he was picked up by the Underground and reunited with his fellow evaders.

\* \*

A new day arrives in France. Dick, Al, and Bill are positioned at Plouha on the French coast waiting to be transported back to England; however, Dick is billeted apart from the others of his crew. Jerry shows up later that day and rejoins Bill and Al.

\* \*

Lou Feingold and Warren Tarkington aren't so lucky. They are near Paris with Monsieur Gilbert but today things will change. Early in the morning the men are gotten up, fed breakfast, and put into a vehicle for movement for Paris. Gilbert and the barber who cut the men's hair yesterday are the guides. After a drive of 25 miles, the men find themselves on the northwest edge of Paris. Feingold, Tarkington, Donaldson, and Parker are taken to the metro station, let off in the company of Gilbert, and given instructions. They walk down the stairs to the underground metro tracks and board the next subway train coming through and ride to the designated station

and get off. They then climb the stairs to the street exit and, following the instructions, walk to the house of Madame Schmitt, their appointed contact in Paris. They walk to her front door and knock.

The door opens and the men enter. They are surprised to find two evaders already there. One is a downed English Typhoon fighter pilot and the other is named Olaf. The Englishman seems to be a very vocal individual and born adventurer. He is fluent in Norwegian, tells the men he fought with the Loyalists against Franco during the Spanish Civil War back in the mid-1930's, fought with the gallant Finns against the Russians back in the 1939 Russo-Finnish War, and is now a fighter pilot in the Royal Air Force who has been evading Germans in France. Obviously a man of action who courts danger!

Olaf, on the other hand, is an enigmatic character. After meeting him, Tark and Lou form an opinion that all is not quite right with this individual. His stories don't always seem to jibe. Tarkington becomes suspicious and speaks to Gilbert about him. Gilbert too has concerns and tells Tarkington to find out as much as he can about him without being too obvious.

Tark engages Olaf in conversation and Olaf relates how he is a private in the U.S. Army but detailed to BBC to make recordings. Olaf says it was his misfortune to be flying with a Canadian B-17 crew in an American raid over Kiel, Germany on 13 October 1943 and was shot down. It seems to Tark an obvious phony story. Warren continues the conversation and Olaf says he took off from Ipswich, England but can't remember the American bomb group he flew with nor the aircraft tail markings. He continues his story with the fact that he lives off the American base with some close friends but he doesn't know their names. He continues that the BBC pays him \$4.00 per day per diem on top of his American pay. He is responsible for writing articles in Dutch, French, and German, languages that he demonstrate proficiency in. Before the English fighter pilot arrived, Olaf also claimed fluency in Norwegian, but the Englishman has established that Olaf is lying about his linguistic skills in Norwegian. After the conversation ends, Tarkington is more convinced than ever that Olaf is not what he purports to be. Something will have to be done about him.

Just before supper, an attractive young female member of the Underground arrives at Schmitt's home. She calls herself Claudette. Lou and Tark evaluate her as an extremely self assured and domineering woman. She is quite proficient in English as she is a graduate of Wellesley University. She tells them she handled both Dick Smith's and Bill Booher's departure from Paris the day before. During supper she chats and tells Lou and Tark that she has looked all over northern France for them and had arranged a rendezvous for pickup but they never showed. She then gave up and returned to Paris.

Following supper, Claudette and Tark go to the bedroom to discuss the Olaf situation. Claudette thinks he is a Dutchman trying to escape from the Germans through the system to England since he has been referred to her from up north. She evaluates him as just plain stupid and not smart enough to be a German plant. After the discussion, Claudette and Tark return to the company of others and announce that all four of the downed airmen will be taken to other safe houses immediately. Madame Schmitt's is only a way station along the escape route.

At 5 p.m. Claudette with Lt. Donaldson and Sgt. Parker in tow leaves Madame Schmitt's and heads out into the Paris streets. In two hours she has returned for Lou and Tark. She tells the men they will leave France by way of boat, but Olaf is to be told they are heading for the Pyrenees Mountains and Spain. When Olaf learns the two Americans are leaving he asks where they are going. They provide him their cover story as directed by Claudette. After good-byes, Lou and Tark follow Claudette out into the night. She walks them to the metro station and instructs them to ride to Pasteur Station, get off, and walk to a certain address near the station. While Lou and Tark are riding the metro, Claudette returns to Madame Schmitt's and prepares for the last trip of the evening. At 9 p.m. she departs with Sgt. Reeves, thus leaving the British fighter pilot and Olaf with Madame Schmitt. By this time, Feingold and Tarkington have gotten off of the metro, exited the station, and find themselves on Pasteur Boulevard. They are dressed in French civilian clothing so no one pays any particular attention to them. They walk down the boulevard constantly looking for a sign to indicate Rue d'Ernest Renan. At last they come across the street and start looking for a building bearing the number 10. When they sight it, they walk up and knock on the front door. The door is opened and they are admitted to the flat of Madame Kocera Massenett. Although they don't suspect it at the time, this will be their home for the next four weeks.

\* \*

At Plouha, time hangs heavy for the men of the Smith crew. Dick is with five other Americans in Germaine's house, cooped up in a bedroom with the blinds drawn. He learns after the war that her real name is Marie Therese LeCalvez and she was one of the most fearless Underground workers of that area. With six men cramped in a bedroom and not being able to look out the window or go outdoors due to the heavy German traffic in the area, it is a long day. Meanwhile over at the farmhouse, Bill, Jerry, and Al are also waiting for the word to move again. They find it a pleasure to speak English with all the different men that are gathered there. Bill meets a RAF pilot from Southern Rhodesia and has a conversation with him concerning his adventures. It seems he was shot down over the English Channel but nearer the French coast than the English coast. The German air/sea rescue service fished him out of the water and took him captive. After arriving ashore, he was turned over to German authorities and eventually found himself on a train heading inland. He was able to jump train and escape and was found by the Underground who moved him through the system until he reached Plouha. A very fortunate young man. Bill and his crewmates also welcome two newcomers during the day. They arrive together. One speaks good English but with an accent and is incapacitated with a broken leg. The other is a lieutenant from the Russian army who is a tank commander. The men never really learn how a Russian officer winds up under the protection of the French Underground. The first man tells the American what to call the Russian, but also tells them that is not his true name. Since the Russian can't speak English, names really don't matter that much. This individual tells

Bill, Al, and Jerry that they are waiting for a message on the evening BBC broadcast telling them when a British ship will arrive to pick them up.

A short digression from the story at this point. Many years after the end of World War II, Dick Smith and Bill Booher learn from Lucien Dumais, one of the officers in charge of Operation Bonaparte, that the unidentified English speaking man was in fact Val Williams. He and the Russian lieutenant had been in a French jail but were able to escape. Williams broke his leg while escaping. Dumais and others of the Underground questioned Williams true allegiance because of the circumstances surrounding his escape. The doubts were so serious that the Underground nearly executed him the night before he was finally transferred to England by British gun boat. Later, his pro-Allied status was verified. A close call for Val Williams. Now back to the main story.

Darkness falls on the night of the 27th and the Underground workers and some of the evaders in the farmhouse and Germaine's house huddle around the radio sets waiting for the early evening BBC news that contains the appropriate code words to alert those who are to be picked up. There are none. Everyone waits anxiously for the later 10 p.m. newscast, and again there is nothing. Tonight there will be no code words that affect Dick Smith and his three crew members. All the evaders and Underground personnel are disappointed! And so it's to bed to await another day.

\* \*

Thursday the 27th sees Lou and Tark living in Madame Kocera's apartment in Paris. They learn her maiden name was Massenett and that she married a Czechoslovakian sugar factory owner. She hasn't seen him in over four years and last saw him in Sophia, Bulgaria late in 1939. The Americans think this is rather strange since they are not told any of the details. The woman has a son named Jean Kocera who has a Norwegian wife and two sons and resides not too far away. Jean is also a member of the Underground as is his close friend, Raymond Mauret. Neither of these two know anything about Claudette.

On Friday, the men are anxiously awaiting the arrival of Claudette as she has promised to bring them some items known in the military as personal comfort items. At long last she arrives and is greeted warmly. As promised, she has cigarettes, tooth brushes, and razor blades for them. Claudette stays a short while and then leaves.

Lou Feingold and Madame Kocera begin a partnership that improves their linguistic abilities and helps while away the hours. Lou speaks French rather than his native English and Madame corrects his errors. Lou does the same for her spoken English. Tark does not enter into the linguist improvement program and spends his time in the bedroom doing other things. The days' activities settle into a routine waiting for the word to move once again.

\* \*

Friday has been another tedious day for the evaders at Plouha. The main activity of the day is counting the hours until the BBC broadcasts its two evening news programs. Disappointment settles on the evaders and Underground members again as tonight is a repeat of last night. No code words to proceed with the operation as the seas are running way too high for safety in the English Channel. The anxiety level of everyone increases as tomorrow night will be the last night in the escape window of opportunity. It has to be tomorrow or the men will have to be scattered around the countryside only to try again in February. It is far too risky to even try to maintain 25 evaders under wraps in cramped quarters under the very noses of the Germans. The men go to bed and offer up a prayer that things will work out tomorrow night.

Saturday drags on, the monotony broken only by a couple meager meals. At last the sun sinks over the western horizon and everyone becomes more alert and anxious. At the appointed time, the radio is tuned to BBC and the leaders group around praying for the code words. Their prayers are answered and the first BBC broadcast transmits the long awaited words, "La Maison d'Alphonse" or House of Alphonse. It's a GO! The men would have dearly liked to shout for joy but they couldn't: noise like that attracts Germans. The 10 p.m. broadcast informs the Underground that the British ship is on the way. The pace of activities picks up immediately.

Various Underground cells begin to move their evaders to the central rendezvous point, a cottage about two miles from the beach where the men will be picked up. This is in fact, "La Maison d'Alphonse" owned by Jean Jicquel. Bill Booher, Jerry Eshuis, and Al Mele and their 22 companions leave the farmhouse just before midnight on January 28th. They walk quietly in single file until they reach the cottage where Dick Smith and his group have already been taken. Some of the farmhouse group take turns carrying the man with the broken leg. Jerry, in spite of his previous wounds, is pretty well making it on his own, but Bill and Al still keep an eye on him just in case. Friends stick together in difficult times.

At the cottage, all 25 evacuees are briefed by Captain Lucien Dumais, a French-Canadian army officer and commander of Operation Bonaparte, the escape organization evacuating the four men of the Smith crew plus the others. Dumais tells the men what they must do and what they cannot do. Upon termination of the briefing, the evaders are started towards the beach.

Silence is mandatory as there are constant German patrols with German shepherds in the area. The route takes the men through barnyards and pigsties to create problems for the tracking dogs. The men walk single file towards the sound of the pounding surf. Dick, Bill, and Al are together helping Jerry when he needs it which is not often. The four men stick together as it's still comrades to the end.

Finally the column of men reach the trail leading down the cliff to the beach. Bill remembers the cliff as being about 75 feet high or so and very difficult to descend since it was a moonless night. The evaders inch their way down the steep trail in single file with their hands on the shoulder of the man in front of him. Minute by minutes they descend until at last they all safely reach the shoreline at Anse Cochet, also known as Bonaparte Beach. Everyone remains silent as noise carries well and the Germans have sentries on the high ground. Bill, Dick, Al, and Jerry find a deeply crevassed cave to stay in until the British boat arrives, it's safe and out of the wind.

Midnight has come and gone, and now it is very early Saturday morning, 29 January 1944, the day of return to England.

After an hour or so, blinking lights appear on the water. The men are excited and ready to get to the boats. They are, however, disappointed as a result of the attitude of the French Underground. The boat arrives with medicines and other supplies, but no money. The ground rules are 15,000 American dollars in real French Francs, not German issued Francs, per evader before the Underground allows any evader to load into the boats. This small boat returns to the mother ship with no evaders. Some like Dick Smith wonder what the hell kind of operation is this? The French for their monetary demands and the Allies for going along with it. Well, there isn't anything the men on the beach can do about it but wait. Just prior to 3 a.m., lights again appear on the water and now there are four rowboats in sight. Fortunately they have the required money and evaders are allowed to board. Dick, Bill, Al, and Jerry wade out in the cold water and are helped into the boat by the British seamen. The British rowers begin rowing towards the mother ship which is about one thousand yards off shore. It is a fast British Motor Gun Boat, number 503. It is cold out there on the water and Dick volunteers to help row in order to warm up some. It isn't too long before the small boats put along side the Motor Gun Boat.

The evaders climb up the ladder to the main deck of the mother ship and are welcomed aboard by an officer standing behind a Royal Navy sailor sitting behind a tripod mounted machine gun. No one expects their first view of a British ship to be that of looking down the gun barrel of a machine gun, but that's the way it is. Security is dominant in the thinking of the British skipper.

Once on deck, the evaders are quickly ushered below deck to quarters near the bow. The men receive a bowl of salty bean soup to warm them up and are then told to hang on as the seas are pretty rough. As the boat leaves the land shelter of the French coast, it encounters heavy swells and things become rather miserable to say the least. Of the 25 intrepid airmen being evacuated, only Dick Smith and Bill Booher prove to be "salt water sailors". The other 23 men, including Al and Jerry, soon succumb to sea sickness and the resulting mess of that many men trying to vomit in one wildly sliding tub on the floor. The compartment soon turns into one slippery, stinking hold. The men are wishing for either a fast channel crossing or a sudden death.

At last the agony is over and Motor Gun Boat 503 slips into its moorings in Dartmouth, England. It is now about 10 a.m., Saturday 29 January 1944. For the members of the Smith crew, it has been 30 days since they took off from Horham on their 13th mission. It is great to be back in England! The evaders debark the Motor Gun Boat and are taken under control by British Intelligence. The first order of the day is to get the men out of their French civilian clothing they have been in for several weeks and into clean uniforms of the British navy. After a wonderful hot shower, Dick, Bill, Al, and Jerry put on their clean clothes and masquerade as junior British army personnel for awhile. They are briefed by British Intelligence and instructed not to speak to any one except authorized Intelligence personnel about their experiences in France. They are then placed on a special railroad car attached to a train heading for London. While eating in the dining car, some unknown individual steals the pipe Dick had taken for his father from the German



officer's apartment in Paris. Al Mele has better luck and his souvenir remains in his possession. Dick is highly incensed that after carrying the pipe through German occupied France, some "friendly Ally" rips him off.

In London the real debriefing sessions begin. The evaders are isolated until the British Intelligence people learn all they can about what went on. The American are then taken to an American operated house on Grosvenor Square where they tell their story to a military interrogator who prepare the War Department Escape and Evasion (E&E) Report and then stamps it SECRET. Dick Smith's E&E Report is assigned number 349 while Bill's, Al's, and Jerry's have other numbers assigned. The E&E Reports, as they were known, were assigned sequential numbers in the order in which the escaper/evader was interrogated. On Sunday the debriefing is still going on. The men are required to sign a War Department Form SUBJECT: Amended Instructions Concerning Publicity In Connection With Escaped Prisoners of War, to Include Evaders of Capture in Enemy or Enemy-Occupied Territory and Internees in Neutral Countries. Basically the form states the signer will not discuss anything that went on while in evader status without permission of specified Intelligence Officers or for 50 years. Men of the Smith crew sign and date their forms on 30 January 1944. In addition to the debriefing session, each man receives a medical examination. On Monday the sessions continue.

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On the same day Dick and his men start their journey back to England, Ken Morrison gets a pleasant surprise back in France. On 28 January, Milton Mills arrives at the Dorez's home in Creil to join Ken. M. Bouge brings Milton on a motorcycle just as he did Ken. As Milton enters the house, Ken is sitting on the floor playing a record on a record player. The two men have a joyful reunion. It is always nice to have a companion in such circumstances as these. Because of a lack of sleeping space in the Dorez's home, Milton sleeps down the street in the home of the Dorez's housekeeper and returns in the morning. Both Ken and Milton enjoy their stay as the fence around the Dorez home allows them to wander through the gardens without fear of being seen, and they have the run of the house as well.

Ken informs Milton that M. and Mme. Dorez are engaged in a cheese and egg business so he'd eat well while here. He could testify to that. Although the Germans controlled much of the business, there was still plenty for the Dorez family to share with the two evaders. Both men appreciated the good meals.

Both men settle into a daily routine and wait to see what happens next.

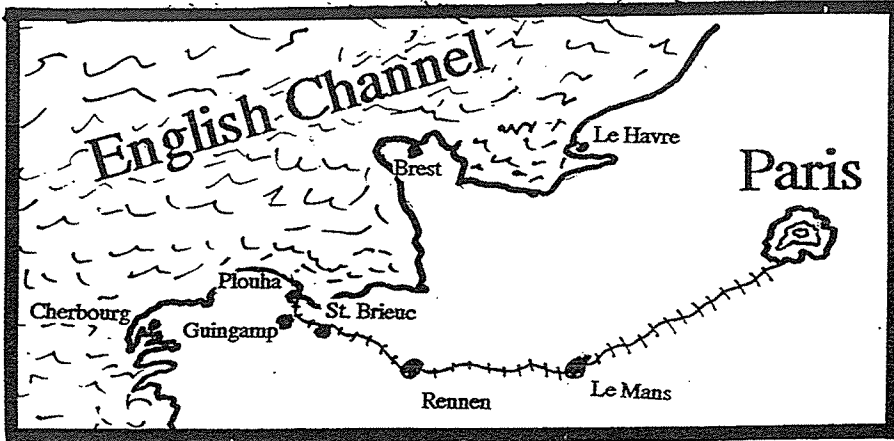
\* \*

Thirty-one January marks the end of the month. Somewhere to the east of where Ken Morrison is holed up in Creil, Gene O'Hearn is in a German POW camp where he has been moved after his release from the hospital. Tony Onesi has recovered enough in spite of no real

help from the German medics and is now able to move around on his own. His discharge from the hospital is imminent . Bob Adams in the cell next to Tony is also recovering but not as fast as Tony.

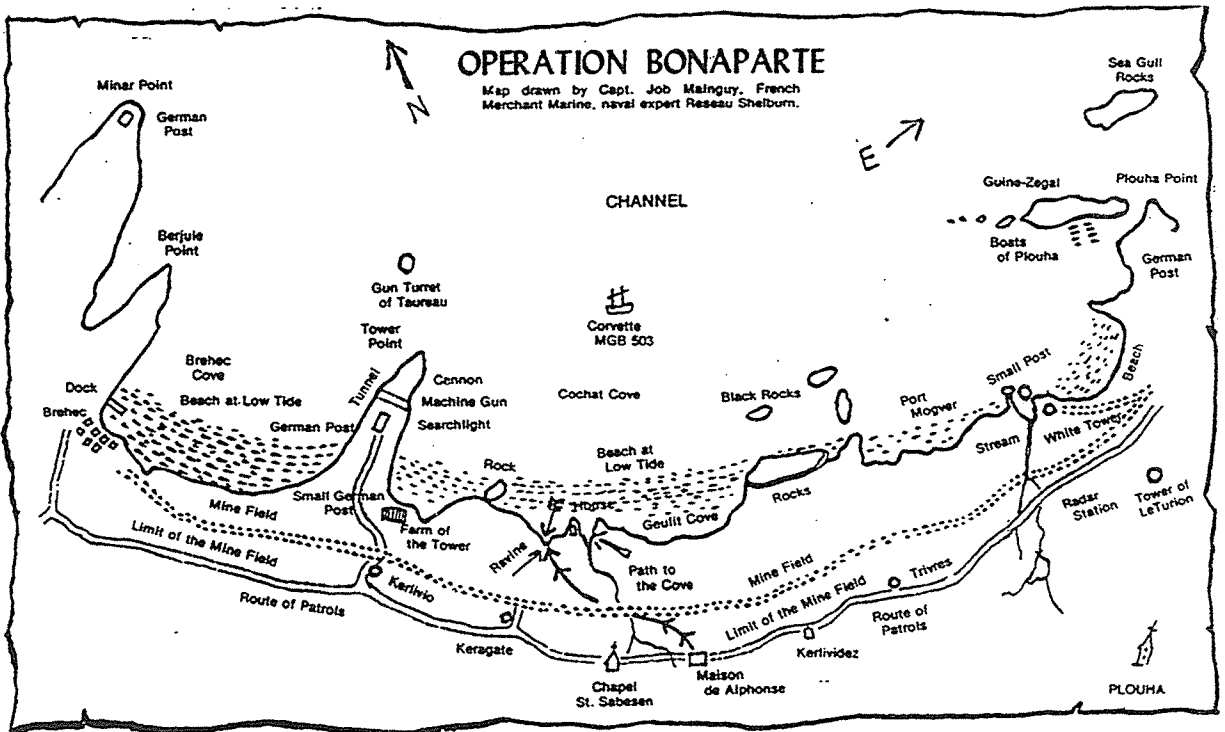
Lou and Tark remain in Paris living with Madame Kocera. Lou's French is improving. Claudette makes a short visit to the apartment and the men talk to her. The four evaders, Dick, Bill, Al, and Jerry are in London undergoing the last stages of debriefings. Transfer back to the USA is only a week or so away. And so ends January 1944.

## MOVEMENT OF SIX EVADERS\* FROM PARIS TO PLOUHA



Left: Evaders went by train to the French coast for a rendezvous with the British Royal Navy.

Below: The beach at Plouha where evaders were picked up and sailed across the English Channel to England.



Right: In 1961, Underground worker Francois Kerambrun sits in the remains of the truck in which he ferried evaders to Plouha Beach during World War II

\* Smith, Booher, Feingold, Tarkington, Eshuis, Mele



## CHAPTER 5

### EVENTS OF FEBRUARY 1944

#### \*\*\* EARLY FEBRUARY \*\*\*

The Eighth United States Air Force has a policy that each evader who returns to England must be identified by a member of his unit before he is released from the Intelligence Section for return to his home base. On 1 February, the 95th Bomb Group sends 2nd Lt. Lloyd A Stanford to London to make contact with the American Intelligence Section. This he does. Then he is introduced to Dick Smith for the purpose of verifying that he is indeed the real Dick Smith. With a straight and solemn face, Lt. Stanford signs an European Theater of Operations G-2 form stating that the man purporting to be Richard M. Smith is in fact Richard M. Smith of the 95th Bomb Group and that he, Lt. Lloyd A. Stanford, knew Smith before he was listed as Missing In Action over enemy territory. Dick affixes his right thumb print to the document and then a Counter Intelligence Corps representative signs the completed form. Dick is now officially 1st Lt. Richard M. Smith of the 95th Bomb Group and is officially repatriated. As Smith and Stanford leave the office, Dick comments to Lloyd that it has been a real pleasure meeting him for the first time. So much for military bureaucracy.

Shortly thereafter, 1st Lt. Richard M. Smith of the 95th Bomb Group identifies the returned evaders as 2nd Lt. William Booher, T/Sgt Alphonso Mele, and S/Sgt Jerry Eshuis, all of the 95th Bomb Group. The appropriate papers are completed, thumb prints imprinted, and signatures affixed and Booher, Mele, and Eshuis are now officially returned to Army Air Force control. A happy day indeed for the four men of the Smith crew!

By 3 February the debriefings are over and the men are allowed to send pre-written messages back to their families in the States saying they have returned from their adventures. Dick, Bill, and Al are now at Horham with the bomb group and starting to prepare to return to the United States. Because of his wounds during the aerial fight on 30 December, 1943, the Army medics have invited Jerry to stay in London for a few days while they give him more medical checks. The medics check him over and clear him to return to his unit. He catches a train and soon is back on base at Horham with his fellow travelers. Murray Ball, the original navigator on the *DESTINY'S TOT*, welcomes his old friends home. No one in 1997 really remembers what they did at that meeting, but the chances are they shared a few drinks as they told their stories of the past five weeks.

\* \*

Meanwhile, in Paris, Lou Feingold and Warren Tarkington are still living with Madame Kocera on Rue d'Ernest. They are awaiting the arrival of Claudette. She finally shows and informs the Americans that they are going out to get photos made for their French identity cards.

The trio walks to the metro for a short ride to some location in downtown Paris. The metro is crowded with many German soldiers and German WACs in addition to the local population. The men look nonchalantly at the Germans as any Frenchman would do. At the appropriate station, Claudette gets off the metro followed by Lou and Tark. They proceed to a store where a French woman is operating a photo machine. Since Lou understands French, he goes first. The woman says, "Right" and Lou turns right. She says, "Left" and Lou turns left. He follows her instructions without any problems. Now it's Tark's turn. There occurs a slight problem as he does not understand French and sometimes when the woman speaks, he turns the wrong way. She has a rather curious look on her face during all of this, but tactfully says nothing as she is obviously anti-German. Once all the photos have been taken, Claudette takes charge of the photos and leads the men back through the metro system to Madame Kocera's apartment.

Upon arrival at the apartment, Claudette informs Lou and Tark that she must go on a mission to northern France and will not be back for five days. This is the last time the men ever see Claudette. Sometime in the next 10-12 days, the German Gestapo makes its move and apprehends Claudette. Obviously their agents have done their surveillance jobs well. Claudette is interrogated by the Gestapo but refuses to divulge any information. She is then subjected to intense physical torture. She lives, but is only a living shell after the horrible experience of being interrogated by the Gestapo.

\* \*

As February 1944 begins, Ken and Milton are still with the Dorez family. Not much in their daily routine has changed. They are still awaiting for some indication that they will soon be on the way again. During the days that pass, Ken and Milton become close friends. Ken learns from Milton that it was only his second mission when he was shot down. Not good luck at all! He also learns that the Lauro family where he had stopped, were an unusual couple. Betty was British and her mother lived in London. Robert was Italian. They had had the unfortunate experience of being in France attending to business matters when the Germans overran the country in 1939 and could not leave. The war seems to have adversely impacted on a great variety of people.

\* \*

Gene O'Hearn is in a POW camp and learning what life is like being a captive. Not a pleasant experience at all!

\* \*

In the hospital, Bob Adams is still recovering but Tony Onesi is being discharged on the first or second of the month. He can get around on his own, but is still weak and certainly not up to par. Tony is taken by a German guard from the hospital and the two of them board a train for Frankfurt, Germany so it's good-bye France. The train trip is uneventful and fortunately the

German guard seems to be a reasonable type of fellow. Upon arrival at the Frankfurt railroad station, Tony learns what real fear is. The railroad yards and station are devastated from Allied bombs, and local workers are cleaning up the debris. They have all lost friends and relatives as a result of Allied bombing raids and they possess a real animosity towards downed Allied airmen. As Tony and his guard walk through the area, citizens become extremely hostile and spit, curse, and throw small rocks at them. In later years Tony will tell people about this incident and say, "The guard and I became very close friends." Fortunately, the POW Interrogation camp they were heading for was nearby.

Tony and his guard arrive at the Interrogation camp and the doors swing open. The guard reports in and Tony is released to the custody of the camp. He is taken and placed in a solitary confinement cell with no windows and no openings; basically four walls and a secured door. A depressing place to be! The cell has a wooden cot with the usual straw mattress. Within an hour, a German guard opens the door and Tony is surprised as he begins to thoroughly search the room. Tony can't understand how anyone would think he had anything to hide since he just arrived, but such was the mentality of the camp operations. Tony is startled when the German begins talking to him in English. "Hello, Tony" he says as he looks under the straw mattress. "How's Buffalo? Nice up there in the summer. I spent some time there and in Chicago. How's your family?" All this while looking under the bed and through Tony's things. The German leaves after obviously finding nothing. He certainly has been briefed on Tony before he enters the cell to search. Probably a German psychological warfare exercise more than a true search for anything that Tony might have had. Experiences like this can be a little unsettling for a new prisoner.

The next day, Tony is taken to a German officer's office. Tony notes it is luxuriously furnished and there is a large bowl of fresh fruit on his desk. No signs of the hardships of war here. It is winter and the officer is wearing large fleece lined slippers. For a moment, he looks up at Tony standing in front of him, lights up a cigarette, and then begins his interrogation. First he asks the routine questions; "What's your name, rank, and serial number?" Tony replies, "Anthony Onesi, Staff Sergeant, 32 479 031." Then the officer asks questions about the bomb group and Onesi's crew mates. He looks at Tony and states some fact he wants verified as true. "Smith is your pilot and Booher is your copilot?" he asks. No answer from Tony. And then the German runs through the rest of the crew roster. "Was your group stationed at Ipswich? Didn't you fly in the *DESTINY'S TOT* which was in the 336th Bomb Squadron of the 95th Bomb Group?" These plus other questions were presented to Onesi as fact. Amazed by this wealth of information, Tony nevertheless remains silent, much to the frustration of the interrogator. The officer, seeing that he is not getting any response from Onesi, raises his voice and summons the guard waiting outside his door. The guard enters and the officer shouts an angry command at him in German as he points towards Tony. Tony gets the feeling that maybe this is the end of the line. The guard grabs Tony and hustles him out of the office and marches him back to his lonely cell. Once locked in again, Onesi reflects on what he has heard about his organization from the German officer and wonders where the Germans got so much information. There were statements

of things even Tony didn't know. He figures that at least part of the German intelligence system is working well. For the rest of the day Tony is left alone in his cell, interrupted only by a meager meal or two.

The next day is a repeat of the preceding day. Tony is taken under guard to the officer who again runs through a litany of facts while Tony remains silent. The guard is once again angrily summoned and once again Onesi is returned to his cell. This goes on for seven days in a row, and Tony is getting tired of playing stupid games with the Germans.

On day eight, the games are over and Onesi is on his way to a POW camp in East Prussia. He and many other downed Allied airmen are herded into a railroad boxcar, destination Stalag Luft VI and Heydekrug, East Prussia. It is a miserable three or four day trip as it is cold and the men have only their GI. clothing and no winter gear for warmth. They huddle closely together trying to stay warm in the "air conditioned" boxcar. Tony has no recollections as to whether they were ever fed or not. In all probability they were, but the rations were certain to be limited and tasteless. Bathroom facilities are obviously non-existent in boxcars so everyone crammed in the car can only hang on until the next stop when the guards let everyone out. The tracks and railroad sidings suddenly become one large outdoor latrine. After this temporary relief, the guards load the men back onto the train and the cycle starts all over again. At last, the train arrives at its destination. Heydekrug is located a few miles off the Baltic Coast in a flat, swampy, and wooded area. The climate in winter is cold and damp. After detraining, Tony and his fellow prisoners are marched into the camp and settle down behind barbed wire fences guarded by soldiers in watch towers with machine guns. Tony is one of the first Americans to be imprisoned at this camp. Now there is nothing to do but wait for an Allied victory and freedom. It may be a long wait.

During this period while Tony is moving East, Bob Adams is being declared fit enough to be released from the hospital. Like Tony before him, he can get around more or less on his own, but he is still weak and not in the best of shape. Just as Tony was moved first to an interrogation camp, so is Adams. He goes through the same psychological warfare games that Onesi did and finally he, too, is sent to Stalag Luft VI where he and Tony meet again. By now February is half over.

### \*\*\* THE LAST TWO WEEKS IN FEBRUARY \*\*\*

In England, Smith, Booher, Mele, and Eshuis are wrapping up their business at Army Air Station 119 in Horham. In order not to lose their flight pay, they have been permitted to get in their flight time in local flights around the base. Each man has retrieved his personal effects that were collected by the Quartermaster when he was declared MIA. It is the policy of the Eighth Air Force that any of its members who are shot down over enemy territory and are rescued by the Underground will be reassigned to the United States after return to England. This is for the security of the European Underground workers. The base Transportation Officer, therefore, has been busy arranging transportation for Dick, Bill, Al, and Jerry to fly back to the United States.

Official travel orders are cut and distributed to each man. All four of them comply with their orders and eagerly proceed to London and report in to the 372nd Air Transport Command Movement Center. Here they are booked on a flight to America. At this point a small problem arises. The men are told that each man is limited to 50 pounds of baggage and Dick and Bill have quite a bit over this. Dick, as leader of the group, arrives at a fast solution based on the men's status. Since Dick and Bill are officers, they are responsible for buying their own uniforms. Al and Jerry are enlisted men who have their uniforms provided by the Army. It is agreed that Al and Jerry will dump their uniforms in the men's room and pack part of the officers' gear in their B-4 bags and upon arriving in the states, Dick as their commander, will insure they get an issue of new uniforms. All agree and so the problem is solved.

On the appointed date and time, the four men board a C-54 transport plane and begin a roundabout flight from London to New York City. It is no direct flight as they had hoped, but a wandering route that takes them to Western Africa, across the South Atlantic Ocean to Brazil, back across the South Atlantic to the Portuguese Azores Islands, and then finally westward across the North Atlantic Ocean to New York City. There are no happier guys alive than when the C-54 touches down and taxis to the parking spot where Dick, Bill, Al, and Jerry deplane. They are now home in the good old USA. Following the usual Army processing procedures, each man heads for home for a well deserved leave.

\* \*

While the first four returnees of the Smith crew are enjoying life at home with families in the USA, Lou Feingold and Warren Tarkington remain in France waiting for their turn to try to breakout of German occupied France. Monday the 14th of February sees Jean Kocera and his fellow Underground worker Raymond Mauret bringing two American aviators to Madame Kocera's apartment. Lou and Tark are introduced to T/Sgt Vines and S/Sgt Robert K. Furth, both fresh from the French countryside and brand new to Paris. It is a pleasant break for Lou and Red Dog to have a few minutes talking with some fellow Americans. After an hour or so the two sergeants are taken to the small flat of Anita Lemonnier in Block 2 of the same housing complex. Anita is a special investigator for the French Underground in Paris.

It is now Wednesday the 16th. A stranger arrives at Madame Kocera's and asks to speak to Lou and Tark. He is introduced only as Marcel. He is in fact Marcel Cola, the Director of the Paris Division of Operations. Marcel subjects Lou and Tark to an interrogation in order to ascertain for himself that both are legitimate American evaders. Finally he is assured and proceeds to tell the Americans some bad news. It seems that Olaf, the suspicious fellow Lou and Tark had met at Madame Schmitt's, slipped away and apparently contacted the German Gestapo. Agents were sent and apprehended Claudette as well as other women who had been sent to houses where Claudette had stashed evaders. Marcel continues that in the sweep by the Gestapo, the only Underground worker caught was Claudette, but on her she had the names of several French houses used by the Underground. It was speculated that the Kocera house was not on the list because Claudette is such a good friend of Madame Kocera. Unfortunately, the Gestapo brings



in Madame Schmitt. After relating this bad news to Lou and Tark, Marcel says his good-byes and leaves to go about his business.

After such bad news, a little diversion will help. Luckily Madame Kocera has arranged for Lou and Tark to go visit Sergeants Vine and Furth at the Lemonnier flat. The visit goes well and all the Americans appreciate the chance to talk to other Americans. But all good things come to an end, and the men leave and return to the Kocera apartment.

Marcel unexpectedly shows up at Madame Kocera's on Monday. His purpose is to take photos of Lou and Red Dog with him in order to get a set of French ID cards made in preparation of the next stage of the journey home. He tells both men to be prepared to leave for the French coast a week from today, or Thursday the 24th. Both Lou and Red Dog are excited with the news as sitting around waiting has become very tedious. Marcel again says farewell and is never again seen by the two Americans.

### \*\*\* AU REVOIR PARIS \*\*\*

Dates and time of plans often change when dealing with the French Underground, and so it happens again to Feingold and Tarkington. Jean Kocera and Raymond Mauret arrive at Madame Kocera's flat on Wednesday the 23rd and confirm Marcel's previous remarks about a departure date from Paris. Movement is now set for Thursday evening.

Thursday evening arrives and Feingold and Tarkington are ready and eager to begin their last leg of their journey through France. Good-byes have been said and when Jean arrives, the men are ready. Tark and Lou, with Jean in the lead, proceed on foot through the Paris streets which are crowded with both Frenchmen and Germans. No one in the bustling crowd seems to pay much attention to them. They walk until they reach Paris' Gare railroad station which is located in Gare Montparnasse in the southwest quarter of Paris. Lou and Tark are given tickets and then they board the train just as if they were regular French travelers. Once aboard, they meet Raymond with sergeants Mike Olynik and James Quinn. The four evaders and their two French escorts are now secluded in a six-man railroad compartment arranged by some unknown member of the Underground. This train will take the men on an overnight trip to the Brest Peninsula.

During the night, the men sleep as best they can on the train. At 9:15 a.m. on Friday, 25 February, the train pulls into the station at Guingamp, a provincial French town with the usual cobbled streets, some 25 miles east of Plouha, the site from which the British Royal Navy picks up evaders for return to England. As the men detrain, each carries a folded newspaper as a recognition sign. Mathurin Branchoux, the Guingamp Underground leader, has arranged for the men to be met as soon as they are off the train. Meeting the American evaders are a woman, referred to as Louise, and her male companion. Lou and Tark follow the man to his house across the street from the railroad station. They enter and then are told by the man to stay put. They do and he leaves. While this is going on, Louise signals for sergeants Olynik and Quinn to follow her. She leads them to a designated safe house a ways from the station. An hour later,

both Underground members appear at the house where Lou and Tark are waiting and inform them to come with them. The four of them then make their way to the safe house where Quinn and Olynik are. It is quite a walk to that location.

During the afternoon, a short, dark haired, English speaking Underground worker arrives at the house sheltering the four Americans. He refers to himself only as the "Captain" and tells the men he is there to question them one more time. He asks questions like who won the World Series and other questions that Americans would know but any German infiltrator most likely wouldn't. The interrogation goes swiftly and soon a satisfied "Captain" leaves. This man is probably Captain Lucien Dumais, a Canadian army officer of French descent who has been slipped into France to establish the escape system that came to be known as Operation Bonaparte.

Darkness falls and it is time to move again. A young Frenchman appears at the house and summons the four American fliers. With them in tow, the party heads down a road leading to Guingamp. Upon arrival, the men find a truck and driver waiting. A few other evaders arrive with their French escorts. Now everyone climbs into the truck and the man behind the wheel drives off. At certain points along the road, flashlight signals appear and the driver stops. From out of the darkness, more American evaders appear and climb aboard. Eventually there are 17 men in the truck.

At one stop, nine designated men get out of the truck and the truck drives on with the eight remaining men. Before reaching the destination, the driver of the truck somehow learns there has been a slip up in plans. He immediately flips a U turn and heads back to Guingamp until the problem, whatever it is, is resolved and it is safe once again to proceed with the plan. After more driving, the driver finally stops and the men in the back are told to get out. They are instructed to walk eight blocks until they reach a farmhouse and then enter it. The house will be unfurnished except for some mattresses and blankets that are on the floor. The Frenchman tells the group that they are to remain in the farmhouse overnight and try to get a good night's sleep. Tark and Lou as well as the other six men do as they are instructed and find the farmhouse just where they were told it would be. Each man picks out a mattress and blanket and settles down to get some sleep.

Dawn breaks over the coastal town of Plouha. Saturday, 26 February, 1944 arrived and it will be an important day in the lives of Warren Tarkington and Lou Finégold as well as the other evaders. The group Lou and Tark are in remain secluded throughout the day. Only the arrival of food breaks the monotony. After dark, Marie Therese LeCalvez, an attractive and heroic member of the Underground, arrives and advises the eight men that the news as to their departure should come on the evening BBC broadcast at 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. After her announcement, she leaves, and the men are left to ponder whether they will actually get back to England in the next 24 hours or not. They certainly hope so.

The "GO" message is received on the 7:30 p.m. broadcast and the Underground radios an acknowledgment and immediately moves its transmitter before the German radio directional finders can home in on the location. This is always a tense time as there is a continual game of

cat and mouse between the Germans with their radio directional locating equipment and the French Underground with its mobile transmitters. This time, the French win again.

Marie Therese reappears at 8:15 p.m. and tells the men they will be moved to a rendezvous point with Britain's Royal Navy. A half hour later, two French guides come and soon Lou, Tark, and the others are following very quietly behind the Frenchmen. After a walk of about two miles, the group is reunited with the nine men that were on the truck with them the night before. Lou and Tark note that the British Spitfire pilot has his hands tied behind his back and they wonder why.

The final rendezvous point is the house of Monsieur Jean Jacquel that is situated on the high ground near the coast and beaches. In Underground circles it is code named *la Maison d'Alphonse*. Lou Feingold and Warren Tarkington and the rest of the evaders meet a French-Canadian referred to as the *Chief*. He is in fact Ray LaBrosse of the Canadian army and Deputy Commander, *Operation Bonaparte*. The *Chief* briefs the men on what is about to transpire. Subsequent to the briefing, Marie Therese and her male companion lead the men from the house and start toward the beach. Both know where the German minefields and gun emplacements are so they take a route that will avoid these hazards. Soon the men reach a spot on top of the cliff overlooking the ocean where a steep trail leads down to the beach below. The file of men starts down. Each man holds the hand of the man in front and back of him as they cautiously descend to the beach. After reaching the beach, they are in for a disappointment. Here they learn that the tide is too high to land the small British boats so there is no other choice than to turn about and laboriously climb back to the top of the cliff. This they do and once there the French guides have a short conference. They then form the men up and move them to another path leading down to the beach and again the men hold hands and slowly work their way down the path. This time the group reaches a beach where the tide is within acceptable limits for the evacuation. Lou and Tark are happy they don't have to climb up the path again as it is in fact a tough climb.

Now that all the men are on the beach, they are moved into a cave to await the British Royal Navy. Midnight comes and goes and still no sign of the rescue ship. Minutes drag on and after what seems forever to the men, the glorious moment they have all been anticipating since they were shot down arrives; the Royal navy comes to their rescue! It is now 2:15 a.m. on Sunday, 27 February 1944, a date all the men will remember for the rest of their lives. A Frenchman on the beach transmits a signal with a flashlight and soon four row boats appear out of the darkness. Lou and Tark are excited and ready to leap into the first boat they can. A voice directs them to wade into the surf and they are directed towards a boat where they clamber in. Lou is presented with a shot of rum from the British seaman manning one of the oars. It tastes quite good.

With everyone aboard, the British seamen row quietly out to the mother ship which is a fast Motor Gun Boat. The rowboat pulls along side the mother ship and Lou and Tark climb up the ladder to the main deck where they are greeted and welcomed aboard. All the men are directed to the bunks in a compartment below deck where they are greeted and welcomed aboard. The men select a bunk and crawl in. It is late and the men have been up a long time.

They have been in a state of high tension for hours and now they are safe in a warm, dry environment. It is time for sleep. As soon as the last man is aboard and the rowboat hoisted aboard, the British skipper sets a course for England and the Motor Gun Boat moves rapidly out of range of German shore batteries. Unlike the trip last month where the angry seas made the trip so miserable, this cruise is gentle and most of the men sleep their way back to England. Lou and Tark certainly do.

About mid-morning, the British ship arrives in the port of Dartmouth where the men go ashore. British Intelligence assumes control of the men and then Lou and Tark undergo the same travel and debriefing routine that Dick, Bill, Al, and Jerry did one month before. On 29 February 1944 (Leap Year Day), 2nd Lt. Joseph J. Nastasiak, Air Corps, journeys south from the 95th Bomb Group at Horham; destination, London; purpose, identify Lou and Tark. After he vouches for the two men's identities, they are officially back in the Army Air Force. It is good to be back in England!

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Nineteen forty-four is a leap year so Lou and Tark spend the last three days of February in debriefing sessions before returning to Horham and the 95th Bomb Group. Meanwhile back in the United States, Dick Smith, Bill Booher and Al Mele are about to be assigned to Buckingham Field near Fort Myers, Florida. Jerry Eshuis is on his way to the air base at Norwich, Connecticut.

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By mid-February 1944, Ken Morrison and his companion Milton Mills have been escorted to the vicinity of Hornoy, a small village about 32 kilometers southwest of Amiens. As Ken and Milton walk northward on a road with their French helper, they come across a railroad track. They cross the tracks and proceed to the first house on the right where they enter the yard through the gate in the fence surrounding the house. The Frenchman knocks on the door and the party is met by Edouard Paire, an old Frenchman who lives with his wife, his daughter-in-law, and a man named Henri. Morrison and his companion reside with the Paires for the next few days while the Underground plans and arranges the next move. Sometime, there was a photo session as later when a Sergeant Wilson P. Jones passed through the Paire household, he was shown pictures of Ken.

A few days pass and then a Frenchman arrives to escort Ken and Milton into Hornoy proper where they are taken to a hotel owned by Joseph Balfe. Now Balfe is an interesting character as he was a sergeant major in the British army in France during World War I. Sometime during the 1920's or 30's he returned to France and became a hotel owner. With the overrunning of France by the Germans in the early stages of World War II, Balfe offers his military talents to the French Underground. His offer is gratefully accepted.

The trip back to Allied control is moving slowly for Ken Morrison and his evader companion, Milton Mills. The past November, Balfe lost contact with the group he dealt with in the Underground and had to re-establish his contacts, this time with a different group and unfortunately operations did not seem to move nearly as rapidly as before. To complicate matters, the British Royal Air Force is making a concerted effort to disrupt the French rail system, and they are being rather successful. While this did indeed greatly hinder the Germans, it also slowed movement of evaders southward through the Underground system.

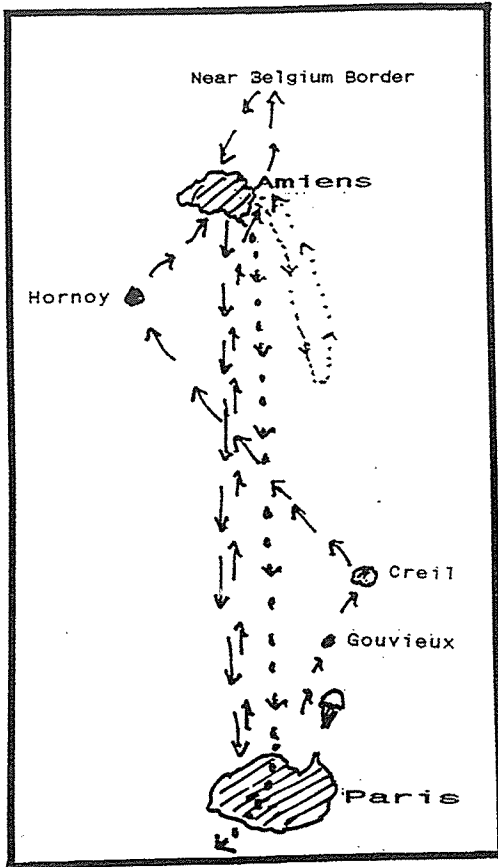
During late March, the Underground receives a tip that the Germans suspect three Americans are being hidden in the area. The local German commander orders a thorough search and soon one begins. Fortunately for Ken and Milton, their French helpers learn of the search and hurriedly move them out of town to a secure location. Three members of the Underground are not so lucky as Ken and Milton and are arrested by the Germans. The men never learn whatever happened to them. And so February comes to a close with Morrison and Mills waiting in Hornoy for the next move by the Underground.

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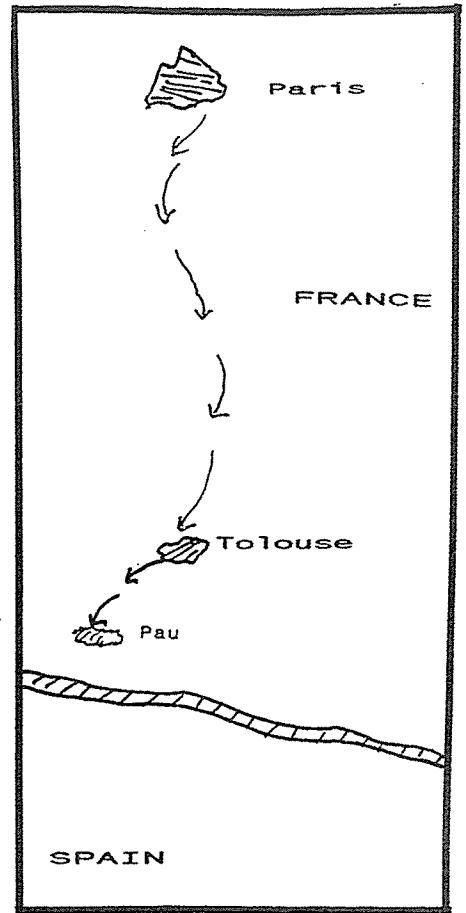
While Morrison is still evading capture, Gene O'Hearn is a prisoner in one of the Luftwaffe camps for Allied airmen. His fellow gunners, Tony Onesi and Bob Adams are incarcerated in Stalag Luft VI in East Prussia. They are settled into the camp routine but the days are long and monotonous. Four and a half months in the future will find Tony and Bob subjected to another period of trauma as the war shifts in favor of the Allies.

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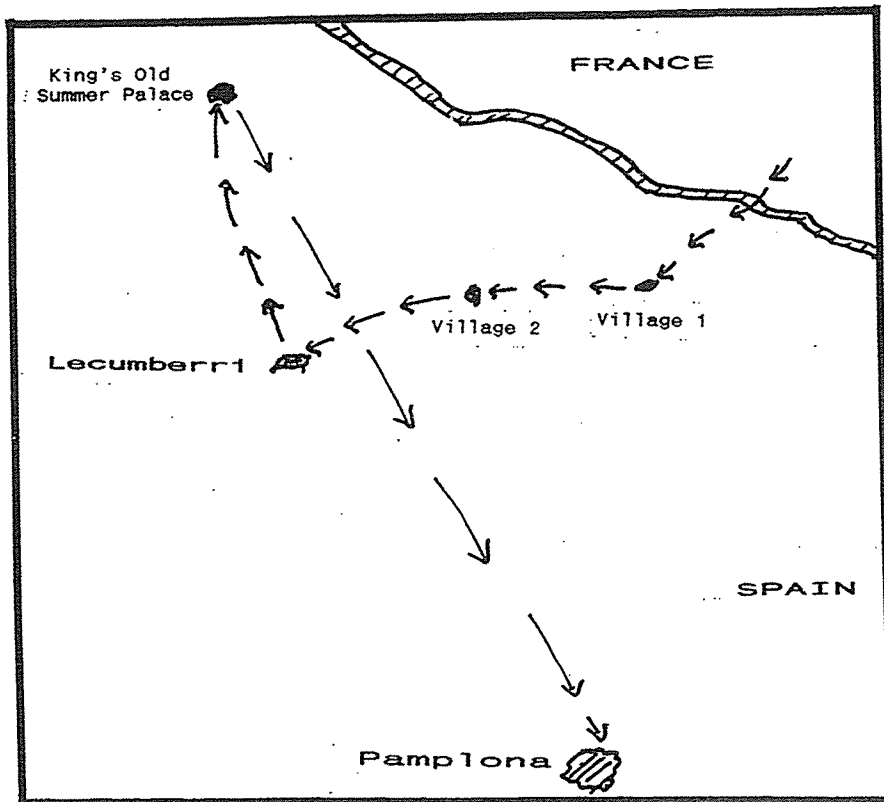
And so February 1944 passes into history with four of the *DESTINY'S TOT* crew back in the United States, two in England preparing for the return to America, one still evading capture in France, and three captured and confined in POW camps in eastern Germany.



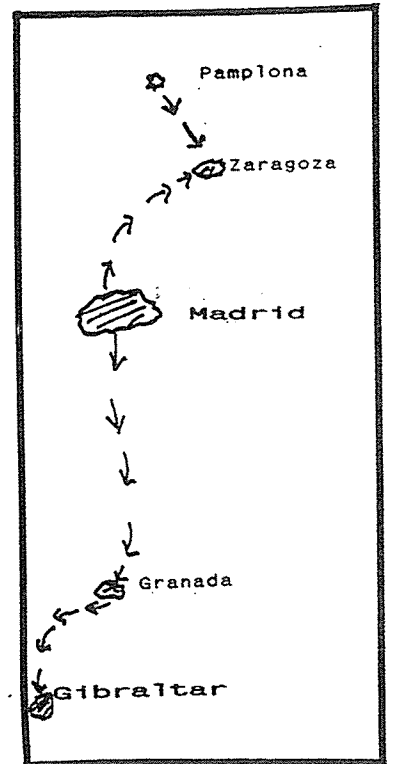
Left: Morrison and fellow evader Mills were kept in safe havens north of Paris.



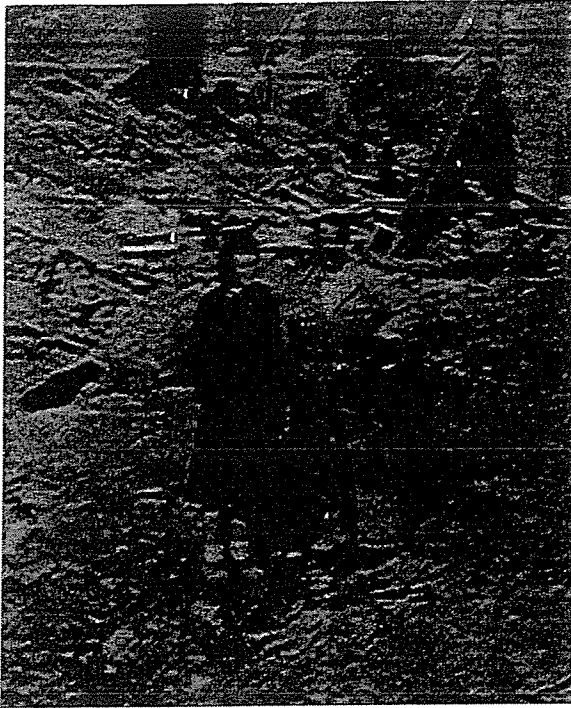
Right: The trip from Paris to Pau.



Morrison and Mills were held in northern Spain for one month after crossing over from France.

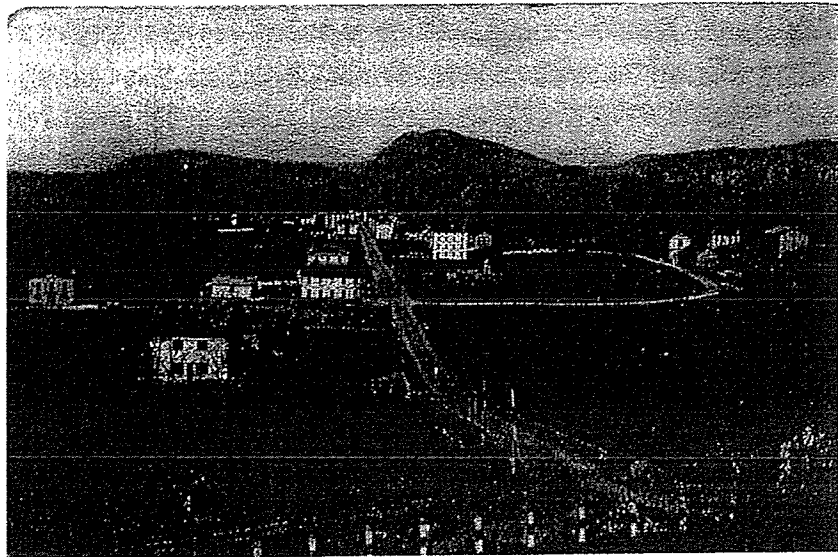


The route from Pamplona to Gibraltar.

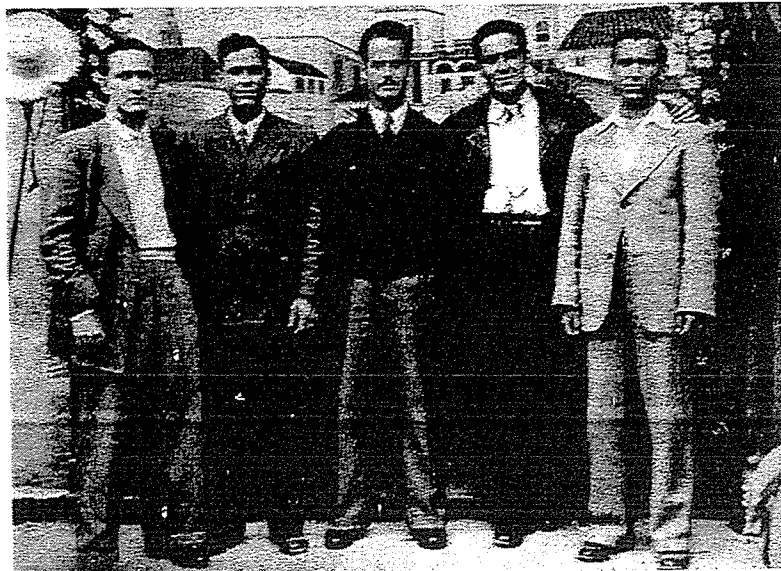


Left: Shortly after Morrison and Mills left the Tourdes home, it was destroyed during a British air raid.

Below: Lecumberri, Spain where Morrison and Mills were held for a few days after entering into Spain.



Right: Five evaders pose for a photo in the village of the King's Old Summer Palace.  
L-R: Milton Mills, Ken Morrison, Paul Jones, Harry Moss (an Englishman), and John Landers.



## CHAPTER 6

### THE NEXT SIX MONTHS

#### \*\*\* BACK IN THE STATES \*\*\*

Lieutenants Louis Feingold and Warren Tarkington begin March, 1944 in England where they have returned just a few days before from their adventures in France. After undergoing the Intelligence debriefing in London, they return to Horham and the 95th Bomb Group and start their outprocessing for return to the United States. While here, they have a get together with Murray Ball at the Officers' Club and talk over old times and recent happenings. Finally the two men are assigned a flight on an Air Transport Command aircraft and are flown back to the States which they had left months before. Lou and Tark, like others before them, take a well deserved leave at home.

A reunion takes place in New York City in late April or early May of 1944. Three old crew-mates of the *DESTINY'S TOT* meet in New York City for a night on the town. Dick Smith and Al Mele fly in from their base in Florida and in New York City meet Lou Feingold and a lieutenant friend of his. The four men have supper together at a fancy New York restaurant where they swap tales of their adventures and catch up on current events. Dick remembers Lou's dad picking up the tab even though he wasn't there. It was a memorable evening to say the least!

Dick and Lou have one more outing together that is both enjoyable and memorable. They are visiting the girls' dress shop owned by Lou's father when Mr. Feingold introduces them to two really good looking fashion models. In as much as Dick has a car, the men escort the two young women up the Hudson River North to a nice little roadhouse where they stop for supper. They go in and order cocktails and later supper. Dick's date is so "affected" with her hero date that she, as Dick remembers it, couldn't even cut the chicken off the bone. Dick does it for her. A "First", he remarks in silence since all the country girls Dick knows back home in Minnesota are quite proficient with cutlery. To show her appreciation for the evening, the model presents Dick with an autographed professional photo of herself. As Dick says later, "I was mighty big back in the BOQ that I inhabited." Dick sees her once more during a trip to New York City but after that Lt. Smith is transferred and that girl was out of his life.

By the end of March, Dick Smith and Bill Booher are living in the same BOQ at Fort Myers, Florida and are settling into their jobs with the aerial gunnery school there. Al Mele is also at Fort Myers getting acquainted with his new job. Tark and Lou are enjoying life at home with their families. Jerry Eshuis is now a gunnery instructor at the Army Air Force base near Norwich, Connecticut.

In April, Lou Feingold reports to his new duty station in Louisiana where he becomes a flight instruct for navigators. Warren Tarkington is first sent to Midland, Texas to qualify as a



bombardier instructor. Upon completion of that program, he is permanently assigned to San Angelo Army Air Force Base as an instructor at the bombardier school.

By the end of April, 1944, six of the seven evaders of the *DESTINY'S TOT* are fairly well settled in their post-combat tour positions within the Army Air Force.

### \*\*\* MEANWHILE BACK IN EUROPE \*\*\*

As March rolls around, Morrison and Mills are still in Homoy, but it isn't long before they are moving again. This time they go north to the larger city of Amiens. They start out under the directions and surveillance of the Underground. Sometimes they pick up a bike and ride until they reach a designated spot where they either leave the bike or turn it over to an Underground worker who appears on the site. After bike riding, it is back to the basic mode of transportation, walking.

In a day or so, Morrison and Mills reach Amiens where they seek out the house of M. and Mme. Georges Tourdes. They are welcomed and brought in. There is a secret room in the house where Ken and Milton hide when there is any indication of trouble. There comes a rumor the Field Marshal Rommel is to pass through Amiens so it was into the secret room as the Germans heighten security throughout the area. When the motorcade passes by the Tourdes house, Ken and Milton peep through a crack in the attic and watch.

The Underground arranges for Ken and Milton to move to Paris so the men say good-bye to George Tourdes and his family and head for the train station where they board the southbound train. While on the train, several jovial German soldiers come into the car in which Ken and Milton are riding. They are singing the classic song *Lili Marlene*, and they encourage everyone to sing along so the men join in. Since neither speak German or French, they elect to hum along which seems to satisfy everyone. Another war story for the grandkids.

A French contact greets Ken and Milton when they arrive in Paris and escorts them to an apartment in the center of Paris where they stay overnight. From the apartment they can see the Eiffel Tower. Bad timing for the men as the Germans are conducting another search for evaders so the French Underground elects to send Ken and Milton back to Amiens for a short time until things settle down in Paris.

Once back in Amiens, the men are taken first to some village near the Belgium border for two days and then back into Amiens where they learn that the Tourdes house was destroyed during a British air raid. Morrison and Mills are directed to the house of M. and Mme. Lamattre in Amiens proper. The family owns a beauty parlor business and M. Lamattre spends two days a week cutting hair at the German camp. The Lamattres and their two small children are perfect hosts. Ken and Milton are taken to a couple of movies and three social gatherings, one of which is sponsored by the local Chief of Police. The men are also taken into the countryside where the Lamattres have a plot of land for growing vegetables. The hosts take the Americans to church on Sunday, but since it is a Catholic Mass, the Lamattres coach Ken and Milton when to sit, stand, and kneel.

Sometime in late March or early April, Ken and Milton are notified that it is time to move south. They start out for Paris but complications arise and a French Underground worker intercepts them halfway to Paris and orders them back to Amiens. When they arrive back, Ken and Milton return to the home of M. and Mme. Lamattre.

It is now around the 9th or 10th of April and Morrison and Mills are notified that it is time to try again to get to the Spanish border, so once again they set out for southern France. Fortunately for them, this time they will be successful.

The Underground provides rail tickets for Ken and Milton and the trip to Paris is generally uneventful. After leaving the train station in Paris, Ken and his companion walk through Paris and as a bonus get to see the Eiffel Tower and the Arch of Triumph like any tourist would. There are French Underground contacts along the way. Arriving at the city limits of Paris, the men keep right on going. For the next few days the men move southward. Sometimes driven in a car by a member of the Underground, sometimes riding a bike, and sometimes walking. There are days when not much distance is covered for one reason or another. Nights are spent with French families connected with the Underground so at least the men are fed a little and have some place to sleep. Ken and Milton remember one elderly French lady giving them a piece of candy from a box of bonbons she had been saving for a long time. Since she has very little food, Ken and Milton are very touched by her generosity.

During the trek southward, Ken and Milton stop at a designated home each evening. At one house they are immediately told that the Germans are searching for them so both men hurriedly leave the house and run to an abandoned home about three hundred yards away and hide under the floor. They see the Germans enter the house they just left. A narrow escape!! Shortly thereafter they hear gunfire and then silence. Later they learn that one man and one woman were killed during that search. A tragedy for the kindhearted French people trying to help the downed Allied airmen.

In the morning, Ken and Milton start out once again. They are finally instructed to get on a train for Toulouse. The Underground obtains the tickets and the men board the train and settle down for the trip. It turns out to be a long, slow trip with many intermediate stops.

At the stops or at stations where a transfer is necessary, Ken and Milton wander around among the other passengers or sit quietly on a bench and act like they are napping. Both men also feign much sleep while on the train so as to avoid being drawn into a conversation with anyone. Ken and Milton soon realize that they are not the only evaders on the train, but it is necessary to appear inconspicuous and so they do not try to contact any other evader.

On or about 15 April and after many hours on the train, Ken and Milton arrive at the railroad station at Toulouse in southern France. Unexpectedly, German guards herd all the passengers into the station for an identity check. Travelers are lined up and the Germans start down the line looking at ID cards. Ken and Milton insure they are not together in the line. Tension builds when a man is pulled from the line and placed under arrest. Ken later learns he was an Englishman. Milton's stomach is turning when he hands his ID card to the German. The guard examines the ID card and looks Milton up and down without saying a word. He then returns the

card. Later on Ken undergoes the same treatment. After the check the travelers wander off and Ken and Milton team up again outside the station.

An Underground contact soon shows up and gives the men instructions and starts them on their way to Pau, a small town to the southwest in the foothills of the Pyrenees Mountains. Ken and Milton travel over 70 miles in a round-about way to reach Pau. Again the travel is done by a combination of borrowed bikes and just plain walking. It takes a fair amount of effort to reach Pau.

Once Ken and Milton reach Pau, they are housed in a dilapidated barn-like structure which contains a treasure of paintings, statues, furniture, and all kinds of art. The art works had been moved into this barn to protect them from art gathering Nazis. The two men bed down the best they can and wait. It is a two day wait while the French Underground gathers a number of other evaders for the last leg of their trip into Spain.

From the 17th of April until the 21st, Ken and the others walk from Pau to the French-Spanish border and prepare to crossover into Spain, a neutral country. There is a French guide and the group being escorted consists of Ken and Milton plus six other Americans, one Englishman by the name of Harry Moss, and five from other countries. It's quite a group. They travel from dusk until dawn and hole up during the day. The apprehension of traveling through German occupied territory plus the excitement and anticipation of reaching Spain makes it difficult to sleep during the trip. There is very little food as each man has only two English walnuts, a chunk of bread, and a piece of cheese. Not much food for such a strenuous hike. The men walk for three days and lay up for two before the actual crossing. In the day or two before the actual crossing, Ken and the others hear gunfire in the distance. Later they learn that a German patrol caught another group of evaders and in the melee shot and killed several of the Allies. Ken and Milton thanked their lucky stars they weren't with the group behind them.

At last it is Saturday 22 April 1944, a day to remember! It is on that day Ken Morrison, Milton Mills, and their twelve companions cross the French-Spanish border with their French guide. For Milton it is as good a birthday present as he had ever had. The guide ushers the men down the pass until they reach the snow line. Here he bids the men good-bye and gives them their final instructions. The small party of evaders works their way down the mountain until they come across a shepherd who gives the men a drink of wine. He points them in the direction of the nearest village, and so they start out once again.

At last they arrive in a small Spanish village where outsiders are immediately noticed. Somewhat to the men's surprise, they are promptly taken into custody by the local police and herded into one room with only one "necessity can" in it. Here they spend a miserable night.

The morning of 23 April the men are put on a bus and driven to another village where they are placed in a barn where the straw on the floor is damp and smells bad. It has been many hours since the evaders have eaten so by this time, the men's stomachs are beginning to ache. About noon, the guards bring a wooden tub of potatoes that are only half boiled. Even though the "cooks" hadn't bothered to either wash the potatoes or fully boil them, they tasted great to Ken and the others who feel like they are starving at that point.

There obviously is nothing for the men to do except grin and bear it for the time being and hope that things will improve. During the afternoon, Milton tries to make a pillow out of some straw to get a little sleep. He finds a leather wallet that he shows to Ken. They open it up, and it has photos of a Jewish wedding in it. They decide it must have been lost by a German Jew who had escaped to Spain. Milton still has this souvenir of his trials in Spain.

Late that afternoon, things seem to be taking another unpleasant turn. Spanish guards line the men up in preparation of giving them prisoner haircuts, but at the last moment, the "cavalry" arrives in the form of an American Counsel. He rescues the men and no hair cuts are given. Ken and Milton never learn how this American showed up at that precise time. Later, they learn that the Americans have picked up the habit of their fellow British colleagues and routinely sweep through the border areas looking for imprisoned Americans and British servicemen.

Although the men remain under Spanish guards, the treatment immediately improves! Ken and the others are hurried into a barracks-like building where they are allowed to shower, shave, and generally clean up. They are then taken to a restaurant for a meal but since they have eaten very little during the previous six days, some become ill after eating a full meal. Time cures all, it is said, and within two days, the men are back to enjoying decent meals without side effects.

The Spanish now bus Ken, Milton and the others to the little town of Lecumberri where the men spend four days. They are billeted in a large barracks containing cots and shower facilities. For breakfast, the guards march the men about a mile down the road to a pastry shop where they buy thick hot chocolate. Ken and Milton think it is good stuff.

Another move is in store and by 29 April the Americans and Harry Moss, the Englishman, have been bussed to another mountain village, name not remembered. The other Allies are moved to alternate locations. Ken and the others are still technically under Spanish control and there is an accompanying guard or so, but basically they come and go as they please. The American Consul visits every week or ten days just to see how things are going.

Living becomes quite pleasant! Ken and Milton, along with the others, are housed in a hotel-like mansion. They are told a little later that this used to be the Spanish king's summer palace in bygone days. The place is filled with rooms, dining halls, and ballrooms. Ken and Milton are impressed with the lower rooms that have large baths where warm artesian water flows continually. Real luxury! Ken has no idea of who is picking up the tab for this, but apparently some section of the American Embassy in Madrid is making all the arrangements.

Prices are cheap in town which helps. Ken and Milton turn into regular party goers and become quite fond of the local Spanish wine. Ken teaches Milton the Tex-Mex Spanish words to the popular American song *El Rancho Grande*. Frequently the two serenade the local Spaniards at the wine-drinking clubs with their rendition of the song. Ken even occasionally accompanies them on a borrowed guitar. Milton entertains alone by singing *You Are My Sunshine* and once sings a French ditty he learned and wonders why the amused reaction and peals of laughter. Seems he never knew the English equivalent words and it was a rather risqué song.

The countryside surrounding the village is very picturesque. Nearby are lakes that attract many of the evaders on their daily strolls about town.

Spain, as a neutral country, still had diplomatic relations with Germany in the 1940s and had considerable contact as a payment for German support during the Spanish Civil War of the mid 1930's. This relationship permitted many Germans into Spain who basically spied for the Fatherland. There are a few in the mountain village where Ken and Milton stay. The Germans are always trying to overhear what the evaders are saying so Ken, Milton, and the others often concocted ways to devil the life out of the would-be German spies. It adds interest to the stay in the village.

At last, things are in order with the Spanish government and it is time to move the group of evaders out of Spain. About the 25th of April, a bus arrives. The men pack what little personal gear they have, collect the group photos they have had taken by local photographers, say good-bye to the local Spaniards, and climb on the bus eager to leave. The first leg home is to Pamplona where they spend the night. Ken and Milton get to see what many never do, the running of the bulls in Pamplona. They stand on their balcony in the hotel and watch the bulls charge through hoards of running men, some of whom are trampled but who get up with a big smile on their faces and limp away. A scene straight out of a Hemingway novel

Next stop is Madrid where the American Embassy personnel take over. The drive is pleasant and the evaders notice that the countryside is in full bloom with poppies and other flowers of every color. It's quite a sight.

One night is spent in Madrid, complete with an outing to a fancy restaurant and a lobster supper. Milton decides lobster is not his thing. The next morning the Americans are put on a train heading for Seville and then Gibraltar, that British bastion on the tip of Spain. It is a local run train and it seems to take forever to get to the destination.

At last, on either the 27th or 28th of April, Ken Morrison and Milton Mills reach Gibraltar. They spend a couple days there looking around and being processed. As Ken and Milton understand it, the process to send them to England is to state the men are Spanish citizens emigrating to England. Whatever the system is, it works.

There is an American Army Detachment stationed in Gibraltar with the British and at last Ken and the others are issued uniforms and told to put the civilian clothes aside. Shortly it is time to board an Air Transport Command aircraft for the flight to England. Finally off they go and on 30 May 1944, Ken and Milton deplane in Merry Ole England, happy their continental adventures are over!

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Life in the prison camps has its trials for Sergeants Gene O'Hearn, Bob Adams, and Tony Onesi, but at least they can see the sky and talk to friends. Tony and Bob remain at Stalag Luft VI in East Prussia. The German commandant is a career Prussian officer, Oberst Hoermann von Hoerback, who is very strict but is basically fair in his dealings with the prisoners. There is no brutality from the guards in the camp. Gene is in another camp somewhere in Germany. Onesi and Adams are not in the same barracks, but they see each other in the camp

and often talk among themselves. Life in the camp does not vary much from day-to-day. There is a morning roll call and then the men try to find something to do the rest of the day. As noncommissioned officers, they are not forced out on labor details like the privates and corporals. All this is in accordance with the Geneva Convention pertaining to the treatment of prisoners of war, and the German commandant pretty much adheres to the rigid interpretation of the rules. There is one major meal per day and it isn't much. Potato soup mostly and sometimes bread which the GIs call sawdust bread. While some men insist it has wood sawdust in it, Tony is of the opinion it is flour from a mix of different grains ground with the husks still on. Not great, but better than starving. There will be additional light meal before lights out that night. During the day, Tony and Bob may spend time "shooting the bull" with their fellow prisoners or perhaps engaging in a baseball or football game. Occasionally in the evening, some of the men may present a skit or song fest. Tony refers to these men as "the Broadway types". Still, their efforts help relieve the monotony of daily survival. There are no formal religious services in this camp, but a few lay ministers hold religious gatherings that some of the men attend.

There are a few younger, fanatical Nazi oriented guards at the camp in addition to the older men in uniform who are more relaxed and understanding about things. The commandant keeps the younger ones under control. The prisoners find that there are shortages among the Germans too and there are some of the older guards who are willing to smuggle in certain items like radio tubes for a set amount of cigarettes or chocolate bars that come in Red Cross parcels. Shortages always seems to make strange trading partners.

Escape is always on the minds of men in POW camps. Onesi is aware that there are camp escape committees and digging committees but he is not involved in any of the efforts. He is certain the Germans know of the prisoners' tunneling efforts, but act as if they don't. Tony thinks they allow it to keep the prisoners occupied. Things change drastically in March. During the night of 24-25 March 1944, a mass escape by Allied officers at Stalag Luft III is attempted. Some are successful and some are caught and executed immediately. This incident results in increased security measures in all German operated POW camps and essentially eliminates all hopes for the men in Stalag VI of even trying to escape.

### \*\*\* THE ACTION PICKS UP \*\*\*

June is a happy month for Ken Morrison and his fellow evader Milton Mills, Jr. On 1 June, 1944, they are in London undergoing a two day debriefing session. From there it is back to Horham for Ken to collect any personal effects and to outprocess before returning to the USA. As luck would have it, Ken meets Milton in London again so there is someone to pal around with for a few days. They look up a fellow evader they had been with in Spain, the Englishman Harry Moss. Harry invites them out to his home for an evening and the three men have a wonderful time entertaining Harry's family by recalling their adventures together. The sixth of June arrives and with it, D-Day. Ken and Milton observe the air armada leaving to attack the European mainland. The men notice how deserted London is after D-Day.

Soon Ken and Milton are aboard an Air Transport Command aircraft heading for the USA. After another two day debriefing session, this time in Washington D.C., Ken and Milton head for home on leave.

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June 1944 arrives and historic events take place that will impact severely on the prisoners from the *DESTINY'S TOT*. On the 6th of June, the Allies land on the beaches in Normandy, France and the Allied invasion of *Festung Europa* is underway. Although 11 months in the future, the beginning of the end has set in for Nazi Germany. Word of the invasion spreads quickly throughout occupied France, and the French rejoice even as they acknowledge that there will be many more battles to come and many more German and Allied soldiers and airmen will die before the Germans are expelled from France.

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Word of the invasion even reaches east into the heart of the Third Reich as well as behind the barbed wire fences of the POWs camps. Tony Onesi remembers that news spreading through the camp as the news of the invasion is picked up on one of the secretly hidden radios maintained by the prisoners.

As American and British forces drive eastward from the French coast, the Russian army is also gaining momentum in its drive westward. Late June and early July see the Russian First and Second Baltic Army Groups driving the German's Army Group Center back into western Lithuania and Latvia. The Russian Second and Third White Army Groups are attacking into East Prussia. Stalag Luft VI, where Adams and Onesi are imprisoned, will soon be overrun.

With the impending arrival of Russian ground forces, the Stalag Luft VI commandant, Oberst Hoermann von Hoerback, receives orders from higher headquarters to evacuate all Allied prisoners to the west. The Germans continue to encourage the American POWs to prepare for the forthcoming 4th of July gala in an attempt to keep them occupied and unaware of pending evacuation. Of course rumors are rampant and Adams and Onesi and all the other GIs know the Russians are on the move towards them. On the morning of 14 July 1944, the rumors become fact and Onesi and Adams become two of the first group to leave the camp that very day.

Upon being notified that all the POWs are moving, the men hastily gather up their few personal possessions and prepare for the move. It is a demoralizing move and becomes known in history as *The Heydekrug Run*. German guards form up about 1,500 prisoners and at 3 p.m. move out. Tony Onesi marches with his good friend, John Kohl. Kohl, being of German ancestry, knows German very well and can communicate with the guards. The column of prisoners march to the railroad station in Heydekrug where the men are loaded into 40 or 8 boxcars. The 40 or 8 was a name held over from World War I when the cars were designed to carry 40 men or 8 horses. The Germans cram at least 50 men into each of the cars. It is half a day train ride to the seaport of Memel, now known as Klaipeda, Lithuania.

At the port, the prisoners are herded like animals onto an old ship named the *Masuren*. As the POWs are literally being stuffed into a hold of this old coal freighter, Tony is on a ladder leading into the hold. As he looks around, he can see four or five men below him on the ladder and no place in the hold for them to go. John is right above him so Tony hollers up to John, "Tell the guard there isn't no more room down here!" Kohl relays the message in German and before he knows it, the guard slams his rifle butt into John and kicks him in the shoulder. John is knocked loose from the ladder and falls with the result that everyone on the ladder is knocked to the floor of the hold. The guard continues to cram even more prisoners into the stifling hold.

Tony and John pick themselves up and work their way to the spot where they can stand up with their backs up against the drive shaft housing. The temperature is rising as more men are forced into the hold. There is no ventilation at all and the only air intake is through the 18 inch hatch where the men start their climb down into the hold. After the Germans decide they can't squeeze any more prisoners into the hold, they close the hatch and lock it. The temperature increases even more.

Tony thinks, "This must be it! They are going to drift us out to sea and let our own bombers or subs destroy us." Each prisoner is lost in his own thoughts and there is a deathly silence in the hold. The only sound one hears is men stripping off their clothes in an attempt to cool down and survive. Time drags on as if into eternity. Suddenly there are muffled voices topside and it sounds as if an argument is in session. The hatch above has heavy planks covered with a heavy canvas covering to insure no light shows out. As the men focus on the noise above the decks, they hear a noise as if something is being scraped against another object. As they look up, they see one plank being raised. Simultaneously, a wave of hot air raises from the hold and the men feel some relief from the excessive heat they have been subjected to. Tony and the others later learn that the voices they heard were the POW leader, Sergeant Frank Paulus, arguing with Oberst von Hoerback about the need for fresh air for the men in the hold. Von Hoerback reluctantly agrees to raise one corner of one plank with the stipulation that if anyone in the hold lights a match that can be seen from an airplane, he will close the hatch again. Tony was sure he was looking out for his own safety.

For three days the men endure the hold as the old freighter slowly steams southwestward in the Baltic Sea. There is no food for the men and barely enough water. The only toilet facility is a big bucket that is occasionally hauled up by rope and emptied. No one is allowed topside. About 6:00 a.m. on Monday morning, 17 July 1944, the *Masuren* docks at Swinemunde, Pomerania, a seaport on the Baltic Sea where the Oder River flows into the sea. Today, the town is named Swinoujscie, Poland and is on the German-Polish border. German guards order the POWs out of the hold and form them into ranks outside on the dock. Tony is curious about what is to happen next and what does happen is extremely unpleasant! Men are shackled two by two at the wrist and at the ankle. Tony is paired with a black sergeant named Roger. Guards herd them inside another box car and another miserable train ride is in store. The boxcar sits on a siding for a considerable period of time. Finally an engine is coupled up and the train moves out. Half a day goes by and again the train is on a siding. The boxcars' doors open and the men



ordered out. Tony and Roger climb out as best they can with their shackles on. Tony later learns that they are in a small village called Kiefheide, some two and a half miles from Stalag Luft IV. The men gather up their limited possessions which consist mainly of a small amount of food and a blanket. Roger has been in charge of music back in Stalag VI and he is carrying a portable wind-up phonograph player. This will become a major problem very soon.

Oberst von Hoerback has relinquished command and control of the prisoners to a SS captain named von Mueller. While von Hoerback is basically a reasonable fellow, von Mueller is not. The day is hot and the men weakened from being crammed into a ship for three days. Von Mueller gallops his horse up and down the struggling column of men shouting, "Run! Run!" He takes great glee in this. It is hard to run when shackled and trying to carry a few belongings. The guards are fanatical 10 to 12 year old Kriegsmarines armed with rifles and bayonets and reinforced by German Shepherd guard dogs. Tony and Roger are fortunate as they are in the middle of the group away from the bites of the dogs and prods of the bayonets. Within the first five hundred yards, men start discarding their possessions; no one is in shape to run two and a half miles. Von Mueller delights in the prisoners' agony. As they struggle forward, Onesi sees machine guns in the woods lining the road with anxious gunners just waiting for the first prisoner to try to break formation and race for the woods. By eight hundred yards, the men are gasping for breath and have dropped practically everything, that is except Roger. He doggedly hangs onto the phonograph, but it is slowing him down. Tony pleads with him to drop it as he is lagging behind and Tony is struggling to drag him along and keep up. Roger refuses. Somehow, both men struggle on and then the run is over, and Roger still has the phonograph. The men drop to the ground exhausted. Eventually the German guards remove Tony's shackles to Roger, and how good it feels!

For three days the men remain outside the main gate of Stalag Luft IV while they are held in an open holding pen and inprocessed. At last Onesi is possessed and enters Stalag IV. He is directed to a barracks where he finds the usual wooden bunk and straw mattress. It is a new camp so there is no established system to receive Red Cross parcels to supplement the rations.

Stalag Luft IV differs from Luft VI in several ways. There are few privileges any more as the Gestapo is controlling things now since the Great Escape at Stalag Luft III a few months before. The guards are younger and more fanatical and the prisoners are subjected to more harsh treatment and harassment than before. Obviously these actions are approved by the new commandant. Tony finds that the guards track him and everyone else with their machine guns every time they leave the barracks for the wash room. It is rather unnerving with trigger happy guards behind the guns. Tony and his friends are reminded of this when a few weeks later they are watching a German electrician working on a pole at a construction site when he accidentally hits something and is electrocuted. As he slumps over in his safety harness, some Americans on the other side of the fence break into applause. Immediately machine gun bullets are flying only inches over the prisoners' heads and the men hit the dirt. The German guards take a dim view of Americans applauding the death of a loyal German. It is a sobering experience for the prisoners!

## CHAPTER 7

### AN INTERLUDE

From September through December 1944, things seem to settle down somewhat for the men of the *DESTINY'S TOT* who are in the United States. Dick Smith, Bill Booher, and Al Mele remain at Fort Myers, Florida doing their jobs at the aerial gunnery school and enjoying life as best they can. In early 1945, Al Mele learns that by the authority of General Order 538, Headquarters Eighth Air Force, he has been awarded the Silver Star for gallantry in action on 30 December 1943 during the aerial fire fight after which the *DESTINY'S TOT* went down. He is awarded the decoration at an appropriate ceremony.

Lou Feingold continues in his assignment as a navigation instructor down in Louisiana while Warren Tarkington is still training bombardiers at San Angelo.

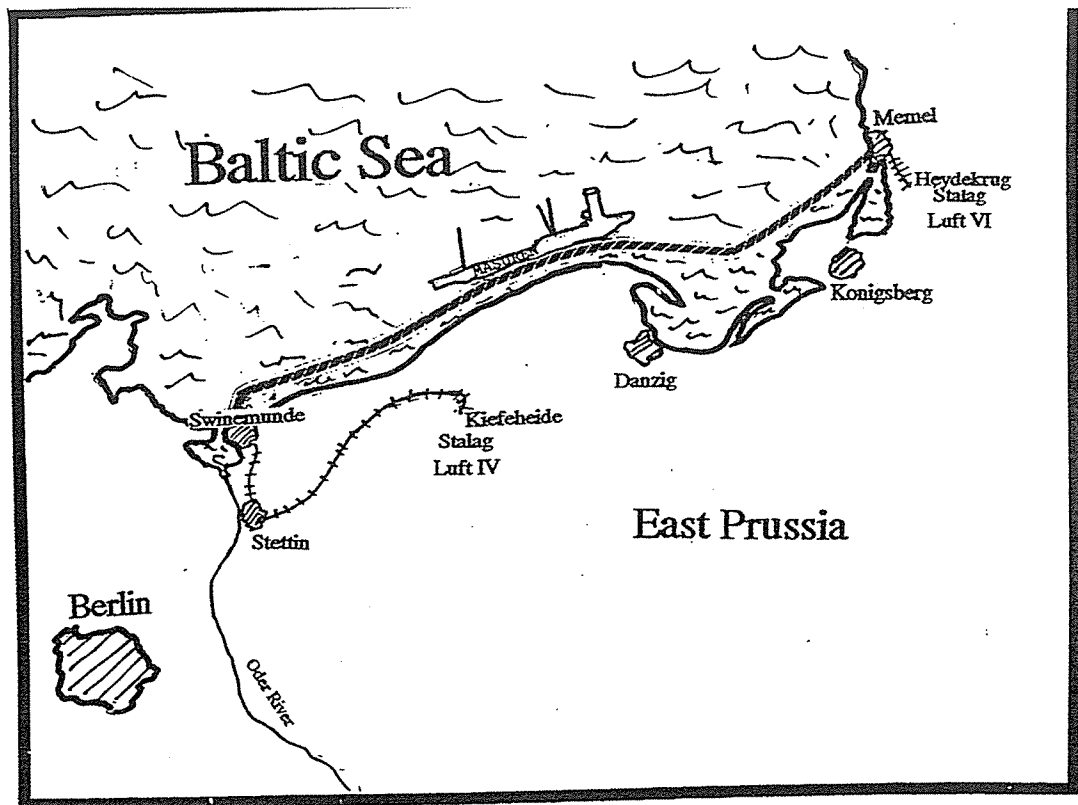
The War Department decides Jerry Eshuis is the man they need in the Pacific Theatre of Operations so it assigns him to a B-29 squadron stationed on Tinian Island in the far reaches of the Pacific Ocean. So once again, Jerry goes off to war, this time against the Japanese. Jerry now becomes a tail gunner on a B-29 Superfortress.

By late summer of 1944, Ken Morrison has returned to the USA, undergone all the personnel processing the Army can think of, and is finally assigned to Yuma Army Air Base in Arizona. Here he becomes an instructor at the gunnery school. Much to his surprise, he finds that Milton Mills has also been assigned to the same base as an instructor in the radio school. Life is good. Free weekends, not too much work, and plenty of class A passes. And of course there is Milton with whom he can share a few "war stories" every now and then. Milton, unfortunately, has complications from his leg wound and is hospitalized elsewhere and that is the last Ken or Milton ever see of their fellow evader.

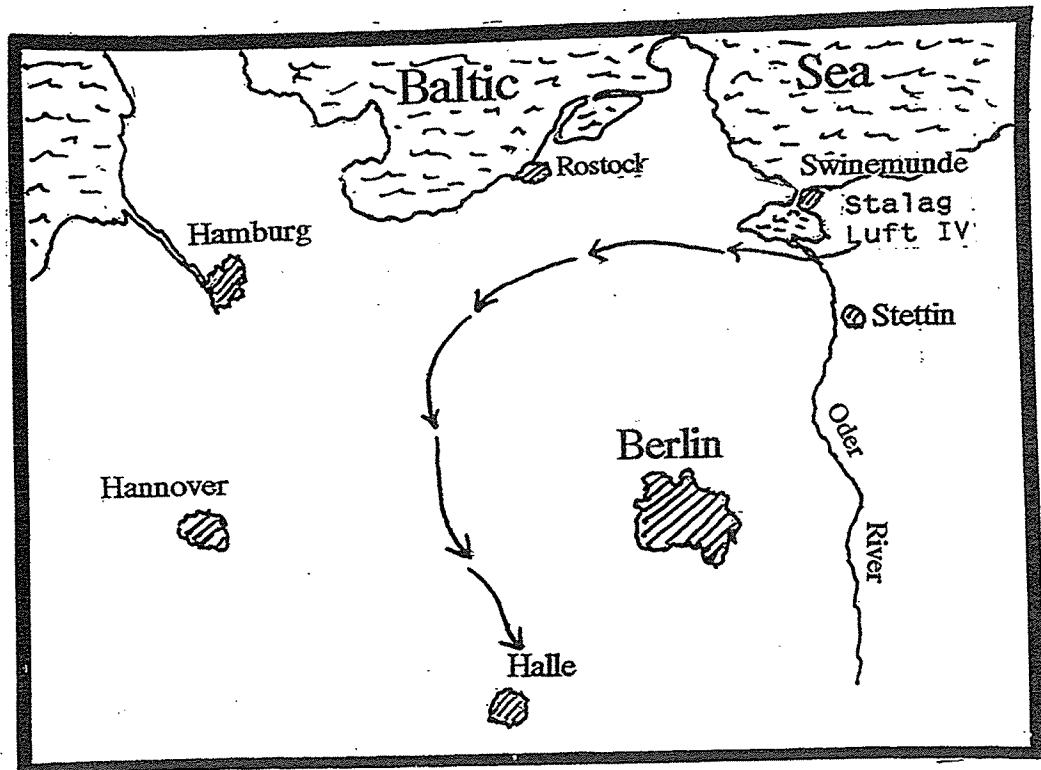
While six of the *DESTINY'S TOT* final crew are enjoying life in the United States and one is heading overseas again, life is not going so well for the remaining three men of the crew, Bob Adams, Tony Onesi, and Gene O'Hearn. All are still prisoners of the Germans. Bob and Tony find that being in a brand new camp such as Stalag Luft IV has major disadvantages, one of which is that the Red Cross parcel system is not yet in place so rations are bland and in short supply. Adams finds himself working in the mess hall, at least part of the time while he was in the stalag. The men's daily rations continue to consist of a small portion of "sawdust" bread and a bowl of either potato or turnip soup. It's always the same and there is never enough to make one feel full. It isn't until November 1944 that the first Red Cross parcels begin to arrive and thereafter the men get a little additional food. Towards the end of 1944, Germany is desperately trying to hang on and keep the Allied and Russian armies out of the Fatherland itself, but to no avail. December sees the Germans launch the last ditch effort to stop the Allies at the Ardennes region of Belgium, but after the initial success, that too results in failure and the Battle of the Bulge is history.

By Christmas of 1944, rumors are flying fast and furiously within all the German POW camps. The camp's clandestine radios keep the men generally aware of where the American and British armies are in the west and where the Russians are in the east. Tony and his friends hear rumors that the German military really doesn't know what to do with all the prisoners. They are a burden, but on the other hand they can't be turned loose. Hitler himself favors executing all prisoners, or so the men are told. Fortunately cooler heads prevail and many of the senior German officers know the end of the war is near and that executing defenseless prisoners won't enhance their status once Germany is defeated.

And so Bob Adams and Tony Onesi continue to survive day-by-day. Only the thought that the Allies will liberate them not too far in the future keeps them going. Gene O'Hearn in his POW camp is undergoing the same situation and thinking the same thoughts.

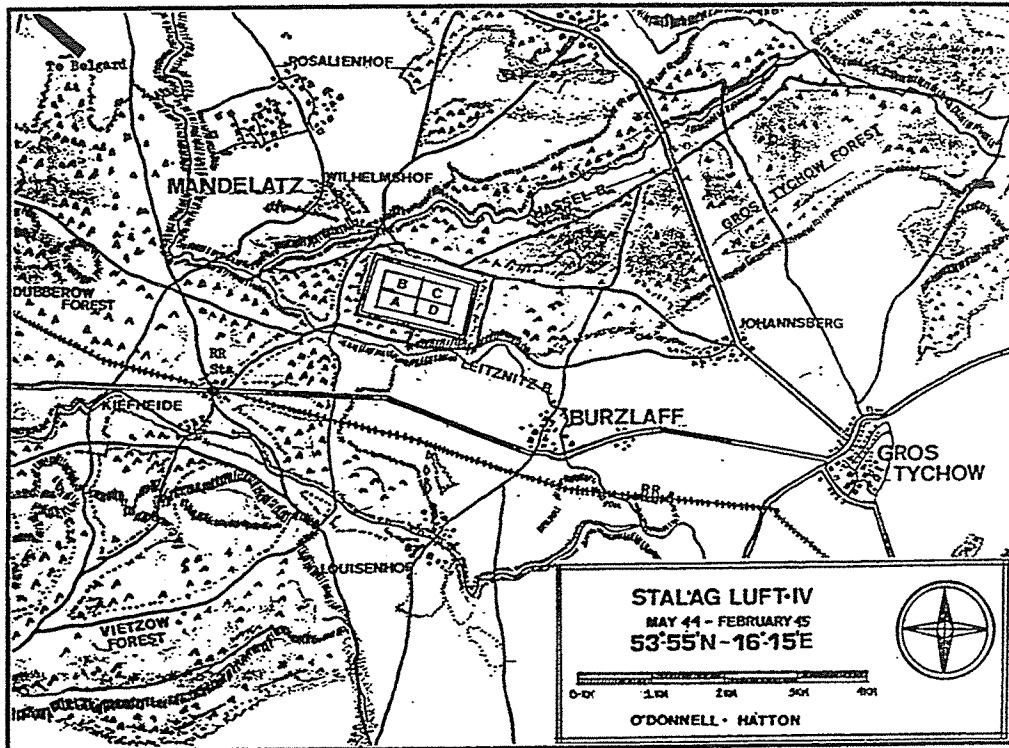


To avoid advancing Russian armies, Onesi and other POWs of Stalag Luft VI were move by rail and ship westward to Stalag Luft IV during the period 14-18 July 1945.

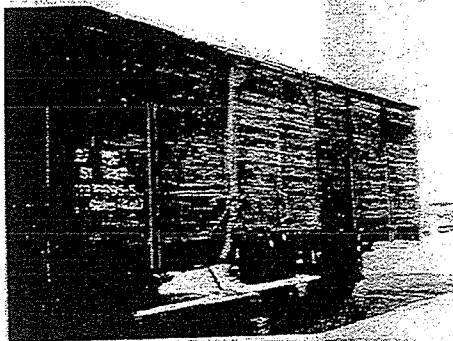


From 6 February until 26 April 1945, prisoners of Stalag Luft IV were forced marched west and southward to avoid advancing Russian armies. The march continued until overrun by a British division.

# STALAG LUFT IV

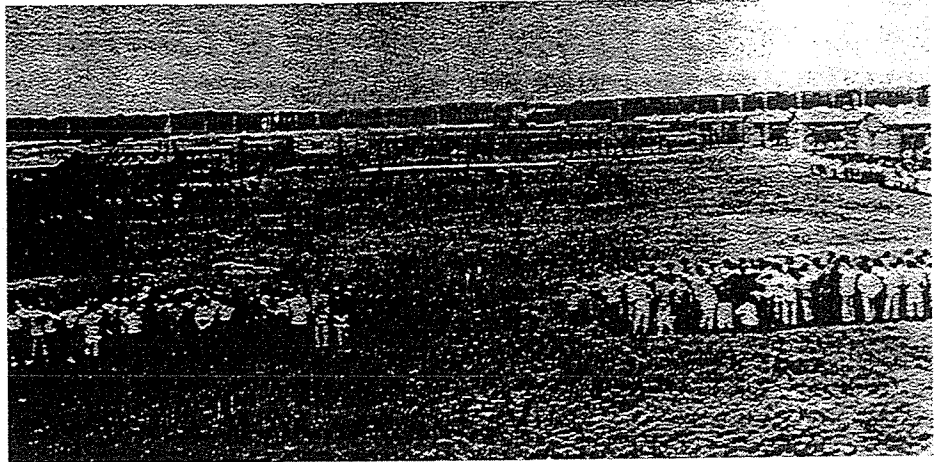


Above: Map of the location where Stalag IV was built



Left: A 40 or 8 boxcar used to move POWs from Swinemunde to Kiefeheide.

Below: Roll call in the American compound.



Note: Sketch of camp and photos courtesy of the Ex-POW Association.

## CHAPTER 8

### 1945: THE YEAR OF VICTORY

\*\*\* V-E DAY IS COMING \*\*\*

It is now February 1945 and the six members of the crew of the *DESTINY'S TOT* stationed in the United States read and hear about the Allied advances worldwide and particularly in Europe. They feel the war in Europe is entering its final stage.

\* \*

Out in the Pacific, Jerry Eshuis is on Tinian Island and beginning to fly combat missions in his B-29. While things are going well in the Pacific, the war is not as close to being ended here as it is in Europe. No telling how long it will continue. There is nothing much to do but fly the assigned combat missions and write letters home and hope the censors aren't too strict.

\* \*

In Eastern Germany, Adams, Onesi, and O'Hearn remain prisoners of the Germans. The German position is rapidly deteriorating near Stalag Luft IV as Russian Marshal Zhukov and his First White Russian Army Group bear relentlessly down on that sector of Germany. It now becomes a time of trial and suffering for Tony, Bob, and Gene.

One day, Tony and Bob are informed that their camp is being evacuated immediately. Moving 10,000 POWs is no easy chore under the best of circumstances and this doesn't even come close. The sick and wounded are placed in boxcars and taken away by train. Tony and the rest are forced marched to the west. It is brutal time. The winter is the coldest recorded in 50 years and the men have only the clothes on their back and one blanket. Each man has one half of a Red Cross parcel for food. Food will be scarce over the next three months.

From 26 February through 26 April of 1945, Tony and his fellow prisoners endurance is strained to the maximum. Prisoners are formed into groups of 200 men, a more or less manageable number for the guards. There seems to be no destination in mind, just walk and stay out of the way of Allied forces. For over 86 miserable days and 500 agonizing miles, the men walk and stagger in a gigantic circle with no relief. German guards resort to threatening local German farmers to provide some potatoes or flour but both are in scarce supply. It is not a good time for either prisoners, guards, or German farmers.

Tony Onesi and his German speaking friend John Kohl are teamed with one other POW and two German guards as an advance party to their group. They march three to four hours

ahead of the main body. As the day begins to draw to a close, the German guards and Kohl attempt to beg, borrow, or pilfer flour from the local farmers. Once some flour is obtained, the three POWs start a fire in some farmer's outdoor oven and commence to bake bread for the main body. At least working around the ovens, they can temporarily stay warm. If the men are very lucky and scrounge some potatoes from the farmers, they make some watered down potato soup. When the main body of POWs and guards arrive, the men ration the bread out to their fellow POWs and ladle out the watery soup. On one occasion, Lady Luck smiles on Tony and the advanced party. Just as they are stopping for the evening, they come across a horse that has just been recently killed during a strafing run by some aircraft. That night there is a chunk of meat in the soup. What a treat!

Ninety percent of the time, Tony, Bob and the others sleep out in the open, cold and wet. If they are fortunate, the German guards force some reluctant farmer to open his barn and the POWs can at least burrow into the hay and stay somewhat warmer and dryer than usual. Tony remembers one tragic incident about staying in barns. He and the advance party had already left before this incident happens, but he hears about it that evening. It seems that several GIs thought they'd hide in the hay and escape, but that's not what was in store for them. After a head count, it was obvious that some were missing. The guards sent the dogs into the barn and a couple GIs came running out with the dogs hot at their heels. These men paid a price for trying to escape. There were still men missing so the barn was set afire, even though it was a German barn. The SS guards were ruthless. As the three of four remaining GIs rushed out of the burning barn, they were gunned down by the guards and their bodies left on the ground. All the POWs were outraged at the guards, but there was nothing they could do. There are no more escape attempts.

\* \*

While prisoners of Stalag Luft IV are being killed for attempting to escape while on the forced march, an entirely different scenario is being played out on the wanderings of the men from Stalag Luft where Gene O'Hearn is. The column is in disarray and the supply system of the German Army is non-existent for this group of guards and prisoners. Everyone must forage off the land to live and the German farmers are losing much at the hands of the retreating German armies and prisoners. Gene distinctly remembers many of his group of prisoners as well as some of the German guards deserting the main body and going it alone or in small groups. After two or three days, many return as the going has been difficult and the opinion of the men comes to be that there is more protection and power by being with the main body. It is a time of trial for everyone in the region except for the Russians.

**\*\*\* AT LONG LAST: FREE AGAIN! \*\*\***

At a location within central Germany, Gene O'Hearn's group of prisoners and German guards eventually meet their fate as the men of Stalag Luft IV will in a few days. Their march has ground to a halt, thus successfully avoiding capture by the Russians. Fortunately the men have reached the British sector of operations and can no longer continue to avoid British units. On some date, probably in late April 1945, at some specific time and location, the British begin policing up groups of the German guards and Allied prisoners. Staff Sergeant Gene O'Hearn is at last free and being returned to American control for his first leg of his travels back to the United States.

\* \*

On or about 2 May 1945, Tony and his small advance party stop for the night and are busy making bread in a German farmhouse in the general vicinity of Halle, Germany. Suddenly they hear some noise and as they look out, they see a great deal of activity on the road. As they watch out the window in amazement, a British tank stops a bus loaded with German soldiers about four hundred yards away. Tony, John, and the other POW run outside to greet soldiers of the Second British Division. They don't know where their German guards are and don't stop to think about it as they run toward the tank. As they are rejoicing with one another, a German officer in a Volkswagen car abandons the vehicle and runs into the nearby woods. The British tank commander tells Tony and John to take the bus of German soldiers and drive to the nearby town and turn them over to the English officer who will be there. And so in a wink of an eye, Tony is transformed from being a POW to an Allied guard taking German soldiers on their first leg of their trip to a POW camp. Both the bus and the Volkswagen are taken and away the men drive.

Tony acts as a guard in the German bus and directs the German driver where to go. John Kohl and the third member of their group hop into the Volkswagen and follow the bus. Onesi directs the German driver down the road for about a mile or so until they come to the center of a small town with a barb wired compound in the platz. Here Tony finds the English officer in charge who relieves him of his bus load of German soldiers. Now Onesi, Kohl, and the other GI get into the Volkswagen and head southwest towards American lines. The British are very accommodating and even pass out some food along the way. The three take turns driving and wend their way southwest through Germany and finally enter American lines in France. They are still bumming gas and food, but continue driving straight through. The Americans direct them to Camp Lucky Strike, a processing center near Le Havre, France. At last, three weary but happy GIs arrive at their destination after a journey of two or three days. Here they report in and are immediately told by an officer they must relinquish their Volkswagen. Having one, is in his words, "Verboten". At least he knows one word of German.



At Camp Lucky Strike, Onesi is deloused and given clean clothes. He can even take a decent shower for the first time in months. Tony recollects that his weight is down to around only one hundred pounds by this time. The last three months have really taken a toll on him. There are vitamin lines, hot chocolate lines, and nourishing snack lines. As Tony and his friends soon learn, having all that food available is entirely different from being able to eat it. After months of semi-starvation, it is difficult to hold down a lot of food at any one time.

One day, Tony is asked by a friend to wait in a hot chocolate line for him. He reluctantly agrees as he hates standing in lines and his friend knows that. While waiting in line, Tony has a pleasant surprise: his cousin and a very good friend from back home in New York walk by and when they just about collide, they recognize him. The men joyfully embrace for the next few minutes. In fact Tony's cousin has been looking for him for two weeks feeling certain that he would pass through Camp Lucky Strike. The cousin is the head cook in one of the permanently assigned units so he and his friend escort Onesi to their quarters and here Tony spends most of his time for the next two weeks. By now V-E day has come and gone and all everyone wants is to get home.

Tony is treated like a king by his cousin and his friends. He recollects that since his cousin and his friends were all cooks, he has access to the best food in camp. What is ironic is he can hardly eat any of it or he gets very sick so he has to stick to plain food and not much of that. What a predicament!

After spending a couple weeks of being medically examined and administratively processed, Tony Onesi is scheduled to return to the United States. Unlike the evaders of the Smith crew who flew home, Tony is one of thousands who has to suffer through a sea voyage to get back to New York. As Tony leaves Camp Lucky Strike for the docks at Le Havre, his cook friends load him up with a box of baked chicken to eat on the way home. Tony is an airman, not a seaman, and he remembers that as soon as he stepped aboard the liberty ship. He suddenly doesn't feel well at all. Tony is seasick and miserable for a week until the ship docks in New York City. He doesn't eat a thing and his chicken, as he puts it, "was up for grabs". There was no happier young man in the world than S/Sgt Anthony Onesi when the troops disembarked at New York City!

It is now time for home leave, rest, and learning to eat Mom's good food again. What a change from prison camp! After his leave, Tony reports to Army Air Force Redistribution Station #1 at Atlantic City, New Jersey where he remains until the end of the war. He is eventually discharged on 3 October 1945.

\* \*

Back at Horham, England Lieutenant Colonel Lester Burt, commander of the 95th Bomb Group, somehow learns of the heroic actions of Bob Adams during the action that sent the *DESTINY'S TOT* crashing into a French farm on 30 December 1943. He prepares and submits a recommendation for a Silver Star for Adams. The recommendation enters the bureaucratic system and disappears from sight for an extended period.

### \*\*\* A CHANCE ENCOUNTER OF OLD CREW MATES \*\*\*

It is now mid-August 1945, 15 August to be exact, and Bill Booher is ferrying a plane from Fort Myers, Florida to Harlington, Texas. Aboard the aircraft are several servicemen bumming a ride to Dallas from Florida. Bill lands the plane at Love Field in Dallas, lets the men off and refuels for the next leg of the journey. While waiting for the plane to be refueled, Bill and his crew learn that the world's first atomic bomb has just been dropped on Hiroshima, Japan. This is exciting news to say the least! Most of the men want to spend the night in Dallas, but Bill, as aircraft commander, says they have to keep going to Harlington. Fate, or perhaps the copilot, decrees otherwise. As Bill taxis for takeoff, the magneto on one engine acts up and it is obvious that repairs will be needed before takeoff so it's back to the parking ramp.

Since the repairs will take overnight, Bill and his crew check into the BOQ and enlisted transient quarters. Bill and his officers head for the Officers' Club for supper and maybe a drink or two. After arriving at the O Club, who does Bill meet but Murray Ball, the original navigator of the *DESTINY'S TOT*. What a surprise! An impromptu reunion takes place and the men catch up on what each knows about the other members of the original crew. Since the dropping off the first atomic bomb seems to signal the start of the end of the war against Japan, there are toasts for an early peace. After a pleasant time together, Bill and Murray head back to their own BOQs.

The following morning, Bill and his crew are airborne again and finally deliver their plane to Harlington, Texas. It is then time to head back to Fort Meyer.

### \*\*\* ESHUIS CONTINUES THE WAR \*\*\*

In the summer of 1945, Jerry Eshuis is the only member of the crew of the old *DESTINY'S TOT* that is still overseas and engage in combat. His bomber squadron, the 676th of the 444th Bomb Group, Twentieth Air Force, is flying missions over the Japanese homeland and trying to bomb Japan into submission before ground troops have to attempt a costly amphibious landing. Jerry determines there is far less threat from enemy fighters compared to missions over Germany, but the flak put up by the Japanese can rival that of the Germans. Flying combat missions against any enemy remains a hazardous way to earn a living.

### \*\*\* V-J DAY AT LAST \*\*\*

In July and early August, there is considerable activity at the north end of Tinian Island where Jerry is stationed. There are B-29s there as well in the southern airfields where Jerry's Superfortress is located. The men hear rumors about something special going on up north, but the area has been cordoned off and is off limits to them. Then on that historic day of 6 August 1945, Jerry and his squadron learn what has been going on in the off limits area. An

announcement is made that the *Enola Gay*, piloted by Colonel Paul W. Tibbets, Jr. has dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. Three days later, *Bock's Car*, piloted by Major Charles W. Sweeney, drops the second atomic bomb, this one on Nagasaki. On 15 August, Japan surrenders and V-J Day is finally here. The military newspaper, *Stars and Stripes* publishes huge headlines on these events. There will be no more combat missions for Jerry Eshuis and his squadron mates.

**\*\*\*IT'S ALL OVER \*\*\***

Jerry has done his bit for the war effort. He has flown 14 combat missions in 1943 against the Germans and another 21 missions against the Japanese in 1945. It's a combat record to be proud of, but now it's time to go home!

As rapidly as possible, men from the Pacific Theatre of Operations were returned to the United States and the men processed for discharge based on the points accrued for their service. Jerry, with his combat time, has a large number of points so he soon finds himself at the discharge center at Fort Lewis near Tacoma, Washington, very near his home. Jerry is now a civilian again, but proud of his Army service!



The arrow points toward Jerry Eshuis posing with his B-29 crew.

## CHAPTER 9

### LIFE AFTER THE ARMY AIR FORCE

#### \*\*\* BACK TO CIVILIAN LIFE \*\*\*

All adventures must come to an end and with the Allied victory over Germany and Japan, the military rapidly demobilizes and with it, the ex-crew of *DESTINY'S TOT*. That is with one exception. Lieutenant Warren C. Tarkington, having been in the Army Air Corps prior to World War II, decides the Air Force life is for him.

Tarkington is serving as the supply officer for Unit C-1 at San Angelo Army Air Force Base when the Japanese surrender in August 1945. Tarkington stays in the Air Force for twenty-one years during which time he and his wife raise two service "brats", a boy Richard in honor of Richard M. Smith, and a girl Jan. Tark retires from active duty as a major in 1960.

Dick Smith is the first of the crew to be discharged and is so before V-J Day. He obtains an early out and is directed to report to Fort Snelling, Minnesota where he is honorably discharged on 2 June 1945. He then goes to work flying commercial airliners for Eastern Airlines. Later Dick obtains his degree from Notre Dame University and returns to Minnesota to make his fame and fortune in the agricultural business. He marries and raises three children.

Bill Booher is also hooked on flying and obtains a flying position with Consolidated Can Corporation. He doesn't have enough points for an early discharge so Bill is not Honorably discharged until 9 December 1945 at Chanute Field, Illinois. He, too, marries and raises three children. In 1949, Bill is traveling in the north and north central parts of the USA. While in New Hampshire Bill looks up Gene O'Hearn. Gene seems to have put the POW experience behind him reasonably well and is quite sociable. Bill next stops in New York to visit with Tony Onesi but learns he is in Chicago going to school. It's then on to Ohio where he visits briefly with Bob Adams who complains about several things associated with his service in the military. At last Bill arrives in Minnesota for a visit with his old friend Dick Smith. Afterwards it is back to the east coast after stopping in Chicago where he locates Onesi. As it turns out, Bill gives Tony a ride back to Buffalo. For Bill, it was a most pleasant trip during which he saw many of the men who had shared his wartime experiences.

Lou Feingold returns to New York City and enters the young girl's dress business with his dad. He marries and he and his wife raise three sons and one daughter.

On many bomber crews of World War II, there is often one or two men that want to erase all memories of war and just seem to disappear after their separation. In the Smith crew, the men are Bob Adams and Ken Morrison.

Adams is resentful of his captivity at the hands of the Germans and after the war doesn't want to talk about it or see anyone connected with it. He is Honorably discharged at Camp Atterbury, Indiana on 6 September 1945 and returns home to La Grange, Ohio to start life anew. In late February of 1947, he receives a letter from the Adjutant General of the War Department informing him that he has been awarded a Silver Star for gallantry in action on 30 December 1943. It has taken twenty months for Lt. Col. Burt's recommendation to be processed and acted upon.

Ken Morrison was always a relatively private person so after the war, he returns to Phoenix, Arizona, marries and basically severs all connections with his old crew mates.

Al Mele is still at Fort Myers, Florida when World War II ends. Al learns he has sufficient points for demobilization in the near future and is soon ordered to Camp Blanding, Florida where he is Honorably discharged on 15 September 1945. Mele has learned to enjoy Florida so after his tour at Fort Myers and his discharge, he and his wife settle there and open up an Italian restaurant that becomes a big success.

Shortly after V-J Day, Jerry Eshuis is Honorably discharged at the separation center at Fort Lewis, Washington near his home. After returning to civilian status, Jerry marries, and raises three children. He works building concrete silos for seventeen years as well as building up a small dairy herd after which he goes into full time farming. In 1973, after an irate cow kicks Jerry and breaks his leg that requires a year to heal, Jerry decides it is time to retire from farming. He then goes to work in a farm implement store until his retirement.

On V-J Day, Tony Onesi is hanging around the Army Air Force Redistribution Station in Atlantic City waiting for something to happen. On 3 October 1945, something does. He receives his Honorable discharge and immediately returns to New York and to work in his old job at the International Paper Company. He marries and eventually he and his wife raise three girls and one boy. In 1949, Tony and his family move to Chicago where he uses the GI Educational Bill to obtain a degree in Television Engineering before returning to Niagara Falls, New York. Here he gains a position with Bell Aircraft Corporation and works in the Research and Development Environmental Test Lab. With contracts for Bell falling off in 1959, Tony switches over to F.A.A. and becomes responsible for electronic components in airport landing equipment. This he does for twenty years before retirement. Over the years, the German bullet behind his heart and other lasting effects of his wounds sustained during the aerial combat on 30 December 1943 plus the impact of being a prisoner of the Germans for 16 months has more than once presented him with medical problems and some skirmishes with the medical service of the Veterans' Administration.

And so the men of the *DESTINY'S TOT* are now starting on another great adventure, that of working and raising families.

### \*\*\* REMEMBERING THE PAST \*\*\*

One of the great phenomenon of World War II is the bond it created among so many participants and the dedication of the men to keep the memories alive even 50 years after the war.

Some of the crew of the *DESTINY'S TOT* have and continue to be involved with both the men who shared their experiences of being shot down and in maintaining contact with those Frenchmen, both men and women, who risked their lives to help save them. Unfortunately, Father Time is taking his toll.

Warren Tarkington received a letter from his benefactor, Jean Crouet, even before the end of 1944. The Allies have liberated St. Just and mail could pass between France and the United States so in November, Crouets writes his friend, "Red Dog" Tarkington. More letters follow in 1945 as well as a letter from Madame Odette to Tark's mother and a letter to him from Harry the Baker. In November 1948, there is a Paint Industries Show in Chicago and Jean Crouet travels from St. Just to attend. At the French Consulate in Chicago, Red Dog and Jean meet once again. Both men are glad to re-establish personal contact. Although Tark and his wife would have liked to have traveled to France to retrace that exciting part of "Red Dog's" adventures, the demands of career and family never permitted it.

In 1964, Ralph Patton, another downed American aviator, decides to form an organization of ex-airmen who have been downed and either evaded or escaped from the enemy and were returned to England via Plouha, France and the British Motor Gun Boat system. Ralph calls Dick Smith, Bill Booher, Al Mele, and Jerry Eshuis and invites them to attend. Dick Smith in turn contacts Tony Onesi since Tony lives near Niagara Falls, New York where the meeting is to be held. The initial meeting was held at the Niagara Falls Air Base and five men of the *DESTINY'S TOT* are present at the meeting of what eventually became known as the Air Force Escape and Evasion Society, AFEES for short.

Concurrent with this first AFEES meeting was a gathering of men associated with *Operation Bonaparte*, the Underground systems officers by two French-Canadian officers who arranged for Allied personnel to be evacuated from Plouha, France and transported by British Motor Gun Boats back to England. Both officers of the operation, LaBrose and Dumais were there in addition to several of the French Underground members who flew in from France for the meeting. Since six of the Smith crew were rescued this way, the five men attending the AFEES meeting also attended the *Operation Bonaparte* gathering.

At first the AFEES group was small, but over the years has significantly expanded. Dick Smith and Al Mele served as board members for many years, but it wasn't until the annual meeting in Savannah, Georgia in 1996 that Dick Smith was persuaded to become the president.

Twenty-five years after the men of the *DESTINY'S TOT* were rescued, the American and Canadian chapters of AFEES plan a large reunion in Europe for its members. Dick Smith, Bill Booher, and Al Mele all participate and the trip offers them a wonderful opportunity to see each other again and meet some of the other evaders. It is a trip of a lifetime for many. Not only is there travel to Europe, but also a cocktail party in London with Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain and a reception in Brussels with King Baudouin of Belgium. Once back in France the men meet Paul and Yvonne Begue and see the baby Paulette grown into a very attractive young woman. They also visit with Paulette and Captain Jacques who then live in Clermont rather than St. Just.

There is an awards banquet at the Grand Hotel in Paris where the heroes of the Underground are honored. All in all it is a memorable trip!

Thirty years after the end of World War II, a monument is dedicated at the French coastal town of Plouha in memory of those involved in *Operation Bonaparte*. Both Dick Smith and Jerry Eshuis and their wives attend. The flags of France, Great Britain, Canada, and the United States fly side by side on hallowed French ground at the ceremony, and the Smith and Eshuis families feel proud to take part in such a solemn ceremony that links them to the bravery of the past.

Following the dedication at Plouha, Jerry and Alberta Eshuis take time to visit St. Just and the chateau of Count Baynast and his family. It is a wonderful reunion but the Eshuis family is sorry that the countess is in Rome at the Vatican and that they don't get to visit with her. They learn that the countess had taken the shrapnel from Jerry's leg and worn it on a chain like a necklace in 1944 and 1945. The countess has left a note for Jerry and his wife telling them this and that she wants to keep the necklace as a souvenir. Jerry and Alberta are very pleased with their visit to the Baynast Chateau.

Since they are in the area, Jerry looks up his first French helper, Gervais Gorge, the farmer who hid Jerry from the Germans. Alberta is excited to meet this daring French patriot. Gervais invites the Eshuis family to be his guests so they accept. Gervais' brother Peter and his housekeeper Marcelle are also there so it is a homey place to stay. Jerry receives a major surprise when he visits the farm. Gervais meet him with Jerry's 1943 blood stained Mae West life jacket, flying gloves, and survival kit. Jerry hadn't thought of these items in years and when he sees them, he and Gervais embraced each other with a great deal of emotion. Then there is a picture taking session. This is a time that is remembered by both families even until today.

Dick Smith continues his travels to France and in 1988 he returns and visits with Paul and Yvonne Begue who get together with him in Senlis. Paulette, Captain Jacques' wife, also joins in the reunion and everyone is happy to see each other again. Six years later, AFEES has a fortieth reunion at Plouha and again Dick Smith makes the trek across the Atlantic Ocean to once again renew the bonds between peoples of two nations that were forged over 50 years ago.

## EPILOGUE

As 1997 begins, four of the downed crew of the *DESTINY'S TOT* remain alive to preserve the memory of the exploits of a crew that flew into battle against Nazi Germany 53 years ago. It is through efforts of men such as these that the nation's history will remain forever in the minds of its citizens.

As president of AFEES, Dick Smith is working hard to preserve the stories and exploits of the men of the *DESTINY'S TOT* but also the stories of all the AFEES members. He has made initial coordination with the British to insure that the story of the *DESTINY'S TOT* as well as many other AFEES stories will be included in the new American Air Museum in Duxford, England which is part of the British Imperial War Museum system.

Accounts by Dick Smith and his crew enable future generations to put a face to wartime deeds and to add that human dimension so often lacking in the cold, hard facts of military history written in textbooks.

One last item. During the research for this book, additional information from military historical archives and personal eye witness accounts became available to the authors concerning the action in the waist of the *DESTINY'S TOT* during the last frantic minutes of aerial combat on 30 December 1943. Based on this information and after checking with the Department of the Army in Washington D.C. over the statue of limitations, Dick Smith prepared and submitted a recommendation that a Silver Star for gallantry in combat be awarded to his port waist gunner Anthony Onesi. Whether or not this recommendation will be approved is not known, but Tony Onesi can take pride in knowing that his courageous efforts on that day 54 years ago are still remembered.

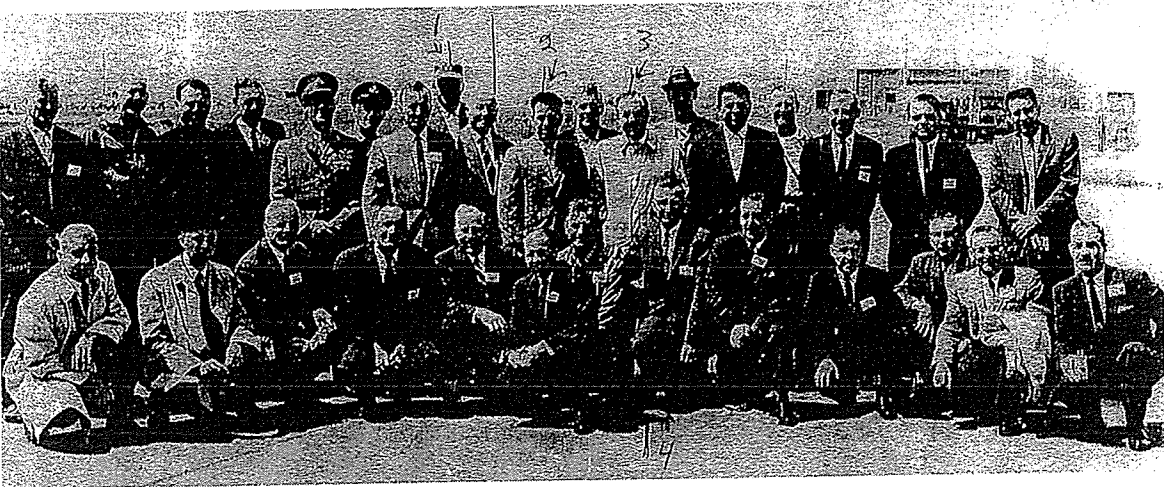




Above: In April 1944, a small reunion supper took place in New York City. L-R: Feingold, Smith, Mele, unknown friend of Feingold.



Right: In 1948, Tarkington has a reunion with Jean Crouet, a French helper, during a visit to the French Consulate in Chicago.



Above: In May 1964, the first four evaders of the *DESTINY'S TOT* that took part in *Operation Bonaparte* gathered in New York for a reunion with other evaders. 1: Smith; 2: Booher; 3: Mele; 4: Eshuis.

Right: In 1969, Booher, Smith and Mele traveled to Paris for the 25th anniversary celebration of AFEES. They are shown here with the Bugue family, two of their French helpers.

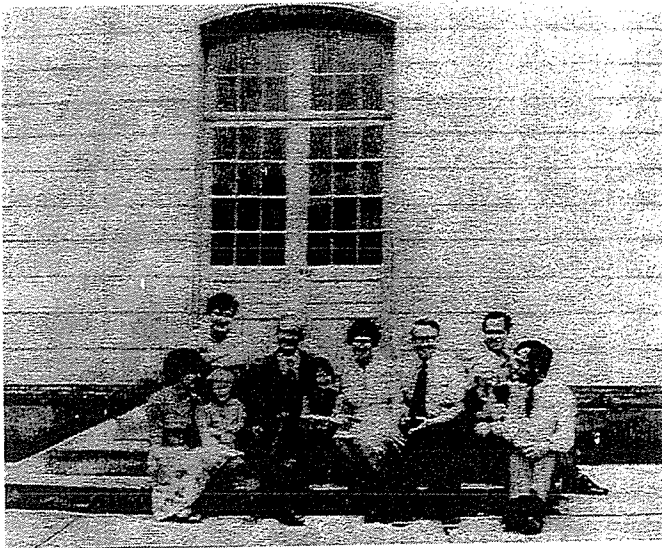




In France, Eshuis is presented with his Mae West vest and escape kit that had been saved by Gervais since 30 December 1943.

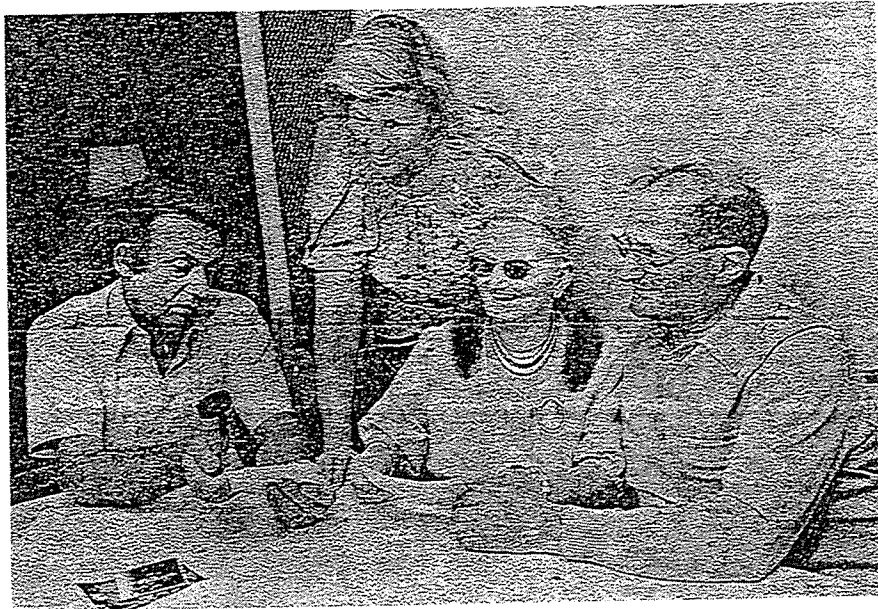


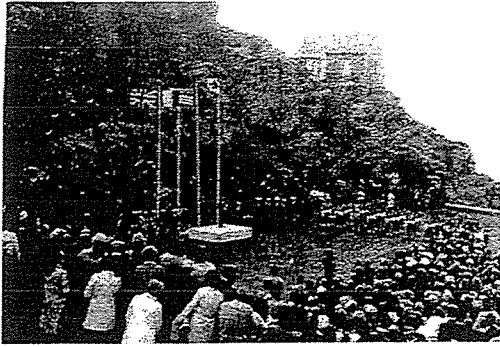
Above: Eshuis with Gervais, his brother Paul, and the housekeeper, Marcelle. Photo taken in 1975.



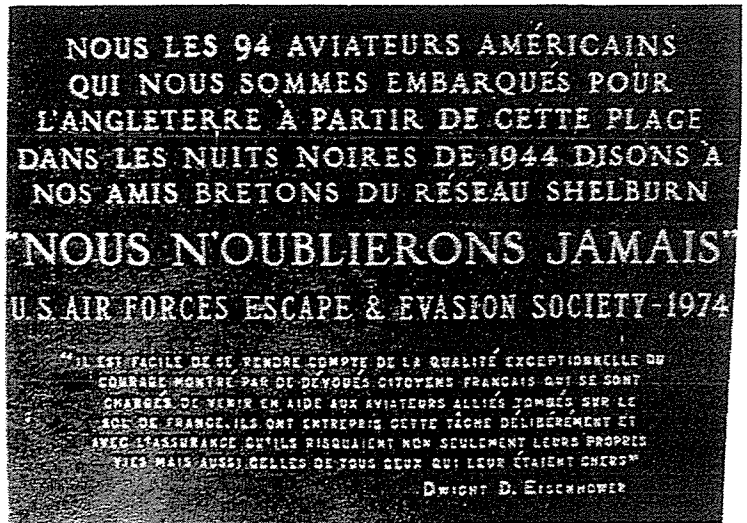
Left: In 1975, Jerry and Alberta Eshuis visited with members of the Count's family at Chateau Morainvillers where Jerry was operated on in 1944.

Below: In 1978, the Feingolds hosted two of Lou's WWII French helpers, Madame Odette and her husband, Gaston, at their home in New Jersey.





Honor Guards of Canada, France, Great Britain, and the USA take part in a 1975 ceremony honoring Frenchmen who died helping Allied Military men evade the Germans.



The plaque presented by AFEES to the French people for their heroic efforts in WWII in saving downed airmen. Dick Smith represented AFEES.



Newly elected AFEES president Dick Smith presides over Memorial Day services at the 1996 AFEES reunion in Savannah, GA.



Tony Onesi at his old gun position in a B-17 on display at the Batavia Air Show in August 1995.

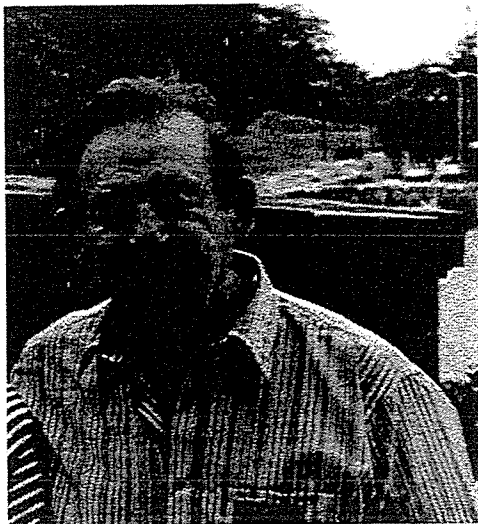
SURVIVORS OF THE  
*DESTINY'S TOT*  
1997



Pilot  
Richard M. Smith



Copilot  
William R. Booher



Navigator  
Louis (NMI) Feingold



Gunner  
Anthony (NMI) Ones

## GLOSSARY

<b>BBC:</b>	British Broadcasting Company, the British national radio station.
<b>Bomb Group:</b>	A numbered organization consisting of four squadrons and considered the basic tactical organization of the Air Force.
<b>BOQ:</b>	Bachelor Officers' Quarters. The living accommodation on a base for unmarried officers or officers without their wives currently present at that base.
<b>Cafe de lait:</b>	Coffee served with hot milk.
<b>CONFIDENTIAL:</b>	The lowest of the three routine military security classifications.
<b>Crumpets:</b>	A toasted muffin served by the British with tea.
<b>Dog Tags:</b>	Two metal tags worn on a chain around a soldier's neck showing his name and other specified information.
<b>G-2:</b>	The military designation of the staff intelligence officer in an organization of one branch of service commanded by a general.
<b>Gendarmerie:</b>	An armed French policeman.
<b>German Plant:</b>	A German spy introduced into an enemy's organization to report on that organization and its peoples.
<b>German WAC:</b>	A female member of the German army other than a member of the Medical Service.
<b>Gestapo:</b>	The dreaded German secret police known for its brutality.
<b>Litter:</b>	Military name of a stretcher.
<b>Kriegsmarines:</b>	Members of a German naval unit.
<b>Mae West:</b>	A life vest named for a famous female movie star known for her large bosom.

**Oberst:** The German rank equal to an American colonel.

**Oberstleutnant:** The German rank equivalent to an American lieutenant colonel.

**OD:** Olive drab; a color used by the Army in uniforms and on vehicles.

**Per Diem:** A specified amount of money per day paid to military personnel when they are away from their home base to help offset the additional expense of being away from home.

**Quartermaster:** The supply services of the American Army. One of its responsibilities was to inventory and store personal effects of MIAs or KIAs.

**Royal Air Force:** The air arm of the British military establishment.

**SECRET:** The second highest military security classification.

**Shooting the bull:** Idle conversation among friends.

**Silver Star:** America's third highest award for gallantry in combat.

**SS:** Schutzstaffel: The military wing of the Nazi Party known for its dedication to Nazi principles and aggressiveness on the battlefield. Established to provide protection to the Nazi Party.

**Slip-stream:** A stream of turbulent air driven backwards from a propeller on any propeller driven airplane.

**Stalag Luft:** A prison camp for captured Allied airmen operated by the German air force.

**Underground Cell:** The smallest unit of a larger resistance movement with only the chief knowing who was the next higher leader.