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Mr. Pat Reardpm
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Dear Pat:

I read of your request for information concerning your father in the "Ball of Fire" Quarterly paper. I knew your father the last two years he was in the service better than anyone else.

We were in the same Squadron, though not at the same time. However, I have a copy of "Ted's Traveling Circus", which contains an account of the 93rd's history. According to the book, the name of your Dad's plane was *Big Eagle*. (It didn't give a picture of the nose art, but it probably matched the name.) The pilot was Lt. Alex Simpson. Other officers were Lts. William Marsh, Nicholas Cos and Carl Garrett. The other Sergeants were Arthur Torrey, James Deteris, Clauton Kammerer. Sgts names Helman and Revarez were regulars on the crew, but were not on that mission, their place was taken by Stephen Eppolito and Arthur Cox. Your Dad was not only shot down on his first mission, his plane was the first plane from the 93rd Group to be shot down to be followed by 99 more.

The book says he was shot down near Dunkirk when the plane took direct it sin the number 4 engine and fire broke out in the Bomb Bay. The target had bee the Fives-Lille Steel & Locomotive Works at Lille, France.

When I entered Stalag XBIIB, I was assigned to a tier of bunks nest to the tier your Dad slept in. In being thrown into a group, one naturally finds some people he like better than others. And Mike and I hit it off. He already had a "combine" partner named Francis Counse;man, but frequently when food ran low, my combine partner, Moose Gallaher, and I would join up iwht Mike and Francis.

We did the usual things that POWs do, including playing a lot of bridge and managed to survive. I am sure that your Dad told you about the march back into German and camping out in the woods, not knowing what was to happen. There were crystal radio sets in camp, and we were able to here of General Patton's progress across Eruope to the south of us as best we could tell.

The day that President Roosevelt died, another friend of mine, Fred Mills, suggested that it might be wise to escape and see if we could join up with

Patton's forces. I agreed and we left. It was no big deal as the guards were old and tired and there was thick woods. We met up with part of Patton's troops four days later and stayed with them for about three weeks.

I am not sure of the time element, but after we left Patton liberated the camp and everyone was flown to Camp Lucky Strike.

From here on, I will lift a portion of my biography that one of my granddaughters has inveigled me to write, as Mike and I were together until the day we docked back in the US. None of what I will relate could take place in peace time, but everyone was sympathetic, just as they are to the Gulf War POWs. We literally got away with some unbelievable things.

I was told that if I could get to Rouen, France, I could catch a C-47 to Camp Lucky Strike, near Le Havre, which was a processing and embarkation point for POWs returning to the US. When I got to Rouen, I tried to see some of the sights before catching the plane. One sight that hit my funny bone and has stuck with me all these years concerns an elderly gentleman who resembled Buffalo Bill Cody with his flowing white hair and beard. He was using a pissoir, which was a wide open public urinal for men, shielded from the street by boards which generally covered a body from the shoulders to the knees. He was on the very end, and as a rather attractive young girl walked by, he didn't stop what he was doing, but gave her a big bow while doffing his hat!

Once at Camp Lucky Strike, we were processed medically and then given bunks and told that we would soon be going home. Days went by and nothing happened. Mike Reardon, who was from the same group that I was from and Red Dog Jones, friends from Stalag XVIIIB that I had met back up with, suggested that we try and get back to England and see if we could bum a ride back to the states on a plane from our group. We needed some money to do that so I went to the town of Etretat and sold the three pistols that I had to some Quartermaster troops, who didn't get far from the boat dock, for \$300 each.

Camp Luck Strike had a steel runway mat, and when a bomber from England landed, we hitched a ride back to England and then made our way to base at Heathrow, where the 93rd, Mike's and my old group, was based. As luck would have it, had we been one day earlier, we could have gotten a ride back to the states on the last bomber to leave.

We were each able to draw the equivalent of \$800 against our back pay and decided to see the sights before going home. I suggested that we go to Ireland, as there wouldn't be many US soldiers, and I had a brainstorm as to how we could get there.

I happen to have a sister that I have never seen, who was born in the county of West Meath, Southern Ireland. When I first went to England, I had paid a visit to the Red Cross and asked them to see if they could locate her. They had no luck.

I went back to the Red Cross and got a copy of my request and the three of us went to London to SHAPE (Eisenhower's headquarters). I played on the

sympathy being shown to POWs stating that this would be the last time that I would have a chance to find my sister. I also told them that Mike and Red Dog were my cousins.

Lo and behold, it worked. Here we were, actually AWOL from Camp Lucky Strike, but under the circumstances, we really weren't worried, and SHAEF gave us orders allowing us to fly from Creighton field in London to Lankford Lodge which was near Belfast, Northern Ireland and return upon completion - no dates. We got rooms at the YMCA in Belfast at virtually no cost. I found out that Southern Ireland was neutral and I could not get across the border to try and find my sister. As that was out, we proceeded to enjoy ourselves.

Evidently, we were not the only ones who got tired of waiting for transportation, and left Camp Lucky Strike and other processing centers. We started hearing radio announcements for all RAMPS, which stands for Recovered Allied Military Personnel or POWs, to report to Liverpool, as the Queen Elizabeth was due to sail and it was intimated we would be going home on that boat. We waited until our money finally ran out and then flew back to London. From there we took a train to South Hampton expecting to get on the Queen Elizabeth. Were we fooled! I think as punishment for leaving Camp Lucky Strike, we were put on LSTs as part of a 19 ship convoy. A LST was not designed to be an ocean going boat. The middle of the boat was like an empty airplane hanger, made to carry several tanks, etc. There were cabins between it and the ocean. As there were no tanks, they filled up the empty middle with water to act as ballast. The LST followed the path of a corkscrew, going up and down and side to side, there was water sloshing on one side and the ocean on the other side - very conducive to seasickness. It turns out that we were lucky to be on LST, as bad as it was. There were also 17 LCIs as part of convoy. They are so small that they would frequently disappear in the troughs of waves. The POWs on those boats should have been paid submarine pay.

When we got on our LST, it was tied to another LST. On each LST there was a PT boat tied down. When we sailed from South Hampton we only sailed as far as Plymouth. We anchored out from the shore and the two LSTs were tied together again. An announcement was made that Navy personnel could go ashore, but the RAMPs could not.

It turned out that we had gotten to know the navy personnel from the PT boat tied on our LST. I'm not sure how it all came about, but Mike and I ended up in Navy uniforms and went ashore with the PT guys. If anyone had seen us trying to climb down the Jacobs ladders, they would have known we were landlubbers, not seamen.

Mike and I felt very self conscious about the Navy uniforms, and the first thing we did was go up to a Navy Shore Patrolman and asked him a question. We evidently passed muster, as he answered our question and turned away.

We later went into a bar and our two Navy friends went to the john, leaving us sitting alone. At another table were several Navy personnel from the PT boat that had been tied down on the LST next to our LST. They saw the

patches on our uniforms, and came over to our table. In an unfriendly manner they wanted to know what we were doing wearing uniforms with their squadron patches. They knew we did not belong to their squadron. As there were four of them, we were just about to get our clocks cleaned when our friends returned from the john and explained everything. We all ended up being friends.

Our friendship thrived so much that we finally realized that we had missed the last whale boat back to the LSTs. That posed a far greater dilemma for Mike and I than it did for our PT friends. We finally did something that I was later ashamed of. We stole a rowboat and rowed back to the LSTs, letting the rowboat float away. Luck was with us. We climbed up the Jacobs ladder on the LST tied up to ours without being seen. Just as we were stepping over the chains to our LST we were challenged as to what we were doing. Our answer was that we were playing cards with our friends on the PT boat and just returning to our boat. I don't know if our transgression was purposely overlooked or what, but nothing was ever said. So much for our one night in the Navy.

We went our separate ways after landing and did not see each other until after we both graduated from college. However, I visited Mike and met your mother and I think you when they were living on the outskirts of Houston. I also visited with your DAD when he came through Kansas City. I was embarrassed and sad when I called for Mike one day and was told he had die

I hope that this gives you what you were looking for and an insight into some of your fathere's exploits.

Sincerely,

Colin Jones
Colin Jones

P.S. If you are ever in San Antonio, give me
a call.