

Escape

THROUGH

Enemy Territory



A True Story By
Arthur B. Cox, Jr.

Arthur B. Cox,

Donated by 10/01

John

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*Escape
from Enemy Territory*

by Arthur Bogle Cox, Jr.

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SBN 0-942459-01-6

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 88-90844

Published by McCormack Company
455 Arrowhead Trail
Knoxville, Tennessee 37919
1988

Dedication

I want to dedicate this book to my parents, Mr. & Mrs. Arthur B. Cox, Sr., and my brother Mr. Wilbur A. Cox whose prayers made it possible for my safe return from World War II, and to my many friends and relatives who took their time to write to me and encourage me.

Much credit is due those dedicated Ladies of Fountain City United Methodist Church who worked so faithfully to publish and send to all the service men from Fountain City a monthly copy of the *Fountain City Journalette*. The Wesleyan class was responsible for starting and maintaining this paper that our servicemen enjoyed so much. This paper included news about all the local servicemen, their addresses and news about the church.

My sympathy goes to the parents and wives of my fellow crewmen. I received letters from most of them and had a visit from one of the wives several years ago. That was a very difficult time for me. I felt as though I should still be missing in action or in a German prison camp. Being the only one of my crew to escape, I felt as though it also should have happened to me. All the family members wanted to know every detail, and rightfully so. It also disturbed me because there was so little I could tell them about their loved ones.

I also want to thank those brave French people who risked their lives for me. They shared their food, clothes and their homes helping me escape when they scarcely had enough for themselves. I shall always be grateful to them.

In gratitude, after the war was over, I sent "care" packages and clothes for a period of about three years to the French people who kept me.

During times of discouragement I relied on the twenty-third Psalm for comfort: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth

my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Chapter 1

Forewarned

It was a steamy hot day on September 1, 1939. I was a senior at Central High School working during the summer for the Knox County Water Company in Fountain City, Tennessee. We were digging a ditch for a water main when the news came over the radio that the German army had invaded Poland. One of the older men I was working with turned to me and said, "You will be over there fighting before it's over." I didn't think much about what he said at the time, but Mr. Beets was right. I went back to school that fall and during the next few weeks England and France declared war on the Germans. Meanwhile I finished my last year at Central High School and graduated in June 1940.

In September, 1940, I entered the University of Tennessee as a freshman in electrical engineering. However, after attending one year I received my "Greetings" and orders to report to my draft board for a physical examination. Deciding to enlist rather than be drafted, I signed up on September 19, 1941 and was sent to Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia.

My first problem came when I ate my first meal at the mess hall. On the way out of the mess hall I dumped my scraps in a garbage can by the door, when here comes a big, mean-looking mess sergeant yelling at the top of his voice. The garbage can I had contaminated was for scalding our mess kits and utensils instead of a place to dump garbage. He made me carry water from the mess hall and refill the can. Where I came from we put garbage in garbage cans but the army did it differently. This was the first in a long series of "being raked over the coals" for the next five years.

I was assigned to a tent with seven other recruits, most of whom had been in the army less than a week; but to hear them talk you would think

they were old timers. They picked up the army lingo quickly and seemed to enjoy using it.

My stay at Ft. Oglethorpe was a short one. My third day there they gave me several aptitude tests. After receiving the results of my tests they asked me if I would like to transfer to the Army Air Force. I was pleased to get the offer and accepted without hesitation.

I was sent to Keesler Field at Biloxi, Mississippi where I began Aircraft Mechanics School on September 28, 1941. This school was supposed to take six months for completion, but after December 7, Pearl Harbor day, the course was sped up to turn out more mechanics. We began going to school seven days a week instead of five and were no longer given as many weekend passes. Our Christmas furloughs were all cancelled making everyone angry enough to fight; but overall, my stay at Keesler for the first three months was rather enjoyable as Army life goes. We were given passes almost anytime we wanted them.

The only trouble with Keesler Field was that it was still under construction and we were without hot water until after Christmas. We beat this by renting a hotel room where several of us would go in and take a hot shower. This worked fine for a while until the manager realized what we were doing and put a stop to our baths. Finally, we moved from tent city into the new barracks but still had to wait several weeks before we had hot water.

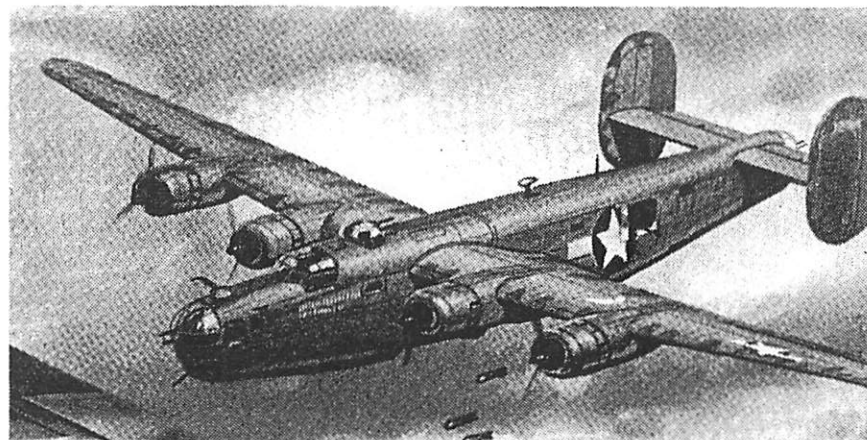
The courses in Aircraft Mechanics were very interesting. We spent approximately seventy hours on each course. The courses consisted of basics, structures, hydraulic systems, propellers, instruments, engines, electrical systems, fuel and oil systems, engine operation and airplane inspection.

Our class finished the course in March and we were sent to a variety of places. Several from my class and I went to Barksdale Field at Shreveport, Louisiana and almost half of the class went to Trinidad—the southern most island in the West Indies. At the time it seemed to them the worst place to be sent, although in the long run it was the safest place to be. Some of these later were sent to Salt Lake City for reassignment. Others in the class went in March to air bases in Texas and were probably sent overseas later.

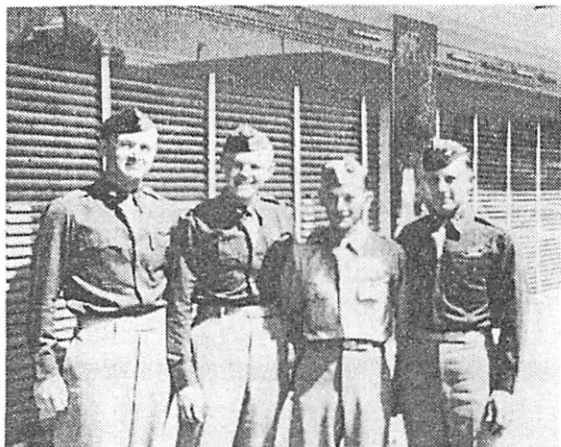
Chapter 2

Training

We were assigned to the 93rd Heavy Bomb Group in the 330th Bomb Squadron. The planes assigned to our group were B-24 Liberators made by Consolidated Aircraft Company. I volunteered to become an engineer on a B-24 combat crew. Our crew consisted of the following men: Capt. Alexander Simpson, Pilot; 1st Lt. Nicholas H. Cox, Co-Pilot; 2nd Lt. William Marsh, Bombardier; 1st Lt. Nathan Garrett, Navigator (who was later transferred from our crew); T/Sgt. Arthur B. Cox, Jr., Engineer-Gunner; Sgt. Arthur M. Torrey, Assistant Engineer; Sgt. Michael Reardon, Radio Operator; Sgt. Clayton Krammerer, Assistant Radio Operator; Sgt. Stephen Eppolito, Gunner; Sgt. S.J. De Torris was added to our crew later. Captain Simpson was an excellent pilot. Often as we were landing we would kid him by telling him to call the control tower to ask if the plane was on



Consolidated B-24 "Liberator"



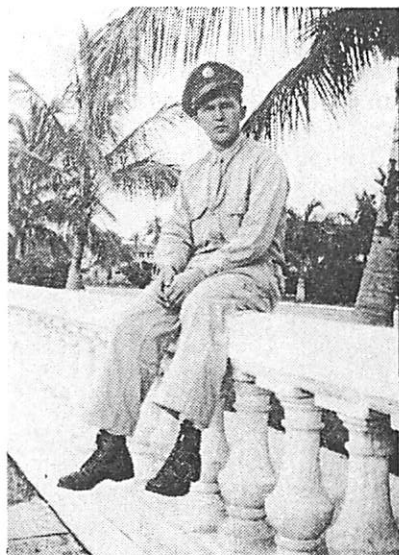
A. Simpson, Pilot; J. Hall, Navigator; N.H. Cox, Co-Pilot; W.A. Marsh Bombardier



Clayton Krammerer



Stephen Eppolito



Sgt. Arthur M. Torrey

Training

the ground. His landings were always so smooth it was difficult to tell when we actually touched down. We flew training missions out of Barksdale, Louisiana, for about seven weeks, then were transferred to Fort Myers, Florida.

The weather was nice at Ft. Myers and I was glad since we were back in tents again. The mosquitoes were "whoppers." I remember a cartoon in the "Yank" magazine that pictured two mosquitoes perched on the foot of a G.I.'s bed. One said to the other, "Shall we eat him here or take him back to the swamp?" This cartoon really portrayed the problems we were facing.

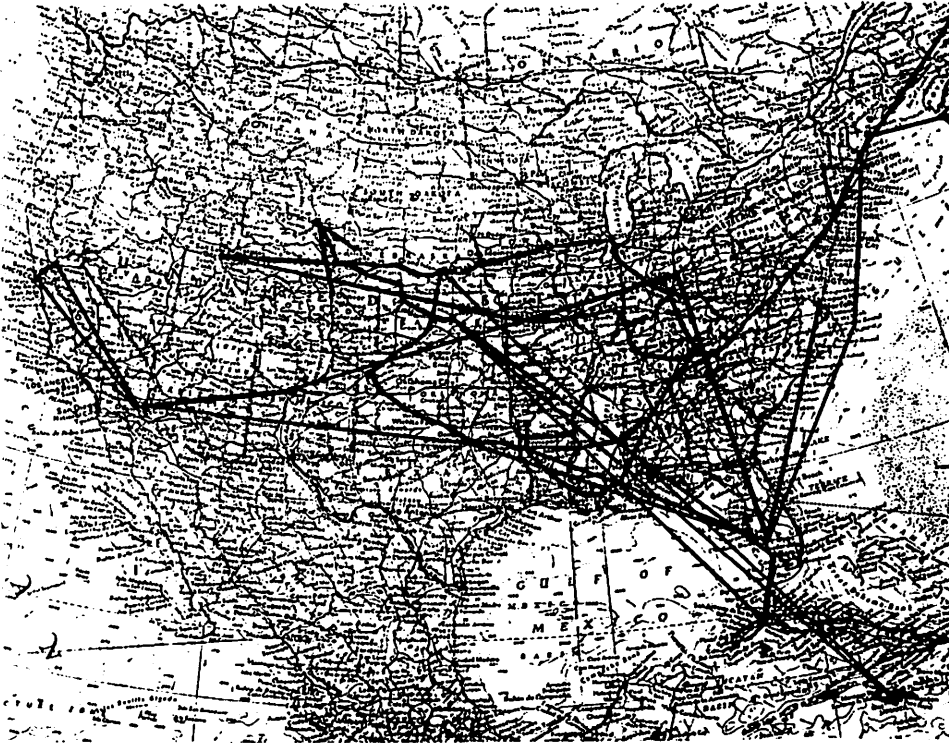
While at Ft. Myers, Florida we patrolled the Gulf of Mexico for submarines. We carried 500 pound depth charges but never spotted a submarine. This was a monotonous task, as we often flew for hours out of sight of land making several trips from Florida to the Cuban coast and back. Every member of the crew had a turn at flying the plane.

Soon I was on the move again. My crew was assigned to test B-24s to desert conditions. We were put on detached service and sent to Blythe, California. We spent 30 days flying in the desert area testing the plane and all the armament with it, firing 10,000 rounds of .50 caliber ammunition during our stay there. The heat was so intense we could not refuel the plane without getting down off the wing and cooling our feet. Everything we ate was gritty with sand even the sealed boxes of cereal. After two weeks of miserable heat our Captain decided to fly over to Riverside, California to spend the night in the transit barracks. We enjoyed this so much we decided to come back every night. While at Blythe we often took a truck ride about three miles to an irrigation ditch to go swimming. Along each side of those irrigation ditches the fields were green and beautiful but beyond that nothing but sand.

Our 30 days being completed, we flew our B-24 to Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio. There the army inspectors completely dismantled our B-24 to determine what effect the desert heat and sand had had on it. However, we were not there long enough to see what were the results. Soon we were given a new B-24D and sent back to Ft. Myers, Florida to continue our anti-submarine patrol over the Gulf of Mexico.

We went to a place in Virginia, called Mulberry Island, where we were tested for our gunnery skills. I scored the highest in my squadron on the .50 and .30 caliber machine guns. The .45 automatic pistol seemed to be made especially for me. It had a good, comfortable feel to it and I shot a near perfect score the first time I fired it.

Our entire group checked out okay on the gunnery range. We were told we were now ready for combat, so we returned to Ft. Myers to await further orders.



*is shows some of the flights I took back and forth across the country. I covered
ot of miles on those training flights.*

Chapter 3

Trip Overseas

Our bomb group transferred from Ft. Myers to Grenier, New Hampshire, on September 12, 1942. We were informed that we were going overseas the following day. Mike Reardon, Art Torrey and I talked the situation over and decided that since this was our last night in the states we would go into town, even though we were restricted to the base. We climbed the back fence and went into town. We were having a great time until we met Colonel Kool, our commanding officer, walking down the sidewalk. We exchanged salutes and nothing was said. We thought maybe he did not recognize us, so we went ahead with our evening. The next morning we were called to the C.O.'s office; and after a very harsh word-lashing he made us run three laps around the Air Base. Mike and I made the laps easily, but Art, being short and plump, had more trouble than we did.

We took off from Grenier, New Hampshire, and flew to Newfoundland, a trip of about 900 miles. As we crossed Labrador we could see thousands of lakes formed by glaciers. All were crystal clear and looked to be formed out of solid rock.

We arrived in Newfoundland late in the afternoon to a bare landscape that reminded me of the desert at Blythe, California but much colder. After our evening meal we were informed that one man from each plane would have to guard the plane overnight. We flipped coins to see who the lucky man would be. Out of 10 on the crew, guess who lost? They gave me an Army .45 pistol and an arctic sleeping bag; so I spent the night under the plane. The wind howled and some snow blew by but I stayed warm in the sleeping bag. Not a single plane was stolen during the night.

At daylight I was relieved by another crew member and went to breakfast. Later in the morning we departed for Iceland on a trip of approximately 1,300 miles. The trip was beautiful. A layer of clouds near the surface

of the Atlantic Ocean and another at about 15,000 feet made me feel as though we were suspended in space. Everywhere I looked appeared to be sky with white clouds. We refueled in Iceland, staying long enough to stretch our legs and go to the Post Exchange to buy a few things. The cashier took my dollar and gave me back one *krona* and a handful of strange-looking coins. It looked as though I got back more than I gave her.

We took off for Scotland after a short rest. This leg of our trip was about 1,000 miles and we felt good having flown across the Atlantic without any problems. In Scotland a little Scottish lass climbed up on the wing of our plane with a hose about the size of a garden hose and started refueling. When I saw the size of that hose I expected to be there for most of the afternoon. Fortunately, we only had to take on enough fuel for a 300-mile flight. This was the first time I had ever seen a girl pumping gas. Things have surely changed since then.

This final leg of our trip was short. We were stationed at Alcanberry Air Base near Huntington, England, which is near Cambridge. We continued to fly and train in England and attended many classes, some of which dealt with how to react if we were shot down in Germany or France. Most of us took these classes rather lightly, thinking this could never happen to us. We didn't realize that B-24's had not been combat-tested up until now and we were the first B-24 bomb group to arrive in England. Visiting a B-17 base near ours, we saw several of the planes shot full of holes. We began to realize what combat flying was all about and knew we would soon be part of it.

While in England I dated an English girl from Cambridge. She and her family were really nice to me while I was there. Her father, Sgt. Cornish, was the air raid warden in the city of Cambridge. It amazed me to see men in their fifties still in uniform in the British Army. Most of the American soldiers were young men, but not so with the English. Later, my father corresponded with Sgt. Cornish while I was missing in action.

Almost every night we could hear German bombers flying over our base. It was easy to tell them from other planes because the engines were always out of synchronization. The whole country of England was completely blacked out. You could ride from our air base to Cambridge and never see any light. Air raid wardens patrolled the streets and watched to be sure no lights were showing from doors and windows. In London, the English had many barrage balloons floating high above the city to prevent low-flying planes from coming in. These balloons were held by steel cables that made the enemy planes fly high enough to be shot down with anti-aircraft guns.

One night our crew flew a training mission over London to allow the

British anti-aircraft gunners to track our planes for practice. We were flying just above the barrage balloons in total darkness, when all of a sudden search lights came on everywhere beneath us and we were blinded by the bright lights. We were all praying that there were no trigger-happy guys on the anti-aircraft guns.

Early in October we were called to base operations for our first briefing. This turned out to be a diversion raid where we flew over the English Channel to the French coast, then turned back to England. This would get the German fighters in the air and about the time they had to land and refuel, the bombers with live bombs would go in and bomb the target.

Chapter 4

The Real Thing

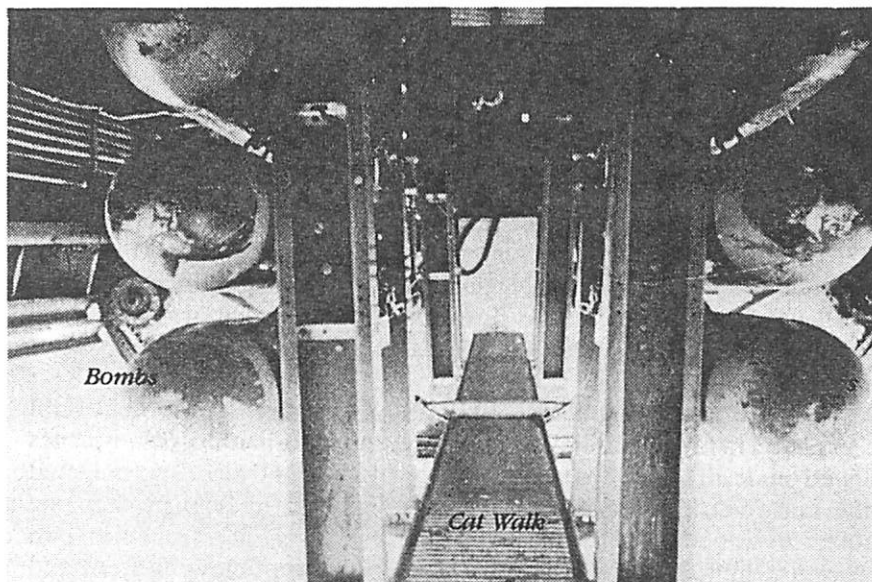
On October 9, 1942, we were called to the briefing room to be sent on our first real live mission. Our target was the railroad yards at Lille, France, about 100 miles from the English Channel. This important industrial and rail center was used by the Germans to supply their troops and air bases in France. The bombing raid was one of the largest in the war to that date.

We took off from Alcanberry about 11:00 a.m. circling the field until the 36 planes in my squadron were airborne and in formation. Other planes followed our lead. Later I was told that a total of about 100 planes participated in the raid. We flew very close formation in order to help protect one another. It was a nerve-racking experience getting all the planes into formation. Often the pilot would have planes above, below, in front and on both sides to watch out for. I often wondered what would happen if one of the planes lost power under these circumstances. We passed over the white cliffs of Dover and headed across the English Channel. Each gunner test-fired his guns to be sure they were working properly.

We crossed the French coast and on toward Lille, our target, which was about sixty miles inland. We encountered very heavy anti-aircraft fire after passing the French coast. Our plane was hit immediately. The two engines on the right side of our B-24 burst into flames. We began to fall behind the other planes in the formation and then came the German fighter planes. By this time we were over the target and dropped our bombs. It was necessary for us to fly straight and level in order to do accurate bombing and this is the time when anti-aircraft guns are the most accurate. Our pilot had his hands full but our bombs fell on target.

Then we were hit again. This time the communication box on the side of my gun turret was smashed and I lost all communication with the rest of my crew.

Intending to go turn off the fuel supply to the two engines that were burning, I pulled the release to drop out of my turret, not knowing the flight deck door had been opened. I turned one flip, hit the side of the catwalk and fell from the plane through the bomb bay doors. I was spinning over and over and could not stop. We had been instructed to make a delayed parachute jump if we had to bail out, but I couldn't tell how high I was since I was spinning so fast.



Bomb Bay Doors

I pulled my rip cord and it felt as though I came to a sudden stop. It was a beautiful sight to see that parachute open.

During my slow descent a German fighter plane came by me and the pilot waved his wings as he passed. I was very pleased to discover they were not shooting the parachutist at this stage of the war.

I must have been close to 15,000 feet when my chute opened. It seemed like fifteen minutes before I reached the ground. While I was still pretty high I saw two men on motorcycles approaching a point where I was expected to land. They were about a half-mile away, but I figured they were coming to capture me.

When I finally touched down, my parachute became caught in a tree, leaving me hanging about 15 feet above the ground. In my haste to try

to escape the two men I had seen on the motorcycles, I unbuckled the chest strap on my chute first and found myself hanging head down by my leg straps. Grabbing my hunting knife, I cut the shroud lines to my chute and dropped to the ground. I was really most fortunate to have landed in a large wooded area near the Belgium border. I got out of there fast and ran most of the afternoon to get as far as possible from the place where I had landed. The woods made it easy for me to stay hidden until dark.

My first night in France was spent in a barn. I pulled up some turnips and ate them before retiring for the night. I spent a near sleepless night and was awakened by the least sound. My concern for the rest of the crew was heavy on my mind since we had been almost like a family since we left Barksdale Field. Had they crashed with the plane? Had the plane exploded in mid air? I wondered if any of them had bailed out of the plane ahead of me.

I arose early the next morning and started walking toward the South. I soon ran out of woods but stayed in the fields away from the villages. I got so hungry I mustered up enough courage to approach a man that was chopping wood and made him understand I was hungry. He gave me some bread and indicated that I should not stay there because it was not safe.

I began walking again and sunset found me in a village, so I crawled into a tool shed to spend the night. The weather was very cold so I pulled off one of my fleece-lined flying boots and pulled it down over my ears. Sleep came a little easier the second night because of pure exhaustion.

The next morning a boy about 10 years old opened the door to the shed. When he saw me he was really frightened and ran to the house. Soon a lady came out to see what kind of monster was there with a boot on his head. She recognized me as an aviator and must have realized I was shot down on the Lille raid. Motioning for me to stay there, she then went to the house and fixed me a large bowl of French fries. Those were the best fries I had ever eaten. When I finished eating she motioned again for me to stay there.

Late in the afternoon the lady returned with a French boy about 18 years of age who spoke some English. After telling him what had happened to me he said to stay there and he would come back after dark for me.

Many things went through my mind while I was waiting for him to return. Would he turn me over to the Germans or would he really help me? I watched for his return and decided if he was not alone I was going to start running again. Finally he came back alone and took me several blocks to a house on Route Nationale that ran parallel to a canal.

The man's name who took me to the house was Joseph Cornille. He introduced me to the three women, the grandmother, the mother and the daughter. They were very kind to take me into their home knowing if they were caught the Germans would put them in prison. The grandmother was probably in her 70s, but she went out everyday and picked wild greens along the canal to help feed me. Everyone called her "Mama." I never found out her real name.

The mother, Madam Marie Bajoux, was probably in her late 50s and worked as a cook at the grade school in Douai, France.

The daughter, Victoria Bajoux, 24 years old, was a teacher of English at the same school where her mother worked.

It was nice to have someone to talk with in the evenings. With the older women all communication was through sign language.

Joseph came to see me almost every night. We would go walking or ride bicycles for a while. I found out the bicycle I was riding was one he had stolen from the Germans. Joseph would walk into the village at night, steal a German's bike at the local pub then ride it home and bury it in his garden. He and many others did things to make life miserable for the German troops occupying northern France.

Another trick they used was to dig ditches in the roads just ahead of the canal bridges. The German trucks drove very fast through the towns because of the troubles the French had caused them. The trucks would hit the ditches at the canal bridges and into the canal they would go. Often the Frenchmen would sidetrack a freight car of supplies bound for the German camps and use it for themselves. I ate some canned beef that had "Reserved for the Wehrmacht" (a term used for all the German Armed Forces) written on the containers.

I spent Christmas day of 1942 with the Bajoux family. They wanted to do something special for me and bought a chicken at the black market. They fixed it with all the trimmings so we began our Christmas dinner. The old bird was so tough when I tried to cut it I broke my knife. There was a moment of silence, then everyone broke out laughing and Vicky, turning to me said, "Well, we tried." That old rooster must have been on Noah's ark but we enjoyed our meal anyway.

Another time the women were talking about mopping the kitchen so



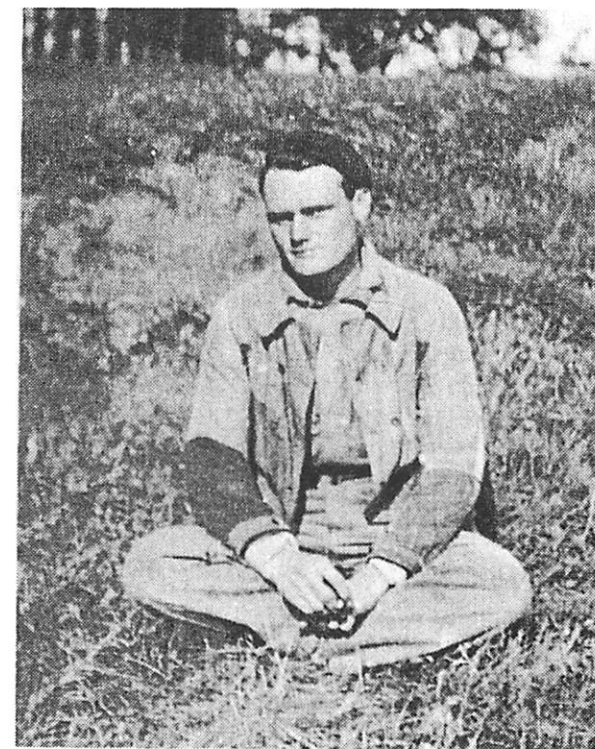
Joseph Cornille

I thought it would be nice if I volunteered to do it. I tried out my French the first time and said, "Joar Laua," which I thought meant "I'll mop." Everyone broke out laughing and I still wonder what I said to amuse them so. From then on I stuck to my English.

Joseph Cornille, the man who brought me there, used a ferret to catch rabbits. He would find a rabbit hole and turn the ferret loose in the hole. Soon the ferret would run the rabbit out into a basket. This helped to put some meat on the table.

Victoria brought home English books for me to read. I played solitaire and watched men pull boats up the canal by hand. There was a path at the edge of the canal and often you would see one man pulling a rather large boat up the canal by a long rope. Occasionally, German troops would march by the house where I was hiding and sometimes they sang as they marched. These were very frightening times for me.

I was told by Joseph to remain there and he would get me in touch with the people who would help me escape from France. I wound up staying there from late October till the middle of January. I became very impatient and threatened to start out on my own. Finally, two men came and asked me many questions about American sports and other things that only United States citizens would be able to answer. They put a map of the United States in front of me and asked, "Where do you live?" I quickly pointed to Knoxville, Tennessee. They then turned the map over and asked what states were north, south, east and west of Tennessee. I realized later that they had to be



Author in France

sure I was an American and not a German passing as an American to try and uncover the people in the underground. The men took my picture and said they would be back soon. They would not say when they would return. I wondered how much longer I would have to wait.

I had worn my shoes out from all the walking so I asked Victoria if she would take them to be repaired. I also asked her if the cobbler could be trusted and she said yes. I had my dog tags sewn between my shoe soles. This came in handy, as I will explain later.

The time I was there I tried to get enough exercise to stay in good physical condition. I walked or rode a bicycle almost every night. One night while I was riding, two guards stopped me at a canal bridge near Douai. One of the guards stayed with me while the other one went to make a phone call. I thought the end had come for me, so I shoved the guard down a bank, grabbed my bicycle and away I went. I stayed out real late that night to be sure I had not been followed by the guards.

Several neighbors helped Victoria and her family keep me. They brought food and clothes for me. Madam Marie De Brabrant was a great help. She had me in her home for a meal on several occasions with her son Pierre who was three years old at the time. His picture is shown in a suit I sent him after the war.



Pierre DeBrabrant in a suit I sent to him after the war.

Chapter 5

Long, Hard Trip

Finally, the men came back and took me to Paris by train. They gave me identification papers with my picture and all the necessary stamps and signatures in perfect order. My papers also stated that I was a deaf mute. I was glad to see this on my papers because what little French I had learned came out with a southern drawl.

When we got off the train in Paris one of the men I was traveling with left and the other told me to follow him several steps behind. In case I was stopped, he did not want to be identified with me. We boarded the subway, rode some distance and jumped off and on another, then another. This must have gone on for half an hour. I was running at top speed and barely getting inside the door as it closed.

We climbed to the street level and walked about a block and entered a gate to a large house. My guide gave the signal to get the gate open. The apartment was beautiful and had indoor plumbing, a luxury I had been without for months. The lady who lived in the apartment left soon after we arrived and I never saw her again.

After spending the night here we returned to the train station in Paris to go south. When we entered the railroad station, the Gestapo grabbed me out of the crowd and took me to a room where I showed them my identification papers. They were not satisfied with that. They made me strip and checked my clothes but could find nothing to give away my identity. This was when I was really thankful my dog tags were between my shoe soles.

I put my clothes back on. When they handed my papers back to me I almost said, "Thank you." Whew! That was a close call.

I had lost my guide and this disturbed me to no end. I walked out of

the station in the direction I had seen him go, looked in the first pub I passed, and there he sat. We returned to the station and caught a train to Tours.

The Loire River just south of Tours was the boundary between free France and occupied France. If I could get across that river my troubles would be reduced considerably. We left the train at Tours and walked out to a secluded spot on the river, pulled off our clothes and started across the river. We were able to wade most of the way except for a few feet near the far bank. I managed to keep my clothes dry by holding them over my head. The water was freezing cold this time of year and we both shook violently before we could get dressed.

My expected freedom was short lived. We learned that the Germans occupied the rest of France the day we arrived in free France. The underground had not been set up in southern France so we were pretty much on our own for a while.

I was now traveling with an Englishman whose name was George. I never found out his last name; but he spoke English, French, German and Spanish fluently. He was the type of person who seemed to know just what to do in any situation. On one occasion we were in the railroad station at Narbonne near the Mediterranean when some German guards walked up to check our identification papers. He started telling jokes in German. The guards laughed and exchanged jokes with him. I laughed as if I understood everything that was being said. The guards never did check our papers.

I later found out that George had bailed out behind enemy lines two times before to get information for British intelligence. This was his third trip through the French underground.

We traveled to Toulouse where we spent another week. The Germans came and started a house-to-house search for allied airmen, so we had to run again. We went from there back to Narbonne where we were supposed to begin our hike across the Pyrenees Mountains into Spain. Our Spanish guide did not show up so we had to retreat up into France. This time we went all the way to Nice, which is almost to the Italian border. The trip along the Mediterranean was very beautiful. In many places the mountains came to the water's edge forming near vertical cliffs. After ten days in Nice we had to flee again. It seemed as though the Germans were following us everywhere we went. This time we took a train to Grenoble, which lies in the mountains some 130 miles north of Nice.

At Grenoble I met a most remarkable lady by the name of Francois. She was about 65 years of age, stoop-shouldered and walked with a cane. She smoked cigarettes in a holder about eight inches long. When she spoke the ashes flew and she seemed to spit her words out as though they tasted

bad. She was one of the leaders in the French underground and when she spoke everyone really got on the ball. I never knew her last name and am not sure her first name was genuine. Most of the people with whom I came in contact used false names to protect themselves.

We had no trouble from the Germans here but became very impatient waiting. I roomed with a Royal Air Force officer for 30 days, during which time we almost drove each other nuts. We played chess for the first week, poker for the second week, and the rest of the time we argued about the caste system. He really believed that if your father was a ditch digger then you could not advance to a higher station in life. His father was an officer in the British army, therefore he could also become an officer. I told him I liked the United States better where a guy could climb as high as his ability and hard work would carry him regardless of his family background. We argued constantly the last days we were there.

After 30 days, five Allied airmen and two Frenchmen gathered at Grenoble, anxious to make the trip out of France. We returned to Narbonne where we met our guide. We were loaded into a truck with a false bottom and covered with boards to get us into the restricted area near the Spanish frontier. The truck we rode in was used by men pruning and cultivating the grape vineyards. We had a very rough ride of about 20 miles. After leaving the truck, we started for the mountain just before dark, having to cross an area about two miles wide where there were irrigation ditches about every 100 yards. Every member of our party fell into one of these ditches before we reached the mountains.

There were two Englishmen, one Canadian, two Frenchmen, one Australian and one American in our party with a Spanish guide.

All the easy routes into Spain were heavily guarded, making it necessary for us to go across one of the highest points of the Pyrenees Mountains. We crossed just east of Andorra, which is a small, separate state between France and Spain. The mountain was steep and still had some snow on the northern slopes.

The Germans used guard dogs to help patrol the frontier, but the Frenchmen overcame this by taking with them female dogs that were in heat. This rendered the guard dogs useless. I would estimate that we hiked about 30 to 40 miles. Everyone was worn out when we reached the top but it was a great feeling. For the last nine months I had been in countries that were totally blacked out at night and it was a real thrill to see lights again.

We went a short distance down into Spain and all slept for several hours. The Spanish guide left us here, so we were on our own the rest of the hike.

We were stopped by two policemen near the town of Figueras. We told them we wanted to contact our separate consuls and they seemed agreeable. They took us to a hotel there and bought us a good meal. We expected to be taken to our respective ambassadors and were very happy.

We had been had. An hour later we were all put in prison at Figueras. They shaved our heads, then took us to an office for interrogation. The man asking the questions spoke the worst English I have ever heard and I still wonder about information he could possibly have gained from my interview.

I was put in a cell with seven other men. The room was so small it was difficult for us to all lie down at the same time. The toilet facilities consisted of a hole in the concrete floor in one corner of the cell with a water spigot mounted above it. The cell had a window about two feet square and about eight feet from the floor. A young boy in the cell wanted to look out the window so he got on a friend's shoulders. While he was looking out a guard fired a shot at him. The bullet missed him, ricocheting off the concrete walls of the cell. It could have killed any one of us, but fortunately no one was hit.

All the men in the cell had lice, crabs and all sorts of bedbugs. I was determined I would stay clean and not let this happen to me. I took all my clothes down to a big vat in the courtyard, washed them and hung them in the sun to dry. When I took my clothes back to the cell I pulled back one of the seams and there was a row of "cooties," so I had to go ahead and scratch with the rest of my cellmates.

Something happened in the prison at Figueras that impressed on me how deep the hatred was between the French and the Germans. While we were in the courtyard one morning someone threw a cigarette on the ground. A German boy about 14 years old who had deserted from the German army (but was still wearing a German uniform) reached to pick it up. When he did a Frenchman stomped on his hand. This made me very angry. I pushed the Frenchman away. Immediately I was surrounded by a group of very angry Frenchmen. I rebuked the man very strongly and I doubt if he understood anything I said, but I am sure they all knew how I felt about the incident. They could have easily beat me to a pulp but none seemed to want to challenge me. In the days that followed I gave the German boy a cigarette occasionally and I did not see anyone mistreat him the rest of the time I was there.

When I reflect on the incident I realize that if my country had been invaded by the Germans I might have felt the same as the Frenchmen. I wonder whatever happened to that German boy after I was released.

Some of the men I crossed the mountains with were released before

I was, and some later. I spent 30 days in that miserable jail watching the Spanish guards steal things out of the Red Cross packages that were sent for us. We ate some kind of beans three times a day. They were larger than lima beans and had a real tough hull and very little taste. Beans and black bread were our diet while we were there.

Finally, the American consul from Barcelona came to release me from the prison. His name was Forsythe. He was from Virginia and was a very nice person. He took me to Barcelona, had me de-loused, bought me all new clothes, then took me to his home. He fed me a super meal which consisted of steak, all kinds of vegetables and desserts. This Tennessee hillbilly really felt out of place in his mansion. The two of us ate at a table about 30 feet long with six of his servants waiting on us. Every time I took a sip of coffee they would fill my cup again. They even cut my meat for me. After spending the afternoon with Forsythe, I was taken by his driver to a hotel in Barcelona. I spent about a week there and was entertained by two Spanish wrestlers who worked for the consul. They showed me around the city and took me to the beach on two occasions. They put on quite a show at the beach wrestling, each trying to outdo the other.



In Spain in a suit given to me by the American consul.

The chauffeurs hired by the consul were really wild. They drove big cars and seemed to have the attitude that the roads belonged solely to them. People had to scramble out of the way as they raced down the narrow streets.

When it came time to leave there, I was joined by some other Americans. The consul furnished us with a station wagon with orders to go to Madrid where some paper work had to be completed before we were permitted to leave the country. We went south from Madrid to Alhama de Argonne. We were kept in a hotel there for about four weeks while the American consul was taking care of the red tape involved.

There were about 20 Allied airmen there who had been shot down in France or Germany and had escaped into Spain. This group was composed of men from Australia, New Zealand, France, Canada, England and the United States. This was a nervous bunch of men, drinking too much and often getting into fights. They were celebrating the fact that they had escaped from enemy occupied territory. Often someone would wake up with nightmares screaming.

The next leg of our trip took us from Alhama de Argonne to Gibraltar. The border between Spain and British-owned Gibraltar was a strip of tank barriers and barbed wire about half a mile wide and very heavily guarded. The rock is about 1,400 feet high and had guns protruding in every possible direction. I was told the rock had 10 miles of tunnels where food, water and ammunition were stored. There were also living quarters and a hospital inside the rock for the troops stationed there. The air strip there was probably the busiest in the world at that time. Planes patrolling the Atlantic and the western part of the Mediterranean were constantly landing and taking off from this base.

We spent one night and the next day there, then boarded a C-47 headed for England. We flew straight out into the Atlantic for about 200 miles, then turned north toward England. The reason for going so far out into the Atlantic was to avoid German fighters that might be patrolling off the coast of France. Every passenger on this flight had been shot down on their last airplane flight and nervous tension ran high. We had no seats and no light. Halfway through the flight, which lasted 13 hours, the engines suddenly stopped. Everyone jumped to their feet and soon the engines started again. We found out later that it was necessary for the pilot to run all the gas out of the auxiliary tanks before switching to the main tanks in order to have enough fuel to complete the long trip.

The pilot and navigator on the plane were English and really on the ball. They flew 13 hours over water in total darkness letting down in a dense fog right over the field where we were supposed to land. It was



This map shows my route from England through France and Spain then back to England.

a good feeling to be back in England; and I was excited and eager to go back to Alcanberry to see my friends. All the U.S. Air Force men on the plane were taken immediately to London where our short-lived freedom came to an abrupt end. We soon were told that anyone coming into a country during wartime must be identified personally by someone who knew them. They put a notice on the bulletin board back at my base for anyone who knew me to report to the commanding officer. Three weeks passed and no one responded to the notice. I later found out that the 93rd Bomb Group I had belonged to had been transferred to North Africa, so no one that knew me was still there.

Finally a mail clerk from my home town saw the notice and went to the commanding officer. His name was Leslie Acker, a next-door neighbor in Fountain City, Tennessee. He was given a jeep and instructions to come to London to identify me.

When Leslie walked in, he gave me a big bear hug and told the officer in charge that we had spent our boyhood days fighting with one another. I was never so glad to see anyone as I was him.

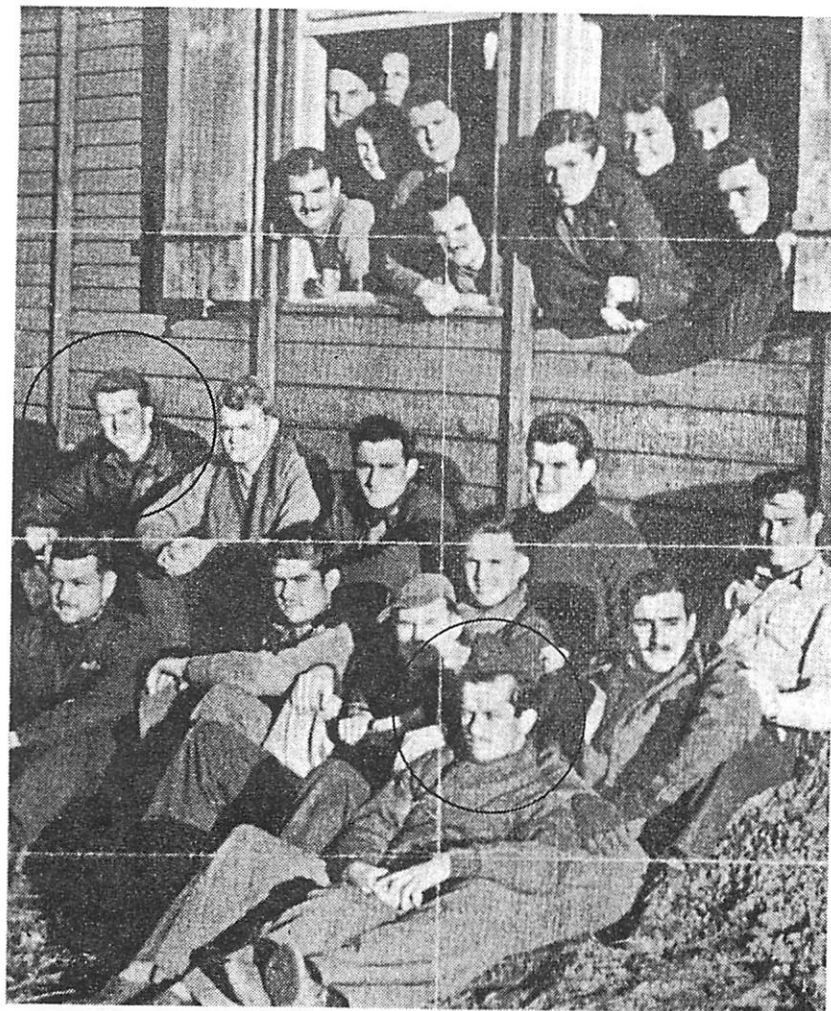
The three weeks I was held in the hotel were spent being interrogated by both British and American intelligence officers. They wanted to know every detail of my trip through France and Spain. Any information about German troop movements or bases where they were stationed was their first priority. One of the British officers that questioned me had been a pilot during the battle of London. He had lost an arm during the battle and the Royal Air Force, being so short of pilots, patched him up and sent him back into action. We will never know the hardships that some people underwent during the battle of London.

I spent the next month traveling all over England lecturing to new Air Force crews on escape and evasion from enemy territory. I traveled with five other escapees and heard about their experiences.

Among our group was a fighter pilot from Kentucky who sneaked on a German air base with the intention of stealing a German plane and flying it back to England. He could not read the writing on the instruments and controls, so he climbed out of the plane and came back through the French underground. We were under the supervision of Lt. Charles Darnell while on the lecture tour. He was a swell person who didn't push us and our tour was almost like a vacation.

After visiting almost every U.S. air base in England, we returned to London and lived at the Washington Club. We went to Eighth Air Force Headquarters to collect our back pay. I was reported missing in action on October 9, 1942 and had nine months back pay coming. They paid me in British pounds, all 1,845 dollars worth. Never having had this much cash before, I felt

uneasy carrying that much on my person. When I returned to the Washington Club, I asked the English girl at the desk if they had a place I could put my money where it would be safe. She assured me that they kept rather large sums of money from time to time. She was really surprised when I unloaded the money on the counter.



This picture shows a group of American fliers who were captured by the Germans. On the left is our pilot Alexander Simpson. In the foreground is the co-pilot Nicholas H. Cox.



Al Simpson, N.H. Cox and some other American pilots in a German prisoner camp.



My Commanding Officer Captain Kool. He stayed in the Army and in time attained the rank of general.



All wrapped up in my flight suit.

Chapter 6

Return to the U.S.A.

After two weeks in London my orders came through to return to the good old U.S.A. I flew to Glasgow, Scotland, and boarded a C-54 bound for the United States. I am not sure how long this trip took, but because we gained six hours between Glasgow and Portland, Maine, it seemed like the longest day I had ever spent. We refueled at Portland, then flew to Mitchell Field in New York City.

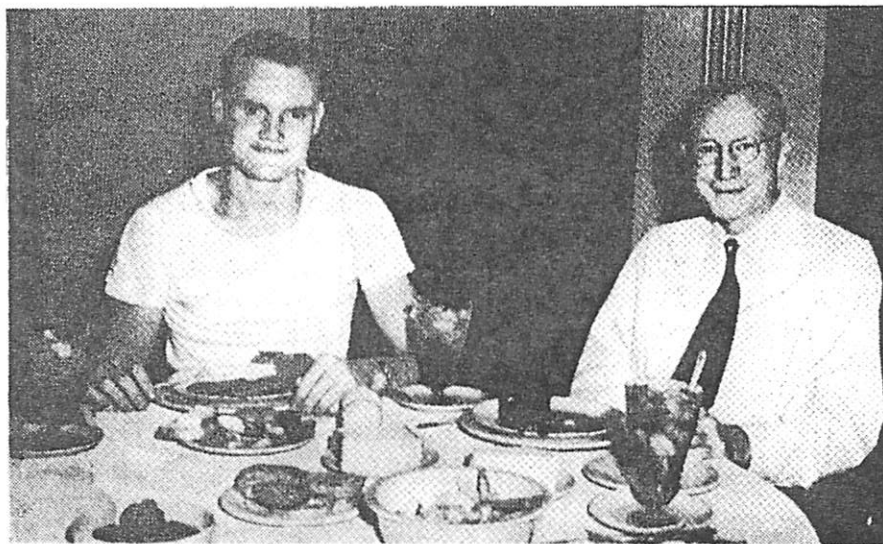
At Mitchell Field I was interrogated again. I must have been the most-questioned G.I. in the Army Air Force. Then, a few days later I was given a 30-day furlough and orders to report to Salt Lake City, Utah, for reassignment.



Sgt. Cox with his brother Wilbur Allen Cox.

My father and mother were eager for me to come home and my brother, Wilbur Allen Cox, wanted me to come to Schenectady, New York, to visit him. Wilbur was an engineer with General Electric Company and played an important part in designing the armament for the B-29 and the P-61, Black Widow.

I decided to spend two days with my brother, then go home to Knoxville, Tennessee. The worst part of my trip had been not having word from my family for the nine months I was missing in action. I am sure it was even worse for my father and mother. The only thing they heard was that I was first missing in action and later killed in action. My parents never gave up hope and I am sure their prayers were what brought me back safely.



The author reunited with his father.

I spent my furlough at home in Fountain City, Tennessee, and really enjoyed it. Several of my friends came in on furlough while I was there.

I went by train to Salt Lake City, Utah, for reassignment. While there I met two men from my old bomb squadron that were also there for reassignment. We were at 2nd Air Force Headquarters having a good time relating what had happened since we last saw each other when I happened to look in an office and see our former commanding officer, Colonel K.A. Kool. We started into his office and were promptly stopped by a Sgt. He said we could not see the Colonel without an appointment. I knew if he

saw us we would not need an appointment so we just stood in the doorway. Soon he looked up and saw us. He came running out, greeted us and took us into his office. It was like homecoming. We spent an hour discussing what had happened to all the men of the old 93rd Bomb Group. Colonel Kool was also at Salt Lake City for reassignment.

I was given a 20-day delay in route and orders to report to Army Air Base, Casper, Wyoming. Not wanting to ride the train back to Knoxville, I went to Hills Field to see if they had any planes going east. Luckily they had a B-24 going to Topeka, Kansas, so this five-hour flight put me more than halfway home. I inquired there about other flights east but none were available so I caught a bus on to Knoxville.

I spent those 20 days fishing with a friend who was home from the Navy.

When I reported to Casper, Wyoming, I was assigned to a test crew. We flew B-24s, B-25s and B-26s. This job was to test the planes before releasing them to the training crews. Very often one of the planes would get a bad reputation because of the gossip between pilots and crew members. They would write all kinds of trouble on their flight reports and the ground crews would check them, but could find nothing wrong. We would have to fly the planes, and usually they would perform perfectly. I think if we could have switched the identification numbers on a few of those planes the problems would have been solved. After six months on a test crew I was taken off flying status and put in charge of a maintenance crew. We did inspections and repairs on B-24 Liberators.

Working on the flight line in Casper, Wyoming in the middle of winter was really miserable. We would work 10 minutes, retreat to the hangers and drink hot coffee for 15 minutes trying to thaw out so we could work more.

Early in the spring our squadron moved over to Scottsbluff, Nebraska for a short period then back to Casper, Wyoming. Soon I was moved to Smokey Hill Air Force Base in Salina, Kansas. From there we boarded a C-47 and flew to Batista Field in Cuba by way of Miami, Florida. Our move from Casper to Cuba was a big shock on the old body. For about 10 days we could do nothing but sleep. Finally we adjusted to the heat.

I worked on B-29 planes while in Cuba and often wondered why we could not have had these bombers when I was in Europe. They had far more armament and pressurized cabins. On the old bombers we wore headsets, oxygen masks, and our parachutes, which made moving around pretty difficult, but which had saved my life.

After a month the B-29 group departed for the Pacific Theater of War; and I was left there in Cuba three months waiting for further orders. All

I did during this time was swim and answer roll call.

Orders sent me back to Salina, Kansas and from there I was sent to Jamaica, British West Indies. I began to feel like a ping-pong ball being batted around from one place to another. Sometimes I felt like they couldn't find anything for me to do so they just kept me moving from one base to another.

After three months in Jamaica with very little to do except swim and answer roll call, I was put on a plane headed back to the United States. I went to Grand Island, Nebraska then on to Delhart, Texas. Since the war was winding down by that time I was given the job of "pickling" airplanes. This consisted of putting a Cosmoline solution, a rust preventative, in the oil and running the engines for three minutes to be sure the solution reached all parts of the engine. We had about 50 men working on this project. Every time we would almost get caught up, here would come another squadron of B-24s for us to pickle. The more planes we parked on the desert the further we had to tow them.

Finally a crew of men came in to replace us and most of us were eligible for discharge.

Chapter 7

Going Home

Most of the men I had been working with were sent to the separation center, but I had some more bad luck. Ever since I had been reported killed in action I had been operating under a temporary service record and the Army was not about to release me until my original records were found. There were eight letters that were written over a period of time trying to locate my original WDAGO Form No. 24 Service Record. Here is a copy of one of those letters:

HEADQUARTERS
DET D, 290TH AAF BASE UNIT (GTF)
APO 861, % PM, Miami, Florida

GCW:jbp

201-Cox, Jr. Arthur B. (Enl)
ASN-14063617

25 May, 1946.

SUBJECT: Temporary Service Record.

TO : The Adjutant General, U. S. Army, Washington, D.C.

1. This Headquarters has on file a Temporary Service Record pertaining to T/Sgt Arthur B. Cox, Jr. 14063617, recently transferred to this organization from the 247th AAF Base Unit (OTU(VH)), SHAAF, Salina, Kansas.

2. Temporary record was prepared approximately August, 1943 from information taken from enlisted man. Thorough search has been made through enlisted man's allied papers and enlisted man has been questioned regarding this matter, however evidence that steps had been taken by previous organizations of which he was a member, to locate original or request made for a new record, cannot be found. This office has prepared and forwarded letters of inquiry to all organizations shown in temporary record.

3. Enlisted man states that he was a member of a heavy bombardment crew which was forced down in enemy territory October, 1942. Further that he was subsequently dropped on the

rolls of The Adjutant General as "Killed in Action." It would seem from the above that original record would have been forwarded from the 93rd Bombardment Group (H), of which he was a member at time of casualty, thru the Eighth Air Force to your office.

4. Request that if original record is on file in your office that it be forwarded to this Headquarters. If record cannot be located and if there is no record of request having been made for a new record for enlisted man prior to his transfer to this organization that a new record be furnished this unit in accordance with Section XXXIV, Par. 77, d, TM 12-230, War Department, 18 October, 1944.

FOR THE COMMANDING OFFICER:

GILBERT C. WAGNER
2nd Lieut., Air Corps,
Asst. Adjutant.

When my original records finally arrived I was given my choice of several separation centers. I chose Barksdale Field at Shreveport, Louisiana where I had first joined my bomber crew and was discharged there on October 23, 1945. By this time Adolf Hitler was dead, and the atomic bomb had finally stopped the Japanese. America was celebrating its victory. I thank God that I managed to escape through France from enemy territory and live to celebrate with my fellow countrymen.

It was good to be home for Thanksgiving. Just to be home with my family made it the best Thanksgiving and Christmas ever. In January 1946 I enrolled in the University of Tennessee to continue my education.



Arthur Bogle Cox, Jr.