ABSTRACT

MCDOWELL, MICHAEL NORWOOD. War Eagles: A Bird’s Eye View of 305th Bomb Group and the Eighth Air Force from the experiences of David C. Cox and Joseph B. Boyle (Under the direction of Joseph Caddell and Nancy Mitchell)

The purpose of this study is to document the history of the 305th Bomb Group and the Eighth Air Force during the critical early period (late 1942 through 1943) in World War II through the experiences of two members who served during this era. This thesis will take a personal view of the aerial combat through the wartime diary of David C. Cox and the oral history of Joseph B. Boyle. Cox and Boyle were friends who served in the 305th Bomb Group from its beginning until they were shot down during different missions in 1943. After the downing of their planes by the Germans, both men became re-acquainted as they became roommates in Stalag Luft III, the German POW camp where events depicted in the movie *The Great Escape* happened.

Other studies have documented the history of the Eighth Air Force and the 305th Bomb Group. During this time, the Eighth Air Force was just beginning to learn the difficulty of conducting daylight bombing missions over Europe. During the period from October 1942 through December of 1943, the losses for the Eighth Air Force were very high, mostly due to the lack of a fighter that could escort the bombers all the way to their targets and back. Other historians have documented the difficulties that the Eighth Air Force, and the 305th Bomb Group in particular, faced during this stage of World War II. What makes this study unique are the sources of David Cox’s diary and Joseph Boyle’s oral history, which make a much richer and more personal history of the early days of the 305th Bomb Group.
War Eagles: A Bird's Eye View of the 305th Bomb Group and the Eighth Air Force
from the experiences of David C. Cox and Joseph B. Boyle

by

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Approved by:

____________________________________  ______________________________________
Dr. Joseph Caddell                     Dr. David Zonderman
Co-Chair of Advisory Committee

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Dr. Nancy Mitchell
Chair of Advisory Committee
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my father, William N. McDowell, for teaching me the value of hard work, and my mother, Peggy H. McDowell, for teaching me the value of a good education.

I would also like to dedicate this thesis to David C. Cox, Joseph B. Boyle, and all of the men who fought in the Eighth Air Force during World War II. Their service and sacrifice helped make their generation one of the greatest.
BIOGRAPHY

Michael Norwood McDowell was born on March 6, 1965 to William and Peggy McDowell. He grew up in Newton, North Carolina, where he graduated from Fred T. Foard High School in 1983. Following high school, he attended NC State University from 1983 to 1986. After transferring to East Carolina University, he graduated in 1988 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts.

After college, he started a screenprinting company, Progressive Graphics, with Richard T. Puckett, Jr., and they remain business partners today. The author is married to Tracey Cox McDowell and together they have two sons, Carter and Walker. He will graduate from NC State University in 2005, and will continue his career as a small business owner.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the help I have received from Joseph Caddell, Nancy Mitchell, and David Zonderman. Without their direction, this work would have been infinitely more difficult to accomplish. I would especially like to thank Joseph Caddell, who shares my enthusiasm for military history and Air Power in particular.

I would also like to thank Charles Carlton, whose suggestion to pursue this project as my thesis is greatly appreciated. His World at War seminar got the ball rolling and inspired me to continue my studies on this subject.

There are others that I would like to acknowledge. I would like to thank John David Smith, whose documentary editing class helped tremendously with this thesis. He also talked me into transferring from the MALS program into the History department, for which I will always be indebted. I would also like to thank Norene Miller, who was always there whenever I or any other history student needed her and is truly the heart and soul of the History department.

No acknowledgment would be complete without mentioning Joseph Hobbs, whose classes are always immensely entertaining and educational. Every class is “his last class”, but let’s hope that he never really retires.

I would also like to thank David Cox, Jr. for giving me some insight in his father, David C. Cox’s life and for loaning his diary for use in this thesis. I also owe much gratitude to Joseph Boyle, for taking the time to do his oral history and for sharing a view into his world and experiences of World War II.
I owe a great debt to my business partner, Richard T. Puckett, for covering for me at work when I had to take classes and meet with professors during the workday. Without his help, my goal of graduating from NC State would have been much more difficult.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Tracey, and my two sons, Carter and Walker, for being patient with me throughout graduate school. To Tracey, thanks for everything you do for me and the boys, and for understanding my desire to graduate from NC State University. To Carter and Walker, the two of you were not even born when I began this journey, and my life is so much more wonderful now that you are here.
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EDITORIAL STATEMENT

David C. Cox diary

During the editing of David C. Cox’s diary, retaining the original intent and meaning of the author’s text as closely as possible was my primary concern. The original diary is kept in the home of David C. Cox, Jr., the son of the author, who loaned it to me for this project. The diary is in good condition and the handwriting is clear and easy to read.

Regarding emendations, I have chosen the “near-literal” method of transcription by keeping interruptions in the original text to a minimum in order to present the reader with a text that still reflects David C. Cox’s original diary entries. However, in order to make the original text easier to understand, I have placed words or letters omitted by the author in square brackets [ ] and added a question mark in square brackets [?] where dates were uncertain. Where the author sometimes misspelled words or used incorrect grammar and punctuation, I have left the text as it was written.

The editor’s intent throughout the editing process has been to authentically represent the words and emotions of David C. Cox.

Joseph B. Boyle Oral History

Due to constraints of time and distance, Joseph B. Boyle’s oral history was not conducted using the interview process. Instead, I sent a series of 120 comprehensive questions to Mr. Boyle, who carefully read over the questions and recorded his oral history by using the questions as prompts. The result was a 2 ½ hour monologue of Mr. Boyle’s war experience as a co-pilot on a B-17. I transcribed the entire recording and have a manuscript
of forty-five pages. As with the diary, all omissions are marked by ellipses. Questions are inserted in brackets when appropriate. While editing Joseph Boyle’s oral history, the primary concern was to retain the original intent and meaning of his words as closely as possible. I placed a question mark in square brackets [?] when dates were uncertain or when the recording was difficult to understand. I did not edit Mr. Boyle’s speech in any way.

The editor’s intent throughout the editing process has been to represent the words and emotions of Joseph B. Boyle authentically.
Figure 1. Carter and His Little Liver Pills.

Figure 2. Dry Martini and the Cocktail Kids.
Chapter One

Introduction

“. . . I noticed a plane on our left falling back. . .,” David Cox wrote in his war diary in 1942. The damaged bomber was “flaming and completely out of control. The plane went into a spin and a steep dive down through the clouds.” After witnessing the loss of his brothers in combat, Cox asked the all-consuming question “how are those boys? . . . Are they dead or alive? What a price we pay for war.”¹

The potential for disaster for men of the Eighth Air Force during World War II was real and terrifying. The war diary of David Cox (1921-1993) and the oral history of Joseph B. Boyle illustrate the perils and uncertainties of combat for these men. War for combat aircrew meant either flying their missions until the Germans shot them down or until they completed enough missions to go home. They always had a burning question in the back of their minds: Would today be the day their number was up or would they live to see another day of combat? Danger lurked everywhere, from mid-air collisions, attacks from enemy fighters, and flak from enemy anti-aircraft artillery.

Cox was the co-pilot of a B-17 in the Eighth Air Force. He joined the Army after the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Originally assigned to the Army, Cox later applied to the Army Air Corps, where all combat aircrew were volunteers. The Army Air

¹ David C. Cox Diary, December 6, 1942, in possession of David C. Cox, Jr., (hereafter cited as Cox Diary).
Force accepted him after his second application\(^2\), and became one of the original members of the 305\(^{th}\) Bomb Group that arrived in England in October, 1942.

During his service, Cox had many close calls and lost many friends. Every member of his original crew perished on a mission that he was lucky enough to miss. He received the Distinguished Flying Cross for helping to return a damaged plane to England (five of ten crewmembers died on that mission). He filled in with other crews until German fighters shot down his plane on a mission to Kassel, Germany on July 28, 1943. After the Germans captured him, Cox served the rest of the war in Stalag Luft III\(^3\), where the fabled “Great Escape” happened. On January 27, 1945, the Germans evacuated Stalag Luft III and forced all of the prisoners to march for three days in a foot of snow during the coldest winter in Europe in fifty years. Cox finished out the war in Stalag VIIA in Moosburg, Germany.

Who was this David Cox? In many ways, he was a typical, young, American boy in the 1940’s. Irvin N. Cox and Connie Bell Auman Cox gave birth to David Cox on October 4, 1918 in Granite Falls, North Carolina. He was the middle son of three boys; Irvin N. Cox, Jr. (oldest) and William M. Cox (youngest). Cox attended Guilford College and the University of North Carolina for two semesters before the war. On July 26, 1942, the same day he graduated from flight school, he married Hilda Walker. After flight school, he was assigned to the 305\(^{th}\) Bomb Group, 364\(^{th}\) Squadron. The 305\(^{th}\) trained in Spokane,

\(^2\) David Cox failed his first Army Air Force entrance exam.

Joseph Boyle, our second subject, was also a typical young man of the 1940’s. He was born on August 25, 1918, in Dawson City in the Yukon Territory of Canada, where his dad worked with a gold mining company and his mother was a volunteer nurse. The gold mining company ran into several problems during World War I and was liquidated in 1920. After the mine closed, his family moved to New Jersey, where Boyle spent most of the rest of his life until retirement at the age of sixty-eight in 1987. He grew up in Teaneck, New Jersey and went to Bergen Junior college before transferring to Lehigh University, where he graduated with a degree in business education in 1939. He joined the Army Air Force after the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 and became one of the original co-pilots of the 305th Bomb Group.

Boyle, like Cox, had many close calls during his service in the 305th Bomb Group. He received the Distinguished Flying Cross for helping bring a damaged plane back to England after the pilot was killed. Boyle’s plane set a record for the most German fighters shot down by a bomber (10) on single mission on a raid to bomb the Renault works near Paris. Cox and Boyle were two of the original co-pilots assigned to the 305th Bomb Group and they later became roommates in Stalag Luft III. Both co-pilots were shot down on the same mission to Lorient, France on May 17, 1943. Joseph Boyle was captured on this mission and spent the remainder of the war as a POW. Cox’s plane was able to make it back to England, where his crew had to bail out of the burning plane. After returning to duty, Cox’s plane was shot down again on July 28, 1943 on a mission over Kassel, Germany. Cox also served the remainder of the war as a prisoner of war.
Historiography

The official history of the Army Air Force in World War II is *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, which was published in seven volumes from 1948-1958 and was edited by Wesley F. Craven and James L. Cate. It follows the Army Air Force’s efforts from the pre-war planning stages through the end of the war. Although it is a good source for the air war, it falls short of being excellent because it lacks the perspective of the individual combatant and only gives you the viewpoint of an official military history. Without the distance of time after the war, it is hard to put the Combined Bomber Offensive into context. *The Army Air Forces in World War II* is useful for background and is a general study of the Army Air Forces in Europe.

Perhaps the best general history of the Eighth Air Force is Roger Freeman’s *The Mighty Eighth*. This detailed and well-written narrative is useful mainly as a reference text for short unit histories and information on airfields, aircraft markings and the general history of the Eighth Air Force. It also reveals the combatants’ points of view, as the participants describe various combat missions. However, it does not place the Eighth Air Force’s effort in context of the entire war effort.

Published sources on the history of the 305th Bomb Group are scarce. Walter W. Thom’s *The Brotherhood of Courage* covers the history of the 305th from its inception until the end of the war. It is a good source for someone who wants to know what the 305th did during World War II, but it follows the old military history of the battle narrative and lacks the personal perspective of the men who were in the 305th Bomb Group.
Another book about the 305th is John V. Craven’s *The 305th Bomb Group in Action: An Anthology*. This book is a compilation of different stories that appeared in the *Can Do Notes*, which was the official periodical publication of the 305th Bomb Group. It provides an interesting collection of stories, poems and anecdotes by the men who fought in the 305th Bomb Group. It was not meant to be an official history of the group, so it doesn’t follow the war in chronological order. It does give you a unique perspective from the men who fought in the 305th; however, it does not really place their story into context with what was going on in World War II, or even the rest of the Eighth Air Force.

In the style of the new military historians, this study will take a look at the history of the 305th Bomb Group from a ‘mole’s eye view’. By studying the history of the 305th from the soldier’s perspective, this thesis will provide a more rich and personal history of this important group of the Eighth Air Force. Through the diary of David Cox and the oral history of Joseph Boyle, this study will report the history of the 305th Bomb Group from the viewpoint of two individuals who were co-pilots during the difficult early years of 1942 and 1943.

David Cox’s son, David Cox, Jr. is my father-in-law and loaned his father’s diary to me after learning of my interest in World War II. After reading the diary, I had many questions that could not be answered by anyone in the Cox family. David Cox, Jr. knew that his father was in a POW camp but did not know which one. Nor did he know if anyone with whom his father served was alive. What happened to Cox after he was shot down? What POW camp was he in? What was it like inside the camp? Cox’s story was fascinating, but what happened to him after he was shot down? The only way to find out what he went through as a POW would be to find someone who knew him in *Stalag Luft III*. 
During my research, I found a website, www.usaaf.net, which had a wealth of information about researching members of the Eighth Air Force. The site also had message boards about specific Bomb Groups within the Mighty Eighth. I found the message board for the 305th Bomb Group and posted a message for anyone with information about David Cox. About a year later, I received a phone call from Joseph Boyle. He gave me a brief history of his time in the 305th Bomb Group and told me that he and David served together as co-pilots and that they had been roommates in Stalag Luft III. Talking with Joseph Boyle would help me find out what David Cox went through during his stay in the POW camp, as well as give me some insight into the daily life there and in the 305th Bomb Group.

I tried to arrange for an interview with Boyle in October 2004. However, Boyle’s home in Florida had been damaged by one of the hurricanes, and he was occupied with trying to get repairs underway. Boyle asked if I could come up with a list of questions and told me that he would record his oral history by referring to the questions. As this was the only way that was convenient for him, I reluctantly agreed to try this method. I compiled a list of questions, arranged chronologically, and sent them to Boyle. When I received the tapes, I was pleasantly surprised. Boyle had recorded a two and one half hour monologue of his war experiences that was fascinating. With Boyle’s oral history to complement Cox’s diary, the story of the 305th Bomb Group could be written from their perspective.

Diaries and oral histories can be fallible sources. Both types of sources are vulnerable to self-serving descriptions of the events within. Diaries may be written for a loved one, or as a personal record of one’s experiences, which could distort the facts represented in the diary. Also, oral histories are often recorded well after the event; in Joseph Boyle’s case, sixty years later. This sometimes makes it difficult for oral histories to
withstand the scrutiny of a close investigation of the events depicted. Diaries of airmen like David Cox were usually written immediately after their missions, which may make them less susceptible to these distortions of memory that can occur over time. These men viewed their days in combat from their own vantage point, which makes them interesting and adds color to their story. However, these sources must be backed up with credible sources to get a better understanding of the daily life of the men of the 305th Bomb Group.

The personal accounts of the difficulties faced by the men of the 305th are unique. Their stories give us a better perspective of what it was like for these men to fly missions over Germany, to see their friends shot down and killed, and eventually, their story of captivity as POW’s in Stalag Luft III.

What sets this thesis apart from other studies of the 305th Bomb Group is the use of the diary of David Cox and the oral history of Joseph Boyle to give us the story of the 305th from the men who flew the B-17’s. There is a need to ‘fill the gap’ in the historical record by telling the history of the 305th Bomb Group through the words and voices of the men who fought in this important period of World War II.

The final reason for writing their story is that we are losing the men who fought World War II at a rapidly accelerating rate. Few published diaries from men of the Eighth Air Force discuss the details of their missions like David Cox’s does. Oral histories such as Joseph Boyle’s are important sources that will be impossible to obtain once these men are gone. Oral histories and diaries impart strength, texture, and color to the official mission histories. They fill in gaps and give voice to those who were silent and enhance the official record. Oral histories and diaries can bring to light hidden aspects of a story, assisting a sense of closure to issues not sufficiently remembered by giving a voice to those who
remember well, but who have not been heard. Oral histories can supplement diaries, and encourage a collective sense of what it was like for these men to fly on these dangerous missions, and to suffer the difficulties of captivity in a POW camp. By studying the 305th Bomb Group from the soldier’s perspective, this thesis will provide a more rich and personal history and will help us understand the impact that World War II had on its combatants. Their story should be preserved in order that future generations will be able to understand the sacrifice that these men made.
Chapter 2
Training and Deployment

A Brief History of the Eighth Air Force

In the beginning of World War II, the British began daylight bombing raids on German targets. After suffering heavy losses, British Bomber Command switched to a night campaign. This made navigation more difficult, but greatly reduced their loss rate. The British used a saturation technique, bombing large areas to assure destruction of selected military targets. When they began their bombing campaign, the Americans insisted on using a daylight strategy. The British and Americans developed a joint strategy of combining the British saturation bombing at night with the precision daylight bombing by the Americans.

On May 14, 1943, the combined Chiefs of Staff approved Operation “Pointblank”. The task for the operation “was the progressive destruction and dislocation of the German military, industrial and economic system, and undermining the morale of the German people to a point where their capacity for formal resistance is fatally weakened.” The primary targets were three major elements of the German war machine: its submarine fleet, the Luftwaffe (German Air Force), and its ground forces. The Allies chose six systems as targets: submarine construction yards and bases, German aircraft industry, ball bearing factories, oil refineries, synthetic rubber and tires, and military transport vehicles.

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The invention of the Norden bombsight\(^5\) convinced the Americans that precision bombing was possible. The Norden bombsight was a complex instrument that analyzed wind speed, wind direction, air speed, and bomb weight to enable more accurate bomb placement. Instead of every plane using their bombardier, the planes flew in tight formation and dropped their bombs when the lead plane (usually with the best bombardier) dropped theirs. If everything worked as planned, the whole group would drop their bombs “right in the pickle barrel,” a popular term among the aircrews.

The Eighth Bomber Command, led by Brigadier General Ira C. Eaker, developed the defensive tactic of flying B-17s and B-24s in tight formations. With thirteen .50 caliber machine guns blazing away on each plane, the aircrews could defend themselves and others in their formation. This strategy worked well in late 1942 and early 1943 when the Eighth were flying missions into German occupied France and Holland.

During the early part of World War II, P-47 Thunderbolts and P-38 Lightning fighter planes could protect the bombers to their targets and back. Beginning in January 1943, the Eighth Bomber Command began to bomb more distant targets in Germany.\(^6\) Because of their range limitations, the P-47s and P-38s could only escort the bombers to the edge of Germany. After that, the bombers had to defend themselves. Losses began to mount at a catastrophic rate. On one single mission to Schweinfurt, Germany, on October 14, 1943 (known as “Black

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Thursday”), the Germans shot from the sky 60 out of 230 B-17s. David Cox’s Bomb Group, the 305th, lost thirteen out of fifteen planes that flew the Schweinfurt mission. After this raid, the Americans began to re-think their unescorted strategy. At this time the P-51 Mustang was only a couple of months from deployment. With the increased range from their improved design and lightweight drop fuel tanks, the P-51’s could escort the bombers all the way to their German targets and back. This greatly reduced the losses to the Eighth Air Force and allowed them to continue their daylight bombing campaign.

A Brief History of the 305th Bomb Group

The Army Air Force constituted David Cox and Joseph Boyle’s combat unit as the 305th Bomb Group (Heavy) on January 28, 1942, and activated it on March 1, 1942. It was assigned to the Eighth Air Force and landed at Grafton-Underwood, England on October 27, 1942.

The 305th operated out of Grafton-Underwood upon first arriving in England. Their first mission was a diversionary sweep on November 14, 1942. The men were anxious for their first combat experience, which came on a mission to the submarine pens at St. Nazaire, France, on November 23, 1942. The Eighth Air Force command considered the mission a success. A total of thirty-six heavy bombers from the 305th and 306th Bomb Groups hit the target that day. Although some of the planes suffered damage from flak, no planes from the

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305th were lost. The 305th moved to Chelveston on November 26, 1942 and remained based there until the end of the war.11

Primary targets up to mid-1943 were submarine pens, harbors, docks, shipyards, motor works, and marshalling yards in France, the Low Countries, and Germany. The 305th made its first penetration into Germany on January 27, 1943, on a mission to bomb the naval yards in Wilhelmshaven. The group later received a Distinguished Unit Citation for a mission to Paris, where it bombed an industrial target with precision despite persistent fighter attacks and heavy flak.

In the second half of 1943, the 305th began deep penetration raids into Germany. 1st Lt. William R. Lawley Jr. and 1st Lt. Edward S. Michael received the Medal of Honor for extraordinary efforts on February 20 and April 11, 1944, respectively. Both pilots were able to pull their planes from steep dives while critically injured. After realizing they had wounded crewmembers who could not bail out, each successfully crash-landed their planes in England.12

On February 20-25th of 1944, the 305th participated in Big Week, an intensive campaign aimed at the German aircraft industry. The 305th also bombed enemy strongholds in support of D-Day and Operation Market Garden (the airborne invasion of Holland in September 1944). Other missions in well-known battles included military targets in the Battle of the Bulge as well as support for the airborne assault across the Rhine in March 1945. The 305th flew its last combat mission on April 25, 1945. It remained in the European

11 Freeman, The Mighty Eighth, 247-248.
12 Ibid, 247.
Theatrer after V-E Day and flew mapping missions over Europe and Northern Africa. The Eighth Air Force inactivated the 305th in Germany on December 25, 1946.13

**Training And Deployment**

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, there was a rush by many young American men to volunteer for the service. This could be attributed to patriotism, or to the realization that they would probably be drafted anyway. Joe Boyle describes his enlistment as a journey in which he went from one service recruiting office to another, looking for one he could join:

I lived in Teaneck, which was a new growing town at that time, Teaneck, New Jersey. I went to Bergen Junior College for a year, after graduation from high school and transferred out to Lehigh University out in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania where I graduated in 1939 with a degree in Business Administration. Two of my closest friends and roommates in the fraternity house had anticipated the war and a year before Pearl Harbor both had volunteered for Naval Officer training in the V714 program.

When Pearl Harbor came along, and I knew that I would be drafted, I also knew that I wanted to get in the service. My first choice would have been to have gotten into Navy training as my friends had done. One of them was already operating on a destroyer and the other

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14 The Naval V7 program was an accelerated course to fulfill the requirements needed to become an officer for those who did not attend the Naval academy.
one, Bob Brimson, was on a PT boat. He happened to be in the same squadron as John Kennedy, back in the early days of training.

When I applied a week after Pearl Harbor I received a draft notice [laughter] and immediately went into New York to Ninety-First Street and applied for V7 Navy officer training. I had all of the qualifications they asked for except one, I was not a native-born U.S. citizen. My citizenship derived from my father’s becoming naturalized in the early twenties, as soon as he came down from the Yukon, but that didn’t satisfy the Navy.

At Ninety-First Street there was a Marine Corp office on the floor below the Navy’s recruitment headquarters and it happened to be a Saturday and when I tried to [laughter] volunteer for the Marines, they weren’t taking any, any volunteers for that day. I went down one more floor and applied for the Air Force. They found I had all of the essential qualifications. I graduated from college; I had been out of college from ’39 until January ’41. And they sent me down to Whitehall Street, where I was able to pass the physical exam and was accepted for flight training and was on my way to Montgomery, Alabama, where we were given another series of tests, both physical and general intelligence tests. I got through that part okay, and by I guess it was the second week of
January found myself on a train to Florida to start primary flying school.\textsuperscript{15}

This is a good example of the simple twists of fate that occur during wartime. If Boyle had been a native-born American, he would have been accepted into the Navy. Or, if the Marine recruiting office had been open, he would have become a Marine. However, he became an Army Air Force officer as a result of these coincidences. Simple choices and the circumstances that followed would often have a profound effect on the men who fought in World War II.

The first part of training for the pilots in the Army Air Force was primary flying school. Joseph Boyle offered a brief description:

\begin{quote}
We were assigned to a school in Arcadia, Florida, which is about fifty or sixty miles east of Sarasota, and the school was being run by a firm, by a civilian firm, by the name of Emory Riddle, which is still in the business of educating people who aspire to become pilots. It was---although I don’t remember meeting Dave (David Cox) exactly at that time, I’m sure that he reported to Arcadia about the same time I did.

And we went through the next three phases of our flying training . . . As I recall, the primary, basic and advanced training programs each
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{15} Joseph B. Boyle oral history, 2-3. Conducted in November 2004 by the author. (hereafter cited as Boyle oral history).
involved 70 hours of flying time,\textsuperscript{16} plus ground work, classes in aerodynamics, engines, navigation in particularly which was very important to us. And we had a rigorous physical program designed to keep us all in good physical shape. Of course, the food was quite good throughout all of our training, as I recall.\textsuperscript{17}

For the cadets, the early days of training were often their first experience of being away from home. There was much to learn and there was always the uncertainty of where their next step in training would be. They were never sure whether or not you would make it as a pilot or where you would wind up after your training was over. David Cox describes in greater detail some of his early experiences in training and his orders to go to primary flying school:

Maxwell Field, Ala. Thursday Jan 1, 1942

I’m starting this a little late since I’ve been here at Maxwell\textsuperscript{18} since December 19, but we’ve had plenty to do. It’s raining today. There’s a very good rumor running around that we’ll leave for primary training January 7. We haven’t been so very busy today since it’s raining but they’ll probably let us make up for it tomorrow. The folks sent me $5 to

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{16} 175 hours of flight training was required in the official academic program of the Army Air Force during World War II. See Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds. The Army Air Forces in World War II, 6 vols. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1955) Vol. 6, 560.
\textsuperscript{17} Boyle oral history, 3.
\textsuperscript{18} Maxwell Field, Alabama was the location of an Army Air Force officer candidate school (OCS). See Craven and Cate, The Army Air Forces in World War II, Vol. 6, 680.
\end{footnotesize}
have my teeth fixed up but I don’t know when I’ll have chance to have it done. They issued us Khaki uniforms today. We spent a couple of hours waiting in line tho! The paper says that Manila\textsuperscript{19} is in danger of falling.

Maxwell                       Friday Jan. 2, 1942

Went up in pressure chamber today. We went to 18,000 feet. I suffered no ill effects, but Rick Auman passed out and we had to come down. Had planned to go higher. It’s raining again tonite. We’re getting ready for inspection which is tomorrow morning. Took my final in civics in ground school. Passed OK. Got a very sweet letter from Hilda.\textsuperscript{20} I love that girl.

* * *

Monday Jan 5.

Received our orders today to go to Primary. I’m to go to Helena, Ark., Cunningham goes with me. Tessier, Wendell and Terry and Mowry go to Ocala, Fla.. They’re lucky. Have made plans to ride up there with Hugo Franz in a yellow convertible. Glad to get away. The


\textsuperscript{20} Hilda Walker was David Cox’s fiancée.
next class will have to stay here 5 weeks. We’ve been here about 2 ½ weeks.21

At the beginning of World War II, the AAF forces numbered 20,000 men. By the end of 1944, there were over 2.4 million.22 For the young cadets, Army Air Force (AAF) training meant continuous drilling and instruction, from the break of dawn until sunset. When the next morning broke, it started all over again. Moreover, the cadets had to deal with unwanted attention from their upperclassmen. Cox describes the difficulties of being an underclassman in training as well as the hospitality that men of the service often enjoyed in the towns where they trained.

Friday, Jan 9th 1942

Received permanent room assignments today. I have three new roommates: Davies, Gillespie and Onorato. Onorato isn’t here yet but had to go home for some reason. Every time an upperclassman comes into the room we have to yell “attention” and stand in a brace until given at ease. We have to double time in the area and hit the wall when passed by an upperclassmen on the stoop. They’re giving us hell and that’s no exaggeration. We [are] preparing for inspection which is in the morn.

21 Cox diary, January 1st, 2nd, and 5th, 1942.
22 Craven and Cate, The Army Air Forces in World War II, Vol. 6 Men and Planes, xxv.
Sunday Jan 18

Spent they the day in town today. The people here have hospitality plus. Makes you not quite so homesick. Since this [is] such a small time town there isn’t so much to do. People here will give a cadet the shirt off their back.\(^{23}\)

Conditions were not always favorable for flying, so cadets would spend this time in the classroom. This was often considered boring, especially in comparison to learning to fly a plane. Cadets also dealt with the difficulty of being separated from loved ones, as Cox describes in his diary.

Tuesday Jan. 27

Considerable wind today. It’s cloudy and wet. They won’t let us fly today. No mail from home. I’m so homesick I’m about to go crazy. When we have nothing to do it’s a lot worse. They will probably issue us full flying equipment tomorrow. That will save me the trouble of borrowing Gils’ every time I fly. Heard today that we’ll be at Helena for nine weeks. That’s a great disappointment, even though I like it

\(^{23}\) Cox diary, January 9\(^{th}\) and 18\(^{th}\), 1942.
here. The sooner I get through the quicker I’ll have Hilda for my own.  

During their Primary training, the cadets mostly flew the PT-19, a two seat, open cockpit airplane. The pilot in training would fly in the front seat, with the instructor seated in the back. Most of the cadets who ‘washed out’ did so during their Primary training. The cadets were anxious to move on to their next phase of instruction. After two months of Primary, David Cox finally made it to Basic Flying School in Greenville, Mississippi. He describes the final phase of primary training, a brief furlough home and his engagement.

Greenville, Miss. March 30th

Here I am in Basic. So much has happened since I last wrote in this book. At Helena I soloed at 10 hours. I took my 20 hr. check at 23 hrs. Failed it. Took it with Dick Robinson. He really ate me out. Went on flying though. He rode with me again at 37 hours. Passed it then. A few days later I took my 40 hr. check with him and passed OK. Bouse told me that I’d improved my flying a great deal. Went through Lazy 8’s Pylon 8’s, Chandelles and forced landings. At 54 hrs. I took my Army check with Lt. B.H. Nale. Passed OK. At 55 hrs. I took my final check with Mr. Uhle. He passed me. Finished up flying on Tuesday 16th of March. Capt. Skaer came back and made us all fly ½ hr on

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24 Cox diary, January 27, 1942.
Thursday 18th. Got our 9 day furlough on Friday morning. Went to Memphis with Mr. Azlan + made trip in 1½ hrs. Caught 11:50 plane out of Memphis for Atlanta. Caught train in Atlanta + arrived in Charlotte at 1:30 AM Friday night.

Irvin + Sally Took me to G’boro + got there about 12 noon Saturday. Sure was good to get home. Spent every evening with Hilda. On Tu Wed nite I asked Mr. Walder if I could marry Hilda. He said OK. Thursday I went up with Mother and bought a ring for Hilda. Will be married as soon as I graduate. (if I do)...25

Basic flight school was highly structured and left little leisure time for the pilots in training. There was much to learn and the days were filled with both class instruction and flying time. Cox illustrates the daily routine for the cadets.

Wed April 1, 1942

April Fool’s Day. A beautiful day. We didn’t have the lecture last nite. This morning my instructor demonstrated 9 types of stalls. Seem complicated but I guess I’ll get them sometime. My instructor never does holler at me. I’m going to suggest that he does tomorrow. Flew for an hour and he didn’t raise his voice one time. He seems to be timid but maybe it’s because he just a nice guy. We get up at 6:00 and have
15 mins. to dress and straighten the room. We then fall out for mess.

We report for flight formation at 7:00. We’re on the flight line until 11:30. Mess is at 12:30. Ground school starts at 1:05 and lasts until 5:30. Mess is at 6:00. Call to quarters is at 8:15, and taps is at 10:00.

We don’t have a minute to spare all day long... Cox notes that his instructor is “a nice guy” who never yells at him. Cox also writes that he may suggest that his instructor yell at him. Is this because he wants more pressure? Does he feel that he will learn more and perform better if the instructor gets after him more?

Learning to fly could be a very difficult and dangerous task for the pilots in training, and there was little room for error. Accidents often occurred and were usually fatal. Cox describes the loss of a fellow cadet in an accident while training as well as his own thoughts about death in two diary entries.

Friday April 3, 1942

Got 3 letters from Hilda today. Helped raise my spirits considerably. Things are easing up considerably around here. Just heard that one of the men who were underclassmen at Hellena while I was there was killed. Spun in. A fellow by name of Johnson... That was first fatality at Helena... Cox notes that his instructor is “a nice guy” who never yells at him. Cox also writes that he may suggest that his instructor yell at him. Is this because he wants more pressure? Does he feel that he will learn more and perform better if the instructor gets after him more?

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26 Cox diary, April 1, 1942.
27 Cox diary, April 3, 1942.
Cox notes that “things are easing up considerably”, suggesting that the training program is getting easier while at the same time noting the death of a fellow cadet. It may have been getting easier to Cox, but training continued to be dangerous.

Wednesday 8th

Still raining and mud is everywhere. . . . I keep thinking of Hilda constantly and wondering if I’ll be assigned to combat on graduation and if so will I come back to her or make her a widow. The future will tell I guess. I’m not afraid to die. Seems strange because Death is supposed to be something to be afraid of. Opal died and I was afraid for her. I wonder why I’m not afraid? I’m not reckless though so I don’t think I’ll die by accident if I do.\(^{28}\)

Cox is starting to believe that he will graduate, but also is concerned about dying and leaving a widow. He also seems to express confidence in his own abilities, noting that if he dies, he does not think it will be his fault.

David Cox finally made it out of Basic flight school and moved on to Advanced flight training. Just making it to Advanced was very difficult for the cadets. The men who made it through Advanced training could be proud of their accomplishment. Out of the 317,000 men who began the Army Air Force cadet-training program, only 193,000 graduated.\(^ {29}\) Over fifty

\(^{28}\) Ibid, April 8, 1942.
\(^{29}\) Craven and Cate, Vol. 6, xxxiv.
percent of the men assigned to the Army Air Force ‘washed out’ during the initial written tests or physicals. After that, an additional forty percent of the remaining cadets would not complete the Primary, Basic, and Advanced schools. By 1944, most of the gunners, radio operators, and flight engineers aboard the B-17’s would be ‘washouts’ from the Army Air Force cadet program.\textsuperscript{30} The AAF recruited and trained more men during World War II than any other country and became the largest air force in the world. They were also the best trained. By the end of the war, American pilots averaged 360 hours of flying time while the German pilots average was only 110 hours.\textsuperscript{31} The superior training and experience that the American airmen received would pay off greatly during the latter years of World War II.

After the difficult period of training, the cadets could look forward to their assignments to their new B-17 crews. In an extended diary entry, Cox describes the deaths of other pilots in training, his graduation from advance training (and his marriage on the same day) as well as his assignment to his B-17 crew.

\begin{flushright}
June 17\textsuperscript{th} 1942 Columbus, Miss.
\end{flushright}

\begin{quotation}
Well, here I am in Advanced. I’d never have thought that I’d get this far when I had about 4 hrs. + Bouse was yelling, “You’re the dumbest damned lads I’ve ever had.”
\end{quotation}


\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
In Basic I really had the fun. Thompson was a swell guy. Didn’t have any trouble with any of my checks and really enjoyed taking them. Not as tough as Primary. We took about 8 hrs. of formation flying, 6 hours of nite flying, and 6 of cross country 2 of which was at nite.

Joe Molloy who I roomed with in primary cracked up and killed himself on his NXC [Night Cross Country]. His wife had a baby girl about a week before. We gave the kid a $100 defense bond and sent some flowers to his wife.

Johnson who was underclassmen at Helena when I was there also cracked up, killing himself. He seemed to be a mighty nice fellow too.

We had a beer party and a dance after graduation and really had some fun. Everybody got stewed but me. I had a good time tho. . . .

They gave us 5 days travel time between Basic and Advanced. Ed Gillespie, Doherty, Costanzo, Broley, and myself went down to N. Orleans for a day. Had great fun. Broley + Costanzo went to single engine advanced. Doubt if I will ever see them again. Advanced was entirely different. We had the same living quarters as Basic but had to meet only 2 formations daily. . . . Columbus was kind of a p. poor town. People looked down on soldiers + cadets. However, I endured for 6 ½ weeks. We were scheduled to graduate on August 5th but since we were thru flying on July 24th, we graduated on the 26th. My folks were coming down for the graduation. Hilda said she couldn’t make it.
Can you imagine my surprise when she was in the back of the car. I was never so glad to see anyone in my life. Pop, bless his soul, had two days growth of beard on his face but he really looked good to me. Mother, who holds top place in my heart next to Hilda, was naturally tired but happy to be able to come down. Bill + Irvin\textsuperscript{32} were there too. We all packed up + went 20 miles over to West Point to stay Saturday nite. (All this happened a good while ago, but since the biggest moments of my life happened at the same time I remember everything as tho it were yesterday) Graduation was scheduled for ten-30. At 9 I was a 2\textsuperscript{nd} Lt. at 10:20 I was seated under the trees waiting to receive my diploma. As usual everything was messed up + our names were announced all cockeyed but I got the diploma and my Wings. Mother pinned them on for me and she was proud of me. I was just as proud as she, that I had Father looking on with a proud smile. I felt kind of self conscious but I had really worked for those things (Little did I know then that I would be a husband in 6 hours). I took Mother + Hilda + the rest over to the day room while I cleared the post. . . .

Then came the bombshell. We were to be sent to Salt Lake City! Since the marriage couldn’t come off as we had planned I couldn’t let Hilda leave me again. So with mother making the plans we decided to be married in Columbus. Cunningham came in with me to buy the license + to have a little fun I stuck the license in my shirt + walked

\textsuperscript{32} Bill and Irvin Cox, were brothers of David Cox.
dejectedly up to the car. Naturally everyone asked if I had it. I said no. Hilda’s face lighted up + she looked so relieved. Then I told her + her face dropped a foot. I don’t think she was very eager eager to be married right then. We found a minister + the ceremony was performed. Then Pop had to have some pictures. The folks left that afternoon + Hilda + I were alone. We spent that, our wedding nite at the Gilmer Hotel. The next morning I went out to the post, got my orders + got back about 2 o’clock. We caught the bus at 2:30 for Memphis + arrived after dark. Bill Roach + “Kirtie” were waiting there for us + we celebrated that night for 2 reasons-----Our graduation and our marriage. We caught the train next day for Salt Lake. Stopped at Kansas City + St. Louis for a little while. The last day we were pretty nearly broke but managed somehow. . . .

Arrived in Tucson after 2 days on the train (very happy days too.) We were the only married couple with a berth in the “BOQ” car. Great fun. Luckily we found an apartment the first day. The folks had come through with some money (you can always count on your folks) so we were not cramped that way.

We had to get up at 6 every morn so I could catch the bus to the field. These were mighty rough hours for a newly married couple but

33 Bachelor Officer’s Quarters.
we were in love so it didn’t matter. The planes were on a 24 hr. schedule + I flew a good bit at nite. B-24’s\textsuperscript{34} (Flying Boxcars)

When we had been at Tucson for about 3 weeks I was transferred from the 39\textsuperscript{th} Bomb. Grp. 62\textsuperscript{nd} B.S.\textsuperscript{35} to the 305\textsuperscript{th} B.G.\textsuperscript{36} This new group was already trained + was ready for combat. We were told to be ready to leave on a moments notice. I kind of hated to leave Tucson because we were just getting settled. Hilda would buy our groceries at the Commissary + we were getting out of debt. A week after I was put in the 305\textsuperscript{th} I left for Spokane, Wash. I was eventually scheduled to get to Syracuse\textsuperscript{37} so I sent Hilda there. Four days I was in Spokane + 4 more days on the train to Syracuse. Those 8 days were mighty long because I was separated from Hilda.

When I arrived in Syracuse Hilda was in Philadelphia with Peggy.

She caught the next train back tho and we were together once again.

The Col. gave us a three day pass so we went home and spent the most

\textsuperscript{34} Consolidated B-24 Liberator was a heavy bomber used in World War II. The B-24 did not receive the same amount of publicity as the B-17, although the more B-24s were built than any other U.S. aircraft in World War II. (18,190 B-24s compared to 12,692 B-17s). See Kenneth P. Werrell, \textit{Eighth Air Force Bibliography} (Manhattan, KS: MA/AH Publishing, 1981), 93.

\textsuperscript{35} 39\textsuperscript{th} Bomb Group, 62\textsuperscript{nd} Bomb Squadron. Assigned to combat in the Western Pacific from April 6 through August 14, 1945. See Maurer Maurer, \textit{Combat Squadrons of the Air Force World War II.} (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: USAF Historical Division, 1969), 238-239.

\textsuperscript{36} The 305\textsuperscript{th} Bomb Group was assigned to combat in ETO (European Theatre of Operations) from November 17, 1942 through April 25, 1945. See Maurer, \textit{Combat Squadrons of the Air Force World War II}, 450-451.

\textsuperscript{37} Because of limited resources, the Army Air Force had to use many different bases throughout the country for different types of training. See Thom, \textit{Brotherhood of Courage}, 7-17.
of the 3 day pass on the train. It was good to be home again though after so long a time. When we got back to Syracuse we were able to get an apartment across the street from Joe\textsuperscript{38} and Doris. Joe is the boy I’m copilot to. Doris is his wife. We economized by eating together and had some good times together. Joe and I were able to get off about 5 PM every day but had to be back by 8 the next morning. That made us have to get up about 6 every morning. This Army life is tough, but I like it. . . .

We finally decided on a name for our ship. It is to be \textit{Carter and His Little Pills}. Our crew members are: 1\textsuperscript{st} Lt. Joseph W. Carter, pilot. 2\textsuperscript{nd} Lt. David C. Cox, co-pilot (that’s me). 2\textsuperscript{nd} LT. W.G. Moorer, navigator, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Lt. R.A.Gray, bombardier, S/Sgt. Maxwell, Top turret, Sgt. S.A. Kirk, engineer + crew chief, Sgt. B.R. Dayley, ball turret, Sgt. Shirley, tailgun, Sgt. Courtney, radio oper.

They are all a good bunch of fellows and I think we’ll get along O.K.\textsuperscript{39}

For the men of the Eighth Air Force, crew assignments were one of the most important things that happened during their training. The men would have to depend on every man aboard his B-17 in order to make it home safe from every mission. Joseph Boyle also describes his B-17 crew assignment and his colorful pilot, Captain Allen Martini:

\textsuperscript{38} Joseph Carter was the pilot of David Cox’s original crew, assigned to B-17 serial # 42-24588. See John V. Craven, \textit{The 305th Bomb Group In Action}. (Burleson, Tx: 305\textsuperscript{th} Bomb Group (H) Memorial Association, 1990), 293.

\textsuperscript{39} Cox diary, June 17, 1942.
I recall that our particular airplane, which I might mention to you right at this point, had a very colorful name. I was assigned to a crew of a Captain [Allen] V. Martini, and his plane had been named before I was assigned to the crew at Syracuse, New York. His plane had already been named *The Dry Martini and the Cocktail Kids*. My friend Martini was a very confident pilot, a very good athlete, a tall, nice looking blonde Italian, half Italian, half Irish I imagine. He had a wonderful way with words. He was an excellent pilot and he never fell short of being a good PR [public relations] man for himself and our crew.⁴⁰

During the early part of World War II, the B-17’s were being built faster than the Army Air Force could fill them with adequately trained crews. In the rush to train pilots to fly the new planes, the Army Air Force took some shortcuts in training during the early part of the war,⁴¹ as Joseph Boyle describes:

Dave Cox and I along with about 16 other freshly trained pilots right out of flying school were assigned as co-pilots to the 305th BG and joined the crews of Lemay’s group at Syracuse, NY.

Our group, the group Dave and I were in, had no phase, what they call phase training or combat training is another way of putting it, whatsoever. We were just assigned to these airplanes with absolutely

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⁴⁰ Boyle oral history, 3.
no preliminary training whatsoever. In my case, I had never even seen one until I was loaded on one in Tucson, Arizona, flown to Spokane, Washington, from which Dave and I and all the other 60 or 70 of us went by rail to Syracuse, NY, where we waited for new airplanes to be delivered.

As the new airplanes were delivered in Syracuse, NY, we were assigned to the various crews. The original eighteen co-pilots that had been through phase training were sent back as first pilots to be re-trained a second time and the theory at that time apparently was that they would give these pilots much better training than time would allow otherwise in their hurry to build crews as fast as they were able to build airplanes. To the best of my knowledge, they never did that again. They never took a bunch of green, freshly trained pilots such as we were and just dumped us into the co-pilot seat in a four engine airplane and then sent it off into combat. But that’s what happened to us, anyway.42

One of the reasons the pilots of the 305th Bomb Group lacked critical training was because of a shortage of B-17s at the time. According to Walter Thom, “a lot of them [other bomb groups] needed B-17s on which to train, and some of them had precedence over the claims of the 305th. The aircraft plants had not yet come up to President Roosevelt’s

42 Boyle oral history, 5,6.
production targets. For all these reasons, at any time anywhere up to six of the B-17’s restored to the 305th might be preempted and sent to another unit.43

Another reason for the lack of training may have been because of the rush to get the 305th Bomb Group to England. There appeared to be some controversy as to whether the group would continue on to England as planned, or be re-assigned to the Pacific Theater. Walter Thom reports “there was a move afoot to Shanghai the Group from its destination in England to the Pacific Theater of War.”44 The shortage of B-17’s and the apparent move to transfer the group may explain the reason why the original co-pilots of the 305th Bomb Group appeared to be undertrained.

After their crew assignments, the men of the 305th Bomb Group would prepare to deploy to their air base in England. David Cox and Joe Boyle were part of a small group that flew 35 B-17s to England for the 305th to use in combat. During the flight, the group had to make a re-fueling stop at Gander, Newfoundland, and then on to Prestwick, Scotland. The journey over was not easy. Two B-17’s crashed on take-off from Gander just in front of David’s plane. He details the journey over to England, as well as the difficulties involved.

England       Grafton-Underwood

I have to write this up to date because events have been so fast that little time could be had for writing down events. I sent Hilda home from Syracuse on October 18th and we left there on October 20th. I really hated to leave her at the station but had to be at the post at 12 and

44 Ibid, 21.
her train didn’t leave until 11:30. I had to turn and leave her when the tears started coming. I can’t stand to see her cry. We flew through some awful weather to Presque Isle, Maine. The weather remained poor for 2 days but we were able to take off the 2nd day. Presque Isle is a cold desolate place. However the quarters they assigned us there were very comfortable. They have a good large PX there so Moorer bought up 20 cartons of cigarettes as they are scarce in England. We arrived at Gander Lake, Newfoundland without mishap and it is more desolate than Presque Isle. For the first time in my life I was in a foreign country. It was from here that we were to make the long hop to England. Blackie Moorer was a good deal put out when he found that the same cigarettes he paid 15c a pkg. for in P.I. sold at Gander Lake for 7 ½ c a pkg. No tax. We were at Gander for 2 days in fairly comfortable quarters. A God forsaken place tho. Some of the enlisted men had been there for 18 mos. without ever getting to a town.

We took off at 11:30 PM the nite of Oct. 24th, for Prestwick, Scotland. 2 planes crashed on takeoff. One of them was right in front of us but we calmly taxied into position and gave it the gun. We flew at 13,000 feet most of the way across and ran into icing conditions, had supercharger trouble, and our airspeed indicator iced up. Even Chas. Lindberg had an airspeed indicator. We didn’t.

45 PX is an abbreviation for Post Exchange.
At about 10 AM the 25th we landed at Prestwick. . . . We took off immediately for Grafton but had to turn back because of weather. We had to wait 3 more days before we were able to make the trip. In the meantime I was introduced to the English way of life, and the English climate which is very damp and cold. Quite a contrast to the desert country at Tucson.46

The difficulty of shuttling the B-17’s along this route was also noted in Roger Freeman’s The Mighty Eighth. He described the conditions of the route that the 1st Bomb Group faced on their trip over to England. “The visibility on approach was so poor that they were unable to land. Faced with either a return to Goose Bay or an alternative landing ground 400 miles along the Greenland coast, eleven Fortresses returned to Goose Bay after fourteen hours in the air . . . The remaining three machines, hopelessly lost, were forced down out of fuel on the Greenland coast; luckily all crews were saved. This first experience underlined the difficulties in ferrying along this route, particularly the weather hazards.”47

Walter Thom also mentions the difficulties that the 305th Bomb Group faced in their shuttle over to England. Although Cox mentions two planes crashing on takeoff, Thom only reports one plane crashing on takeoff and another crash landing after running out of fuel. He states “one luckless 305th pilot tried to take off across a runway. The plane ran of the edge and was ‘banged up a bit’. Thom does not account for the other plane that Cox mentions as crashing on takeoff and no other sources for this incident could be found. Although

46 Cox diary, undated entry.
47 Freeman, The Mighty Eighth, 7.
Freeman and Thom give basic information that confirms Cox and Boyle’s accounts of the trip over to England, the diary and oral history offer a more personal and close perspective on this important event.

After the first Bomb Groups deployed to England in the fall of 1942, the AAF was forced to change their route for deploying the planes. There were reports that German submarines discovered their route and radio to the Luftwaffe the position of the group, making them an easy target. However, this has not been confirmed. When asked to describe his journey from Syracuse, NY to England, Joseph Boyle offered the following detailed account as well as how the Eighth Air Force had to change the route for the delivery of the planes during the war.

On the flight over from Newfoundland to Prestwick, Scotland, the, our airplanes were loaded with the original ten members of our crew and often one or two other personnel from headquarters and all of our personal gear. The planes were unarmed and of course the length of our flight was approaching our limit with our fuel range. As I recall, it took us about eleven hours, ten or eleven hours to make this flight and we couldn’t have flown much with the fuel we were carrying. Of course, with the high weight of fuel, it was impossible to carry any armament in addition over that long a flight.

Delivering four engine bombers, B-17’s and B-24’s, with a full crew soon became impossible to accomplish the way we did it. What
happened was German submarines after a few of the early groups had flown over the North Atlantic, got wise to the possibilities and would radio the German Luftwaffe and give early warnings of these flights of bombers being shipped over, being flown over, and the Luftwaffe was able to send fighters out and started to shoot them down.

Once that happened, the plans on getting our aircraft and crews to England in order to bulk up the Eighth Air Force, had an entirely different problem, which involved, the solution which involved flying all the way to South, northern South America, from there to Assension Isle, from Assension Isle to Africa, and from Africa north around Spain and all the way to England. That is the way, not too long after our trip, they were forced to send heavy bombardment crews to engage and to join up and expand the Eighth Air Force and the Air Force that they eventually built up in Italy, I think it was the Fifteenth. That long route, that was followed up until the activity of submarines was greatly diminished. Once the submarine threat was minimized, then, of course the northern routes could be used again to get Air Force planes and men over to England and to Italy and to really add power to the Air Forces over there.49

49 Boyle oral history, 4.
Upon their arrival at their assigned base (Grafton-Underwood), the 305th Bomb Group began to settle in to their new accommodations. England’s weather took a bit of getting used to. David Cox describes the conditions at Grafton-Underwood in his diary. “My first and lasting impression of GU was mud. The English built these roads about 5 feet wide for bicycles I think and when a 6x6 Army truck straddles one of them mud from both sides comes up. Immediately we got settled ground school classes began and we started flying some practice missions over England. Most of them had to be at low altitude because of the poor weather we have most of the time here.”

Joseph Boyle also had a similar description of Grafton-Underwood in his oral history. “We were only in Grafton Underwood for a very, very short time, a week or two or whatever. It was rainy, muddy, there was, [laughter] the sky was either clouded up or, and the fogs were dense, and there was very little air activity as a matter of fact, from the time that we arrived in England in October of ’42 until January of ’43.”

For most aircrews in the Eighth Air Force, adjusting to life in England was not especially difficult. Although the accommodations were not as good as in the United States, they were much better than what an average infantryman experienced. During World War II, Eighth Air Force combat aircrews casualty rates were higher than infantry units, but with the risks came better living conditions. At the end of a long mission, aircrews could shower, enjoy a hot meal and a warm bed, while infantrymen were exposed to the elements, seldom had a warm meal, and even more rarely had the opportunity to shower.

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50 Cox diary, November 16, 1942.
51 Boyle oral history, 5.
52 Craven, The 305th Bomb Group in Action, 7,8.
While Eighth Air Force aircrews enjoyed better accommodations than infantrymen, they were not the best living conditions. David Cox described his quarters in his diary. “I’m quartered in an enlisted mens barracks with four other co-pilots, Kerr, Mericle, Mjellem, and Lakey. We have a coal stove right in the middle of the barracks and that is all the heat we have. So you can imagine just how cold it is over in my little corner. These English built barracks do not have running water … and the nearest bath house is about ¼ mile by mud.”

In addition to better living conditions than infantrymen, aircrews also had easy access to London. Crews often received forty-eight and seventy-two hour passes every few weeks. David Cox briefly described his experiences in London in his diary. “I’ve been off the post two times and went to London once. About all I do is go to a show and go to bed because to sleep in a comfortable hotel bed is a luxury around here.” Even though there were many distractions for the combat airmen, when darkness arrived, blackout precautions made them fully aware of the dangers of German air raids.

When asked about his experiences in London, Joseph Boyle described that he had family roots nearby and was able to catch up with some relatives during his time there.

The free time I had in London was a real break for me. My father had been born and grew up in London until at the age of sixteen he and his father had gone to the United States, and then later in 1910 Dad had gone to the Yukon. But, my grandfather had been a publisher in England, in London, and had been involved with many different

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53 Cox diary, November 16, 1942.
54 Cox diary, January 1943.
newspapers, had owned a part of a print shop that was famous at the
time for having printed the first copy of Henry George’s *Single Tax
Theory*, which is a respected tome in the field of government and
economics, and my great-grandfather was a congregational minister
who had been pastor of a large church in London, and we of course had
various relatives in London, some of whom were still around, so that to
me it was a treat to not only go to London, but to have a few relatives to
look up, friends of the family, so on.55

Not only did men of the Eighth Air Force enjoy better living conditions and easy
access to London, airmen received medals and promotions quicker than ground forces and
were the envy of the men in foxholes. Even with all of these advantages, there were often
times when the airmen envied the infantry. Crews on a bomber could not choose whether to
run or fight. Men on the B-17’s could not run away. Gunners could shoot to defend
themselves, but there was no defense for flak.56 Aircrews could sometimes drop “chaff”
(pieces of foil) as counter measures to the flak. Once a bombing run had begun, the crew had
to fly straight and level to achieve an accurate bombing run, and could not divert to avoid
flak or fighters until their bombs were dropped. For aircrews, flak was often compared to an
infantryman being caught in the open during an artillery bombardment. This often left the
aircrews feeling helpless and terrified.

55 Boyle oral history, 10.
56 Flak is an abbreviation of German words *flieger abwehr kanonen*, which means anti-
aircraft fire and could be accurate up to 25,000 feet.
Compared to infantry, combat airmen saw things on a larger scale. While infantrymen often described their view of combat in meters, “airmen saw the war on a continent wide scale.”\(^{57}\) The success of the air war was difficult to measure. While the Army could measure its success in cities liberated, prisoners captured or enemy killed, the Eighth Air Force seldom saw an enemy fall and never took a prisoner. B-17 crews dropped bombs on their enemy from a distance of 20,000 feet. Their visibility of the damage done was limited to structures, whereas the infantry saw the effects of their combat on a closer and more personal scale.

In the beginning of the air war, aircrews had to fly a total of twenty-five missions before returning to the United States. As the war dragged on, the Eighth Air Force increased the number of missions to thirty-five. Before the P-51 Mustang became available as a long range fighter escort, only 25 percent of the Eighth Air Force crews survived the twenty-five missions.\(^{58}\) (David Cox was shot down and captured on his twenty-fourth mission, while Joseph Boyle was shot down on his fifteenth.) After the P-51 came into use in 1944, sixty-six percent of the aircrews survived their required missions.\(^{59}\)

The English weather made surviving the required number of missions even more difficult. Clear days were the exception rather than the rule. Pilots had to learn how to fly in the dangerous conditions of rain and fog. Weather changed rapidly. Conditions had to be dreadful in England to scrub a mission. Not only did the weather create dangerous flying conditions, but it also made life miserable at the base. There was such an inadequate supply of coal that there often was not enough for everyone. This led to widespread pirating from

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\(^{57}\) Ambrose, *Citizen Soldiers*, 291.


\(^{59}\) Ambrose, *Citizen Soldiers*, 293.
base coal dumps, a crime that usually went unpunished. For the most part, Americans found themselves in the middle of a country with a similar culture, traditions, and the same language. As John McManus, author of *Deadly Sky*, stated “By and large, they enjoyed excellent relations with the British people, although the wartime British complaint about Americans being ‘overpaid, oversexed, and over here’ has been well documented.”60 The American retort was that the British were ‘underpaid, undersexed, and under Eisenhour’.

60 McManus, *Deadly Sky*, 89.
The 305th Bomb Group was ready to begin their bombing missions. There were many difficulties that the men of the Eighth Air Force faced that made their mission experience unique. A look at the mission experience from the perspective of men who fought in the Mighty Eighth will help provide a better understanding of the accounts from David Cox’s diary and Joseph Boyle’s oral history.

Daylight missions for the combat airmen meant getting up in the middle of the night. Wake-up calls often came as early as 3:00 AM. Jack Novey of the 96th Bomb Group described the feeling of waking in the dead of the night to prepare for a raid.

The time is 0300 hours on a cold, rainy morning in England in the fall of 1943. I lie in my bunk, listening to the rain. Other men are snoring. Before long the sergeant called the Charge of Quarters comes tromping down the walk, opening the doors of other huts, and shouting out names. Then he opens our door and calls the names of those scheduled to fly today. We’re all grumbling as we get up. We go to the bathroom, wash up, come back to our bunks, and get dressed. It’s dark,
cold, and raining. We’re wondering who’s going to live and who’s

going to die this day.61

David Cox also recorded a note to his wife in his diary about the feeling that any day could
be his last. “Tomorrow I go on my 6th raid. Today we lost Maj. Taylor. 20 mm cannon shell
in the chest. If it’s me tomorrow, I love you Hilda.”62

After getting dressed, the men would go to the mess hall for a pre-combat breakfast,
usually powdered eggs and sausage. The crews would then proceed to their unit’s mission
briefing. The squadron commander usually would start the briefing by telling the crews
where they were going, announcing flight leaders and other bombing groups on the mission.
After that, an intelligence officer would usually display aerial photos of the bombing areas,
and also inform the crews of fighter opposition and flak. A meteorologist would inform the
aircrews of the forecast and cloud cover expected. This would usually be followed by a pep
talk from the squadron commander, along with the IP (initial point, where the bomb run
would begin), bombing altitudes, radio frequencies to use, and other technical information
pertinent to the mission.63

Following the briefing, stress would increase as the aircrews prepared for their
mission. After climbing into the plane, the crew would settle into their respective positions.
The B-17 had a crew of ten, all gunners, with the exception of the pilot, copilot, and

61 Jack Novey, The Cold Blue Sky: A B-17 Gunner in World War II (Charlottesville, Va:
62 Cox diary, January 13, 1943.
bombardier. The pilot was responsible for his men twenty-four hours of every day. His crew was composed of specialists who had to work in harmony to succeed and to return safely.

The copilot (David Cox and Joseph Boyle’s position) was the executive officer and had to be prepared to take command at a moment’s notice. He needed to be familiar with all of the pilots’ duties and had to be able to fly the B-17 whenever necessary. The copilot was also the engineering officer and maintained a complete log of all performance data.64 Joseph Boyle wrote a poem entitled Sweating it Out (The Copilots Lament), in which he describes a personal view of combat from the copilot’s seat.

With fighters high at six o’clock,  
With Messerschmids at Ten,  
With Focke-Wulfs diving thru’ the top  
To climb and dive again,  
Another boring in at twelve  
With neon leading edge,  
Nine men can be oblivious  
But one of ten must hedge.

Oh! Pity the poor copilot  
His wavering glance belies,  
He gazes at the instruments  
With fighters in his eyes.

Although it looks like July 4th,  
The pilot never shirks,  
His eyes are on the leading ship  
Not on the fire-works.  
Navigator, bombardier  
Are want to view the fight,  
As do the eager crew-men six,  
Through a machine-gun sight.

Oh! Pity the poor copilot  
His forehead’s dripping wet,  
Nine men are fighting for their lives,

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64 McManus, Deadly Sky, 29.
Boyle’s poem reveals the special mental difficulties that the co-pilots faced during their missions. Everyone else was so occupied with the rigors of combat and could not see as much of the battle as the co-pilot, who was responsible for observing the equipment and the planes surroundings, and thus had a closer view of the combat that enveloped him. Boyle’s poem gives us some perspective of what it was like for the co-pilot during these difficult times.

In front and below the cockpit was the bombardier and navigator’s position. The bombardier would sit in the front and control the flight during bombing runs. The navigator was responsible for getting the plane to and from the objective, keeping a flight log, and for manning a nose gun in case of frontal fighter attacks. He had to be well informed on weather, flak concentrations, and the type of formations flown.

The engineer occupied the top turret position. This turret had twin .50 caliber machine guns and could rotate 360 degrees. When not in combat, the engineer monitored certain gauges in the cockpit and assisted the pilot and copilot. He was the senior non-commissioned officer on the plane. The engineer was also responsible for opening the bomb bay. Under adverse conditions, he would be called on to help release the bombs when they didn’t drop correctly. Behind the bomb bay was the radio operator’s position. From here, the engineer would give position reports, assist the navigator, and inform headquarters of targets attacked and the results. He maintained a log and was often the crew photographer.

The next position in the B-17 was the ball turret. Often described as the most dangerous battle station, it required men of small stature to fit in the cramped position. The ball turret

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65 Unpublished poem by Joseph Boyle.
The gunner would only occupy this position well after take-off and would leave the ball-turret before landing. His duties were to protect the underside of the plane from fighter attacks. Behind the ball turret was the waist gunners’ position. Each of these two gunners had a post-mounted .50 caliber machine gun. Because the waist gunners fired from openings in the sides of the B-17, they had the coldest battle station on board. At high altitudes the temperatures often reached as low as minus 40 degrees Fahrenheit. The waist gunners were responsible for defending the flanks of the plane. The last station in the extreme rear of the B-17 was the home of the tail gunner. In order to get to his station, the tail gunner had to crawl through the tail housing to a cramped position where he was responsible for defending the rear of the plane. There was a small escape hatch that could be used in case of emergency.66

By World War I most senior military leaders stayed away from the front, and for the most part, were not in great danger. This was not the case for the Army Air Force during World War II. It was not uncommon for division commanders to lead missions to Germany. They put themselves in the same peril as the rest of the men. This practice of leading from the front also was common further down the chain of command. It was rare for group commanders not to fly on at least every third or fourth mission. This was a sharp contrast with field-grade officers of ground combat units, who rarely ventured to the front lines during intense combat.

Likewise, the segregated tradition between the enlisted men and officers was almost non-existent in the Army Air Force. The combat positions each man took were more a factor of their physical abilities, rather than leadership skills. It was discovered early in the war that

66 For a more detailed description of the duties on board a B-17, see McManus, Deadly Sky, 27-42.
the Germans treated non-commissioned officers better than regular enlisted men. The enlisted men were put in different POW camps that were run by the Germany Army. The conditions in these camps were much worse than those of the Stalag Luft camps, which were run by the German Luftwaffe, and held the captured officers. In case a plane was shot down and its crew was captured, all men aboard the bombers who were not officers were given the rank of sergeant, which would help them receive better treatment if captured. The ranking was often the same between pilot, copilot, navigator, and bombardier.

After getting into their positions, the crew would prepare for take-off. The roar of hundreds of engines was deafening. After receiving the signal to go, the B-17s taxi into position and start down the runway. Formations were extremely tight and tension mounted as the possibility of mid-air collisions loomed. After take-off, the planes would climb through cloud cover where the chances of collisions increased. The Eighth Air Force lost 4695 heavy bombers and 2,801 fighters in combat operations during 1944 and 1945 and lost 896 heavy bombers and 764 fighters in accidents during the same period.67

The B-17 did not have a pressurized cabin and the oxygen system was necessary after climbing above 10,000 feet. Each crewmember would put on an oxygen mask that was tied into the main breathing system at each battle station. There also were portable “walk-around” oxygen bottles that allowed each crewmember to move freely around the aircraft. These portable bottles would last for 6-12 minutes and were also used when aircrews had to bail out above 10,000 feet. If an airmen had to bail out at 20,000 feet with no oxygen, there was the risk of passing out before they could open their parachute. Temperatures at high

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67 Werrell, Eighth Air Force Bibliography, 61,62.
altitudes were very cold. Because the B-17 was not pressurized, extreme cold was a constant worry.⁶⁸

The waist gunners bore the brunt of the cold conditions. Jack Novey, a waist gunner, described the feeling of standing at the open waist of his B-17 in the coldest conditions he had ever experienced. “The air temperature is anywhere from thirty-five to fifty degrees below zero—not counting the chill of the wind, which whistles through our waist windows at 150 miles per hour and more. Freezing to death is a constant hazard at these altitudes. It’s cold. It’s the kind of cold that creeps into every pore of your body and freezes the sweat on your back. If you pull off your glove and touch the metal of the plane, it will take the flesh off your fingers. If you have to pee, the urine freezes before it hits the fuselage floor.” Novey also described the electric suits that the waist gunners used to keep them warm. “Sometimes the air temperature was sixty or seventy degrees below zero Fahrenheit. Our primitive electric suits and all the heavy clothing we could put on just barely kept us from freezing to death. The cold hurt: it penetrated with an intensity that was the same as pain. The cold was like a serpent, crawling over my body, enveloping and numbing my mind, roaring into my ears, ‘Let me in. Let me in and I’ll kill you.’”⁶⁹

After reaching their desired altitude, the B-17 crews anxiously awaited the arrival of the first wave of enemy aircraft. This usually occurred soon after crossing the enemy coast. With all guns blazing, this was a very chaotic time. With the B-17 flying at 250 mph and the German fighters flying as fast as 450 mph, it was difficult for the gunners to fix on a target. The German fighters usually attacked from the front of the formation, coming in one after another. Sometimes the B-17 gunners would get lucky and shoot down the enemy fighters.

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⁶⁸ Astor, The Mighty Eighth, 81.
Jack Novey described a fighter attack on his plane during a mission in September 1943. “. . . all of a sudden, right in front of me appeared an Me-109. . . I let loose a burst from my .50-caliber machine gun, and shells exploded around the cockpit. The pilot blew his canopy and ejected.” Novey described the horror of seeing his enemy dying. “His suit was on fire. His parachute opened up, burned away in an orange-yellow blaze, and he came out mouthing a scream. I’ll never forget that image freezing in front of me in slow motion. . . I can only hope the pilot was dead before he started to fall in flames- but I don’t think he was.”

Crews could often see other bombers going down, spinning out of control with little chance of anyone escaping. They would look for the parachutes from the unlucky plane. It was often the tail gunner who had the best view, and the rest of the crew would wait in anticipation for the count of the parachutes. Seeing friends shot down was often the most agonizing time for the aircrews. If airmen were lost over enemy territory, there was no recovery of the body, however they did have the painful task of going through the lost crewmembers’ personal effects, making sure there was nothing to shock his loved ones and parents.

After the first attacks by fighters, the B-17 crews had flak to look forward to. Flak was often feared above enemy fighters. The flak was usually worse during bomb runs because the pilots could not do anything to avoid it. The planes had to hold their formation during the bomb run under all circumstances in order to maintain bombing accuracy. Philip Ardery, author of *Bomber Pilot*, described the perils of flying through flak:

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70 Me109 is an abbreviation for the Messerschmitt 109 and was the German Air Force’s first modern fighter. See Werrell, *Eighth Air Force Bibliography*, 98.
72 McManus, *Deadly Sky*, 198.
Usually the worst flak we saw was while we were on or closely approaching the bombing run, when we could not afford to make any turns for any reason, except to put the bombardier over the target. After the bombs were away, if the formation was one of medium or larger size—that is, twenty-four ships or more—the wisdom of turns … was questionable. If fighters were about, such turns might loosen the formation. Loosening the formation meant greater vulnerability to fighter attacks. There was really nothing you could do when the flak started breaking around your ship but sit and look at it—and pray.73

Bomber crewmen felt helpless in their inability to avoid flak. The inability to fight back against it helped to magnify their fear. German flak was more deadly than the flak faced by crew in the Pacific. The Germans produced a tremendous number of antiaircraft guns, most notably the 88 mm, to counter the Allied air threat. Along with the large number of guns, the flak was often very accurate. The Germans used radar to detect the altitude of the incoming bombers and could set the fuse of the antiaircraft artillery to explode at the correct altitude. The Germans also knew which airfields, factories, oil refineries and railroad marshalling yards would be likely targets and could concentrate their defense around these areas.74

Joe Kenney, a radio operator in the 99th Bomb Group described the awful feeling that came when they saw other bombers go down to flak. “In one instance one whole wing was

blown off a B-17 with no survivors. Several other planes exploded with the same ‘no survivor’ results. Any place you looked … you could see a trail of smoke and a ball of flame. There were many, many parachutes from planes going down."  

If an aircrew was fortunate enough to avoid a mid-air collision, numerous fighter attacks and the flak described as being thick enough to walk on, then they considered themselves lucky and prepared to fly another dangerous mission when called on.

During the summer of 1944, Army Air Force psychiatrists conducted a study of bomber crews to try to determine why they were so focused on flying their combat missions to the best of their ability. The bomber crewmen answered repeatedly that they couldn’t let the other men down. They also found that the crewmen thought it was very important for them to fly their missions with their own crew. Some copilots would even give up a chance to be the first pilot on another crew in order to remain with their original group. Keith Lamb, a copilot in the 100th Bomb Group, describes such an experience. “I thought I was getting along so well where I was I didn’t want to change my luck. I might be assigned an incompetent crew-or lousy plane-or something else just bad. One of those things could have cost me my life.”

The death of friends in combat often had a profound effect on the men of the Eighth Air Force. Perhaps William Cubbins, a pilot in the 450th Bomb Group provided the best analysis of why brotherhood motivated the combat fliers. “Another face of courage is the love and respect that one has for comrades in battle. It is an allegiance more to one’s self and

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76 Keith Lamb, unpublished memoir, Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum, 51.
others than to the cause. That men may rise above their fears and fight in a self-sacrificial manner is not only noble, it is often the margin of victory in battle.

Cubbins also described the peer pressure involved in the Eighth Air Force. “There is also the impulse to do things simply because it is the thing to do. If we do not emulate our peers, we become…outcasts from our closed society. The two notions seem to coalesce into the most prevalent force of all—that is, ‘fear of being perceived to be less than one’s peers.’” Cubbins illustrated the unspoken bond of shared responsibility. For many it is a sustaining force that bridges fear-filled moments between battles, and allows them to find comfort in ‘shared’ danger.”

With the loss rate of heavy-bomber groups reaching 88 percent by early 1944, replacement crews were a fact of life. These replacements were often part of a crew that trained together in the United States and like replacements in infantry units, they had to earn the respect of their fellow aircrews by getting some combat experience. This was usually the most dangerous time for a new crew. They had to learn how to fly in tight formations and the real life experience of air-to-air combat with fighters. These new aircrew were often ignored socially at first, mainly because the other aircrew knew there was a good chance the replacements would be shot down and wanted to avoid the heartache of losing more friends. Replacements who outranked combat seasoned veterans were often resented. After surviving their early missions, the replacement crews began to be accepted. They soon became part of the brotherhood of combat fliers that was motivated to risk their lives for each other in their world of violence and death.

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78 McManus, *Deadly Sky*, 339.
Even though the scale and distance made aerial combat largely impersonal, American combat airmen knew that their enemy was real flesh and blood. Bomber crewmen knew that their bombs were falling on enemy civilians as well as factories, marshalling yards and other strategic targets, but at an altitude of 20,000 feet, the men on board the bombers did not see the damage done in a close and personal way. Strategic bombing philosophy evolved to include area bombing against enemy cities. On September 27, 1943, the Eighth Air Force began experimenting with new electronic equipment that helped them bomb German targets that were covered with clouds. These were not precision attacks because success was measured in miles instead of feet.\(^79\) Combat crewmen sometimes found themselves troubled by what they were doing, although they carried out their orders as best they could. Their closest contact with the enemy usually occurred during the attacks by fighters.

Sometimes the crewmen would even talk of respect toward their enemy. E.T. Moriarity, a waist gunner in the 306th Bomb Group described his respect for the famous group of German fighters known as The Abbeyville Kids.

Their favorite ploy was to fly around us up high so they could look us over like a boxer feeling out his opponent. Jab and jab, move in and out, and then throw the right. When they decided to move in, they spread out and came boring in from the front and usually went right through the formation. If a B-17 was hit and could not keep his place, he was an instant prey. On one mission, a German pilot in an FW-190\(^80\)


\(^80\) The FW-190 was a single engine German Fighter plane that entered combat in 1941 and proved to be a dominant fighter in the early part of World War II. See Werrell, *Eighth Air Force Bibliography*, 93.
joined us. He flew into the middle of our formation, dropped his
landing gear and flaps, and flew with us for a couple of minutes. No
one could fire at him lest they hit a ship in the formation. All of a
sudden, he retracted his gear, pulled up his flaps, snap-rolled 180
degrees, and dove from view, attesting to the skills and courage these
men possessed.81

Thousands of American combat airmen faced the sick feeling that accompanied the
realization that their plane would not make it back home. The only thing worse than
witnessing the loss of another plane was realizing that their own plane was going down.
Those who were wounded and survived were lucky. In ground combat during World War II,
three or four soldiers would be wounded for every one killed. The opposite was true for air
combat crews. For every man wounded, three were killed. The Army Air Force lost 54,700
men killed in action and 17,900 wounded.82 Some were able to return to base, crash land or
bail out over England. David Cox helped fly a damaged B-17 back to England after being hit
by flak in a mission to Lorient, France on May 17, 1943. Even though the plane was heavily
damaged, his crew was able to make their bombing run and to return their plane to England.
Five crewmen in the back bailed out too early (while still over the English Channel) and were
never found. The five crewmen in the front of the plane bailed out over England and all

81 E. T. Moriarity, self-published memoir, *Files of the Center for the Study of War and
Society*, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.
82 Ambrose, *Citizen Soldiers*, 290-310.
returned to duty. David Cox received the Distinguished Flying Cross for his efforts in returning the damaged plane.\textsuperscript{83}

Joseph Boyle had a similar experience on his first mission. German fighters killed the pilot during an attack. Even though he suffered serious injuries, Boyle was able to return the plane back to England and save the rest of the crew, an accomplishment that earned him the Distinguished Flying Cross.\textsuperscript{84}

If a combat aircrew was lucky enough to make it safely back to the base, the debriefing was the last part of the mission. Combat crews would meet with intelligence officers to discuss every detail about the mission. During the debriefing, the crews would find out how successful their mission had been and relay any information that might be useful in future missions. Two important questions covered during the debriefing were flak and fighters. One example was information navigator Ben O’Dell relayed about a number of flak guns in a wooded area. “Being convinced that I was correct, the debriefing officer forwarded the information to Fighter Command. The next time we flew over the same location, we were not fired upon. Instead, there was a large burned-out area around the former Gun Emplacement Site. Fighter Command did its job!”\textsuperscript{85} Intelligence officers often gave combat aircrews alcohol to help them unwind during the debriefing. Roger Armstrong, whose B-17 was named \textit{U.S.A. the Hard Way} and assigned to the 91\textsuperscript{st} Bomb Group, described a typical debriefing after a mission to Merseburg, Germany:

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{83} David C. Cox discharge papers. In David Cox’s (son) possession.
\textsuperscript{84} The Bergen Evening Post, \url{http://www.teaneck.org/virtualvillage/scrapbook/1943jan/1943jan.htm}.
\textsuperscript{85} McManus, \textit{Deadly Sky}, 180.
\end{flushright}
Our crew sat together at separate table from other crews. The Intelligence Officer came over and sat down. He asked a number of questions on what we saw in the air and in the target area. We soon learned that he had a set of questions all crews were asked. The Eighth Air Force had learned that the crews would open up more if they had a couple of stiff shots of Scotch or whiskey. So he poured out a double-shot and everyone, except the copilot, drank them a little bit faster than normal. This was to loosen our tongues. He received a lot of rapid-fire information after that drink. In fact he tried to slow down our conversation a bit. At interrogation, the crews were always in a hurry to get back to the barracks, clean up, eat, and go to town.86

After the debriefing, the combat airman could go back to his barracks, take a shower, eat and relax. With another mission under his belt, he could relax until the next time he was called on to risk his life for his country all over again.

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Chapter 4

The 305th Begins Combat

After settling in at Graton-Underwood and becoming accustomed to their new routine in England, the 305th Bomb Group was finally ready for their first mission. The German Luftwaffe was very strong at this point in the war. Joseph Boyle gives an account of the strength of the Germans in his oral history.

The German Luftwaffe had a very, very strong force located at several big fields all up and down the coast of Europe at that time and while the flak was heavy and pretty effective, it was mainly the fighters that were knocking our airplanes down. To give you an idea, we went overseas, the 305th BG went overseas with 36 airplanes, but in the course of the next 30 months it lost 125 airplanes to enemy action alone, not counting the ones that went down through accidents or mechanical malfunctions or for other reasons. The, I think the rate of loss was about 6 percent when we were flying.

However, when the AF was built up to include many, many more groups and the targets were further and further into Europe and into Germany itself and the targets were highly industrialized, cities or towns where there was a tremendous amounts of anti-aircraft in place,
the losses could be much, much higher than we normally would encounter in one the earlier raids. For example, where we may lose, in the days I was flying, two or three airplanes from our group, in one terrible occasion, the 305th went to either Schweinfurt or Ploesti, I forget which one, and out of sixteen airplanes, I think they only got two or three back.87

On November 18, 1942, the group flew on a diversionary sweep.88 The idea of the diversion was to send a group of planes toward a fake target in order to draw the German fighters away from the groups that were flying towards the real targets. On November 22, it looked like the 305th would finally get to fly its first real combat mission. The group was assigned to fly a mission to Lorient, France to bomb the submarine pens there. However, clouds obscured the target and all of the planes had to return to the base with their bombs still loaded.89 David Cox wrote about the disappointment in the first two raids not resulting in a real combat mission in a diary entry on November 28, 1942.

“G.U. ’42 November 28

Well, I’ve had my “baptism of fire” and it was wonderful. First I’ll tell the events that lead up to it from the beginning. About 2 weeks ago we started our raids. The first two were just diversion missions for the purpose of drawing up the enemy fighters, exhausting their fuel, so that

87 Boyle oral history, 11.
88 Thom, The Brotherhood of Courage, 36.
89 Ibid, 36.
when the group with the bombs came over they would be comparatively safe while the fighters were on the ground refueling. We flew down to the French Coast and turned and flew back to Grafton. We didn’t encounter any fighters however but S-2\textsuperscript{90} says there was a whole squadron of them flying in the sun the whole time on our last diversion. Our third mission came up and promised to be the real thing. We were briefed at 6:30 A.M. loaded our ships with 2 x 2,000 lb. bombs the nite before and took off in comparatively good weather about 10:30 AM for Lorient, France to bomb the ship yards + submarine pens there. However, after flying through fairly intense flak (anti aircraft fire) we arrived at the target to find it covered with clouds. Our secondary and last resort targets were also covered. Since we had orders to maintain our altitude which was 20,000 feet we had no alternative other than return home. We landed with our bombs still in the racks. Sometimes I wonder what would be left of us to identify if we dropped one from our racks armed, just as we landed. Those 2,000 lb. babies can really tear up the country. We were all very disappointed that we had to bring our bombs back but if we had been bombing Germany instead of France you can bet your boots we wouldn’t have brought them back.\textsuperscript{91}

\textsuperscript{90} S-2 is military shorthand for Intelligence. See Neal B. Dillon, \textit{A Dying Breed} (Grants Pass: Hellgate Press,2000), 56.

\textsuperscript{91} Cox diary, November 28, 1942.
In this diary entry, Cox does a good job of explaining what a diversion mission is. This could probably be attributed to his training as a co-pilot. The co-pilots were the main observer onboard the bombers and also wrote the mission reports at the end of the missions, and therefore paid more attention to details than the rest of the crew.

Cox also notes that his plane had to return its bombs due to the fact that the target was covered by clouds. Returning with bombs in the rack could be extremely dangerous for the men on the plane. However, he also notes that if the mission had been over Germany, they would have dropped their bombs anyway. Does this mean that missing the target in Germany would not matter as much as in France? What about the possible damage to civilians in the area?

The 305th Bomb Group finally got to fly its first real combat mission on November 23, 1942 on a raid to St. Nazaire, France. The group was briefed to bomb the submarine pens, which were heavily defended by both German fighters and anti-aircraft. The squadron leader was assigned to fly as the co-pilot for Cox’s crew on this mission, so Cox had the opportunity to fly as a waist-gunner. Cox describes the excitement of flying his first mission and the tense air battle that the B-17 crew would soon become accustomed to.

On November 22nd we prepared for another raid. Our bombs were already loaded so all we had to do was to be briefed. At 5 o’clock the next morning (Nov. 23) we got up ate breakfast and went to the briefing room. Our target was to be the dry docks at St Nazaire, France. One of the most heavily defended areas on the French coast. We went to the

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airplanes at about eight as take off was scheduled for 10:10. Saw that
everything was in order. I found that Capt. Sault was flying as co-pilot
so I had my choice of staying at home or going as a waist gunner.
Which do you think I did? Takeoff time was set up from 10:10 to
11:10, and we finally took off on schedule. Our ship was the lead plane
in #2 Squadron. Naturally we were to have some difficulty with the
weather. We were supposed to have not more than 5/10 clouds 93 but on
the way over it became 10/10. As soon as we left the English coast we
began climbing when we reached the French coast we had our bombing
altitude (22,000 ft.). Heavy flak began to come up and we experienced
a few minor hits in some of the other squadrons. We made our turn at
the initial point and suddenly there appeared the target in front of us
through a hole in the clouds. All the time flak was bursting around us
and the stuff after it’s force was spent would bounce off our wings +
fuselage like pebbles.

left
I was on the ^ waist gun and just before we went on our bombing
run I saw an FW-190 high about 7 o’clock coming in on us. My oxygen
mask chose this moment to freeze up and I was wondering if I was
going to last out the attack. He dropped a wing towards us and started
coming in. There was a spurt of white smoke as his guns cleared and
then all I could see was flame. All his guns were firing and they were
firing at me! He has 2 machine guns and 2 cannon (20mm.) in his

93 5/10 Clouds is a description for 50 percent cloud cover.
wings and 2 machine guns + 2 cannon in his fuselage. He had all of them going at us.

As soon as he started firing, I started firing. That was about 900 to 1000 yds. My first shots were a little bit in front of him but when he was in to about 600 yds. I had him dead in my sights. I held the trigger down and saw my tracers go into for about 300 yds. He peeled off and down across our tail and Courtney (radio operator) who was also firing at him put a tracer through the tail of our ship. It came smoking along right over my head and the waist filled up with smoke + pieces of metal were flying around. I looked over at Kirk who was on the other waist gun to see if he was hit because I thought an explosive had hit us. I'm pretty sure I shot that FW down. (I was given credit for a damaged)

Shortly after this encounter we dropped our bombs and saw them sink 3 ships and destroy the welding shops. Heavy flak continued to burst around us + the Colonel stat started to dive in 5 mins. we were at 300 ft over the sea and headed for home. Our gas was low so we had to land at Davidstow down in Cornwall. Noone was injured and the planes were in good shape considering all the flak. We were at Davidstow for 2 days waiting for the weather to clear up so we could fly the 191 miles back to Grafton. So here I am back at GU waiting to go on another raid. 

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94 Cox diary, undated entry.
Cox reflects on the fact that he cannot fly on this mission as co-pilot, a trend that continues throughout his service. His pilot, Joe Carter, was often the flight leader, and as such, the squadron leader and other high-ranking officials often flew along as observer. This meant that the co-pilot position would be occupied by this observer. As the flight leader was in the front of the formation, it was also one of the safest positions in the formation and high-ranking officers would sometimes request to fly in this safer position, often just to be able to say that they flew on a mission. Joe Boyle was also ‘ranked out’ of his seat on several occasions.

Cox mentions that he had the option of flying as the waist gunner on this mission. This would probably have been unusual, as all of the gunners on board the plane had extensive training in gunnery school and he would have taken someone’s position that had more experience as a gunner. He also notes that one of his fellow gunners, the radio operator, accidentally put a tracer into their own plane's tail.

For the 305th, the St. Nazaire mission on November 22, 1942 was their first real raid. Thirty-six heavy bombers hit their target. The group’s leader, Curtis E. Lemay, insisted that the group fly a straight and level bomb run from the Initial Point to the Bombing Point, with a time of about six to eight minutes over the area, which most of the men of the 305th thought that this would mean disaster. The theory at the time was that “if you fly straight and level for 10 seconds, you’ll get knocked down.” Lemay believed that there was a better way, and developed the wedge-shaped box formation that would later become standard for

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96 *The Brotherhood of Courage*, 33.
the Eighth Air Force. The men of the 305th followed Lemay’s plan and the mission was considered a success. Of the twenty planes from the 305th that flew on this mission, only four had to abort. The flak was intense, but only one plane from the group was hit. This plane’s damage was limited, and it was able to return to the base. No planes were lost on the raid, a first for the Eighth Air Force.

With bad weather settling in for a while, the 305th Bomb Group anxiously waited to fly on their next raid. Cox wrote about the time that the men had to relax and to reflect on their new life in England.

November 29th

A very uneventful day. Being Sunday and very cloudy and rainy we did nothing but sit by the stove and play “Hearts”. I plan to write Hilda again. . . . We had a false alarm this morning. A raid was planned but the weather closed in (as usual) so we didn’t get off. Bordeaux was the target which is a very long way off. Damn, but I miss my wife. I’m really going to make up for all this though, when this war is over. I ought not to plan too much on the future tho. It is so uncertain. That German FW-190 is too good an airplane. . . .

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97 Ibid, 34.
98 Ibid, 37.
99 Cox Diary, November 29, 1942,
Cox discusses how much he misses his wife Hilda. Sometimes the diary is addressed to Hilda, and other times he talks about her as though he is writing to someone else. He also mentions the uncertainty of war and the fact that he may never make it home. This theme seems to appear throughout the diary.

Dec. 3, 1942.

A year ago today I was at Keesler Field and sweating out my cadet appointment. Those were the dark days. Now I have my wings, my commission, a wife, a good bank account, and a good job. I’m able to save about a hundred a month in addition to what Hilda’s able to save. I ought to be happy if financial security has anything to do with it, but that isn’t all there is to it. I haven’t been checked out as a first pilot yet, and so that stifles my ambitions. I’m very lonesome for my wife and she’s 5,000 miles away. . . . I look forward to hearing from Hilda but when I do I only want her all the more so I don’t know which is worst. .

Cox mentions the things he is thankful for, but also talks about his ambition to be a first pilot. He believes that he should already be a pilot and expresses disappointment in the fact that his promotion has been delayed.

100 Ibid, December 3, 1942.
The 305th had another raid on December 6, 1942. The target was the Fives-Lille Steel Company in Lille, France. The factory produced steel rails and locomotives, which were important to the German transportation system. The target was well defended with both flak and German fighters. The 305th lost their first plane on this mission, and David Cox witnessed a plane in his formation going down. Nearly all of the crew of Cherry, flown by Lieutenant William A. Prentice, were killed. Only Lieutenant Henry J. Webber parachuted to safety. Webber would spend the rest of the war as a POW. Cox described this mission and the agony of losing their first plane and crew in combat.

December 6, 1942
Grafton
Underwood

Today we went on our second bombing raid. Got up at 6:30, ate breakfast and went to the briefing room. Our target was Lille, France. Naturally we had two hours to sit on our ass and sweat out the weather. Finally we took off about 10:30 A.M. Carter got lost from our leading elements and we tacked on to the 303rd Grp. by mistake. When we finally located the rest of our group we were so far behind that we had

103 The Eighth Air Force conscripted the 303 Bomb Group (known as “Hell’s Angels”) on September 10, 1942, which was based at Molesworth, England. See Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth*, 247.
to pull 40” of HG. for about 30 minutes before we caught up. We had reached our altitude by the time we reached the French coast. The 303rd and the 93rd Grp. were ahead of us at 1000 yd intervals. Jones had to turn back because of engine trouble. Our altitude when we caught up to the Col’s element was about 22,000 ft. We had just passed the French coast when I noticed a plane on our left falling back. His no. 3 engine was smoking. I lost sight of him for about 3 mins. I saw him again at about 4:30 and about 2,000 feet below us and about 3,000 yds to our rear. He was flaming and completely out of control. I saw one parachute open and thought I saw another man jump but didn’t see his chute open. Perhaps he made a delayed jump. The plane then went into a spin and a steep dive down through the clouds. Some of the fellows claim they saw the plane break up + explode. Gray says he saw it all the way to the ground and crash but I think that’s a lie because I had to crane my neck to even see it from where I was and Gray was in the nose. Some claim that two FW’s jumped this plane as soon as it had dropped back from our protecting fire. I didn’t see them though. I later learned that this plane was from the 422nd Sqdn. flown by Lt. Prentiss. This was our first loss. I believe it was caused by a technical failure. About this time light flak started coming up. None

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104 The Eighth Air Force conscripted the 93rd Bomb Group (known as “The Traveling Circus”) on September 6, 1942. See Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth*, 244.
105 422nd Bomb Squadron was one of four squadrons assigned to the 305th Bomb Group. See Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth*, 247.
106 Lt. William A. Prentice was killed in action (hereafter referred as KIA) on December 6, 1942. See Craven, *The 305th Bomb Group In Action*, 291.
very close. We had an umbrella of about 40 Spits$^{107}$. And their vapor trails covered the sky. Very pretty + so comforting.

We made our run on the target through moderate flak. I spent most of my time taking pictures with Joe’s camera. For some unknown reason our bomb racks did not work and consequently no bombs were dropped in our sqdn. As the rest of our ships were bombing on us. ie: when we dropped ours they would see them leave the ship and so would drop theirs. To add to the confusion the Col. turned off of the target before we had even flown over it. No one knows why. Only one sqdn. dropped their bombs, the 422$^{nd}$. One out of 4 sqdns. in our group. About this time an FW-190 attacked us from about 1 o’clock and at our same level. He fired one burst from about 700 to 500 yds. and then fired a burst from about 400 to 300 yds. He seemed as though he was firing at us. I was expecting to see our windshield splinter any minute. He came into about 50 yds. I got a snap-shot of him at about that distance with Joe’s camera. Our speed and his add up to about 600 miles an hr., so that’s about how fast he passed us. Soon after, Dayley, our ball turret gunner put several good bursts into another FW. which attacked us head on and low. He said he saw his tracers go into the fuselage and pieces of the ship break up. He only probably ^ get credit for a damaged as we didn’t see the FW go down. About this time the

$^{107}$ The Spitfire was a British fighter plane that helped England defeat Germany in the Battle of Britain. See Beck, Ed. *With Courage: The U.S. Army Air Forces in World War II*, 53.
flak became more intense and one burst almost got us. It burst on our level and about 25 yds in front of us. Our no. 3 engine hit the smoke. The return home was singularly uneventful as we had only one attack which was from the rear. I didn’t even see the plane which attacked. I flew most of the way back and the only thing we saw of interest was a convoy of about 15 boats in the channel. We landed, licked our wounds and counted our losses. When we had our final accounting we lost one ship and crew of ten men, one engine on Jenkin’s ship, also a hole from flak underneath Kerr’s seat about the size of your fist. Also some holes in various ships from cartridge cases from our own guns. What we’re thinking about mostly though, is how are those boy’s in Prentiss’ ship? Are they alive or dead? What a price we pay for war.\(^{108}\)

In this diary entry, Cox notes that only one squadron out of the 305\(^{th}\) Bomb Group dropped their bombs on this mission, which means the mission was not very successful. This is interesting because it shows that he does not always cast things in a better light. He could have written that it was a successful mission and that the bombs were dropped on target. He may be more accurate about the mission details because he was the main observer on board his B-17, and also had to write the mission reports.

Cox also notes the loss of another plane and the randomness of war. He wonders what happened to Prentice’s crew and notes the heavy price that must be paid for war. As the war wears on, does the repeated loss of friends make him wonder of he will survive?

\(^{108}\) Cox diary, December 6, 1942.
The loss of Prientice’s B-17, named *Cherry*, was the first loss for the 305th Bomb Group. Although Cox writes in his diary that he believes that mechanical failure was the reason for their loss, Prientice’s plane was actually shot down by German fighters during the raid. Thom notes this in *The Brotherhood of Courage*. “German FW-109 fighters shot *Cherry* down. Eyewitnesses credited the tail-gunner, Sgt. Leaham Bryant, with shooting down the fighter as *Cherry* was in her death dive, but no crew members were available to confirm the kill.”

After the raid on Lille, the 305th Bomb Group moved to their permanent base in Chelveston, England on December 10th and 11th. The group did not find the weather or mud conditions any better than at Grafton-Underwood. Cox described the new base and a mission that he missed on December 12.

December 13, 1942

Well, we’ve finally gotten settled here at Chelveston.110 Yesterday we went on our first raid from this post. Only I didn’t get to go. No bombs were dropped.111 Encountered quite a few fighters and Gussie

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111 Bad weather prevented a large attack planned for air installations at Romilly-sur-Seine. See Carter, *Army Air Forces in World War II: Combat Chronology 1941-1945*, 68.
Pyle got an engine shot out. Joe dropped back and covered him so he
got back OK. Mud is just as thick over here, so conditions were about
the same at Grafton. Our mess + officers club is much better here tho. .

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On December 20, 1942, the 305th flew on a raid to Romilly, France. This mission
was the Eighth Air Force’s most costly mission of 1942 in terms of aircraft and men lost.
The Eighth Air Force dispatched a total of eighty B-17s and 21 B-24s, making it the second
mission of World War II with over 100 aircraft involved. 72 out of 101 heavy bombers were
able to bomb the target.\footnote{Craven and Cates, \textit{The Army Air Forces in World War II, Vol. 2}, 256.} However, this most effective raid came at a price. The Eighth Air
Force lost eight B-17s on this mission. For the 305th Bomb Group, this was the first raid
from their new base at Chelveston and Cox described the loss of the B-17’s. He also wrote
about a phenomenon that often occurred during combat. Men in combat would frequently
exaggerate the strength of the enemy as well as damage done to the enemy. Cox noted both
of these in his diary on.

\begin{flushright}
December 20\textsuperscript{th}, 1942
\end{flushright}

Chelveston

Today marked my 5\textsuperscript{th} raid over occupied France. We bombed hell
outa Romilly-sur Siene which is about 75 miles inland from Paris. We

\footnote{David Cox diary, December 13, 1942.}
got up at 6 a.m. ate breakfast and went to the briefing at 7 a.m. I pedaled down on my bike and it was cold as hell. I almost went to sleep at the briefing. Our target was to be Romilly which was an airplane park (German) for this theatre of operations. The specific target was the hangars along the side of the field. I almost went nutty when they told us that we were to fly the last element\textsuperscript{114} again. That’s about the 4\textsuperscript{th} straight time we’ve done that.

We took off at 10:45 AM and got into formation OK. We rendezvoused with 3 other groups at Beachy Head.\textsuperscript{115} We were making vapor trails while we were circling waiting for the other groups and when we finally got on our way to the target there was a good thick layer of clouds under us because of the vapor trails. The other three groups were to proceed us into the target.

As soon as we hit the coast of France we encountered enemy fighters and two 17’s went down. There was one group behind us that got the hell shot out of them. I didn’t see any chutes come out of those 17’s either. We passed over Rouen on the way in and the visibility was good. The marshaling yards\textsuperscript{116} stood out like a sore thumb! We could have blasted them to hell and breakfast.

\textsuperscript{114} The Eighth Air Force called the last bomb group in a mission the last element.
\textsuperscript{115} Beachy Head was an area where bomb groups would reform before crossing the English Channel.
\textsuperscript{116} Marshaling Yards were railroad centers. See Beck, ed. With Courage The U.S. Army Air Forces in World War II, 253.
Our first attack was by 2 FW-190’s which made a head on attack against our flight which was underneath the group. Both planes attacked simultaneously and the first one fired a burst from all guns at about 800 yds. Blackie Moorer opened up with the navigators gun and Dayley from the ball turret. The FW’s came on in and Blackie tracked them as they came through the formation. He fired a bunch of tracers near Major McGhee’s ship + put one .50 through the nose. The second FW didn’t fire a shot for some reason. Dayley thinks he damaged one FW but Martini’s Ball turret claims a destroyed. We had one more attack from about 1 o’clock just before we reached the initial point. No damage. Gray missed him. We made a 360° turn at the initial point so the other groups could get in the target first. We didn’t encounter any more fighters until we left the target + started back out.

A funny thing happened. When Maj. McGhee’s bombardier opened his doors three of his bombs fell (We were about 10 miles from the target at this time.) His wing men thinking the bomb release line had been reached toggled their bombs out. The leading ship of their 2nd flight also dropped on the leader + so the whole 422nd dropped their bombs 10 miles from the target.

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117 Major Thomas K. McGhee was the air commander (leader) for the 305th on this mission. See George C. Kuhl, Wrong Place! Wrong Time! (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing), 35.
118 Joseph Boyle’s plane.
When the target was reached we made several good hits but several bombs were also wide of the target. The groups before had really tore the hell out of it though.

When we passed Paris on the way out 2 more 17’s were lost, and one 24. I saw the Eiffel Tower and as we passed Paris red flak came up at us but was wide. I saw 7 chutes from one plane that went down. When the plane hit flame which looked like it was a mile high shot up. The groups ahead of us were pretty badly shot up. They claimed that 80 pursuit attacked them but I know for a fact that there were only 4. They claim about 30 shot down too which is also gross exaggeration.

The trip back home from the Channel was uneventful + we landed without incident. Successful mission.\(^{119}\)

Cox describes this mission as ‘successful’. What he probably means is that although some bombs missed the target area, significant damage was done to the target without major losses to the group. He does note that the entire 422\(^{nd}\) Squadron missed the target area because of a mistake by the lead plane. However, he did not reflect on the damage to the area that was accidentally bombed and considered the mission a success anyway. The 305\(^{th}\) Bomb Group’s leader, Curtis LeMay, reflected on the success of a mission by saying “If we

\(^{119}\) Cox diary, December 20, 1942.
accomplished the job in any given battle without exterminating too many of our own folks, we considered that we’d had a pretty good day.”

Cox also illustrated a problem with the bombing technique used by the Eighth Air Force. At the time, it was believed that the most accurate way to drop all of the bombs from a group on the target was for the leader of the group to drop his bombs first, and then all of the other bombers in the group would drop on his lead. However, if there were a mistake made by the lead plane, then often the entire groups bombs would be off target, as in this case described by Cox.

Another detail that Cox observes is the exaggeration of damage that often accompanied the reports. He notes that the group ahead claims that eighty German fighters attacked, but that he knows that it was only four. What he is pointing out is the phenomenon that many aircrews felt when attacked by fighters. The fast moving fighters attacked repeatedly, and often appeared to be in larger numbers, which could account for the exaggeration.

The raid on Romilly, France was the last raid of the year for the 305th Bomb Group. It had been a long year, beginning with training in January and finishing with combat missions in December. The men of the 305th had been through their baptism by fire. However tougher times were ahead.

The 305th flew another raid on January 13, 1943. This would be a return mission to the Fives-Lille Steel Company. The factory had not been heavily damaged during the December 6, 1942 raid, so it was still a viable and heavily defended target. Joseph Boyle described this as his first mission. His pilot, Captain Allen V. Martini, was sick and was

ordered by the flight surgeon to stay at the base. At the controls of *The Dry Martini II* was
Major Tom Taylor, the commander of the 364th Squadron of the 305th Bomb Group, with
Boyle as the co-pilot. For Joe Boyle, his first mission turned out to be a difficult one. Major
Taylor was hit and killed by a 20mm cannon shell from a German fighter. The airplane
immediately dropped 2,000 feet as Major Taylor’s body rested against the controls. Boyle
was also injured by the blast, but he managed to move Taylor’s body from the controls and
re-gain control of the B-17. Joseph Boyle recalls his baptism by fire in his oral history.

I think, to the best of my memory, the 305th just went on a few
diversions and I don’t recall being on any actual raids until one very
eventful one, for me at least, that we made on Friday, January 13th,
sitting next to him in the cockpit, led a raid over Lille, France to bomb, I
believe a fuel works there. The general in the cockpit with Lemay was a
General Hansel. And there was probably about three groups involved
with the raid, which means that, I’m just guessing, that there was
probably between 45 and 60 airplanes involved. That particular raid
was the only raid that my pilot, Dry Martini, ever missed. He had a
very bad cold and the flight surgeon refused to let him fly that day.121
So his place was taken by a young Major by the name of Tom Taylor,
who I had hardly known in my brief association with the 305th . . .

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121 Captain Allen Martini was grounded for the day due to illness. See Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth*, 23.
On this particular day that Martini missed flying his plane and Tom Taylor took over the responsibility, we had just dropped our bombs over the target and turned, headed back to England, which was, from the altitude we were at, was very much still in sight. Lille is not very far into France. I was just taking it all in, this being my first combat mission, and trying to absorb as much as I could and hopefully find some way to be useful, if necessary, when we were attacked from the front by a fighter, the first I’d ever seen. The first indication of the attack was when a little tensil like light lit up way out into the sky ahead of us, and at the time I saw the light, this little tensil glow, I still didn’t see anything. It didn’t seem to be attached to anything. Before that thought had even had time to enter my mind, I blacked out. By the time I regained my consciousness and opened my eyes, the airplane was into a dive, Major Taylor was thrashing around in his seat, and I saw a gaping hole in our windshield, where I later learned that a 20 mm shell had come through his side of the windshield and struck him right in the chest. It didn’t, it didn’t take long for me to realize that there was something now for me to do.

I must admit that for a brief minute I was completely confused about how to go about the job, but it was obvious that I had to get the airplane back up to straight and level and it was in a substantial dive and

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122 One cannon shell exploded in the cockpit of *Dry Martini II*, killing Major Taylor. See Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth*, 23.
had gained enough speed that it was with considerable difficulty that I began to inch the nose of the airplane up and hopefully get it back up where we might possibly be able to rejoin the group.\textsuperscript{123} This was not made any easier by the fact that with the rush of 40 degree below cold air coming through the hole in the windshield and the moisture and the humidity, although it was minimal in the cockpit created a problem where all the inside windows in the cockpit quickly frosted up, so that I was unable to see out of them.\textsuperscript{124}

Boyle quickly considered the situation and realized that he would need help from his well-trained crew. \textit{The Dry Martini II} was in peril and it would take a tremendous effort on everyone’s part to save the plane, as Boyle details in his oral history.

At that point, I got in touch with the tail-gunner and asked him to give me some directions to where our group was. In the meantime, our radio operator\textsuperscript{125} had come forward and quickly sized up the situation. He pulled Captain, Major Taylor’s body out from the pilot’s seat, and had gotten hold of a leather gauntlet and shoved into the hole into the windshield and managed to plug it up so that by the time I was finally able to get the plane up to a level flight, the windows began to clear and

\textsuperscript{123} \textit{The Dry Martini II} dropped 2,000 feet after being struck by the cannon shell. Boyle managed to pull Taylor’s body from the control and level off pulled the plane out of its dive. See Thom, \textit{The Brotherhood of Courage}, 47.
\textsuperscript{124} Boyle oral history, 6.
\textsuperscript{125} Top-turret gunner S/Sgt O.E. Ballew carried Taylor’s body out of the cockpit. See Thom, \textit{The Brotherhood of Courage}, 47.
we had no further trouble, far as visibility was concerned. The only problem was trying to catch up the group, which had gotten well ahead of us as the result of this attack.

I learned later that I’d been hit on the left, in the inside of my left thigh, with a sizable, piece of the [laughter] fragment of the windshield, which buried itself in my leg, felt like a bee sting. I learned that the top turret and the ball turret gunners had both been hit in the legs by 30mm machine gun bullets, and that there was some other damages to the plane, but that we had no other, no other men injured on board. Slight correction there, I got hit by that piece of windshield and it buried itself in the inside of my right leg, right thigh. It was sufficient of a problem that I was sent to the hospital after we got home, got back to the base and did have almost ten days of recuperation plus I did get a whole week of R and R which I was able to spend down in London.\textsuperscript{126}

The loss of Major Tom Taylor hit everyone hard. To lose a crewmember was always difficult, but in this case, Taylor was also the leader of the 364\textsuperscript{th} Squadron. Boyle reflects on the loss of Taylor:

There are several things about our experience about this raid, January the 13\textsuperscript{th}. The date itself bodes no good. Tom Taylor was a Major, I believe he might have been at most a year older than I was, I was 23 at the time. From what I learned about him later, my association

\textsuperscript{126} Boyle oral history, 8.
with the group had been so brief, I’d had very little contact with him at all. He’d been merely, been pointed out to me as being the commander of our 364th squadron. As such, he did not have an airplane of his own, was responsible for all of the planes and pilots in his squadron. A squadron as I recall is nine airplanes, we had four squadrons in our group, a total of 36.

Tom Taylor was an Eagle Scout type of ever there was. He was handsome, well-mannered, well educated, and apparently a very effective pilot, who had qualified to be a Major at such an early age. The irony of losing a man like that on the very first raid was pretty hard to take. He was extremely well liked by everybody in the Group, and it was just tragic to think that his life was snuffed out so quickly, so easily and so soon. And then when you consider that Martini went on and finished 25 raids, had many close calls, and ended up going back home with his crew but for two people, myself, his co-pilot, and Sgt. Mitchell, his original tail-gunner, who was eventually shot down and killed on the airplane that I was finally shot down on May 17th of that same year, it is really something to think about. Here Martini, misses one raid, survives all kinds of risks following that, becomes a war hero, is written up in the *Saturday Evening Post*, talks to a million or more people.

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127 S/Sgt Henry Mitchell was killed on a mission to Lorient, France on May 17, 1943. See Craven, *The 305th Bomb Group in Action*, 295.
128 *15 minutes over Paris* by Major Allen Martini was published in *The Saturday Evening Post* in November 1943. See Craven, *The 305th Bomb Group in Action*, 127.
when he comes home, and I mean, sells many millions of dollars worth of war bonds, flying around the country talking to groups.\textsuperscript{129}

In this part of his oral history, Boyle notes the irony of war. His pilot, Allen Martini, only missed one mission during his service. It happened to be the mission that Taylor, who was filling in for him, was killed. Was Martini lucky? He completed his twenty-five missions, a rare feat during this part of the war. Again, this illustrates the randomness of war and how these men reflected on it.

As this was Boyle’s first mission, he still had very little experience flying the B-17. As mentioned earlier, the original co-pilots of the 305\textsuperscript{th} Bomb Group were sent on to England without having any Phase Training, and had very little training on the B-17 itself. Joe Boyle described the difficulty of landing \textit{The Dry Martini II} on this mission:

And then the third thing that stands out about it is the fact that the landing I made that day was only the fourth landing I had ever made in a B-17. We’d gotten all the way to England, and I’d started to flying raids, or we went on diversions, and I suggested to Martini it might be a good idea if he let me try to make a landing, which he reluctantly did. He let me shoot one landing. Of course, under the circumstances, one landing didn’t exactly make me feel qualified, so I was complaining, and one of the other pilots, Hank Berman by name, who flew on our wing, took mercy on me and said “Joe, I’ll let you shoot a couple of

\textsuperscript{129} Boyle oral history, 8.
landings in my airplane”, which he did. And I did make two landings in his, the second of which was kind of bumpy and I believe I flattened one of his tires.

Well, with that in mind, you can imagine what was going through my mind when coming back from Lille, with the pilot dead, and me being put to the test of making a landing for real, [laughter] I was anything but a very [laughter] competent flyer. However, we did manage to get down safely, although I’m afraid I made the final approach a little too fast and so that the result was I nearly ran out of runway before I was able to jam the brakes on and then practically ground loop the plane to a halt. But, it didn’t matter whether or not it looked pretty, the job got done and in the final analysis I was recognized with a Purple Heart and a DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross] for doing a job that theoretically I was trained to do anyway. But medals were easily, were rather freely given out at that stage of the war and I appreciated getting the ones I got.

This raid on Lille, France and the heroics of Joe Boyle and the rest of The Dry Martini II has been documented by other sources. It is mentioned in Roger Freeman’s The Mighty Eighth, where the loss of Major Taylor is noted as well as the fact Martini missed the

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130 Joseph Boyle had to use the emergency brakes during the landing because the hydraulic system was damaged during the mission. See Thom, The Brotherhood of Courage, 49.
131 Boyle oral history, 9.
mission due to illness. “The Dry Martini II . . . [was] on this mission flown by Major T.H. Taylor; Martini had been ground for the day due to illness. The lead plane was an obvious choice of target, and one cannon shell exploded in the cockpit of Dry Martini II killing Major Taylor.”

This mission was also noted in Walter Thom’s *The Brotherhood of Courage*. Thom also notes the illness of Martini as well as the death of Major Taylor.

A cannon shell from the lead fighter burst through the side window of the cockpit to the left of Taylor. It killed him instantly, and wounded Lieut. Joseph Boyle, the co-pilot. *Dry Martini* immediately dropped 2,000 feet. This sudden drop indicated to Boyle that the engines were gone, but in spite of his wounds, he pulled Taylor’s body away from the controls, and managed to level off the airplane. . . . Boyle, still fighting through great pain, managed to get the airplane back into the formation, in the lead position of the second group. . . . Mabry climbed into the pilot’s seat, to help Boyle fly the airplane. Between them, Boyle and Mabry landed Dry Martini back at Chelveston handily. They had to use emergency brakes, though. The hydraulic system was shot away.

One difference between Boyle’s account and the one in *The Brotherhood of Courage* is that Boyle says that the radio operator removed Major Taylor’s body, while Thom’s account says that Sgt. Horace L. Mabry removed Taylor’s body and helped Boyle bring the

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plane back to England. However, this would have been unlikely, as either the navigator or bombardier would have more flying experience and would have been more likely to assist Boyle.

Also, Boyle mentions that he thinks this was the first mission for the 305th Bomb Group and that the previous missions had only been diversions. However, the group flew on one diversion on November 18, 1942 and their first mission was on November 22, 1942. The group had to return with their bombs in the racks due to cloud cover over the target. The 305th flew on six missions before the January 13, 1943 raid on Lille, France. Boyle may have been ranked out of his seat on some of these missions, which may account for why he remembers this raid as his first. Although there are some discrepancies between Boyle’s oral history and the official sources, he is mostly accurate and his account gives a more personal view of the incident and adds a new perspective on how this event transpired.

Staff Sergeant John Hill was the ball turret gunner on The Dry Martini II and was also wounded on this mission. He gave his account of the mission to Lille, France in an article in The Zanesville Times Recorder on April 12, 2004.

Hill was wounded on a raid against Lille, France, on Jan. 13, 1943.
During the raid, Hill's plane, the "Dry Martini II" was piloted by a substitute, Major Tom H. Taylor, because the flight surgeon had grounded the regular pilot, Capt. Allen Martini.

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134 Craven, The 305th Bomb Group in Action, 326.
Taylor was killed by the fire from an attacking German Focke-Wulf 190 fighter plane. Several crew members, in addition to Hill, were wounded.

One FW 190 came weaving through the formation and let go with a 20mm cannon shell which crashed through the cockpit window, killing Taylor instantly. At his side, Lt. Boyle was stunned by the explosion and blinded by the shower of glass splinters. He regained consciousness, and after a struggle got the ship under control.

"Meanwhile, shells pierced the forward compartment, the ball turret and the top turret," Hill said.

Hill and the top turret gunner continued to fire despite their wounds (Hill was shot through the leg), until other crew members could give them first aid. The co-pilot succeeded in getting the plane home, but it was so badly shot up, it had to be scrapped.

*The Dry Martini II’s* experience on January 13, 1943 became rather famous and was also noted in Joseph Boyle’s hometown newspaper *The Bergen Evening Post.*

**Boyle Praised For Rescue Of Hit Fortress**

Wounded in a sky duel with the Nazis, Second Lieutenant Joseph B. Boyle, 24, of 539 Standish Road, Teaneck, who piloted the battered
U. S. Army Flying Fortress "Dry Martini Jr.", safely back to England after the acting pilot, Major Tom H. Taylor of Eugene, Ore., had been killed during a raid on Lille, France, last Wednesday, has received high praise from his commanding officer. "Lieutenant Boyle's courage, level-headedness, and ability in bringing his aircraft back safely saved not only its crew but also the aircraft. All the crew acted heroically under great difficulties and intense enemy fire", the official commendation read.

Brigadier General S. Hansell Jr., who was in the lead ship of the flight, yesterday visited Lieutenant Boyle, who is convalescing in London from gashes of the leg and face caused by the bursting shell which killed the pilot. Major Taylor was substituting for Captain Allen Martini, who was too ill to go on the mission.

Pounded by the enemy after the Fortress had discharged its load of bombs on the steel works at Lille and given up as lost by its formation, the young copilot brought the bomber out of a 2,500 foot dive, managed to level off, and chose a place in another fighting formation, riding out the attack.135

*The Bergen Evening Post* article offers a local perspective for the readers from Boyle’s hometown. It also notes Boyle’s commendation for his action.

David Cox also reported on the January 13 raid on Lille, France in his diary. He mentions the loss of Major Taylor as well another raid on December 30, 1942 to St. Nazaire, France. He recalls the loss of more B-17’s on these raids, in addition to the fact that any day could be his last.

January 13th 1943

Chelveston

Tommorrow- I go on my 6th raid. Today we lost Maj. Taylor[.] 20 mm in. cannon shell the chest. If it’s me tomorrow. I love you Hilda.  

D

Jan. 21

Funny how things turn out. The doc wouldn’t let me go on the mission on the day that I wrote the insert. Major Taylor was killed. Caught a 20mm cannon shell in the chest. Joe Boyle was the c-pilot and flew the ship back. He’ll get the D.S.C. or the D.F.C. Did a damned good job. He was his and his face was all cut up from the broken glass from the windshield. This was a raid on Lille and our squadron was all shot up. In the ship I’ve mentioned, the ball turret

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136 Cox diary, January 13, 1943.
gunner and the top turret gunner were hit. Three planes were made unfit for combat. We put some bombs on the target though. On Dec. 30, 1942 we raided St. Nazaire and really put it out of commission. We lost one plane on that raid. Lt. Love[.]\(^{139}\) Capt. Tribbett was all shot up but managed to get back. Jenkins collected quite a few holes in his ship. A flak shell went through his wing + exploded about 20 feet above them. Got back OK tho. Jones got a wingtip shot off, but got back OK.

+ crew

Incidentally we lost Hillbinger\(^{140}\) on the Lille raid on Jan 13\(^{th}\).

This is a rather sketchy account but I didn’t go on either of these raids. I’ve been ranked out of my c-pilot’s seat on both occasions. Lucky maybe, but I want to get my raids over with.

I was scheduled for 2 raids since then but dammit both were called off because of weather. I have the worst luck.

To date this group [305\(^{th}\) Bomb Group] has lost 3 planes over France. However we had quite a few shot up pretty badly. We’ve been getting frontal attacks almost entirely but we’ve mounted twin 50 cals.

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\(^{139}\) Lt. Floyd Love was killed on a mission to Lille, France on December 30, 1942. All ten crew members were KIA. The cause was unknown. See Craven, *The 305\(^{th}\)* Bomb Group In Action, 291.

\(^{140}\) Lt. Conrad J. Hillbinger was killed on a mission to Lille, France on January 13, 1943. All ten crew members were KIA. The cause was unknown. The Missing Air Crew Report (hereafter known as MACR) number is 15639. See Craven, *The 305\(^{th}\)* Bomb Group In Action, 292.
in the nose of some of our wing men + are those Jerries\textsuperscript{141} going to be surprised when a whole bunch of them are shot down, then maybe they’ll think twice before they come in on us.\textsuperscript{142}

We have a raid scheduled for tomorrow but I’ve again been ranked out of my seat. So, I’m gonna sleep until 12 o’clock.

Blackie got his 1\textsuperscript{st}[lieutenant] and Gray is in for his. Damn, to think I’ve been a 2\textsuperscript{nd} Lt for 6 mos. + 3 \frac{1}{2} of it in the combat zone + still a 2\textsuperscript{nd} Lt.. Whereas the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Lts in the states automatically get their 1\textsuperscript{st} after 6 mos. in grade. And they don’t get shot at! Something ought to be done about it. Of course since I’m just a 2\textsuperscript{nd} Lt. I can’t do anything about it. I’m bitter; maybe I should have washed out of flying school, maybe I’d be a 1\textsuperscript{st} Lt. by now if I had.\textsuperscript{143}

In this diary entry, Cox writes about getting ‘ranked out of my seat’. Because his pilot, Captain Joseph Carter, was often the flight leader, which meant that a higher ranking officer would fly as co-pilot to observe the mission. Cox also complains about not getting a promotion to 1\textsuperscript{st} Lieutenant, while other members of his crew were promoted. Walter Thom mentions the frustration often felt because of this, and the reason why it sometimes happened. “There was time for plain and fancy grumbling . . . and some justification in it. Somehow, the T/O (Tables of Organization and Efficiency) weren’t working out. Second

\textsuperscript{141} Jerries is a slang term that was used during World War II to refer to Germans. See Freeman, The Mighty Eighth, 29.
\textsuperscript{142} The German Luftwaffe modified their attacks in November 1942 to take advantage of the absence of nose guns in the American bombers. The Americans added guns in the noses in January 1943. See Craven and Cates, The Army Air Forces in World War II, Vol, 2, 678.
\textsuperscript{143} Cox diary, January 13 and 21, 1943.
lieutenants remained second lieutenants after as many as 10 to 15 missions. Washington was slow, also, with sergeancies.” Thom explains why the promotions were slow, while Cox expresses the frustration with this from a more personal level.

Men of the Eighth Air Force were constantly on pins and needles, nervously waiting for attacks from German fighters. The aircrews of the 305th knew that they would encounter flak as they approached the target area. However, they were never sure when they would run into German fighters. All of the men aboard the bombers had to keep a constant watch for enemy planes. For a personal perspective on how and when the bomber crews encountered German fighters, Joseph Boyle was asked at what point did the B-17 crews begin to encounter German fighters, and he made the following comments.

You asked at what point did the flight begin to encounter German fighters. In the early days of the Eighth Air Force there were maybe four or five groups total operating and our main objective was to, and the principal job, was to do what we could to damage or destroy the submarine pens in the various locations on the western coast of Europe and starting with St. Nazaire at the south and Lorient, Brest and going north to Vegasac, Hamburg and Willhamshaven in the north. Each of those places had facilities to keep the German submarines well equipped and give them new ammunition and so on and at that time during the war they were playing havoc with all the allied shipping. They were

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144 Thom, The Brotherhood of Courage, 58.
sinking ships faster than you could count them almost, and there were thousands of Merchant Marine personnel being lost in the process.

So, the fighter protection we had was minimal, although the British had Spitfires and Hurricanes. They would attempt to give us some cover sometimes as we entered, went out on a mission, they would fly with us for a short distance and other times they would fly out and meet us and give us some cover as we got back close to England, but they were very limited in the range and didn’t help us much when we get, when we got anywhere within range of our targets.145

The 305th flew on a mission to Germany on January 27, 1943. The target for the day was Wilhelmshaven, which was a North Sea port from which the German U-boat wolfpacks preyed on Allied ships in the North Atlantic and the English Channel. The submarine pens were the target for the day and the 305th Bomb Group sent 17 planes on the mission. One B-17 from the group was lost on the raid with five crewmen taken prisoner and five crewmen killed in action.146 This raid was a historic one for both the Eighth Air Force and the 305th Bomb group because is marked their first raid on German soil. Neither David Cox nor Joseph Boyle mentioned this raid.

The second mission to Germany for the 305th was to Hamm, Germany on February 4, 1943. The marshalling yards were the target, but the bombers had to return without bombing

145 Boyle oral history, 11,12.
146 Thom, The Brotherhood of Courage, 53.
due to bad weather over the target area. Cox missed this mission, but did mention it in his diary.

Feb. 5 1943 Chelveston Eng.

This is a day worthy of mention because today we lost Jenkins\textsuperscript{147} ship and crew, the first loss to the 364th. I didn’t go on the raid but it was the 2nd raid on Germany by Fortresses\textsuperscript{148}. Andy Kerr, one of my classmates, was co pilot to Jenkins. The ship exploded so it’s very doubtful that anybody got out. He’s the first of 42-G\textsuperscript{149} I know of that has been killed in action.

I was in London with Kerr 3 days ago. He was a happy go lucky sort of guy. Swell fellow. So was Jenkins. The 422\textsuperscript{nd} lost Davidson\textsuperscript{150} and his ship. He may have gone down in the channel tho.

I’m scheduled to go on a raid tomorrow, Doubt if it will come off tho. It will be my seventh raid.

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\textsuperscript{147} Lt. Cornelius A. Jenkins died when a German FW-190 rammed the right wing of his B-17 on a mission to Hamm, Germany on February 4, 1943. Five crewmembers were KIA and 5 were captured and became prisoners of war (hereafter known as POW). See Craven, The 305\textsuperscript{th} Bomb Group In Action, 292. \\
\textsuperscript{148} The Flying Fortress is a nickname for the B-17. See Freeman, The Mighty Eighth, 1. \\
\textsuperscript{149} 42G refers to the B-17G. The B-17 evolved into a better bomber as World War II progressed. Early combat led to many design changes that helped improve its performance. The B-17G had a maximum range of 3700 miles while the B-17D could fly only 2500 miles. The B-17G also had eight of its thirteen machine guns in power-driven turrets whereas the B-17D relied on seven hand-operated machine guns. See Beck, ed. With Courage The U.S. Army Air Forces in World War II, 152 and Astor, The Mighty Eighth, 95. \\
\textsuperscript{150} Lt. William K. Davidson was killed on a mission to Hamm, Germany on February 4, 1943. All ten crewmembers were KIA. The cause was unknown. See Craven, The 305\textsuperscript{th} Bomb Group In Action, 292.
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Old #588\textsuperscript{151} has had only 1 hole in it. A hole about an inch long in the cowling of no. 2 engine from flak. Hope that’s the only hole it ever gets.

Twenty-five and we go home but we’ll probably be sent to Africa before then. That would be adding insult to injury. . . .

Probably have to get up at 4 AM in the morning so I’d better hit the hay.

Goodnite my, darling.\textsuperscript{152}

Cox ends this entry with a goodnight to his wife, which indicates that he may be writing this diary for her. Because of the uncertainty of war, Cox may have been trying to keep a record for his wife so that she could understand what he was going through during his time in war. If he was shot down, the diary might have been returned to his wife. He also seems to be writing it for himself at times, mainly because if the technical details of the missions that only someone with his knowledge would understand.

Cox refers to this raid as his sixth. During this part of the war, twenty-five missions were required before a crew could go back home. The average number of missions for an aircrew at this time was thirteen, leaving most of the crews either shot down or killed. The

\textsuperscript{151} Old #588 refers to the serial number of the B-17 \textit{Carter and his Little Pills}. See Craven, \textit{The 305\textsuperscript{th} Bomb Group In Action}, 293.
\textsuperscript{152} Cox diary, February 5, 1943.
Memphis Belle was the first B-17 of the Eighth Air Force to complete its twenty-five missions, returning to the United States on June 9, 1943.153

The men of the 305th always welcomed a break from combat. In between raids, David Cox managed to get a pass to London. Upon returning, he recorded his experience there in his diary, as well as his thoughts on having to fly with another crew instead of Carter’s Little Pills.

February 12, 1943 England, Chelveston.

Just got back from London. Didn’t leave on pass until six last nite so it was a short pass. Saw a show this afternoon “Du Barry Was a Lady”. Fairly good, but the English actors just can’t stack up to the ones in the States. No mail from home today but 2 days ago I got about 5 letters, which was very, very nice. . . . There is also a mission planned for tomorrow. I’m scheduled to fly with Mokler but I don’t feel right when I don’t go with Joe in the Old #588. If I wasn’t anxious to finish my missions and get home to my little wife maybe I wouldn’t even go. Not that I’m afraid but I like to fly with my crew. . . .

Heard yesterday that Bishop was killed at Topeka when his B-24 crashed. He rode down from Salt Lake to Tucson with us. He’d been married since Advanced tho.

153 Freeman, The Mighty Eighth, 50.
Well, getting sleepy so here’s hoping I can still write in this book tomorrow nite. Goodnite, Hilda, my darling I love you.

10:30 P.M.\textsuperscript{154}

David Cox’s next diary entry was on March 7, 1943. The 305\textsuperscript{th} had been on several raids since his last report. On February 12, the group flew another mission to Hamm, Germany. The bad weather separated the 305\textsuperscript{th} from the main formation and they had to return to the base without bombing. The group also had a raid on St. Nazaire, France on February 16, where the target for the day was the U-boat basin locks. Sixty-five heavy bombers were dispatched for this mission. There was an unsuccessful air-to-air bombing attempt by German fighters.\textsuperscript{155} The mission was considered unsuccessful as the 305\textsuperscript{th} suffered bombsight difficulties.\textsuperscript{156} However, the group lost another B-17, piloted by Hank Burman. Cox described the loss of Burman’s crew in his diary.

\textit{Sunday} \hspace{1cm} \textit{March 7, 1943}

Well I didn’t get to write on that nite but I’ll make up for it tonite.

So damned much has happened, since I last wrote.

We were scheduled to fly to Hamm, Germany on Feb 12. We were briefed and it looked like it was going to be a tough one. We took off

\textsuperscript{154} Cox diary, February 12, 1943.
\textsuperscript{155} Carter, \textit{The Army Air Forces in World War II: Combat Chronology} 1941-1945, 96.
\textsuperscript{156} Freeman, \textit{The Mighty Eighth}, 26.
without incident and formed over the field. Flew to the east coast and ran into a front. We flew instrument formation but pulled the squadron away from the group. When we finally broke thru at 10,000 feet we were several miles behind. We flew all the way to Germany but couldn’t catch the group. Clouds were up to 22,000 feet. Worst weather I’ve ever seen. Finally we lost sight of the group and turned for home after flying over Germany for about an hour. Didn’t see but one fighter and he was off in the distance. Returned home without incident. We made several raids since then but I’ve been on only 3. On the Wilhelmshaven raid (second one) Benson\textsuperscript{157} went down. Nobody knows how or when, it was so sudden. Mjellum was his copilot. Everybody got shot up pretty bad but 588 got only a few scratches.

The group went down the glory road to St. Nazaire again. I didn’t go. It was really a rough trip. Flack was so thick that they were flying through black smoke, very dense over the target. Burman\textsuperscript{158} got a flak hit in his no. 3 engine over the target. About 5 minutes later an FW-190 made an attack on his element which Joe Carter was leading. Burman got a hit in his gas tank between his no. 3 + no. 4 engine, and Joe got a hit in the prop dome of no. 4. A fire started on Hank’s wing from the

\textsuperscript{157} Lt. Isaac D. Benson was killed on a mission to Wilhelmshaven, Germany on February 26, 1943. All ten crew members were KIA after their B-17 was shot down by German fighters. See Craven, \textit{The 305\textsuperscript{th} Bomb Group In Action}, 293.

\textsuperscript{158} Lt. Henry M. Burman’s B-17 was shot down by German fighters on a mission to St. Nazaire, France on February 16, 1943. Burman and Dominick N. Lazzaro were captured and became POWs. The other eight crew members were KIA. See Craven, \textit{The 305\textsuperscript{th} Bomb Group In Action}, 293.
gasoline and in about 30 seconds the wing burned through and broke off. His plane did a half roll to the right and went into a spin. One parachute was seen. After spinning for a few thousand feet the plane exploded. Bob Mericle who was copilot seen to rise up in his seat just before the plane left the formation, but he wasn’t seen to jump. Burman has been reported a prisoner of war.

We were scheduled for Emden, Germany and I wasn’t able to go. Nothing happened tho. Bad weather.

I went as observer on a raid over Brest, France but nothing happened. Bad weather.

Last Thursday we went to Rotterdam, Holland. We were briefed to go to Hamm again but didn’t make it because of a front lying just inside of the coast. We flew down the coast for about 50 miles through very intense flak, and I was expecting to feel a piece of it any minute. We got our bombs on the target and turned out to sea. There were 3 fighters and they attacked just after we left the coast. No hits on us though. The 306th159 went on in to Hamm in spite of the bad weather and lost 3 planes and the group following them lost 2 planes.160 We didn’t lose any on that trip.

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159 The 306th Bomb Group (known as The Reich Wreckers) was assigned to the Eighth Air Force in September 1942. See Freeman, The Mighty Eighth, 248.
160 Freeman, The Mighty Eighth, 26.
Yesterday [March 6, 1943] we were briefed to bomb Lorient. We assembled over the field and flew down to Lyard Point, from there we stayed at low altitude and flew around the coast of France + off of it about 150 miles all the way down as far as Lorient. We made our turn and climbed until we were almost at the target. Flak was coming up pretty thick, but stopped for some reason just as we left the bomb release line. I saw 2 planes from the group ahead of us go down apparently from flak hits. Several parachutes came out of them. There was no flak to amount to anything over the target when we turned back out to sea.161 About 25 miles out to sea we were back down to 10,000 feet. I saw another plane crash into the sea and a flare shoot up from it. We followed the same route back except we landed at Pruddonock on Lizard Point, because of shortage of gas. This is an RAF162 Base and we naturally had RAF accommodations which were terrible. One good thing, however, I got the first fresh egg I’ve had since I’ve been in England. I slept between RAF blankets which are as rough as sand paper. I scratched all nite + was kinda cold. We blasted hell out of the target so I don’t think we’ll have to go back to Lorient anytime soon.

Here’s a summary of planes we’ve lost:

Prentiss

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Captain Lynn H. Mokkler, a pilot in the 305th Bomb Group, wrote an article about the loss of some of their friends. The article was published in *The Pittsburgh Press* and was published on July 25, 1943. Mokler documented the loss of Hank Burman’s plane.

**Tale of a Pennsylvanian**

Lt. Henry M. Burman was tall, dark and handsome as no one has every been tall, dark and handsome before. A Philadelphian, he was athletic from top to toe—which took up a space of six foot three from the ground up and miles around the shoulders. He was always fond of horseplay, and although he could be serious if he had to, he generally had nothing more on his mind than a new joke or his next pass day.

I guess Hank saw it as soon as we did, because we could see his co-pilot, Bobby Mericle moving around in the cockpit, striving vainly to

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163 Cox diary, February 12, 1943.
get rid of the insidious red parasite licking away the wing and steadily
growing bigger. Finally they must have decided it no go, because Hank
pulled out of formation to where he knew he’d be a clay pigeon for the
Focke-Wulfs, but, where he wouldn’t endanger any of the rest of us if
his ship exploded. Good, big-hearted Hank Burman, generous and cool-
thinking to the last!

Then the wing crumpled and fell off and what had been a great and
graceful war bird became a tangled wreckage, flopping lifelessly down.
Several parachutes were seen to open, then fade away.\(^{164}\)

This article is obviously sympathetic towards the men of the 305\(^{th}\), and adds a sort of
‘home team’ or local color feel to this account. This article and others like it were likely
written to give a positive spin to the reports of combat during World War II. Even though
the article is sympathetic towards the 305\(^{th}\) Bomb Group, it gives us a more personal view of
aerial combat and the bond that developed with men who fought together.

Hank Burman managed to survive a rather spectacular crash, which is detailed in an
excerpt from Joseph Boyle’s oral history. Boyle describes his surprise to see Burman as he
entered Stalag Luft III.

As I was, by then I think I was part of a small group of other
prisoners and as we entered the main gate of Stalag Luft III, and into the
compound that I was to be interned, I was delighted to see, standing

\(^{164}\) The Pittsburgh Press, Sunday, July 25, 1943.
there, among others, looking at the incoming purge, they used to say
‘well there will be a new purge group coming in of prisoners practically
every day, and among the group waiting, looking us over, was my old
friend Hank Burman. He’d been shot down at least two or three months
before and as of the day that I last flew, Hank was still listed as missing
and probably dead. Nobody had heard a word about ‘em. It turned out
that Hank, who’d been shot down in, I think it was February, on a raid
to St. Nazaire, had his airplane badly shot up and had given the order for
his crew to bail out and he tried to get out of the ship himself, it went
into a violent maneuver that threw him up against the instrument panel
and he was jammed in hat position until while the airplane crashed to
the ground from about 17,000 feet. Through a miracle, after the plane
hit the ground, he momentarily came to and made a real effort to crawl
out away from the wreckage, thinking in terms of the fire and so on, and
he managed to get away from the wreckage a little ways, then passed
out again. He didn’t come back to, regain consciousness until a week
later, when he found himself in a Luftwaffe hospital.165

On March 8, the 305th Bomb Group flew on another raid. The marshalling yards of
Rennes, France were the target for the day.166 For David Cox, it was both a lucky and tragic
day. He missed the mission due to a cold. Unfortunately, *Carter and his Little Pills* was shot

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165 Boyle oral history, 24, 25.
166 Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth*, 27.
down on this mission. For Cox, this was a major loss. He had been assigned to Carter’s crew since their departure from Syracuse, NY. Cox detailed their loss in his diary on March 10, 1943.

March 10, 1943

Well, here I am writing again but I started to give this writing up. The reason is that I now have to add Captain Joe W. Carter\textsuperscript{167} to the above list. On March 8\textsuperscript{th} he, Blackie, Gray and the rest of the crew went down in the Channel. The target [was] Rennes, France and they blew hell outa it. I was scheduled to go with Joe but the nite before Stein came up to me at the Club and asked me if he could go in my place, that he hadn’t been on a raid in over a month. Since I had been on two in a row I said OK.

Just after they left the target Joe was hit. The fighter came head on and low. Ashcroft said that bullets raked the ship from nose to tail. He fell out of formation and started losing altitude. Spitfires covered him all the way down, and circled him after he hit the water. His position was radioed and in 36 minutes after he hit the water a flying boat was at the scene. Seven bodies were seen floating near a dinghy. But an enemy fighter appeared about that time and since the flying boat

\textsuperscript{167} Lt. Joseph Carter was killed on a mission to St. Nazaire, France on March 8, 1943. All ten crew members were killed in action. German Fighters shot down their plane. The MACR number is 15718. See Craven, \textit{The 305\textsuperscript{th} Bomb Group In Action}, 293.
had no armor he had to come back in. A boat was sent out however but
nothing at all could be found, neither the dinghy or the bodies.

Now I’m the only one left of the nine who came over. I feel very
much alone and the empty beds in the barracks don’t help any. I think
I’ll try to get a transfer either to pursuit\textsuperscript{168} or try to get back to the states
and get a ship of my own. I might have a chance at it.

I sure do feel sorry for Doris, and her child. But there’s still a
chance.\textsuperscript{169}

The loss of \textit{Carter and His Little Pills} would be very difficult for David Cox. These
were the men he had trained and fought with for the last eighth months. Why did he miss
this mission? He says that he let someone who had missed several missions take his place.
However, this would have been unlikely. Everyone was anxious to finish their twenty-five
missions, and he had already stated that he only liked flying with his crew. He may have had
a cold and would have been grounded anyway. Regardless, this is another example of the
unpredictable circumstances of war. He is both lucky and unlucky. He lost his crew that had
been together since training, but was still alive. Did the loss of his crew make him feel guilty
because he wasn’t there to help them?

Captain Lynn Mokler also documented the loss of David Cox’s crew in his article in
\textit{The Pittsburgh Press}. His commentary describes Captain Joseph Carter and the disbelief
shared by the men of the 305\textsuperscript{th} that \textit{Carter and His Little Pills} was lost.

\textsuperscript{168} Pilots often referred to fighter planes as pursuit planes.
\textsuperscript{169} Cox diary, March 10, 1943.
Almost Gets Home

For downright coolness, I never saw a man like Capt. Joe Carter. He was from Shafter, Cal., built like the Rock of Gibraltar and just as steady.

He was hit while over the Biscay channel when we’d just begun to think we had a free ride home. All around were the very lovely Spits for withdrawal support, and we were thinking to ourselves what a fight that had been, when blooey! Three M.E.’s came roaring through. They left Joe’s Fort smoking badly in two engines. He naturally had to fall back, but was still under control, going down with a protective cover of Spits humming about him.

We didn’t dream he wouldn’t make it because England was already in sight. He began to lag more and more until finally he was a speck in the sky, and staining it with a trail of black smudge. Our tail gunners could just barely make him out when he turned into the wind for a crash landing in the water. There was a great splash and when the scouting plane went, the sea was calm. On its surface was nothing but a yellow life raft—empty.\(^{170}\)

The death of his crew had a profound effect on Cox. After their loss, he did not write in his diary for three and a half months. When asked how Cox reacted to the loss of his crew, Joe Boyle made the following observation:

. . . of course, as we both know, Dave Cox fortunately was not on this mission. I did not fly on this mission and I can’t tell you exactly how Dave reacted when he heard his crew had gone down. But, it had gotten to the point where we became a little, had gotten a little numb to that kind of news. There wasn’t much we could do about it, and there was that feeling that I think that is absolutely basic to human nature, and that is that there is a sense of relief first that it wasn’t you, and secondly there’s a sense of real sadness at losing your friends. 171

During this time, Cox adjusted to flying with replacement crews, a task that he found very difficult, as documented in later diary entries.

For Joseph Boyle, another difficult mission was imminent. On April 4, 1943, the 305th Bomb Group raided the Renault works in Paris, France. The Nazis had taken over the plant and were now producing tanks and trucks for the German war machine. The Eighth Air force outfitted Boyle’s crew with a new B-17, *The Dry Martini III*. The crew hoped that the new B-17 would have better luck than the previous *Dry Martini’s*, but no such luck would prevail. Boyle was injured once again and his crew was credited for shooting down ten

171 Joseph Boyle’s oral history, 12.
German fighters, a record that stood until the end of World War II. The mission was a particularly dangerous one for Boyle’s crew, which he recounted in his oral history.

Well, before I got shot down, on May 17th on a raid to Lille, to Lorient, Lorient on the Brest peninsula in Brittany, I had one other exciting raid and that occurred in May 4th or 5th when our group was part of an attack made on the Renault works in, just outside the city of Paris. As I recall, there were about 75 planes on that raid, the Paris raid. And it was considered a very successful raid as far as the damage that was done to the Renault works, which were manufacturing trucks and the Germans, of course, were getting the benefit of the trucks.

On the way into the target that day, we observed two large flights of fighters on the ground taking off and obviously on the way up to start to attack us, but what we didn’t know was that we had a very strong tailwind going in and we got to the target quicker than we expected to and I guess before the fighters really could get up altitude and start shooting at us. But when we dropped our bombs and turned around on the way out, things changed drastically. Instead of ground speed of over 225 mph or so we were making a ground speed of something like 90

173 This raid was on April 4, 1943. Eighty-five heavy bombers hit industrial installations in the Paris area, including the Renault armament and motor works. See Carter, *The Army Air Forces in World War II: Combat Chronology* 1941-1945, 115.
mph flying home. This meant that we were over enemy territory for a much longer time. And during that time we had repeated attacks against our group, and our particular group lost three planes that day. I don’t know how many planes may have been lost from the other groups.

Before we’d taken off that day, a photo officer on the base had handed me a movie camera and asked me to take pictures if I had the opportunity. And so, it was by chance that I was using this camera, attempting to take pictures during a series of frontal attacks, that two machine gun bullets came through the windshield on my side of the airplane this time, and the blast knocked the camera out of my hand.\footnote{Four cannon shells penetrated the windshield of The Dry Martini III. See Craven, The 305th Bomb Group in Action, 129.} Fragments of the windshield . . . I found I had a handful of blood, and [laughter] with the, again with the freezing cold air coming through the windshield [laughter], and hitting me in the face. My face was numb and I had an awful feeling that my chin had been shot off. It turned out that my wounds were very superficial, but at the time, I didn’t know that. Martini was so busy taking evasive action, as a result of repeated fighter attacks that were coming in one right after another, constantly, for a least 20 or 30 minutes time, that he didn’t have any time more than to give me an occasional glance.

Finally, at one point after glancing at me, he gave me, he hit me in the ribs with an elbow and pointed down at the floor of the plane. I
looked down and found that my oxygen tube had been severed and I was sitting there without getting oxygen through my oxygen mask. The result was, I was beginning to pass out. I reached down and picked up the oxygen tube, shoved it in my mouth, and after a few, inhaling a few mouthfuls of pure oxygen my head cleared and I realized that I was still alive and well and only minimally injured.

To make a long story short, on that particular mission our airplane was credited with shooting down some 12 enemy aircraft. In the final briefing, after we got back, I believe that 10 or 12 were considered confirmed and that set a record of fighters shot down by any one bomber for, to the best of my knowledge for the rest of the war.\textsuperscript{175}

Now, I never saw even one airplane shot down, but of course, from my point of view I just had a little piece of the sky that I could account for. So, all I knew was that I’d gotten myself another Purple Heart without doing anything that I’d planned to do.

After that raid, we found the airplane had over 300 holes in it, large and small. But fortunately, the windshield fragments that hit me in the face was the only bodily damage done to anybody. The airplane had to be retired from combat and a night or so announcement had been made that this \textit{Dry Martini and the Cocktail Kids} shot down this large number

\textsuperscript{175} \textit{The Dry Martini III} was credited with shooting down 10 German fighters on this mission, which was a record for a single bomber in the Eighth Air Force. See Freeman, \textit{The Mighty Eighth}, 29.
of German fighters, Lord HawHaw’s voice came over the radio and personally challenged the *Dry Martini and the Cocktail Kids* to prove their marksmanship by rendezvousing at some point in the sky over the English Channel and the Germans, and we were advised that the Germans would send up ten more planes and give us a chance to shoot them down if they wanted to, if we wanted to meet the challenge. This was the kind of thing that you would get over the radio that the Germans used as propaganda to let us know that they had very accurate information on everything we were doing. For example, one of the old stories was that Lord Hawhaw would direct a comment to some particular base and tell them that the clock in the officers’ club was ten minutes fast or something to that, along those lines, constantly needling us to think that there were saboteurs and spies within our ranks someplace.177

Several things about Boyle’s account of the Paris raid are noteworthy. Boyle’s report on the mission is from the memory of an event that occurred sixty-two years earlier. He incorrectly states the date as May 4, 1943 instead of the correct date of April 4, 1943. However, the mistake on the date is a minor detail. He recalls that seventy-five bombers were on this mission while the official records show eighty-five. This is also a minor detail, and he is pretty close. He is correct on the damage to the target. Boyle reports that the Paris raid “considered a very successful mission as far as the damage that was done to the Renault

176 Lord Haw Haw was a British traitor who would broadcast propaganda from Germany in an effort to effect the moral of the Allies. See Thom, *Brotherhood of Courage*, 79.
177 Boyle oral history, 15.
works.” In *The Mighty Eighth*, Roger Freeman states that “Fortresses [B-17s] left the Renault motor vehicle works at Paris a smoking ruin. It took six months to resume full production, denying the enemy 3,075 lorries [trucks].”

Freeman also confirms Boyle’s account of the ten German fighters *The Dry Martini III* shot down that day. “*Dry Martini*, leading the low unit (364th Bomb Squadron) attracted successive attacks. By quick evasive action of the pilot, Captain Allen Martini, and able shooting of the gunners, the Fortress survived. The ten “Jerries” credited the crew as destroyed was a record for a bomber on a single mission.” Although it would be easy to embellish this story, Boyle has reported a fairly accurate account of the action on board *The Dry Martini III*, and has given a better description of what the mission was like for the men on board this B-17.

Several sources have documented this particular event. The newspaper in Joe Boyle’s hometown wrote an article about his experience on this mission.

**Boyle's Dry Martini Blasts Renault Plant and 10 Nazis**

*Teaneck Copilot Has Second Narrow Escape From Death As His Camera Deflects German Shell*

The battle-scarred Flying Fortress Dry Martini and its 10-man crew of cocktail kids went berserk like a sea salt on shore leave, over Paris yesterday and set a record for bombers in shooting down 10 Nazi fighters over the southwest Paris plant of the famed Renault works.

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178 Boyle oral history, 15.
180 Ibid.
Lieutenant Joseph B. Boyle of Teaneck, co-pilot of the plane he brought back to its near-London base last January 13 with its pilot dead and another crewman wounded, had his second known close call from death.

Radioed reports before midnight last night declared that only the camera Boyle poised before his face saved his life by deflecting the enemy-fired 50-mm shell which crashed the windshield and sprayed some of the fighters in a rain of fine glass. The Dry Martini, a veteran of missions over Nazi-held France and Germany, returned to its home field looking like a sieve with 60 shell holes, some as big as a pumpkin and with no one hurt more than for scratches.

In its January assault on Lille in northwest France, Boyle took over the stick when the Fortress spiraled out of control with Nazi planes after it. Boyle lifted the plane out of its nosedive and raced the ship back to England, miles behind the squadron. It was not until the ship gained the channel that Boyle shook off pursuit. He himself was wounded and the ship was decommissioned.

The first thing Boyle said as he lifted his shattered camera from the plane, was "I'm sure I got some good pictures." His mother said today "I think that kid has a charmed life, but I am jittery all the same."181

181 http://www.teaneck.org/virtualvillage/scrapbook/1943apr/1943apr.htm
This raid was also documented in *The Saturday Evening Post* on November 20, 1943 in an article titled “15 Minutes over Paris”, written by Allen Martini, the pilot of *The Dry Martini and the Cocktail Kids*.

For Joe Boyle and the rest of the *Cocktail Kids*, this would be a mission to remember. For the Eighth Air Force, the April 4, 1943 mission to the Renault works was the deepest penetration into Occupied Europe. The bombers enjoyed fighter support after leaving the target, but were on their own while over the target. *The Dry Martini III* sustained 160 cannon and bullet holes and the left aileron was partially shot away during the attacks.\(^{182}\) The damage was so great that *The Dry Martini III* had to be retired. The plane became a ‘Hangar Queen’, a term affectionately given to damaged planes that were scrapped for spare parts for other less damaged planes. The Group as a whole dropped 500 bombs, with only two determined to have missed the target area, an accomplishment that earned the 305\(^{th}\) Bomb Group a Distinguished Unit Citation.\(^{183}\)

For David Cox, life without his original crew was difficult. He flew on a couple of missions filling in for the sick co-pilot (Edward T. Logan) of *Available Jones*, piloted by Morris Jones. After Logan returned to his crew, *Available Jones* was shot down on the Paris mission on April 4, 1943. Finally, Cox settled in with a new crew, led by pilot Varney Cline. They flew missions to Lorient, France (April 16, 1943), Antwerp, Belgium (May 4, 1943), Kiel, Germany (May 14, 1943), Helgoland, Germany (May 15, 1943) and back to Lorient on

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\(^{183}\) Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth*, 29.
May 17, 1943.\textsuperscript{184} The Kiel raid was the deepest penetration yet for the Eighth Air Force and the Raid on Helgoland marked the first 200-bomber mission for the Americans.\textsuperscript{185} For Cox, the mission to Lorient on May 17\textsuperscript{th} marked his closest call with death to date. After receiving heavy damage from flak, Cox managed to return the B-17 to England and received the Distinguished Flying Cross for his efforts. David Cox detailed this mission in his diary.

May 26, 1943

It is 3 months and a half since “Carters Little Pills” went down and so I’m afraid that there is no chance for my good friends. So damned much has happened since then that it’s entirely possible that I’ll leave some of it out.

Being left without a crew did not do me any good. I didn’t have Joe to pull for me and since Capt. McDonald was hit Capt. Smith has been our C.O. I wish I could say something good for Capt. Smith but since all I would say would be bad I won’t say anything.

I flew a coupla missions in the two months that followed. Logan was sick with an ear infection so I flew with Morris M. Jones.\textsuperscript{186} Just after Logan began flying again, he went with Jones and they were shot 

\begin{footnotes}
\item[185] Freeman, \textit{The Mighty Eighth}, 47.
\item[186] German fighters shot down Lt. Morris M. Jones’ B-17 on a mission to Paris, France on April 4, 1943. One crewmember (Edward C. Mescher, the Ball Turret gunner) was killed in action. The rest of the crew became prisoners of war. See Craven, \textit{The 305\textsuperscript{th} Bomb Group In Action}, 294.
\end{footnotes}
down. Then I had no one to fly with. About this time the replacements started coming in. I had 12 missions under by belt, but Smith wouldn’t check me out. The new fellows coming in were most all in my class at Columbus. Tuttle, Personeus, Tyler, Higgins, Rodgers, Walker. They all had their 1st Lt’s. and were all 1st pilots. I was plenty bitter and still am for that matter. Varney Cline came in a little ahead of these fellows with Bolken as his copilot. Being very big hearted, Capt. Smith made Bolken Asst. Operations Officer and made me Cline’s copilot.

We went to Lorient\textsuperscript{187} and made the trip without mishap. I did ½ of the flying. We then went to Antwerp\textsuperscript{188} and collected quite a bit of flak. This raid was on [May 4, 1943]. We had P-47’s\textsuperscript{189} with us on this one and it was an easy one. They really did a good job on those FW’s.

Our next one was to Kiel,\textsuperscript{190} a very long hard trip. We did a damned good job on the target but I was ready for the hospital when we got back. Dead tired. The FW’s were shooting at us for about 45 minutes and it looks as though the cannon they had were about 40 mm. Our 50 cals. looked mighty puny against them. This raid was on May [14, 1943]. No losses.

\textsuperscript{187} Two groups of heavy bombers hit bridges, ports and naval facilities at Lorient, France on April 16, 1943. See Carter, \textit{The Army Air Forces in World War II: Combat Chronology}, 121.
\textsuperscript{188} Sixty-five heavy bombers struck the former Ford and General Motors plants at Antwerp on May 4, 1943. On this mission, P-47s began providing fighter escorts up to 175 miles. See Carter, \textit{The Army Air Forces in World War II: Combat Chronology}, 129.
\textsuperscript{189} The P-47 was a rugged single engine fighter first used by the Eighth Air Force in early 1943. See Craven and Cate, Eds. \textit{The Army Air Forces in World War II Vol. 6}, pp. 216-217.
\textsuperscript{190} Carter, \textit{The Army Air Forces in World War II: Combat Chronology}, 135.
Our next one was to Wilhelmshaven but just before we got there we ran into a front and so weather conditions prevented us from ever getting to the target. Instead we bombed a naval base at Helgoland\textsuperscript{191} which is on an island just off the coast. We had quite a few attacks and lost two airplanes out of the group.

We were scheduled for a raid on Brest but our #4 engine acted up so much we had to turn back. On the 17\textsuperscript{th} of May our number was up. We were scheduled to hit Lorient\textsuperscript{192} again. We were leading the 2\textsuperscript{nd} element of the high squadron. We had a helluva time in the climb and pulled 46” of Hg. And 2500 rpm for about 15 minutes. Smith really messed us up in the formation several times. I was so mad I could have shot him down. The group was at 27,000 ft. and we were at about 27,900 ft.

We were scheduled to hit the target at 12:10. We encountered no enemy fighters on the run in to the target, but at 12:05 they hit us, about 50 of them. The 20 mms. were bursting all around us and the smoke was so thick it was almost like flying through clouds. They would start bursting about 200 yards ahead and keep coming closer and closer. Finally, I said to myself “The next burst will get us” and it did. Colby, our top turret gunner was firing like mad all this time. In fact

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{191} 135 bombers attacked various targets around Helgoland, Germany on May 15, 1943. See Carter, \textit{The Army Air Forces in World War II: Combat Chronology}, 135.
\textsuperscript{192} 118 heavy bombers hit the port area and U-boat base at Lorient, France on May 17, 1943. See Carter, \textit{The Army Air Forces in World War II: Combat Chronology}, 136.
\end{footnotes}
all the guns were going. All we could see in the cockpit were the bursting 20 mms. The enemy fighters were coming in dead astern and just sitting out there and shooting at us. Penfield got one before we were hit. Our tail was laid open right down the middle, half of our left horizontal stabilizer and elevator was shot away. We had a hole the size of a wash tub in the left wing behind #2 engine. Our number 2 gas tank was hit and was burning, our #2 engine was hit and had to be feathered, all of our radio was shot out except the interphone, there were several holes in all blades of the #2 prop. Two shells entered the cockpit on the left side and severed all aeileron control on our left aeileron and left only one strand holding the right aeileron. Our tail gunner was wounded + his guns out of action. The ball turret was hit and was inoperative. I guess this covers the damage.

We were knocked out of formation and lost about a 1000 feet altitude. Cline cut on the AFCE\textsuperscript{193} but I cut it off immediately because it wasn’t working properly and I wanted to make the bomb run. \(\forall\) I think Cline wanted to bail out as soon as he found we were on fire, which I think was the reason he cut on the AFCE. I talked him out of [it] though and we battled through the prop wash of the group ahead of us and Joe dropped his bombs on them. We were burning inside the

\textsuperscript{193} AFCE is an abbreviation for Automatic Flight Control Equipment. The AFCE was linked to the bombsight and was used successfully for the first time on March 18, 1943. See Carter, \textit{The Army Air Forces in World War II: Combat Chronology}, 108.
wing all this time and I was expecting the wing to burn through any minute, but we had to get the bombs away.

We kept losing altitude all the time and couldn’t stick to a formation because we had on aileron control. We kept on burning all the way across the Briest peninsula. During this time all the memories of home and my loved ones kept running through my mind. By this time the fire was so hot that the metal on the upper surface of the wing would melt and roll off.

The Spitfires picked us up at the French coast and formed a rear guard. We sighted Start Point in southern England about this time and headed for it. We were still at 22,000 ft but began losing altitude all the time. We told the boys in the waist to get Penfield the wounded tail gunner into position to bail out. Cline gave them the preparatory signal to bail out with the bell. We were about 15,000 ft at this time and I think the men back in the tail mistook the prep. signal for the real thing because it was at this time that they bailed out. The fire was getting worse and worse, and large pieces of the wings were rolling off. The rubber on the tank was boiling and bubbling out of the gas cap.

Sid and Joe were getting ready to get out and Colby had gone back in the waist to bail out. I looked over at Cline and told him to go first.

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194 The point where bombing missions began the trip across the English Channel was known as the start point.
but he shook his head and told me to get out. Since I’m a 2nd + he’s a first [1st Lieutenant] I had to go.

We were at 12,000 ft when Joe went out the nose hatch. feet first. I checked my chute straps and climbed down in the nose. I picked up my flight cap, cigs and matches on the way, but, damn it, I forgot my dark glasses. I stuffed them in my pocket kneeled in front of the hatch and breathed a very short prayer. Then I dived out. The slipstream caught me and I had the sensation of great speed for a moment then I slowed down. I counted ten and pulled the rip cord. Immediately I had the sensation that I had been jerked wrong side out. My chest buckle on my chute had hit me across the lips and they were bleeding. It was deathly quiet and I looked around for the plane. I saw two white puffs so I knew Varney and Colby were out.

I felt as though I would never reach the ground. About this time I started swinging and although I went through all kinds of contortions to stop it, it only increased. I could make out people on the ground now and waved to them. Suddenly the ground seemed to come up and hit me in the face. The wind was drifting me and I saw I was going to hit backwards. I tried to twist around, but no effect. Then there was the ground, and a terrible jar. That’s all I remember for a few seconds. I had hit flat on my back. When I came to I was trying to hold the shrouds and spill the ‘chute which was dragging me slowly across the
field. I finally spilled it and about that time a farmer came up and helped me out of the harness. He took me to his house and gave me some tea. The old ship was circling overhead and burning badly. She finally crashed in to the sea.

An RAF transport came up and took me and Joe and Sid to an airfield. We got in touch with Varney and Colby and we were soon together. We notified the Air Sea rescue service that there were five men in the sea and their approximate position. Boats, planes and Spitfires were sent out immediately. Our Spitfire escort followed the chutes down to the water and gave an accurate fix on them. No word has been heard from these men. Five good men and we couldn’t help them.

My injuries were a mashed lip, wrenched shoulder, and bruises, not to mention a crick in the neck.

They flew a plane down for us and we were back at the base in time for late supper. The search for the other 5 men continued for 48 hours but no trace was found.

The doc treated us and gave us some dope to make us sleep. The next morning I was so sore I could hardly move. That afternoon we went on a five day pass to London. While we were gone we lost 3 more
planes out of our squadron. McCauley\textsuperscript{195}, Tuttle\textsuperscript{196}, and Kohler\textsuperscript{197}. All were fairly new replacements.\textsuperscript{198}

In Cox’s account of this raid on Lorient, France, he reports on the actions taken in order to save the plane as well as the loss of the five men in the rear of the plane. He mentions that Varney Cline [pilot] wanted to bail out as soon as they noticed the wing was on fire. Cox states that he talked Cline out of bailing out and that they continued on the bombing run. Even though Cline was the pilot, he had less combat experience than Cox, which may explain his reluctance to continue the mission. Did Cox believe that it was more important to complete the mission than to survive?

Cox also reports on the loss of the men who were in the rear of the plane. Because the communication system was out, the men in the back mistook the preparatory signal as the bail out signal, resulting in their deaths in the English Channel. Once again, Cox had to deal with the loss of men from his crew.

\textsuperscript{195} Lt. Carrol L. McCauley died on a mission to Kiel, Germany on May 19, 1943. Six crewmembers were killed in action and four were prisoners of war. The cause was unknown. The MACR number is 15329. See Craven, \textit{The 305\textsuperscript{th} Bomb Group In Action}, 294.
\textsuperscript{196} Lt. Donald W. Tuttle’s B-17 was shot down on a mission to Lorient, France on May 17, 1943. Four crew members were KIA and seven were POWs. The cause was unknown. The MACR number is 15555. See Craven, \textit{The 305\textsuperscript{th} Bomb Group In Action}, 295.
\textsuperscript{197} German fighters shot down Lt. Harvey J. Kohler’s B-17 on a mission to Kiel, Germany on May 19, 1943. Kohler and two other crew members were prisoners of war and the seven others were killed in action. The cause was unknown. See Craven, \textit{The 305\textsuperscript{th} Bomb Group In Action}, 297.
\textsuperscript{198} Cox diary, May 26, 1943.
For Joseph Boyle, the May 17th raid on Lorient, France was his last. Filling in with a “pick-up” crew, his plane was shot down and the Germans captured him. Boyle recorded a riveting account of his final mission and capture in his oral history.

During my tour of duty in England I flew as co-pilot on three or four different airplanes. Occasionally, I would be ranked out of my seat on The Dry Martini airplane by some higher-ranking officer from headquarters or from the staff who wanted to be able to say when he got home that he’d flown on a mission. And since Martini’s was one of the lead airplanes and a relatively safe place to be, if there was such a thing,
I would get knocked, I would get bounced out of my seat and then, naturally, still having to make up 25 missions, I would just wait until I was required to be co-pilot on someone else’s plane.

Finally, on May 17 [1943], I was part of a pick-up crew of relative strangers and following the briefing in the morning, we loaded up the airplane. Actually it was still before dawn. I was flying that day with Harry Indeary, who was, along with Dave Cox, had been one of the original 18 co-pilots picked up on short notice, and Harry was finally flying as first pilot. In the tail we had Sgt. Mitchell, who I knew, who had been on the original Martini crew, and those two were the only other members of the crew of ten people that I had ever seen before. It was truly a pick-up crew.199

Pick-up crews were often assigned to the rear of the formation, in a position they called “Tail End Charlie”. This position was the most perilous in the formation because they were in the rear of the group, which Boyle reports:

We were flying a mission to Lorient and we were in the unenviable position of being in the “Tail End Charlie” location in the formation, which meant we were in the last element of the last group, which was always considered a dangerous position and one that’s easily

199 Boyle oral history, 16,17.
shot at by enemy fire because they could come in and take a, let the
burst of gunfire go and quickly dive away from the rest of the group.

It happened that following the bomb run the group seemed to
gather a little unusual speed and we were unable to maintain our
position and in falling back slightly, we invited immediate attack from
German fighters and the very first barrage that hit our airplane was from
the rear. I could hear fragments of shells hitting against the armor plate
behind our seats. And immediately we tried to get on, we got on the
intercom, only to find that it didn’t work, and that somehow or other in
that initial attack, the communications in the airplane were gone. This
was a terrible predicament to be in because we had no idea of what,
whether the airplane was damaged beyond what we could see or who
might have been killed or hurt.

And in the ensuing 5 to 10 minutes our plane was attacked
sufficiently that all four of our engines were smoking, had lost power
and we’d been left way behind the formation. And I out of frustration, I
tried to crawl, get from the cockpit down into the nose to see what had
happened to the navigator and the bombardier. Not an easy thing to do
since we had on May West’s, the parachutes and to move around the
airplane you had to, you had to attach a heavy oxygen bottle to carry
with you. Otherwise, at altitude, with any real effort, you’d quickly
pass out.
I succeeded in getting into the companionway and was inching towards the nose when I realized that the space I was in was filled with thick smoke and the type of oxygen mask we had allowed the smoke to come into the breathing tube. So after about three inhales where I got the heavy smoke into my lungs I started to pass out, then I had to back out of the companionway and I stood up behind the pilot’s seat and with a brief conversation as best we could make each other understood, Harry and I agreed that the smart thing to do was to give the signal to bail out, which Harry did by reaching for the alarm bell, which would supposedly ring at all spots throughout the airplane and was final and urgent notice for everybody to bail out of, if they could.

I immediately went down into the companionway, this time without the oxygen bottle, and holding my breath, felt my way along until I got over the escape hatch. I clawed at that with my hands and was unable, I got a hold of the latch but I was unable to open the hatch itself. So I got back on my haunches a little bit and with my heel of one foot I bashed it against the part of the hatch which forced it upon and the wind quickly blew it away. I tumbled out of the opening in a balled up position and fell as far as I felt safely I could, which I later estimated to be about 5 or 6,000 feet. I wanted to make sure not to end up hanging in the parachute and being an inviting target to any fighters that were in the area.
Unfortunately, when I did pull the handle to release my parachute, it came out with, it gave me such a jerk that I passed out momentarily. Typically, when we load the airplane we’d loosen up our parachute harnesses for the sake of comfort while we sat in our seats and flew the airplane. Naturally, [laughter] it must have happened to most of us, when we finally pulled the chutes we found that the harnesses were so loose we nearly fell through them. In my case, the upper cross-member of the support came right up and hit my chin and nearly tore my nose, felt like it nearly tore my nose off. But anyway, when I did re-gain my senses again, I was swinging kind of wildly in the chute and hanging like a wet rag in the harness and I finally started looking about in the sky for any traces of my group. I could see practically nothing. The whole operation had moved out of my sight in the period of time that it taken me to drop, fall through space and finally open my chute.

One impression I’ll never forget about that parachute jump was that when things finally settled down and I was swinging comfortably in the chute, I was over water at first, but the wind was taking me toward the land, when I got down to, and it was extremely quiet, it was amazingly quiet after the racket of the airplanes and the engines and the noise that we were so used to while we were in flight. Then all of a sudden the dead silence was broken by the beautiful sound of a birdsong coming up from a wooded area below me as I drifted closer to the
ground. It almost sounded like a choral group training beautiful music. It happened to be a sunny Sunday morning and it was the last pleasant thing I remembered before I was slammed into the ground, my chute partially hung up in a tree and I passed out again.

While I was in the process of standing up and getting out of the harness, two young Frenchmen came running up to me and started to speak in broken English, obviously offering me their help. As they did that, I pulled off one of my flying boots. I tried to take my flying boots off and as pulled one of them off, my shoe came off with it. I had to sit back down and put that shoe on again, knowing that I would need both shoes on my feet in order to run. While in that brief period of time however, a group of German soldiers came, who had seen my chute come down in the area, made their way to us, and the French, of course, fell back. And this group of non-coms [non-commissioned officers], all chattering away, came up, surrounded me and then one of them who spoke English told me in a cheerful voice that for me, the war was over.

A few minutes later, a motorcycle came roaring up across the wooded farmland that I found myself in, and a young German officer, I guess an SS trooper, he had the typical scar on his face and as soon as he came to a stop on his motorcycle, he jumped off, he pulled out his Luger and he, the first thing he did was to wave the non-coms away from me and tell them to stop talking to me. And he came over to me
and gave me a shove to let me know who was in charge. And then he turned and he threatened a Frenchmen with his gun and he told them all to, that several other French people had come out of the middle of nowhere and gathered around, even though we were out in what appeared to farm land, he made them step back and he indicated for me to get into the sidecar of his motorcycle and we took off.

We hadn’t traveled very far on this motorcycle when the German pulled off the road at a point where one of our airplanes, near where one of our airplanes had crashed. He drove up to maybe fifty yards from it, told me to stay in the sidecar while he stepped out a few paces away and looked at the plane. It could possibly, it could very well have been the plane that I had just bailed out of, but I had no way of knowing because when we loaded that plane in the early morning I did not, couldn’t have seen or wouldn’t have remembered if I had, the numbers on the fuselage. So, I could not positively identify it as our plane, but it was a B-17.

We only stopped there for a moment or two, and there was nobody else in sight. From there, it was another short ride to a little village where this SS officer turned me over to a young German captain, who was apparently in charge of this village. He took me into his office, which had formerly been a dentists’ office and sat and spoke in very clear English and didn’t ask any military questions particularly, but
he did do, he showed me the jewelry, the personal jewelry of some flyers who’d been found in the area, who had, crewmen, presumably from our plane and asked me if I could identify, positively identify anybody through his jewelry, rings, watches and so on. The only thing I could identify was one, one item, possibly it was a watch, that had belonged to Sgt. Mitchell, who I knew was our tail-gunner. I was told that six bodies had been found and that one or two were still in the airplane, apparently, and the other four, or whatever number it was, the implication was that they’d gotten out of the plane, but their parachutes had failed to open, at least that’s the story this young, this German officer seemed to want to make me believe. Of course they never will know what actually did happen.

Later, [laughter] many years later, as a matter of fact, Harry Indeary, the other pilot and I, did learn that the radio man and the bombardier had both arrived, gotten to the ground safely and had been taken in and hidden by French farmers and were kept hidden for several months before the [French] Underground took them down to the Pyrenees and they were able to get over into Spain and to get home. But that’s kind of wandering from my story.

I was put in a local jail overnight, and the next morning taken to a town called Vannes, V A N N E S [he spells it out] I think it is, where I was held on a railroad platform waiting on a train to take us to Paris.
While we were there, Harry Indeary, my pilot, and close friend, showed up on the station. He was limping badly. He’d come down, his chute had gotten hung up in a tree, and the Germans had cut him free of the tree, but when he dropped to the ground he’d injured one leg to the point where he could barely, barely walk at all. It was, it was a relief to see someone at least from the airplane, and he and I spoke a few words [laughter], although the Germans didn’t allow us to talk very much to each other at that point. And we waited there and the train finally took us directly to Paris.

When, we got to Paris, our captors got a hold of a car or a taxi, I forget which and they dropped Harry off at the American hospital in Paris, where he was to receive treatment for his injured leg, and I was taken on to a large railroad station, where on the second floor there was this sort of a soup kitchen where hundreds and hundreds of Germans were passing through, coming and going and making connections either taking them back from leaves or taking them from leaves home to various places. And I was sort of the center of attention for quite a while at this railroad station because I was obviously a captive and those days, of course, we were known as Luftgangsters. And these German G.I.s that were coming and going, some on home leave from the Africa Korps and places like that. They would ogle me and stare at me for quite awhile, but eventually as the night wore on, we were in this station from early one evening all the way through to 7 o’clock the next
morning. Anyhow, they finally got used to looking at this *Luftgangster* and didn’t pay much attention to me. The next morning, the train took us up to Frankfurt on Main, and from there I was taken to the interrogation camp.

From the time that I arrived at the railroad station in Paris, I was in the hands of three Germans. One older chap, who didn’t speak any English, had a very serious demeanor and heavily lined face. He looked like he was in his fifties or older. And two younger men, both in extremely good health, blonde, blue-eyed Germans in their mid to later twenties. Both of them happened to be on leave from the Africa Korps. And it wasn’t until we were on the train, well on our way to Frankfurt that these two proved to have some knowledge of English and were curious and began to ask me some questions. One of them asked me, for example, if Roosevelt was a Jew because German propaganda had been claiming he was for a long time. I assured them that he was not. They also wanted to know whether or not we had bombed any German targets and I reluctantly told them we had. They said “Well, were you on any raids over Germany”. I said “No, I was not personally, but I was aware that some of our groups had made penetrations along the coast of Germany. And they were very dubious about that. It developed that they were both on their way back to Hamburg and they had families and one of them had shown me some little booties that he had picked up in North Africa, like made out of leather for one of his children. And they,
But then, one of those two young men asked me where I was from in the States, and when I said “New Jersey”, he said “Oh well, then you may know my aunt. She lives in Dumont.” And I said, “Well, I do know where Dumont is, it’s only a few miles from my hometown, but I’m afraid I don’t know your aunt.” Anyhow, this conversation seemed kind of like a Gilbert and Sullivan view of the war. Anyhow, these two guys were only too soon going to find out what the Air Force had been able to accomplish, in spite of what they had been told by their propaganda.201

Boyle notes the death of tailgunner Henry Mitchell and that the radio operator [Robert Neil] and the bombardier [James Wilschke] managed to escape through the help of the French Underground. These men could have escaped, but this was not confirmed. The Missing Air Crew Report did indicate that they survived.202 The deaths of Mitchell, Roy Richards [navigator], John McFarland [engineer], Walter Schenk [ball-turret gunner], Dennis Cullinan [right waist gunner], and John Norris [left waist gunner] were confirmed.203

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200 The first raid on Hamburg, Germany was on July 25, 1943. See Carter, Army Air Forces in World War II: Combat Chronology, 163.
201 Boyle oral history, 15-21.
203 Ibid.
On the raid to Lorient, France, Boyle had to face the most difficult situation for a member of the Eighth Air Force. Combat airmen who could not make it back to England had few options. They could bail out over enemy territory or crash-land if they had wounded aboard who could not survive bailing out. The last option would be to make it to a neutral country, such as Switzerland, where they would be interned until the end of the war. Internment in a neutral country was not as bad as being in a prisoner of war camp, but the airmen still could not return to England. Bailing out over enemy territory was very dangerous. If a combat airman had to bail out above 10,000 feet, he needed a portable oxygen canister. There also was the chance that a German fighter could shoot at him while he was on his way down. Although this was not commonplace, it did happen on occasion.

For the downed airmen, being captured by German soldiers was a relief. To the German civilians whose homes were destroyed and family members killed or wounded by the bombers, the captured American bomber crews were known as Luft Gangsters or Terror Fliers. German civilians who captured combat airmen would sometimes lynch them out of their anger for the bombs that had been dropped in their area. Downed airmen were usually safe if they were caught by the Germany military. To the downed aviators, the best words he could hear were probably “For you the war is over,” often the first phrase spoken when captured by German soldiers. Once captured by the German military, a combat airman

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205 Ibid, 51.
was usually safe from the civilian lynch mobs. Joseph Boyle wrote a poem about the fate that sometimes awaited the airmen who were captured by these civilian mobs.

*And Who Shall Judge*

Dropping bombs from dizzy heights  
Upon a hapless foe,  
Leaves flying men all unconcerned  
To havoc wrought below

For flying men are fighting men  
Whose battles rage up where  
Cold sunlight glints on spitting guns,  
And fighters streak the air.

War’s passion, hate and sentiment  
Dissolve in frosty space,  
And men are one with aeroplanes,  
Nerves welded in the chase.

With boundless sky the battlefield  
And measureless the gain,  
Red blood flows free, as on the ground,  
But never shows the stain.

The target reached, the bombs away,  
Makes easier the mind  
Whose single thought is getting home,  
Not carnage left behind.

But what about the silent host  
Who cheated death on high,  
Who also thought their war was fought  
In confines of the sky.

I cannot speak for lifeless forms  
Strung up by silken shrouds  
Of parachutes that saved them from  
Fate’s play above the clouds.

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What speechless terror filled their minds
As by mob they died,
Could not be told to you or me
Through cord so tightly tied.

But mute, grotesque, they clearly tell
What there is of pity
For luckless airmen dropping with
Bombs into a city.

And who’s to judge the justice done
By hands that willingly
Stop digging for their buried dead
To rig a gallows tree.\(^{207}\)

\(^{207}\) Joseph Boyle, unpublished poem.
Figure 4. *Prayer Over Lorient.* Drawn by Joseph Boyle.
After recovering from his wounds from the May 17th raid on Lorient, France, David Cox returned to combat duty. He didn’t make another diary entry until June 14, 1943, when he reported on a raid to Bremen, Germany the day before.
Monday

June 14th '43

Yesterday we went to Bremen Germany. Two days before we had started to Bremen, but since we were [a] fill in airplane in case of abortions, and there were no abortions we turned back after following the Group to the English coast. Yesterday it was a different story, we were briefed to fly the lead of #2 element in the high squadron. Everything went off OK. The assembly was good and we held our position good. About 200 miles out over the North Sea we started our climb. About this time the oil pressure on 3 of our engines started falling but we continued hoping that nothing would happen, besides there was still 200 miles of salt water us and friendly soil and we could make the German coast much quicker. There were 4 abortions in the high squadron leaving only two to be filled in on the second element of the lead squadron. We saw no fighters in to the target. We were just leaving the target when the flak hit us. It was as intense and as accurate as any I’ve seen. Incidentally, Varney got suddenly sick at the IP\textsuperscript{208} and I had to fly the airplane on the bombing run and through the flak. We hit prop wash\textsuperscript{209} from the group in front of us and almost lost the formation. We had only 12 airplanes over the target. One was shot

\textsuperscript{208} The Initial Point is the starting point for a bomb run. See Ambrose, The Wild Blue, 99.

\textsuperscript{209} Pilots described the turbulence caused by planes in front of them as prop wash.
down. I had to fly most of the way back as Varney wasn’t feeling so good. I thought we’d never get home. But finally make it without further incident. There were 5 planes shot down over Bremen and 21 were shot down on the Kiel raid which was carried out simultaneously. Twenty six altogether. High losses. They almost wiped out the group over at GU. 18 planes out of that one alone.211

This diary entry would be David Cox’s last. After the loss of his original crew on March 8, 1943, his diary entries became more sporadic. He continued to fly missions until July 28, 1943, when he was shot down on a mission to Kassel, Germany212, in what became known as Blitz week. Over 300 heavy bombers were dispatched, but bad weather prevented the majority from completing their mission. Forty-nine bombers attacked aircraft works at Kassel. Twenty-two heavy bombers were lost on this mission as German fighters scored their first effective attack with rockets.213 All ten of the crewmen on Cox’s B-17 successfully bailed out. After landing in a rose garden, Cox was greeted by a German soldier pointing his rifle at him. He had to go through interrogation at Dulag Luft (the Luftwaffe interrogation camp) in Frankfurt, Germany, and then was sent on to Stalag Luft III. After arriving at the

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210 22 heavy bombers were lost as a result of the heaviest fighter attack to date. See Craven and Cates, *The Army Air Forces in World War II: Vol. 2*, 670.
211 Cox Diary, June 14, 1943.
POW camp, Cox would have plenty of company. By July 1944, 8,447 Army Air Force officers and 8,146 enlisted men were captured and interned by the Germans.\textsuperscript{214}

\textsuperscript{214} American Prisoners of War in Germany. Prepared by the Military Intelligence Service, War Dept. July 15, 1944.
Chapter 5

Stalag Luft III and Stalag 7A

Cox did not keep a diary in Stalag Luft III and did not talk about his POW experiences much after the war. However, Joseph Boyle detailed his stay in the camp, along with his experience at the interrogation camp, Dulag Luft\textsuperscript{215} in his oral history. For Cox and Boyle, the fighting part of their war was over. However, the next two years would become more difficult as they began their life as POW’s. Boyle described his interrogation at Dulag Luft and his arrival in Stalag Luft III in his oral history.

When we arrived at Frankfurt on Main, I was transferred by a narrow gauge railroad train a short distance out of Frankfurt to the Dulag, where we were all interrogated prior to being sent on to the various camps.\textsuperscript{216} There wasn’t anything particularly unusual about the Dulag. They were wooden barracks, just a bleak, fenced of area in the entrance to it, high barbed wire fences all around.

\textsuperscript{215} Dulag Luft is an abbreviation for Durchgangslager der Luftwaffe (transit camp of the air force). Durand, Stalag Luft III: The Secret Story, 56.

\textsuperscript{216} There was a tram that carried the prisoners into the Dulag Luft. See Durand, Stalag Luft III: The Secret Story, 53.
An interesting thing happened to me just right in the beginning, I don’t recall, the first or second day. I was standing in the courtyard near the entrance talking to a young Norwegian, who was in his early twenties, who was a very handsome young man, and well built, about six feet tall, and I learned he and some friends had escaped from Norway by boat and sailed to England and volunteered for the RAF. And as we were talking, there was some commotion at the gate and I looked and a young Luftwaffe officer was being admitted at the gate, and was at the gate, was pointing to myself and the Norwegian. Then this young Luftwaffe officer came striding up to where we were and starting conversing with the Norwegian. I realized that this was a conversation I was not necessarily involved or could be a part of so I stood away some distance and waited while these two fellows carried on this conversation.

Eventually, they seemed to be deeply engrossed in what they were saying and when the young German officer stood back and [laughter] saluted the Norwegian and briskly walked out of the compound. I came back over and asked this RAF guy, this Norwegian what it was all about. And he smilingly told him that this German was the pilot that had shot him down and had gone to a great deal of trouble to find out where he was and come and have this chat with and to congratulate him on his courage in this combat. It seems that these planes had had a head to head confrontation. The German had shot the
Norwegian’s plane up so bad that oil from the engine covered his windshield and he was struggling to get out of the plane, which he finally did. The plane accidently crossed wingtips with a German plane and both planes went down. The German thought that this was a deliberate maneuver and had come to show his admiration for the adversary, whereas the Norwegian got a [laughter] great deal of pleasure of admitting to me it was no such thing, it was just an accident, all he was only trying to do was to save his own neck.

They kept us in solitary confinement in that, the Dulag. But it was only a matter of two or three days and I think two sessions when they were satisfied that I didn’t have any worthwhile information.217 And we were sent along to Stalag Luft III in lower Salisia.218

Stalag Luft III was located in what is now Sagan, Poland. It was a large camp that had British flyers as well as American. The German Luftwaffe operated this camp and conditions were much better in the Luftwaffe camps than in the camps that the German Wermacht (Armed Forces) ran. The German Luftwaffe gave a certain amount of respect for their fellow flyers, even if they were the enemy. Even though the POW’s at Stalag Luft III were treated better than those of the regular POW camps, it was a difficult period for the men imprisoned there.

217 Prisoners were usually confined in solitary cells and their stay at Dulag Luft usually lasted less than one week. See Durand, Stalag Luft III: The Secret Story, 55-72.
218 Boyle oral history, 22-24.
Stalag Luft III was a POW camp for all Allied flyers. The British flyers were from many different nations. Men from other Allied countries could join the RAF and thus were able to assist in the effort to defeat the Germans. Boyle describes the makeup of the RAF:

At this stage in the war, Stalag Luft III was populated almost exclusively by RAF prisoners, British flyers. And when I say British, that includes of course Canadians, Australians, South Africans, volunteers from Belgium, Poland, Norway and other Allied countries.\footnote{Durand, \textit{Stalag Luft III: The Secret Story}, 103-105.} The young men from these countries, as soon as their countries were under attack, looked for ways to fight the enemy and one of the obvious ones was to find their way by whatever ways possible to England, where the RAF was always looking for well, healthy, well qualified people to train because the resistance to the Germans at that point in time was pretty much dependent on the success of the Royal Air Force. So, as those of us from the 8\textsuperscript{th} Air Force and other Allied air outfits were captured, we’d be taken and mixed right in with the British,\footnote{The integration of Stalag Luft III is detailed in \textit{Stalag Luft III: The Secret Story}, 103.} who had already been there in some cases for two years because the attempts to invade the continent going back to Diep had resulted in quite a lot of RAF captives going back that long. By the time that we were liberated roughly two years later, some of our British friends or friends from the RAF had already been prisoners for almost 5 years.
For the new arrivals, there was an orientation period after coming into Stalag Luft III. They would get their room assignments and learn the new lifestyle of the Kriegies, which Boyle reports in his oral history:

Newly arrived prisoners would be assigned to a room and they’d be given a pallyass, which was a fabric mattress cover and told where to go to find a supply of straw. You’d take this empty mattress cover to the whatever storage place where they kept the straw and then fill it up as best you could and close it and take it back to your room and lay it out on whatever bunk you’d been assigned. We slept in bunk beds, which were built in against the walls. And the mattresses were supported by half a dozen 1 x 3” wood slats which were laid across the two long, rested on wood nailed to the inside of the bed side, the wood frames. Usually there were 6 to 8 of us in a room and as I mentioned we were mixed in at that time with British prisoners.

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221 Kriegies is short for kriegsgefangener, the German term for prisoners of war, and is how the POW’s referred to themselves.
223 Boyle oral history, 25.
Figure 6. *The New Arrival, part 1*. Drawn by Joseph Boyle.
The food made available at Stalag Luft III was another thing that the Kriegies had to become accustomed to. In general, the food was adequate, up to late 1944, when food...
shortages began to be a problem for both the prisoners and the Germans as well. Boyle described the food in *Stalag Luft III*:

The food at the time that I arrived in May of ’43 was consisted of bulk issue from the Germans. Potatoes, black bread, some jam and coffee, most of this stuff ersatz, but edible. And we were supposed to receive, ideally, a full Red Cross parcel per man per week. Red Cross parcels weighed about 11 lbs. When the full compliment of parcels did arrive in camp and were distributed, there was more than enough food and a pretty well-balanced diet. As a matter of fact, in the first couple of months in the camp, I actually put on a few pounds and through pretty regular exercise, I was in excellent shape.

However, not soon after that the quantities of parcels that were available to the camp fell off slowly and we were, it was more like a half a parcel per man per week that was coming into the camp. That continued pretty much for the next fifteen months, and in the last three to four months of the war, the conditions, the transportation, everything else broke down. And the number of Red Cross parcels dwindled down to practically nothing. At that period of time, life was quite different. Food was drastically in short supply, and in the last three or four months, most all of us who had been healthy up to that time had lost a

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224 These were the main staples for the POWs in *Stalag Luft III*. See Durand, *Stalag Luft III: The Secret Story*, 158-161.
considerable amount of weight and we looked pretty sad by the time we were liberated.\textsuperscript{225}

Boyle’s report on the food in \textit{Stalag Luft III} is mostly accurate. Interruptions in the transportation system made the delivery of Red Cross parcels more difficult in 1944. Arthur Durand described these difficulties in \textit{Stalag Luft III: The Secret Story}. “Because the southern route through France was closed, few new parcels were put ashore in Europe from May through December, 1944. From September 4, 1944, until January 17, 1945, the

\textsuperscript{225} Boyle oral history, 27, 28.
prisoners of Stalag Luft III received only ‘half-rations’, or one-half parcel per man per
week.”

For the prisoners of Stalag Luft III, the daily routine of military life helped them keep
their sanity. The camp was well organized, both by the Germans and internally by the British
and Americans. When asked about the organization of the camp, such as the distribution of
food and clothing, Joe Boyle gave the following report:

Everything was pretty well organized and regulated at Stalag
Luft III. To begin with, from the beginning it was an all officer camp
and the discipline was strictly followed. Only a few people were
allowed to talk directly to our German guards and the reason for that
was simply that those who could speak German and get to know the
guards better were in a better position to get certain concessions from
them or even to eventually bribe them and manipulate them in one way
or another to our benefit. The camp was organized so that whatever
food came in was distributed equally. Whatever clothing that was
available would be made available to the people that needed it the most.
There was nothing, there was no means of exchange based on money.
We were issued a few paper Marks when we arrived in camp, but they
were completely useless and meaningless. It did develop that certain
things that we had or came by over the course of time which could be
used to trade.

\[226\] Durand, Stalag Luft III: The Secret Story, 162.
You asked what type of food and clothing did we have there. I guess I’ve given you a pretty good run-down on the food. And the clothing was pretty much a mixed bag. We didn’t get, that I know of, much in the way of clothing, shoes or anything of that nature directly from our own organization, the Army or the Air Force. Most of it was supplied, I think, from stores of things that the Germans had. In the case of, for example, some raincoats that were issued at one point. They were light blue cotton material that had been issued for the French Army in World War I.\footnote{The Germans issued boots and overcoats that were mainly plunder from France and Belgium. See Durand, \textit{Stalag Luft III: The Secret Story}, 172.} To make a long story short, what we ended up wearing during the course of our stay as prisoners pretty much consisted of what we had on when we were shot down plus an assortment of things that became available as time went on. There was no recognized uniform or any piece of clothing that was issued by the Germans that would be recognized as a standard, such as you may have in an American jail today where all the prisoners are dressed in the same coveralls or anything like that.\footnote{Boyle oral history, 28.}
Figure 9. *Kriegie Clothing.* Drawn by Joseph Boyle.
For the prisoners of Stalag Luft III, the accommodations were Spartan, but livable. The camp was well organized and arranged in barracks, also called ‘blocks’ by the prisoners. Joseph Boyle had the following description of the barracks of the POW camp.

The barracks we were in were pretty comfortable. They were simple wood barracks. And they were all fairly newly built. As a matter of fact, while we were there the camp expanded from a total population of 2,000 when I arrived and there were 10,000 of us in this same camp divided into five different compounds of approximately 2,000 men each. These compounds were added as the flow of prisoners increased. There was construction going on or a new compound being built practically all the time we were there.

An international Red Cross officer would come through the camp periodically and any urgent messages that needed to be sent to families at home or things of that nature could be accomplished through his offices. The Germans generally followed the Geneva Convention, and we had no problems that involved anything more distressful than being kept out in the cold or the rain for periods of time while we were being counted or in some cases being punished for some infraction that we’d committed as a group, by some individuals or as a group.²²⁹

²²⁹ Boyle oral history, 29.
Escape attempts were a regular activity for the prisoners of *Stalag Luft III*, particularly during the early period of the war. However, most of the POW’s realized that escape was not a realistic option and mostly conducted these attempts to force the Germans to use more resources to prevent escapes instead of for conducting the war. In his oral history, Joseph Boyle described his participation in the escape attempts, his participation in internal security, as well as the general attitude amongst the prisoners on escape attempts.

One of the first things we were asked to do within the first few days that we were in the camp was to participate in one or another ways in the ongoing effort to tunnel out. The British, I guess, started tunneling out [laughter] of prisoner camps long before we got there and it was sort of a game. The Germans knew, were constantly on the lookout for tunnels and had various means of checking the ground and sending in dogs to sniff things out. But, it was just part of being a prisoner that you were morally obliged to keep the enemy on his toes and make every effort to harass as far as you could within the limits of the Geneva Convention.

I guess the first time I learned of these activities was when they requisitioned two of my six bed slats, which made holding up this pallet made of straw a rather difficult proposition, since your weight tended to push the straw down between the slats and into the face of the guy below you. And then, within the first week I was there, I was told to
report to a given barracks. I went in and was told to put, lower my
trousers and I was shown how to tie a bag that would hang down my leg
and was to be filled with sand, and through the use of a couple of
drawstrings, after you put your pants back up, and belted up again,
you’d reach into a pocket and [laughter] as you found a suitable location
to get rid of this yellow, bright yellow sand in various pre-determined
spots around the camp, as unobtrusively as you could, you’d empty out
the sand and report back for another load.

The penalty for escape was 21 days in the cooler, assuming you
were re-captured under non-threatening conditions. Most of us realized
that the chance of actually getting home from there was very slim if you
didn’t know a second language. And while we were all asked to
participate, without question, in any organized escape attempt made by
any of our group and approved by the escape committee.⁹³⁰ There were
few of us that actually had any real desire to get outside the camp and
run the risks of losing our lives in the trying to cover the 800 miles in
any direction we would have to go without help and without knowledge
of the language and the land in order to reach a friendly border.⁹³¹

Boyle’s story about the disposal of the sand from the tunnels is confirmed in Arthur
Durand’s *Stalag Luft III: The Secret Story*. Durand reports that “Right under the eyes of the

⁹³⁰ For more information on the Escape Committee, See Durand, *Stalag Luft III: The Secret
Story*, 78-81.
⁹³¹ Boyle oral history, 26.
Germans, hundreds of cubic yards of whitish yellow sand were dumped in the compound and dispersed without leaving any telltale signs for the ferrets [German guards] to detect. The sand was usually carried out of the tunnel area in small elongated cloth bags concealed in the carrier’s pant legs or under his coat. A string attached to a pin opened the bottom of the bag, and the sand gradually drained out.”232 This method was also detailed in Paul Brickhill’s *The Great Escape*. “You fill the bags with sand at the traps and you wander around the various spots and then you pull the strings in your pockets; out come the pins, and the sand flows out of the bottom of your pants.”233 Both of these sources confirm Boyle’s account of this escape activity.

For the POW’s of *Stalag Luft III*, falling into a daily routine was the best way to pass their time and to keep their sanity. They had activities such as athletics, a library, (with some classes taught there by fellow prisoners), and they even built a theater. POW’s were allowed to write letters on occasion, and to receive mail also. Joseph Boyle remembered the activities in the camp in his oral history.

Daily life in camp was pretty routine. We got up around 7 o’clock, I guess, and someone would go to the cookhouse to get a keinwasser full of hot water to make tea or coffee. And after breakfast, we would be summoned out to *Appell*, that is, to be counted out in the open field that served double service as a parade field and as a sports field for games such as softball. There was a dirt basketball court with a

couple of baskets set up the regulation distance from each other. Volleyball was another game that was played in camp. And the equipment for these games came to us through the auspices of the YMCA, principally, there may have been other sources that I’m not familiar with.

But the, after the morning count, the chores of the, whatever chores were involved in the barracks were apportioned on a weekly basis usually, as was the preparation of food. Rather than trying to operate individually, obviously it was more sensible to pool whatever food we got within our room or ‘mess’ as we would refer to it, any group living within four walls. And usually one man was assigned as cook and one man was assigned to clean up, usually serving for a week, alternate though the room.

We were allowed something like three cards and one letter a month, or I’m not sure exactly. These were supplied by the Germans. And, of course, over a period of time, we were able to correspond with our families at home and was allowed parcels sent in to us, as long as they didn’t include anything that would useful in our attempting to escape. Obviously, our families would most often be sending us cigarettes and candy, extra clothing, whatever had come to their mind or had been requested by the individual Kriegie who’d been fortunate.

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234 The Germans allowed two letters and four postcards per prisoner per month. See Durand, *Stalag Luft III: The Secret Story*, 238.
enough to get a letter or card of to home and receive an answer or a package in response.235

For the prisoners of Stalag Luft III, an open market of sorts developed that allowed them to participate in trades for goods and services. Cigarettes became the main currency in this market, but some of the men had certain skills or talents that they could use to their advantage. Joseph Boyle was a talented cartoonist, which he used to help him with the trade that existed within the camp, which he details in his oral history:

There was a certain amount of trading went on between Kriegies, depending on their needs and whatever was available in the camp. As I mentioned before, cigarettes were the chief means of exchange, but articles of clothing would often be traded.236 And for example, in my own case, when some of my fellow Kriegies discovered that I had a minor talent for cartooning and they’d been issued these logbooks by the YMCA, some of them were interested in having me re-draw one cartoon or another that I’d created in their books. As these requests piled up, I found that I was spending an awful lot of time on other people’s books when I had plenty of things I would like to do for

235 Boyle oral history, 29.
236 Cigarettes were the main form of currency in the camp. See Durand, Stalag Luft III: The Secret Story, 250.
myself. So I’d put a small charge of a portion of a candy bar in
exchange for my work.

And there were other people in camp who were, for example, we
had one fellow who was deputized to repair shoes and had been
equipped by the Germans with the essentials. He’d had experience with
this at home and naturally if he repaired a pair of shoes for you, why
you would pay him either with cigarettes or chocolate bars or whatever
he was favorably inclined to accept.237

One event that occurred during Cox and Boyle’s imprisonment in Stalag Luft III was
a July 4th celebration made famous in the movie The Great Escape. The Americans decided
to pull a practical joke on their British counterparts and a July 4th celebration ensued. With
the help of some homemade brew from some of the more resourceful prisoners in the camp,
the commemoration was one to remember. Boyle gives the following account of this
experience in his oral history.

A couple of my early experiences in the camp were very
memorable. And I’m speaking of the time while we still shared this
compound with the British, which I think lasted for, from May, June,
July, August probably through September. I not sure of the dates when

237 Boyle oral history, 31.
we were finally moved to the other compound. But anyway, one of the most [laughter] funny, interesting things that was done, on July 4th, we had a major in the camp who dreamed up this wonderful idea that since we were mixed up with the British to use the July 4th as a practical joke. So he, with the help of two others, dressed up himself as Paul Revere riding on a horse and with, by using a large soup-kitchen spoon and a huge pan borrowed from the camp’s kitchen, about 7 o’clock, about the time most of us would get up, he started parading around the compound yelling “the British are coming, the British are coming” and banging on this huge pan or pot he had so that sound carried throughout a good part of the camp. Of course, the German guards didn’t know what to make of this. But it wasn’t long and some of them assumed that it was a diversion and that maybe there was an escape effort going on someplace. But the truth of it was, it was just a gag and our British, our fellow British prisoners got a big laugh out of it.

And that day also kicked off something that was completely unknown to me until that moment, and that was that the Americans who’d been down for a few months and had learned through the British that you could make booze from, out of the raisins and prunes that came in our Red Cross parcels by adding sugar and water and with help with a fermented raisin, which was called a *girfreiter*, which could be

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238 The Americans were moved to the South Compound on September 8, 1943. See Durand, *Stalag Luft III: The Secret Story*, 118.
borrowed from someone else’s brew which, in turn, had been started by, probably by yeast that a German guard had been bribed to bring into the camp long ago. In any case, these various rooms had planned these celebrations and had made this homemade brew in advance and celebrated the 4th of July by drinking this stuff. It turns out that the homemade brew was extremely potent and my friend Hank Burman was in a room that had made a supply of it, and he generously gave me a small drink of this stuff [laughter], maybe an inch of it in the bottom of a cup, which, following which I really was pretty well inebriated. And before that morning of that day was over, there were guys all over the camp just laying down passed out [laughter] from this stuff. I drew a picture of it in my own book.239

239 Boyle oral history, 31,32.
The July 4th celebration that Boyle mentions in his oral history was also reported in Durand’s *Stalag Luft III: The Secret Story*. This event was somewhat symbolic as the
Americans were preparing to ‘gain their independence’ from the British as they moved to their own compound. The Germans let the prisoners celebrate and counted the motionless forms in the barracks for the evening *Appell*.240

The American prisoners of *Stalag Luft III* helped the British with their escape activities while they imprisoned together in the North Compound. As *Stalag Luft III* became crowded with the daily influx of new prisoners, the Germans built new compounds to accommodate the large prison population. Fortunately, the Germans moved the American prisoners to the new South Compound before “The Great Escape”, and were able to avoid the tragedy that resulted for the British prisoners who managed to escape, which Boyle noted.

It was during these early months, when the group of Americans who were active with the British in digging the three tunnels known as Tom, Dick and Harry, had the opportunity to work on these tunnels and would have been, [had the chance to escape] when finally the one tunnel broke and 82 guys got out of it. These Americans, including people like myself, who had worked sufficiently hard on these projects, were given the priority to escape if they chose to make that decision. It was only because as Americans we were pulled out of this camp in ’42, I beg your pardon, in ’43 that there were no Americans lost their lives when Hitler gave the terrible order to shoot fifty of our friends who had worked so hard on these tunnels and were actually just massacred, completely against the rules and regulations and understandings of the

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Geneva Convention. It was a sad day, of course for those of us had
known some of these chaps who had worked on these tunnels and were
told that they’d been shot.241

The Americans who helped dig the tunnels were unable to participate in the escape
because they were transferred to the South and Central compounds before the escape. Eighty
British prisoners escaped through the tunnels before the Germans discovered the hole. Four
prisoners were caught at the hole, but seventy-six were able to clear the camp area. Three of
these prisoners were able to make it back to England, but the rest were captured. Hitler
ordered the deaths of fifty of the escapees, which was a violation of the Geneva Convention.
The Germans that participated in the prisoners deaths were prosecuted after the war.242 Paul
Brickhill’s The Great Escape gives a detailed, first-hand account of the escape.

With the move to the new compound, the Americans were given the opportunity to
re-unite with some old friends by choosing who some of their bunkmates would be. This
opportunity allowed David Cox and Joseph Boyle to become re-acquainted. For the
American prisoners, it was comforting to be surrounded by friends that they became so close
to during combat. Prison life made the men of Stalag Luft III very resourceful. They soon
learned to take whatever materials they could get their hands on and make everyday items
that could make their life easier, as well as some items they could use in leisure activities.
Boyle describes the move to the South Compound as well as a story about the
resourcefulness of the POWs.

241 Boyle oral history.
It was the move from the, I think it was from the North Compound to the South Compound, when the Americans were separated from the British that it gave us the opportunity such as Dave Cox and myself to get together as roommates in the South Compound. And as a result of that move, why we were able to put together groups usually of fellows who, through either training together or had been in the same bomb squadrons or bomb groups so that it was more sociable and life became a little bit more interesting since we found ourselves elbow to elbow with friends we’d known quite well before we got shot down.

Apart from creature comforts, which were, of course, number one, being warm enough in the cold weather and having enough food to have energy left to do a little exercise and engage in some of the games we played were important things and took your priority, but beyond that there were many, many things that we did as Kriegies that evolved from, just the business of necessity being the mother of invention.

Just to name a few of them, it didn’t take long for most us to become fairly competent tinsmiths. The one thing that was readily at hand, of course, were the tin cans left over from the Red Cross parcels. We soon learned how to take these cans apart and convert them into many useful items. For example, as the bed boards disappeared into tunnels, we learned to make straps which could secured from one side of
the bed to another by taking off a taking strip and folding these straps under them, underneath the tacking strips and then putting them back into place on the sides of the bed so that they made a comfortable cradle for our mattresses and freed up all of the wooden slats for shoring up tunnels.

Another thing we made were small cook stoves that didn’t require much fuel in order to get enough heat to bring water to a boil. We made some pots and pans. Many of us learned how to knit. We could, most of had an old sweater that we were wearing when we were shot down and while that gradually fell apart, we could take the yarn out of it and make ourselves socks or a bella clava, which several of us did. There was one guy who was such a good knitter that he could knit a sock a day. He was the guy in the next room who taught me how to knit.

The *kriegies* could often be very creative in their use of whatever material that was available. David Cox, Joseph Boyle and some of their bunkmates managed to make some golf balls, which Boyle describes in his oral history:

The one [laughter] really somewhat ridiculous thing is that Dave and I and Harry Indeary and our friend ‘Ample’ Andy Anderson found
ourselves making our own golf balls. This came about because time
during the second summer we were there an 8 iron showed up. And I
forgot who brought it into the room and how in the world it had gotten
into the camp, Stalag Luft, in the first place, but there it was, an eight
iron. And several of us who had played golf, figured “Gee, it would be
great if we could do something with it.” Unfortunately, whatever golf
balls that had come into the camp had long since been knocked back out
again into the woods, so it was determined that we would make our own
golf balls.

Harry Indeary, who’d studied engineering came up with a, made
himself a graph paper and laid out a figure eight pattern as you would
find if you take a baseball apart and he did it to the scale of a golf ball
and that dimension was supplied by Andy Anderson, who had been a
very serious golfer in college in Oklahoma before he came into the Air
Force, and was very eager to be able to get to practice golf again, a little
bit. So, we cut the patterns for the cover of the golf balls out of old
basketball covers or you could get enough leather out of the top of a G.I.
boot and we carefully punched holes around the fringe of it. We took a
piece of heel, rubber heel and rounded it and wrapped with a cord that
comes out of a beat-up old softball, which was available to us, and
wrapped it carefully and then partially sewed up the leather cover, and
squeezed the ball into it, finished sewing it up. And then the sewing
part was accomplished by borrowing a needle and linen thread from the
shoe repair guy. And then we would sit and dampen the leather and roll it between a book and tabletop and try to keep it nice and round as it slowly shrank up and tightened up. And then, to protect it, we would take a little tallow wax and rub it on the surface so that the moisture wouldn’t loosen the leather up to quick.

And these homemade golf balls worked well enough that we could go out and pitch ‘em back and forth between the barracks, which Dave and Harry Indeary and Tom Tuttle and I and Andy Anderson did. Day after day, we would embed a Klim can in the ground, open end up, it was just about the size of a golf hole, and we improvise a couple of putters, I forget how we did it, but it was just a piece of wood, a long piece of wood with something on the end of it that you could putt the ball with and we would have these contests. I remember that Dave Cox turned out to be the most successful. The prize was something like four squares of a Canadian chocolate bar for a hole in one, and as I recall, Dave made about three of ‘em.

Another example of the prisoner’s ingenuity was the building of the theater in the South Compound. The Americans were able to scrounge up enough material to build the theater, which was used for plays and musical entertainment. The three-hundred seats were made from Canadian Red Cross boxes. A few of the plays produced by the prisoners were

\[243\] Klim was dried milk. The prisoners used the cans to make various objects needed in the camp. See Durand, *Stalag Luft III: The Secret Story*, 270.

\[244\] Boyle oral history, 33-35.
The Man Who Came to Dinner, Dover Road, The Invisible Duke, Front Page, Petrified Forest, Philadelphia Story, Hamlet and Arsenic and Old Lace. Joseph Boyle recounted the camp entertainment in his oral history.

We were able to put on some shows and the Germans allowed us musical instruments into the camp, which we used to great advantage. There was a lot of satisfaction in the, particularly after the Germans allowed the building of a theater building in our compound. And it came into considerable use. The seats were made, in passing, by using the wood that the Red Cross parcels came in. In other words, the Red Cross parcels was in cardboard, but many of them apparently in a crate, and the crate was made out of wood. It was from that wood that we made the seats in the theater.

Prisoners of Stalag Luft III also had the opportunity for some athletics. With some help in the way of sports equipment supplied by the YMCA, the men were able to play softball, football, basketball, track events, weight lifting, boxing and fencing. The prisoners took advantage of their athletic opportunities to stay in shape and to keep their minds fit as well. Boyle recalled some of the athletics played in the camp in his oral history.

246 Boyle oral history, 35,36.
247 Durand, Stalag Luft III: The Secret Story, 249.
I already mentioned their [was] softball and touch football and basketball and volleyball. In the winter, as a matter of fact, there was ice hockey. The Germans allowed us to flood a portion of the field space, build a little dyke and flood it. And the winters were very cold there so it didn’t take long to freeze over. And the YMCA again, I guess it was, or maybe it was some other outfit from Canada or England, sent in clip-on ice skates, and many of our Kriegies had been accomplished hockey players in high school and college. Of course, that’s particularly true with the Canadians. So that there were some very interesting hockey matches being played over the winter period. Also, the British went out and played rugby under the most unfavorable, cold, wet, [laughter] circumstances, but it didn’t seem to bother them.  

For the prisoners of Stalag Luft III, the ability to communicate within the camp and to receive information from outside the camp was vital. Communications within the camp, particularly from compound to compound, was necessary in order to coordinate any escape attempts as well as other covert activities. Receiving information from outside the camp was also important. The prisoners put together radios from parts that were either bribed from the guards or smuggled in. The POW’s needed to stay informed on the progress of the war, especially as to where the Allied forces were in respect to Stalag Luft III. Any escape

248 Boyle oral history, 36.  
249 Durand, Stalag Luft III: The Secret Story, 263-266.
attempts that might occur while their liberation was imminent would be an unnecessary risk for the prisoners. Joseph Boyle recalled the communications within the camp.

As far as getting information between compounds, it was not easy. You could do it by way of chaplains, which were moved back and forth between the compounds. You couldn’t accomplish much by yelling at each other across the expanse of ground and the various barb wired fences that separated the compounds.

How did we get information from outside the camp? Well, we got it in every day from new purges coming in. We also got it through the hidden radio, or radios that we had and managed to keep during the whole period of incarceration. And we got it through the daily issues of German newspapers which the Germans allowed to come in to the camp. But, of course, this was all propa . . . mostly unreliable propaganda.250

The prisoners of Stalag Luft III used the information they received from these sources to help them in their covert activities. These activities included escape plans as well as relaying information from within the camp back to the Allied intelligence community. One of the ways that the POW’s communicated this information was through secret code used in letters sent home. Joseph Boyle was one of the men trained in this secret code and reported on his covert activities in his oral history. When asked about covert activities within the camp, Boyle had the following response:

250 Boyle oral history, 36,37.
You asked about covert activities? Everything depended on the probation of the escape committee. And if your escape plan was approved, every effort was made to organize every last individual in the camp to enhance your ability to escape, both in manufacture of documents or clothes or whatever else was needed. I’ve already mentioned how I learned about the escape activities. And that was by getting rid of sand, through that, my pants leg the first couple of weeks I was prisoner. And from that point on you begin to put one and two together and you gathered that there were a lot of things going on in camp that you would do what you were told to do and ask no further questions.

Internal security, escape committee, I wasn’t involved in either one of those. But I was involved with a small group, I think there were six of us, who were brought in onto a long standing plan of sending messages home in our letters in a code, which was involved, first with getting a code word established and recognized back home in the intelligence department and once that had been approved, why you’d build your own code around a system of numbers and letters and it was a very complicated and [laughter] and ungainly way of communication very small bits of information. And while I spent many hours trying to perform it in a productive way, when I got home after the war, I found that most of my letters had been, had been blacked out by the censors before they left the camp and that completely screwed up the messages I
was attempting to send to the intelligence department. I did get a couple of letters to me in the camp, which I decoded and did get some basic information that perhaps was useful. Usually it had to do with some port you could try to make your way to if you were lucky enough to escape and there was a chance of tying up with sympathizers who might help you get into Sweden or something like that.251

The American prisoners used the coding system that Boyle described after 1943. Earlier in the war, the Military Intelligence service did not see much value in the coding system. However, after realizing that the British were having some success with this, the Americans began their code work in Stalag Luft III, where they received and sent several hundred coded messages. The number of prisoners involved in the coded letters ranged from forty in the South Compound [American] to more than one hundred and seventy in the British compounds.252

On January 27, 1945, the German Luftwaffe evacuated Stalag Luft III in order to avoid the advancing Russians.253 The Germans gave the prisoners one hour to gather their belongings and prepare to march. It was the coldest winter in Europe in fifty years and there was over a foot of snow on the ground. The prisoners were forced to march over ninety miles in three days, with little rest or food. The journey to Stalag VIIA was exceptionally difficult, but also foreshadowed the grueling months that followed. Joseph Boyle documented the difficult journey in his oral history.

251 Boyle oral history, 37,38.
252 Durand, Stalag Luft III: The Secret Story, 262.
253 Ibid, 326-327.
Along about November of 1944, every indication was that the Russians were driving the Germans out of Poland. And once they’d gotten by Warsaw, it was obvious that nothing was going to stop them until they got the Berlin. We did begin to prepare for evacuation, knowing it had to come sooner or later. When it finally came, we were given twenty minutes notice one night, oh, about 5 or 6 o’clock at night in January of ’45 I guess it was. And the Germans told our commanding officer that we were to prepare to leave, to evacuate the camp within the next half hour. Of course, having been there for almost eighteen months, twenty minutes wasn’t much notice, and the order was also passed along to stall as much as we could, and we did. And within, in the remaining hour of so, rather I should say in the next hour or so, we tried to either eat a package of whatever food we had on hand, knowing that we were going to be on a forced march and suspecting that we wouldn’t get much food for next foreseeable future. Things, since the whole country was in a, complete chaos.254

During the march, the POW’s still had to contend with the guards. However, the guards were not in much better shape than the prisoners at this point, which Boyle describes:

254 Boyle oral history, 38.
You asked how the prison guards treated us during the march. Well, it was more likely we were, all belonged to the same fraternity [laughter]. The guards were suffering as much as the prisoners and there were even rare cases where the guards were so weak, so ready to throw in the sponge that the prisoners would carry their rifles for them.[laughter] Did many POW’s escape during the march? A few, but there wasn’t much point in it. We all knew the war was so close to the end that it would, it would seem completely stupid to jeopardize you life at this point in time like that when all you needed to do was to be a little patient and the end of war seemed that close.255

After the difficult march, the prisoners were loaded onto a train that would take them to Stalag VIIA in Moosburg, Germany. The journey on board the train was as difficult as the march. The Germans packed over one hundred men in boxcars called ‘forty and eights’, which were designed to hold forty men or eight horses. Joseph Boyle described the conditions on the train to Moosburg.

The conditions on the train to Moosburg? Well, I don’t know, I guess there were forty or fifty of us packed into boxcars and we were in them for three days and two nights, I think, or maybe even four nights, three nights. It was pure misery. We had nothing to eat or drink. Or

255 Boyle oral history, 38,39.
did we? I don’t know. Maybe we had a little water. I don’t remember that. You couldn’t lay down. You had to sit and lean against other people. And for the few people that had to relieve themselves, there was a little pail passed around once in a while. I think that in the two or three days, the train stopped in the middle of open areas where the guards would throw open the doors of the train and we were allowed to pour out into the open landscape, farmland mostly. Snow covered, where we could relieve ourselves. And under the watchful eye of guards on top of the trains, armed with machine guns, and then get back onto the train and continue our journey to, down towards Munich.\textsuperscript{256}

About thirty men tried to escape during one of the relief stops, but were physically exhausted and were captured within a few days.\textsuperscript{257} The prisoners continued their journey towards Moosburg, which Boyle describes:

We arrived at our destination, which was Moosburg, a town about 35 kilometers north of Munich. One, early one morning, as I recall, it was like 6 o’clock, 5, 6 o’clock in the morning and when they opened the doors of the boxcars, it was still grey, early, before sunup and all we saw was an expanse of snow and mud. And when we got to move away from the train we got a look at this camp, which was nothing to look at. Just a barbwire enclosed area, which we later learned contained about 125,000 prisoners. And we spent the first

\textsuperscript{256} Boyle oral history, 39.  
\textsuperscript{257} Nichol and Renneli, \textit{The Last Escape}, 88.
couple of nights in tents, before the Germans, somehow or another, moved a bunch of Russians out of one part of the camp. I don’t know what they did with them, but then they put us in, where the Russians had been.\textsuperscript{258}

Joseph Boyle sketched a wonderful drawing that illustrates the misery the prisoners suffered during their march to Moosburg.

\textsuperscript{258} Boyle oral history, 39,40.
Figure 11. *The Last Kilometer*. Drawn by Joseph Boyle.

Conditions at Moosburg
Stalag 7A was located about 35 kilometers northeast of Munich. It was originally designed as a camp to hold US Air Force NCO’s. As Germany began to collapse in the spring of 1945, the camp became a central point where prisoners from other camps. By the end of the war, Stalag 7A housed 7,948 officers and 6,944 enlisted men that had been evacuated from other camps. Conditions within the camp were considered to be barely correct by the standards of the Geneva Convention.259

On February 2, 1945, 2,000 officers from the South Compound of Stalag Luft III arrived in Moosburg. Five days later, another 2,000 men from the Central Compound arrived. The conditions in the camp were deplorable. The prisoners were arranged with 300 men in barracks designed for 200 men, with no heat and generally unhealthy conditions. The German administration was unprepared for the large influx of prisoners and the camp was completely unorganized as a result. Hitler wanted to use the POW’s as a final bargaining chip at the end of the war.260 With most of the POW’s confined in a few small camps, the prisoners had to ration what little food they received. David Cox, Jr., related a story his father told him when he was growing up. “When we [the Cox children] would not want to finish our food, he [David Cox] would remind us of how hungry he would get [while he was a POW], and that the German soup had bugs in it, and also the bread.” He also recalled another story about his dad’s stay at Moosburg. “When he was in the final camp, waiting to be processed for liberation, he got very hungry. He traded his flight ring to an Italian POW

260 Ibid.
(through a fence) for chocolate bars. Later, when he got home, he had a duplicate of the ring made and engraved, which is in my possession today.”261

Stalag VIIA was liberated by General Patton’s 14th Armored Division on April 28, 1945. An American POW took an American flag from a jeep and climbed the flagpole to replace the Nazi flag. Patton, who said “I want that son-of-a-bitch cut down, and the man that cuts it down, I want him to wipe his ass with it”, had ordered the raising of the American flag.262 Patton then said, “Well I guess all you sons-a-bitches are glad to see me”, which was followed by a loud roar from the crowd. When the crowd quieted, he said “I’d like to stay with you a while, but I’ve got a date with a woman in Munich, its 40 kilometers away, and I’ve got to fight every damn inch of the way. God bless you and thank you for what you’ve done.”263 Joe Boyle described the conditions in Moosburg, as well as the story of their liberation from the Germans:

The conditions there were pretty crude, pretty crumby, and it was quite a letdown from the [laughter] accommodations we’d enjoyed at Stalag Luft III. The last days in Moosburg were interesting. We could hear gunfire. And, of course, it turned out that Patton’s troops were approaching the area. And when they finally arrived, I happened to be lying on my bunk. And I don’t know what time of day it was. But, I heard this commotion and rolled over and looked, and there in the

261 David C. Cox, Jr., March 8, 2002, unpublished interview by author.
263 Ibid.
center of our barracks came this group of Allied officers. One of them that was easily identifiable was General Patton. And as I learned later the guy, walking down next to him came tromping through our barracks was General Van Fleet.

So, among, of all the different barracks and buildings that they could have walked through, I have often felt myself lucky that I happened to be a witness to Patton actually going through, making a quick inspection of this camp we were in, during his brief stay there, because we were only on the way that he was headed. There was still a long ways to go. The Germans were putting up, still putting up considerable resistance between Moosburg and Berchtesgaden. And so, Patton and his people were amazed to find the number of prisoners that they’d came across in the camp. And of course, they were in no way prepared to do anything for us, I mean they didn’t have, they barely had enough food to themselves. And we knew instinctively that while we were technically liberated, we probably had some time period of time to go before we enjoyed any of the comforts of being free.\footnote{Boyle oral history}
Journey from Moosburg to Lucky Strike

After being liberated, the POW’s were ordered to stay in the camp until more American authorities could come to help administer the evacuation. However, most of the men were anxious for their first taste of freedom in years. Eventually, David Cox and Joseph Boyle were sent to Camp Lucky Strike\(^{265}\) near Le Havre, France, where they waited for processing by the Army and orders to return home. Joe Boyle described the POW’s newfound freedom, as well as his journey to Camp Lucky Strike.

After watching a mixed group, oh, the Germans threw, of course the German guards had all thrown their arms away and all disappeared from the camp when Patton arrived. And at this point, instead of having our normal mess, which we’d actually not had since we’d marched out of Stalag Luft III. We’d more of less paired up into two’s, sort of a buddy system, because everything was so uncertain. So, I happened to be paired up with my friend, Ed Pipp. And Pipp and I decided that we weren’t, we weren’t going to hang around this camp too long after seeing that several other dozens probably, or hundreds of other POW’s that were just following [laughter] the Russians, who were the first to just march out, break out of the camp, cut holes in the barb wire and break out. But the Americans had left a few American personnel to try and keep us in the camp, but they didn’t do it forcefully and most of us

\(^{265}\) Camp Lucky Strike was located LeHavre, France, and is where the POW’s were debriefed and re-assigned after their liberation. See Durand, Stalag Luft III: The Secret Story,
found our way out of the camp, either for a, out of curiosity or for a short walk, or to take off and to head home. And Pipp and I decided to head home.

And we went out and started to hitchhike down toward Moosburg, but that was in the direction where, the fighting was still, theoretically, going on. And nobody would pick us up, and so we crossed the road and we started to hitchhike the other way and by means of armored carriers and jeeps and trucks, we managed to hitchhike our way up to Frankfurt on the Main, from where we hitchhiked a ride by air to Paris on an air transport airplane. These planes were flying all over Europe at this time, taking people to and from everywhere. And no questions were asked when we walked out in the airfield in Frankfurt to where the air controller was and said, you know, we were ex-prisoners and would like to go home and would like to get to Paris or someplace. he said, “Well, there’s a plane coming in the next ten or fifteen minutes that would probably get you a ride to Paris.”

General Dwight Eisenhower had ordered the former prisoners to stay in Stalag VIIA. However, many of the prisoners, such as Boyle and Pipp, decided to try to find their own way to Paris266 or elsewhere, as Boyle describes:

So we got a ride to Paris and when we got there, turned ourselves in to the Red Cross, who provided us with toothpaste,

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toothbrushes, shaving equipment and directions to a small hotel where we were allowed stay and directed us to an officer’s mess, which we were allowed to utilize and we enjoyed being in Paris for the next four, five or maybe it was six days, during which the V.E. day occurred and we had the pleasure of walking down the Champs Elysee with thousands of French people, in the company of a young French couple, who had taken us under their care that morning when we got out of bed and walked out onto the sidewalk and learned that it was V.E. day and the National Anthems of all three countries were being played in rotation all over Paris. And Pipp and I spent the day with this young French couple, who didn’t speak English, and we didn’t speak French, and enjoyed the great sense of relief and joy that came to all of Europe that day.

A few days later, the authorities caught up with us and they told us that we had to get our tails down to Le Havre and report into Camp Lucky Strike, and, which we did by hitchhiking again. And were at Lucky Strike for a week or so, we were well fed while we were there. We were finally loaded onto the last convoy of the war and we were sent home. The trip home took about ten or eleven days. I’m going to end my story there.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁷ Boyle oral history, 42.
Chapter 6

Conclusion

World War II provided many challenges for the men of the Eighth Air Force. The stress of seeing friends killed or injured during combat was difficult to bear. There was also the constant threat of being shot down and having to spend the rest of the war as a prisoner of war. David Cox, Jr. described the war’s impact on his father. “From comments made by my mother years after the war, I think he was changed dramatically by his war experiences. Before the war, in high school, he was president of the senior class, apparently, quite popular, and made excellent grades … He was trying to get through school, dating my Mom when Pearl Harbor hit and war was declared. My remembrance of growing up with him was of a respectful but distant relationship. He worked hard, drank hard and while he was a good provider; he spent little time with us. But he gave his best years in the Service, and never considered himself a hero, just like so many of his counterparts.”

Some of the men who served in the Eighth Air Force look back at their service and reflect on the difficult times they went through during the war. Perhaps Bob Geraghty best described the experience of being a combat airman. “All air combat crewmen in World War II were the same. We all groaned when the curtain in our briefing room was pulled aside, and the long red ribbon stretching from our bases … to the target … was revealed. We all

268 David C. Cox, Jr., March 8, 2002, unpublished interview by author.
grabbed our Mae West’s and heaved ourselves into the throbbing, shaking aluminum tubes of
death, which smelled of high-octane gas, cordite, and urine. We all prayed a bit when the
flak…whomped around us. We all cursed a lot when the fighters slashed in, wings aglow
with our death candles. We all grieved for our buddies who didn’t make it.”

When Joseph Boyle and David Cox began their service in the 305th Bomb Group, the
Eighth Air Force was in its infancy and was beginning a very difficult period. From 1942 to
the end of 1943, the loss rate for the Eighth Air Force was staggering. Until the introduction
of the P-51 Mustang as a fighter escort that could safely guard the bombers deep into
Germany, the aircrews suffered losses that they found hard to accept. The raid on
Schweinfurt, Germany on October 14, 1943 was the last mission into Germany without long
range fighter support. The 305th Bomb Group lost eighty-seven percent of its force for this
mission, which would be the highest rate for any bomb group during a single mission in the
war.

Joseph Boyle and David Cox served in the 305th Bomb Group during this difficult
and dangerous period from the Fall of 1942 until they were shot down by the Germans in
May and July of 1943. Their chronicle describes this difficult period from the soldiers’ point
of view. Most of the histories of the Eighth Air Force and the 305th Bomb Group are
narratives that describe the missions and the results in the traditional military history style,
with technical information about the targets and the success rate of the missions. David
Cox’s diary and Joseph Boyle’s oral history give us a richer and deeper understanding of
what it was like for the men of the 305th Bomb Group during this difficult period of World

270 Thom, The Brotherhood of Courage, 117, 118.
War II. By examining Cox’s diary and Boyle’s oral history, we realize a more personal impression of the events and personalities of the 305th Bomb Group.

David Cox wrote his diary during his time in combat sixty years ago. His story comes from the perspective of someone whose life was in peril on a daily basis. His diary gives a personal account of the missions of the 305th Bomb Group that were not previously available. He writes about the loss of friends, the excitement of combat, the role that fate plays in war, and of his wish to finish his tour and return home. Cox’s diary offers a window into the experience of losing his crew and the pain of being the only survivor from Carter’s Little Pills. He reports on the difficulty of being an outsider and the frustration of having to fill in with other crews. Cox also reveals his bitterness about the delay in his promotion. The reason for this delay has been documented previously, but Cox’s diary discloses the frustration involved on a more personal level.

It is difficult to say for whom Cox was writing the diary. He often addresses it to his wife, maybe to give an account of what his war experience was like in case he did not return from a mission. At other times, Cox goes into great technical detail that only someone in his position could understand, indicating that he was writing the diary for himself. However, this may be because of he was a co-pilot and was the main observer on the missions.

Cox sometimes mentioned that the bombs missed their targets, but does not mention the collateral damage that may have been associated with these missions. After these mishaps, Cox usually reported on the technical reasons for missing the targets, which may also be because of his role as the chief observer on board the plane. Boyle does not talk about collateral damage in his oral history, but mentions it in his poem, Whose to Judge,

which he wrote during his stay in *Stalag Luft III*. The poem is about civilian deaths from American bombers and the civilian lynch mobs who hang the captured airmen. Although men have admitted regret of civilian casualties after the war, it is more rare to find evidence of these feelings during war times.

Diaries and oral histories can sometimes be fallible sources. In this case, Cox’s diary has proven to be very accurate. The events he describes have been documented in Freeman’s *The Mighty Eighth*, Thom’s *The Brotherhood of Courage*, and *The Army Air Forces of World War II: Combat Chronology*. His description of the loss of *Carter’s Little Pills* was documented in John Craven’s *The 305th Bomb Group in Action*. Cox’s account of Boyle’s actions to save *The Dry Martini II* on the January 13, 1943 raid on Lille were accurate and were also documented in Freeman’s *The Mighty Eighth* and Thom’s *The Brotherhood of Courage*. Cox usually wrote in his diary after finishing a mission, which may account for its accuracy.

Joseph Boyle’s oral history is from the perspective of a man who sixty years earlier survived these difficult missions, as well as two years in a German POW camp. His oral history also gives an accurate report of his activities in the Eighth Air Force. Although Boyle’s oral history was recorded sixty years after the war, he gives accurate descriptions of his combat experience. His accounts of the January 13, 1943 mission to Lille, France and the April 4, 1943 mission to Paris are correct. These events were documented in Roger Freeman’s *The Mighty Eighth* and in Walter Thom’s *The Brotherhood of Courage*.  

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272 Craven, *The 305th Bomb Group in Action*, 293.
When checked against these previous accounts, it is clear that Boyle’s oral history is an accurate description of the events, with the exception of the incorrect date for the Paris mission. Boyle’s oral history gives us a more personal account of the Lille mission, from the perspective of the man who pulled the B-17 out of its dive and saved the rest of the crew. The previous sources have documented what happened on board The Dry Martini II, but Boyle’s oral history gives us the story from the vantage point of the someone who was on board for this mission. His description of the record of ten fighters shot down by The Dry Martini III was also accurate when checked against Freeman’s The Mighty Eighth277 and Thom’s The Brotherhood of Courage278. Again, Boyle’s oral history makes this account richer by offering the perspective of one of the men on board.

The death of Major Taylor on the January 13, 1943 mission to Lille, France has also been documented in the Freeman’s The Mighty Eighth279 and Thom’s The Brotherhood of Courage280. These sources give an accurate description of what happened during this mission, but fail to give us any personal insight on who Major Taylor was and what his loss meant to the men of the 305th Bomb Group. Boyle’s oral history describes Taylor from a personal standpoint and describes the emotion involved in the loss of a man who was respected by the men of the 305th.

Although Cox’s diary and Boyle’s oral history were recorded sixty years apart, together they offer a perspective that is both unique and valid in the study of the 305th Bomb Group and the Eighth Air Force. By using their voices, this thesis provides a more personal history than the typical narrative.

277 Freeman, The Mighty Eighth, 29.
278 Thom, The Brotherhood of Courage, 79.
279 Freeman, The Mighty Eighth, 23.
280 Thom, The Brotherhood of Courage, 47.
In *Listen to their Voices: Two case studies in the interpretation of Oral History*,
Ronald Grele describes the importance of studying history from a more personal perspective.
“[Oral history] helps us understand the people interviewed and their historical point of
view”. 281 Personal perspective adds texture to history and helps us understand what someone
was going through from the vantage point of one who was there. This thesis helps make the
narrative history of the 305th Bomb Group richer by blending it with David Cox’s diary and
Joseph Boyle’s oral history.

Boyle’s oral history gives us the story of the POW camp where the Germans held
them until the end of the war. Through his voice, we can hear history from the ground up,
from the POW’s point of view. He tells us of the danger of being shot down and captured,
and of the difficulties of daily life in *Stalag Luft III*. His oral history also details his and
David Cox’s work on the tunnels that were later used in the Great Escape, and of their
difficult evacuation and march to *Stalag 7A*, where they were later liberated by General
George Patton’s troops. Through the words of David Cox and the voice of Joseph Boyle, we
can re-live the difficult days of World War II from the perspective of the men who served in
the Army Air Force in the European theater. Their story is a rich narrative that could only be
told through the words and voices.

David C. Cox and Joseph Boyles’ accounts of their training and combat experiences
were quite typical of many other men of the Eighth Air Force, but what makes it important is
that they expressed their experiences frankly, simply, and intimately. Although Cox never
intended to publish his diary, his incisive chronicle transports the reader to a time when he

281 Ronald J. Grele, *Listen to their Voices: Two case studies in the interpretation of Oral
History*, in *Envelopes of Sound: The Art of Oral History 2nd ed.* (Chicago: Precedent
and his fellow Eighth Air Force aircrews fought terrible and fascinating battles, a world that is hard to understand except through the eyes of someone who was there. In Joseph Boyle’s oral history, one can experience sights and sounds of battle at 20,000 feet, the randomness of war, the narrow escapes and the sudden loss of friends through his words. Cox and Boyle offer a more personal description of what combat was like than the official histories. Their story discloses their passion, wonderment and despair. In a poem entitled The Fate We Share as Prisoners, written during his time as a POW in Stalag Luft III, Boyle describes the POW’s hope for the future. Only an American who experienced air combat in World War II could share it as Joseph Boyle has.

The fate we share as prisoners
Is drab and often grim,
Existing on such scanty fare
As Reich-bread, spuds and klim.

Beds and books and little else
To fill Time’s flapping sail,
She makes or loses headway all
Depending on the mail.

Oh! Drab the days and slow to pass
Within this barbed-wire fence,
When all the joys of living are
Still in the future tense.

So here’s to happy days ahead
When you and I are free,
To look back on this interlude
And call it history.282

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282 Joseph Boyle, unpublished poem.


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Figure 12. "Almost Out of Gas!" Drawn by Joseph Boyle.
Figure 13. “Dinner is Served!” Drawn by Joseph Boyle.
Figure 14. *Kriegy Economics*. Drawn by Joseph Boyle.
Figure 15. *Pretty Good Parcels.* Drawn by Joseph Boyle.
Figure 16. “The Gay Summer Season” Drawn by Joseph Boyle.
Figure 17. Toward a More Economic Coal Consumption! Drawn by Joseph Boyle.
Figure 18. Kriegy Stoves. Drawn by Joseph Boyle.
Figure 19. “All the Comforts of Home!” Drawn by Joseph Boyle.
Questions for Joseph Boyle’s Oral History

1. Where were you born?
2. Did you grow up in the same area?
3. When did you join the Army Air Force?
4. Was that your first choice?
5. Where did you train in the U.S.?
6. How long did the training process take?
7. Can you describe the trip over to England?
8. Can you describe the living conditions at Chevelston and Grafton Underwood?
9. Did you get to go to London during your stay there?
10. Did you encounter animosity from men who were fighting the ground war?
11. What were the weather conditions in England like?
12. How did the briefings go?
13. What did you cover during the briefings?
14. What happened after the briefings
15. Can you describe your responsibilities as a co-pilot?
16. Can you describe the responsibilities of the other members of the crew?
17. How did the Flights form up?
18. Was this dangerous? (Weather conditions, etc?)
19. Did you witness any mid-air collisions?
20. At what point did the flight group begin to encounter German fighters?
21. At what point did the fighter escorts have to return to England?
22. Can you describe a mission? (First mission?)
23. Were the first missions in 1942 more difficult or different from those later on?
24. How did they change?
25. Can you describe learning to fly in combat?
26. How did this differ from your training?
27. Was combat anything like you anticipated?
28. Did you have a name for your plane?
29. Did you fly on more than one?
30. Did you fly on the mission when Carter’s Pills was shot down? (March 8, 1943)
31. Can you describe what happened?
32. Can you tell me how David Cox reacted to losing his crew?
33. What happened on the mission where your plane was shot down?
34. Did everyone survive?
35. Where were you shot down, and how long did it take before you were captured?
36. Were you captured by German military or civilians?
37. How were you treated after your capture?
38. Were you taken immediately to Dulag Luft?
39. Did you see any of your crew members there?
40. Did any of your crew go on to Stalag Luft III?
41. Did you ever see any of the non-coms [non-commissioned officers] after the war?
42. How were you treated at Dulag Luft?
43. Did you receive treatment there that was outside the Geneva Convention?
44. How long did they keep you there?
45. Can you describe the living conditions at Dulag Luft?
46. What type of food/clothing did you have there?
47. Can you describe the barracks conditions there?
48. How were you transported to Stalag Luft III?
49. What was your orientation there like?

50. How long were you there before you saw someone you knew?

51. Were you interviewed by internal security (U.S.)?

52. Can you describe the type of clothing that was issued to the prisoners?

53. Can you describe the barracks or “blocks” conditions?

54. Can you describe the daily routine at camp?

55. Did Stalag Luft III have its own monetary system? Did prisoners exchange cigarettes, etc.?

56. What type of entertainment was there in camp?

57. Did you have a library there?

58. Did you participate in any of the education programs that were offered there?

59. What types of athletics were available there?

60. What was the food like in the camp? Did rationing become more difficult as the war drew to a close?

61. Did the camp receive most of its food from the Red Cross?

62. How did Foodaco work?

63. How did prisoners communicate within the camp (how did you get information from other compounds)?

64. How did you receive information from outside of the camp?

65. Was information received through coded letters, etc.?

66. Did you have access to radios? If so, how were they smuggled in?

67. Can you describe the resourcefulness of the prisoners in Stalag Luft III?

68. How did you make your daily life better by re-using/recycling everyday materials (Klim cans, etc.).

69. Can you describe escape attempts/committee?

70. Can you describe covert activities within the camp?

71. Were you aware of MIS-X before you arrived at Stalag Luft III?
72. Did you find out about it at Stalag Luft III?
73. Did you know anyone that was trained for MIS-X?
74. How did the Germans counter these activities?
75. What was the punishment for escape attempts?
76. How did you find out about the Great Escape?
77. Were you aware of it before it happened?
78. What were the effects on the camp after the escape?
79. Did you participate in any escape activities?
80. Did you participate in internal security or escape committee?
81. Can you describe the Evacuation of Stalag Luft III?
82. How much notice did you have before you were forced to evacuate?
83. Did you have adequate supplies for the forced march?
84. How long did it take?
85. What were the conditions?
86. Did many POW’s die on the march?
87. How did the prison guards act towards the prisoners during the march?
88. Were you treated more harshly?
89. Did many POW’s escape during the march?
90. Did you receive any help from citizens during the march?
91. Can you describe the conditions on the train to Moosburg (Nuremberg?)
92. Where did you end up (Nuremberg or Moosburg)?
93. Can you describe your stay at Moosburg?
94. What were the conditions like there?
95. Were there many escape attempts there as well?
96. Did Moosburg have the same type of internal organization (U.S.) as Stalag Luft III?
97. Did you and the other prisoners begin to lose hope as conditions deteriorated or did they remain hopeful as the end of the war drew near?

98. How was the camp liberated?

99. Can you describe this event from your perspective?

100. Can you describe the feeling of being liberated?

101. Is it true that Patton was there?

102. What was the repatriation process like and how long did it take?

103. Were you able to leave the camp immediately? (Go to camp Lucky Strike, etc.)

104. How long did you have to stay in this camp? Can you describe your de-briefing?

105. Did you go back to the US immediately after leaving the de-briefing camp?

106. Was it difficult to adjust to freedom and his return the United States?

107. What did you do after the war?

108. Did you stay in touch with many of your fellow POW’s or guys you served with in the 305th?

109. Did you join veteran’s organizations?

110. Did you ever talk to your children about your war experiences? Or your wife?

111. If so, when did you begin to talk about it?