

MISSING IN ACTION

WORLD WAR II

By: Simon Wilczek

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I joined the Air Force on Jan. 22, 1943 and was discharged on November 14, 1945

I took training at Shepard Field Texas for Airplane Engine Mechanic. Gunnery training was at Kingman, AZ. I took part in the Offensive Europe Campaign. We finally went on our first mission from England. We flew from England, where we were stationed, to Bordeaux, France.

As we were going for our target, we were hit by ground fire, and our engine was on fire. We had to bail out. After I bailed out just a little before 8 AM, an elderly man came over to me. He showed me a house and told me there would be a lady, "go to this house". When she came out to go back to the other house, I should step out from behind the fence where the lady could see me. Then she would talk to me and tell me what to do, which she did; she told me she had already taken care of the pilot and copilot. They had just gone out the back door and the Germans came in the front door.

She had me go out and lay down in the grass, about 500-ft away, and to not get up. She was afraid the Germans might be around and they would see me. She spoke very good English, which really helped.

That evening just after dark, they came and took me to where the pilot and copilot were. The next night they took us to a group who took us to where the other crew members were. It was sure a happy reunion. We walked all night to get to this place where the Frenchmen were. They took us to this farm and we helped them with their

hay. We would pile it up in the evening and spread it out in the morning to dry it out; (this is how it was cured). They used oxen to pull the mower that cut the hay. When the Germans would come by the road we would hide in the shocks of hay. The French were very watchful as not to let the Germans see us.

When we left this place, we went in a car. We had not gone very far when we were shot at. We all got away into the woods. Needless to say we didn't know where we were. We heard some talking so the pilot went to see whom it was. It was some Frenchmen. The pilot came back to get us. We were taken to this building where they were housing their prisoners. We were there for several days. The Frenchmen asked us if we wanted to see an execution. We thought we did, but when it came right down to seeing it we didn't watch. They executed five or six people who were working with the Germans.

This was the first place we had been where we were able to take a bath. It was a pond outside, but it served the purpose. One day we were eating dinner and all of a sudden here came some mortars (exploding shells) by the Germans. There was an elderly Grandma there whom we had to help out. Well, we all got out of there pretty quick! We had to get to hiding in the woods, and we made it safely.

The French had bombed a bridge and stopped the German troop movement, which turned out to be pretty exciting. It didn't last long. The Germans got out real fast but they lost one half-track when the bridge blew. A half-track is an army vehicle with guns mounted on it. These Free French were pretty brave, having no more to fight with than small arms. They shot several Germans.

During the time we were at this place, the Americans landed a plane. They unloaded a small half-track. The French would not let us go to the plane. We just wanted to get back to England.

The Germans were moving out as this was after D-Day. We were in France on D-Day, and you never heard such a rumble and roar all day. One day we rode on the back of a truck with two machine guns, as guards, watching for the Germans. While the French had gone to Toulouse to get some tobacco, they had me hang the American flag from the top of a building.

The French gave us a seven-course dinner. Our plates were changed after each course. This was quite something as I had never had but one plate for all my courses. After this we went back to our Group quarters.

We then moved to Eauze, France (pronounced AOs). By this time the Germans had moved out. We met several nice French people. One evening the English dropped some arms and ammunition to the French. We went with them to pick up the bundles the English had dropped. The French had made a triangle with fire pots. The English would drop the material in this triangle.

One day the Americans landed a C47, a cargo plane. On it was a small tank for the French. We tried to get them to take us to the plane and let us fly back with them. They said no because they had to get the plane out of there before the Germans could see them.

We stayed in Eauze for quite some time. One Saturday when the people came to town, I met a person who asked me to have a drink. Apparently they thought I could speak French, I told them I could understand a little of what they were talking about. It was a nice afternoon.

I met a nice girl named Odetta, who lived on a farm near Eauze. I saw her for a few days, then she asked me to go to the show. I said, "yes I would". She wouldn't let me pay. I don't remember what the show was about, but I enjoyed holding her hand and being with her. After the show we walked to the middle of the square in town.

She gave me a big hug and kiss, then took off for home. I did not see her again as they moved us to Bordeaux where we stayed for a few days.

We helped the French round up a couple of bad Frenchmen at a movie. We left Bordeaux and went to Biarritz. I don't remember how long we stayed there. It was a pretty town.

The Americans were supposed to fly down and pick us up which they did in a couple of days. I remember touring the City as much as we could by foot.

When the plane came in we were ready to go, but we had to wait until the next day. That evening they had a dance for us. I could not dance but enjoyed watching.

We got up the next morning and said our farewells and thanks. Then out to the plane and back to England! We landed at a pilot's base and they drove me crazy to see my post cards and pictures, but it was fun. Then we went back to our base.

The next day we went to London. I saw some of my buddies, such as Chester Jech and Marion Jindra. Some of the things we saw in London were Buckingham Palace, Big Ben, Number 10 Downing Street, and a few places that I had studied in history. It came time for us to go home.

We were put on a C54 plane and home we went. We stopped at the island of the Azores, then to home in the good ole' USA. We landed in Maine then took a train back to Oklahoma. I had two weeks leave, and then back to the old Army grind, at Vance AFB, Enid Oklahoma. I finished my tour there and came back to Kingfisher.