

Chapter 4 – The Battle to Rule the Skies

October – December 1943

October 1943

During this month the Ninth Air Force was moved from the Mediterranean to Britain and, as tactical bombers, the Marauders were transferred from the Eighth Air Force to the Ninth under General Brereton. The plan was to relocate the Ninth from the Mediterranean to England in preparation for the planned D-Day Invasion. Their mission was to destroy the Luftwaffe and its bases of operation thus bringing about air superiority. This was also preparation for upcoming role of ground support after the invasion.¹ Along with Operation Point Blank, the Ninth would have different objectives than the heavies of the Eighth which were mostly employed in attacks against German industrial targets.

According to the online History of Ninth Air Force, they had to prepare to move into Europe following the invasion while continuing to give the troops air support. They had to build and maintain their own airfields. The top commanders were Gen. L. H. Brereton, commander, Maj. Gen. Ralph Royce, deputy commander, Brig. Gen. Myron R. Wood, Service Command, Brig. Gen. Samuel E. Anderson, Bomber Command, Brig. Gen. E. R. Quesada, Fighter Command, and Brig. Gen. P. L. Williams, Troop Carrier Command. General Anderson insisted that aircrews stay together, even on furlough. The training program was a prodigious one. Even after a mission crews often were sent on training flights. The standard operating procedures called for two missions a day. This really taxed the maintenance crews, not to mention the flight crews. Men also received days in classes when flights were not scheduled. And, at times, whole weeks were spent in practice.²

The above description, of course, was a schedule that no one could keep, and it was surely written in interview with a staff officer. At any rate, it was the intended goal for the mediums at this time. But despite the big plans and intensive schedule, the weather in October, 1943, was so bad that the 323rd Group only logged seven missions this month, the least in any month throughout the war. To add to it, the media only covered the heavies of the Eighth Air Force. It seemed that the Ninth hardly existed in their eyes. Unfortunately, except for a few notable exceptions, this would continue for the rest of the war. They were lucky to get a sentence, “the Ninth also flew today”.³

The Marauder Men had been accustomed to being the underdog. In fact that idea had helped them to galvanize their resolve to prove themselves. But now that they had been doing it for some time, where was the press? As Ernie Pyle put it, “Lack of recognition definitely affects morale.”⁴

Ironically, and to make matters worse, the bomber high command was getting upset with the Marauders for an entirely different reason than they had in the previous spring – the reason now was that they were performing too well! The brass believed that due to their relatively low losses, and high bombing rate, they were making the heavies look bad. The low losses of the Marauders were overlooked by the press. This should have been news because of the recent view that the Marauders should be phased out of operations. This had to be embarrassing to the review committee that Truman headed.⁵

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¹ History of the Ninth Air Force – online.

² *Air Force, July, 1944*, 13-15.

³ Moench, *Marauder Men*, 84.

⁴ Pyle, *Brave Men*, 396.

⁵ Moench, *Marauder Men*, 82.

Meanwhile back in the Marauders, due to the miserable weather, the Satterwhite, Haller, and Sprague crews each flew only 2 missions this month. Gus's first one was to the Amsterdam-Schipol Airdrome on October 3rd. Willie and Tex were on this one, too. Major Wood led the Squadron. Over the target they met very heavy flak, both approaching and leaving, which was noted in the post-war comments of James F. Hunt and 1st Lt. Jesse R. Swan's Mission log. Wounded were Haglund and T/Sgt Charles I. Vacanti.⁶



Wilson Wood, James Hunt, Jesse Swan, Phillip Haglund (WIA), Charles Vacanti (WIA)

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The next day at Earls Colne bad weather covered the area. During the day a B-17 crash landed and started burning. S/Sgt David Goss was the first to see the pilot trying to get the unconscious co-pilot away from the plane. Still near the plane he fell to the ground. Goss arrived about that time and picked up the co-pilot thus allowing the pilot to get away too. The plane exploded a few seconds later.⁷

David Goss hailed from Gardenville, Maryland, just outside Baltimore. He was fourth in a family of five – three brothers and four sisters. David's father, Andrew Goss, was originally from Tennessee and he worked as a salesman. His mother, Regina, was from a German immigrant family. David liked to wander in the woods alone and read books. He was not gregarious and pretty much kept to himself. His grades were good enough in school to win a scholarship to college. He had studied engineering for two years when the United States joined the war. He tried out for pilot but was rejected when it was discovered he was color-blind, a fact he had not known before. The Air Corps trained him in the maintenance and use of the Norden bombsight.

However, since the Squadron had only been given a few of them he found himself without anything to do. He started working with the armorers, discovered he liked it, and had become a member of the armament section by the time they reached England.⁸ After being stationed in England for a while David liked to paint and started painting nose art and flight jackets. His artwork was very good but he was admittedly colorblind, and he would sometimes ask others for advice on color selections. The first nose art he painted was on the *Red Dog*. The airship's crew chief liked to play a card game called Red Dog, hence the name of the plane. David painted a smiling dog holding four aces.⁹

I called David on the phone and explained who I was. He said, "Yes, I remember Frenchie. I knew him well." I told him about the story I was putting together and he said, "I will do whatever I can to help. Send me some information on what you need and I will do it."

⁶ Moench, *Marauder Men*, 82.

⁷ Moench, *Marauder Men*, 82.

⁸ (David A. Goss, *Was This Meant to Be?* Privately Published, Arlington Texas, 1994, 7, 12-13, 21, & 25. Copy furnished courtesy of Ronni and Nels Cassano.

⁹ Goss, *Meant to Be?* 28.



David Goss, servicing one of the waist guns of *Red Dog* 41-31818 VT-C, piloted by Jerome F. St. Peter.

David died before receiving the package I sent, but through a relative I was informed that after the war David had written a book titled *Was This Meant to Be?* It was out of print and I couldn't find it until Ronni Cassano sent me a copy. It was written in the third person about his experiences during the war, and it was from this book that most of the information about him was found. The following is an excerpt from his book, in which he related saving the B-17 crewmen. David, goaded on by his friend John, most likely fellow armament man John W. Foutch, is describing the event to his wife Joan, a woman he met and eventually married in England.

"I won't say it was nothing, but lots of men have done more without recognition. It was in the middle of October, when a B17 was in trouble with two engines out trying to land at our strip. We knew he wasn't going to make it and a bunch of us ran to where it looked as if he was going to try to set it down. We got to the edge of the pasture he was aiming for just as he piled in. He tried to avoid the farm house by banking the plane over on its wing and slammed in hard. Must have been a real jolt to the pilot and his co-pilot. Now *that* was something worth talking about. When both of them dropped out, I went to help them get away because the plane had caught fire. That's all!"

John cut in, "Now wait a minute Joan. That's not all. The plane was in flames, and we all knew it was loaded with fuel and a full bomb load. We all stood there, but he ran to the plane to give them a hand. Now go on and tell her, Dave. It's about time you talk about it. You knew as well as we did that the thing could blow at any moment."

"All right, John. Yes I knew, but don't ask me why I went. All I knew was they needed help and I had to go. The co-pilot was out cold, and the pilot was dazed, but he helped me get the co-pilot on my back, and we got the hell out of there. Excuse me Joan! We got far enough that when it did blow, we didn't get hurt. Then some other fellows came to help us get away."

"Joan you should have seen the blast. There wasn't much left of the plane."¹⁰

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¹⁰ Goss, *Meant to Be?* 43-44.

Meanwhile the Poulin family back home could only pray and wait – wait for the next letter to prove the boys were still alive, at least on the date they had written last. “It was scary,” Uncle Vic said, “We’d look for letters and wait for telegrams.” He said the family went to church every day and prayed together each night at home. “That’s probably what helped them through the war – the fact that we prayed for them.”

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Although the Air Command was elated at the heavy bombing results, and concentrating on the next targets, the men of the heavy bombers had to live with the high rate of casualties they were receiving. Combat fatigue was even more of a problem for them than for the aircrews of the medium bombers. On the one hand, they had their ‘25-mission tour’ but on the other, they had their high rate of losses. With a loss rate of 3.8 per mission they weren’t doing so well – out of 100 aircrewmembers in July, sixty-four would be dead, wounded, or POWs by December.¹¹ At higher command there was no doubt that performance was directly linked to morale, and that included the ground crews as well. Ground crews might perform poor maintenance while flight crews poor bombing results. General Moench noted that the fact that the United States was rich and powerful and would eventually win the war didn’t help the fighting individuals much. It was up to them to find the strength to go on.¹²

The heavy bomber missions often lasted 8-10 hours at a time, while medium bomber missions were usually 3-4 hours at the most. Of course, that meant that mediums often flew two missions per day (not always combat, but still two assignments per day), so it’s very difficult to say who had it worse. Charles B. Sadler, one of the flight surgeons for the 323rd Bomb Group noticed the mood of one ‘heavy’ aircrew when he flew with them. They were very depressed and spoke of the heavy losses their unit had received.¹³ After a particularly difficult mission, one B-17 crewman summed up his feelings as he reviewed the empty bunks in his barracks. He decided not be friendly with the replacements as they might also be lost soon.¹⁴

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The crewmen in the heavies also had another problem to watch out for besides combat casualties and battle fatigue, and it was just as dangerous as enemy attacks – the cold. The Air Force had not expected the aircrews to fly at thirty thousand feet and did not prepare proper clothing for the intense cold. Seventy percent of our casualties came from frostbite. The Germans had electrically heated underwear. The US began to produce their own heated clothing but the wires usually broke so it was replaced by a two-layered suit. But even the new clothing was not adequate for the altitude, especially in winter. It was the fingers that suffered the most.¹⁵ The officers and some of the gunners in the forward compartments had heat, but the gunners that were aft of the bomb bays did not. Author Joffrey Perret relates that the airmen of the Eighth Air Force did not receive adequate heated suits until 1944, and even then, fifteen percent of the casualties were still due to the cold.

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At last, Gus’s search for his brother Guy paid off. Through letters back and forth, they set a tentative meeting place and time in London. Neither knew when the other would actually have leave, but if they both had leave in London on the same day, they would meet there with their respective girlfriends.

¹¹ Perret, *Winged Victory*, 281.

¹² Perret, *Winged Victory*, 408.

¹³ Moench, *Marauder Men*, 334. Postwar comments of Charles B. Sadler, M. D.

¹⁴ Bowman, *Castles in the Air*, 67.

¹⁵ Perret, *Winged Victory*, 365.

Gus explained, “The thing was, that when you wrote a letter it had to be censored, see? So they gave the pilots the right to censor. Well, this one particular letter didn’t get censored. I had an idea where Guy was because I had been stationed there before. But I wasn’t sure he was there, it was merely a deduction. Finally, I got an answer from Guy and I went up to see him. Then we made a date to meet in London.”

Apparently, both boys each had a regular girl in London who they would meet at a certain time and place if they had the time off.

“Well, it was more or less an understood date,” Gus continued. “It wasn’t made in advance because we couldn’t make dates in advance. The understanding was that whenever I came into town, she was my date.”

Guy said, “I was standing there on the street with my date that had brought another girl for Gus when he walked up. Her mouth dropped open and she looked from Gus to me and from me to Gus. Then she said, ‘There’s two of you?’ (belly laugh).”

“We had met the same girl,” Gus said. “She didn’t know what to do. Well, we got rid of her anyway... there was no sense arguing over her, I’ll tell you that. The girl friend she had with her... (sour face).”

She had met them separately and gotten the two Poulins mixed up! The brothers were both so disgusted they left the girls there and went off to talk and drink. This meeting occurred on Guy’s 20th birthday, on October 15, the day after Black Thursday.

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After that, when Guy was visiting Gus’s Marauder base, the two brothers concocted a plan to fly a mission together. They really wanted to fly together and Gus wanted to show Guy what a great plane the Marauder was, despite all the rumors.

“We all liked Guy when he came to visit our base,” Willie said. “We wanted to help him fly a mission. He switched places with the tail gunner.”

Gus said, “Guy and I were to fly out together but the plane wouldn’t fly [it returned to base] because of mechanical failure.”



Gus Poulin



Guy Poulin

(Photo courtesy of Bernadette Carter) (Photo courtesy of Solange Turcotte)

Ever since the five Sullivan brothers went down with a ship (remember the movie “Saving Private Ryan?”), the US armed forces decided that brothers must be separated, so a family would not lose more than one son at once. However, disregarding Army regulations, and their Mom’s

trauma if they both were shot down, they hatched out a plan on how to fly together anyway, substituting Guy for the usual tail gunner, Rogers. Luckily for Mémère (grandma), the plane had mechanical problems and had to return to base without completing the mission.

However, everything was OK until Guy forgot to answer with the tail gunner's name and used his own on the intercom. Guy explained, "The pilot said, 'Two Poulins on the same ship?' ...and the jig was up!"

"We got discovered, and got hell for it." Gus said flatly.

I could just imagine Dad telling Uncle Joe what a 'bonehead' he was – and Uncle Joe just chuckling it off. No doubt, with Satterwhite escorting them to the CO's office, they sniped at each other in French undertones; Satterwhite probably just shook his head or maybe rolled his eyes every now and then. If the army didn't need aircrews so bad they would have been court-martialed, but luckily, the Colonel had bigger fish to fry, so all they got was yelled at. Guy's pilot, Bill Cabral, stated that this was the only black mark on his crew's record.

"The boys are pretty good about these London missions and about conducting themselves in the expected manner," says Cabral. "In fact, the only flagrant violation we've had was when Poulin sneaked off on one of his passes to visit his brother Gaston at a Marauder station, and flew a mission with him over France."¹⁶

I never heard what Satterwhite said. For a very short time, Uncle Joe had been a Marauder man, too. Later, one of the local hometown papers, probably the Waterville Sentinel, published a small blurb:

SOLDIER BROTHERS FIND EACH OTHER ON BRITISH SOIL

In a recent letter received by Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Poulin of 153 ½ North Avenue, from their son, Sgt. Gaston Poulin mention is made of his first meeting with his brother, Sgt. Guy Poulin in England. Both men are gunners, but this was the first occasion of their meeting on foreign soil. Sgt. Gaston mentioned the fact that Sgt. Guy took a ride with him but didn't like the plane as well as his own, "but I wouldn't change with him either," the sergeant added. The two Skowhegan lads expect to see each other quite often now.¹⁷

A MONTREAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHED THIS ACCOUNT (paraphrased in English):

Received from England, two Franco-American brothers, members of the United States Air Force met for the first time after they arrived overseas. Their meeting coincided with the birthday of Staff Sergeant Joseph Guy Poulin, who celebrates his exploits in a Flying Fortress *Eightball*. Joseph Guy is a turret gunner, the same as his brother Staff Sergeant Gaston Poulin, 22 years, who serves on board another type of bomber. They are the sons of Mr. And Mrs. Joseph W. Poulin of Skowhegan Maine, who emigrated from St. Joseph de Beauce to the United States just before the birth of Joseph Guy. Their only relative in Montreal is Miss Marie-Ange Lessard [Memere's sister]. They are the sons of a veteran of the last war.¹⁸

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In the 323rd, missions continued to be briefed and scrubbed because the targets were covered by clouds and rain. Willie and others used the time to go see Kenny Class at the hospital.

"When we went over to visit him," he said, "we all went over, giving him a bad time... and they had a nurse there named Bean, he called her 'String.' He was having a pretty good spin there that little turd was... he was the smallest gunner (laughing). 'String, I'll need another rub as soon as we get rid of these jokers,' he says, laughing. 'All right Ken,' she says. 'Don't worry about

¹⁶ Steinmetz, *Screwballs*.

¹⁷ Gus Poulin's Scrapbook.

¹⁸ Gus Poulin's Scrapbook.



Kenny Class

rubbing my long leg, you can rub the short one this time,' he says. And we knew what he was talking about. She took it in stride. 'OK Ken.' She was a good nurse. She would put up with him. She had to be a good nurse."

But things had not been so easy for Kenny.

After the operation, infection did set in. A colonel who knows a lot about the use of the newest miracle drug, penicillin, climbed into a plane and flew half-way across England to take care of Kenny. And the colonel did a good job, Kenny is getting along fine.

"The boys in the squadron gave me something like six quarts of blood," he says. "I've got so many people's blood in me I hardly know who I am." The way he says it, you know he's proud of the new blood.

As soon as the hospital would let them come, Kenny began to get visitors. They came in twos and threes, and their rank ran from private to colonel. They came in and talked with him, but they didn't say much. And Kenny didn't say much. They were mostly fliers, and fliers don't need many words to show their feelings for a friend who's lost his wings.

Then Colonel Thatcher came, and he brought with him a Purple Heart ribbon.

Colonel Thatcher is tall. His face is gray. Take off his uniform and he looks like a school teacher; but he's a group commander, and his group flies Marauders. That means the fliers he leads into combat are the best pilots in the world, and his men say he's the best of the lot. It's a big job for a man in his thirties, and Colonel Thatcher's face shows it. Officers don't have any trouble remembering to say "Sir" when they're talking to Colonel Thatcher, because they know he's got the biggest job there is in war. He leads men into combat.



Colonel Thatcher receives a commendation. The man to his left is Lester Maitland, commander of the 386th Bomb Group – the oldest man flying bombers out of England
(Photo courtesy of W. L. Brainard).

Colonel Thatcher walked into Kenny's room and shook Kenny's hand.

"How are you, Kenny?" he said, "Glad to see you."

"Glad to see you, sir."

"I brought something for you, Kenny, something that stands for a hell of a lot more than the simple fact that you got hurt."

“Thank you, sir.”

The colonel pinned the ribbon on the front of Kenny’s pajamas and shook his hand and walked out of the room. Kenny saluted the colonel’s back as he was going out the door, and Miss Southerland who had been standing behind the colonel, looked at Kenny and looked at the empty door and she half-ran out of the room and caught up with Colonel Thatcher in the hall and grabbed him by the elbow and turned him around. Colonel Thatcher stopped and turned and Miss Southerland reached up and took him by the lapels of his blouse.

“You can’t do it that way!” she said tensely. “You can’t just walk in there and pin a little ribbon on his chest and walk out. That boy’s all the heroes of this war wrapped up into one. That boy deserves all the medals in the world. That boy is wonderful. You can’t just pat him on the back and then walk away and forget it.”

Colonel Thatcher let her finish, and then looked at her for a minute.

“I know,” he said at last. “I know all about Kenny. And Kenny knows that I know. There’s no need for talk between Kenny and me. We understand each other. I’d be making things difficult for him if I stayed to talk with him, because he’d be working hard to keep me from feeling sorry for him.”

Miss Southerland turned away uncertainly and went back into Kenny’s room. She still wasn’t sure. She didn’t look at Kenny when she went into the room. Kenny spoke first.

“He’s certainly a wonderful guy,” Kenny said, and Miss Southerland looked at him, hoping Colonel Thatcher had been right in what he said.

“He’s the finest man I’ll ever know,” Kenny continued. “He always reminds me of something I read somewhere.”

“What is it?” Miss Southerland asked.

Kenny quoted: “They shook from their wings the dust of their bodies.”

As he finished speaking, Miss Southerland heard an airplane in the far distance. Kenny was listening, too.

“That’s a B-26,” he said. And his eyes were shining.¹⁹

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“There was another guy over there in the hospital,” Willie said. “His eyes were really big, his eyelashes were gone. He had been burned. His hair was gone. So when he looked at you he looked like an owl. He still was stiff over his burns – but he was making it. He’d been in a B-17 or a B-24, one of those. We used to have wheelchair races. I’d get behind Kenny and two or three other guys would get a guy in a wheel chair and we’d head down the hall. ‘Go!’ We’d run down the hall full blast; never giving any thought to dumping somebody. Kenny didn’t either – he was leaning forward and wanted me to go faster. But that sort of thing helps those guys to get better faster. You can’t hold a bunch of young people down.”

It’s funny to hear how the boys really acted, when the brass and the press weren’t around. Willy was impressed by another nurse there at the hospital. “This wasn’t ‘String,’ this was another one I met there, a British nurse. Her husband had been out at war for three years, and she hadn’t heard from him, she didn’t know if he was coming back. I felt sorry for her. She was quite a lady. She didn’t have any serious thoughts about any man, because she was waiting for her husband. He was a medical man too. I often wondered what happened to her.”

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On the 24th of October 1943 the Marauders were finally back in action, but some of the 453rd planes experienced an unusual difficulty on this one. Two hundred B-26s attacked the Airdromes at Mondidier and St. Andre-de-L’Eure. Flak was heavy and some of the planes had trouble with propwash, which is caused by flying too close behind another plane’s air stream – the usual result is that the plane loses its lift and begins to fall.²⁰

¹⁹ YANK the Army Weekly, November 14, 1943. Courtesy of Lee and Lillian Zipperling.

²⁰ Moench, *Marauder Men*, 83.

Tex describes what happened. “We hit some prop wash and dropped,” he said. “I hit the ceiling. There was everything up there, parachutes, and what-not. Our plane had gone into a dive and Roscoe [Haller, the pilot,] recovered from it. Woomp! I hit the floor and I looked back, and I saw two of the bombs break their shackles. [When a tailgunner looks back, he’s actually looking forward.] We were carrying four 1000 pounders that day. One of the bombs, after breaking its shackle, wedged the door open just enough where the door joins the catwalk in the bomb bay, to continue on and fall out of the aircraft over England. The other bomb was lying on the bomb bay door.”

“So we settled-down and started to climb,” Tex went on, “I sat down by the radio operator [Ramey]... I thought we had crash-landed. And that 5-man life raft laid horizontally in there... it came loose somehow. Ramey was trying to put on the dad-gummed life raft to jump instead of a parachute!. He had been thrown around very violently after we hit the prop wash and he was probably a bit addled from the jolt of hitting the floor when Haller pulled the plane out of the dive. When [James] Smith got down out of his turret he noticed that Ramey was trying to attach the life raft pack to attachment points on his parachute harness, where his parachute pack was supposed to be, and prevented him from doing so. Haller flew our aircraft on out to the English Channel and the bombardier opened the bomb bay doors. Instead of the bomb falling out, it just remained on the door. As Haller rocked the plane back and forth, Smith caught hold of the bomb’s tail fin and succeeded in making the bomb fall free from the plane. The bomb fell in the Channel.”



Bryce Ramey, James Smith, Sam “Tex” Findley; enlisted crew of the “Egg Crate”

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After the Satterwhite crew’s last mission of the month (15 missions total), their plane, the *Miss Safartus Rickenschicker*, was officially retired on October 24th as ‘war weary’ and sent to a training unit.²¹

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By October 31st the US Air Force had fielded 2,385,000 men all over the world. They had flown over 250,000 sorties and had destroyed over 8,000 enemy planes with many more probably destroyed.²² America could do a lot once it decided to.

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November 1943

This month, the 323rd Group performed twelve more missions with the Satterwhite crew flying three of them. Bad weather continued to be a serious deterrent. Willie’s plane, *Pub 13* must have also been retired as war weary, because on November 2nd, Willie and crew were given a new plane #41-31983 VT-D.

“They put it in a hangar,” he said about *Pub 13*. “And the last I saw of it, it was back in a corner, locked up. There was a couple of stands around it. They were going to use it for parts.”

²¹ Trevor Allen, B26 Marauder researcher.

²² Online USAF Museum.



Nelzo Cassano

Willie’s pilot, Lt. Mark Sprague, wondered what to name the new plane. His ground crew chief, Nelzo F. ‘Nels’ Cassano had an idea. Desiring to showcase the aircraft’s record in spite of its reputation he asked Sprague to let him name the plane. Sprague hesitated due to the controversial nature of the name and the cartoon figure that would accompany it, but he finally gave in. The new name was “Truman’s Folly,” a barb aimed t the Vice President of the United States.²³

Mr. Cassano, who also had attended the reunion in Colorado City said, “I gave the airplane the name, *Truman’s Folly*, because at one time, the Truman Committee condemned the B-26 and suggested the Army Air Corps to stop ordering the plane.”

Willie liked the name, and the cartoon... because he sure didn’t like Truman... “He was a stupid ass,” he said. Most of the Marauder men agreed. I asked Nels about his background.

“I was born in Italy on February 7, 1920,” he wrote. “Came to the United States with my parents, two sisters and one brother and went through Ellis Island in 1924. We landed in Chicago and there is where I grew up. I graduated from Hirsch High School in 1938 and worked as a chief usher for Warner Brothers. I then went to work as a brakeman on the Pennsylvania Railroad. I joined the Air Force on October 4th, 1941, went to Sheridan, Illinois, then to Jefferson barracks, and from there to Kessler Field, Mississippi, to train as an airplane mechanic. I was then sent to the Martin Factory in Baltimore and then to Ohio, on to Tampa Bay, Myrtle Beach, and then to England...”

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David Goss

At this time, David Goss received a commendation for saving the lives of the B-17 pilot and co-pilot. He wrote in his book: “On the 2nd of November the Squadron Adjutant notified David to report to Operations in dress uniform where, to his great surprise, he was awarded the Soldier’s Medal. The Group Executive Officer, in conferring the decoration, informed the assembly, “This is the highest decoration permitted for non-combat action.” After recounting the event he turned and said, ‘Sergeant Goss, you are a true credit to your squadron.’”²⁴ David was surprised at the award but he appreciated the recognition. Sometime during November he started

painting his second nose art of a redhead called *Reddy Betty*.²⁵ Later, he would also begin painting airship art on the flight jackets of the aircrew members.

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On November 3rd 1943 the 453rd flew a mission to the Amsterdam-Schipol Airdrome, the same airbase they had attacked a month before on October 3rd. This airdrome was a main hub of German air activity on the west coast. These were the fighters that were attacking the heavy bombers as they flew out and back from their long-range missions. It was an important target. Major Travis led the Group. German fighters came in just as the flight nosed down to begin their attack run. The gunners fought back ferociously. The Spitfire escort also joined in. One FW-190 was damaged as it dove through the formation. Another was downed by S/Sgt Eulon C. Bell (tail gunner) and T/Sgt James C. Bailey (top turret gunner). Another was shot down by Sgt Ferdinand C. Dec (tail gunner) and Sgt John H. Niven (waist gunner). Several other enemy aircraft were downed by the Group.²⁶

²³ Moench, *Marauder Men*, 68. Postwar comments of Mark A. Sprague.

²⁴ Goss, *Meant to Be?* 12.

²⁵ Goss, *Meant to Be?* 19.

²⁶ Moench, *Marauder Men*, 86.



Richard Travis (P), Eulon C. Bell Jr. (EG), James C. Bailey (TG), Ferdinand P. Dec (EG).

The 453rd gunners were hot on that day! The airdrome was damaged but continued to be used by the enemy. Turret gunner, James Curlee Bailey, was born in Clarksville, Texas, on April 30th, 1924, to parents Marie and Jim Bailey. Due to a shortage of officers and Norton bomb sights, many enlisted men served as toggliers, men who dropped their bombs when the lead bombardier dropped his. Bailey volunteered to become a togglier. He was wounded twice but survived the war to return home, only to be senselessly murdered while attending college in 1947.

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The next day, an accident occurred on the hardstand of *Truman's Folly*. Ground crew chief Nelso Cassano describes what happened.

“On the morning of November 4, 1943, we were preparing the plane for a mission. It had been fueled, the bombs had been loaded by the ground crew, and the plane was ready for a pre-flight check by the flight crew. I saw Brainard [Willie] under the plane checking up inside the bomb bay. He had turned to start out when some malfunction caused a 2000lb bomb to release striking him across the shoulders and knocking him forcibly onto the concrete.”



The *Truman's Folly* before the nose art was painted on. Pilot Mark Sprague in center.
(Photo courtesy of W. L. Brainard)

In Willie's words, "I was in a semi-stooped position, checking the plane's hydraulics and accumulator pressure. I was stepping out from under the bomb bay, when a bomb fell off the rack and hit me square on the upper back. It knocked me forward on my knees and sprawled face-down on the asphalt surface. The bomb landed on the ground between my legs. I was lucky it didn't land on top of me. Ketcham was over on the next hardstand [the *Rickenschicker* was berthed next door], and he was yelling at everybody because he thought the bomb was laying on my legs. He came running over and he was yelling, 'Get that bomb off his legs!' Then he saw that the bomb was between my legs not on them. He was telling me about it, later. I was out cold. I kind of remember they put me on a board, put me in the ambulance, and then I was gone [passed out]. I was taken to the Earls Colne field hospital unconscious. We had been warned to carefully check the adaptors being used to hang this size bomb."

Casimir Sochocki said: "I remember when Brainard had a bomb dropped on him. I was not present when this occurred but later learned that an armament man was checking out the controls in the nose of the aircraft and mistakenly pulled the salvo lever on the intervelometer."

The Sprague crew stood down. Soon the mission was scrubbed due to bad weather anyway.

Willie explained, "When I came-to I could not move my body from just above the waist down. The hospital was three Quonset huts... kind of set out like a "T". One side was the emergency room and the other was a pharmacy and they called that the 'sick call' – that's where you reported for sick call. And the other had six or eight beds in it... might have been more. It was a regular Quonset hut like we slept in."

"It was bad," Willie continued. "I was kind of bummed up a little bit. A little bloody here, a little blood there. You know, when you hit your head on a hardstand it kind of scratches it up some... nothing that lasted very long. I sure as hell didn't learn anything. I was just as stupid afterwards as I was then (laughing). Most of the problems I have now, come from that accident. During the next few days feeling returned but I was unable to straighten my knees or move the lower part of my body. It was several days before I could move my legs or body and I can remember being in a great deal of pain. I didn't get a Purple Heart for that... didn't need one (laughing). After a few days, I felt better and I could move around a little. I was in the hospital for eleven days."

Nels Cassano wrote, "It could have been very serious. Lucky guy!"

"Somebody was watching over you!" Tex told Willie at the reunion.

Everyone agreed.

* * * * *

On the 5th of November, 1943, Gus and crew received a new plane, #41-31959 VT-S which was subsequently named *Miss Safartus Rickenschicker 2nd*, the crew being the same.²⁷

* * * * *

While on leave, Tex saw Bill Crowe, one of the 453rd airmen who had been shot down in July! He could hardly believe his eyes.

"I was in London one day," he said, "and I saw one of his [Lipscomb's] crewmen – it was Bill Crowe. I talked to him for just a minute. He said, 'I can't talk now. I gotta go, but I'm coming back out to the base.' I went back to the base and told Col. Travis and he thought I was crazy. I told him, 'I did!' He was having trouble believing me."

Bill Crowe was a member of the Lipscomb crew that had been shot down on July 31st. It turned out that three men had parachuted safely after all.²⁸

"The underground had picked up Crowe and Hager," Willie related. "Crowe told us after he got back to the outfit. They walked out of France to Spain. The underground smuggled them to

²⁷ Trevor Allen.

²⁸ Moench, *Marauder Men*, 52.

the Ambassador's house in Madrid. Then from there, they came back up to England. They gave us a little talk about their escape to England. They saw Berry. The last time they saw Berry, everybody was looking at the car. They were standing there on the street, whistling. Of course, by this time they had on farmer's clothes. Their uniforms were on under their clothes. Their flight clothes were gone but they had their jumpsuits with their insignia and rank – that's what they said you gotta keep. And you gave your escape kit to the underground. They had francs in it, and they needed that money. So you gave that to them. That was several thousand francs and they would take care of you... and that's what they did."

The Germans employed forced labor on their captured nations and thousands of young people took to hiding, eventually forming the Maquis (their name for the Underground). Regardless of what they may have thought about the French government there was no question that citizens and especially the Underground would help the Allies as much as they could.²⁹



Roger Morwood (KIA), Roland Clark (KIA), William Crowe (escaped), Joseph Hager (WIA/escaped), James Berry (MIA); men of the Lipscomb crew.

It's not likely that Crowe and Hager returned to combat duty because the Allied air forces had a policy of not allowing escaped flyers to return to their former posts. The reason for this was that if they were shot down again and captured, they could not be tortured into revealing who had helped them to escape the first time.

"Crowe and Hager said they didn't see Berry come down," Willie explained. "They only saw him in that car. I imagine Berry went off down the highway... lit up a cigarette... puffing that thing and going down the road, and they picked him up. Knowing Berry, he'd probably do that. Never give a thought that he might be picked up by the wrong people, or if he did he didn't give a damn." As General Moench confirms, Berry commonly lacked respect for pretty much everybody. His attitude in the car was reported by Crowe and Hager to have been "like a conquering hero."³⁰

Willie continued, "He was riding in this open convertible sedan in the back seat between two SS officers – they looked like SS officers. And that's the last time anyone knew anything about Berry. The Red Cross tried to track him down. Nobody could find him – never did find any trace of Berry. We don't know what the hell happened to him. He probably got beaten to death by the SS officers. He probably told them to go to hell. He was that kind of guy. He wasn't afraid of a damn thing. I might've been tempted to do something stupid like that. I often thought so."

Each man must have run through his own escape scenario in his mind - how to best exit the plane and what to do once on the ground.

"I know what I would do," Willie said. "I would do my damndest. You hit the ground, roll over, roll up your chute and hide it under a bush or anything. You can get under a bush and stay there. Don't move. Let the underground find you - not try to find them. That's what Crowe and Hager did. I always felt that if I was with Frenchie, we'd get out. I'd just stick with him. Stick

²⁹ Moench, *Marauder Men*, 365.

³⁰ Moench, *Marauder Men*, 52.

with Frenchie – he was my escape. That’s what I figured too. I’d tell him, ‘Don’t you screw up, ‘cause you’ve got to get me out of France.’ I’m glad it never came to that, ‘cause they separated me and Frenchie anyway.”

But the thoughts that ran through an airman’s mind on a mission were not just simply of escaping from the enemy once on the ground. There were many things to think about: being killed outright, or mortally wounded were the most obvious. But in addition, an airman also worried about things like losing oxygen at high altitude, frostbite in the cold sub-stratosphere, crash landing in a ball of fire on return to base, a parachute not opening, or, worst of all, being plastered against the ceiling of a falling aircraft, completely unable to escape, with nothing to do but wait for death.

* * * * *



Willie’s plane, *Truman’s Folly* #41-31983 VT-D in flight (Photo courtesy of W. L. Brainard).

* * * * *

On the 15th of November, eleven days after his accident, Willie was released from the Earls Colne field hospital. “I began getting around on a walker and crutches,” he said, “and a short time later was allowed to go back to my unit on 2 canes. I remember having a hell of a time trying to get to the mess hall and back.” Gus wrote in a report, “As a result of his accident it was impossible for him to run, walk, or ride a bicycle any distance without having his legs lock on him. When this happened it was necessary for him to massage his legs for several minutes.”

* * * * *

During this month, as the Ninth Air Force was reorganizing to accommodate new groups coming in, experienced personnel were needed to fill the gaps in command. Colonel Thatcher was transferred to become the commander of the 99th Wing and Major Travis went with him. And if all the personnel transfers weren’t enough, the thirty mission tour was extended in duration to fifty and combat fatigue became an increased concern. The airmen must have wondered how much more they could take.

...one special problem that did worry both the Commanding and Medical Officers was that of “fatigue” – a vague term that covered many of the symptoms of stress of combat, stress of separation from home, stress of the job, and more. The reactions to such stress took on many forms – sometimes the symptoms or presence of a minor illness, sometimes a resort to alcohol, sometimes an actual “breakdown” as that term was popularly used. The Commanding and Medical Officers

were especially alert to the problem of fatigue for its emergence could have impacted significantly on the maintenance of good health, on the inherent psychological drive of the men, and on the performance of the mission.³¹

Most aircrewmembers initially approached combat with a sense of personal invulnerability in which anticipated casualties were always “the other man.” Typically, the first subtle symptoms of combat fatigue might begin to show up in medium bombardment aircrew personnel with 30-40 missions – something considered normal by the medical staffs.³²

Because of the RAF’s longer combat experience and the special relationships between the USAAF and the RAF, the USAAF was significantly influenced by RAF thinking. In the case of combat fatigue, that influence created a stigma regarding those affected in that, although once lenient on the matter, by the early 1940s the RAF no longer tolerated non-performance keyed to this condition, e.g. if a Non-Commissioned Officer refused to fly he was classed as “LMF” – lack of moral fiber. Such classification normally resulted in immediate loss of all rank. Reflecting or stimulated by this RAF attitude toward combat fatigue, there developed a general view among Marauder Men that anyone who succumbed to this condition was a sissy, was inherently a coward, or worse. Yet, combat fatigue was as likely to strike the daring, driving, hard-hitting combat person as any other individual.³³

* * * * *

On the town in London, the adventures of Gus and Guy continue:

“One night,” Gus related, “on a 72 hour pass, half of my crew and half of Guy’s crew was there also. We were sitting at the bar with ‘Whitey’ [Widetsky?] who had false teeth. He had to go to the bathroom. Know what happened to his teeth?”

“What?”

“Down the toilet. When he returned to the bar, everybody asked him what had happened to his teeth. He says he lost them. We asked ‘Where?’ ‘Down the toilet,’ he replied.”

“He flushed ‘em down?”

“Ya, he had gotten sick and puked. We were all sitting around the table. ‘Course the bottles are underneath the table. Whitey says, ‘I need a drink.’ So he reaches under the table to grab a bottle and he drops it.”

“Did he break it?”

“Yup, broke it all to hell.”

“Everybody mad at him?”

“Nope. It was too funny. I told him he had better quit. He was only 20 years old, but you’d swear up and down he was about fifty. Baldheaded. This was a meeting we had in London.”

* * * * *

On November 28th, Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin met at Teheran in North Africa, to discuss the ongoing strategies of the war.

* * * * *

December 1943

Although severely hampered by bad weather in December, the 323rd stepped up the bombing of NoBall targets – missile launching sites.³⁴ The Satterwhite crew flew two more missions together, then, sometime after the 5th, Captain Satterwhite was promoted to Major and became commander of the 455th squadron. The crew broke up but Gus and Ketcham stayed together and were assigned to fly with another crew. The Pilot was 1st Lt. Selby M. Foster Jr. This plane had a copilot, Flight Officer Alfred C. Macksoud, and the Bombardier was 1st Lt. Frank E.

³¹ Moench, *Marauder Men*, 334.

³² Moench, *Marauder Men*, 339.

³³ Moench, *Marauder Men*, 334.

³⁴ Moench, *Marauder Men*, 119.

Larkin Jr.³⁵ The engineer-tailgunner was Ferdinand P. Dec (mentioned earlier as having downed an enemy fighter). A new crew under the command of Lt. Leo Myron Denny took over the *Miss Safartus Rickenschicker 2nd*.

Approximately the 18th sortie the crew of the *Rickenschicker* broke up as its pilot [Captain Satterwhite] was promoted to major and made commanding officer of another outfit. From here on, T-Sgt. Poulin did his flying in the “Toid Boid”. Here again was a strange name, this time dreamed up by the pilot. “What it referred to, no one will ever know,” Poulin says.³⁶

* * * * *



The Van Antwerp Crew L-R: Harold Gustafson (TG), Eugene Duffy (NB), Willis Diel (EG), Anthony Van Antwerp (P), William Zipperling (RG) (*A. Van Antwerp/Freeman 176*).

* * * * *

Lt. George Friesner was transferred from Gus’s to Tex’s crew.

Tex says, “It was about this time that we lost our bombardier. Every time he was briefed for a mission he would plead illness to our pilot claiming that he was unable to fly due to some health problem such as tooth ache, belly ache, etc. that made him unable to fly that day. He would usually make these complaints to our pilot after the mission briefing causing us to have to get another bombardier on short notice for the mission. He just lacked the intestinal fortitude that it took to be a combat crewman. He was sent back to the U.S. and was replaced by Lieutenant George Friesner. All of us had a fear of the hazardous undertaking in which we were engaged. We were well aware of our mortality and the risks we were taking of being killed, wounded, or becoming prisoners of war. The hazards we shared forged a close bond between the members of each crew. It was a bond, which in some ways was closer than that which exists between blood brothers.”

* * * * *

³⁵ Trevor Allen, B26 arader researcher..

³⁶ Gus Poulin’s Scrapbook.

On December 9th, Willie celebrated his birthday and the adventures of Gus and Willie continue:

“It was my 21st birthday,” Willie said, “and for my birthday present, Frenchie and some of the guys bought me 21 shots of whiskey at a bar. I went in the bar and they set these shot glasses up on the counter and they said there was twenty-one of them and I was supposed to drink them all. I drank some of them and for the life of me I couldn’t finish them. The other guys must have finished them. Then we went out and got on those damn bicycles. I had a hell of a time trying to get started. Finally, we got going.”



Richard J. Travis
Captain, 453rd

Gus added, “After that, you know, we’re pedaling along on the bicycles and I told Willie, ‘Now, you follow me this time. Don’t try to pass me.’ So zooooom (a sweep of the arm), there he goes. And over in England they have briar patches, just like sandpaper. I was just strolling along when I heard Willie yell, ‘Halp! I’m stuck.’ I went back and sure enough he was stuck - stuck in a briar patch. I had the flashlight. He was supposed to follow me. Right into the puckerbrush he went. He couldn’t get out, but I finally got him out, bicycle and all. I said, ‘Willie, you’ve got to follow me. I’ve got the flashlight.’”

Willie continued, “I was watching the little tail-light on Frenchie’s bicycle but every time he went around a turn I didn’t. That tail light would disappear and into the ditch I went – I must have crashed about five or six times that night.”

I could just visualize Gus and Willie traveling an English country road on a dark night. Just shapes zipping along on bikes and suddenly, you can’t see it happening, but you can hear Willie going into the bushes (again). But the difficulties of the night were far from over.

“We weren’t supposed to be out that late, ‘cause we were on alert,” Willie explained. “About the time we finally got back to the base, we heard the engines revving out on the field and we knew we’d better get to the briefing room right away. After spending so much time in the bushes I didn’t look too good, so I came into the briefing room... I was pretty sober by then... I had scratches, dirt, and leaves; covered with all that crap, and I was still in my Class A’s (dress uniform), we were late... had missed roll call. I was a mess. My hat was off to one side. Somehow Frenchie had changed into his flight clothes, but I just went straight into the briefing... Travis was standing there looking at me coming in. I sat down in the nearest chair, and stared straight ahead, at attention – not daring to move a muscle. Travis was just starting the briefing and he looked at me and then he turned his back to the group. He was staring at the map. He stayed that way for quite a while. Someone told me later that he was laughing. He was good like that (laughing). After the briefing I saw the yellow flare and I knew I had time to get cleaned up, so I did, but then the red flare meant that the mission had been scrubbed. Boy, was I glad!”

* * * * *



John Bull

As far as bombs are concerned, the Marauder men at Earls Colne were not used to receiving, just delivering, but now the base was bombed by the Germans, possibly in retaliation for the increased attacks on the Noball targets.

“Well, we pulled our regular missions,” Gus said, “our regular turns, we got bombed a few times, but not real bad. One night, one of our buddies who didn’t care for anything... he didn’t care if the bomb landed right in the middle of him. We were getting blasted. He’s laying on the top bunk in the Quonset hut. His name was John Bull. ‘John, you coming into the bomb shelter?’ someone asked. ‘Well,’ he says, ‘I only cover about six feet of this

ground here. They're bound to miss me.' Well, they missed him, but they caved in the whole side of the Quonset hut! That's how close they came!"

No one was hurt but the raid reminded everyone that they were not invulnerable even at their base and the air raid shelters got more use than they previously had.³⁷

"They bombed us one night," Willie added, "and that was the worst place to be in that thing [the wash-drying shack]. When that first bomb hit, we got two or three splinters of shrapnel into the side of that shed. We were into that bunker real fast. But the shrapnel didn't go through the wall. It buried into the stucco. We never heard an airplane – couldn't figure out what they were aiming at."

* * * * *

Gus and Ketcham's first mission with their new pilot, Lt. Selby Foster, was to the infamous Amsterdam-Schipol Airfield on the 13th of December, 1943. This was Gus's 24th mission and Tex's 18th. Willie was still recuperating from his accident. On the approach to the target, the flak was thicker than anyone had ever seen before. It was described by some as a "large black cloud," and by others as "the 4th of July."

Another raid occurred on the 13th of December with four Marauder Groups, 216 planes in all, the largest number to date.³⁸ Three Marauders were shot down, and 147 were damaged. The Foster crew's hydraulics were shot out and they crash-landed upon return.³⁹ As Moench wrote, "Once more, the Amsterdam-Schipol Airdrome earned a name not repeatable in print."⁴⁰



Marauders pound the Amsterdam-Schipol Airdrome on December 13th, 1943 (Moench 126).

"We crash-landed six times," Gus stated. "This time, we had been hit in the hydraulic system again. We got the main landing gear down, of course, you don't know what flaps are..."

³⁷ Moench, *Marauder Men*, 120.

³⁸ b-26marauderarchives.org.

³⁹ Trevor Allen, B26 Marauder reasearcher.

⁴⁰ Moench, *Marauder Men*, 120.

“Yes, I do. (I’d built those plastic models).”

“Those are more or less air brakes. We couldn’t drop any flaps... we had no hydraulic braking fluid. We hit the ground with two wheels. Naturally, at 200 miles an hour, you don’t stop without brakes... and we ended up in the ditch again.”

Sometime in December, 1943, about the 24th mission, the “Toid Boid” [actually another loaner plane] went on a flight that brought the worst flak that T-Sgt. Poulin has experienced. “The plane was pretty well shot up and we were forced to make a crash landing.” All the crew escaped without a scratch. The Skowhegan airman reports that none of his crew in either Marauder ever received serious injuries on any of their expeditions. “I guess we were the luckiest crew in the ETO.”⁴¹

Gen. Moench didn’t describe Gus’s crash landing, but he did write about Zip’s, whose plane also crashed upon returning that day. Every aircraft in the 453rd Squadron incurred damage. The “Flying Dutchman piloted by 1st Lt. Anthony Van Antwerp crashlanded at the Halesworth Airdrome. They overshot the end of the runway and ended up out in the field with pieces falling off the plane all the way. Three men were injured during the landing, T/Sgt Eugene C. Duffy (NB); T/Sgt Willis D. Diel (EG); and S/Sgt William P. Zipperling, (RG).⁴²

Tex wrote, “When Zip’s plane crashed, a machine gun came forward and hit Zip between the eyes, so he sported some black eyes for a while after that.”



Tex’s bomb tag.

Zip told his family that when he got out of the aircraft, he was shaking like a leaf. He wasn’t much of a drinker back then, but when someone asked him if he wanted a drink, he said, “Yes!” And he downed a whole glass of liquor just like it was water. This was his 25th mission. Van Antwerp’s crew received a new plane which they named *The Flying Dutchmen II*, #41-31826 VT-M.⁴³

I asked Tex if he had been on that mission.

“Yes,” he wrote, “I was on the Schipol mission, 13 December, 1943. It was one of the roughest that I flew on. Schipol received severe damage from this attack. The below sea-level airdrome was put under 10 feet of water and it was June of 1944 before the Krauts got it pumped out.”

Tex wrote on the bomb tag he saved from that mission, “The hottest flak yet, wow!”



Anthony Van Antwerp, Eugene Duffy (WIA), William Zipperling (WIA), Willis Diel (WIA)

The Amsterdam-Schipol raid ended the Nazi ability to cover the European west coast with any significant amount of air power. Because of the damage to their airfields and facilities, they had to pull back to airdromes closer to Germany. The air battle for the western coastline of Europe

⁴¹ Gus Poulin’s Scrapbook.

⁴² Moench, *Marauder Men*, 121-122.

⁴³ Alf Johanneson, aircraft researcher.

had been won. The Germans weren't defeated yet, but they were pushed back and it was the beginning of the end for the Luftwaffe. In December the American fighters known as P-51B Mustangs entered the ETO, and they could fly all the way to Berlin and back. For the first time in the war, the heavy bombers would now have a full escort. And in the next five months, 2,262 Nazi fighter pilots would die. In May alone, the month before D-day, the Germans would lose fully 25% of their pilots.⁴⁴ The relentless Allied Air Forces kept flying.



Zip's aircraft #41-34712 VT-M the *Flying Dutchman* (Photos courtesy of Lee and Lillian Zipperling)

Foster crew's plane on the Schipol mission, #41-34897 VT-W, must have been a loaner, the next time out, the Foster crew flew in their regular plane #41-34853 VT-R *Toid Boid*. The nose art on the plane was a drawing of Jimmy Carioca, one of Walt Disney's Three Caballeros, except that he was leaning on a bomb instead of a cane.

Gus logged nine more missions in December, completing his 30th mission to the Lostbarne Noball on New Year's Eve. He only had 20 more missions to go.

* * * * *

During the last year, the US citizens at home had not been idle. General Moench sums up the amazing material accomplishments of the United States during 1943.

In the United States, the "Arsenal of Democracy" was turning out materials for itself and all the Allies in increasingly enormous quantities. Beginning in 1943, the United States had produced 132,000 aircraft, 148,000 tanks, 1,200,000 trucks, 42,000 guns, 27 million tons of merchant shipping and warships. In this period, the United States had given in assistance \$3.5 billion to the

⁴⁴ ehistory.com.

USSR, \$6.0 billion to Great Britain, \$1.5 Billion to China, India, Australia and New Zealand, and \$2.0 billion to African, Middle East and Mediterranean countries.⁴⁵

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Gus in flight jacket with the *Toid Boi*'s Jimmy Carioca logo.

* * * * *

A Wing and a Prayer

One of our planes was missing, two hours overdue.
One of our planes was missing, with all her gallant crew.
The radio sets were humming and waiting for a word,
When a voice broke through that humming and this is what they heard:

Coming in on a wing and a prayer,
Coming in on a wing and a prayer,
Though we've one motor gone, we can still carry on,
Coming in on a wing and a prayer.

What a show -

What a fight -

Yes we really hit our target for tonight,
How we sing as we limp through the air,
Look below there's a field over there,
With a full crew on board and our trust in the Lord,
We're coming in on a wing and a prayer.

What a show -

What a fight -

Yes we really hit our target for tonight,
How we sing as we limp through the air,
Look below there's a field over there,
With a full crew on board and our trust in the Lord,
We're coming in on a wing and a prayer.

The Four Vagabonds (McHugh/Adamson) 1943

⁴⁵ Moench, *Marauder Men*, 125.



Technical Sergeant Walter L. Woods
323rd Bomb Group, 453rd Bomb Squadron
USSAF 1942-1945
(Photo courtesy of Willis Brainard)



Staff Sergeant Lawrence C. Nusser
323rd Bomb Group, 453rd Bomb Squadron
USSAF 1941-1945
(Photo courtesy of Willis Brainard)

More photos courtesy of Willis Lee Brainard:



A P-51 Mustang with invasion stripes.



A B-24 Liberator – the other heavy bomber (besides the B-17 Flying Fortress).



Thunderbolt



A captured Focke Wulf with British markings.



A captured Junkers-88 with British markings.



A front view of the same JU-88.



A P-38 Lightning



P-38 Lightning after take-off.



Maintenance on Truman's Folly.