

"DAD - TELL US ABOUT YOUR TIME  
IN THE AIR CORPS"

This is Walter W. Swartz's account of his military career. As a member of Lt. Ernest B. Fitzpatrick's crew he was shot down over Belgium and taken under Lt. Rene Londo's care for escape and evasion. Here is his story.

(continued from September)

It was here on the second day that we watched a strange story take place. After meeting Mammy and Pappy (the leader, by the way, was Mammy, and she was in charge of the Secret Army), three men entered the courtyard; two sat on a bench outside the house, while the third came in and all of a sudden, French was again spoken with lots of emotion, plus the usual arm waving! A coin was flipped. They looked at one another and a small pistol was handed to one of the men. They all kissed in the usual manner, that we were now becoming accustomed to. Then, this man plus the two sitting on the bench left together. We were later informed that one of the two men sitting on the bench was to be executed for betraying the Secret Army and passing on information to the Germans. The method used, was for all three men to ride on a tram, while traveling in a noisy city. The pistol was then to be placed to the victim's head and the noise of the shot would be covered by the noise of the tram. The two men would then leave the tram where a car would be waiting for them. This story was confirmed while we were there in September of 1987.

Four days later, we left the Secret Army Headquarters. A week later we learned the Germans raided the Headquarters. The only one they found was Mammy, the woman who was the leader of the underground for that area. The Germans beat her brutally but were never able to get her to tell them anything. During our visit in 1987, we learned there were several Jews hiding in an adjoining courtyard in House #5 and when they heard the Germans were coming, escaped out the back window, while the Germans searched House #3 first. They next went to House #5, finding nothing they left and the Jews were then able to return by way of the front door.

It was in Liege that we were to split up again with Joe Lisicki and Bill Schack going together, and Fritz and I going together. I did not learn of their capture until we returned to the States in November of '44. Here again, the fickle finger of fate was at work, for there were two women and one man to



CARPETBAGGERS

Lt. Fitzpatrick's  
Original Crew Members  
857th BS

(see names below)

photo-Walter Swartz

be acting as guides, none of us wanting to go with the women. So we drew straws, Ernie and I losing, or so we thought at the time. So we left following a mother and daughter team.

There were many stops with various places to hide and several changes of guides. We spent a few days at a castle (relative of the King of Belgium) but had to keep moving usually because of the Germans looking for us. We did learn that after we left, the Germans did come looking for us and shot up the walls with machine gun fire. The youngest son of these fine people was later killed by the Germans.

Our next stop was much longer but in no time we again had to leave because we were told the Germans were looking for us in the area. We took the longest and most painful walk I have ever had. When we finally stopped, I had so many blisters on my feet I stopped counting as the lady at the farm house opened them up with a needle and then had me soak them in hot water. I was given clean socks and a different pair of shoes. We stayed at this farm house that night but before going to bed we were each given pistols and told that if anyone came through the door to shoot. We were awakened the next morning, (cautiously I might add and with great care) so the farmer told us, for fear of getting shot.

As you know, the invasion came on June 6, 1944 and prevented us from moving any further south than the Liege area. It had always been our hope to try for the Pyrenees and into Spain.

Before the American First Army arrived in the city, we heard a commotion going on outside the house we were hiding in. Looking out the window, we observed several Germans, some on a vehicle and others walking to the door of the next house and then banging on the door. It was obvious they were in a hurry. We had learned that a doctor lived in this house and when he saw them drive up

he ran down the cellar steps and escaped out through one of the other homes. All of the basements were connected just in case a bomb should strike one of the homes. These were Row Houses. One of the Germans had been wounded and needed attention. The doctor's wife told them that he had gone out and that she did not know where he was. They did not believe her and began to torture her. I will not describe the method they used but I can tell you I shed many tears as we listened and not able to do anything. It takes a long time for hate to leave. I said at the time and have said often since, that "if crying prevents one from becoming a man, then I will never make it."

ORIGINAL CREW MEMBERS

pilot:	Lt. Ernest Fitzpatrick	NH
co-pilot:	Lt. Howard W. Lynch	NY
navigator:	Lt. James E. Sherwood	DC
bombardier:	Lt. Joseph J. Lasicki	NY
radio oper:	T/Sgt. Paul A. Kasza	OH
engineer:	T/Sgt. Walter W. Swartz	PA
alt.engr:	S/Sgt James E. Williams	GA
Armor/g:	S/Sgt William E. Schack	OH
alt.engr:	S/Sgt Donald F. Menser	PA
tail/g:	S/Sgt Daniel E. Jones	OH

The two crew members that were dropped were, Menser and Jones. Donald Menser was assigned to his own crew. Daniel Jones was killed flying with another crew.

On the night we were shot down, we had two officers flying their first training mission. They were:

co-pilot - Lt. Richard V. Thiriot  
navigator - Lt. Cornell Dogrothy

Shortly after Liege was liberated in September, 1944, we started our trip home by way of the Red/Blue Ball Highway, crossing on pontoon bridges in army trucks, being stopped time and again to be interrogated. Reaching Paris, France, we naturally had to be interrogated once again. After which we were flown to London aboard a C-47 where we were put back in uniform and returned to our base at Harrington, England. Things sure had changed in four an

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## "DAD - TELL US ABOUT YOUR TIME IN THE AIR CORPS"

(continued from page 8)

one half months. It was good to be able to talk with our C.O. Col. Heflin and obtain all of my back pay. The problem was, where to put all that money! I also found that all the men assigned to the quonset hut I had been living in, had also been shot down or crashed after we had. I hope they were as lucky as we were.

I arrived in the States in November of '44 to a wonderful welcome and many parties."



Allied flyers that were liberated Sept. 15, 1944. Photo taken at Liege, Belgium.

Back Row (L-R): 3rd from left is T/Sgt Walter W. Swartz and 4th from left is Lt. Ernest B. Fitzpatrick

photo-Walter Swartz



Belgian Underground Members. Photo taken at Liege, Belgium. Sept. 1944.

3rd Row From Front (L-R): 4th from the left is T/Sgt Walter W. Swartz and 5th from the left is Lt. Ernest B. Fitzpatrick

photos-Walter Swartz



Belgian Underground Members. Photo taken at Liege, Belgium. Sept. 1944.

3rd Row From Front (L-R): 6th from the left is T/Sgt Walter W. Swartz and 7th from the left is Lt. Ernest B. Fitzpatrick

## MAIL CALL

### CARPETBAGGERS IDENTIFIED

Dear Si,

Reference the Sept. 1994 - 49th issue of the Carpetbagger newsletter on page 4, the photo submitted by Bob Boone of 5 officers and 4 enlisted personnel. I can identify the officers since 2 are of my crew! Starting left to right: Jim George, bombardier; Rudy Rudolph, Ops Off; Bob Boone, Sq. CO; George Stinchcomb, aircraft commander; and Bill Ferman, navigator.

The enlisted personnel worked in Squadron Ops.

The reason for the photo was we (my crew) had just completed our 35th mission. You can count the little bombs on George and Ferman's jackets. Jim George flew another sortie in the C-47 and I flew 3 in the C-47.

It was a shock and at the same time a pleasure to see that photo.

You guys are doing a great job. Keep it up, please.

Sincerely, George J. Stinchcomb

Dear Si,

Your issue of "The Carpetbagger" was as good as ever.

Reference the picture of me and others - page 4: This is a picture of the 858th Operation's Staff. The officers L-R are Jim George, bomb. on Stinchcomb's crew. He was from Omaha, NE and he died several years ago; me; Boone; George Stinchcomb, pilot; navigator of Stinchcomb's crew but his name does not come back to me at this time.

Enlisted men L-R: Section Clerk and driver, Cpl. ?; S/Sgt. Laskie or Laskey or something like that. He was from Phila or Pittsburg or thereabouts. He was Chief Clerk of the Section. The other two were Section Clerks but I don't know their names.

My best, Rudy Rudolph



Dear Si,

Mary and I have had great fun in recalling many of the events and joy filled times on our trip with the "Carpetbaggers" in Harrington, England and in Paris and Lyon, France. We will never forget the warm reception at each of the villages of St. Cyr de Valorges, St. Germain Laval, Tarare, Duerne and Annecy. In every village the villagers were waiting for us.

It is clear that the "Maquis" - the Resistance - is greatly respected in France and all of the "Carpetbaggers" got to go along with them for a "wonderful ride".

I never in my wildest dreams thought that I would get to march to a military band down the Champs Elysees, salute the French National Honor, light the flame at the tomb of the French Unknown Soldier and lay a wreath of flowers on his tomb under the Arc de Triomphe. It was a great trip!!

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Morale is the greatest single factor in successful wars."

Dwight D. Eisenhower  
Former President, General