

I was glad to get posted South to Husbands Bosworth and market Harboro #14 OTU where we partially crewed up flying Wellington "Wimpies" for 110 hrs. At #14 OTU we did a lot of circuits, air firing, high level practice bombing, map reading, navigation, night flying training and a lot of ground school work and aircraft recognition.

Now we'll be getting into the big stuff as we're posted to 1661 Conversion Unit near Scampton to fly Stirling bombers, which I call a flying box car, for 50 hours, 30% of it night flying. I recall, vividly, our first cross country and high level bombing exercise. It was a little exciting as Jock (our Scotch engineer) miscalculated the fuel consumption of those 4 big radial engines when, at 18,000', the port outer quit. Nisbet (our Australian Skipper) ordered: "FEATHER THE PORT OUTER", then the "PORT INNER", "STARBOARD INNER", and STARBOARD OUTER ALL QUIT". Then came the order: "BAIL-OUT!, BAIL-OUT!, BAIL-OUT!" The Stirling don't glide well with dead engines. I managed to get my parachute hooked on and was struggling to get the escape hatch open when Jock bellowed "HOLD IT, I GOT IT", as he switched fuel tanks the three wind milling props came to life. We pulled out about 3,000 ft. There's no mention of this in our logs.

Well, we graduated from Stirling bombers after a few harrowing experiences and were posted to #5 LFS near Syerston where we were introduced to the Lancaster. We were only there ten days getting checked out in the Lanc III, exercises 1,2,3,4,5,6,7 ; a total of 13 hours of flight time 4 of which were night work.

Now to our Squadron, #50(RAF, of course) at Shellingthorpe, near Lincoln in Lincolnshire. We did three cross country flights, practicing bombing, navigation, and fighter affiliation and were off on ops the next day. After five of the hottest targets, 2 days and 3 night flights, and a diversion to "fog free" Scotland, the Skipper got promoted from Flight Sergeant to Pilot Officer and I got promoted to Warrant Officer but we didn't have much time to celebrate as the weather cleared enough to get airborne and another night raid on Konigsberg. I think that was the time the search lights nearly caught us. The Skipper put the plane in such a violent "cork screw" that they couldn't find us again. I know it was violent because my leather helmet wasn't enough to stop me from getting a "goose egg" when I flew up into the turret and hit my head on the controls. The "cork screw" is initiated with an immediate dive to the right or left. If one search light gets on you, you might as well say you're down, because immediately two to three more are on you and if you're lucky enough to get out of the range of the first ones, more would pick you up on the way 'till they get you down. I think that was the first time I pissed my pants but not the last.

It didn't seem like we got much time for recreation, but I remember one incident. Jock, our flight engineer, and I were "out on the town"; as we got to base we spotted a lorry with four new merlins on it. One of us suggested we give the merlins a ride as they were giving us a ride so often. With Jock at the wheel and me at the gear shift (or was it the other way around?) we drove that thing all around the base until the SP's got on our trail when we decided to park it in amongst the barracks and skillfully lost the SP's.

I have to tell you how I learned that the Skipper was hiding a medial handicap. One beautiful day on a daylight raid I experienced a spray coming down in my compartment from the pilot's area. I inquired "Hey Skipper, how come it's raining down here and not raining outside?" I never did get a reply but I got more time at the controls while he got more time on the can in the tail.