

VOICES OF WAR



Observations of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and civilians from both sides

VOICES OF WAR

ALL HELL LET LOOSE

1939

(Poland) Cavalry Officer Wladyslaw Anders



I observed a teacher leading a group of her students to the shelter of some woods. “Suddenly, there was a roar of an aeroplane. The pilot circled and descended to 50 metres. As he dropped his bombs and fired his machine-guns, the children scattered like sparrows. It disappeared as quickly as it had come, but on the field some crumpled and lifeless bundles of bright clothing remained. The nature of the new war was already clear.”

(Poland) George Slazak (13 years old)



Was on a train with other children travelling home from a summer camp. “Suddenly there were explosions, screams, and the train lurched to a stop. We got out and ran to a nearby forest. We lay hidden for half an hour until the bombing stopped. We left the forest and approached a blazing troop train that had been the German target. The boys burst into tears at the sight of bleeding bodies.”

(Poland) Jagwiga

Sosnkowska (Nurse)



As the human wreckage was laid on the table the surgeon vainly attempted to save lives. Tragedy followed tragedy. At one time the

victim was a sixteen-year old girl. She had glorious hair, her face was as delicate as a flower and her lovely blue eyes were full of tears. Both her legs, up to her knees, were a mass of bleeding pulp. She died quietly, like a flower plucked by a merciless hand.

VOICES OF WAR

(Germany): **Soldier Alexander Stahlberg**

“Non of the brave mood of August 1914, no cheers, no flowers.”



Writer Stefan Zweig: “People do not feel the same because the world in 1939 is not as childish as it was in 1914.”

(Britain) **Pilot Officer Donald Davis:**

“It was a marvelous autumn day as I drove up through the Chiltern Hills and I remembered thinking that I should be dead in three weeks.”



(Britain) **Julie Breeze, Schoolgirl and WREN:**

World War Two began when I was 13 ½ years old and lasted until I was 19 ½. So it occupied almost all of my teenage years. I was born in England, and when war broke out I was attending school



in London, the same school where David Thompson the Canadian explorer (1770 -1857) had received his education over 150 years earlier.

The possibility of a coming war had been in the news for several years in the early 1930's. I remember being terrified when I was quite young and saw headlines in a newspaper 'WAR, WAR, WAR'. Hitler came into power in 1934, so if the headlines concerned his policies I could have been under ten years old at the time. After a while I took the threat of war more for granted. However, in the late summer of 1938 our Prime Minister Mr. Neville Chamberlain returned from a conference in Europe assuring us that, through his success as a negotiator, there would be 'Peace in our time.'

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VOICES OF WAR

1940

(Britain) **Doris Melling,** (Office typist)

“Everyone is getting engaged, married and having babies. Makes me feel a little stale and out of things.”



(Britain) **Pilot Officer Paul Richie.**



“They are shits after all. The Messerschmitts machine-gunned refugees. There is no chivalry.”

(Britain) **Private Ernie Farrow:**



“All along the road were the bodies of civilians who had been killed.

They had no heads, no arms; there were old people and little children. We couldn't stop to clear the road and we had to drive our lorries over them.”

(Britain)
**S p i t f i r e
P i l o t
O f f i c e r
G e o f f
Wellum:**



“All at once, crossfire, heavy and pretty close at that. Bloody front gunner. My target, concentrate, the target. Looking at him through the sight, getting larger much too quickly, concentrate, hold him steady, that's it, hold it...be still. Sight on, still on, steady... fire NOW! I press the gun button and all hell is let loose; my guns make a noise like tearing calico...I get the fleet impression of hits and explosions of the glass nose of my Dornier and of Britain's Spitfire breaking away, it's oil streaked belly visible for a fraction of a second. Keep firing, Geoff, hold it. For Christ's sake break off or you'll hit him; too close, this. I stop firing, stick hard over. I even hear his engines as he flashes by inches overhead. Bloody hell, this is dangerous!”

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VOICES OF WAR



(Germany) **Bf109**
Pilot Lieutenant
H a n s - O t t o
Lessing (Bf109
pilot).

“During the last
few days the
British have been
getting weaker,

though individuals

continue to fight well...The Hurricanes are
tired old ‘puffers’...I’m having the time of
my life. Peacetime is going to be boring after
this.”

*(One of the old ‘puffers’ killed him the next
afternoon!)*



The RAF Hurricane, an “Old Puffer”



(Britain) **Spitfire Pilot Officer Paddy**
Barthrop:

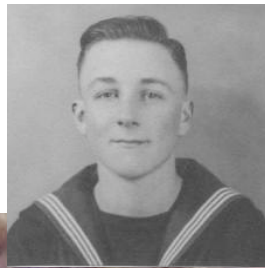
“It was just beer, women and Spitfires. We
were a bunch of little John Waynes. When
you’re nineteen, you couldn’t give a
monkey’s! We partied and boozed dreadfully.
After one drinking session we were
scrambled and I will never forget taking off
and thinking, ‘That button...turn that way...
switch on gunsights...’ We were absolutely
tanked. Mind you, when we saw the black
crosses, we became instantly sober!”

VOICES OF WAR

1941

(German) **Einsatzgruppe Officer Walter Stahlecker.**

In the Lithuanian City of Kaunas, 1000 Jews were rounded up and clubbed to death by Lithuanian collaborators. “These self-cleansing operations went smoothly because the army authorities, who had been informed beforehand, showed understanding for this procedure.”



(British) **Able Seaman Billy Crawford (17).**

HMS Hood. “Dear Mum, I know it’s wrong to say but I’m fed up. I can’t eat and my heart’s in my mouth. We struck bad weather and the waves are as big as houses. I wonder if you could write to the Admiral and tell them how old I am and that you have two other sons serving. I just want a shore job and get off this ship.”

(HMS Hood was sunk a few weeks later only 3 survivors of the 1420 crew – Billy Crawford was not one of them).

VOICES OF WAR



(American) **Franklin D. Roosevelt,**
President, USA.

Yesterday, December 7th, 1941, a day that will live in infamy – the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.



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VOICES OF WAR

1942

Stalingrad

(German) **Stuka Pilot Herbert Pabst.**

“We ploughed over the blazing fields of Stalingrad all day long. It is amazing how people can continue to live in that hell.”



(Russian) **General Vasily Chuikov, 62nd Army.**



“Approaching this place, soldiers used to say: ‘we’re entering hell.’ After a few days they said, “No, this isn’t hell, this is ten times worst than hell.”

(Russian) **Nikolai Nikulin, 62nd Army.**

“During the night I crawled to a shell crater for water. My tunic and trousers are stiff as cardboard with mud and blood. The corpse near me stinks unbearably. There are so many around. Here and there, body parts trampled into the mud – a flattened face, a hand, all as brown as the soil. We walk on them.

(Russian) **Woman soldier from Tobolsk.**

“I had been imagining what war was like – everything on fire, children crying, cats running about, and when I got to Stalingrad it tuned out to be really like that, only more terrible.”



Observations of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and civilians from both sides

VOICES OF WAR

The Pacific

(American) **Lt. Cdr. Paul Stroop** USS Lexington.

It was
p r e t t y



discouraging to see these Japanese launch their torpedoes then fly very close to the ship to get a look at us. We were shooting at them with our new 20mms and not hitting them at all.”

(American) **Gunner’s Mate Allen Heyn.**
USS Juneau.



“There was oil very thick on the water, it was at least two inches thick, and all kinds of blueprints and documents floating around, roll after roll of toilette paper. I couldn’t see anybody and thought, ‘Gee, am I the only survivor’...then I heard a cry and I saw this guy, he said that he couldn’t swim and he had his leg torn off...”

(Japan) **Commander Mitsuo Fuchida.** Akagi (Carrier).

“I was horrified at the destruction that had been wrought in a couple of seconds. Deck plates were buckled, planes stood tail up belching flames and smoke. Tears streamed down my cheeks.”



The Mediterranean.

(British) **Able Seaman Charles Hutchinson**
HMS Carlisle.

“The bombers came and attacked wave after wave. A huge bomb exploded in the water near our gun.



One thought flashed through my mind, ‘My God, this is the end.’ Then there was a direct hit on number two gun. There isn’t a gun now, just charred metal – all the lads of the gun crew killed – a ghastly sight.”

Observations of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and civilians from both sides

VOICES OF WAR

The Atlantic

(German) **Kaptain Erich Tropp, U-552.**

“Living and working in a submarine, one has to develop and intensify the ability to cooperate with other members of the crew, because you need each other to simply survive.”



Gulf of St. Lawrence



Gulf of St. Lawrence

(Canada) **RCNVR Nursing Sister Martha Brooke.** SS Caribou. Passenger ship sunk by U-69. With 12 other survivors clinging to the ropes of an upturned lifeboat as waves crashed against them and washed them away, one by one. “Agnes said she was getting cramped. She let go but I managed to catch hold of her and held her until daybreak. Finally a wave took her away.”



(Canadian). **LCdr. Audette. HMCS Coaticook.**

“I stopped to pick up a body...a red-headed young lad, probably a casualty of one of the three ships torpedoed on Sunday. When the body had been recovered, I came down from the bridge to check his identification - none.... in the early shadows I read the burial service and committed his body to the sea. For many hours afterwards, my ship was quieter than usual.”

Observations of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and civilians from both sides

VOICES OF WAR

1943

(German) **Kapitanleutnant Manfred Kinzel, U-338.**

0110 GMT. Convoy in sight bearing 200 degrees True. Turned off and ran on an easterly course to get a good view of the situation. Approximately 20-30 ships,



protected by destroyers ahead and on both sides. Ships go in small line ahead, formation in fours. I got in position and we fired two torpedoes at the right-hand ship. We then turned to port and aimed a second pair of torpedoes at the lead ship in the second column.

(Kinzel's first torpedoes slammed into MV Kingsbury).

(British) **Deane Wynne, Merchant Seaman, MV Kingsbury, Atlantic Convoy SC122.**

My ship was hit and was sinking and I had only devil's option left: jump into the frigid waters and get clear of the ship or get sucked down with it as she sank. I was surprised to

find myself bobbing on the surface, then I was carried up by a wave and slammed into an upturned life raft. There were two others on the raft, a young Welshman and Kingsbury's 70-year-old chief engineer.

We held on for hours in the freezing cold, shouting encouragement to each other. Our fingers were numb, our bodies black and blue from being bashed against the raft. We were in the water for hours, praying for a miracle.

Suddenly the rescue ship Zamalek appeared and we could hear shouts of



encouragement from its sailors. I felt a rope and put it around my waist. The sailors let down a scramble net and I climbed with the aid of the sailors hoisting the rope. They pulled me on board. I turned to help my other two shipmates. They had vanished, swept under the ship's hull before they could reach the boarding net. I slumped down on the deck and wept.

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VOICES OF WAR



(German) **GrosAdmiral Donitz.**
Commander of the German Navy.

**Referring to the 44 ship convoy HX239
Halifax to Liverpool.**

Now, if there is anyone who thinks that combating convoys is therefore no longer possible, he is a weakling and no true U-boat captain. The Battle of the Atlantic is getting harder but it is the determining element in the waging of the war...do your best with this convoy. We must smash it to bits.

(No convoy ships were lost but U-569 and U-752 were sunk).



Observations of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and civilians from both sides

VOICES OF WAR



1944

(Canadian) Vi Connolly, wife of an HMCS Athabaskan survivor:

On Sunday, April 30, 1944 I followed my usual routine. I went to church and sang in the choir. When I got home, my mother-in-law told me that I had a phone call from a Mrs. Hayes, whose son, Bill, was also on the Athabaskan. I called Mrs. Hayes and she asked if I'd heard from Bill. I told her of his most recent letter that had arrived the previous week. She said, "I mean more recently." I told her no, and that's when she burst out, "the ship went down last night!" Needless to say, I couldn't respond, I just collapsed in my mother-law's arms, who, immediately and without hesitation said, "Bill's OK!" Mother's intuition?

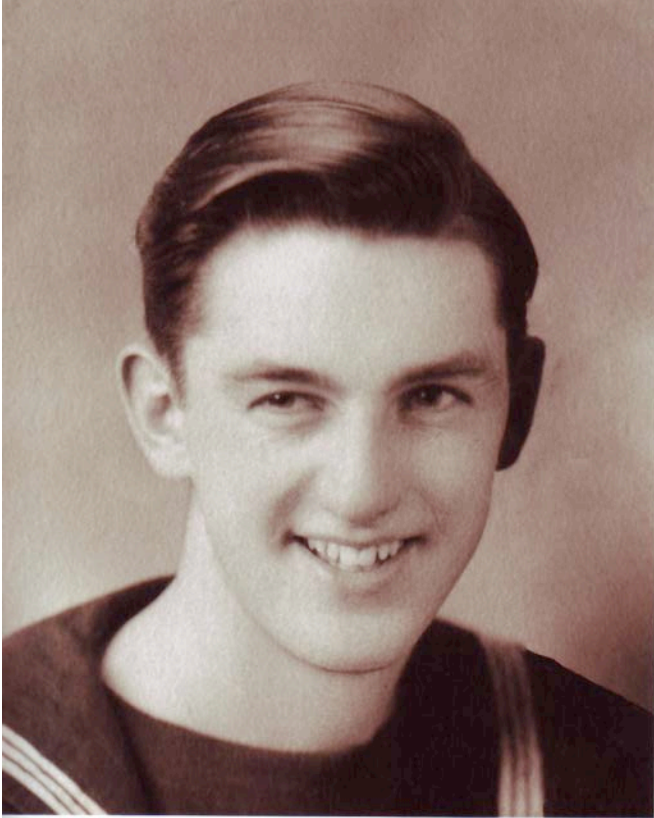
The news started the most devastating and frustrating times of my life, and that of our immediate family and friends. Yes, it was war after all and although I knew that tragedy

could happen, it didn't lessen the constant ache in my heart.



Bill and Vi Connolly, 1942

VOICES OF WAR



Andy Irwin, 1944

(Canadian) **Andy Irwin, AB, HMCS Algonquin:**

We continued operations along the Norwegian coast until May 25, 1944 when our destroyer Flotilla was ordered to Portsmouth on the south coast of England. We actually anchored off Seaview on the Isle of Wight on May 27. I turned 19 the following day.

We could tell that something big was going on because of all the shipping. Speculation was running wild. We carried out several night patrols in the English Channel on June 4. On the afternoon of June 5, we learned that *Operation Neptune*, the naval component of the invasion of Europe was to commence that evening.

At 1600hrs, we weighed anchor and proceeded to our rendezvous point off Cowes, Isle of Wight, where we joined with *HMS Hillary* the Headquarters ship of Force 'J' (Juno Beach). En route we passed *HMCS Prince Henry* and *HMCS Prince David*, two former passenger liners from the BC coast. Our initial role was to escort *HMS Hillary*, which carried Major General Keller, Commanding Officer of the Third Canadian Division, and his staff, to the assault area off the Normandy coast. It was D-Day!



HMCS Algonquin crew briefed by Cdr. Piers

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VOICES OF WAR

1945

(G e r m a n)
**W e r n e r
Hirschmann,
U-190**



The war at sea for German submarines consisted of two very separate periods. The war began with the so-called Happy Times, when the efforts to sink cargo ships supplying England with its necessities was very successful, but later changed into what we called the Sour Pickle Time, when the chances of survival for us became almost non-existent. Altogether we had about 820 submarines that became engaged in facing the enemy and we lost about 780. Of about 40,000 submariners about 30,000 died and about 5,000 became prisoners-of-war. Survival was not a matter of skill, courage or experience - it was a matter of luck.

U-190 sank HMCS Esquimalt, the last RCN warship to be lost in WWII



(Canadian) **Able Seaman Frank Smith.
HMCS Esquimalt.**

With others clinging to rafts after the Esquimalt was sunk by U-190. “They kept up their determination to the last – until they could fight for life no longer and then, knowing death was coming, said goodbye to us all and their families or girlfriends.”

VOICES OF WAR

(Canadian) **Margaret Haliburton, WRCN:**

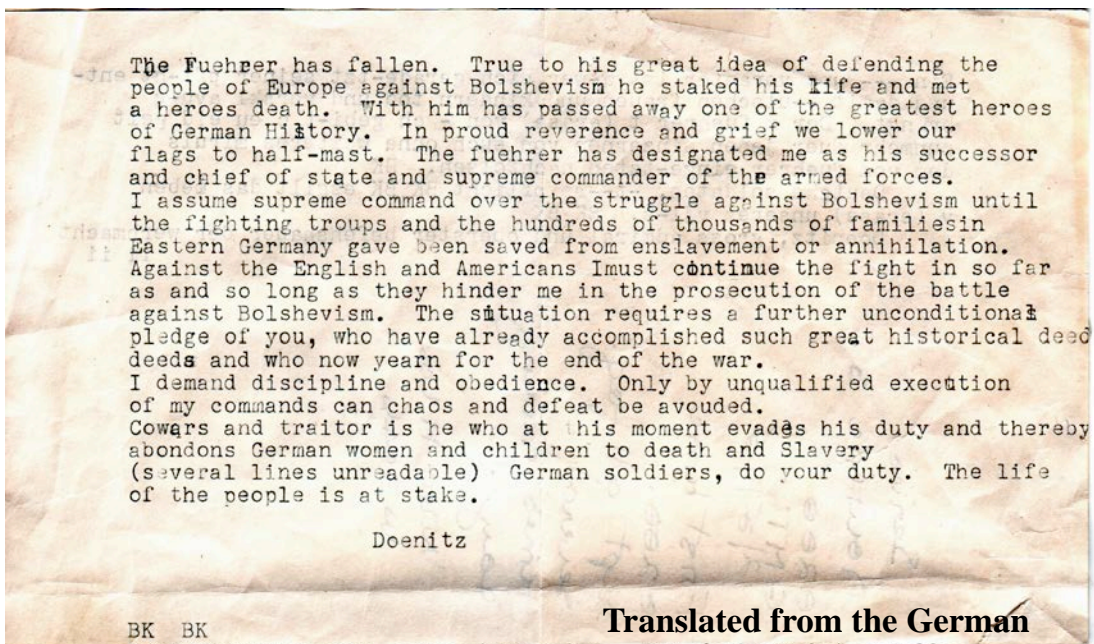
On this particular day I was on the day shift (0900 to 1600), Nothing unusual was happening, just another day of searching - searching - searching for German Submarine transmissions.

Conversation consisted of desultory comments and the usual complaints, when suddenly - the air came alive. Copying madly we realized something very unusual was happening. All of us were receiving the same message. Messages always came on different frequencies and by different operators.

I realized it was plain language and was having trouble getting used to the rhythm and the length of the words. (Germans seem to love compound words) To add to the



difficulty - the atmospherics were not the best Suddenly one of the girls shouted "Hitler's dead! - Hitler's dead!" We realized that we and other radio operators were the first to know this important news.



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VOICES OF WAR

Voices of War

September 1939 – May 1945

**Project design and production by Tom Dykes
May 2013**

**A selection of audio recordings made by students of the reported observations
of a variety of soldiers, sailors, airmen and civilians who experienced WWII.**

**Selections from
All Hell Let Loose by Max Hasting
Turning the Tide by Ed Offley
U-boats against Canada by Michael L. Hadley
and
*Primary source interviews by TAB Gr. 12 Writer's Craft Students.***

***Recorded at TraxAhead* by a team of T.A.Blakelock students.**

Recording by Anthony Panacci, TraxAhead studio.

**The recording is to be used in the Gr. 10 History course at
T.A.Blakelock High School, Oakville, Ontario.**

Observations of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and civilians from both sides

VOICES OF WAR

The Voices

Mason Barsony

Mandeep 'Manny' Bharna

Denise Bridges

Nicholas Cicic

Jacob Corby

Sean Courage

Natalia Gorska

Jennie Phillips

Otilia Rehnstrom

Ryan Sneyd

Observations of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and civilians from both sides

VOICES OF WAR

On 'Ops' at last!

By Squadron Leader George Stewart, DFC



By Tom Dykes, (C) 2015

VOICES OF WAR

I was one of many graduates of the BCATP (British Commonwealth Air Training Plan), which trained thousands of aircrews in WWII. Entering the RCAF, 10th of March 1942. I received my pilot's wings a year later on 11th of March, 1943, and was posted overseas.

I sailed from Halifax NS, in convoy, on the Delftdyk, a 12000 ton freighter, (I was one of about a dozen passengers) arriving in England on the 31st of April, 1943. Several submarine attacks, during our crossing of the Atlantic Ocean, convinced me that I was glad, not to have joined the navy. Sadly, my cousin Bill a Royal Canadian Navy Signaler, was lost in 1944, when the *Athabaskan*, on which he was serving, was sunk in the Bay of Biscay.

We all reported to the #3 PRC, selection center in Bournemouth, to hear what our future might hold. It seemed that all the pilots they required, were for heavy bombers, and I stood before the selection officer, expecting to be aimed in that direction, as most of my fellow new arrivals were. To my great surprise, he said "OK young man; what would you like? You can't have Spitfires, we've enough pilots for them." I was so surprised that I almost fell down!! Quickly, I replied, "What I wanted most in the whole world, Sir, is to fly De Havilland Mosquito". He answered, "Well, Stewart, I can't send you to Mosquitos directly, but I will post you to a Night Fighter AFU on Blenheims, and if you're successful there you could be sent to Mosquitos, or Beaufighters." I thanked him very much and went to pack. I was ecstatic!!! Absolutely on 'Cloud Nine'. My hopes were realized!!!

The conversion course on Blenheim MK I's at #12(P) AFU, at Grantham went well, and I was posted to #60 (Night



Newly Commissioned, 1943

Intruder) OTU at High Ercall, in Shropshire, and for the first time, I met the 'aeroplane of my dreams', the De Havilland Mosquito. Having followed its development and incredible performance, from the very beginning, there was no other aircraft that I coveted more.

The Mosquito was, for me, 'Magic Personified', and that feeling has stayed with me to this day. Of the many versions created, I would be flying the fighter-bomber, which carried four 20mm cannons, four .303 mg's, and two 500lb bombs. I would be trained to be a Night Intruder pilot, and expected to be on Ops by the year's end. I was so excited, also a bit apprehensive, remembering the old saying 'Be careful what you wish for; you might get it'

I arrived at High Ercall late in August 1943, with a sum total of 249 flying hours, and I must say that as my instructor and I walked out to the flight line for our first trip in the Mosquito, it was quite overwhelming!! Here we would be flying, initially the MK III trainers, and

VOICES OF WAR

the older versions, MKII's, retired from operations as newer ones(MK VI's) were coming on line.

There before me was a dead black sleek monster weighing over 20,000lbs, and I found it terrifying. I rapped it with my knuckles, and it was like hitting solid cement!! It was awesome!! I loved it!! I thrilled at the chance to fly it!!

It flew me for the first few hours, but as I became accustomed to its 'naughty' ways, my confidence increased each time I went up!! You had to firmly control the Mosquito, or it would bite you. Under-controlling to correct the swing taking off or landing, led to disaster, as it soon went beyond correcting it with brakes and rudder. I was awed by the high speed, in cruise, the circuit, the stall, and approach to land, as well as the high 'single engine safety speed' of over 170 mph; but soon got used to it.

I teamed up with my Navigator, FO Paul Beaudet, a young man from Montreal, who shared with me the same great love and respect for the Mosquito, as we looked forward always to our next flight. We sailed through the OTU course with flying colors, and upon graduating, on November 30th, were eager to getting on Ops.

Our CFI, S/L Russell, called us all together, and said that they were looking for volunteers to join an RAF Intruder squadron in the Middle East, if any of us were interested. Our hands were the first in the air, because we gathered that we'd get more Mosquito flying that way. We were, with a few others, accepted for the job, and were posted to the Ferry Training Unit at Lyneham, to train for flying out to the Middle East.

We picked up a new MKVI Mosquito fighter- bomber and after doing

consumption tests, with the recommended power settings, etc. we flew to Portreath in Cornwall, ready to take off for North Africa. (we achieved 2.71 air miles per gallon, which was more than enough for the 1200 mile flight to Gibraltar, or Rabatsale in French Morocco).

We flew the trip at 10000 feet, across the Bay of Biscay, and a few miles off shore from Spain and Portugal, keeping a constant lookout for any German fighters who might be on patrol, and landed at Rabat in time for Christmas, 1943, where it was lovely and warm, a far cry from chilly England.

From there, we flew around the north coast of Africa, past Algiers, and landed at El Aouina aerodrome at Tunis, after about five and a half hours flying against a head wind.

We didn't know for sure where our squadron was located, and were directed next to Malta, landing at Luca aerodrome. 23 Squadron RAF had been there, they said, but moved to Alghero Sardinia, where, they believed, we could find them. We took off after lunch, flying south around Sicily, then north to Sardinia, and up to Alghero on the west side, landed, and reported in.

"Well Stewart", said WC Murphy(DSO, DFC and Bar, Croix de Guerre and Palm, and Chech Medal). I don't know who told you that we need crews, because at this point we are over-strength. So we'll have to ship you out to Algiers for re-deployment. We will, however, accept the aircraft. This was a huge blow to us, and we were greatly disappointed, but Algiers it was, and we went there, and settled in at Surcouf, a rest camp.

We asked for an audience with the AOC, Middle East, and told him about our plight. "Gentlemen, I can't do anything

VOICES OF WAR

about you joining the squadron, but I will authorize a flight back to the UK, and you can report back to the ferry unit. They will likely have something to keep you occupied”.

We flew back in a DC3, were accepted with open arms, and ferried another three Mosquitos to the Middle East, finally, re-joining 23 Squadron RAF on April 24th, and by then, allowed to stay.

We did some local flying, then at last an NFT for our ‘Nursery Trip’ around Corsica one night, which went off like clockwork, and reported next morning ready to do our first OP that night, likely over southern France, or Italy. We were assigned an aircraft, and did our NFT (night flying test), landed and at last expecting to be briefed for our first operation that night.

“Well Chaps, this will surprise you”, our flight commander said; “all flying is cancelled, as of now, and we are going back to England by sea”.

We sailed out of Naples, on the Strathnaver, May 10th; arrived in England seven days later and were taken to Norfolk to an aerodrome called Little Snoring, near Fakenham. (those British place names just ‘slay me’).

We set up shop here, and with a sister squadron, #515, and understood the reason for our recall to England, as the invasion began a week later, on June 6th, 1944. We now had to prepare to support it.

This event and the subsequent drive, which ended the war in Europe less than a year later, would require all of the help available, and that included our squadron. Now, we were in Bomber Command, as part of 100 Group, (BS) Bomber Support, they expanded the scope of our activities

to include many other duties, which could include, (besides Night Intruding), such things as ‘Spoof’ raids, when we would pretend to be the main force, and bomb target cities from 20000 ft; then suddenly disperse and go to our intruder target aerodromes as usual, meanwhile German night fighters could be vectored our way, and miss the Main Stream on its way to the real target for the night.

Special duty escorts for i.e. B17’s flying near the Dutch coast, engaged in electronic scanning enemy territory for V1 & V2 sites. We did daylight fighter escort trips. ‘Train bashing’ in the bright moonlight of Northern Europe, after finishing our Night Intruder patrols, was always an option for us, which we did if conditions were suitable. Day and night Rangers, (looking for targets of opportunity). We were considered available for all or any activities that ‘Group’ felt appropriate. It was very interesting!

Finally, Paul and I started Ops flying our ‘Nursery’ trip around the Zuider Zee, on July 12th, (remember, we finished OTU the previous November 30th), this shallow penetration of enemy territory was to help us ‘get our feet wet’, then, we’d be assigned targets gradually deeper into enemy territory, sometimes carrying two 500lb bombs, or other times extra long range tanks, depending on the distance to our target, always as dictated by Group HQ.

Our ‘Intruder’ patrols at our target German Night Fighter Bases were always for one hour , and intruder aircraft covered German Night Fighter Bases for one hour before, during, and one hour after the raid by the Main Force. We were to be ‘on target ‘ within a minute of our allotted time, and off the same way, an hour later. The last thing we would do, before departing, was to give them our

VOICES OF WAR

bombs, and hopefully mess up their runway in use. We were a pain in the neck to their flying operation, and the aircrews were afraid of us, and often diverted to another base, even if too low in fuel to reach it. We understood that if they shot us down, it would count double.

G/C Obrian Hoare, DSODFC, our station commander was quick to point out that our hour long vigil was the real purpose of our mission, to keep the enemy 'nervous', and if we were able to shoot one down, that was just a bonus, so "don't feel that your trip was wasted if you find it uneventful".

We flew operations, with the feeling that we were always waiting for the 'shoe to drop', as at any moment, during our time over enemy territory, a German night fighter could be closing in on us, (even though we very often took a look behind us), or could run into a cluster of 'nomad balloons', randomly placed in our path, and were seldom in a zone of silence, when we wouldn't hear in our earphones the interference, as they scanned us with their DF equipment, ready to vector their night fighters our way.

We were always concentrating on the space immediately around our Mosquito, during the hours we spent over enemy territory, or near it on our way in and out. Many of our losses occurred on the way home, when crews would 'let their guard down'.

In spite of this vigil, they did get some of us, and not just the new and inexperienced crews, as you might expect. We even lost our popular CO, Stickey Murphy, and our pals Ken Eastwood and his navigator 'Griff' Rogers, Both while on an intruder trip to Guttersloh!

Early in my tour of Op's, I intruded on Coulommiers, (just east of Paris, on two occasions, on the 4th, and 8th of July, dropping my bombs on the way out; challenged by searchlights, but strangely not shot at .

Early in August ,23 squadron had orders to provide daylight escort to 260 Lances who were bombing oil storage facilities at Bordeaux. There was a mad rush to get going, and some SOB took my parachute, thus delaying my takeoff just under half an hour, while I searched for another. Our guys were going south, just offshore west of the Brest Peninsula, so Paul and I raced at nought feet over the peninsula, hoping to make up the difference, to join the main stream before arriving at the target. As luck would have it, we got there before the rest of our squadron, and escorted them by ourselves until 23 arrived a few minutes later, over Bordeaux.

The operation was repeated the next day, but this time I had no delay. We encountered no enemy fighters on either occasion. We did have our favorite points of entry, on our way to our patrol areas. N & S Egmond and across the Zuider Zee to Wilemstad, then East through the gap between two hot spots, Meppel and Zwolle, and to the Dummer Lake, from which we would go left to Vechta, Quackenbrook, and Diepholtz, or north to Ardorf Marx and Varel, and the Steinhuder Lake by Hanover, from which we'd go to Wunsdorf, Paderborn, or Nordhausen. Those two lakes, plus river junctions were the only visible navigational aids we could see in the dark.

Our 2nd Op was to Venlo, and Volkel, in Holland, but because the aerodrome wasn't lit, we brought our bombs back, as often was the case. We were always aware of distant searchlights, or rotating

VOICES OF WAR

beacons, used by the enemy, and since we were the last of the 'Cat' Eye intruders, we felt deprived by our lack of AI radar, which would have helped us immensely in seeking out the opposition. All this time, the enemy fighters had the advantage of AI, in finding us. The tide would change after the end of the year, by the introduction of ASH to our aircraft, but since we finished our extended tour in December, it didn't help Paul and me !!

Our night vision training did however keep us in good stead, and we were able to spot the odd EA in the dark. One case in particular, on the 4th of November, at Ardorf aerodrome, in a 60mph gale, having shot at and damaging a JU88 on its final approach to land, they doused all the lights immediately, leaving the poor devil in the dark, and us racing across the airfield at 100feet; we pulled up towards the downwind leg, and saw a HEIII, going off to our left, (black on black) so I pulled up past his tail, into a wingover, and back to the attack, scoring hits, and sparks and bits falling off in the dark, as we overflowed him and saw him no more.

On our bomb run at the end of our patrol, we noticed an emergency flarepath laid out beside the main runway, and a confusion of lights in motion where we think the JU88 must have crash landed. We had a little ditty that we sang around the bar, about the Mosquito:

*"Mossies they don't worry me, Mossies
they don't worry me,
If you get jumped by a One Nine OH,
I'll show you How to get free!!
Keep cool and collected keep calm and
sedate
You don't let your British blood boil
Don't hesitate; just go right through the
gate
And drown the poor bastard in oil!!!*

Our squadron official seal had a Latin slogan inscribed on it "SEMPER AGRESSUS", which when I was with them was interpreted as "PRESS ON REGARDLESS", and it was further enhanced by a little "Pub-style" ditty.

*Press on regardless, never mind the
weather.*

*Press on regardless, We'll all go in
together.*

*Press on regardless; it's just a piece of
cake.*

*'Cause you'll never see the Dummer, or
the Steinhuder Lake!!*

Our NFT's (Night Flying Tests) were a joy to fly, flying for the sake of flying, and to be sure that the aircraft was fit for the night's Op; because aborting a trip was a big 'NO-NO'; and if it did happen they would expect a really good reason for so doing. I took the greatest pleasure in doing my NFT's, and it was to me a "Kid in a Candy Store" experience.

In the 50 operations Paul and I flew, we didn't have a single abort, which may not have been a record, but it was uncommon. There were times we were tempted, but we had this 'itch' to continue!!

A tour of operations on our squadron, consisted of 35 trips, which would be followed by a 'rest tour' as an instructor at a Mosquito OUT, and then another operational tour of 25 trips.

Canadians had a two- tour limit, after which they would be sent home for re-deployment. Our British counterparts, however, were not so fortunate, as they kept rotating back and forth until they were lost, or the war ended.

Paul and I finished our first tour in eleven weeks, and still feeling refreshed, wanted to continue with 'Ops;' finish our second

VOICES OF WAR

tour right away and go home to Canada, and stay there to instruct.

G/C Hoare, said that whereas he couldn't authorize that, he could grant us an extension of fifteen trips. We agreed with this, and after we were dismissed, I said, "Paul, when we hit fifty trips, we will not tell them, and we will just do our next ten, and they will have to let us go home!!"

We did our fifty trips 'extended' tour, and the next day we were ordered to appear at the Station Commander's Office. "Gentlemen, you are now tour expired; so don't get any ideas about continuing ops. Also you may be pleased to hear that we are sending you home!! Congratulations!!"

What a Christmas present!! It would be over a month before our departure, but we were delighted.

Our operations had taken us to very many German night fighter bases, as well as some in France, Holland, and Belgium.

In the course of our tour, we damaged three enemy aircraft in the air, one on the ground, and shot up fifteen trains. We carried out escort duties, day and night rangers, and generally everything they asked us to do, and now looked forward to seeing our families again, after about two years.

We did however lose some fine friends, and that was hard to take, but that's what happens in wars. Our aircraft was hit on occasions, and we had to return on one engine. We had some close calls, but lived to tell the tale; and, except for hurting my foot slightly while crashing a Mosquito, because of a blown tire, we came through unscathed, and gained from the experience. Also, we each were awarded the DFC. While awaiting our posting to Canada, I turned 21 years of age, and was thankful for my opportunity to fly the Mosquito.



S/L George Stewart, 1945

We arrived home, after an Atlantic crossing on the Aquitania, Feb 6th to Feb 14th, disembarking at Halifax, and on this trips, we had no u-boat attacks, which was a relief. Family time, and disembarkation leave, was great, then off to Greenwood, #8 (Mosquito) OTU, to instruct, from March 21st until it shut down, and we were released July 25th, 1945.

I went back to school for a while; joined 424 Squadron RCAF Res, then, in 1948, as a civilian went to China as a Mosquito flying Instructor, and with 'Moose' Fumerton, and Jack Turnbull, converted more than three ROCAF squadrons to the Mosquito for Chang Kai Shek.

We were there nine months, before being 'run out of town, by the Communists. We fled by train to Hong Kong, and our Chinese pilots flew off to Formosa, and settled there permanently. I achieved another childish goal, while there, that was to reach 1000 hours in Mosquitos, something done by few.

VOICES OF WAR

My wife Marion and I were invited to Taiwan in 2003 to visit the ROCAF, and I addressed their Fighter Squadrons, and their Airforce Academy, as well as met some old friends. I also flew four of their simulators. We were royally entertained.

As a last Mosquito note, I was asked to crew on a Mosquito purchased by an American collector Kermit Weeks, in Scotland, and restored in England, and help bring it over here in 1987. The chief pilot, George Aird, who had done 45 Atlantic crossing deliveries, changed seats with me between Greenland and Labrador, and I flew it for about an hour and a half. It was quite a trip.

Kermit and I flew it to Centralia (where I got my wings), and we too changed seats for about 30 minutes. Just before he took it to Oshkosh where it has sat ever since.

I have also done a lot of flying with Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum, where I have flown most of the aircraft. I was member # 13 when it started in the early seventies, and I am a life member.

At 83 years of age I now look back and happily reflect on my amazing good luck to have experienced so many wonderful opportunities since I started flying in September 1942.

George Stewart, Hamilton, 2006

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Squadron Leader George Stewart, DFC, 1945



S/L George Stewart’s Mosquito, Pathfinder Squadron