



Captain Hugh Hudson Arnold's
World War II
Letters, Missions and Life Stories

Introduction

Hugh was born on November 17, 1924 in Galesburg, Illinois. He died on November 15, 2016, just two days short of his 92nd birthday. Through his words, we follow his World War II journey. We experience what it was like to train for two years, starting from boot camp in February 1943, to First Lead Pilot of the B-17 Bomber in February of 1945. He enlisted as soon as he turned 18 and reported to Atlantic City, New Jersey to begin boot camp. At first, he was worried he would “wash out” or not be smart enough to qualify to be an air cadet. Approximately 60 to 70% of those enlisted to be pilots, navigators and bombardiers were eliminated. However, Hugh had nothing to worry about. The Army Air Corps recognized his intelligence and advanced him ahead of his classmates time and time again. Hugh was only 19 when he was instructing men much older than he to become pilots. He was only 20 when he was the lead command of a ten-man B-17 crew flying bomb missions in Europe. This is impressive for someone so young. We will start with some excerpts from Hugh’s autobiography so we can learn about his background and be introduced to some of the people who were important to him.

Typing these letters has been one of the greatest joys I have experienced. Dad is such a wonderful writer. Through his eyes, we experience his excitement, concerns, elation and disillusionment. We witness his growth from a wide eyed, eager “teen” into a mature adult who endured both hardship and loss. Not all of his friends made it. Fortunately, he also gained lifelong friendships and pride in accomplishing so much at such a young age. I hope you enjoy reading them as much as I have.

Here's to you, Pops!



*Allison Arnold Minnick
January 21, 2025*

Excerpt from Hugh's Autobiography

As the summer of 1944 wore on, after D-day, it became evident that we were winning the war. As instructors we had a good choice of what plane we might want to end up flying - something exciting like a P-38 or A-26, but the great demand was for pilots to fly the big bombers. Orders kept coming through for B-17 pilots and I finally offered to take the place of an instructor on orders who had a wife and child. He was very glad to accept my offer and the authorities that he said OK so off I went to Sebring, Florida to learn how to fly a huge four engine bomber weighing 110,000 pounds fully loaded. It was as big as they got until the B-29 came along about that time. Again, what a thrill. Bringing that huge thing in over Lake Okeechobee. Shooting landings, flying formation at dawn at 24,000 feet where you could see the sun rising out of the Atlantic and the moon setting in the Gulf of Mexico. I have pictures of three of us flying formation low over the harbor at Havana, Cuba. This was later after the crew was assigned to us and we trained 10 weeks as a crew at Avon Park, Florida – just up the road from Sebring. At the end we could take a plane anywhere we wished on a final cross country flight. We went to Iowa City, Iowa, 100 miles or so past my hometown of Galesburg, IL. We buzzed the college campus quite effectively and various townspeople told me after the war how well they remembered the excitement of that mighty roar and huge plane. The only trouble was, by that time it was early winter. The plane froze up that night at Iowa City and we couldn't get the engines started – there were no services in Iowa City, it had a dirt runway with power lines at the end, not a B-17 type of airfield. We were going on to Des Moines to re-fuel. My folks had driven up from Galesburg and it was sort of a last hurrah before going overseas. We finally got the engines running – managed to leap frog over the power line at the end of the runway, but one engine caught fire in the process. We got into Des Moines on three engines with the crash trucks and all. No repair facility at Des Moines so we were there a week until they sent a C-47 up to get us and fly us back to Avon Park. We had on summer uniforms, no extra money, had to all stay in one big room at the Hotel Fort Des Moines but it was quite a week. After the war, Life magazine rated Des Moines as one of the 5 best towns in the US for military personnel to be lucky enough to visit. Enough said. The weekends we didn't have to fly we would hitch hike over to either Tampa on the Gulf or West Palm Beach on the Atlantic. Such fun.

Phase Nine B: B-17 Training with Crew, Avon Park Army Airfield, Avon Park, Florida (October 1944 – February 1945)

Tuesday, October 1944, Interim time at Macdill Airfield, Tampa Bay, Florida.

Dear Mother and Dad, yes, it is good to be linked by mail again, had a swell letter from each of you, thanks for your kind thoughts Dad. This has been a strange chapter in our army career. Was busy the first week completing some required courses but now it's just like being on a vacation down here except for two formations a day. My time is my own. At first there were lots of fellows here I'd known at one time or another and then Wednesday every one of the fellows I'd left at Hendricks came in and we're back having a big time. Have gone to some very nice places to eat and have resisted most of the temptations of this town which is really over run, due to my

period of enlightenment at home. A little bit of home really goes a long way. Sunday we took off in search of a sailboat on Tampa Bay. Found the Yacht Club and had a swell afternoon out on the water underneath the 17's taking off from Macdill Field. Yesterday we went horseback riding, had a very nice little mare and it was a lot of fun. We were alerted for shipping yesterday and will leave sometime this week. I'm sorry to say that we'll be leaving Tampa (2 of the 4 heavy bomber fields in 3rd Air Force are right here in Tampa) so it means horror of horrors, back to Avon Park or down to Gulfport, Miss. Our stay here has been a little shorter than average, and it's the first big town we've been in for a long time, but we sure haven't flown any lately and it's about time we were getting back to work. I was really disappointed the way the election turned out and by the end of the evening was getting pretty mad with the damn Southern Democrats I was meeting on the street. The Republicans seems to have lost out all around. Would liked to have seen the Register Mail on how Galesburg voted. Am getting the paper now. What was the story on Bill Stoneking getting killed? We played basketball together at High School. Mrs. Ades wrote that they have adopted a four day old baby and seemed very happy about it. I knew they had been looking very carefully into the matter. She wanted me to tell you, Mom, about it. Hope Dad is feeling better now and glad he likes the men. Hope you didn't go to too much trouble about the birthday Mom, will make sure I get your packages. Will probably have my crew assigned to me tomorrow. The responsibility starts then. Much love, Hugh P.S. Enjoyed Pastoral very much as did about half the guys I know who read the copy I have. Was very pleasant to read as you lay in the afternoon sun or the sack. Keep writing here and they'll forward it. Please keep me informed of Dave's plans.

Sunday, October, 1944, B-17 Training with Crew, Avon Park Army Airfield, Avon Park, Florida

Dear folks, left Tampa Friday, have my crew now, pretty good bunch, one staff sergeant, 3 corporals, and 3 P.F.C.'s and second Lt. co-pilot and bombardier, the navigator joins up in a couple of weeks. You probably wonder where I've been and why I haven't written sooner, but afraid the letters will be scarce from now on. However, hope you can manage to keep them flowing as they really help. Enjoyed so much your letters at Plant Park (*park in Tampa*) the candy was wonderful and I really felt important having a box of Whitman's Samplers. Thank you very much. Haven't had any of the other packages you mentioned yet but they'll show up. To answer some of your questions about shoes, the slippers sound fine, certainly don't want anything that costs shoe stamps. Things lose some of their relative value when you're twelve miles out in a mosquito infected swamp, and really I feel quite embarrassed and ashamed at all the pains you take for me, I'm afraid I must assure you that I shan't be able to find much this Xmas, possibly not a thing, would have shopped at Tampa had we been there a while longer but there were too many new things to enjoy for the short while. I'll tell you as briefly as possible about Avon Park. We'll be here around 10 weeks, it is strictly a combat base, scattered back in the swamps over an area of about seven by four miles, yet it is a small field, you could get lost right on the post for months if you strayed 50 feet off one of the few roads. We sleep under mosquito netting, have no furniture whatsoever (which I mention as a definite detriment to writing) the officer's club is 3 miles in one direction from where I live and the flight line is 1 mile in the other direction with things scattered in between so we do quite a bit of walking. We work seven days and then have the eighth off, start flying at 4:30 in the morning and fly in the afternoon till 10:30 at night, 6 hours at a stretch. That's the general picture, all strikes me sort of indifferently as not much fun but something that has to be done, things can always be shrugged off in the army hat and off you go. Having a crew is a little more novel than it may sound. For once in my life I'm getting places 15 minutes ahead of time, watching 9 guys, thinking a lot about doing things right. Usually in the army one merely manages to get by with a minimum effort but now I have to be a little better. We had a little time yesterday evening and spent most of the night travelling the 12 miles to town, hour wait for train, 9 miles by train to Sebring, 8 miles to the Base, several hours conversation and then return process. Saw McKay, Russ Brown and some of the boys. There's no bank here, I wonder if Dad would start a bank account for me at the National Bank (think it would be better for cashing checks than the Farmer's Mechanic. If he could start one, I'll have my check sent there and won't have

to carry cents I own all the time. Perhaps a joint account would be best. If you need something to start it, I'll send the money right away, also wish you'd check on War Bonds and acknowledge this. I should have 1 \$500, two \$100 (with this), and about 17 or 18 \$25 bonds. Please don't feel I'm not thinking of you and very grateful for the weeks you made so happy and also grateful for your contributions towards a happy birthday. It's hard to express yourself with the distractions of an open barracks and there's so much to consider it's hard to get very personal about any of it. Well, good night and much love, Hugh

Wednesday, October 20th 1944, B-17 Training with Crew, Avon Park Army Airfield, Avon Park, Florida

Dear folks, have not heard anything further about Uncle Fritz or how Aunt Fan is, I know you've been very busy. Hope everything is under control. Must say they've been pretty upset down here. This tropical storm you may have heard about was scheduled to be one of the worst in history. The army has so much Air Force property in this region that they really make a science out of figuring these storms out. We started hearing about this storm about a week ago and by last Monday, they had it scoped to come up through Cuba and Key West and strike Florida between Ft. Myers and Tampa which put us practically in the center of it. All the pilots on the field were alerted and they got us up at 4:00 A.M. Tuesday morning to fly the ships out. They took everything that had wings and sent it to Ohio, Tennessee and Texas. However a couple of us figured we'd like to see a storm so managed to be among the 20 out of 1000 who weren't needed. Meanwhile they evacuated every other plane in Florida and Ft. Myers to several towns. The four of us left in the barracks battened down the hatches, put our beds in the hall and at 3:30 A.M. last night beat our way down to the weather office against a 65 mph wind. At that time the storm center was about 40 miles off Ft. Myers and it looked like quite a storm. We came back and went to bed with the old barracks rising right out of its foundations. However about an hour later it veered up the coast and the center missed us so all in all it was a lot of fun. Just heard the news about the Philippines (*this occurred on October 20, 1944.*) To be expected but all in all we should be very thankful that we have been able to bounce back. It is a big factor to be considered personally because the Philippines put Japan within B-17 range. Heretofore the 17's have been limited in the Pacific because the B-24 has a greater range – only advantage over the 17 of course. It is perhaps logical that one of the four of us seated here will be operating out of the Philippines someday. Our instructor recommended Ernie Bailey – (been at Moody with me from 44-B) and I for B-29 1st pilots but from past experience I know that all it means is that if any of our class goes to B-29's we may go too but I doubt if any of our class will go to B-29's. This hurricane may have slowed up our getting home somewhat because none of the planes will be flyable for a while. They'll all need a lot of work done when they get back. They have over 100 17's here and rarely more than 30 are flyable at once so now with them all flying they'll all be beat up when they get back. Absolutely all I have to do is about 3 days of flying and then wait for orders so I may be home next week or not for three weeks. Army is fine and has been on one mission. I read God is My Co-Pilot at Moody. Reading between the lines I don't think much of Colonel Scott. Darn swell of you to want to send it to Army. It is a very interesting book and I liked it a lot. Was swell being down in Miami. Bob's parents are wonderful people and they really have about the nicest house I've ever seen. Not in magnificence but it is located there on Indian Creek with sharks swimming in the front lawn, ringed with porches, they have a big family and it was very livable and lovely. I had to get up early Sunday and come back here to fly – naturally I sat and waited for a ship instead of flying but had to come back anyway. Bob came here when I did but is in the 15 week course and they have quite a bit more free time than we. Looking forward very much to coming home. I lay in bed listening to the hurricane and thought of something last night which I want to get in writing before I forget. Let's have baking powder biscuits, butter, and honey in the comb once while I'm there. Boy the food here is poor so yum yum for baking powder biscuits and honey! Hope your asthma is better Dad. Let's not have a siege this winter, no kidding. Please keep well both of you, that's everything. Good night, much love, Hugh. P.S. Would you get all my winter clothes still there cleaned and pressed so that I'll be able to wear them when I get home? Thanks.

Mid-October 1944, B-17 Training with Crew, Avon Park Army Airfield, Avon Park, Florida

Dear Mom and Dad, a very sad thing, and yet he will live on, much more so than many who've gone on before him. We have certainly been blessed by having him as our Uncle Fritz (*He died October 12, 1944.*) Please tell me of Aunt Fan, of course you will, but I do hope she and all of you are more happy for what a swell guy he was than grief struck by his loss. I had known nothing of it until today, first the telegram, then Dad's letter and Mom's card of Sunday. Wrote Aunt Fan, I'm not smart enough to write that kind of letter, sometimes feel as though I've been living in a tough atmosphere so that I lose some of the refinements I might have had started once. We've been busy. Had a four hour final exam in navigation yesterday morning. It was the ultimate of several years' navigational experiences and was pretty involved. Had a final in engineering today. You'd be surprised at how little I'm concerned with the actual flying anymore. It's what goes on while you fly. This afternoon I was up at 24,000 feet from one till six. It gets pretty cold up there and you're rather much jammed into an oxygen mask the whole time. Can safely say it is a long way from nowhere up there. Hope to get off this weekend long enough to run down to Miami with Bob McKay and see his home and folks. We're scheduled to be done the 23rd of October but don't know when we'll leave. We may hang around for five weeks till they get room for us. Pilots are cheap these days in case you haven't heard. Russ Brown, the boy from home who's been one of my closest friends down here, had a baby girl this afternoon, and Uncle Fritz died. Well it is the world we live in. Had a nice letter from the Ades, I really don't think time has healed much except his girl. Army has looked down and seen his bombs hit Germany now. A fine boy. Hope I see you soon and get on my way myself. Have to fly at 6 A.M. so goodnight. Much love, Hugh

BLINDFOLD TEST FOR B-17F or G

(The pilot being checked will put his finger on each item, moving to other seat when necessary.)

1. Altimeter
2. P.D.I.
3. Airspeed
4. Turn Indicator
5. Emergency Hydraulic Control
6. Flight Indicator
7. Rate of Climb
8. Radio Compass Controls
9. Manifold Pressure Gauges
10. Clock
11. Compass
12. Pilot Heater Switch
13. Anti-Icer Control
14. Tachometers
15. Flap Indicator
16. Oil Pressure Gauge
17. Fuel Pressure Gauge
18. Oil Temperature Gauges
19. Landing Gear Control
20. Flap Control
21. Fire Extinguisher Control
22. Feathering Switches
23. Wing De-Icer Control
24. Alarm Bell
25. Passing Light
26. Landing Lights
27. Running Lights
28. Cockpit Lights
29. Booster Pump Control
30. Battery Switches
31. Generator Switches
32. Cowl Flaps
33. Ignition Switches
34. Hydraulic Gauges
35. Emergency Bomb Release
36. Parking Brake Handle
37. Emergency Brake Control
38. Air Temperature Indicator
39. Cylinder Temperature Gauge

I CERTIFY THAT: Crew #1 ARNOLD
HAS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED THE BLINDFOLD TEST.

DATE: 11/22/44 Capt. Paul R. Tashewski Jr.
(Check Pilot)

Blindfold Test that Hugh passed (from Hugh's files)

Tuesday, November 1944, B-17 Training with Crew, Avon Park Army Airfield, Avon Park, Florida

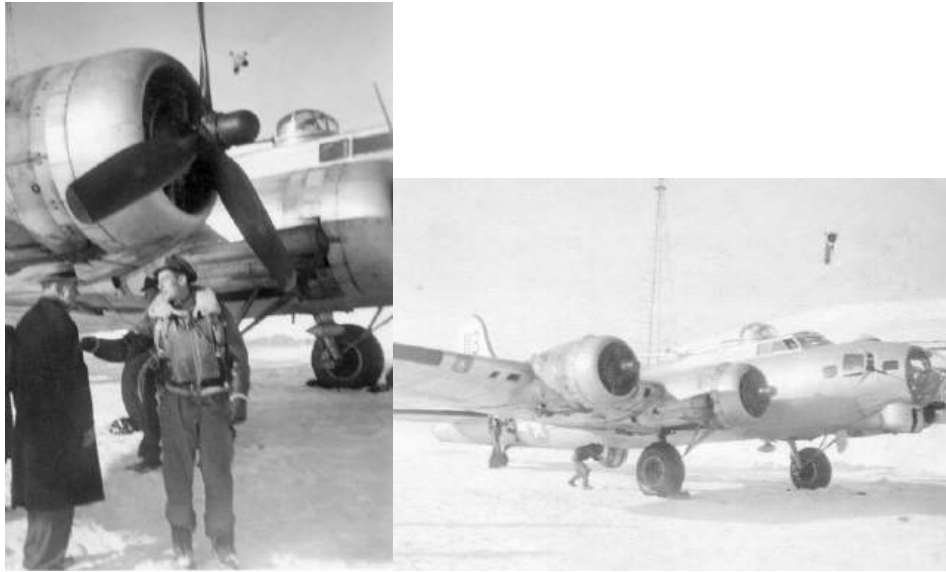
Dear folks, today is our day off so maybe I can catch up a bit. We have been flying from midnight last night till flying tomorrow morning at three A.M. so I slept all morning and went to the officer's club for the first time and ate off a tablecloth. I got your package and everything was in fine shape. Food tasted awfully good and the slippers are fine only dear Mom, try to remember your son has big feet. No kidding, I really appreciate how hard it was to send the package and all when you don't even know where I am. The only advice I have about food is that when it rains, it pours and so I wouldn't send much for Xmas because a guy can sure get sick trying to do justice to everyone's efforts. I'm enclosing \$150 to be deposited and will try and have the check sent direct after this. Saw about Galesburg's hero, Skip Carlson and thought what you did. Yes I got the pictures and asked you to send some more of the better ones. I've been thinking of something you could do in the way of welfare if that's what you're looking for and that would be to start another photo album. We've got a lot of pictures accumulated around and I think it would be fun to do. I'd like to have the pictures at Cochran mounted together and some of the Lakeland and Moody ones, like those of the fishing and all those nice ones we've been getting of the family and if I get a camera, I'd like to have an album of my own. Yes I found the bracelet – told you so at Plant Park, and Army is with the 8th Air Force in England where I expect to go. Each new step I am less able to tell you about and probably the climax will be combat, suffice it to say that everything in all seriousness has been a picnic for me before this in comparison. Not to be self-righteous at all but though others don't realize it, the Air Corps knows it and each of my friends who are first pilots are running our own little show. I feel completely on my own and I'm learning fast what it means to have no one but myself to turn to. It is nothing to brag about, nothing to complain about, nothing that can be explained to mother or to Captain Blank or to the co-pilot or to the tail gunner. It is something about growing up but when you look up there and see a B-17, in the ship if it is me or Ash or Bailey, there is one man in that plane who is trying to be himself and 10 other men. The co-pilot doesn't have to worry if the crew didn't go to that class or read the back of page 14 of yesterday's schedule because someone stole the schedule but there may be six men court martialed if the pilot doesn't talk his way out of it for them. "The bombs won't drop, sir, the oxygen in the lower ball is out sir, my guns are jammed, sir, tower calling, radio to pilot, bombing range wants the time on that last bomb, say again, slower, navigator's radio is out." Boy, I mean it's a lot different than Sebring. Last night we dropped incendiary bombs, calibrated the compass and air speed indicator and flew to Tallahassee and over the Gulf to Ft. Myers for 6 hours. It isn't too warm down here now. In fact it is usually 20 to 25 below zero at 20,000 where we do most of our flying. In other words I don't care a whole lot if I never hear about Marilyn, Ginny, Mary Jo, etc., etc., and the only thing I can do in life at present is take care of myself while you all take care of yourselves and then learn enough to beat a lot of people out of my way when I come back so that 10 years after the war is over, Hugh Arnold is still taking darn good care of himself and his. Great statement huh? But if I'm working harder and missing fun that once was had in college then I want to be a better man for having worked. I'm very glad you're feeling better Pop and that the house is done and you have good men. You bet I'd like to be there in the woods with you but if I was I'd be missing too many new problems and situations down here. One gets over fast the feeling that "how can he leave the wonders of home and go back to work." Never mind, I'll quit talking, I'm happy. I hope you are, I'm glad Dave has a house and hope you'll all be together for Xmas. Bear with me on my gifts. Mother I can't buy wash cloths or sweat sox, please send 5 wash cloths and some sweat sox plus any army winter long sleeve underwear and pants you see lying around. Much love, Hugh

Tuesday, November 29, 1944, B-17 Training with Crew, Avon Park Army Airfield, Avon Park, Florida

Dear Mom, received three letters from you yesterday and one today leaving much to be talked over. As I didn't get your letters yesterday until I was on my way to the flight line at 2:00 P.M. to fly until midnight and have been in ground school all day, I have had to wait to answer all your questions. I guess the most important

consideration is for when you should go to California. You're forcing me to put the chips down, I've known all along that I probably would not get home again and I really don't expect to. It is just easier on everybody to say, "Sure I'll be home again," and then if you do why everything is fine. We finish here on February ninth and go to Savannah direct for a matter of 3 to 10 days, and then as far as I know, that's that. The only thing is that there is always a chance of getting a trip somewhere along at the end of the class and if possible I'd fly to Chicago for the one night. Also sometimes things are very crowded at Savannah and the crews get a seven day leave. If any of this happens it would probably come in February anyway though so you could be pretty safe spending January in California. I should surely hate to spoil the first chance you've had of a winter vacation for so long especially if you stayed home and I did not get there by one means or another and I assure you, the biggest chances are that I shall not get there. I'm certainly glad you're planning on going out there, you both deserve a rest. The idea of your driving to Florida would be fine. You'd enjoy it etc., etc., etc., many good points, but once again, accept my judgment and don't even think about it. Sure, I'd give a lot to have a car, but it's something I can't have at present, there would not be 10 minutes in a day when I could see you and we're just too far away from anywhere to make it at all reasonable so don't think you're going to write the Admiral for more butter, it just wouldn't work. I got the birthday telegram last week, very good and I appreciated it and thought about James James and all the rest, but am convinced you're a hard woman if you can give a message like that to Western Union with a straight face. A joint account suits me perfectly if you can keep track of your finances because I never know how much I have till the end of the month. The reason I say that is because I like to know just where we stand or otherwise you would always gyp yourself and at the end of the month I like to know whether I came out ahead or not. I'll probably start having my check sent straight to the bank so I suppose they'll just credit me when I do, also may make out an allotment to the bank when I'm overseas so that I'll have some cash besides the war bonds when I get home. Will they send me statements and also a checkbook? I received a card saying your package is at the express office in town so should get it soon. We've been quite busy since the minute we got here. All last week, (that is every other day is when we fly) we got up at three A.M. and flew till around two P.M. We were doing high altitude (20,000 ft.) bombing, formation, etc. and it is a lot of work when you have 10 men up there on oxygen trying to get things to run right. If Elly (*his cousin*) wants to worry about Johnny that's okay but I think I can be just as good an airplane commander as the next guy and maybe a little better so don't bother to worry about me. That's not conceit but self confidence doesn't hurt at all in this racket. As I've said before though, flying the ship is the easy part but the big jog is taking the responsibility for a half a million dollars equipment and 10 men's actions. We're now flying in the afternoon and evening, very beautiful out tonight but we had ground school all day and fly tomorrow and have bomb trainer in the morning. We had Monday off and went to Tampa Sunday evening after getting up at three and flying and then going to link in the late afternoon. Got in around midnight and then I didn't have to be back till flying Tuesday noon so considering I didn't waste any time sleeping I had a lot of time off. It was the first break we've had and we'll get another in two weeks, it was practically like a seven day leave after the schedule here. I met a very nice girl at Tampa the last few days we were at Plant Park. She's very beautiful and I was quite surprised at how really nice she is. We've had a lot of fun riding horseback and just walking around not doing anything. I'm sorry Dave is having such a tough time, you can readily see how many things he has to consider and it makes my life seem very simple though at present I find it rugged and therefore am convinced that he really has his hands full. Don't know anything definite to say about California. Would be so bad if we did get off and you weren't home but I definitely want you to go and relax and forget everything for as long as you can. Perhaps I should advise your going early in January or sometime around the middle of February. Hope you can keep Aunt Fan's car in our part of the family. Dad just won't be able to go out and buy a car when the Laffy gives out completely and he has no call but to drive a car most laborers wouldn't drive. The used car market every day is becoming more non existent and I would be very glad to help buy it if you'd let me because I hate to think of my pop struggling with the Laffy. Did you get the War Bond? Much love, Hugh. P.S. Thanks for all the letters. Sorry things were bad at the service center.

Congratulations to Bob Walton, that is very fine and Bob has come a long way. P.S. The pictures were small, how's about sending some copies of the best among those and last summer. Send me a couple of Steve and I when he wasn't playing with my dog tags. I'm proud of how much he likes me there.



Hugh, his father Ray and the B-17 he flew to Des Moines.

Tuesday, December 1944, B-17 Training with Crew, Avon Park Army Airfield, Avon Park, Florida

Dear folks, well we finally did make it back and are back in the groove once more ready to get up in the wee hours tomorrow for flying through today. We had it nice with ground school. As usual, no coal when we got back so I'm afraid it's pretty cold to tell you just how swell it was to see you and have you see everything. It will always make it lots nicer to know that you've seen the ship, met the boys and are a little closer with us in spirit. The stay in Des Moines was very nice and so unexpected. I assure you crew #1 has been the envy of the field and quite the boys who "got around" since we got back. Also somehow feel crew #1 made quite an impression on Des Moines in their own little way. We certainly had things our way there and lots of fun. All in all, a wonderful break in what perhaps I have convinced you is quite a steady grind down here. The crew is a lot better, though today 6 of them were one hour late for a class – my poor back – and as I told you they really liked meeting you and guess they figured they weren't too bad off if their pilot has folks like that. By the way Mom, will you have Jean take your present and wrap it up for me. With it, year after year you know, goes all my love and thanks. There may be no chance for a Christmas letter other than this, if so you know I'll be thinking of you all. Give my special hello to Aunt Fan, and have a very happy time together with Dave, Jean & Steve in front of the fireplace, also the night before with "Twas the Night Before Christmas" and the lights of the tree in the darkness and need I refer to the Arnold way of doing things on Christmas. Midnight lurks and I must clatter off to dreamland with all its peculiar B-17's that are even more obstinate than those we have here. Good night and much love, Hugh

Friday, December 1944, B-17 Training with Crew, Avon Park Army Airfield, Avon Park, Florida

Just have time for a short note, Pop, but I wanted to tell you just how really swell I thought it was when I read you were giving Mom the Packard for Christmas. It was just plain sweet of you, Dad, cause we all knew it was something you had sort of made up your mind against and the whole idea of it I know will just make her happy beyond words, not for the car but for the idea of the thing. It was one of the nicest Christmas presents I could have gotten - to know you made her that happy after the convincing fight you put up. Didn't you think the pictures were swell? Man it looked good to see Crew 1, a B-17 and Ray M. there right in the midst of it all. It is

so completely about time you were in on some of the doings and to have those good pictures of that big day is right on the ball. Had a great day today – started at three A.M. and didn't get in the air till 2 this afternoon. Had six P-51s making passes at us for gunnery. They really can move around. This started out to be a good letter Pop because I was much impressed with the pictures and your letter and wanted to tell you but I'm getting so tired I can't keep my eyes open. Words still don't describe how happy I was to see you and Mom and I hope the Arnolds have the very best of a Christmas. Show Steve a good one for his first. We're all very lucky. Good night Pop and much love, Hugh

December 25, 1944, B-17 Training with Crew, Avon Park Army Airfield, Avon Park, Florida

Dear Mom and Dad, Christmas 44 has come and is going now for both you and I. I imagine our thoughts have been pretty close together all day though I'm afraid it was much easier for me to visualize you than for you to know what I was doing. I hope your Christmas has been all I have been imagining and I'm sure it was very happy. I know you were all as glad as I was that you were all together and only hope you were not silly enough to have it marred in the least by my not being there. The unwritten and unspoken messages that went into your Christmas package to me were received by me a hundred fold and I really felt all the love, faith, and hope you were expressing in every little bit of it Mother, and as I said, I felt Dad's Christmas love for all of us in his present to you Mother. The only thing I am sorry about is that there was no visible indication of any unselfishness, love or affection, no contribution whatsoever towards anyone's happiness made by me. However I hope you will feel Mother that - if the sweater is at all wearable – every time you wear it I am thinking what a lovely lady and mom you are and am very proud of you both as my parents. Dad, afraid I can't say "each time you eat a grapefruit" but nevertheless if they are good, you will like them and I wish I could give you something you would like better. If my actions deceive you by their unfamiliarity into making you proud of me that is probably the best way I can make you happy and I shall try very hard to do that. The camera looks like a very nice camera. I know absolutely nothing about them but I think Arpin (*his co-pilot*) will be some help there. The big question will be getting film and I will scour Florida for some and then we shall see. I will take good care of it – if it was Uncle Fritz's he took good care of it and I will hope in my disordered life to take good care of this that came from his ordered life. The pictures of the farm were precisely perfect. The Gods must have been with you that day in catching such minute detail. The one from Stony Point looking up the valley mother was a real artist's work. You having told me of the atmosphere they were taken in that day so especially for me of course makes them mean a great deal. You certainly characterized Dad and a cigarette or perhaps his relations with a cigarette in that one picture. By the way, the little container was nice and might be good to remember as a surprise when sending more pictures (the book with glass leaves.) Family pictures were new and good. Speaking of pictures, I'd like to place a large order from Crew 1 for copies of the Iowa City pictures. Figure it this way – send a copy for each man in the good group scene and in the smaller shots – three or four copies at least where there are three or four of us. In fact, send 10 or 12 of the one good crew scene and scattered copies of the ship so that I can give each of the men 2 or 3 pictures at least. Today has been divided between; "Oh bear, I do love you" and "Bother" and looking at accumulated pictures. I must have over 100 here; and just thinking and lying in bed. "Pooh" was not a silly present at all in case you had any doubts. Luckily there was no one much around to see me reading "Winnie the Pooh" all day but it is fun and familiar too. How long since it was read to me? I'll send it on to Steve later for him to digest it. Was thinking that I doubt if children consider it funny but just very natural but it certainly is quaint or perhaps would you say subtle? Think I'll put Mary to the acid test and see if she likes Pooh. I'll just thank you for everything in the package – it was a nice package and I liked it. Bob McKay is here at Avon now in the new class. He was one behind me at Sebring. Was going to spend the day with him in Miami or go to Tampa and spend it with Mary. As it turned out I figured I couldn't keep this pace up of dashing all over standing all night on buses, etc. and so stayed here. Luckily it was too because instead of flying from 3 A.M. till 2 P.M. we had to wait for the weather till 1 P.M. and didn't finish until 8 PM. So as the day before Christmas turned into Christmas Eve,

Crew 1 was flying formation with Crew 2 (Ash) and Crew 5 (Bailey) dropping bombs from 8,000' on the "area" target over in the midst of the Everglades. However 'Incite Victor' was behaving himself and it was a good mission. They just sent up to Des Moines for our lady in distress, 'Butter Uncle'. The pilot, navigator and bombardier of Crew 1 had a very good dinner at the club and spent the rest of the day lounging in their underwear. Give my love to Aunt Fan and I will write her soon. Much love, Hugh

Sunday 21st January 1945, B-17 Training with Crew, Avon Park Army Airfield, Avon Park, Florida

Dear folks, been really off the ball on these letters and owe everyone in the world so believe it or not am not taking advantage of the fact tomorrow is our day off and hitting the road tonight but am catching up a bit and going to see Winged Victory and be impressed by the thrilling life we lead of "Off at dawn into the Wild Blue, etc., etc." Really enjoyed the box of candy Mom and very glad you had a good time in Chicago. The T-shirts are fine, thank you and I don't think I'll need any more. By the way, that's an item which should always be procured in the large size as otherwise they come half down to my stomach and stop. You asked me to give you the straight on coming to Savannah. Well, obviously we'd like to see each other again very much but I think it would be rather not be gritting one's teeth and instead take things as they come. The time would be most certainly inopportune as everything there would be very temporary and unpredictable and we might get there and get alerted for shipment the first day with resulting confinement, etc., and never even get to leave the base. On top of this I think it would make the moment a little too poignant – for you anyway, I'm not worrying about it, there have been several million before us and so let's not be a Mrs. Wetherbee and rush off to see Charles but let's be a Mrs. Arnold and realize it is no great undertaking - just a routine matter of waiting a very short time and "my won't we have all kinds of interesting experiences" and let it go at that. We still have 3 weeks or so but since we are on the subject, believe me that the air war in Europe is a cinch now compared to what it has been up until D-Day. I'd be much more perturbed and petulant I assure you if I thought I had to anticipate what the boys used to. You get your missions off in a hurry now and I almost feel guilty drawing the extra flying pay anymore – but it sure comes in handy! I've mentioned some of these big missions we've been on and thought I'd enclose the field order for one we flew the other day. It was quite a deal – 72 B-17s and 200 fighters, the biggest formation they've ever flown in this country I think. Heard from Army – he's doing fine and very much enjoyed your letter and the pictures. Will have the colored prints sent home as I probably wouldn't get them back in time, then if any are any good you can have more made. Very nice weather down here. Been getting little quips from some of the girls back home about a "night club singer" evidently through Jim Creighton. What did you do, tell him I've finally found the one? She's swell, but after all, it's not very important. Much love, Hugh

February 6, 1945 B-17 Training with Crew, Avon Park Army Airfield, Avon Park, Florida

Dear folks, well we are back from the holidays, barely able to crawl around today. We had a very good time, were there from late Thursday night until Monday night. Aside from the usual activities of seeing the town as it is in season, we were on the beach two afternoons, played 18 holes of golf, got well sunburned, spent naturally lots of money and got a lot of sleep. It's nice to be in Florida during the winter for a change and it is quite a different place. Every single day we've been here has been a masterpiece of mother nature and every night as dark as pitch with the stars 20 times their normal light in a very black sky. The weather helped a lot to make up for the feeling the base here was a world of its own in a quaint way out in the swamps. (I can see that I've told you very little of what we've done here by how impressed you were with the field order I sent you which was one of many.) One thing we did here was just as sure as each breath – until last Friday every other day we were here we flew at least 6 hours taking off in the day and landing at night or taking off in the dark and landing in the day. 1000 miles of flying every other day covered a lot of ground. On one of the flights last week we really had a good look at Cuba. Went down there and just fooled around for a couple of hours looking at whatever was interesting, buzzing fishing villages, chasing sailboats, circling Havana, etc., very beautiful place from the air.

Eased over to the Dry Tortugas – amazing barren little reef or two of sand, the one with the lighthouse and other with the old prison completely filling it. Some mornings when we weren't too busy we'd coast over and cruise up and down the West Coast – Tampa, Tampa Bay, Sarasota, Ft. Myers, watch the sun come up and listen to the old songs coming through our headsets and munch on a roll we'd brought along. Every day we saw nearly all the state from Orlando south. About the most beautiful thing I've ever seen though was the other morning when we rendezvoused a 36 ship formation over the field at 20,000' just at daybreak. We had all taken off individually at about 5:30 A.M. That incidentally is a pretty sight. Everything pitch black except the running lights on the wings of the ships and the occasional flare pots along the runway and the blue florescent lights on that maze of instruments in the cockpit. The crackle of the radio, flickering lights moving ahead of you and the last minute run up of the engines, dials to set, switches to throw, gears to be meshed and 30 seconds after the ship ahead of you starts rolling down the runway you ease the big bird out into position, call the tower, lock tailwheel, flick on the generators, hit the alarm bell and Brooks turns off the put-put (*a supplemental generator to boost the electrical supply on the ground to save the aircraft batteries*) back in the waist and at the same time your throttles are wide open and you are pulling her off and you're up in that old familiar fathomless black, a known and respected friend. Well, to get back to the rendezvous, for about 80 minutes you are climbing up and up. At 10,000 feet you have that last cigarette, put on your oxygen mask, zip up your boots a little tighter. It is just beginning to get light. Above you the layers of clouds are turning the most violent red and pink imaginable and below you everything is still dark and hazy though you begin to make out the coastline – Cocoa, Vero, West Palm – then Lake Okeechobee, Sebring and Avon which you are sweeping in a 50 mile circle as you climb. You remember that metro said there was a 110 m.p.h. wind from the west at altitude so you're not surprised to find out the last sweep took you down over W. Palm. Above you the ships are clearly visible against the grey green sky climbing upwards but the earth conceals the ones below you climbing up invisibly. Four or Five thousand feet above you the atmosphere is at the right humidity and temp for vapor trails and suddenly a ship is making a cloud of its own up there. Four foamy trails from each engine making a circle in the sky. You look out and see the vapor rolling off your wing too and billowing off into space behind you. Never stopping for a second is the "Hello Bertha Love, this is Factor Uncle," "Incite Peter this is Upper Easy, your #3 engine is smoking, better lean out that mixture a little." And every little while you get in your two cents worth as the earphones crackle and sputter. The higher you get the vaster the sky is and smaller the earth, all of Florida now seems like your back yard and barely enough room for you and your 35 mates. From almost down by Miami as you climb back towards shore from having forgotten that 110 mph wind for a few minutes and look out to see yourself over the ocean. However you're not alone, above and on all sides and now from below even you see them miles away coming, and while you're watching, he has come and gone by to the side or a thousand feet above, he watched you and you watched him. And all the time the sky and the colors. As you near 21,000 feet you move back towards the field in time to see your leader reach his position and lower his wheels, fire his two red flares and start his circle so you move into position in the high squadron, below you the lead squadron is forming and below them the low squadron. 12 ships in each for this mission. When all have formed they move in upon each, each ship a few feet from Bob on the right, George on the left, Dick ahead and Ash behind. Well, I could go on and on all day about the fighters and Task Force Assembly with Drew Field, etc. but here I stop. (Never thought I'd get around to writing about it but often think of you, did then and guess it's time you had a little description once again and I played with the pen trying to explain some little thing again.) You may think of this if you like as the start of every mission in England if we go there only then the state of Florida for 36 ships will seem quite spacious for a rendezvous, compared to say South England for 500 ships. Today we spent clearing the post, turning in equipment, checking records and sleeping, will start packing tomorrow I guess and then off to Savannah Friday with perhaps time for one more game of golf before then. By the way, this flying sounds swell but mostly it is quite cold, very tiring and often nerve racking as everything is an effort at altitude and very much cold rubber on your face, irritating the whiskers you didn't shave. It is better than mud and filth by far but still

far from grand and glorious and even so, slightly more work than pitching hay though I guess my endurance here would be better than at pitching hay for am getting quite used to this. The crew is 9 men now so Alley will stay here for another 10 weeks as I told you. He is now home on leave. I am not really sorry to lose him as I think the other nine of us know our jobs better than he and can take better care of ourselves. He was a funny little 25 year old guy or boy. Would you have the bank send me statements every month and I am starting a \$50 allotment to them effective April 1st. Till then my account will be quite negligible I fear as I'll keep all the money I have till I know where, what and when. Certainly have no idea what to expect and will probably leave the wrong things home and make many mistakes. Enclosing pictures taken in the plane. Not too sharp but rather a tough proposition to take them. Love, Hugh P.S. I'll send you any negatives I'm through with that I think might be any good and you can keep them for me or have copies made for Dave.

Phase Ten: Combat Crew Overseas Staging Area, Hunter Field, Savannah, Georgia and Camp Kilmer, New Jersey (February 1945) Transported on the Queen Elizabeth from New York City to Glasgow, Scotland, then to Royal Air Force (USAAF Station 130) Glatton, England.

Excerpt from Hugh's Autobiography

Our next step was Hunter Field, Savannah, Georgia, the staging area for processing for overseas. That was supposed to be a 2 – 3 week stay. We were scheduled to pick up a new plane and fly it over to England but the pilot of a crew in the previous group became ill and again – Arnold, crew #1 by the alphabet, we were moved up to take their place. We processed in 24 hours – I still have one black and one brown flying boot – they gave me all our train tickets and we were off to Camp Kilmer, NJ. When the time came to empty the camp out, some 20,000 men, we boarded trains, got on a ferry and crossed the Hudson at midnight to the stern of this huge ship. The name was painted over of course but I could barely see the indentation of the letters ELIZ. It was the Queen Elizabeth, the largest ship in the world. We were off to war.

RESTRICTED

HEADQUARTERS THIRD AIR FORCE STAGING WING
Office of the Commanding General

G-EPW-h

SPECIAL ORDERS)
NO. 45)

Hunter Field, Ga.
14 February 1945

E X T R A C T

* * *

21. Par 1, SO #41, this Hq ce pertaining to Shipment FT-111-CA is amended as fol: so much pertaining to Crew 27 is deleted.

22. Fol B-17 Combat Crew is asgd Shipment FT-111-CA and WP Camp Kilmer, N.J. immediately by rail so as to arrive 15 Feb 45 for TDY pending further dispatch to overseas destination thru New York FE, EDCMR: 15 Feb 45:

FT-111-CA-27	P	1091	2nd Lt HUGH H ARNOLD	0823232	In Charge
	CF	1051	2nd Lt FIERRE P ARPIN	0837100	
	N	1034	2nd Lt HUBERT M ANGE	01824359	
	EG	748	S/Sgt Robert G Rustin	14002455	
	ROG	757	Cpl John W Anderson	31447419	
	AG	612	Cpl Freeman C Clouse	39210567	
	AROG	611	Cpl L A Badger	35841731	
	AEG	611	Cpl Joseph W Brooks	34185401	
	TG	611	Cpl Andy Kuzenchak	33102279	

- a. See Annex "A" to this order.
- b. Pers will use APO 19047-CI.27 c/o PM New York, N.Y.
- c. Pers will be clothed and equipped in accordance with List C, Individ Clo and Equip, 15 Nov 43, as amended.
- d. Maj HOWARD C ARNOLD O172613 AC is Prov Gp Ldr for this shpmt.
- e. Monetary alws in lieu of rat (Sec II AR 35-4520) will be pd in adv a/r \$1.00 per meal per EM, each for 3 meals to Camp Kilmer, N.J.
- f. TOT. TDM 501-31 P 431-01, 02, 03, 07, 08 212/50425.
- g. Auth: Ltr Hq USAF 370.5 (24 Jan 45)PUB-R-AF-M subject: "Movement O, Shipment FT-111" 25 Jan 45.

* * *

BY ORDER OF LT COLONEL COWAN:

DAVID S CARTER
Capt, Air Corps,
Adjutant.



ERNESTINE P WILDER JR
Capt, Air Corps,
Asst Adjutant.

DISTRIBUTION: 3-Port Air O, New York FE, N.Y.
5-CO Camp Kilmer, N.J.
plus reg comb crew dist

Notification that Hugh's Crew #1 was going to replace the former crew to go overseas immediately. (from Hugh's files)

Saturday, February 10, 1945 Overseas Staging, Hunter Field, Savannah, Georgia

Dear folks, arrived here this noon after the usual lovely army train ride in Civil War Coaches. This is a very nice field, seems somewhat organized for a change and I have run into a great many fellows I've known along the way. This is quite the place, nothing but combat crews here for that short stay where they really outfit you up. Wonderful flying equipment made out of fabrics you've never even seen, knives, pistols, beautiful field glasses, etc., etc., each a lesson in compactness and practicality. We have talked before of codes and so forth, be simple to arrange if we wanted to but it is not too hard to understand why you shouldn't know if it is important to our security, if it is a well established old outfit I'll be able to tell you anyway where it is and if I don't, you can surmise it a rather new operation. My mail is under no scrutiny here. I now know how we are leaving the country but not when or where. I won't disclose how we are leaving though as it is just as well. Too many people aren't talking about how too many of the crews are leaving at present. I think we'll be here long enough to hear from you, if not they'll forward it quicker anyway. I sort of feel that our outfit may be going almost anywhere for some reason including I mean any place in the world, not that some aren't going to Europe as usual. They are having a large dance tonight at the club and the music is beginning to drown my thoughts out. Nice weather here, got a good tan at Avon, you wouldn't want to be here Mom, it is nice not to know what comes next for a change and I'm sure it will be interesting. Oh, by the way, I sent most of my clothes home from Avon, no indication of where we're going. I just can't take very much and kept the hardest items to replace with me. May end up with all the wrong clothes for the climate but it can't be helped. Was sorry to send Dave's game set home but I just couldn't keep a single spare item and perhaps you can send it to me later. Will probably be issuing many calls. Don't know just what I sent, hope it was nothing shocking. Don't worry, you'll hear from me by phone and more letters before we leave. Much love, Hugh P.S. for vocabulary this is a combat crew staging area. *(Hugh left for New Jersey 24 hours later!)*

February 17, 1945, Overseas Staging, Camp Kilmer, New Jersey,

Dear Mom, the old phrase "military security" is here to stay for some time now, we certify our own letters that they are OK and then some of them are censored later so I'll see what I can write about. We're somewhere on the East Coast at a P.O.E. (*Port of Embarkation*) waiting for the necessary means of transportation to parts unknown. That much you probably knew anyway. We're getting a chance to catch up on all the things we missed when we left Savannah. The story there was that most of the guys were there a couple of weeks with nothing much to do except 1st Pilots meet a couple of formations every day and then there'd be about 3 days of processing, drawing equipment, checking records supplies, etc. We were all set up on a shipment with all the guys from Avon and were getting lots of rest when they woke me up at noon Wednesday and told me to get the crew together. All we'd done was unpack but inside of 3 hours we had drawn about \$10,000 (*\$175,000 in 2024*) worth of flying equipment for the crew, packed everything for overseas shipment, gotten all our records straight etc., etc., and if you knew anything about the army that was quite a day's work. We got in town just in time to chase the train down the platform and get on, leaving everything we owned sitting on the platform, or in cleaning and laundry establishments behind us. Had a lot of fun on the train traveling in style instead of on a troop train. We got here empty handed and of course every place you went it took 30 minutes to explain who you were, why you were here, and how come this and that, but luckily I found our clothes last night and in 3 or 4 months we'll know these guys as well as the ones we just left. Have a lot of swell equipment. Beautiful new light weight fur flying clothes, watches, a forty five automatic of my own, combat boots and all the usual tons of flying stuff. I don't want to start explaining why this and that but things have changed and will be lots different since we finished training. I just hope we get over there and get a few breaks, get to see a lot of things, learn a lot about the world and then get back here in a hurry for about 30 days of just lying around home with all of you. There's really darn little to write about, was swell to talk to you, sorry I missed you Dad. Afraid I don't have any

dramatic emotions to report on the prospect of leaving the U.S. They get you used to feeling that most anything is routine, neither good or bad. Much love, Hugh

February 26, 1945 Camp Kilmer, New Jersey

Dear folks, you're probably surprised to get this as you no doubt had it figured out that by now we were half way to somewhere. Well, that is what comes of figuring things out. However, I guess the best way to keep from saying the wrong thing is not to say anything which is what makes it very dull to write letters. I've had two you wrote a long time ago to Avon and one you wrote to the APO address. The letter situation I fear will be rather uninspiring but all we can do about that is to keep writing. I wish you knew how much I wish I could have gotten home or seen you without your feeling the way you do about our not having done something about it, there wasn't anything we could do. No use writing about it but the more I see of the world, the more you and Dave and the family and the kind of trusting life one leads as a kid seem to be important. I've had a chance to do a little reading here. Maugham's "Razor's Edge," "Kings Row," "To Have or Have Not." Maybe I'll get a few concrete ideas and goals for myself out of the fighting but I suppose not. I can see where this playing around isn't exactly the most important thing in life, not that I haven't been doing a lot and probably shall continue to. Maybe what I'm looking for are some things that really are important like you have told me mother, you find yourself looking for now that the actual care of raising your children has been lessened somewhat and like everyone else in this world searches for I guess and never finds completely. It seems Uncle Fritz got himself oriented in life about as well as anybody ever succeeds at that. I find myself now wanting intelligent interesting people to talk to more than anything else, people that I automatically understand and vice versa, people I have learned to trust and know and then we go on from there. That was partly what I hated most in leaving Ash and several of the other boys at Savannah. Ash was taking Army's place a lot. We sort of digested life and our crews from Sarasota and Tampa to Miami and West Palm, on the golf course and beaches, to the bars and standing on midnight buses, at four A.M. and in the middle of the afternoon. Naturally that is one of the things I liked about Ange, the navigator, is his intelligence. It is funny what exact opposites we are though by nature. What I'm driving at is that you and I have always been able to meet on this basis, in fact, I guess that is where it all started for me and we both considered our talks rather choice affairs. I wish there were more chance for it now and feel we're both losing a heritage by missing them. Also compliments to you my dear, the family considers me grown up somewhat and I too, but there's an awful lot of moulding of my mind to be done ahead and I shouldn't mind having it exposed to your good sense, high ideals, and fineness a little more. I feel as though I'm bound to have some decency no matter what from knowing you, only I imagine the more I know you as I change and grow up the better man I'll be someday. One might attribute the crazy letters I write you as an attempt to hold on to more than mundane everyday communication with you and I'm convinced my letters are unorthodox after having to censor the crew's mail every day. Thank God no one I know censors mine. By the way, you know they don't censor yours in case you thought they did, just the letters we write. Don't think I have a guilty conscience or suddenly am organizing a reform movement. All of us, Army, Ash, Ange (*Hugh's Navigator*) etc., are probably judging by conventional, set standards, of a well patterned world leading lives to cause perhaps some raising of shocked eyebrows by church going dowagers. Dad said in Macon that he trusted my judgement, didn't worry about what I did because he had faith in me, God bless him for that, I never forgot and hope to live up to it. Often I don't write my thoughts but know I'm thanking you two, praising you to myself and mainly looking to you as the Rock of Ages, etc. Terrible weather, had some fun here. Aunt Phil probably wrote you. They were swell and I thought Barbie was awfully sweet only she has a few disillusion coming doesn't she? I don't know why I feel out of place when I see the Seims. I guess because I should know them better and we pretend I do, but I always feel halfway between the reservedness of a guest and the oneness of a family and confusedly am a poor representation of the Arnold family. Outside in the rain the loudspeaker is blaring at retreat the stirring strains of the Fighting Army Transportation Corps. Everything is glorious nowadays isn't it. Hell. I sent home my orders.

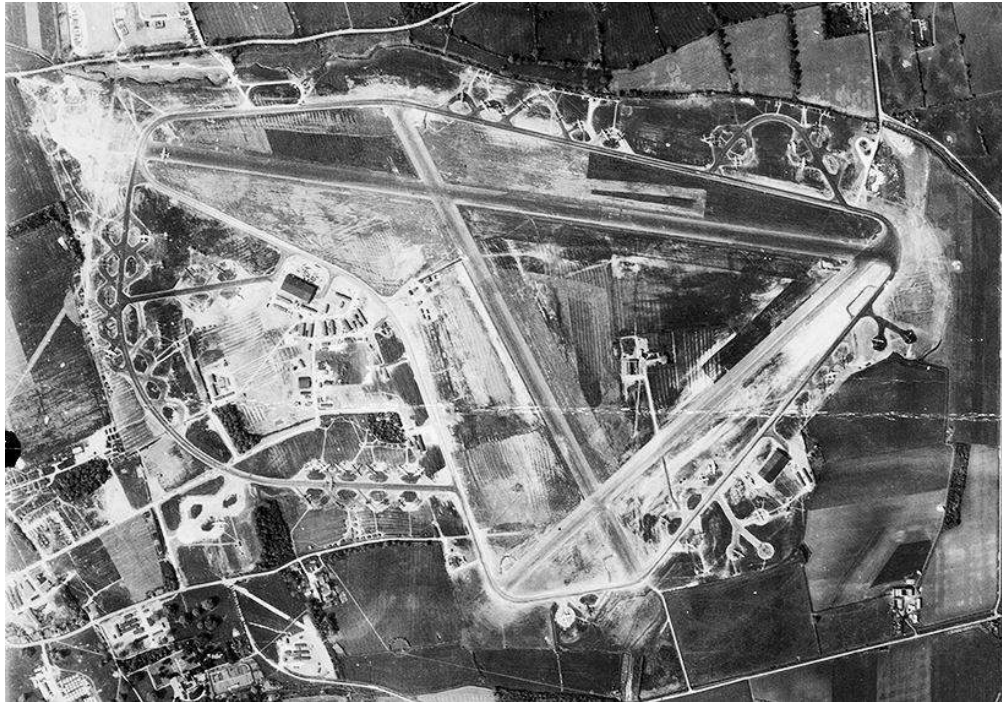
Save them as is, they come in handy when someone wants to charge you for something. Also sent home my watch. They issue us a very good hack watch here, (*a hack watch is a mechanical watch whose movement offers a mechanism for stopping and setting the seconds hand of the watch, then restarting the watch the instant the time setting matches the time displayed by a reference timepiece*) and I don't want to keep two of them. You see, being waterproof, I can't take my own watch up to altitude where we fly as the air pressure inside the case versus that outside would burst it. My watch has been swell and maybe there is someone in the family who could use it and care for it till I get back. Otherwise you might have it cleaned and by that time I'll probably be back anyway. The lighter has been my real, honest to goodness luxury. I bought it in Des Moines, spent everything I had for it and you'd go a long way to find one like it. I wish you'd give it to Jean and have her keep it for me and use it all the time when it is handy since there isn't any girl I like well enough to give it to cause frankly I'd have to like her a lot. Understand? If Jean still smokes I'd like her to like that lighter and not to care if it gets scratched or lost cause that's what I'd do with it. Know you'll have a swell time in Chicago. That's a wonderful deal having the 5 of you so close. Tell me all about how they are coming along and the job, etc. Don't be too disillusioned with the war time night clubs if they are too filled with drinking air corps. I know you're not going to worry as much as lots of people but are going to be taking good care of yourselves instead and having fun as much as possible and enjoying the woods and the spring and Pat and our home. Let's keep counting our blessings and don't either of you work too hard. Afraid my bank account will evaporate if I don't get busy. Did you tell them to send me monthly statements and expect \$50 a month starting April 1st for which I'd like to know they are getting. So long now and very much love, Hugh. P.S. Ma, I'm surprised at you. Obviously the squadron leader lowers his wheels and shoots the flares to identify himself among the scores of milling planes as the one to ease up to and take your position upon.

Sunday, March 5, 1945, Travelling on the British ship Queen Elizabeth from New York to England

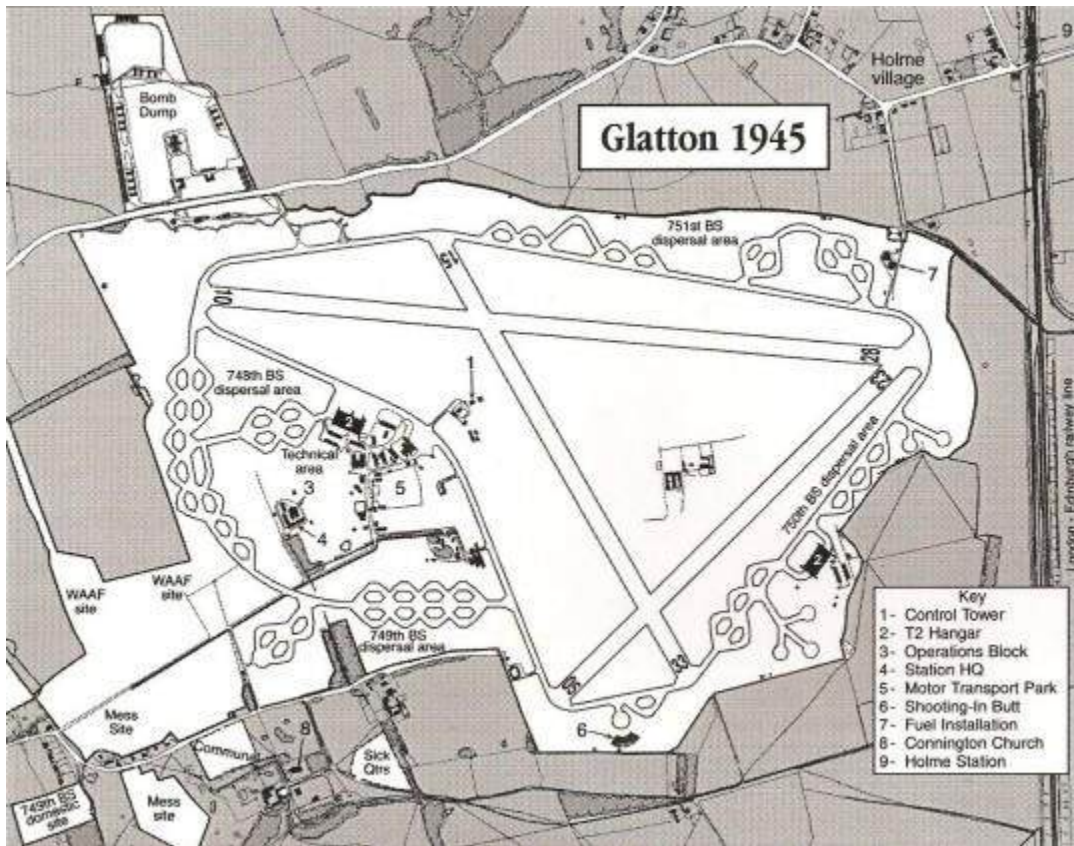
Dear folks, I'm afraid you're going to have to get used to not hearing much of anything interesting from me, but don't take it that I'm not interested enough to tell you. It makes letters rather boring to write and I haven't written more than a couple. However, I will mail this when I arrive somewhere in England and you can take it as a safe arrival message though I won't have a chance to add anything. We're sitting here playing Monopoly on the floor. I just cleaned the boys out with my big business policies. They are naturally quite ingenious about stacking us in here but it isn't too bad. Everything I start to say I have to stop and decide to leave out because officers are on their honor to censor their own mail – lower left hand corner of envelope - and so I can't leave it to the censor. Hope you had a fine time in Park Ridge. Did you get into Chicago to Vaughns to see our aunt? She and Rudd had a lot in common according to Aunt Phil when I saw her. Imagine Steve is getting cuter than ever now that he has started to walk. Grandma and Grandpa did themselves proud with that family there. It doesn't seem particularly momentous to be where we are. I guess that is because I have gotten too used to momentous things in the past two years, flying here and there and seeing the country and the elements from right up where you are part of them. Maybe that is a good description of flying. At night when you fly you are part of the dark, near clouds you are like part of the clouds and in a storm you are inside it and not perspective to it. However, as to flying, I shall probably forget how if I don't get some practice. Most guys are less enthusiastic about things than I am in my least enthusiastic moments and so none of us are particularly excited. In many ways it is like going from Moody to Sebring or the like. However it ought to be quite novel. I am well and in good shape all around. Certainly hope you are and that Dad isn't having any real financial difficulties. How is the Packard? Mother I often think of you during that first summer I was in Pentwater with Aunt Jean. I'll be back on a par with you when we get together with Miss Hasket and Rudd. This is most discouraging to write. Guess it won't be long before the squills and snow drops break through (*types of plants and flowers.*) Maybe I'll be back in time to see the zinnias. Much love, Hugh



Royal Air Force Station Glatton, England, Google Maps



Royal Air Force (USAAF Station 130) Glatton on May 9, 1944 (Wikipedia - Footnote #8)



Map of RAF (USAAF Station 130) Glatton, England in 1945 (Sawtry LH Society – Footnote #9)

The structures inside the triangle are actually a part of the Rose Court Farm. It continued to operate during the war despite being in the middle of the take off and landing runways.



Former Royal Air Force Station Glatton (USAAF Station 130) on January 19, 2025 from Google Maps. You can see the triangle shape of the runways. Rose Court Farm is still there.



This print titled “457 Bomb Group Station 130 Glatton” by artist Mel Brown was found in Hugh’s home.

Phase Eleven: B-17 Bombing Missions, USAAF Station 130, Glatton, England (March – May 1945)

Excerpt from Hugh’s Autobiography

Five days later we were sailing up the Clyde River into Glasgow after having sped alone across the Atlantic on a pre-arranged course, never holding the same heading for more than 60 seconds so that a U-boat could not put a torpedo into you. Can you imagine if they had – over 20,000 men in the icy North Atlantic Water.

I had always felt strongly about Winston Churchill and how England stood alone after the fall of France with the greatly outnumbered RAF probably deterring the expected German invasion. Our airbase was some 80 miles north of London, a tiny village called Glatton on the Great North Road. We flew practice missions during the early part of March and then the big day came for our first mission. At that time no one anticipated the war could end so soon. The Allies had not yet crossed the Rhine and it was anticipated the Germans would fight even harder to defend their homeland. Also, the flakbatteries were being moved back in greater concentration around the German cities and the major added “attraction” was the insertion into combat of the first jet fighter, the ME262, in early 1945. This plane was light years ahead of our fighters in speed and was very effective, seldom

failing to bring down a bomber when it attacked our formation and was practically impervious to our fighters because of its enormous speed advantage. We were constantly on the alert for their anticipated appearance to attack our group. Sure enough, on our 6th Mission, Oranienburg, a suburb of Berlin - there they were – an explosion of our 50 caliber machine guns, a flash by of these beautiful sleek twin engine planes with no propellers! Something few had ever seen before. One held outside my window as it peeled off. I have this vivid recollection etched in time although it must have been a fraction of a second. We were leading a 3 ship element in the high, most rear box (sort of tail end Charlie). Our bomb bay doors were frozen open so we could not quite keep up with the formation because of the drag. One of the 2 planes we were leading disappeared and was one of the 2 planes our group lost that day. The other plane in our 3 ship element had a huge hole shot out of its vertical stabilizer. Our plane was not damaged although the malfunction of our bomb bay doors was probably the cause of the loss of our wingman and damage to the other. The jets also shot down our group leader, Colonel Francis.

Each mission had special white knuckle memories. Our first mission the lead ship blew up in a great ball of fire in front of us – changing the black of a pre-dawn take off in pouring rain in zero visibility to a giant sun. Weather was always a problem to compound the problem created by German flak. On the one true milk run we flew – to the Girond peninsula outside Bordeaux, France where a large concentration of Germans had been by passed, we were flying below, and a few feet behind, the lead ship of our squadron. The first bombs always included a smoke marker to mark the course of the bomb drop. Our ship filled with smoke from the marker just as the plane took a mighty jolt. We were carrying a one ton bomb on each side with a 1000 pound bomb on top of it. The 2000 pound bomb on the right side did not release. The 1000 pound bomb, dropped on top of it. These two giant bombs were “live” in our bomb bay waiting to explode. The armorer, Clouse, and I went into the bomb bay with a walk around oxygen bottle and a pair of pliers. Eventually we lucked out and the big bomb was unhooked and dropped, releasing the other bomb. Had we not succeeded in releasing the bombs we would have had to bail out over the Channel.

Another harrowing few seconds occurred over Dresden when we had to make three repeated passes at the target. On the 3rd pass we collided with another bomb group. These massive formations could not scatter or alter course suddenly and very occasionally had to fly through each other. This was called by the crews “Shuffling the Deck.” It was about the worst thing that could happen as seventy two planes flew right through each other in a small air space at a closing speed of nearly 600 mph. Fortunately we lucked out and no one collided.

It was an awesome sight to fly over Germany. It seemed the whole country was on fire. One very clear day we were bombing Ingolstadt, a town in Southern Germany near Munich. I remember how beautiful the Alps looked to the South. Normally the only crew members who would see the bombs strike would be the lower ball turret gunner Badger and tail gunner Kuzemchek, but on this mission we circled so that we saw the bombs seemingly obliterate the town. I could see a train stopped in the country outside town. After the war, a friend from my home town, Galesburg,

whom I had grown up with – Dale Rowan and I were comparing war time experiences. He had been a gunner on a B-24 who was shot down and a prisoner. He described watching an air raid on a small town in southern Germany from a ditch outside the town being bombed where the train had been stopped to avoid the bombs. It was Ingolstadt and he was watching his friend from Galesburg participate in the bombing while I looked down on his train.

My friend Army who had been terminated as an instructor after the bad landing had just finished his tour as a B-24 co-pilot when I arrived in England. He came over to our airbase for several days to oversee my first mission. We all had bicycles which we rode around the countryside. I went to London on pass 3 or 4 times. It was a sight to behold with service men from every country imaginable. The blackout was very real but it was a time of stout hearts and good cheer.

March 9, 1945, "Somewhere in England" (He wasn't allowed to say where he was.)

Dear folks, All hale and hearty naturally dear ones. Seems to be quite a countryside from what I've seen of it. In fact, very beautiful, very neat, and pleasantly rural. So many things are such a disappointment that in my growing cynical way I had not dared to expect such a pleasant difference in the outward appearance of this country from America. Spring's first evidence – green grass enhances it all a good deal. This will be my first real spring in two years since it was negligible in the south, and I am thrilled by it. Feel quite fortunate in being here at this time considering the war and the season. "Ah to be in England, now that April is here" and all that sort of thing. Wish I were able to write as David did but it is impossible for me to mention any of the places we have been, however, we have seen much of interest. We are not assigned to a Group yet and won't be flying any missions for awhile. Love, Hugh

March 10, 1945, "England" (He wasn't allowed to say where he was, specifically.)

Dear folks, wanted to let you know before I forgot that I sent home a \$100 bond and \$100 in cash today to put in the bank so please let me know when it arrives. Also, I keep forgetting to ask Dad if I still have that insurance policy he took out for me with Ed Petit a long time ago. If so Pop, I wish you would please keep the \$100 and let me start paying for the insurance at least now while I have some money. I should have checked that a long time ago and found out at least what company it is and started paying the premiums. Was just thinking of the last I called you, don't believe I ever mentioned how sorry I was not to get to talk to you Pops. Went for a long walk last evening with Ange through the meadows and pastures. It was very pretty. So far we have not gotten off the post and haven't seen much of any English towns yet. By the way, his parents are H.L. Ange, Jamesville, N. Carolina is the address. O.N. Arpin, River Drive, Versailles, Connecticut would get Arpin's folks. I'll get the other boys addresses for you later. We probably won't fly any missions for quite a while yet and when we do, things should be comparatively smooth. Much love, Hugh

March 14, 1945, "England" (He wasn't allowed to say where he was, specifically.)

Dear folks, not much has happened but I suppose till you get used to my being here, you'll want to hear from me every few days – said he with a sly grin. Have been into several towns for a very few hours. The people and the towns don't compare too favorably with my first impressions of the countryside. The towns of course are very dull and drab as seem the people you meet there and the kids are an awful lot of beggars which you can't blame them for. Ate supper in town last night which was interesting. It is easy to imagine the privation of the English people I think, but it would be hard to put yourself in their place. I'm sorry we are so out of contact but I know your letters are on their way and it will be nice to get them. Since Avon Park I've received about five letters in all, mostly forwarded from Avon and none over here yet of course. Perhaps I'd better ask for a package so you can send one if you wish. Food is much appreciated as we can't get any except at meals. Please send some

chocolates as they'd keep the best I guess. Have plenty of film at present as we haven't had a chance to take pictures yet. Have met a great many fellows over here I've known at various places. Surprising number of good Moody and Sebring friends. Much love, Hugh

March 15, 1945, "England" (He wasn't allowed to say where he was, specifically but was assigned to the 457th Bomb Group, 750th Squadron at the Royal Air Force Station Glatton.)

Dear folks, as you can see, we now have our permanent address and have moved to our new home. It appears to be a good group and has a good record. It is nice to be able to unpack and settle down for a change. I haven't had a chance to get any clothes cleaned since we left Avon Park and have been wearing the same shirt and pants since we left the states so you can see it is nice to have a home. We live in Nissen huts if you know what they are – pre-fabricated steel. Had an interesting train ride down here. We will be training here with the group for quite a while as there is a lot for each of us to learn that couldn't be taught back in the states. The weather is warm and nice and we're damn lucky to be here now. They are pounding them hard. Everything rest assured, is and will be, well under control and I'll have some work to do for a change. Love, Hugh

March 16, 1945, 457th Bomb Group, 750th Squadron at USAAF Station 130, Glatton, England

Dear folks, These V-Mails don't have room for much but are handy when you're busy. I think airmail would be just as fast and I hope you'll be able to write your usual blue, pink and green specials Mom. Boy, everything is really rationed over here. I'll need some stationery which we can't get. Also, could you send cheese and crackers or canned fruit juice? We can't buy even a handkerchief in the way of clothing until we've been here 90 days which is a blow because they told us you get better deals on clothing over here and we can't wear flying jackets, etc., so we're sort of stuck on a few articles. However, it's nothing you could buy that I'm short. Just mentioned it as a comparison to the plenty in America. We get 3 candy bars, 1 pack of gum, 7 packs of cigarettes per week. 8 razor blades, tube shaving soap and toothpaste every month all of which is plenty. However, I'll ask for things often enough so that you can send what you want when you want and don't feel I'm begging for stuff, just want to supply the requests you need for mailing. The food is pretty good, enough butter and fresh eggs before missions. However, of course, no milk. Hope Dad has enough help on the farm this spring. Imagine the fields are nice and fresh and soggy now. Love, Hugh

March 22, 1945, 457th Bomb Group, 750th Squadron at USAAF Station 130, Glatton, England

Dear Pop, got my second letter today, one from Dave written March 12. Still going to school and getting things straightened out. Went for a long bike ride yesterday, sure is pretty country over here. Sometime when we get a two day pass we hope to bike down and see Cambridge and look the place over. We've been working learning some fuel lines, etc., out of a couple of old wrecked B-17's. We're planning on tapping a line and fixing up our hut with some running water. This is Arpin's brainchild and it will be quite an elegant hut if we fix that up. Please send me a tube of shaving cream sometime. Let me know how the farm is Dad and what you're doing out there this spring. Glad you got a new suit and had a lot of fun in Chicago. Afraid you'll get pretty tired of my letters. Useless to write about the interesting things. Mainly don't want any of you to worry about me and for you to know we're lucky to be here. Love, Hugh

Sunday, March 25, 1945, 457th Bomb Group, 750th Squadron at USAAF Station 130, Glatton, England

Dear folks, the big news in the ETO is obviously that your boy has bought himself a bike for 5 pounds. Ange and Arpin got new ones with pumps for 10 pounds so as we go riding along, they are handy guys to know as one or the other of my tires loses its air every 10 minutes. Cycling is about the best exercise we can get, lots of the guys sit around and never get any. It stays light till about 8:30 and we've been taking a new road each evening. They have such beautiful churches in every little town, beautiful old houses, green meadows, rolling hills and the

quaint little lanes – paved and wide enough for a buggy. We rode till late last night under the moon. When we start flying regularly we won't have much time for anything. That's why we're so eager now. The grind is about the roughest thing about the missions now. The boys come back early in the evening and lie down too tired to take off their clothes off and are awaked anywhere from 5 till 6 and off to fly another the next morning. Good for finishing in a hurry though. Haven't had any more mail – please send me a Tube of Squibbs toothpaste. Weather isn't bad, glad we didn't get over here in the winter. Much love, Hugh

Tuesday, March 27, 1945, 457th Bomb Group, 750th Squadron at USAAF Station 130, Glatton, England

Dear folks, got four letters from you tonight when I came in the barracks. Really welcome, funny, 3 were written late in February and one the middle of March. Dad's suit reminds me of Toronto. Glad things are going well at the farm. Guess what – this is tops, after deciding Army had already headed home, he shows up here Sunday night. I was tickled like a five year old at Christmas. He left this morning, I forgot about working and we just spent two days reliving all the old times. He sure is just the same old Army – looking really good. He finished his tour the same day I was assigned here to the Group – 30 missions in 8 months – you see I won't be bombing Germany every day by any means. Army had a good time over here and a lot of interesting experiences. It has been just a year since we parted at Moody and we'd sweated out getting together for a long time. You spoke of the Red Cross rest homes. They call that a "flak" leave and you get it once during a tour. I flew a boy down to a rest home near Southampton this afternoon and then we flew over to Bath to look for ruins which of course we didn't see but it was pretty down there. We landed at an R.A.F. fighter base and they had a couple of transport planes with G.I.'s just back from the front lines. They looked awfully envious of our nice shiny B-17. This is a pretty punk picture I'm sending. The colonel keeps a picture of all the pilots in his office and I had to stoop in front of the camera for him. The boys in my crew all got their sergeant ratings today. The way things look, they'll completely outrank me in a few more months. Army and I took some hasty pictures he's going to develop and send on. He'll probably be married next time I see him, sure is a good boy. Not too much to write about. We've got a nice fire in the stove and it is making me sleepy. Keep well and write. Love, Hugh



I found this on the 457th Bomb Group Association website of the Operations Room and found Hugh's name (see blue arrow)!



Here is the same photo without the arrow. You can see his name more clearly. Officially titled "Mission Board 457th" from the Roger Freeman Collection, acquired by the Imperial War Museum, UK in 2012. (Freeman was the historian for the 8th Air Force Historical Society and the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force named their research center after him. I have been in touch with their

collections person and they are going to make this document available in their center. This photo was taken in May of 1945. Hugh would have been there. I wonder if he knew Roger. (Footnote #10)

HEADQUARTERS 457TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) E-A-5
Office of the Operations Officer
AAF STATION 130

PILOT'S PRE FLIGHT CHECK LIST

Arnold

Date Apr. 12

(To be checked, initialed,
and submitted to S-2 after
interrogation after mission.)

I. EQUIPMENT:

A. All Crew Members.

1. Electric Suit Complete:

(a) Gloves. All O.K. ✓

(b) Shoes. or

(c) Trousers. Exceptions _____

(d) Jacket

(e) Extension Cord.

2. Mae West.

3. Parachute, incl. First Aid Kit.

4. Flak Suit.
(Note: Equipment shown in "A" through "D" is to be worn
over the body in order named.)

5. Helmet with Earphones.

6. Oxygen Mask.

7. Escape Equipment:

(a) Escape Kit.

(b) O.D. Trousers and Shirt.

(c) Foreign Phrase Pamphlets.

(d) G.I. Shoes. All O.K. ✓

(e) Passport Photos. or

(f) Razor. Exceptions _____

(g) Caudrums for urination.

8. No billfolds or personal papers.

9. No pistols, or trench knives.

B. Special Equipment.

1. Pilot.

(a) Pilot's flimsy.

(b) Binoculars.

(c) Goggles. (optional)

2. Navigator.

(a) Navigator's Flimsy. (incl. Beacon Flimsy.)

(b) Astro Compass.

(c) Log Forms and cover.

(d) Maps and charts. All O.K. ✓

(e) Forms 218.

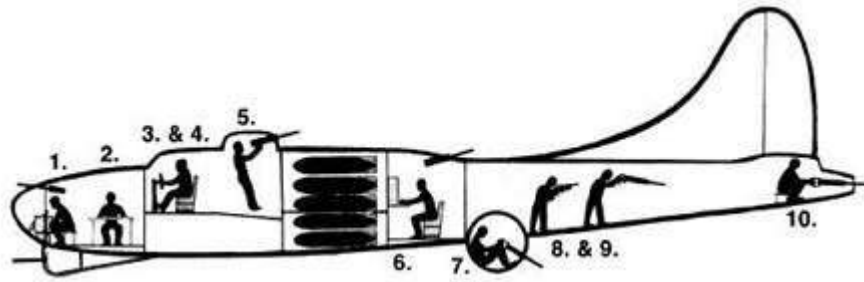
(f) Computer. or

(g) Dividers. Exceptions _____

(h) Pencils and erasers. Exceptions _____

(Note: At night, add flashlight, air navigation tables,
air almanac, and sextant.)

- 1 -

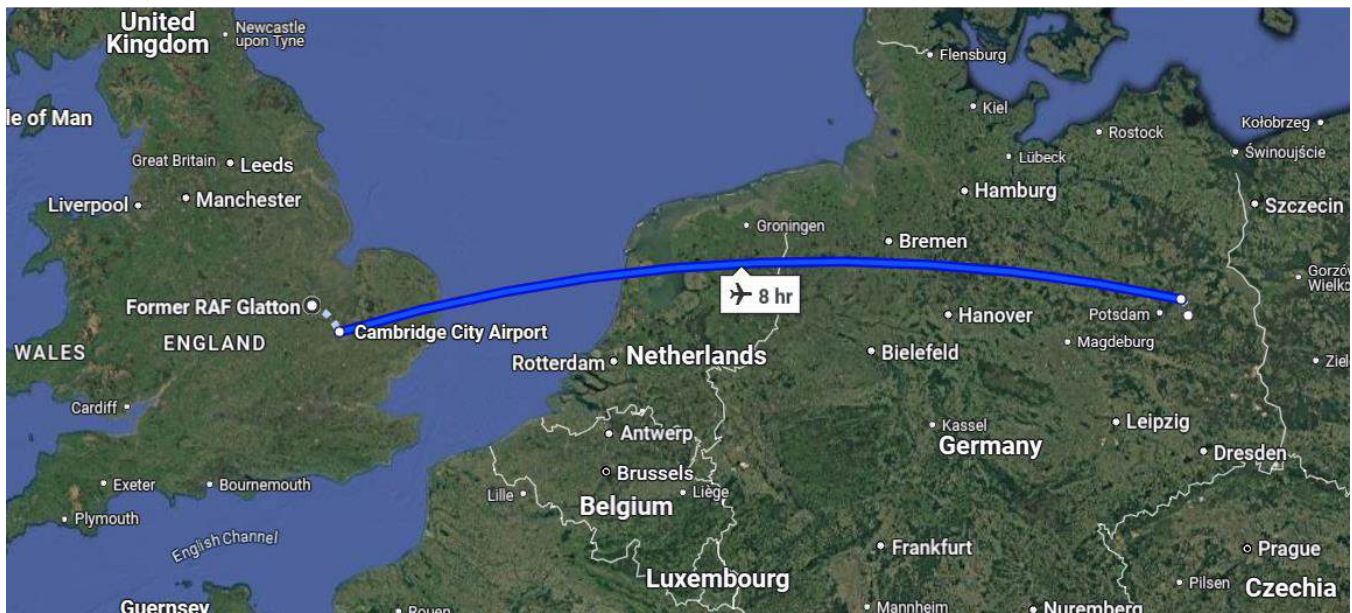


B-17 crew positions

1. Bombardier	6. Radio Operator/Gunner
2. Navigator	7. Ball Turret Gunner
3. Pilot	8. Right Waist Gunner
4. Co-Pilot	9. Left Waist Gunner
5. Top Turret Gunner/Engineer	10. Tail Gunner

Pilot's Pre-Flight Checklist (Footnote #11)

(Hugh flew his first mission on Wednesday, March 28, 1945. We have his original mission journals and will share them below)



Google Maps

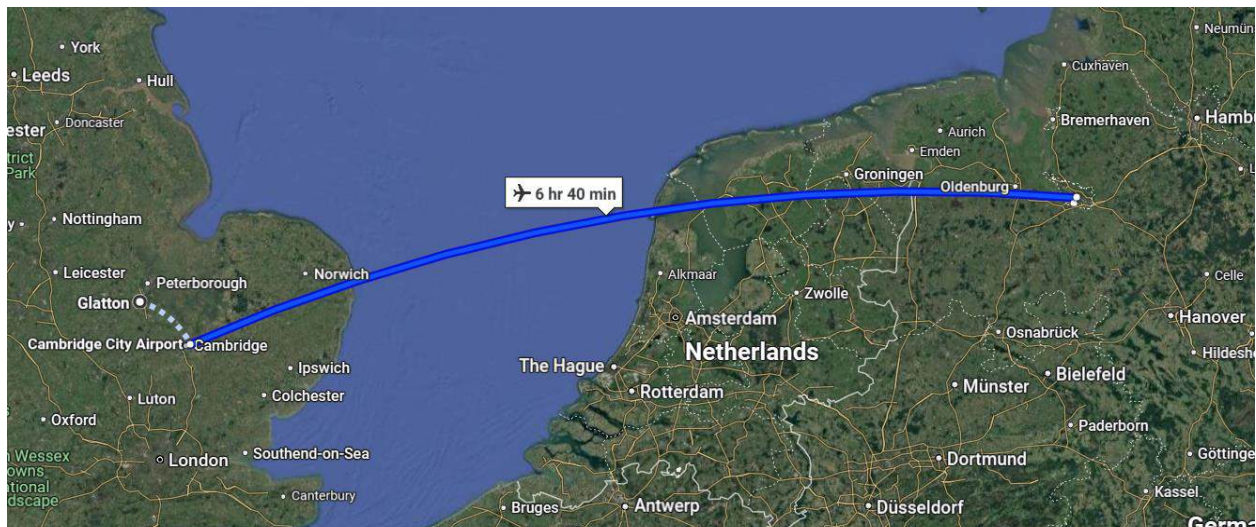
1st Attempt, March 28th, Berlin

Snafu from start. Instruments from 800' to 20,000'. Formation rendezvous in France. G Box (*known as Gee Box, which was a radio navigation system used by the Royal Air Force*) burned up right after takeoff and radio compass interference excessive. We try to D.R. (*Dead Reckoning Navigation - Distance =*

Speed x Time) to France, end up by ourselves completely lost near the front lines. Chase about 15 groups (of B-17's) but never see ours. Finally head back and wander over Belgium, France, England, the Channel and God knows what. Use Air Sea Rescue and "Darky" (*British backup homing system: the pilot could be talked back to his home base by HF voice*) radio to get back here after four hours in the soup.

Thursday, March 29, 1945, 457th Bomb Group, 750th Squadron at the Royal Air Force Station Glatton, England

Dear folks, the mail has been coming through better now thanks to you, I knew you were writing of course, but I wanted to compare how long it took. Naturally we're in the 8th Air Force, they're the ones who've always done our type of bombing – the heavies. When you get my early letter from the boat I want to see if you're as smart as Aunt Phil was, if not, ask her about Miss Hasket. How is Jim, you had lunch with him and didn't tell me a thing about him. Also, heard from Ginny that Bob Walton was home. The weather hastened back to its usual state, ask any yank who've been over here, one of their most flowing gripes, which has put a stop to even our bike rides temporarily. Also we've been pretty busy. Don't feel as though I'm hiding things due to censorship. Now that we're in a permanent outfit I can say pretty much about the set up. There is just not too much to tell. They seem to have the Germans on their knees which is fine. I like it over here okay and all I'm sweating out is getting back home as soon as possible which is a selfish attitude considering the boys over here a couple of years. I'm kidding about the selfish part – (4 words crossed out) take what you can get. Love, Hugh

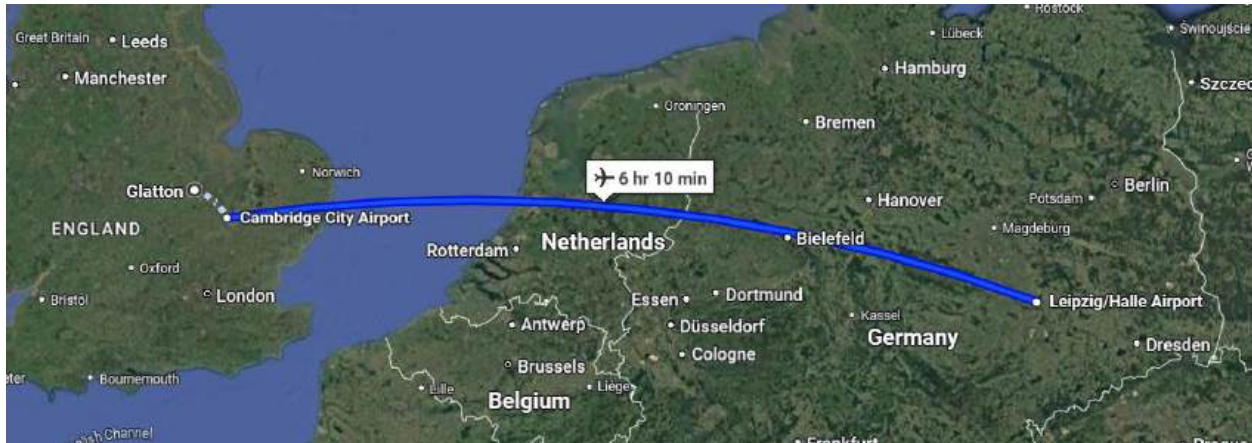


Google Maps

1st Kill, March 30th, Bremen

Soupy again. Forts (*the B-17 was called The Flying Fortress*) all over the sky. Saw the flak (*German ground based anti-aircraft cannons which shoot bombs into the air. They then explode, thus damaging planes with the shrapnel and jagged metal.*) miles away and thought "we've had it." When the little puffs showed up between the nearest ship and us, a puff out here and a puff out there and a puff by the wing and a puff right beside me; well, it wasn't quite like I'd planned. I could hear it and feel it – only thing was, it wasn't as rough as I'd figured – average according to the veterans. We picked up about 15 holes, had to crank the doors shut in the middle of it. Hit the target at 304 ground speed, came home about 120. 6000 lbs. Let down through the soup coming home and iced up our windshield like a brick wall in about 30 seconds. Broke out and thawed out about 2000' without running into

anybody. This isn't like flying in the states. Hope it puts hair on my chest. We lost 1 crew. 5 hours on oxygen. Total 7:20 hours flying.



Google Maps

Number 2, March 31, Halle

After a meeting last night and no supper; back in the hut by 10:30. I spent two hours in the sack to be wakened at 1:30 A.M. We staggered down and were briefed for Meresburg – 400 guns and jets. Really sweated it out after the show 80 guns made at Bremen. However it was P.F.F. (*Pathfinder Force, which were crews who used flares to light up the targets*) so we hit the secondary – Halle. Flak was light and inaccurate, surprised me no end. Kuzumchek, the tail gunner, had a big piece come through and spend itself on his seat. Splinters all around him and a couple of small ones in the elevators. My seat is sure sore after spending 16 of the last 24 hours in the pilot's seat. Came back over the front lines and saw the Rhine, not a bridge standing for miles. Signs of the big push here and there below us. Used 2000 gallons to the target, 500 coming back. Formed in the dark. That forming is as bad as anything so far. 9:00 hours flying.



Google Maps

4th Try, April 2, Denmark

Briefed – jets had moved up into Denmark and we were going after them at medium altitude. Target had to be visual so for once we were going to see something, jets also and everybody was all hepped up. Hit the Danish coast and there was a solid undercast so the whole 8th brought their bombs home. Wreck on the runway when we got home so we circled the buncher (*a ground based radio transmitter that guides planes to their airfields*) for 90 minutes. 38/150 lbs. G.P. (*General Purpose*) Demolitions. Very beautiful today. Groups at all levels on top of each other. We were on the bottom right off the deck with about 100 Forts in perfect formation above us. Wished I'd brought my camera. 7:20 hours wasted.

Number 5, April 3, Denmark

Up at 3 A.M. – all set to go at 6:30. Delay. Back to the barracks, then called out to the planes and then back to the barracks again. Re-briefed at 10:45. All set to go at 12:30 and mission scrubbed.



Google Maps

3rd Mission, April 4, Roteburg

Out after the jets again. Intruders were ahead of us but we didn't see any. Medium altitude. We went in up in Denmark and then came down towards Hamburg. Contrails and all the groups overrunning each other and in each other's prop wash because of the fighters. Made 4 passes at the target and had to crank the bombay doors shut each time but couldn't stay lined up over the target because of the clouds. Were at 14,000' with groups going every direction trying to hit the target. Sweated gas and feathering #2 when she wouldn't settle down. (*Feathering the blades of a propeller means to increase their angle of pitch by turning the blades to be parallel to the airflow. This minimizes drag from a stopped propeller following an engine failure in flight.*) Came home south of Bremen and across Zuiderzee (*shallow bay in the North Sea in northwest Netherlands.*) Brought bombs back but got shot at a little so I guess we finally get credit for it. 9:00 Hours.



Google Maps

4th Mission, April 5, Ingolstadt

Pouring rain this morning when we went out to the planes. Arpin remarked that someone would get killed on takeoff if the mission wasn't scrubbed. Sure enough, we were sitting there waiting to taxi out with the rain beating on the canopy. The first ship started down the runway, disappeared in the murk and then the whole black and raining west exploded in a ball of fire. No noise due to our engines, just this huge mass of orange flame from 2800 gallons of gasoline, 4000 lbs. of high explosives and 1500 lbs. of incendiaries went poof. We flew in the soup over to Paris and assembled over the town. Saw the Eiffel Tower, Île de Paris (*Cité*), etc. Went to Manheim and then over to the Danube almost to Munich. Saw the Bavarian Alps as clear as my hand over 60 miles away. Snowcapped and rugged rising right out of the plains. We made two passes at this ordinance depot and hit it square. We were at 15,000' visual and I got a chance to see what bombs do. No flak and didn't see any fighters. Coming home we went through a front, 1 1/2 hours of snow, sleet and ice, flying on the fleeting glimpses of the next ship, like flying on a ghost. Guess that was the worst hour and a half I ever spent. When we broke out, we let down over Belgium. Every 5-acre field had a stick of at least 10 bombs in it. Passed over Brussels and came out over Calais. Big concrete gun emplacements just blasted to bits. Beaches still covered with barbed wire, White Cliffs of Dover shining in the distance. Came home over London. Got a couple of good looks at the Moselle River. Really sweated the gas today and just about landed in France. Used 1 gallon coming home for every 6 we used going over. Time 10:30 Hours – long time, 4.5 hours actual instruments.

April 6, 1945, 457th Bomb Group, 750th Squadron at USAAF Station 130, Glatton, England

Dear Mom, received the neighborhood letter yesterday. It certainly was nice and homey to hear from all of them. Please thank them and tell them how much I enjoyed hearing from all of them. Got two letters from you today with the very cute picture of Steve, which I put on the wall beside my ties. I'm glad the spring is so pretty and you were out in the woods seeing it – I know it is a nice time of the year. The squill looked very familiar. I

might very well be with you in mind when you are enjoying the spring. Quite a surprising thing today. I was washing my hands at the club and when I turned around there was Bob McKay who had just been assigned to this group. Strange how he followed a month behind from Sebring, Avon, Savannah, P.O.E, the same boat and ended up here. We didn't fly today for the first time in about a week and lots of little things that need doing accumulate for these days when we aren't flying. Haven't been in town, seen a show or done a thing for a couple of weeks. Been falling asleep before supper and not waking up till they roll us out in the morning most any time after 2 A.M. Expect to get a two day pass tomorrow and get down to see London and buy some clothes. I haven't seen Bob Walton for a long time but his letters certainly are indicative of what you said and they make me feel sort of funny and always did like getting to be an old man. Certainly he is terribly enthusiastic mainly about all his dates, the big parties, his car, and the basketball he's playing ever since he's been in the army and then speaks lightly of how lucky I was to beat him overseas as between leaves he's been trying so hard to get over lately. It took me a long time and a lot of work to get here. Imagine however, all this is because he makes an effort to have fun, has the chance and is enjoying the most freedom he's ever had, which is fine and good and I'm inclined to be too serious anyway. Dick was right about how lucky I am and I'm sure you realize that anyway. It's not so grand that I hope to stay over here a long time as some of the neighbors hoped but it's many times better than any place else next to the states. Guess I told you this is far from an English estate and most of the land that isn't buildings, roads, runways or hangers is plowed and what's left of somebody's farm. I saw Paris yesterday, been over it above the clouds before but yesterday I saw the Seine, Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame, etc., for a few fleeting moments. Usually can't fly over London but came home over there yesterday, a lot of smoke but you could see the Thames and ships and the general city. Lots of the boys here when we arrived finished and going home now. Sure enjoy all your letters. Much love, Hugh



B-17 Releasing Bombs (Wikipedia-Footer #12)

5th Mission, April 7, Uelzen (east of Bremen)

Supposed to go on pass today so stayed up most of the night but they routed me out to fly another guy's crew who was sick. Six hour delay so we headed for northern Germany around 10. A.M. Lead in element and it was a good crew. No flak and no fighters hit us, but they really hit the rest of the 8th pretty hard. Our squadron hit a small marshaling yards visual. Lower bomb man saw our bombs hit and said ours and the lead ship really tore up the rail yards but the rest of the boys toggled late and wiped that poor little town off the map. No wonder the German civilians want to tear the Air Corps apart I guess. About five hours later I was sitting in the rail yards at Peterborough (*Hugh's air base*) cleaned up heading for London. Funny war when you think that a few hours before a similar little rail yard was one minute whole and the next minute a mass of broken rails and crushed freight cars. The

Germans are really having it now, not long ago those mighty German warriors were probably sitting there on their way home and now their whole country is being blasted. Keep waiting for that Luftwaffe to hit our groups, they've been hitting somebody everyday but not us yet. I was just thinking, our group alone dropped 25% as many bombs on this one little town today as were dropped on London in one day. They are paying for it now. Total 7 hours, 55 minutes.

Monday, April 9, 1945, 457th Bomb Group, 750th Squadron at USAAF Station 130, Glatton, England

Dear folks, I got two letters from you today, Mom written late in February to your son overseas who was sitting in the P.O.E. If you feel as though some of my letters are unresponsive to what you've written it is because I'm still just getting many of your early letters. Ted Austin was a swell guy and I hope that was a good picture. He said he'd write when it looked as though I wouldn't get to write after the rush of leaving Savannah. Just got back from two days in London. Missed most of one day as I had to fly another crew Saturday while all my boys were out on pass. Ruth Gebhart happened to be in London and thought she saw me so checked the Red Cross Clubs and got a note to me. It turned out she hadn't seen me but anyway we got together this afternoon and had a good long talk. It was quite nice to see her, she's looking fine and really seeing a lot over here. What I mean, she knows what's going on over here which no one back in the states can know. Funny how she's so much in the army. Went to Westminster Abbey for church Sunday and saw some of that area but that was about all the sightseeing I got in as I arrived in London late Saturday night and was busy today. Really enjoyed sleeping between those clean sheets. Met an awful lot of guys I've known down in London. Some of the guys we left in Savannah and fellows we came over on the boat with and all around. Sat across from a man who was in the Ag Dept at U. of Illinois who knew your Dad – Mr. Case – this was at the officer's mess in the Grosvenor House. Did I tell you that Bob McKay is in this group. I bought a beautiful battle jacket in London. Have to bring it home and show it to you soon. A bunch more of the boys in the hut finished their tour today. We're about the only crew in here that's flying now and all those boys just sit around and talk about going home all night. I have to go to bed and get some sleep now. Afraid I'm getting pretty bad with my letters. Much love, Hugh. P.S. Got a big laugh out of the last performances of the old "Laughing Lafayette."



Google Maps

6th Mission, April 10, Berlin

Today was Oranienburg, a suburb of Big B (*Berlin*). A lot happened in a very short time and I'll try and figure what happened. We've been expecting the G.A.F. (*German Air Force*) every day and they've been there but never hit us since I got here, so the boys sit up there and call out the P-51's all over the sky and wait for the jets to come out of the contrails, clouds, smoke, or anywhere. Today the bomb run was a mass of planes hitting targets all over the area, smoke markers, those huge towering columns of smoke 5 miles high everywhere. We went down the run, very visual and could see the fires and bombs bursting from previous groups. Arpin (*Hugh's Co-Pilot*) was flying, we'd turned off the target and I was trying to see the bombs hit and a Fort that was going down when without a warning, every gun in the ship except in the nose opened up. That's quite a sensation when you know that at last the jets have hit and when we've never fired the guns before over here. I listened and grabbed the controls to help Arpin when I saw beside me just breaking off, a beautiful Me 262 shining silver going about 600 mph. We were flying tail end Charlie in the high box and of the three of us back there, one of our boys blew up, one ship got his rudder shot off and we weren't even scratched. Three jets came in abreast in that one pass at the 36 ships in our Group and it just so happened that it was we three they were aiming at. We were darn lucky and my boys did a good job. Brooks was tickled pink to get to fire his guns and he really let go, though secretly admitted he never saw the plane. Kuzumchek and Badger looked him in the eye and swapped lead with him and it was a good feeling to hear those boys work. That 15 seconds was what they were trained 6 months for. We lost our Group Lead today, also with Colonel Francis, saw a B-24 blow up and the boys saw a couple of Forts get it. Lost two ships from our 36. By the way they didn't expect us back today and several people asked if I'd heard any more about Lt. Arnold's crew, we sure didn't realize it at the time though. Time 8:45 Hours



"Escort Fury" (Classic Aviation and War Art, LLC – Footnote #13)

A World War II artist, Robert Bailey depicted the scene Hugh was in and named it "Escort Fury." My husband Dan and I bought a print for my dad. The following is a description on the website. "On April 10th 1945, Oberleutnant Walter Schuck boldly attacked a B-17 formation southeast of Berlin and was in turn shot down by fighter escort pilot Lieutenant Joseph A. Peterburs of the 20th Fighter Group's 55th

Fighter Squadron. In "ESCORT FURY" Oberleutnant Schuck has ejected the canopy of his Me262 and, fighting the fierce slipstream, is levering himself up prior to parachuting away from his stricken aircraft. Schuck sprained both of his ankles and was still recovering when the war ended. Lieutenant Peterburs was also shot down this day and taken prisoner, but escaped and fought with the Russians until the end of the war."



Schuck and Peterburs, once enemies, met in 2005 and became close friends. (ARGunners Magazine – Footnote #14)



Google Maps

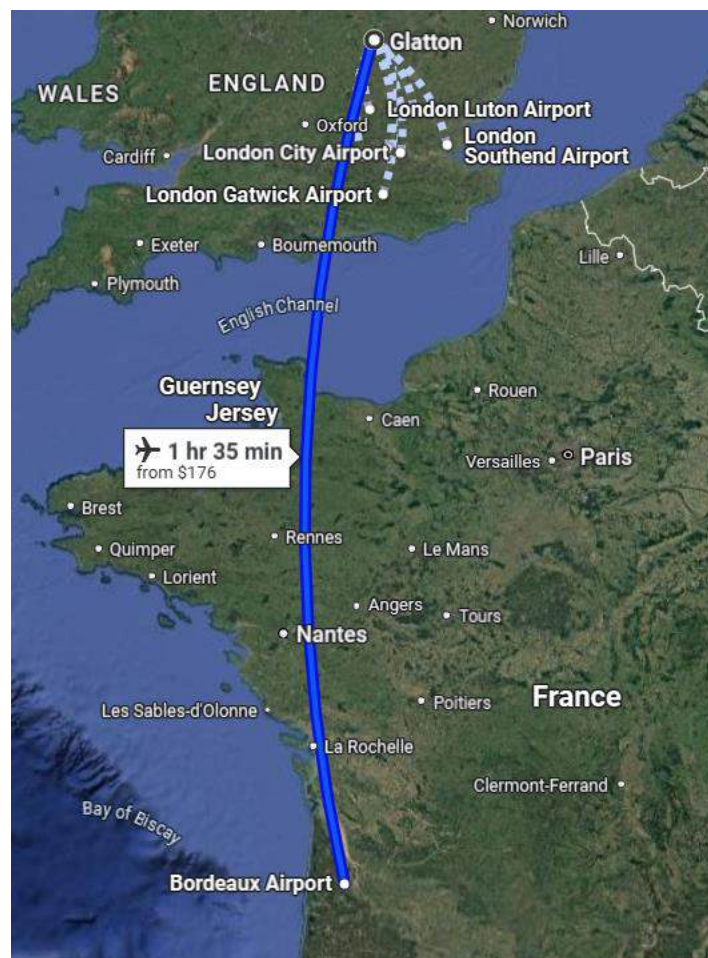
7th Mission, April 11, Munich

Assembled the group 90 miles east of Paris. Could see for miles today over Germany, fires everywhere. We came in on the target from the south and were right over the Alps down there. They certainly are beautiful and rugged. Were over Lake Constance. We bombed an oil works just out of town from 27,000' – highest I've been. There was a lot of flak everywhere except right on us and we went weaving in and out of it coming off the target. The whole 8th was down there hitting every town in that area of Germany. Everywhere you looked there was a group of ships bombing something. Saw my first bombs hit today, as we were going home a Group hit right in front of my left wing. Watched the smoke marker all the way down and it was beautiful. Every inch of the marshaling yards hit and not a bomb wasted and smashed the bridge at one end. Then with our usual efficiency, 3 more groups came in not so accurate and blew the town up. First group didn't harm a house. Almost seven hours on oxygen.
8:40 Hours

Thursday, April 12, 1945, 457th Bomb Group, 750th Squadron at USAAF Station 130, Glatton, England

Dear folks, things are more apropos for me to write a more interesting letter because – I got some sleep last night, have some free time, and just received 2 letters from Mom, 1 from Dad and 1 from Aunt Fan. Yes I have been getting your letters – all date some 6 weeks old, some 1 week – very, very much appreciated. Glad to hear you are singing in the choir now again Dad, it used to seem a shame for you to stand in the congregation and sometimes hardly sing at all. Hello Aunt Fan, very glad to get your letters. I'm glad you had such a fine trip to California. All the talk of spring sounds very good – except of course the work which always somehow makes me involuntarily shudder. We had a few days resembling early spring several weeks ago but since then it has been pretty cold rather like early March. However today is warm and sunny and one appreciates the fact that the leaves have been coming out and I guess there are flowers around somewhere. It has been green all along but without that spring atmosphere. Mother, your efforts seem very worthy to me. The world needs lots of house cleaning and it will start, a long and better job before long in this part of the world. However I'm afraid there will be a lot of scars left. You speak of my getting to see the whole finishing process occur. I feel as though I am seeing a lot of it. No one can see more than his own very limited scope, the infantry sees clearly but much less broadly. I see nothing clearly but I do see endless miles of bombed countryside, fires stretching from one end of Germany to another. I feel the advance in different ways, longer missions, enemy territory at one day in one place and the next time we come back we go 50 miles further over friendly troops. That's a big consideration knowing just when and where to go to find Patton in case of trouble. I have written much about what I've been doing because I want you to realize that it goes on and takes place with no ill results and that it is a case of the work involved putting in the missions one by one and there is no uncertainty or dread of anything but a lot of work. Now as I write and tell you a little about it, realize that it is nothing but a very broad experience, something I can tuck under my belt and know I've lived which is unusual only in the fact, thank God, that war doesn't come every five years. I have been on and am credited now with seven missions and have been over there a few other times that didn't count. We've been operational since the latter part of March. I frankly haven't even seen my bike in a week and the reason I haven't seen much of spring is that we're rarely around here during the day. With the preparation and aftermath, a mission usually occupies from about 3 A.M. till 6 P.M. Today I got up at three A.M. went through the usual process and was all set to go about seven A.M. when the mission was scrubbed – cancelled – so we came back and hit the lovely sack till noon when we got up leisurely and showered and shaved. When I first got here I clamored for tooth paste, shaving cream, etc. Now I know I have plenty because I don't find time to use that stuff except every 3 or 4 days. It's a good deal because that's the way you finish up and get home in a hurry because I don't share other's sentiments about staying over here a long time as I said before. Would like to see more of the country close at hand but the army isn't too good a place. You can't go far in two days and every 2 or 3 weeks isn't too often – you're usually looking for a

good bed. We've seen Berlin, Bremen, parts of Denmark and quite a bit of central Germany and the Munich area. Usually lower and can see more of northern France and the Belgium area. Those Alps down there are beautiful and rugged but everything is quite remote. Believe me when I say that all I worry about and matters of most concern are how long the mission is and whether I had enough sleep the night before and those certainly aren't very dangerous matters. So you worry about my getting enough baths and lots of sleep and you'll cover the situation pretty thoroughly. I feel so spry today I might even dash off into an English town ce soir (*tonight in French.*) Afraid I shan't digest a vast sum of reading matter over here – would like to though. I hope you feel you know what I'm doing now and are sufficiently acquainted with the situation. Think of it all primarily as quite routine. Bless and love the spring flowers and birds, mighty nice. Much love, Hugh. P.S. I was on my first mission and roughest, they shot at us a little that day, when you wrote in the style of Gertrude Stein, probably at the same time you were writing. I often think of you starting the day with a cup of coffee and looking out the dining room window at the garden at about the same time as we are crossing the lines into Germany or hitting the German coast if we're up further north. Felt right there with you on your birthday as we clicked off the miles high up in the sky.



Google Maps

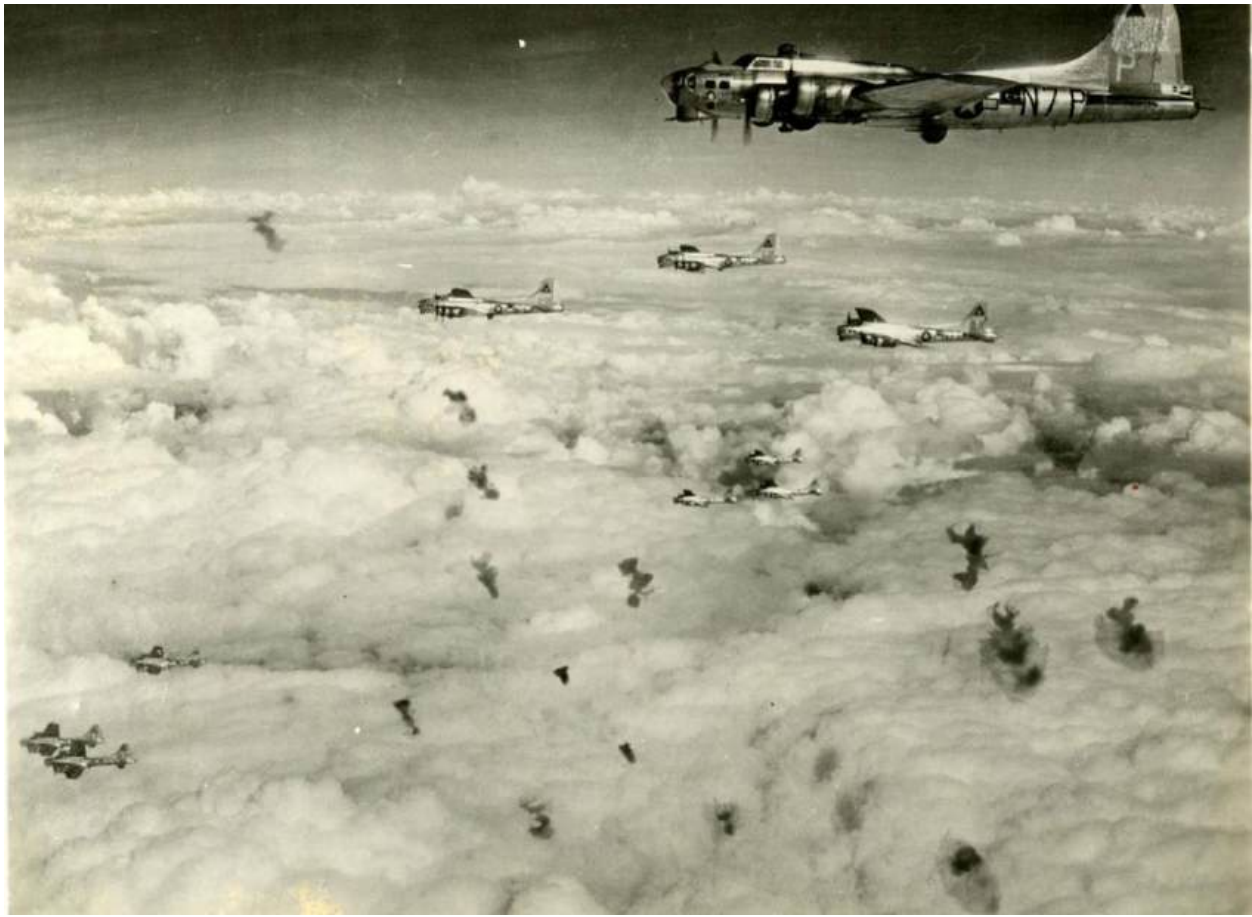
8th Mission, April 14th, Bordeaux, France

Woke us up for this one at 1:30 A.M. First ship had a leaking gas tank with gas all through the wing so we decided finally to take another ship. Missed a rough night assembly thank God, caught the formation and flew down to Felixstowe, crossed the Channel and down through France at a nice comfortable low altitude past Rouen, down to Lyons where we started climbing to altitude. Out over

the ocean and then into the target from the southwest, bombs away and start letting down for home. Really nice, no flak or fighters or German Civilians waiting for you. Home past Cannes, Nantes, Bayeaux and the invasion beaches. Ships used as breakwaters and bombed invasion airstrips and littered beaches right there below. Half mile visibility back at the base and made two passes at the field before we found the runway and came in just about on top of each other the third time. Really got a good look at France today. 7 hours, 50 minutes.

9th Mission, April 15, Bordeaux, Girond, River Mouth, German Positions

The Group formed East of Paris at 5,000'. Flew over there alone giving a better view of the early morning countryside. After forming we came over the heart of Paris in division formation – about 500 Forts – could see it all – Arc De Triomphe, the palace and grounds by the river, Place de l'Étoile, etc. Got down east of Bordeaux at the I.P. (*Initial Point*) and we had to circle for an hour while the scouting force decided which target we were to hit. Were carrying two one-ton bombs and two 1000 pounders. Easy target of course like yesterday, when we dropped, the two on the left side went out and the 1000 pounder on the right released, but the big baby got stuck and the 1,000 pound job fell on top of it and jammed. At the same time we flew through a smoke marker and the ship filled with smoke so it was pretty tense for a while with two live bombs in the bomb bay. Clouse and Rustin got back in the open bomb bay without a mask and finally tripped the big baby and she fell in the ocean. I'd pulled the salvo switch so we couldn't crank the doors shut and they worked there in the bomb bay about an hour and finally got them up. We came home about the same way as yesterday, a pretty ride. 9 hours.



Flak surrounding B-17 Planes, (National WWII Museum – Footnote #15)



Google Maps

10th Mission, April 16, Regensburg

Third in three days but it was a nice one. Good weather and the bombs really blasted the heart of the city. There was a wall of very unhappy looking flak ahead of us, looked like a brick wall right down the

bomb run, but for some strange reason, war is a funny thing, it stopped just as we got there and started up right behind us. They'd have shot us up fine I'm afraid if it hadn't been for that. Seemed like most of Germany was on fire again. Fine highways down there but every bridge blasted. 8:10 hours.



Google Maps

11 Mission, April 17th, Dresden

Four in four days and we're getting a little dopey, but it is good to see the missions start to build up. Taking pills now to stay awake. Flying over the Channel today we saw a tanker burning very fiercely. Smoke visible for 20 or 30 miles. It was the same boat we saw yesterday still burning. We flew across Belgium and Germany and went to Freiburg for the I.P. (*Initial Point*) and went into the target in thick contrails. The flak was quite accurate but not intense, burst every now and then quite close, fascinating black things. Just as we got over the target the clouds closed in below us so we shut the bomb bays and went back to the I.P. and came back in again. Same story, nice accurate flak. This time we were at 19,000' and sort of like clay pigeons but they didn't hit us close enough. Clouds got in the way again so up come the bomb bays and back for another run. By this time we were getting pretty mad and I was feeling a little naked with no flak suit which Rustin lost. Third time down the flak was getting awfully familiar but we dropped our bombs and headed for home after an hour in the target area. Too mad and tired to appreciate the scenery on the way home. Germans were playing American jive on the radio for us coming back. 10 hours.

April 18, 1945, 457th Bomb Group, 750th Squadron at USAAF Station 130, Glatton, England

Dear folks, Sorry not to have written for several days but since the last letter I've really been busy. Where guys used to fly a mission every four or five days at the most, we flew four in four days. However they are just long and tiresome with no excitement to worry about. Today is another one of those days to catch up. Had eggs and chips down the road where we bike to. Will try and get some pictures developed this afternoon and go to Link Trainer and then fly a test flight tonight. I have a ship of my own now. It is quite nice, they are all good crates though. The B-17 is an awfully fine ship – steady and reliable, not dashing and eccentric. Have flown over 1000 hours now by the way. Don't expect to fly tomorrow as we have a mobile trainer here and we'll have some ground school and then we get a two day pass. Trying to decide where to go; may bike to Cambridge, perfect weather now. The last few days at least five or six fellows I was instructing with at Moody have been assigned

here. Quite an old reunion and of course I have to tell them about combat – ha ha – rough in the ETO (*European Theatre of Operations*) as we say. Thinking all the time about getting home before too many months. We're about 1/3rd done now and the war may end sooner. Much love, Hugh



Google Maps

12th Mission, April 19th, Falkenburg

Milk run from way back. Perfect weather, ship okay, no flak or fighters. Over southeast part of Berlin for I.P. down to target and home. Should have been flak there. Don't know where it was. Saw Cologne, nothing but rubble except for the cathedral standing gaunt among the ruins. Got chewed by the colonel for coming home early with the pictures of the bombing. Left the formation at Antwerp and came home in less than an hour. They don't give you credit for much over here. Eligible for 1st Lt. now, Oak Leaf Cluster for Air Medal. 8 hours.

April 20, 1945, 457th Bomb Group, 750th Squadron at USAAF Station 130, Glatton, England

Dear folks, got a letter from you written the 5th and a V-Mail the 12th today. Your letters are certainly very much appreciated and interesting. You mentioned Aunt Fan reading mine, bet it didn't stand up very well beside Ned Landon's. Glad the colored pictures arrived. Don't you remember Mom, 3 stands for Bertha and W for William – Bertha William. My ship now is "Bluebell S for Sugar." Going to ride into town about 9 miles in a few minutes and get my bike fixed up. Army lives at High Street, Woodsfield, Ohio but he's going to call you up as soon as he gets home. Sure wish I'd been doing the kind of flying described in the clipping you sent with Oscar Olson in it instead of "Flying over Germany" in the big iron Fort – safe but not as much fun. Most beautiful weather and each little English house has its lovely yard and garden. Quantities of iris, bluebells, forget me nots, tulips, apple blossoms, daffodils and English hedges and turf. The churches and cemeteries in these small towns are impressive things and we've seen a great many of them in this area while biking after supper. It stays light till about 10 P.M. so you can have a good ride and then go to bed. Glad you sold the car pop. Bank account looks okay. Thanks. Love, Hugh

April 22, 1945, 457th Bomb Group, 750th Squadron at USAAF Station 130, Glatton, England

Dear folks, been having quite a bit of free time lately. Cold again and we've been sitting around the fire all afternoon. Most of the boys are up on a practice mission but I was lucky and didn't have to fly, though Arpin, Ange and Rustin had to fill in. By the way, the crew is all together still, which is pretty good after this long and everyone is darn good at his job and all the routines are working out smoothly. Rustin is working harder now

and the gunners really proved themselves as far as I was concerned the other day. Good old Joe Brooks is just the same, wandering through the English countryside. Clouse, the armor gunman really does well with the bombs, too. They'll all be staff sergeants pretty soon. Was out with Bob McKay last night and we had a good time reminiscing. Haven't gotten any packages yet but they should be here soon. As you can see, cookies and the like would be pretty stale. Tinned meats, cheese, melba toast, spreads, etc. are about the most practical things but I don't need too much. Hard to realize what has happened to Germany these past few weeks but it is a product of a lot of people's work and suffering, isn't it. The house sounds very pretty Mom. Sure hope to see how it looks before too long which is probably expecting too much. Just to let you know everything is coming fine. Much love, Hugh

April 26, 1945, 457th Bomb Group, 750th Squadron at USAAF Station 130, Glatton, England

Dear folks, things have been pretty quiet for us lately and I'm wondering just how much more "war" we'll see over here. Sure glad things are working out so well but wish I'd been over here a little sooner. Flew a big practice mission today. Makes you mad when you wear yourself out flying combat to go practice what you get so you do in your sleep and 24 hours a day in your mind. Heard from Archer today. Moody Field has closed its doors to cadets, God bless her and the boys who stayed behind who are flying all the dream ships of the army. Shreve is in Carolina training in B-25's which he's flown at Moody since I left and loves it. Had our second pass the other day and Rustin, Clouse, Brooks, and I went to Leeds. Had a good time reminiscent in a way of Des Moines where the enlisted men and the officers were all out together. Leeds is a tough town though like the rest of the English cities. Don't know whether I mentioned it before but you spoke of the planes over Paris en route to Bordeaux – that was my best view of Paris. Saw Bordeaux twice in two days. Was thinking, wish you'd keep sending clippings of the Register Mail. Things that appear in there about the guys I know that you happen to notice. Spent this morning cleaning the hut – felt just like you. This hut has the dirt and treasures of two years in it. Things you own just disappear into the piles of junk behind cots in the corners and everywhere and of course everyone just helps himself to anything in the hut so when you clean you find clothes, equipment, soiled laundry, shoes, etc. of guys who've been gone for ages. Everyone leaves about half what they own when they leave in their haste and joy and it just sits. For instance, one example, today we found over 20 pairs of shoes that belonged and were used by no one now living here. Even acquired a set of sheets so guess I'll crawl out of between those wool blankets. Struggles to make this lousy English coal burn now, guess I should join them. Much love, Hugh

Sunday, April 29, 1945, 457th Bomb Group, 750th Squadron at USAAF Station 130, Glatton, England

Dear folks, very cold today, even slight flurries of snow, this English weather is mighty strange. There is very little to write about. As you can see by the papers there has been little to no activity for us for quite some time. It's about like being a cadet again and life is full of ground school and practice missions, all of which strikes everybody as being quite a waste of time. The war news is swell isn't it. Sure am glad to see them on their knees. Our family certainly has been fortunate and it isn't for our sakes that's important but there are a lot of people whose stakes have been pretty heavy as we're learning more every day. Naturally it makes things mighty uncertain for us. We may end up doing most anything or maybe there'll be some more flying for us over here. I sure hate flying around for nothing every day now though. There's just this little of interest that I'll have to mention how livable our hut is now. There are just ½ as many guys in here now as when we arrived and the floors are clean, clothes in place, beds made, etc., all very gleaming. Evidence of our new role as men of leisure. Still sweating out your packages. I sent home my first air medal the other day and it should get there in 3 or 4 weeks. Got an Oak Leaf Cluster for it the other day. This is about the third spring now in the army when my mind turns to all the work at the farm which spring means for Dad. Please don't work too hard Pop. Bet everything is mighty beautiful out around the farm, Lake Bracken and home. Poor Ange has 25 months in grade

as a 2nd Lt. which is unheard of even for a quartermaster and it looks like he isn't going to make it over here – red tape saying a navigator has to have a certain number of missions. Certainly is a shame, he's conscientious as can be and hard working. Practice flight tonight and I have to go eat. Much love, Hugh

May 1, 1945, 457th Bomb Group, 750th Squadron at USAAF Station 130, Glatton, England

Dear Mom, well old dear, a package mailed March 22nd arrived today and it certainly was a treat. It arrived here like you'd mailed it yesterday and a choice collection it was – each item something I hadn't seen for months. Been quite cold here so the figs and apricots were fresh and moist like out of the ice box, cookies weren't even cracked and nuts were swell. Sure was worth waiting for Mom, thanks a lot. New Yorker was the most appropriate literature you could have sent too, very good. Wish I could tell you more about what we are thinking. Naturally there are lots of rumors going around but nothing has been told to us yet. I hope to heck of course that we get home for a while and I'm sort of counting on it without any basis for assurance of course. I've often mentioned that the 8th Air Force is what is called a strategic air force and not a tactical air force. If you've remembered that, you could probably tell what we've been doing lately and what they're planning for us. A tactical air force supports the ground troops and a strategic air force goes deep after industry, communications, etc. with the idea of the effect being felt in battle many months later perhaps. To quote the radio of last night "General Spaatz said that the job of the strategic air force was over and I'm in that air force ma." However by the time you get this things should be even more obvious that way – so even you could tell what is going on. Still cold at present. Last night we scrounged some fresh eggs and fried them with spam and toast and tea over our little stove. Somebody swiped my bike and that's about all the news there is. Hope you've been getting my letters such as they are. I haven't heard from you in over a week and Dave for months. Much love, Hugh

May 4, 1945, 457th Bomb Group, 750th Squadron at USAAF Station 130, Glatton, England

Dear Mom, this should reach you by mother's day, not that this is of any great significance, guess I'm losing any claim to thoughtfulness I ever might have had. I've told you all along how much I look to you for moral strength and comfort and just thinking about you Mom always helps a lot. The feeling is even stronger over here when you feel there aren't many people in the world whom you are very close to. You have a claim to a great deal judging solely by the feeling for you that you have created in your sons. It wouldn't mean much to say I shall think of you on mother's day, of course I will and so many times a day, but let's think of the possibilities that maybe, before very long at all, we will be sitting around the dining room table – the next time we sit there, it won't be for just a few days either as it has been the last three or four times. In the meantime, we are all well and living comfortably. I certainly am well situated. Over here with a chance to see something of England and well cared for. Have had time enough here to get pretty well settled and once one is settled, life becomes quite effortless. Letters from you and Dad yesterday mailed the 24th. So you just figured out what we were doing and by that time it was all over. Well, that's as good a setup as any I guess. My love to you mother, Hugh



Flying over the Alps, (The Digital Collections of the National World War II Museum – Footnote #16)

May 11, 1945, Linz Austria, Chateaudun, France, 10:45 hours

This was probably one of the most interesting days of my life. We took off at 7:30 this morning and headed straight for Linz, 100 miles east of Munich. Continental coast at Flushing, Holland, which was completely destroyed. Across Walcheren, peaceful Dutch farms with the windmills sticking up out of 10 feet of salt water. The whole trip we were 500' to 1000' above the ground so everything was very clear. We then flew over Antwerp, Aachen, Koblenz, Nuremberg, Regensburg. All primary targets of the 8th Airforce and badly battered. Beautiful forests and hills, winding roads and streams, castles, churches and white Bavarian cottages. Noticeable changes in architecture as we moved eastward. The German field south of Linz where we landed was a German bomber crew training base nestled in the shadow of the Alps. Very immaculate, spit and polish with wrecked and new planes all over the field and hillsides. Landed at noon in heat comparable to Florida. Many Forts blew a tire or nosed over coming in, but the French prisoners seemed to think us a safe risk, nevertheless. Field had been taken a week ago and in the same shape as when captured. Went through a JU88, DO217, JU87, and got some shells and an instrument. Picked up our prisoners after about an hour and came back over Ingolstadt and got a good look at the results of our fourth mission, then Stuttgart, Nancy and back to Chateaudun. Ange was sick so we got an ambulance and went into the hospital in town. Toured the town, ate, very quaint place, good looking mademoiselles, a wrecked German tank where it had been shot out in a fight in the center of town. Drove the ambulance all around and really saw the place. The field had been the largest in France, but the 8th bombed it and town and made quite a mess. More

wrecked planes, 8 huge hangars gutted, mass of crumpled steel, etc. Drank one quart of champagne before we took off and 2 more on the way home, flying low at sunset just off the tree tops and church spires. Really enjoyable. Home at 10 P.M. And that is the end of our trips to war over here.

Hugh's Autobiography Excerpt

Very shortly after VE day our crew was selected to be in the first group of 25 planes from the 8th Air Force to fly home. (Again – crew #1 – Arnold – had its advantages). We were weathered in Iceland for several days, then flew over Greenland to Labrador and down to Windsor Locks Army Air Base – the field I had watched them build in 1941. I flew over Amherst and Loomis, we were greeted by Paramount News – the mighty 8th returns to fight the Japs. I turned my B-17 over to a ferry command crew and never flew a B-17 again.



Glatton Memorial Monument (American War Memorials Overseas – Footnote #17 & 18)

“237 COMBAT MISSIONS WERE FLOWN
FROM THIS FIELD OVER ENEMY
OCCUPIED EUROPE BETWEEN
FEBRUARY 21, 1944 AND APRIL 20, 1945

16,915 TONS OF BOMBS WERE DROPPED
WITH A LOSS OF 86 B-17s AND 739 AIRMEN
KILLED, MISSING OR PRISONERS OF WAR”



Memorial to the American Airmen of the 457th Bomb Group at All Saints Church in Conington, England. Conington was directly adjacent to USAAF Station 130. (American War Memorials Overseas – Footnote #19)



Hugh recognized his plane (highlighted) by the tail markings in the B-17 “Graveyard” in Kingman, Arizona where they were dismantled and sold for parts. (from Hugh’s files, possibly 1946 from the Los Angeles Times)

Boeing produced 12, 731 Flying Fortresses and currently there are only 45 ships remaining that are in complete form. Only six of those have seen combat and still fly. (Wikipedia – Footnote #20)

Excerpt from Hugh's Autobiography

I spent May 20 – June 20 at home – had only been there for two weeks in 3 ½ years and it was good. I reported to Sioux Falls, S.D. for further assignment which in mid-July was to B-29 pilot transition at Roswell, N.M. While at Sioux Falls some interesting things happened. Both of my Chicago girl cousins who were sisters got married and I went AWOL to be part of their wedding. AWOL sounds worse than it really was as we had nothing to do at Sioux Falls but await orders. The groom, Ed, was an army captain just back from three years in the South Pacific (Guadalcanal) for whom I served as best man although I'd never seen him before – war time you know. I killed time there by working as a roustabout at the John Morrell packing plant with my copilot and navigator. I then got a job tending bar (at age 20 – not supposed to even drink) at the officers' club in downtown Sioux Falls. That job came with a meal which avoided standing in line for an hour out at the base and included socializing with all of my friends across the bar who had to pay for their drinks – heck of a deal.

The second time I went AWOL was to the other sister's wedding. Col. Smith, our deputy group commander was drinking across the bar from me the night before and we were discussing his taking a B-25 to New York City the next day. I arranged to hitch a ride as far as Chicago with them. However, on reflection I realized that since I was going AWOL I shouldn't be listed as flying on that plane so I took the train the next afternoon. When I got off in Chicago the following morning, Union Station was alive with the newspaper vendors hawking the extras announcing the crash of Colonel Smith's B-25 into the Empire State Building. The 72nd floor of the building was torched with high octane gasoline – killing a number of workers in the Catholic War Relief offices and dropping an elevator load of people to their deaths. Colonel Smith and crew survived a tour of combat with the 8th Air Force, but being used to paying close attention to terrain maps, apparently forgot to factor in unmarked tall sky scrapers.

Shortly afterwards, I was assigned to Roswell, N.M. for B-29 First Pilot Transition. Everyone was still thinking of terms of a fall invasion of Japan so when the atom bomb appeared out of the unknown the war ended very suddenly.

Towards the end of August I suffered a collapsed lung. I suddenly couldn't breathe or straighten up and was in great pain. When they got me to the hospital I was relieved to be told that they knew what it was but I would not be able to get out of bed for any reason for quite some time. Three weeks to be exact, during which time I read almost a book a day, including War and Peace, and many others that one never had time to read. One pleasant aspect of that stay was a relationship I shared with a wonderful nurse who was 8 years older than I. She was quite attractive, very much so, to one confined to his bed for 3 weeks. She went with the base Colonel but was my secret girl especially when she was on night duty. It was all very innocent as most things were in those days.

I got discharged right from the hospital and was able to enter college two weeks late that fall. The history of Knox College in Galesburg was so full of Arnold ancestors that it was time to settle down. Phyllis and I started going together that next spring right after I returned from being best man for Don Armstrong, (*Army*) my closest army buddy. There were only a handful of men on campus that fall of 1945. I had known a lot of the Knox students while I was growing up in Galesburg. By winter quarter there were a handful of pre-war Betas back on campus and we reactivated the Beta chapter and pledged a good nucleus of new members. The Beta house was still occupied by female students but we managed to get things moving for a strong fall reopening.

That summer I worked on the farm and then went to a Knox summer geology camp in Dubois, Wyoming. We lived on a ranch outside of town through which the Wind River flowed and which served as our only source of bath water – cold! We hiked and studied rocks and geologic formations throughout the upper Wind River Basin. Dubois was a wide open town. I helped run the crap table in the Silver Dollar Bar several Saturdays and one night a drunken bartender at a saloon near the ranch where we used to go study because it had electricity, stuck a carbine in our stomachs because we wouldn't gamble with him.

Phyllis was working at a resort in Indiana with a friend Molly Lamp. Molly went with Skip Carlson from Galesburg. We had played basketball together at Galesburg (Silver Streaks) and Knox so we went over there several times. Very romantic. I wrote Phyl by Coleman lanterns many nights.



Hugh's wife, Phyllis Jean Short. Their wedding on September 7, 1947

This is as far as Hugh got in his autobiography. Here are some excerpts from his obituary:

“On September 7, 1947, he married Phyllis Jean Short, whom he had known since grade school. They moved to Colorado Springs, where Hugh graduated cum laude from Colorado College in 1948 with a degree in business. After graduation, they moved to Denver where Hugh began the Goodyear Training Program. However, he soon decided to go the University of Colorado Law School. He graduated in 1951 in the top of his class and was ranked 11th in the Colorado State Bar Exam.

In 1951 he and Phyllis moved to Greeley, where he practiced law for 17 years. He then was selected as the first District Judge appointed under the non-political selection process in 1968. He has always been viewed as an extremely fair, just and wise leader and servant. He was President of Rotary, a founding Director of the Cache National Bank, Moderator of the Church, President of the Colorado District Judges Association, and spent five years on the Colorado Judicial Discipline Commission. He received the second annual honor for “Outstanding Performance in the Judiciary” from the University of Colorado. He was one of 12 judges on the Executive Committee of the National Conference of State Trial Judges. He was an active member of the Board of Chamber of Commerce and Red Cross Board. His children, Laurie (1951), Clark (1955-1972) and Allison (1959) were born during those years.

One of the legacies he left his family is his love and appreciation of nature. He was an avid outdoorsman who hiked the Grand Canyon four times as well as the Paria Canyon. His grandchildren will never forget him taking them on many wonderful and exciting adventures as well as teaching them how to ski, golf and play tennis. He was a skier before skiing was popular and some of his adventures included hiking up Trail Ridge and skiing down in uncharted territory. He was one of the original investors in Vail Resorts, which afforded him a lifetime ski pass when it cost only \$5 for the day. He always said he got the better end of that deal, since he skied for free at Vail for the rest of his life. He taught us to get out and live life - camp, fish, hike, travel the world - which he did with gusto. He supported The Sierra Club, National Geographic, Environmental Defense Fund, The Nature Conservatory, Union Pacific Railroad as well as his alma maters and numerous other charities. He was a Boy Scout leader and led his troop on a thrilling Canadian Headwaters canoe trip. As he said – “I like to taste from every plate of life.” And he did. He never met a stranger and was beloved by all. He would stand in an elevator and ask “So where are you from?” He was interested in everyone and would say, “So tell me about yourself.” And he listened with interest. He was also an amazing historian, scholar and conversationalist. Until just recently he would meet with his coffee buddies at “My Place” twice a week for morning coffee. He maintained an office where he went to work almost every day and attended Rotary, Greeley Club, the Last Patrol and Church. Up until the end he was interested and interesting. He will be greatly missed by his family and friends.

Hugh Hudson Arnold passed away peacefully in the morning of November 15, 2016, just two days short of his 92nd birthday. His wife Phyllis passed away 10 months prior on January 14, 2016. He and Phyllis were married 68 years.”

Final Notes:

First of all, I want to thank Hugh’s mom, Helen, for saving these letters. What a gift it has been to read them and I am so glad that future generations will also have this same opportunity. Dad, we thank you for your sacrifice and service and for allowing us to be a part of your adventure.



Hugh in front of a B-17 many years after the war. (From Hugh’s photos)

Additional Resources

There is a link to a 91 minute video of Hugh Arnold recounting his time in WWII in the Library of Congress. Excellent video from start to finish!!!

<http://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.64319/>

Video of Glatton Air Base, crews, planes, missions: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whIAG-YBUb8>

<https://457thbombgroupassoc.org/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8Et9rUMd14>

Other Viewing

“Masters of the Air” Apple TV+, 2024, produced by Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg based on [Donald L. Miller](#)'s book *Masters of the Air: America's Bomber Boys Who Fought the Air War Against Nazi Germany*

Footnotes and Credits:

- #8 – https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Glatton#/media/File:RAF_Glatton_-_9_May_1944_-_Airfield.jpg, acquired on 1/19/25
- #9 - https://sawtry.ccan.co.uk/content/catalogue_item/a-map-of-the-american-air-base-at-conington, acquired 1/19/2025
- #10 - <https://457thbombgroupassoc.org/roger-freeman-photo-collection/>, acquired on 11/15/2024
- #11 – <https://b17flyingfortress.de/en/details/die-besatzung/>, acquired on 1/19/2025
- #12 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Glatton, acquired on 11/14/2024
- #13 - <https://warart.com/bailey-robot-all/escort-fury->, acquired on 1/19/2025
- #14 - <https://www.argunners.com/walter-schuck-luftwaffe-pilot/>acquired 1/11/2025
- #15 - <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/boeing-b-17-flying-fortress>, acquired 11/15/2024
- #16 - <https://www.ww2online.org/image/b-17-flying-fortresses-flight-seen-another-b-17-formation>, acquired 11/15/2024
- #17 - <https://www.uswarmemorials.org/admin/images/memorials/1620986295large457thbgmemorial01.jpg>, acquired 1/19/2025
- #18 - <https://www.uswarmemorials.org/admin/images/memorials/1620986295largeimg4633a.jpg>, acquired 1/19/2025
- #19 - https://www.uswarmemorials.org/html/monument_details.php?SiteID=1699&MemID=2236, acquired 1/19/2025
- #20 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_surviving_Boeing_B-17_Flying_Fortresses#44-85790, viewed on 1/20/2025