



**Extract from:
Personal History
Of
Kenneth Tilghman
Roney**

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The War Years

T

o receive a commission in the Air Corps, it was necessary to take Army Extension Courses on the following subjects:

- 10-1. Organization of the Army
- 10-2. Organization of the Air Corps
- 10-3. Defense Against Chemical Warfare
- 10-4. Military Law — The Law of Military Offenses
- 10-5. Military Discipline, Courtesy, and Customs of the Service
- 10-6. Internal Guard Duty
- 10-7PI. Map and Aerial Photograph Reading
- 10-7PII. Map and Aerial Photograph Reading
- 10-8. Military Sanitation and First Aid
- 10-10. Aerial Navigation

I enlisted as a private in the 127th Observation Squadron, Kansas National Guard, on 10 August 1941, and was honorably discharged as a private on 11 August 1941 to accept a commission as a Second Lieutenant, Air Corps, in the Kansas Air National Guard. The Squadron was Federally Recognized on 14 August 1941, and inducted into Federal Service on 6 October

1941. On 15 August 1941, I took a flight test for a military pilot rating with Lt. Col. J. K. McDuffy, our assigned Air Corps Instructor, in a North American BC-1A, and passed. Through the rest of August and September, I continued to work at my CAA duties and, at the same time, worked on the Army Extension Courses in my free time.

After 1 October, all of my flying was done in military aircraft. We had received an order to pick up a Douglas O-46A airplane assigned to the squadron at Middletown Air Depot, Middletown, Pennsylvania. Major Flanary sent me back to get it. After completing all of the necessary paper work, a mechanic showed me how to turn on the gas and start the engine, and I took off for Columbus, Ohio. Enroute to Columbus, I noticed the generator was not charging, so after landing, I taxied to the National Guard hangar to have it fixed. Since it was late in the day, I remained at Columbus overnight while the mechanics worked on the voltage regulator. Next morning, the weather was fine and the airplane ready, so I took off for home. However, I ran into some heavy weather coming in from the west, so landed at Indianapolis and spent the night. By morning, the weather had cleared, and I took off for Wichita, which I made non-stop in 4¾ hours. That brought our aircraft to three — an O-38E, an O-46A, and a BC-1A

For the Duration

On 13 October, the Squadron moved from Wichita to Sherman Field, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to begin the year's training. Some weeks later, one of our officers, Lt. George Stone, had obtained leave to go home on some business, and asked me if I would fly him to St. Louis so he could catch a commercial flight out of there. It was a Sunday, and Major Flanary said OK, so off we went for St. Louis. As I was on final approach to the St. Louis airport, I heard a tower controller tell an airline pilot that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. It was 7 December 1941. From then on, our lives were changed dramatically. We soon got word that we were inducted into the Army of the United States for the duration, whatever that was to be.

As a result of Pearl Harbor, training was stepped up and flying increased. On 26 February 1942, I left Fort Leavenworth to ferry our O-46A back to Middletown Air Depot, and to proceed to Langley Field, Virginia, to pick up an O-38E and ferry it back to our home base. Leaving Langley Field for Cincinnati, Ohio, in the O-38E, I noticed the magnetic compass wasn't working properly, so I returned to Langley and waited while they installed a new compass and calibrated it. On the next try, the radio didn't work, so I returned again and waited while the radio was repaired. The third try was successful. I enjoyed those cross-country trips. Training continued, and gradually we received more aircraft. Before leaving Fort Leavenworth, the Squadron had acquired, in addition to what it had, a North American O-47A, several Stinson L-1A's, three Curtiss O-52's, and several Piper L-4A's.

In April, the Squadron was transferred to the Army Air Field at Tullahoma, Tennessee. Shortly thereafter, I was transferred to the 20th Observation Squadron, Pope Field, Fort Bragg, North Carolina. This was a newly-activated Squadron, and I was promoted to Captain and put in command. On 3 July, I flew an enlisted man from Pope Field to Somerton, Pennsylvania (where I had previously instructed), and let him off to visit relatives. I visited with friends at Somerton and then flew to Central Airport in Camden, New Jersey, where I left the airplane and stayed overnight with the Kenneth Bowens in Haddonfield. Next day, I met the enlisted man at the airport, and we took off for Fort Dix, New Jersey, where I had the airplane refueled, and we then flew non-stop back to Pope Field.

About the middle of September, I was placed on temporary duty with the IV (Provisional) Ground-Air Support Command, Shreveport, Louisiana. I was then attached to the staff of Lt. General Walter Krueger, commander of the 3rd Army at Camp Polk, Louisiana. "The 3rd" was on training maneuvers at the time, and I was the Air Liaison Officer for the headquarters, to provide air-support as needed. I had a desk in the Headquarters tent (about the size of a circus side-show tent), and had to be on hand all day to answer questions or give advice on matters of air support for the ground forces. The IV (Provisional) Ground-Air Support Command was attached to the 3rd Army and was the administrative command for the 75th Observation Group assigned to the IV Army Corps. The 75th Observation Group consisted of four squadrons — the 127th, 22nd, 30th, and 13th. The 127th supported the IV Army Corps; the 22nd, the 28th Infantry Division; and the

30th, the 7th Armored Division. The above comprised the main forces of the "Blue" army. The 13th Squadron supported the 38th Infantry Division which, together with several Engineer Companies, and several Tank-Destroyer Battalions, comprised the "Red" army.

The two armies were given theoretical problems and were required to accomplish their mission within a specified time. A problem would take two or three days, depending on its make-up. Then the staff officers came in while the troops were getting placed for the next problem and held a critique. Some of the problems worked out well, and some were pretty sorry, depending on how they were handled. When the time was set for stopping a problem, I would fly low over the two armies in an L-1A liaison plane and blow a siren, which was fastened to a wing strut, as the signal to cease hostilities. That was fun. I was popular with the ground troops because I stopped the exercises.

On 1 November 1942, the IV PGASC was officially disbanded, and I received orders transferring me to the 21st Observation Squadron at Will Rogers Field, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and assigning me as Squadron Engineering Officer. I was checked out in the following aircraft: B-25C, A-20C, P-39F, and P-39D1. On 15 March 1943, the 21st was transferred to Northern Field, Tullahoma, Tennessee. About this time, the Observation Squadrons were designated as Reconnaissance Squadrons, and some were converted to Light Bombardment Squadrons. In June 1943, I was transferred to the 46th Bomb Group (Light) at Will Rogers Field, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and attached to the 51st Bomb Squadron for administration. In September 1943, I was assigned to the cadre of a new Bomb Group, and with other assigned officers, proceeded to Orlando, Florida, where we attended the Army Air Forces School of Applied Tactics (AAFSAT). While there, we received orders abandoning the new Group and assigning us to the 416th Bomb Group (Light) stationed at the Army Air Field at Lake Charles, Louisiana. We reported there as soon as the schooling at Orlando was over.

Overseas

During December 1943, we were alerted for overseas duty, and all activity pointed toward that objective. The Group moved to the Army Air Base at Laurel, Mississippi, and was put under tight security. In January 1944, we were moved to a staging area at Camp Shanks, New York, to await transportation. After a couple of weeks of waiting, we boarded a steamer, which took us down the Hudson River to a waiting ship in New York Harbor. It was the French liner *Columbie*, which had participated in the North African invasion, and still showed some battle scars. I had the flu when we embarked, but rather than risking the Group being sent without me and then being sent over later as a "casual", I struggled aboard and then went into the ship's hospital for five days until I recovered. We were in a huge convoy and progress was slow, as the slowest ship set the pace. It took about a week to cross, but we had excellent food, as the chef was from the French luxury liner *Normandie*. Finally, we sailed up the Firth of Clyde and disembarked in Glasgow, Scotland. A train was waiting for us, and we were soon on our way to our new home at Wethersfield, Essex County, England, where we remained until we crossed the Channel into France much later.

"A Foggy Day...."

We arrived at the base toward midnight. It was late in January 1944, and a typical English winter night — cold, damp, foggy, and altogether miserable. We were assigned to freshly-built Quonset huts, with a row of eight bunks down either side and a small coke-burning stove in the center. The temperature inside was the same as outside, and all we had were two blankets in our backpacks. For a mattress, there were two sections of "biscuits", in British vernacular, which, together, made up the mattress. They were stuffed with excelsior, I believe, and a round bolster of the same material served as a pillow. Our foot-lockers and other belongings didn't arrive until later.

Everyone was tired, so as soon as we could unload our packs and get out our blankets, we flopped on the bunks and tried to get some sleep. I slept in my uniform and heavy trench coat with the two blankets over me, and thought I'd never get warm. The cold and dampness went right to the bone. By spring, the "biscuits" had been replaced by kapok mattresses, white sheets, and feather pillows, which was quite an improvement. The stove was a joke — we got a small ration of coke per month, and even with a red-hot fire, it didn't warm things up much. Later on, linoleum was put down over the bare concrete floor, and this cut down on the radiated cold considerably.

Eventually, we were able to arrange things so we could be reasonably comfortable. We were allowed one bath per week, eight sheets of toilet paper per day, and a fire in our barracks from 5:00 PM to 9:00 PM only. We ate well, but got potatoes at every meal, and Brussels sprouts almost every day for supper. The only kinds of meat we had were pork and Spam — beef was unknown. Milk and eggs were powdered, and bacon, when we had it, was dug out of the congealed grease, which was never drained off after cooking. Flight crews did get an extra ration of nine fresh eggs and four oranges per week.

Nazi Propaganda

I listened to the little five dollar radio I took with me and enjoyed the Nazi propaganda broadcasts in English. According to them, the Russians were being thrown back on all fronts; we were being pushed into the sea in Italy; all our aircraft were being shot down; London was being wiped out with hundreds of bombers, while the civilians were evacuating the city by the thousands. All lies!! The only people they were kidding were their own. The rest of the world knew better.

The Douglas A-20G

Our aircraft, Douglas A-20G's were waiting for us when we arrived in England, so training began immediately. The A-20 was originally designed as a low-level attack bomber. However, in that theatre of operations, we were to do medium-altitude (15,000 feet) precision bombing. The airplanes were equipped with the Norden bomb-sight, perfect for our purposes. They had also been modified with the installation of a rear upper and lower gun turret with two fifty-caliber machine guns in each, operated electrically by a single rear gunner. The engine exhaust system had been changed from a full collector ring to short exhaust stacks for each cylinder. This change alone added about 20 mph to the speed, due to the jet-effect of the short stacks. The 416th Bomb Group (Light) consisted of four Squadrons: the 668th, 669th, 670th, and 671st. Each Squadron was assigned fifteen airplanes with a couple each for backup. That way, for maximum effort, each Squadron could put up three flights of five airplanes, for a total of sixty airplanes in the Group formation. There was also the 79th Station Complement Squadron assigned to the base for operating the mess halls, motor pool, and other housekeeping functions. A Depot Squadron supplied us with parts and equipment, as needed.

Promotion

On 25 February 1944, I was promoted to the rank of Major and assigned as Group Technical Inspector and Group Aircraft Accident Investigation Officer. After the Group started receiving battle damage, I was kept busy making sure repairs were properly made.

D-Day

Several practice missions were flown before going over enemy territory. Prior to D-Day (6 June 1944) our operations consisted of bombing "buzz bomb" sites on the coast of France. Those pilotless bombers were plaguing London and doing a lot of damage, not to military targets, but to the civilian population. In preparation for D-Day, we concentrated on German shore batteries and other enemy installations as ordered. D-Day itself required an all-out effort by all Allied forces, and our Group flew three missions that day. There were so many ships in the Channel, I don't believe you could have ditched an airplane without hitting one of them. Battle damage was heavy, as the Germans threw up everything they had; but not a single enemy fighter got through.

Glamour Pants

To keep warm at night during the winter months, I'd go to bed wearing two undershirts, one cotton and one wool; a pair of long wool drawers (glamour-pants, the boys called them); two pairs of wool socks, and a wool cap on my head. On my bed, I put my air mattress on top of the bed mattress; on top of that, a wool Army blanket doubled; then my "issued" canvas bed-roll; on top of the bed-roll my kapok sleeping bag; on top of that another army blanket doubled; then I'd throw the flaps of the bed-roll over the sleeping bag and blanket and strap them together; then another army blanket on top of all that. On real cold nights, I'd put my canteen on the stove until the water boiled, and then put it in the foot of my sleeping bag. There was very little hot water available, and most of the time we had to wash and shave with cold water. Usually at night, I'd heat water in my canteen cup and then shave from my steel helmet, using it as a basin.

Bicycle Casualties

Shortly after we arrived, the Group was issued a number of RAF bicycles for our use in getting around the base. Almost immediately, the casualties started streaming into the base hospital. The guys were cracking up on them right and left. There were far more casualties from the bicycles than there ever were from combat. Eventually, this tapered off as they learned how to ride them.

"Give an Englishman a Window..."

The first leave I got (in February) was a three-day pass. Another fellow and I went to Cambridge and checked in with the Red Cross for lodging, who found a room for us in a private home. We were given the address and went out to find it. As usual, it was a foggy night, and between the fog and total blackout, we had to feel our way along, since we couldn't see where we were going. It was easy to bump into people on the street or step off of the curbs before we knew they were there. We finally found the house and were greeted by a small, redheaded Scottish lady — a widow, we learned later — and were escorted into the parlor. There was a fireplace with one lump of coal burning in it, and that was the only heat in the entire house. The landlady huddled in front of it wrapped in a heavy wool shawl. She showed us to a bedroom upstairs, which had a large window which was open and the breeze was blowing snowflakes into the room. It was said that if you give an Englishman a window, he'll open it! I believe that, because nearly everywhere we went, we found open windows, regardless of the weather. I guess the people were used to that, as few homes had central heating. Even many hotels were not centrally-heated, but guests were furnished with small electric heaters that barely took the chill off. I remember well that night in Cambridge — we were half the night getting warm.

Our base at Wethersfield was about thirty-five miles northeast of London, and on clear nights we could see the flashes from the bombs being dropped on London. There were air-raid trenches scattered about the base, and until we became accustomed to the air-raid sirens, we got out of our warm beds and shivered in the trenches until the "all-clear" sounded. We soon learned to simply pull the covers over our heads and go back to sleep when the sirens blew. We figured we'd rather die warm in bed than freeze to death in the trenches. One night, I was awakened by a loud explosion that shook everything for a moment. That got us out of bed, and upon investigating, we found that a British night-fighter had tumbled a "buzz-bomb", and it had landed on our airfield, leaving a huge crater off the end of one of the runways. The RAF had developed a technique of flying alongside the "buzz-bombs", tucking a wing tip under the wing of the bomb and then suddenly raising their wing, which would flip the bomb over on its side, upsetting its gyro and causing it to crash — hopefully in open country where it could do little harm. Specially-equipped "Typhoons" were used for this purpose, as they had special radar equipment for tracking the bombs, and were fast enough to overtake them. Those night-fighter pilots deserved a lot of credit, as their job was especially risky.

Beating a Tattoo

On one mission over the coast of France to bomb a "buzz-bomb" site, our formation was forced by cloud cover to climb to 20,000 feet to release our bombs, when our normal altitude was no more than 15,000 feet. We were at that altitude for a half hour or more before we could descend. We returned to the base OK, and I landed normally, rolled to the end of the runway, and turned onto the perimeter strip. This strip circled the entire field, and tied into the end of each runway, and the aircraft were parked on hardstands located alongside the strip. I noticed I seemed to be taxiing awfully fast and braked it down. Reaching my hardstand, I turned to the right to park, but because of my speed, couldn't stop in time and ran into a pile of 500-pound bombs stacked next to the parking area. I looked out to the right, and here was the right propeller beating a tattoo on the bombs, while all the ground-crew were "taking to the hills"!

I nonchalantly shut off the engines and got out to survey the damage, all the time wondering why it had happened. I had seen an accident coming, but had made no effort to prevent it. After our briefing, I went to the Flight Surgeon and told him what had happened and asked him why, as I'd never even scratched an airplane before. He said I had been suffering from lack of oxygen from the high altitude at which we'd been flying for so long. It made me feel better to know that, but if those bombs had exploded, I'd be sailing yet!

On another mission, the plane on whose wing I was flying received a direct flak hit just aft

of the bomb-bay, which blew the whole tail off. The blast threw me out of formation momentarily, and pieces of the aircraft peppered my plane, but fortunately did no serious damage. The flak that day was about as heavy as I'd ever seen it — pieces of it sounded like hail hitting a tin roof. There were more than 100 holes in my plane when I landed, including three punctured gas tanks. Thank goodness for those self-sealing tanks; they made it possible for me to get back safely, and eliminated a serious fire hazard. My "strike-camera" got pictures of the front end of the crippled plane spinning down, as we were on the bomb run and the doors were open and the camera was operating. As far as we know, no one got out. Another time an A-20 got a direct hit in the bomb-bay and set the fuselage tank afire. It went down like a comet, trailing a sheet of flame for yards behind. After a while, the enlisted-men gunners were saying, "Wear your flak-suit today; Major Roney is on the loading-list!"

After D-Day, we concentrated on pockets of enemy resistance, as requested by the ground forces, to help them break out of the beachhead. Once General Patton and his 3rd Army got rolling, we supported him with precision-bombing of specific targets he had asked for. There were times when he could not be found, as he had outrun his communication lines. At other times, we supported the U.S. 9th Army, as needed. During this time, I was busy running down parts we were short of and transporting new flight crews from Ireland to our base. We had a UC-64 airplane (DeHavilland Norseman) a Canadian-built Bush plane. It was a single-engine, high-wing monoplane with a 600 HP Pratt and Whitney engine and full-length, high-lift wing slots and flaps. It would carry six passengers plus a crew of two, or an equivalent weight of cargo. I made several trips to a U.S. Base fourteen miles west of Belfast to pick up replacement flight crews, and also a number of trips to Burtonwood, England, the main replacement depot for parts, especially brake discs, which wore out rapidly. When not supporting the 3rd Army, we concentrated on railroad marshaling yards, airfields, power plants, important highway intersections, factories, harbor installations, supply points, bridges, etc.

On most of our missions, we were unescorted, because the Germans saved their fighter strength for the "heavies", like the B-17's and B-24's. When we were escorted, it was by an RAF squadron made up of Polish volunteer pilots. No enemy fighters ever got through when they were our cover.

Chaff

Later on, a system was developed to jam the enemy radar so they couldn't determine our altitude or number. Minutes before the main bombing force would arrive over the target, three so-called "pathfinder" airplanes would fly over the area and dump loose "chaff", as it was called, consisting of small strips of aluminum foil, which would spread out and flutter down slowly. Each piece created a blip on the radar screen, so all they had was a lot of "snow". This was a great help in throwing off the accuracy of the flak, which was very heavy at times and accounted for all of our losses.

The English Countryside

When spring arrived and the weather warmed, we had the opportunity to look over the country a little bit. The fields were green and well-kept. The villages were clean and neat, the thatched roofs giving them a picturesque look. The farms looked prosperous. All the farm buildings were of brick or stone and the roofs, either tiled or thatched. The lawns were well-kept and beautifully landscaped. Roses grew everywhere. All the fields were neatly fenced with wood or iron fences. The roads were narrow and winding and the country slightly rolling. There were no billboards to mar the countryside. There were a lot of streams and pretty valleys. The village streets were narrow, and the houses close to the streets. Most of the homes had many chimney-pots sticking up through the roofs, since there was no central heating; and so each room had its own stove and chimney. There was no evidence of waste, no junkyards, no dumps, no auto graveyards, and no trash or paper laying around. Everyone seemed to take particular pride in the looks of his place.

Wartime in London

I took quite a few interesting "leaves" to London. Several times we stayed at the Red Cross, which had accommodations for just such purposes, and other times we stayed in hotels like the Strand or the Savoy. Once, we stayed at St. James Place, just around the corner from Buckingham

Palace. Those hotels were more elegant than anything we had been used to, and they were a pleasant change.

For the first few trips to London, the "buzz-bombs" were still coming over, so we'd lie in bed and listen to their pulsating noise as they approached, and try to determine whether they were getting closer or not. Suddenly the noise would stop, and after a few seconds we would hear the dull thud of the bomb explosion. Sometimes, we'd be kept awake by the noise of the anti-aircraft fire trying to shoot them down before they reached London. Shortly after D-Day, most of the raids on London stopped, as the Germans were driven inland from the coast. There was still an occasional V-2 rocket fired on London from bases far inland, but those finally stopped, too. There was no warning on those bombs, since they dived in beyond the speed of sound, and hit the ground before anyone even knew they were coming.

We toured the Tower of London, Westminster Abbey, and looked at what we could of Buckingham Palace, Hyde Park, and many other points of interest. I was also able to visit several castles in southern England. The only one I can remember the name of was Colchester Castle. It was still in a fairly good state of preservation, but how they ever kept warm in such a drafty place is beyond me. Maybe they didn't. There were also many cathedrals and parish churches dating back many centuries, with their interesting graveyards.

I also spent a leave at Clacton-on-Sea, a resort town on the Channel coast, a little south-east of our base. There we could see the obstacles that had been placed in the surf to repel the expected invasion, which never came, with a small area cleared for bathers. What a contrast to a few years past when the beach and the surf would have been full of summer vacationers.

France

During September 1944, our Group was moved to an airfield at Pointoise, France. It was located a few miles north-northwest of Paris and had been occupied by the Germans. The field had been heavily bombed and was cluttered with wrecked German aircraft, vehicles, and other debris. I'm sure our own Group hit it at least once. The hangars were burned out and were a shambles; and wherever there had been a bomb crater on the runways, it had been filled in and leveled so we could use it right away.

Home Away from Home

Most of the buildings, including the barracks, had been destroyed, so I was issued a wall tent about nine feet square with a small wood-burning stove to warm it. I made a 2x4 framework to hold up the side walls and a wood floor out of ammunition box-lids. The stove and my sleeping bag kept me fairly warm all winter. I can recall putting on my wool uniform in the morning and going to the mess hall where I would stand in front of the roaring fire in the fireplace. Steam would come out of the material from the night's dampness. That fire sure felt good.

As soon as we got to France, we were assigned German prisoners as cooks for our "messes". They lived under the constant threat of either doing a good job or being handed over to the Russians, so they went out of their way to please. The things they could do with frozen chickens, for example, was a miracle. The flavoring and the sauces they prepared were as good as in the finest hotels, and they made a rice pudding that was "out of this world".

There was no electricity on the base when we got there, but among all the rubble, we found a German diesel-powered generator that had never been used and was in good condition. With the help of our Douglas Aircraft Technical Representative, we were able to figure out the wiring and get it running after about a week's work. It was nice to have lights and power again, as the Germans had cut all the wiring and blown up the transformers. A lot of new wires had to be strung and connected to the generator. The power-unit generated 15,000 watts, sufficient for all of our needs. The Germans had also blown up all the wells, so we had no running water until the wells and pumps were repaired. Until this was done, we had to wash and bathe from our helmets. We chopped our own wood, did our own laundry, hauled our own water, etc. — in other words, we had to do everything for ourselves. I was able to obtain a G.I. motorcycle from our Military Police Company. It was a Harley-Davidson 45, and it came in very handy for getting around, as it was

nine miles around the base. There were times I couldn't use it because of the slippery mud. The countryside reminded me of Pennsylvania and Ohio — large green fields and wide straight roads — quite a contrast to the narrow, winding roads of England. Also, they drive on the right, which was much more natural for us. In many ways, France reminded me of home.

Fontainebleau

After we got settled, a Captain Heiland and I visited the famous Chateau in Fontainebleau. It was built by Francois I in the twelfth century as a rendezvous and vacation spot for royalty. Each succeeding royal family had added a wing of its own, until now it covers acres of ground. It was frequented by such kings as Francois I, Charles I, Louis XIV, and Napoleon I. Louis IV resided there at one time and Philip IV and Louis XIII were both born there. It was lavish and ornate, typical of royalty of that period. We entered into the corridor of Francois I, a high-ceilinged corridor about a block long. The floor was of highly-polished oak; the walls were paneled halfway to the ceiling with beautifully carved chestnut, and above that were painted scenes of the times. The ceiling was covered with murals by famous painters. Hanging from the ceiling the length of the corridor was a row of huge crystal chandeliers, with the original candle-holders in place.

We then passed through a marble hall into the Royal Guardroom and then into the Grand Ballroom. It was a huge room at one end of which was an immense pink marble fireplace. Above it was a mirror that reached to the ceiling and reflected the entire room. The floor was a wooden mosaic, made up of fifteen different kinds of wood and polished to a mirror-finish. The pillars and walls were paneled with solid oak, intricately carved and decorated with symbols and coats-of-arms of the various kings. The ceiling was one big mural. Everything was trimmed in gilt or gold leaf. At the end opposite the fireplace was a balcony where the orchestra sat when it played. One side of the room opened into an inner courtyard and the opposite side opened onto a marble terrace overlooking beautiful sunken gardens, and beyond, a large lake with swans swimming on it.

From there we went through the chambers of the kings. Charles I's bedroom had a huge fireplace, and above it, a marble bas-relief equestrian statue of himself — a beautiful piece of work. His queen had a jewel cabinet of solid ebony, delicately and intricately carved, that would cover the wall of an ordinary room. We went on through the various chambers, each one breathtaking in itself, until we came to Marie Antoinette's bedroom. Her bed was at least ten feet wide, with a huge canopy over the top and heavy curtains that could be drawn around it. The rug seemed to be about two inches thick with a beautiful pattern. The opposite end of the room was mirrored, except for the fireplace. Her bathroom was all blue, with gold-plated fixtures, and was surprisingly modern.

Next was Napoleon's suite — his bedroom and the office where he had planned many of his campaigns. All of the furniture was Egyptian, which he had brought back from his expedition to Egypt. Next to it was the Council Room, in which there was a round table at least ten feet in diameter. The top was made from a single piece of solid mahogany, about two inches thick, polished to a mirror-finish. Next was the Throne Room where he had received visitors. The throne had a canopy over it which reached almost to the ceiling. It was in the shape of a crown and was topped with a headpiece of armor. From this, maroon velvet was draped down and back to the sides of the throne. The drapes had big golden bees embroidered into them, as the bee was Napoleon's symbol — depicting work.

Next, we went to the chapel and the library. The library contained over 30,000 books. Words can't describe the other furnishings, paintings, and tapestries throughout. Suffice it to say, it was the most luxurious and ornate place I have ever been in, and I stood in awe of what I was looking at! In no way could it be replaced or reproduced today for any amount of money.

Paris, Melun, and Versailles

Toward the end of 1944, our Group was moved to a new base at Melun, France, about halfway between Paris and Fontainebleau. While stationed in the Paris area, I had ample opportunity to visit Paris and see the sights and points of interest. A favorite objective of most G.I.'s was to buy French perfume to send back home. Another objective was to attend a

performance at the Folies Bergère, which I was able to do a couple of times. There were also a number of good French restaurants. Where they got their food was a mystery to me, perhaps on the Black Market, but they sure knew how to prepare and serve it. Moving from London to Paris was like moving forward fifty years. The hotels had central heating and modern baths; many homes also had central heating and modern appliances. London, of course, was at a terrible disadvantage, having been subject to constant bombardment since 1940.

I recall one leave I had in Paris — a friend and I were staying at the Red Cross in the center of Paris, and had been to a play of some kind, I can't remember its name. After it was over, we took the Metro (subway) to return to the Red Cross, as we both wanted a good night's rest, but somehow we missed getting off at the right station. Rather than getting off at the next station and walking back, we decided to go to the end of the line and take a return train to our station. When we reached the end of the line, we asked a workman where to catch the train back, and he said "Finis . . . no more". We had taken the last train for the day and there would be no more until the next day. There was nothing left for us to do but walk back. The streets were deserted and dark, except for a few street lights — at least it wasn't total blackout as London had been. We walked all of the way in the middle of the streets to avoid any possibility of mugging, and we arrived back at the Red Cross about 3:00 AM.

At Melun, our quarters were in a large Chateau that once had been a hunting lodge for the kings of France. Its name was "Villa Roche" and it was very ornate inside and out. There was beautiful walnut paneling on the walls, and a lot of carvings on and around the doorways and stairs. I had a private room on the second floor, with a fireplace, which was nice on cold evenings. In its heyday, it must have been striking. While in the Melun area, I was able to visit Versailles on several occasions. It had not been disturbed during the war and was exquisite to see. We were able to go through the palace with all the fixtures from Marie Antoinette's time, and got an idea of how that class of people lived then — luxuriously, would be putting it mildly.

A-26 Aircraft

About this time, we started receiving Douglas A-26 type aircraft as replacements for our A-20's. The A-26 carried double the bomb-load of the A-20 (4,000 pounds vs. 2,000 pounds.). It was faster and had Pratt & Whitney R-2800 engines of 2,000 HP vs. the A-20's Wright engines of 1,750 HP each. Its total armament included sixteen fifty-caliber machine guns, all of which could be pointed forward to concentrate on a target. It took about a month to train the flight crews and maintenance personnel before we became fully operational.

Engineering Problems

As soon as we began operations, we began to have problems. Almost right away, we had trouble with nose-wheel retraction. The nose-wheel rotated 90 degrees as it folded into the bottom of the nose section. The shock-strut was supported by a collar in which the nose-strut rotated as it folded. There was one grease-fitting on this collar, on the rear side, and apparently the grease didn't go all of the way around the collar; after a few retractions, the nose-gear would stick on the way up or down. This resulted in several landings with collapsed nose-wheels, which caused considerable damage. We finally resolved the problem by drilling two holes in the collar 120 degrees from the original grease-fitting and installing grease-fittings in the new holes, so there were then three fittings evenly spaced around the collar. From then on, the collar was greased before every flight and that solved the problem.

Another problem was malfunctioning of the fuel booster-pumps. The fuel selector valves contained switches that would turn on a booster-pump whenever tanks were changed. Each tank had its own pump. After a few times, the points in the switches would burn or corrode, or otherwise malfunction, and then the pumps would not operate. The engines would run without them, but then there was no way to transfer fuel from one tank to another, if needed. It took personnel from Wright Field in Ohio to solve that one. There were many other minor problems encountered, as there always are with a new and untried aircraft, but we managed to "keep 'em flying".

Laon

About the time we started using the A-26's, we were moved again, this time to Laon, about seventy miles northeast of Paris. This put us within closer range of the enemy, which we needed, since our targets were getting farther and farther away, as the Allied armies pushed eastward. Laon airfield had been badly hit and was in poor condition as far as the physical facilities were concerned. To house our Engineering Office, I got hold of an unassembled Quonset hut, which we erected on one of the hardstands, and floored with ammunition box lids. That served us until the end of hostilities in May of 1945.

At Laon, we had a Combat Camera Unit assigned to us to make a technical pictorial record of 9th Air Force activities. This was sponsored by the AAF. I was assigned to fly the men of our unit on combat missions. We would fly around, above and below the formation, while they took pictures from all angles. I had one photographer in the glass nose, and one in the cockpit with me. We'd move around as the cameramen directed until we came to the bomb run, and then I'd drop back in formation for the run. On the bomb run, the cameraman in the nose photographed the bombs dropping from the rest of the formation and tracked them down into the target, getting a picture of the strike. The one in the cockpit with me also took formation shots, both coming and going. On the bomb run, he opened the door between the cockpit and the bomb-bay and lay on the floor, with his head and arms hanging down in the bomb-bay. When I opened the doors, he began shooting and got the bombs as they dropped out of the plane. I left the doors open and flew straight ahead, while he tracked them down to the target, getting a good shot of them bursting. The films were sent in daily to a central point, and after the project was completed, a full-length color feature was to be made from the choicest parts of all the films. Eventually it was to be released to the public in the States; however, I never heard of its release, but would have enjoyed seeing it.

Czechoslovakia

While at Laon, we had one of our longest missions — into Czechoslovakia. Some missions took up to six hours, and some aircraft had to divert to other airfields; others had their engines quit on the runway after landing for lack of fuel. On one mission, we bombed in an area where there was quite a bit of air and ground activity — every city and town I could see in any direction was a mass of flames. The smoke was so thick we had to drop to 4,000 feet in order for the bombardier to see the target. We were carrying 1,000-pound bombs and received quite a jolt when they exploded — for a few minutes we bounced around like corks on rough water.

Destruction along the Rhine

About now, mission requests became fewer and fewer as target range increased, and so the pace of life became a little slower, and thankfully signs of the war's end became stronger and stronger. On a beautiful spring day the last week in April, I took an A-26 and flew down the Rhine river from Frankfurt to Aachen. Practically every city along the river had been razed to the ground. Every house in Frankfurt was gutted, and not one had a roof on it. The center of the city was completely flattened. Dormstadt, forty miles south of Frankfurt, was a field of rubble. Cologne was badly damaged in the center of the city, and while a lot of walls were still standing, the buildings were nothing but shells. The cathedral was still standing, although damaged. Every city in the Reich that resisted was the same way. Whenever the ground troops ran into resistance, they called for air power; and then every group that could be mustered would go in and simply raze it to the ground. Brunswick, one of Germany's largest cities, surrendered to the 9th Air Force fighter-bombers while the infantry was still fifty miles away. The Thunderbolts were circling overhead, when suddenly white flags appeared all over the city, indicating surrender. The people were scared to death of the bombers, and they had learned that by giving up, they could at least save their homes.

V-E Day!

V-E Day finally came, and what a glorious relief that was. Everybody was jubilant! We celebrated on the base as best we could. I think everyone was more grateful for the relief of tension and the prospect of some rest, than anything else. Shortly after V-E Day, we started flying our ground personnel on low-level flights over Germany to let them see what our efforts had accomplished. We'd put two or three of our flight-line personnel in the glass nose of the plane, where they had a "front-row" view of everything. I made one trip from Laon to Bastogne, to

St.Vith, to Malmedy, to Aachen, to Duren, to Cologne, to Dusseldorf, to Dortmund, to Hamm, to Kassel, to Muhlhausen, to Paderborn, to Munster, to Munchen-Gladbach, and on up the Rhine River to Remagen, to look at the Prisoner-of-War Camps. We covered over 1,000 miles in four hours. The enlisted men were grateful for the trips. They said the results made it all worthwhile. Everyone felt sorry for the German people, for they were left holding the bag.

Life in a French Chateau

During the second week in May, the Group moved from Laon to a little town named Corneilles, about six or eight miles northwest of Paris. We had no idea how long we'd be there — things were rapidly changing from day to day. We were sure we were going directly to the Pacific, but rumors were flying. One day we'd hear we were going home, and the next day we were not. We could only wait and see. The facilities there were the best we'd ever had. We were quartered in a big chateau on the side of a high hill, with a beautiful view of the valley where the airfield was located, and could see Paris clearly in the distance. I had a private room on the third floor, overlooking the valley, and a lavatory with hot and cold running water. A full bath was right next door.

My office was on the second floor in a big room with a huge fireplace, which was very cheery on a cool or rainy day. Next to the office was another big bath with a tub, basin and toilet, hot and cold running water, and the walls were covered with mirrors. The mess hall was on the first floor, and the food was excellent. We had a French chef who did all of the cooking, and he could work miracles with G.I. rations. One night we had roast chicken, and another night we had steak with french fries and cole-slaw. They were two of the best meals I had while in the Army. We had fresh eggs for breakfast, and fresh hot rolls for dinner and supper nearly every day. We never had it so good.

There was a large, wide marble terrace on the down-hill side of the chateau, and a beautiful lawn and flower garden on down the hill for a couple hundred yards. There was a large pool, and the grounds were heavily-wooded with big, old shade trees. We had some easy chairs on the terrace, and it was very peaceful and quiet to sit out there in the evening and enjoy the view across the valley. A far cry from the cold tents, rain, snow, mud, and slop we had put up with during the winter.

While there, I received an offer of a job as Technical Inspector in a Wing Headquarters of the Occupational Air Force, to be stationed in southern Germany. It would have been a good opportunity if I'd wanted to make the Air Corps my career. However, it would have meant signing up for two more years without the chance of rotation or another promotion. After thinking it over, I declined the offer.

Enough Points for Discharge

We received word that the War Department had broken down the campaign of Germany into three separate campaigns, so that added two extra battle-stars to my ETO ribbon (a total of six) — I already had one for Germany. Together, they consisted of:

The pre-invasion air offensive of Europe

The battle of Normandy (air)

Air offensive of Northern France

Battle of the Ardennes (air)

Battle of the Rhineland (air)

Battle of Central Europe (air).

That brought my total points toward discharge to 106, which proved to be enough to get me out of the Army when the time would come.

Training for the Pacific went on at a feverish pace, and we were hounded by inspectors from higher headquarters, checking us for compliance with orders, policies, procedures, directives, etc., which were included in a so-called "Movement Order". This was normal procedure whenever

a move was contemplated.

Good weather finally arrived, and it was nice and warm during the day and delightfully cool at night. The countryside was beautiful and reminded me of parts of the "States". It was slightly rolling and fairly heavily wooded. Nearly all of the fields were covered with a carpet of bright red wild poppies, a beautiful sight to see. From the window of my room, I could see the Eiffel Tower and the Arc de Triomphe in Paris very clearly. We were still waiting for final confirmation as to our destination.

Camp Chicago

During the middle of July, we left the Paris area for good, which made everyone sad, since it was such a perfect spot. However, all good things come to an end, and we'd never have gotten home if we hadn't moved. We moved to an Assembly Area called Camp Chicago, about ten miles from our old base at Laon, where we had spent the previous winter. However, there was no airfield, just a big open field full of tents. Many units were there, with thousands of troops awaiting further orders. We were the first Air Corps unit to be processed through the camp. Some units were being deployed through the "States", and others, like ourselves, were supposedly going directly to the Pacific. We expected to be in Camp Chicago from four to six weeks. The facilities were much better than we had expected, even though we were housed in tents; we had concrete floors and electric lights.

Two tents away from mine was a large shower and washroom, with plenty of hot water. There wasn't much for us to do, as all the packing and crating of our equipment was being done by the base, so there was plenty of time for athletics, which we enjoyed. There was a large Post Exchange in each area, also enclosed and open-air theatres. A movie was shown every night, and a USO show once a week. Actually, it was a nice set-up. We ate in a consolidated mess hall from china dishes instead of a mess kit. The food, once again, was excellent and was served by French *mademoiselles*. German prisoners did all of the menial work. Any time we wanted a ditch dug, or a stake driven, or wood chopped, we called for a detail of prisoners and they did it for us. The only objection I had to Camp Chicago was the dustiness when the weather was dry.

A Tour to Switzerland

After things settled down, seven-day conducted tours were offered to the Riviera or Switzerland. I chose to go to Switzerland. We were driven to Mulhouse, where the tour began, and spent a day at the "leave center" making all the necessary arrangements. We then went by train from Mulhouse, passing through Nancy, Saarburg, and Strasbourg to our first stop in Switzerland at Basel. The rail system in France had been all but destroyed, and the rolling stock, what was left of it, was in poor condition. We were put in coaches without windows, lights, or heat. Our coach had a flat spot on one wheel, so we bumped all the way to Basel, where we went through Customs and were issued our passports.

From Basel we went to Berne via the Swiss Railway, which was super-deluxe. The trains were all-electric, with heat and lights, and the floors were clean enough to eat from — and they ran exactly on time. At Berne, we had a two-hour foot-tour of the downtown section. We were accompanied throughout the tour by two English-speaking Swiss guides. Nearly everyone in Switzerland spoke English, in addition to French, German, Italian, and a combination language of their own. From Berne, we went to Interlaken, where we spent three days. The second day, we went to the top of the Jungfrauoch (pronounced YUNG-frow-yock), a snow-capped peak 14,000 feet high. As luck would have it, the top was shrouded in clouds, and a blinding snow-storm was raging on the peak. There was a glacier beside the tourist chateau, inside of which a series of tunnels had been carved, as well as a full-sized skating rink. The ice was a pretty, light blue in color, and the electric lights provided a very interesting effect. It was quite an effort to climb stairs at that altitude — every few steps you'd have to stop and rest a moment before going on. Unfortunately, because of the clouds, we had no view from the top, but the view on the trip up and down on the cog railway was breathtaking.

Interlaken was the center of the hand wood-carving district, and there were some beautiful objects for sale. The products ranged from miniature carved animals and figurines, to elaborate

cuckoo clocks, to a full-sized grizzly bear. We were given only \$35 for spending money and couldn't do much with that. I bought my mother a carved wooden salad spoon and fork (couldn't afford the bowl to go with them), a small music box, and a few other small items. From Interlaken, we went to Lucerne, where we stayed in a nice hotel looking out over Lake Lucerne. After sightseeing in Lucerne for a day, we sailed the length of the lake by steamer to Brunnen, then by train to Zurich. After spending a day there and another day in Basel, we took the French railway back to Mulhouse, where the tour ended. The scenery in Switzerland was unlike anything I'd seen before, and the people were friendly. It was such a contrast to all the destruction and misery around them.

Japan Surrenders!

After I got back to Camp Chicago, the Japanese obligingly surrendered, and that meant we wouldn't have to go to the Pacific after all! I read an article in the G.I. paper *Stars and Stripes* that Marseilles had been converted from a Pacific Port of Entry to a USA Port of Entry, which was very encouraging to us. We had been given a "ready" date of September 5th, which meant we were to be packed, processed and ready to move by that date to Marseilles. The War Department had also come out with a policy of no more direct shipments to the Pacific. All of our vehicles were turned in to a nearby depot instead of being shipped to Marseilles for trans-shipment to the Pacific Theatre. All signs now pointed definitely to going home, to everyone's delight.

On to Marseilles and Home

When the final movement order arrived, it was for Marseilles as originally planned. We had thought maybe we'd leave from a west coast or channel port, but it didn't work out that way. We arrived at the Calais Staging Area outside Marseilles on Monday, 17 September 1945, after two days and two nights on the train, packed in like sardines. I had the best sleeping quarters on the coach — on the floor in the aisle. The only reason I rated that was because I was the train commander and therefore could take my pick. At every stop, I had to get up and give information about the train to the station personnel. The train averaged about 20 mph for the trip, plus numerous delays of several hours each, waiting for a different engine. What a trip!

The situation at Marseilles was not as nice as at Camp Chicago, but it wasn't too bad. We had to walk about half a mile to take a shower, and usually there was no hot water. There were no lights in the area, so candlelight was all we had at night. No official word had been received as yet about a sailing date. We would be alerted five days prior to sailing. I took a day while waiting to go sightseeing in Marseilles. The downtown and dock areas, and the people, were pretty dirty and shabby-looking. Marseilles was reputed to contain all the human dregs of the continent, and that seemed about right. The harbor and dock areas had been hard hit by Allied bombs, and the "Jerrys" put up quite stiff resistance before being driven out. Most of the piers, docks, and quays had been repaired sufficiently to operate the port, but there were still a lot of sunken ships in the harbor. The Germans sank a lot of them in strategic places to blockade the harbor, some of which had been blasted out of the way or cut up and pulled away. There was still a lot of work to be done to clean it all up.

Marseilles lies in a flat valley, you might say, surrounded by a semi-circle of high mountains a few miles inland. It makes a picturesque sight when viewed from the sea. We took a two-hour boat ride, sponsored by the Red Cross, along the beaches, waterfront, and bay area. It was a beautiful, clear day, and the sky was Wedgewood blue. I know now what is meant by a "Mediterranean sky". The beaches were rocky and not as nice as our East Coast beaches. In many places there were only big rocks and cliffs rising straight out of the sea. There were many people swimming and lying on the rocks. The rocks were great for diving from, as the bottom goes straight down from the rocks. The water seemed to be as warm as it is in Miami. Out in the middle of the bay is a big rocky island, one of many, on which was built the Chateau d'If, by Francois I (the same king who built the chateau at Fontainebleau). It looks like an old castle or fort, and it sprawls all over the island. It is the place Alexander Dumas made famous in his story about the imprisonment of the Count of Monte Cristo, *The Man in the Iron Mask*.

Our Welcome in Boston

We sailed for home aboard the Victory Ship *Blue Island Victory* on 27 September 1945. We were told it would be a slow voyage, because there was only one working boiler, but we didn't

much care as long as we were on our way. The voyage was uneventful, and actually relaxing. The sea was fairly calm and the weather clear. I worried about seasickness, and for a few days felt a little squeamish, but when that passed, I enjoyed the balance of the trip. The meals were very good. During the day we lay around on deck soaking up the sunshine or resting in our bunks, and watched movies at night. Originally, we expected to dock at Norfolk, Virginia, but a few days before arrival, that was changed to Boston, Massachusetts. I'll never forget what a beautiful sight it was coming into Boston harbor. The dock was lined with people who were cheering and waving American flags. What a happy sight!

After debarking, we were put on a train and taken to Fort Miles Standish, just outside of Boston, and given quarters there. That evening we were all treated to a full-course steak dinner as we had been promised. What a treat! Later in the evening, I went to the P.X. and ordered a chocolate milk shake, the first real milk I'd had in almost two years (all we had overseas was powdered milk). It tasted wonderful, but in the middle of the night, I began to get a knot in my stomach, and had to get up and go outside and let go of everything I had eaten. My stomach didn't want to tolerate fresh milk. It was several days before I could handle it again.

After going through a preliminary processing, we were divided up according to our respective discharge centers. I was assigned to Fort Dix, New Jersey, and was eventually put on a troop train which took me directly to that base. It took another twenty-four hours to be processed through there, but I finally walked out with my separation papers in hand. That was about the middle of October 1945. [Ken's discharge papers show that he "was relieved from active duty on 25 Sep 45, departed from service outside the US on 11 Oct 45, and returned to the US on 23 Oct 45", and reverted to inactive status on 29 Oct 1945.]