

With Our Weekly Newspaper Representatives Overseas

By Messrs. R. F. MacLean and C. J. Allen, Official Delegates of the C. W. K. A. with the Canadian Free Party who toured the United Kingdom

WEEK-END WITH CANADIAN BOMBERS GROUP

By R. F. MacLean

PART I

"There's Smitty!" Under the guidance of an R. C. A. public relations officer we were hurrying through the dark on an early Sunday morning, hurrying from our billets to the station detaching our train where we would meet the boys as they returned from their raid on Leipzig.

The rear of the first returning plane as it circled the field waiting for its landing signal prompted the P. R. O. man to make the remark because at every station there is always one pilot who brings his plane home first. At this station it was "Smitty," and, sure enough, he was the first pilot to walk into the debriefing room.

We heard a dozen stories of how he does it, but they all differ and when asked about it, Smitty just grins and says he doesn't know either. But, oddly enough, there is a "Smitty" on every station.

We had arrived at the station on Saturday afternoon and were to remain until Monday morning. Three cars driven by RAFWID's met us and I discovered that one of the girls was the daughter of one of my rural correspondents!

At the station we were met by the station commander who told us "guys" were scheduled for that night. We had dinner and sat in the mess chatting through most of the evening with the men who were to fly to Leipzig later that night.

It was about midnight when, with the station commander we went out to see the takeoff.

The take-off is something weird and wonderful; something out of a "King Kong" type of movie. You feel you have been transported back into a prehistoric age; that this thing cannot be taking place in a quiet English countryside.

The night is dark and the clouds are heavy. The ceiling is low and one searchlight stays almost straight up through the dark forming on the clouds to show the pilots the height of the ceiling. Around the perimeter of the field are spaced flares clear to the ground. Other flares, of a different color edge the path of the runway over which the planes will take off.

Crouched on the perimeter and faintly outlined against the flares are the ships which will soon take off. Their warning engines are ticking over and frequently roar to a deafening throb as they are given a little more gas.

A signal comes from the control van near us. The first plane wobbles to the starting mark and hitches itself around to face down the runway. A light from the control van briefly plays along its side as its number is taken. Its motor roars and throb until you cannot hear the man next to you speak. Suddenly it commences to move, slowly at first, and then gathering momentum. As it draws away from you, its front light vanishes and you see the tail light lift from the ground. You watch that tail light speed swiftly away from you, until suddenly, a mile away, it seems to jump straight up into the air. "It's airborne," the station commander remarks.

One after another machine after machine, engines roaring, wobbles off the perimeter to the start line and crouches there for a moment or two before hurtling itself through the darkness on its mission of destruction. (The scene is unreal, fantastic. Are they prehistoric monster preparing to pounce upon some unsuspecting city? Are they huge dragonflies from a bygone age?)

As you stand and watch, you shiver. But it is not the cold wind that has sent a chill over you; that has stiffened the hair at the back of your neck. You realize that in those things are the clean, decent youngsters with whom you chatted less than an hour ago; the price of Canadian manhood. And you remember that their mission is one of destruction and that some of them, probably, will not return.

You think too, of the people of Leipzig, who in five hours or six will hear the roar of these planes and the crash of bursting bombs and see incendiaries rain down upon their homes. Despite yourself, you pity the people of Leipzig.

One plane fails to become airborne. The crew, far down the runway, wheel it off, tumble out and hurry to another machine, ready and waiting. They are the last machine to take off.

Finally, the roar from the field is ended. In the sky there is the diminishing sound of the planes hurrying to the marshalling point. You discover you are very weary and welcome a drink with the station commander in his sitting room in an old fashioned English farm house. And then to bed,

knowing that you will be called in the early morning hours to see the planes return.

Once, twice during the night, you were awakened by the sound of a plane near your window. Doubtless, you realize that the machines have returned to their base as something was not functioning quite as it should.

All too soon comes the knock on your door and you hurry into your clothes and cross to the debriefing room. The return to base after the "lap" of each aircraft is unquestionably the most dramatic phase of the operation so far as those who remain behind are concerned. As each bomber lands and the boys file into "debriefing" rooms, they dispose of all the special equipment and maps they have taken with them. They are served coffee, food and cigarettes and they are interviewed by the specialist officers such as gunnery leader, squadron commander, navigation leader, radio officer, etc. Then they are interrogated by the intelligence officers, one crew at a time, and the boys tell of the night's operation, describe the weather and cloud formations, tell in detail of any contacts with enemy aircraft, discuss the relative strength of the anti-aircraft defenses, relate in detail the position of their planes, speed, height, etc., when making their actual bombing run. All the story of the night is unfolded either under questioning or by unpremeditated telling by the crew. The interrogation is definitely a highlight for an observer and is probably the most revealing incident in the operation of a bomber station.

Following the interrogation, the boys are free to go and have breakfast and go to bed but they look at the blackboard at the end of the room and see that all the planes are reported back. They hang around and wait, exchanging experiences with their fellows. This one will tell you of the explosion his bombs made; that one tells about a round with an enemy night-fighter. Another one will describe the flak while a fourth will damn the new machine he was flying and long to have his "old crane" back.

You chat with them for an hour or more and all the time you are conscious that they are looking over their shoulders casting glances at the board. If so happened that this was a bad trip and the losses from this station were comparatively heavy. As crew after crew reported, I watched for chaps I had talked with the evening before. Suddenly I found that I was watching for two youngsters with whom I had sat on a chestfield for three-quarters of an hour. One from Toronto and one from a small town on the prairie. Nice kid! Heedfully I again checked the room. They weren't there. For an hour I watched the door. They did not return.

Presently without a word or a sign all the air crew in the room gathered close in front of the blackboard. They had realized that if any of the missing planes had landed at another airfield, there had been ample time for this station to be notified. The W. O. in charge of the board got up and wiped the blackboard and within thirty seconds, without a word, the men left the room. A dozen of us were left . . . alone with a blackboard—wiped clean.

While those chaps slept, all traces of their missing fellows would be removed. Special officers pick up equipment. It is carefully tabulated, packaged and sent to their relatives. Significantly their final place upon the station is a line on a blackboard never completed.

WOUNDED AIRMEN FLY BOMB-DAMAGED PLANE

WITH U. S. FORCES IN BURMA (CP)—Wounded and flying a bomb-damaged hospital plane, four members of an air-convoy corps—one a woman—brought wounded American troops out of Myitkyina and two other Burma fields.

The woman, Lieut. Audrey Rogers of Burkburnett, Tex., is in command of the air evacuation nurses' corps in India and China.

Her plane landed at Myitkyina the day after Brig. Gen. Frank Merrill's Marauder captured the field in a surprise attack behind the Japanese lines. As the plane was about to take off, Japanese bombers appeared and fragments tore big holes in one of its wings.

One of the wounded men was killed. Then the Zeros ripped bullets and 20 mm. shells through the fuselage. After the attack, the pilots reported the plane was barely airworthy. Nevertheless, the takeoff was ordered and successfully made.

Insisting on completing the assignment, the evacuation crew collected the wounded at two other fields and delivered them at an advanced base before returning to their own base.

Rubber Rings For Home Canning

Ever since the Japanese seized the principal source of natural rubber, it has been an extremely scarce commodity. In order to provide sufficient for the fighting forces use in civilian manufacture has been curtailed. The technical officers of the Department of Munitions and Supply, in conjunction with the Dominion Department of Agriculture, the War-time Prices and Trade Board, the National Research Council and the manufacturers, have looked into the matter of rubber rings for canning jars and several months ago developed specifications which will provide satisfactory rings.

So far, technical difficulties have made it impracticable to use synthetic rubber for this purpose. Experiments are being conducted and these difficulties may yet be overcome. Meanwhile, the highest grade natural rubber is being used.

Last fall complaints were received and through the co-operation of home-wives actual jars of fruit, vegetables, rubber rings and screw tops were examined. All these exhibits were carefully tested, and in some cases investigators went into the homes and made tests on other cans of fruits and vegetables. As a result of these careful investigations, it was determined that only a fractional percentage of the spoilsage could be attributed definitely to faulty rubber rings.

LOWES REED GARDEN

ARMORE, Oklahoma (CP)—Three winters ago Mrs. L. H. Lowe rescued a robin, frozen in the ice of a bird bath. Now each spring the robin returns and lives all summer in the Lowe garden. Mrs. Lowe says the robin has been crippled by a leg.

Suggest Gardens For Youngsters

BY THE CANADIAN PRESS

Some thought should be given these days—with summer vacation here—to the possibility of devoting a portion of home grounds in cities, towns and villages to the youngsters for their own victory gardens.

Boys and girls, as a rule, don't care too much about helping out in the garden. But if they are told that they may have a section for themselves, without interference from their elders, they usually do a thorough job.

Provide them with seeds, plant food, spray material, tools and put them on their own. Don't offer advice until it is sought. You might offer a small prize as an added incentive.

One substitute with two bags goes each a tiny plot and promised to buy their surplus vegetables. The bags are their own crops and all what they didn't use. At summer's end they had a number of war stamps. When the time came to reward the one with the best garden their father gave them both prizes.

LABELLOG OF FOOTWEAR

To safeguard the consumer against degradation of quality, all footwear made in Canada after June 30 must bear either the name of the manufacturer or his War-time Prices and Trade Board number, as assigned by G. C. Hodges of the footwear administration.

The method of identification labelling is already in effect for a number of types of clothing.

Wholesale and retailers may use their own name, label or identifying mark instead of, or in addition to, the manufacturer's name provided the manufacturer's case number and Board license number is also in the shoe. Imported footwear is not affected by this order.



YOUR CORNER STORE IS A Free Enterprise
THAT means corner grocery store that serves you and your neighbors didn't just happen.
Back of every such venture, from the days of the "corner store" to today's modern grocery store, is an individual with the courage to assume risks and face competition for the privilege of serving his own business.
Recognizing the needs of his community, he strives willingly to serve . . . he works hard, and in doing so, he prospers. This is free enterprise.
By lending money and offering other essential banking facilities to small enterprises for over a hundred years, this Bank has played a part in the building of a strong, self-reliant people and a prosperous Canada.
Keep Canada Strong and Free!

The BANK of NOVA SCOTIA

Branches from Coast to Coast

You won't get to Berlin in an Armchair!

If Canada and the United Nations had depended upon "Armchair Soldiers" to fight this war, the Nazis and Japs would have grabbed this country long ago.

There is no "Royal Road" to Berlin. It's fighting all the way and Canada's Army needs every man it can get. That's why, today, you should volunteer for overseas service. You'll need months of intensive training to make you fighting fit.

Don't be a stay-at-home and let the other fellow do it. Get into a man's uniform with the G.S. badge of honour on your sleeve. If we're going to win this war, we'll have to do more than just read about it in the papers.

So, come on you fellows, the good old army has got to finish the job!

OVERSEAS BADGE OF HONOUR
GS
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VOLUNTEER TO-DAY
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